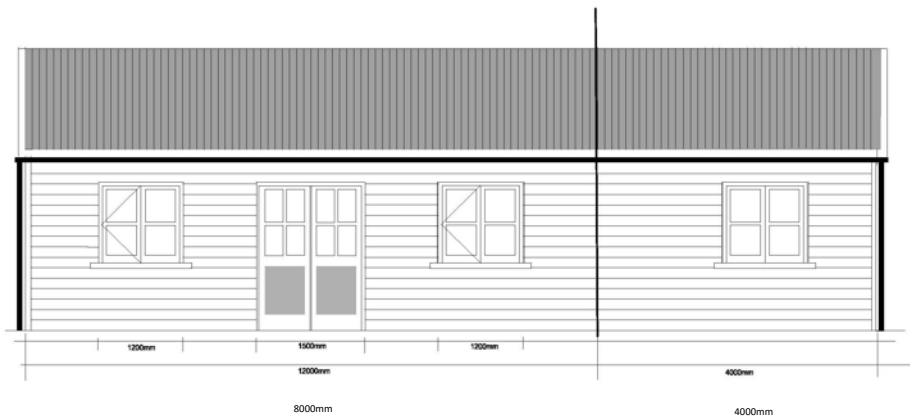


# The Newsletter



Vol no 30 Issue 3 April 2024

SBKA website [www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk)



## Possible Extension to the 'Bee Space'

We've been thinking that we need more storage space at the apiary for some time now. Where could it go, and how do we do it? were the two main questions. Eric McLaughlin, Joe King and Stewart Gould put their collective heads together and decided that the simplest solution would be to extend the existing building to the right. The existing building is 8 metres long, and we can comfortably add another 50%, so that the building would become 12 metres long in total.

Stewart is drawing up plans and consulting with planners to see if we will be allowed to extend. Nothing is written in stone yet, but as soon as we see if it's possible, we can find out how much it would cost.

Suggestions to add another floor and rent the space out as an Air BnB at £195 per night, weren't even mentioned. April 1<sup>st</sup> isn't far away.

## News from the Branch Apiary - March

At last we are seeing those first signs of spring and the sense that the new beekeeping season is nearly here. At the apiary we have removed the anti-woodpecker wire netting from around the hives, and stored it ready for next year, we have also taken off the metal mouse-guards cleaned them with a good scrub in hot soapy water and stored them. To help the bees keep the brood warm we have inserted entrance blocks and placed the varroa monitoring trays in place. This has given us an early chance to monitor mite levels, which fortunately are very low but it also helps to insulate the mesh floors and make it easier for the bees to maintain the brood temperature at the necessary 96 degrees Fahrenheit, which compares well to our own body temperature of 98.4 degrees.

It hasn't been warm enough to make our first major inspections of the colonies, but we have put a queen excluder on those hives which needed it, but without disturbing the brood nest. A few hives had over-wintered with an extra super on with stores in it, hence we needed to pop a queen excluder in before the queen gets tempted to move up from the brood nest into the super and starts laying in it. Hefting has continued just to make sure that the bees have enough food and those hives which felt a little light have been supplemented with fondant.

We have had ten hives over wintering this year and one colony has died out over the winter. The average annual winter mortality figure for managed hives in the south-west region is 15-18%. The figure for unmanaged colonies is far higher according to all the research available.

Over the winter all the supers and frames, which have been stored have been cleaned and sterilised and are now ready for the new season in the clean shed. Eric's Emporium has been stocked up with foundation frames etc and is available at our Tuesday morning Apiary sessions.

Are you ready? The main swarming season is only probably six weeks away. What will you do if your bees swarm? Do you have enough equipment to house them? We are ready, we have the extra equipment and a swarm prevention strategy. This of course never quite works all the time, bees are full of surprises so you will always need that extra equipment standing by ready.

The apiary is beginning to look very attractive with the early blossom and daffodils out. Our flower beds will soon need a spring weeding so do come along and help us on a Tuesday morning. You will get a warm welcome, a cup of tea or coffee and needless to say a supply of kitkats.

The new season is nearly here!

## County Update

The minutes of the last meeting will be circulated when agreed by Trustees

The Somerset AGM went well, the West Country Honey Faarms Award Rose bowl was awarded to Lionel Horler of SE Branch.

David Bates and Suzy Peekins were presented with Honorary member certificates.

The Lunch and venue were good.

The speaker was very interesting they are working with NBU and hoping to get additional joint funding, so that the devices for attracting and tracking Asian Hornets can be rolled out at a reasonable cost asap.

It was agreed that the old SBKA would be wound up by the SBKA Secretary, Chairman and Treasurer.

The Trustees will appoint the new Treasurer, Secretary and Chairman at the next Board meeting.

The minutes of the AGM will be circulated to all members shortly.

**Mikes Bee Supplies**

**Click & Collect**  
[www.mikes-bee-supplies.com](http://www.mikes-bee-supplies.com)  
E: [mikes-bees@outlook.com](mailto:mikes-bees@outlook.com)  
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## **Asian Hornet Update**

I have collected a set of updated Asian Hornet display boards from Lynne Ingram, Somerset Asian Hornet Coordinator for Somerton which will be excellent information when doing events.

I am in the process of arranging an Asian Hornet team meeting, but have yet to hear from everyone and arrange a convenient time to meet.

Pawability is happy to host a display for Asian hornets when she has her monthly events during the summer.

I will be putting together some AH team Verifiers Kits for those that go out in response to potential sightings.

Somerton (Joe/Stewart) regarding the AH trap making session at the Apiary. Date to be arranged.

**Suzy Perkins - AHAT co-ordinator-  
Somerton Branch**



An Asian hornet was found in a potting shed by a member of the Ash Horticultural Society, Kent on Friday 8th March and reported through the Asian Hornet watch app. The hornet was collected by an Animal and Plant Health Agency bee inspector the same day, and confirmed on 11th March. The finding was around 5 miles from a nest found and destroyed in 2023, near Canterbury, Kent.

On the 20th and 21st of March the National Bee Unit received credible reports of lone Asian hornets.

The first was in Preston, Lancashire at a warehouse with regular trucks arriving from France. A bee inspector attended, set traps and is monitoring the location with support from the local beekeeper.

The second credible report was a dead Asian hornet found in Romford, East London. The specimen was collected by an NBU inspector and sent to the lab at Fera Science Ltd for official confirmation.

## **Skep making class**

We are trying to organise a skep making class, which would be a 2 day course over two weekends. Vanessa Woodford of Taunton Branch would conduct the course costing £30.00 each to cover materials.

If you are interested in this very satisfying experience, contact Suzy Perkins at [apicreoe.tengore@gmail.com](mailto:apicreoe.tengore@gmail.com)



## **From the Chair**

Our final Winter Talk was lead by Joe Bleasdale who has recently published a book called 'Honey Without Harm'. This talk was not as well attended as our previous ones but in many ways this suited Joe's style of delivery and it was more conversational than a presentation....I think it would be true to say some of the presentation materials required better eyesight than I have, to access the information but perhaps I need to go to Specsavers..... However, it was really interesting to hear how an experienced beekeeper had developed his practice to keep bees successfully without the use of chemical treatment for varroa. Joe was careful to present the arguments for and against the use of chemicals but through careful observation and management, it was obvious that he had developed a successful chemical free approach which enabled him to raise healthy and productive colonies over a period of almost 40 years. It was also interesting to hear about his experiences of beekeeping at the Newt and Tintinhull.

Our March committee meeting had a very long agenda as committee members reported back and considered priorities for the development of Somerton Branch this year. Amongst other things, we are looking into the feasibility of extending the Bee space (see Stewart's marvellous drawing elsewhere in this newsletter) and whether it is possible to move the Branch library to the apiary. Sarah Kent has done sterling work in maintaining and updating our collection of books and we think they may be more easily accessed and promoted to branch members if accommodated at the apiary. Other committee members have been busy looking into Safeguarding and Health and Safety requirements at the apiary to ensure we are in line with BBKA policy and site specific, whilst we wait for an updated handbook from County.

Other possible projects include improved lighting at the apiary, establishing an observation hive and extending covered outside space for humans! There is pond work underway at the apiary and a new liner has been purchased. Eric McLaughlin is planning to approach other road users to the apiary and see if it is possible to do something collectively to improve the road surface...every visit is an adventure at the moment!

There are a lot of events being planned for branch members. Beginners practical sessions start soon and there are a number of visits being planned for more experienced beekeepers too (see the Events calendar). Do join in, if you can. You are sure of a friendly welcome at any event.

Congratulations to David Bates and Suzy Perkins who received their Honorary members certificates at the SBKA AGM. Congratulations also, to the following members who passed their First Aid qualification on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March- Bernie Perkins, Lisa Letchford, Sue McInnes, Ross Hendry and Jackie Mosedale. Thank you to Jackie for organising the course.

Our next course is Food Hygiene on 20<sup>th</sup> April. It is open to all members.

Wishing you all a very Happy Easter and hope to meet you, before too long, at one of our upcoming events

**Gillian Islip**  
**Chair, Somerton Branch SBKA Charity**



## Asian hornet trapping

Proprietary Asian hornet traps are sold at ridiculous prices. A transparent yellow plastic cup with a black lid, sold by many of the major suppliers will cost you £6.00 - £7.00, and the recommended bait is dearer than a premium malt whisky, but you don't have to pay ridiculous prices.

The trap shown above is made from 2 x 150mm plastic funnels and a zinc sheet Queen Excluder. The QE slots allow smaller insects to escape while holding Asian hornets. The bait is in a small, hotel breakfast type, jam pot with J cloth wick, and contains a concoction known on Jersey as Bob's brew. **Proprietary version - £23.99 + bait. This version £3.00 + some strong cordial and baker's yeast.**

## Discounts from BBWear

Each year I contact BBWear and beg for a special discount for our members on their suits, and it works. They are offering a 15% discount on all basic suits, to all BBKA members as can be seen in the message from BBKA on page 12 **BUT they are offering Somerton Beekeepers a 20% discount** on their basic suits. All other discounts are as the BBKA message.



If you are looking for a good quality new bee-suit and are not bothered by an abundance of pockets, then the BBWear would suit you down to the ground - literally.

If you want to take advantage of this offer, we will have to buy at least 1 suits, but if we meet that criterion, the discount will apply and there will be no P&P either. Go to the BBWear website at

<https://www.bbwear.co.uk/shop/clothing/bee-suits>

**Choose a colour, style and size, then let me know your requirements at [Somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:Somertonbees@btinternet.com)**

**So far, the take up has been extremely limited. We'll wait until the season really starts and see if we can meet the minimum requirement of 10 suits.**



## **Taunton Auction of Second Hand Equipment**

This is an ideal opportunity to grab a second hand bargain. It can't be guaranteed, but there are always a few to be had.

The auction is held at Ruishton Village Hall, Cheats Road, Ruishton, Taunton TA3 5JD on Sunday April 7<sup>th</sup>. Items Can be checked in for sale from 10.00am. Viewing starts at 1.00pm, and the sale starts at 2.00pm.

It's a good idea to get there reasonably early so that you can register as a prospective bidder and have a good look around. It's also wised to make notes of any lot which has caught your eye.

You can pay by cash, cheque or card. Paying by cheque causes delays in the long queue which forms at the end of the sale.

Joe King and I will both be there to offer advice to newer beekeepers, should they fee they need it.

Refreshments and sandwiches are usually available too

## **Trip to Buckfast Abbey & the bees**

Each year we try to arrange a visit to one of the country's best known beekeeping venues, and this year is no different. I have contacted Clare Densley at Buckfast Abbey and we have agreed a date. **Put Saturday July 20<sup>th</sup> in your diaries.**

It is a low key event: not at all intense or technical. Clare is very down to earth.

I'll keep you informed of developments.

## Eric's Emporium

### Supplies available from the apiary

There is a stock of frames, foundation and jars at the apiary which are available for purchase every Tuesday morning and on Saturdays when there is a New Beekeepers' practical session. The stock of jars is rapidly decreasing and won't be topped up until late July. Check with Eric McLaughlin if you wish to visit.

### All frames and foundation are for National hives

DN4 - Deep National Hoffman frames - £1.35 each

10 frames - £13.50

11 frames - £14.85

Standard brood foundation - £1.30 per sheet

SN1 Shallow National frames - £1.00 each

10 frames - £10.00

11 frames - £11.00

Super foundation - 80p per sheet

**Apiinvert.** Syrup ready to feed bees. Unlike sugar solution it requires no mixing, more readily accepted and less work required for the bees to invert (not wasting energy), more close to a natural food.

**13kg 1 - 4 boxes £26 each, 5 + boxes £25 each**

**Apifonda.** If you are venturing on a Queen rearing project this fondant is what you need. Very similar to Apiinvert, it is a paste not a liquid. If a colony becomes light through the course of the winter a dollop of fondant could well be the difference between life and death of the bees.

**1 x 2.5 Kg bag £5.00, 1 box 12.5 Kg £25, 2 + boxes £24 each**

The Apiinvert can be fed as a 'gee up' in the spring, emergency feeding during the 'June gap' and of course at the end of the season when preparing for winter.

**National Foundation** Available at excellent prices.

Deep wired, Shallow wired, Shallow unwired and cut comb.

**For any of the above please ring :- 07812738793, 01458 272114 ( leave a message )**  
email redrascal444@gmail.com



# Bookings open Noon 29 Jan!



*Spring* 2024  
*Convention*

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Friday 12 – Sunday 14 April 2024

Lectures, Workshops & Seminars

***Bumper Trade Show Sat 13 April***

**Ticket prices held: Trade Show only - £6**

For latest information including full programme, visit

[www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention](http://www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention)

***PLUS A FREE HIVE TOOL\* FOR EVERY ADULT PARTICIPANT,  
INCLUDING TRADE SHOW ONLY!***



***\*while stocks last***

Enquiries to: [scenquiries@bbka.org.uk](mailto:scenquiries@bbka.org.uk)



Bees & Honey Section

30<sup>th</sup> May – 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024

Dear All,

How time flies, here we are again looking for half day stewards to help us in the Bees & Honey Marquee.

Many of our helpers from last years show have already expressed an interest to join us again this year.

We are seeking general stewards to help throughout the marquee, including the children's section, candle rolling, honey sales table, general stewarding and helping members of the public. Also most important, keeping an eye on exhibits. Sadly, over the last few years we have had a few items disappear from displays!

Many of our helpers last year weren't even beekeepers, so you needn't think this is directed exclusively to beekeepers.

In return you will receive free admission to the show, spend half a day stewarding and the rest of the day enjoying all the show has to offer with main ring events, livestock displays, food and drink and our very own Pilton Festival Big top with live music throughout the day (Glastonbury)

What better way to spend a summers day

We are looking for stewards for mornings and afternoons. 9am to 1.30pm & 1pm to 5.30pm.

I know many of you have helped us in past years, and we look forward to welcoming you back again for our 2024 show.

**30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> May & 1st June. Thursday, Friday & Saturday**

Many thanks in advance.

Bernie & Suzy Perkins

Email [berniepm@gmail.com](mailto:berniepm@gmail.com)

Bernie mobile: 07948408770

Suzy mobile: 07914069078



## Queen Rearing Course

For many years Roy White ran a very successful queen rearing course at his house & apiary in Kingsbury Episcopi. Roy was unwell for a while, but the good news is that he's back - and so is the queen rearing course.

Roy can accommodate a maximum of 6 people, 3 for a quorum.

He asks that you have a minimum of three years experience

### The course time table is

Saturday 18 May 2.00 pm set up

Sunday 19 May 9.00am grafting

Tuesday 28 May 6.00 pm collect Q cells.

There will be cost to the division of (current Thornes price) £25.20 + pp for 6 Chinese grafting tools to be retained by course participants. He has 6 div. Apideas (small queen rearing hives) hence the maximum of 6 participants. Roy will provide everything else needed. I hope all's well at your end.

**Roy can be contacted on 01458 823898  
or by email at [wennets@hotmail.com](mailto:wennets@hotmail.com)**

**Hurry, because places go fast.**

**Dates for your diary**

**First Beginners' practical session**

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April  
At our apiary

**Auction of Second hand equipment  
Ruishton Village Hall**

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April  
Cheats Road, Ruishton, TA3 5JD  
Viewing from midday  
**Sale starts at 2.00pm**

**Stoke St Gregory Enviro Fair**

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June

**Wildflower Meadow Visit**

Goren Farm, Nr Honiton, EX14 9EN  
Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June

**Baltonsborough Food Fair**

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> July

**Visit to Buckfast Abbey Bees  
With Clare Densley & Martin Hann**

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July

**Beekeeping Taster Day**

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July  
At Somerton Divisional Apiary  
10.00am - 4.00pm  
£40.00 ea incl. lunch  
& refreshments

**Somerton Honey Show  
Keinton Mandeville Village Hall**

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September**  
Chistles Lane, TA11 6ES

**President**

Jackie Mosedale  
01458 241146

**Chair**

Gillian Islip  
[gillianislip@gmail.com](mailto:gillianislip@gmail.com)  
01458 241562

**Vice chair**

Michele Wilson  
[michelewilson1747@gmail.com](mailto:michelewilson1747@gmail.com)

**Secretary**

Alison Clewes  
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**Membership Secretary**

Alison Dykes

**Librarian**

Sarah Kent  
01749 670423

**Honey Show sub committee**

David Rose, Alison Dykes

**Newsletter Editor**

Stewart Gould  
01749 860755  
[somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com)

**Events Programme**

**Position vacant**

**County Trustee**

Suzy Perkins

**Deputy Delegates**

David Rose

**Apiary Manager**

Joe King  
01749 890357

**Extraction Equipment Loan**

John Speirs  
01458 241831