

The Newsletter



Vol no 29 Issue 7 August 2022

SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



The Saga of the Jars

Every year we say “It’s been a strange year”, well this year is strange for many reasons, but not least because of a national 454g (1 lb) honey jar shortage. In order to ensure that we are getting the best deal for our members we approach all the major suppliers and ask for prices before deciding who to choose.

This year the committee also decided to go for a supplier who would supply with lids on the jars, to avoid all the trauma of sorting and counting lids, only

to have several members say that they have not enough lids, or the wrong sort. Strangely, nobody ever reports that too many lids have been supplied.

It was all to no avail anyway. All of the major suppliers said that they were having great difficulty getting deliveries out quickly, with a lead time of 4 weeks. That set the ball rolling. Two, of the major suppliers then said that they were expecting their next delivery of 454g jars in **4 weeks** time. Add on the delivery delay, and we would be half way through September. The final nail in that particular coffin was that one supplier (the cheapest) said "I can't quote you on them because I have no idea what the price will be until they arrive, because prices just keep on rising". Most 454g jars are manufactured in the Far East or Eastern Europe, both of which add further problems to the process, with a particularly nasty war, shipping problems and, since we left the EU, brand new import requirements.

That left just one supplier who had stock of 454g jars, and supplies with the lids on, but they still had a 4 week delay. It was our only chance of getting jars to our members in something approaching a sensible timescale, but we still have another 2 weeks, or so, to wait for the delivery.

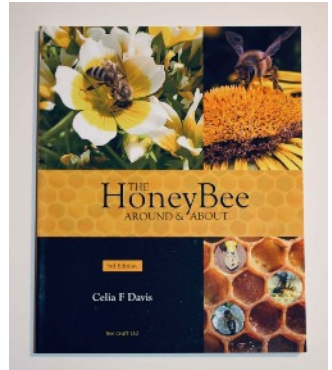
Sorry for the delay, but we do everything possible to get good deals for you. Sometimes it goes a bit awry, through no fault of ours.



The National Honey monitoring scheme was set up to discover what the bees are up to and what they are harvesting in different parts of the UK. They are also working with advanced DNA sampling to detect disease pathogens, pesticides and other contaminants. You have until October 7th to register, so if you would like your honey analysed (for free) and find out more about the scheme, click this link <https://honey-monitoring.ac.uk/taking-part/faq>

Somerton BKA Library

The list of available books was on the Somerset BKA website, but for some unknown reason disappeared recently. However, it is now back online and you will be amazed at the sheer volume of books available to members to read - **FREE**. All you have to do is go to the website and find a book you want to borrow, then contact Sarah Kent, our librarian, who will sort out the book, so that you can collect it from her.



This book - The Honey Bee Around And About, by Celia Davis, is an informative and uncomplicated insight into the life and times of honeybees.

Have a look at what is available here

<https://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk/somerton-library.html>

Sarah's contact details 01749 670423 or email translation@lawsonkent.co.uk

Each week a group of us meet at the Divisional Teaching Apiary on a Tuesday morning by 10.00 am to look after the bees and carry out the seasonal tasks. You are most welcome to join us if you find yourself free. It is a learning opportunity for all of us, coffee is drunk, kitkats are eaten, and a great deal of fun is had.

At the moment the honey harvest is almost ready to be taken. This will be part of the next two Beginners' classes. Taking the Honey, followed by our extracting session. As a retired dentist I always get hopelessly over excited in the extraction session.

Soon we will be thinking of the preparations for the winter ahead, assessing the varroa mite load on each of the colonies, followed by treating, probably by MAQS, then checking that every colony is large enough to overwinter, uniting colonies where necessary, and making sure that they have appropriate stores for the winter ahead.

Surprisingly wasps are already beginning to be a nuisance to some of the colonies, especially the weaker ones. Already we have reduced some of the entrances to make the entrances more defensible, and before long we will be putting out wasp traps to deplete the wasp population. Preparing the hives for the rigours of the months ahead always seems strange when it is only the beginning of August, but that is our reality.

Come along and join us, especially if you haven't over-wintered your bees before. In an average year the colony loss figure for the South west is approximately 15-18% (1 in 6 colonies), Professor Tom Sealey has suggested that in feral colonies the figure for first year colonies is nearer 75%. Clearly we must be doing something right.

A number of colonies became queenless and some have superseded. The queenless colonies have been given a frame of eggs or united with queen right colonies. Currently there is a good flow on and there will be supers to clear soon. The meadow is in full growth, as are the hedges. We will need to organise a work party soon to trim the meadow and cut the hedges. There are a number of other tasks that need doing, painting the buildings before the winter, repairing shed doors, cleaning dirty equipment and maintenance work on the gates which were damaged in the gales earlier in the year.

Joe King & Eric McLaughlin

The Somerset Food Trail Festival

The organisers of the Food Trail contacted Somerset Beekeepers to enquire if beekeepers would participate. The County Chair (our own Stewart Gould) spoke to Somerton and we rose to the challenge. We offered an Open Hive session on Tuesday 19th July. Participants had to book in advance and bring their own gloves and Wellies. We supplied bee suits. The Trail guide had a couple of fetching photos of members in pastel bee suits.

Eight people booked to come and eventually six turned up on the day. You may remember it was the hottest day of the year (and the hottest ever recorded in Somerset).

Those who came had no previous knowledge or contact with bees. I gave them a brief introduction to the life cycle of the honey bee and answered some questions. We then got them suited up, having explained the risks of stings and the availability of antihistamine tablets. Joe King and I took them to a previously selected docile hive and demonstrated the functioning of the colony. They saw brood in all stages, bees, stored honey, pollen and the Queen.

The general public have an inflated view of her, expecting something much larger and this group were no exception. They marvelled that she was able to

lay her own body weigh in eggs at the height of the season and were surprised at the shortness of the worker bees lives.

As we were all quietly stewing inside the bee suits we decamped to the Beespace and had cooling drinks before another question and answer session. This went well. All participants said how much they had enjoyed the morning and left better informed about bee and beekeeping.

Eric McLaughlin

SOMERTON BKA HONEY SHOW 2022 – Saturday 17th September,

Are you like me? As I grow older, time seems to pass more quickly. If you are then you have less time than you think to get your Honey Show entries in. The committee are expecting 300+ entries again this year so please make a special effort to make as many entries as you can. Please read the rules carefully as last year some honey exhibits were rejected by the judges because they did not conform to the show's rules.

So please get your entries together and make our Honey Show "the best in the west" once again
Best of luck to everyone.

Fred Clarke (on behalf of the Honey Show Committee)

All honey show documents are attached to this newsletter, including 'How to win points at Honey Shows'.

Buckfast Bees Trip

The trip to Buckfast is now definitely fully booked, so thank you for showing so much interest. Somerset Beekeepers had a visit there in July and, as usual, it was very informative while being low key, even though we had 2 Master Beekeepers and a holder of the National Diploma in Beekeeping (Only 94 have ever been awarded).

For the August Somerton trip we are promised something completely different as the season has moved on, and I'm looking forward to going again.

Stewart Gould



Click & Collect
www.mikes-bee-supplies.com
 E: mikes-bees@outlook.com
 T: 01278 445158

Foundation

Jars

Hives

Suits

And more!

Bakers Fondant
12.5kg

We take
 Cash or Card
 (no cheques)



Find us at
 72 Wembdon Hill
 Wembdon
 Bridgwater
 Somerset.
 TA6 7PZ

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 £24 each, 5 + boxes £23 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.

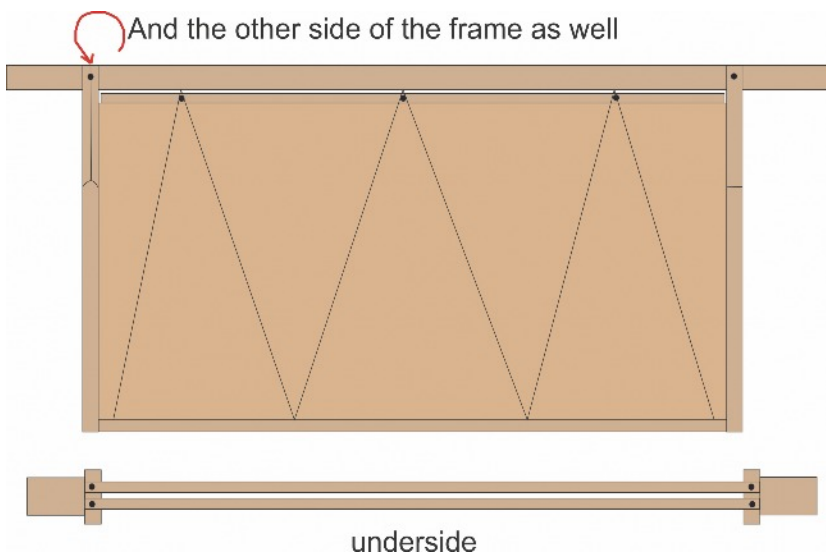
1 x 2.5 Kg bag £5.00, 1 box 12.5 Kg £25, 2 + boxes £24 each

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.

Foundation. National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood available

Eddie Howe email:- redrascal444@gmail.com Mobile 07812 738793

Tel. 01458 272114



Correct positioning of frame pins

Once you've mastered making up frames it's easy, but some people struggle, so this diagram may help to clear the mist. Each season, when I part with some frames and they are going to be replaced, I say 'please don't make them up. I'll do that' and the reason is that quite often they aren't made up correctly. The worst problem is pins in the wrong place, but very often, there simply aren't enough of them. This can lead to the frame collapsing in the hive or extractor.

Starting at the top, there need to be pins through either end of the side bars & definitely on both sides of the frame. So that's 4 pins through the side bars.

Next there should be 3 pins through the side of the wedge and holding the three wire loops at the top of the foundation sheet. I had some with foundation sheets upside down (only 2 loops at the top).

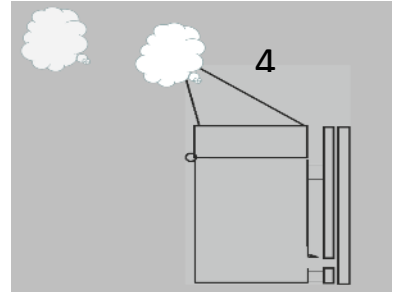
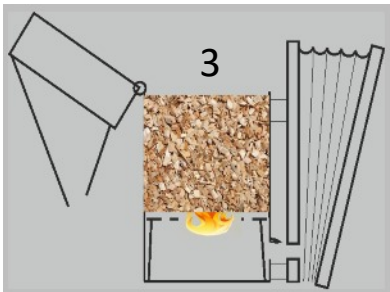
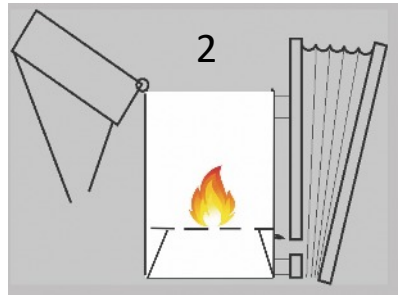
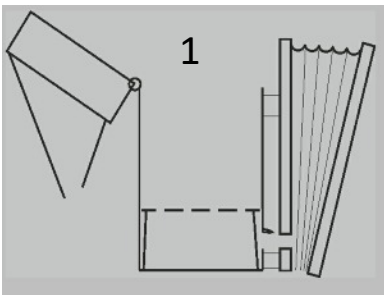
Looking at the bottom of the frame, there should be a pin through each end of the bottom bars. These should always be driven in from the bottom (not the sides). This is so that they can be removed easily when replacing the foundation. So that's another 4 pins.

Each frame needs 11 pins to hold it together securely and to stop the foundation falling out.

Lighting your smoker

While I'm being condescending, I might as well go the whole hog. I have noticed many new and experienced beekeepers struggling with their smokers. We all have difficulty lighting them at some time, but there are some very simple rules.

1. Use fuel which is dry but not dusty, won't burn too fast and produces a cool smoke (corrugated cardboard and pine needles are acrid). Try **clean** wood shavings, dry bark, semi-rotten wood)
2. Always start a small fire **in the very bottom** of your smoker, using old newspaper, then add a small amount of fuel. **Never light the top** of your fuel. You'll just blow sparks or flames at your bees
3. Once the smoker is going **well**, open it up and compress the fuel slightly, then top up.
4. Be very careful where you put it when lit.
5. Always ensure the smoker is emptied before storing it. Several serious fires have been caused recently by smokers.



Montacute Apiary Visit

On 16th July a select group of us gathered at the apiary of Catherine Fraser at Montacute House. The hot weather had possibly put off some attendees and there were only 5 of us, all beginning beekeepers. Catherine had set up the gazebo under the trees and there were iced drinks and a breeze so it wasn't too unbearable. She has around 15 hives in an old walled stockyard within Montacute park. Most hives had between 4 and 6 supers on and the forage is obviously good with acres of parkland containing clover, lime and chestnut trees and flying access to both rape and field beans most years, as well as 80 acres of apple orchard surrounding the park.

She was keen that we helped with some of the taller hives, one of which she had not been able to open for a month in view of the weight of the top supers! We saw her system of swarm management with split brood boxes above a division board although her attempt to run a 2 queen system seemed to have failed as the upper queen had disappeared. She had made up a mounting block to enable access to the upper boxes which worked quite well. Cake was over supplied but no-one was complaining. All in all a successful afternoon.

Thanks to Catherine for her time, and hospitality.

Very Late Swarms

We all know the adage about swarms in May, June and July, but Glastonbury and Street are trying hard to challenge beekeepers to make a new rhyme involving August. Two of our members caught a total of three swarms in the vicinity on Friday July 29th just two days before August started . Not worth a fly apparently, but apparently two of them were quite large.

How about a swarm in August isn't worth a bag of dust? Well, it was worth a try.

Dates for your diary

Beginners Practical Sessions

At our apiary

Fifth session

Taking the honey

Saturday August 6th

10.00am

Visit to Catherine Fraser's

Montacute Apiary

Sunday July 16th at 2.00pm

Somerton BKA Honey Show

Saturday September 17th

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall

President

Jackie Mosedale

01458 241146

Chairman

Eric McLaughlin

jandemclaughlin@gmail.com

07910 764069

Vice Chairman

Jack Barr

01458 252850

jrbarrxv@btinternet.com

Secretary

Alison Clewes

pansvpots@icloud.com

Treasurer

Sarah Griffiths

s_e_lund@hotmail.com

Membership Secretary

Alison Dykes

Librarian

Sarah Kent

01749 670423

Honey Show sub committee

David Rose, Alison Dykes, Fred Clarke

Newsletter Editor

Stewart Gould

01749 860755

somertonbees@btinternet.com

Events Programme

Joe King

01749 890357

County Delegate

Keith Sturgess

Deputy Delegates

Sally Lye

Suzy Perkins

Apiary Manager

Joe King

01749 890357

Extraction Equipment Loan

John Speirs

01458 241831