



Buzz

The newsletter of Taunton & District Beekeepers

December 2023

Welcome to the Christmas edition of Buzz. No doubt many of you are busy in the run up to Christmas, but from a beekeeping perspective this should be a quieter time of the year with a chance to take stock of the year's successes and failures, and make plans for the next season.

Winter is also a time to catch up on some reading, and where better to start than with our newsletter! Why not sit back, perhaps with a glass of mulled wine (see recipe!) and catch up with the news.

You may have heard about the break in at the Club in October with our mobile phone, our coffee money and jars of the clubhouse honey taken. An unpleasant discovery for David and Malcolm Pearce when they arrived at the apiary the following morning and our thanks go to everyone who helped repair the damage and re-secure the clubhouse.

Finally, can I draw your attention to the request for help with a survey at the end of the newsletter? Responses are needed by **December 16th** so if you can help, John would be very grateful.

Lyndsay Stone - Editor





Chairman's report

At the end of another bee keeping year (or the start of another bee keeping year!), we recently held another successful AGM. In the light of the decisions by Mike Dillon and Robin Rees to step down from their roles, who we again thank for their time and support to the Club, vacancies arose for Chairman and Treasurer. From the ranks of our wider membership, Dan Hollyman has stepped forward and agreed to take on the role of Treasurer and, to ensure continuity within the Committee, I agreed to stand for Chairman. The Committee and its roles are important for the effective functioning of any club, as are all our other volunteers who help with many of the Apiary tasks, beginner's training events and generally assist throughout the year. It would be great to see and hear from more of you, so if you have any time to help provide support to your club then please step forward. It's an enjoyable experience and you get to learn a great deal more about bees!

2023 saw another intake of budding beginners who have started their journey to becoming beekeepers; a journey that we know is a lifetime of learning and enjoyment. So, a big TDBK welcome to all those new beekeepers to our warm and friendly club.

This year also saw another successful Spring Auction and Bee and Honey show, both occasions where, through the dedication and hard work of our volunteers, we were able to raise funds that will go towards the running of your club and apiary.

The training and events team of Maggie, Vanessa, Janet and Jenny are working hard to put next year's events calendar together, so if you have any suggestions for events or talks, please let them know. The calendar should be out early in the New Year.

2023 has also seen a rise in unwanted sightings of Asian hornets across the South, incidents that we know from the experiences of our beekeeping neighbours on the Continent will likely only increase. The SBKA Asian hornet team and local coordinators are working hard to raise awareness both within our community and the wider public about this existential threat to the well-being of our bees and other wildlife. To this end, and as members of the wider Somerset Beekeepers community, we are all asked to help monitor in and around our apiaries and report any suspicious sightings.





But, while the weather outside also continues to confound our understanding of our 'old-fashioned seasons' and I'm sure the bees too, may I finally take this opportunity to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and seasonal greetings and a very happy and successful New Year to you all!

Andy Glendinning TDBK Chairman

Apiary Report

It's that time of year in an Apiary when it's very quiet, all the hives have been fed and they have been treated for varroa with Apiguard and then Oxalic acid. The honey was taken and processed at the end of August into September and we had a successful harvest considering the unpredictable weather throughout the season.

The hives will be hefted to check that they are healthy enough to get through the winter months and fondant added as necessary, all in preparation for the next season.

Could I thank all those who have helped with the weekly inspections during this season.

See you next year!

Andrew Perry Apiary Manager

Taunton & District Beekeepers Annual General Meeting

Thank you to all who came along to the AGM on the 18 November, hosted by our President Michael Clark. It was a time to review what has happened over the year and to say thank you to all who have contributed to making Taunton Division a friendly, welcoming club that provides meaningful and fun events for all of our members.





Our Committee for the coming year is made up of the following people:

President	Michael Clark
Chair	Andy Glendinning
Vice Chair	Malcolm Pearce
Secretary	Julie Husband
Treasurer	Daniel Hollyman
Membership Secretary	Angie Sterrett
Honey Show Secretary	Vacancy*
Apiary Manager	Andrew Perry
Equipment Manager	David Pearce
Newsletter Editor	Lyndsay Stone
Social Media Secretary	James Lowe
Health & Safety Officer	Jonah Jones
Delegate to SBKA	Andy Glendinning
Special Advisor	Simon Jones
Education/Programme	Vanessa Woodford

*Please do get in contact if you would like to help organise any aspect of the Honey Show.

Mike Dillon and Robin Rees will stay on the Committee and were formally co-opted onto the Committee on the 5th December as was Daniel Hollyman as he was unable to attend the AGM.



Janet Piper and Paul James were presented with certificates, BBKA and SBKA cloth badges for passing their BBKA Basic Assessment, and Vanessa Woodford for passing the General Husbandry module: Vanessa is now a Qualified Beekeeper.

Basic Assessment Certificates were also posted to Robert Helliard-Moore, Kathy Denslow and James Lowe. Congratulations to all!





Jo Widdecombe gave a talk about how we can improve the quality of our bees, in particular over a wider geographical area than just our own apiary, avoiding using imported bees and queens and ensuring we rear docile, hardy and productive bees. Further information can be found <https://bibba.com>; alternatively for those who want to add to their library, his book The Principles of Bee Improvement is available at all good book sellers.

As usual, a plentiful and delicious tea was provided by the Committee with home-made cakes, scones and sandwiches together with lots of bee chat. Perfect ending to the afternoon.

Julie Husband Secretary

SBKA needs you!

In addition to a Bee and Honey Show Secretary, or indeed anyone who would like to be part of a working group for next year's Honey Show, we are also looking for someone who would be interested in being our delegate to the SBKA Council. This involves attending six council meetings a year and representing the views of our Division as well as reporting back to our divisional committee meetings.

In addition, a reminder that SBKA are still looking for both a Secretary and a Treasurer from March 2024. Without these vital roles, it is difficult to see how SBKA can continue to function in its current form, so please, if you think you might be interested or would like to find out more, email Maggie Norris at secretary@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

News round up

Publicity

We now have 737 Facebook 'likes' up from the mid 650's two months ago, mainly down to the Clubhouse break-in post. This post had a view reach of 14,052 with a global reach of just over half a million people. The post was picked up in America, India, Egypt, Ireland, South Africa and Italy to name a few countries and was responsible for the huge rise in hits, shares and general visibility.





A local NBC radio station in America also picked up the post in Taunton, Massachusetts. I contacted Jess the reporter and had a rather early Teams call with her. We had a tiny mention on the radio station about the continued mix up between the two Taunton's. Unfortunately there is no beekeeping association in Taunton, Mass, as this would have been the only viable link to get a proper story out on the airwaves. We have agreed to keep in contact should there be a bee-related story that can carry on both sides of the 'pond'. The best part of this Facebook story is the visibility we have gained. 291 people have shared our post, this is a major result for exposure!

Please let me know at jameslowe722li@gmail.com if you have any news or photos to post

James Lowe Publicity and Social Media

Wax making workshop

If you wanted some ideas for Christmas presents, the wax workshop held on November 8th was the perfect opportunity!





After an introduction by Maggie North, assisted by her daughter Cyd, three work stations were set up providing everyone with the chance to try their hand at creating tablets of scented wax to use with a diffuser, making wax flowers and dipping candles.

Making wax tablets/candles required 1lb wax to 1oz fragrance oil. The wax had to be heated to 75°C at which point the oil was added. The mixture was then cooled to 65-70°C and poured into moulds and left to set.



Dipping candles looked easy but proved to be harder than expected! Obtaining an even coverage of wax and a smooth finish depended upon dipping your wick for just the right amount of time to build up the wax without melting it; nevertheless some impressive results were seen.

Following on from the enjoyable Wax Workshop, for those of you that want to learn the basic skills of flower making and have a go, there will be a Wax Flower Workshop with Maggie on Saturday January 20th at 2pm. This was covered briefly at the Wax Workshop but there was not enough time to have a go, so get show ready and come along. Tea and cake will be available!

Lyndsay Stone





Who doesn't love a quiz and curry!?

Well, 42 Taunton members definitely liked a quiz and a curry as they rolled up to The Allerford Inn for The Taunton Beekeepers' Quiz on a decidedly frosty evening in November. Ready to do battle for quizzing, things really warmed up quite quickly once the bar was visited and teams found their table to huddle at. As we waited for quizzing to commence the chattering hum in that room was as noisy and bumbly enthusiastic as a peak season mid-afternoon drone orientation session down at one of my hives! The choosing of team names drew the first round of groans and guffaws, but we all agreed on the choice of winner for best team name with the winning "Hive No Idea" (take a bow Julie and team)!

It is a joyful fact of quizzing that even the mildest team members develop into crazy berzerkers keen to shout their answer or develop the stealth of an MI5 spy whispering their secret information as those questions roll in. Hilarity ensued with each new topic and we were so distracted and entertained that we were rather late in serving the curry! Sadly when the curry finally arrived it was not a winner, but enough said about that!

Well, curry disappointment aside, as quizzes go, the Taunton Beekeepers Quiz was an exceedingly good one! There's a real skill to pitching quiz questions so that everyone feels they have at least some chance of getting them right, and Simon Jones our Quiz Master for the evening pitched it just right. Gold star Simon! The topics were familiar including Science and Nature; Sports and Leisure... and of course Beekeeping, which unsurprisingly was perhaps the most tricky and contentious section of all! Yes, those questions were little memory teasers and kept us agonizing over the answers.

So they say it's not the winning, it's the taking part that counts; that said we did have an impressive winning team in, Christine Bailey, Eleanor Burgess, Jim Elliott, Jon Harrod-Booth and Mike Morris, who then generously shared their prize of chocolates with all the teams as consolation.

A big thank you goes to Simon Jones for setting the questions, Julie Husband for actually making it happen, David Pearce for running the raffle and to everyone who kindly donated a raffle prize.

The Taunton Deane Beekeepers Association Quiz was deemed a great success! Could this be an annual event? Suggestions for a venue for next year anyone?

Jenny Squire, The Cheeky Buzzers team!



The search for an Asian Hornet monitoring trap that also minimises by-catch

There are increasing numbers of sightings of this invasive species around our south coast. It is becoming increasingly obvious that by next season we are going to need to be Spring trapping queens. As I've always been interested in protecting our ecosystems, I was aware that minimising the by-catch was important going forward. With this in mind and the information that 5.5mm was the critical diameter, I started a search for options. The G'uard Apis caught my attention as it was just about small enough to put in a domestic freezer for euthanasia purposes, however it was still too large as a monitoring trap and quite expensive.

Discussion around the dinner table produced a positive response from our son, Robert to research available 3D print files as he has 3D printing machines. The following week he returned with file options fitting on Nutella jars and Bon Maman (the French preserves brand - with wide necked jars). A quick delve into the cupboard produced the correct size (I make jams and chutney so jars are always saved in our house) and off he went to print some trial samples. The next week he returned with the complete trap, a modified bait container (milk container lids glued together) and a small funnel that he also printed to fill it.



A trial trap



Trap in use in France

This has now been out in the garden in the spot where I have a Vespa pro trap. The results are very encouraging: no bi-catch in the new trap, but wasps, flies and European hornets in the other. Indeed I have witnessed wasps entering the new trap, then leaving with ease.



The advantage of using these jars is that by reusing materials, it is more affordable; only the tops need to be made. Nutella jars are stable on their sides due to the shape and also have mass so are more stable on a surface such as a windowsill. The central hole in the original designs seems to be 8.5mm but if you know what you are doing these can be adjusted to suit (the G'uard Apis use interchangeable holes: the larger (Red) for queens is 8mm, and the smaller for workers (Orange) 7mm). With the suggestion above we simply use different tops. I strongly suggest looking at the thingiverse website, (see below) that has the original files. If you scroll along to the last of the small pictures you will find a video of them in use in France - gruesome viewing!

<https://www.thingiverse.com/thing:5194652>

alternatively the video alone is at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeval8e1-PM>

I have been working on a cowl top to prevent flooding in rain if used upright. I have found these can be made from milk bottles as can be seen in the pictures. I will try and perfect a design to publish in a later edition.



.....Update on the trap top.

Robert has been hard at work redesigning the no bi-catch top for jars, to fit the standard British jar top, and adjusting the central hole to 7.8 - 8mm to prevent entry by European hornets. The original French file has a central hole of 8.3mm that is just large enough to allow European hornet access. He's happy to sell tops for £2 to cover the material costs. Contact Janet at janet.piper51@gmail.com to place for either size. (If anyone has a 3D printer and is interested in the designs, please get in touch).

Janet Piper, with thanks to Ian and Robert for support and design!

Upcoming Events

Taunton Division members are welcome to attend any of these events
Any queries please contact tauntonevents@somerset-beekeepers.org.uk

Saturday January 6th 9.30-17.30

South West Asian Hornet Conference at The Canalside Conference Centre

Marsh Lane Bridgwater TA6 6LQ

In the South West we are on the frontline in terms of possible Asian hornet incursions and establishment. This conference is an opportunity for Asian Hornet Team members, beekeepers, and representatives of organisations who may be impacted by the establishment of Asian hornets in the area, to come together, prepare ourselves and find useful ways of working together.

This is a chance to:

- Hear about the latest developments in Asian hornet research
- Learn from those already living with Asian hornets
- Learn new skills and update existing ones
- Share good practice
- Plan ahead for 2024





We've put together a programme of speakers, and workshops in a spacious, air conditioned conference centre with ample parking and refreshments

Lectures :

- A View from the NBU: *Megan Seymour*
- Asian hornets in Jersey- review of 2023, lessons learnt, tips & tricks: *Alaistair Christie*
- Current research on Asian hornets: *Dr Peter Kennedy*
- Monitoring, impact and control of *V.velutina* in France: *Quentin Rome*
- The impact of AH on biodiversity: *Dr Sandra Rojas Nossa*
- Tales from the frontline: *Bob Hogge*

Workshops - Choose one workshop in the morning and one in the afternoon. An Event Ticket is required to attend any of the workshops.

- Asian Hornets through the year - life cycle, nests, behaviour. What to look for and when – *Dr Sarah Bunker*
- Practical tracking skills - *Judith Norman & Warwick Newson*
- Recording Asian Hornets - Practical session – Using EpiCollect & digital maps – *Alaistair Christie*
- Monitoring Traps / Bait stations – What? When? Why? Where? Avoiding bycatch – *Colin Lodge & Bridget Knutson*
- The role of the Asian Hornet Teams – *Simon O’Sullivan & Gerry Stuart*

Plus a great raffle with heaps of prizes!

You must book an Event Ticket before reserving your workshop places (1 x AM and 1 x PM)

BOOK NOW on Eventbrite to reserve your place - £10

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/2nd-south-west-beekeepers-forum-asian-hornet-conference-tickets-737292932007>





Refreshments:

Pre-order a sandwich platter or soup from the venue by December 22nd, 2023: info@thecanalside.co.uk

Or bring your own packed lunch!

Saturday January 20th 7 for 7.30pm

New Year Meal at the New Inn, Halse

Menus will be circulated near the time but the cost is estimated to be around £20-25/ head for a 2 course meal.

Please reserve the date and let me know if you would like to come by emailing me at lyndsayhurn@hotmail.com

Saturday February 10th

SBKA Lecture Day at The Canalside Conference Centre, Bridgwater – details to follow.

Saturday February 24th at 2.00pm

“TDBKA Citizen Science Project: Making a Pollen Library” with Simon Jones

Heatherton Park

We’ve been talking about starting a Citizen Science Project at TDBKA and pollen looks to be the subject we’d like to know more about. The purpose of the Citizen Science Project is to identify the pollen collected from Taunton Association Apiary’s colonies, to identify what plants the colonies are foraging on and perhaps at what time of day the colony forages on which particular flowers.

The first step is to start an Association Pollen Library. This will involve collecting pollen samples throughout the year and making them up into pollen slides to be stored at the Association. Once we have a pollen library we can begin collecting pollen from the colonies and identifying the pollen under microscopes.

So we are looking for members interested in collecting a wide variety of local pollen and making it up into a simple pollen slide. To find out more join us at





Heatherton Park where Simon Jones will discuss storing pollen and making up a pollen slide.

Wednesday February 28th 7.30pm

“Finding Drone Congregation Sites” with Stephen Fleming

Heatherton Park

Stephen is the co-editor of *BeeCraft* magazine and practiced at finding DCA's. After the lecture we are hoping to be able to find and map the DCA's near to member's apiaries, with a plan to catch and mark the drones later in the season. With a little luck and planning such expeditions will end up in the local pub to discuss the day and make plans.

Saturday March 9th

SBKA AGM hosted by Taunton Division at Taunton and Pickering Golf Club – details to follow

Saturday September 28th and Saturday October 5th 10-4pm

Skep Making Workshop

We are planning to run a 2 day skep making workshop at the apiary next year. Tea and coffee will be available but bring your own lunch. Places are limited to a maximum of 15 people and will cost an estimated £30-40 for the materials (if they don't go up). At the end of the 2 days, you should all have made your own skep from straw and lapping cane.

If you are interested, please contact Vanessa on vmwoodford@hotmail.co.uk to book a place. And if you are having a large goose (gander) at Christmas, would you please keep the long leg bones so I can make fids for those who want to use the traditional tool.





“BBKA Basic Assessment 2024: Taunton Study Group” with Vanessa Woodford

Have you been keeping bees for at least one year? If you have, are you interested in taking the BBKA Basic Assessment in 2024?

This is a practical assessment that takes about an hour. You will open and examine a hive with the Examiner observing and asking questions. The exam can be at your hive or the apiary's (easier for the examiner as he/she can see more than one person that day.) The Basic Assessment costs £25, which SBKA currently refunds if you pass.

If you are interested (we need at least 4-6 people to take part) the club has a Zoom license this year and is thinking of taking advantage of it to hold zoom sessions one evening a week. The idea is that you get a correspondence paper each week for 10 weeks and answer the questions (up to 10 per paper) and then each week on Zoom small groups go through the paper discussing the answers. You don't have to write them down, just know the answers. It is really an opportunity to learn more about beekeeping as the papers are more comprehensive than the assessment itself. Of course, you can join the discussion without doing the exam if you wish.

This year, we are considering offering a mock practical session in the apiary to allow those taking the Basic Assessment to get a feel for taking the Basic Assessment beforehand.

Dates, times and location to be confirmed.

Open to all members.

If you are interested, please email Jenny Squire on tauntonevents@somerset-beekeepers.org.uk and we'll keep you posted.





Honey Mulled Wine Recipe

Have you ever tried mulled wine but with honey?! Ideal for those cold winter evenings!

Ingredients

- 750ml Red Wine
- 1 orange sliced
- 2 tablespoon of honey
- 6 whole cloves
- 3 cinnamon sticks

Place all ingredients, except for your honey, in a medium saucepan and place on medium heat.

As soon as the wine gets warm, add your honey so that it dissolves quickly.

Stir gently and bring to a simmer, but not a boil, then lower the temperature and simmer gently for a further 10-15 minutes

Winter Reading

The Asian Hornet Handbook by Sarah Bunker

Dr Sarah Bunker has a PhD in insect flight and has been a beekeeper in Devon for many years. In 2018 she went to Jersey to track Asian hornets and this book is based on the experiences of the Jersey beekeepers and their struggle to control the Asian hornet. It is a practical handbook for those interested in the Asian hornet, its arrival in France, the Channel Islands and the UK and what is being done to halt or slow its progress.

The Urban Beekeeper: A year of Bees in the City by Steve Benbow

This was a favourite book of mine when I first started beekeeping. A readable and entertaining account of the highs and lows of beekeeping and the challenges of keeping bees on the roof tops of some of London's famous landmarks.



Adverts/Requests for help

Somerset Beekeepers Association fabric badges are available at the apiary for £3 (or £4 if you would like one posted to you – please email lyndsayhurn@hotmail.com with your address and postcode).



Having checked my Latin dictionary, the closest translation I can come up with is “In winter remembering the hard work of summer”, but if anyone can come up with a neater or more accurate translation, please let me know!

Survey

My name is John Futchter and I'm a PhD student at Kingston University, London looking into how computer vision can help beekeeping. I am currently conducting a survey into beekeepers' attitudes towards varroa. I obtained your email address from the BBKA website as the contact point for your local beekeeping association.

The survey is available at

https://kingston.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_80vE6ONgUFZiljU

It is non-judgemental and does not ask questions about losses, just about monitoring and treating techniques, and how open the beekeeper is to using computer technology e.g. a smartphone, to help monitor varroa levels. The survey is completed anonymously, and no personal identifying information is captured.

I would be extremely grateful if you could distribute the survey web address to your members asking them to complete it by **December 16th** at the latest and pass on my thanks to those that do.

Many thanks, John Futchter



Bees and Hives for sale in the Taunton area

I am trying to move house and I will be giving up beekeeping. The result is three colonies and hives for sale. All are nationals, but only two have been actively worked, with the third left alone. All three are strong colonies with plenty of bees, but the purchaser might want to re-queen in the spring. I am asking £200 ono for each, including brood box, stand, and two supers for each.

Please call Claire Loneragan 07776 312876 (Buyer to collect)

Repairs to bee veils and suits.

Contact Jenny Gammon - 01823 270-465 or 07788407497

We hope you have enjoyed reading our newsletter; and a big thank you to all those who have contributed articles.

If you have anything at all that you would like to contribute to the next edition such as book reviews, recipes, personal stories, all would be gratefully received.

Deadline for March edition of Buzz: March 10th 2024

Lyndsay Stone Editor

