The Newsletter

Somerton & District Beekeepers' Association

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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

The Festive Bee Season

It's amazing what you can get if you really want it. How about 12 bumblebee baubles from Amazon for only £9.81, a bee christmas tree T shirt for £11.99 or a sterling silver bee brooch from Aspinall's for £116? The possibilities are endless. The ultimate gift is, of course, a jar of honey, and you can buy a jar of limited edition 2050 + MGO Rare harvest Manuka Honey from The True Honey Company. They suggest that you can put it on toast, in your coffee, or just eat it off the spoon- available from Selfridge's for just £1500. If that's no quite enough then you can buy the same honey from Harrod's for £1799

Somerton Beekeepers AGM

The 2024 AGM was held on Wednesday 27th November at the Edgar Hall. Rather unusually, his was a Wednesday, and hey are normally on a Thursday, which may have accounted for the small turnout.

The meeting was conducted in a very efficient manner, with Jackie Mosedale introducing the evening and thanking Gillian Islip for her excellent work in he position as chair. Gillian was thrown under the bus and dropped in at the deep end with the resignation of Jack Barr, which took immediate effect. To use yet another metaphor, Gillian picked up the baton and ran with it. Her tenure has been extremely well conducted.

All posts are up for election, or re-election at the AGM, but there have been a few notable 'step downs' from he committee. Jackie Mosedale has handed in her badge as President, a post which has yet to be filled, after an email ballot asking if it was considered necessary (80% of votes returned were for keeping the position & 22% against). The response was very low however.

Jackie has given so much to Somerton Beekeepers over many, many years that it would require a much bigger newsletter to list it all. She will, however, still be around.

Also stepping down from the committee is Steve Horne. Steve was treasurer of Somerton Beekeepers for many years, and also county treasurer for a few years as well. Again, Steve isn't going anywhere, just stepping down from he committee to make way for younger blood.

The Honey Show sub-committee (Alison Dykes, David Rose & Fred Clarke) have also done a sterling job over a good few years, and have stepped aside, to be replaced by Richard Lockyer and Matt Goodwin.

Michele Wilson has been replaced as vice chair by David Furse Roberts. Michele's work as a nurse in A & E meant that it was extremely difficult for to predict her availability.

Joe King has handed over the keys to the apiary to Julian Marter. Joe will still be on the committee, but Julian is now Apiary Manager.

New Secretary Hazel Mosley takes over from Alison Clewes who has taken a side step to cover publicity and events.

From the Chair

Thank you to everyone who came out on a cold and frosty Wednesday evening to attend the AGM at Edgar Hall. It was good to see you there. It gave us a welcome chance to reflect on the past year and look to the next with our newly elected committee. A further thank you to Joe King who kindly provided mince pies, the first of the season for many of us! Welcome to all new Committee members and thank you again to those who have stepped back from roles, after many years of service.

The committee will go 'dormant' for a while over the festive season and through most of January but will meet again in February to formulate plans for the year ahead. In the meantime, if you were unable to attend the AGM in person and have suggestions of activities you would like us to work on in the forthcoming year, please email me with your ideas. (gillianislip@gmail.com)

We have had the fabulous news that planning permission has been granted for the apiary 'Beespace' extension. Thank you, thank you, thank you to Stewart Gould who spent many hours on the application. Eric McLaughlin has already been in contact with our neighbour and builder, Terry Russell and work will commence in January, weather permitting. This should mean that we will more or less have the work completed as the Beekeeping season begins to take off. We have applied to the Clark Foundation for a grant to support the funding of this project and are keeping our fingers crossed that this will be successful. We should hear one way or the other next week.

As you know all members were emailed about the future role of Somerton Branch President. In total there were just 23 responses, 17 in favour of retaining the role and 6 against. Therefore the role will be retained in our Branch structure and we will request nominations in the New Year and organise the election according to SBKA rules.

We have a new book, '**Honey Bee Biology' by Johnson**. According to Catherine Fraser, who recommended it, this could in time take over from Winston's Biology of the Honey Bee as a more updated reference.
Please make a note of a couple of dates already planned for 2025. See back page below. Get your money's worth from your membership!

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.
Gillian Islip (Chair)

Roy White's Christmas Quiz 2024.

1. What is honeydew?
2. What is the colour of ivy pollen?
3. Who is the editor of the BBKA News?
4. How old are the bees that feed larvae?
5. Where is the organ of Johnson, and what is it believed to do?
6. Why does rape honey granulate quickly?
7. In what country was Brother Adam born?
8. To what part of the body are the wings attached?
9. How many wings has the honeybee?
10. At what temperature does beeswax solidify?
11. What is the Pasteurisation temperature for honey?
12. Approximately, how far might a honeybee fly from the hive?
13. Where does Apis mellifera Cecropia hail from?
14. To what family does the apple belong?
15. How many petals do the flowers of the rose family have?
16. How many days from the laying of the worker egg is the cell capped?
17. What is an extra-floral nectary?
18. Do drones have fathers?
19. Is the honeybee Apis mellifera native to North America?
20. Name the famous fictional detective who retired to take up beekeeping on the Sussex Downs.

Answers on page 13. No peeking!

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.

N**ational 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)
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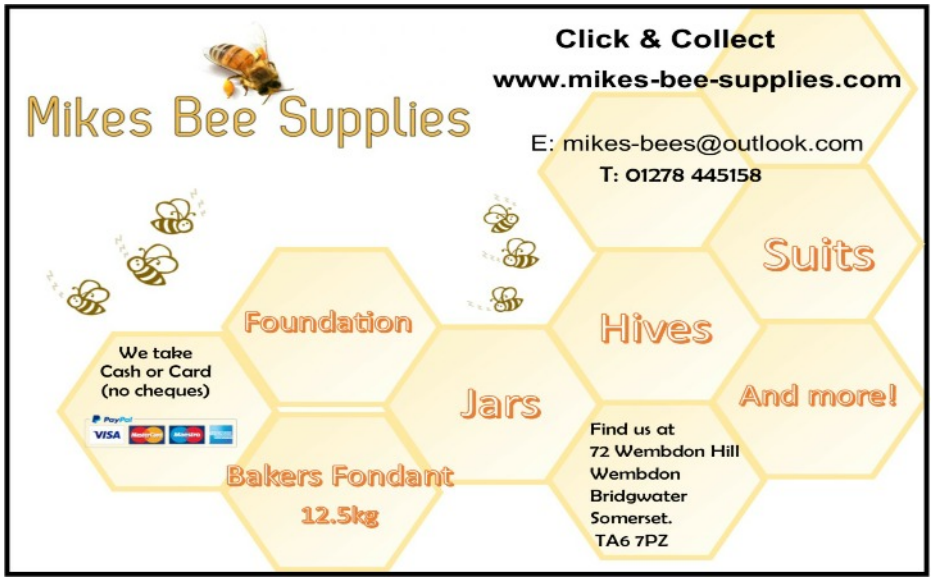

The Guardian Newspaper 9th November 2024

The honey industry faces new demands to overhaul its supply chain after more than 90% of sampled products bought from large British retailers failed pioneering authenticity tests.

The UK branch of the Honey Authenticity Network sent 30 samples last month from Britain for a novel commercial test based on the DNA profiles of genuine honey. Five were from UK beekeepers and 25 from big retailers, including supermarkets.

The tests found that 24 out of the 25 jars of honey from retailers were considered suspicious. All five samples from UK beekeepers were considered to be genuine.

Honey importers in the UK and some experts challenge the reliability of such testing, but this is the latest batch of tests suggesting what may be widespread adulteration in the honey supply chain, with some products suspected of being bulked out with cheaper sugar syrup.

The British Honey Importers and Packers Association (BHIPA) said a "weight of evidence" assessment must be used to safeguard the supply chain. It said the "vast majority" of UK-sold honey was of very high standard.

An EU investigation published last year found 46% of imported sampled products were suspected to be fraudulent, including all 10 honey samples from the UK. The EU is working on advanced testing techniques to detect honey fraud and has passed new legislation to provide improved labelling of country of origin on jars of honey.

Lynne Ingram, a Somerset beekeeper and the chair of the Honey Authenticity Network UK, said: "The market is being flooded by cheap, imported adulterated honey and it is undermining the business of genuine honey producers. The public are being misinformed, because they are buying what they think is genuine honey."

The UK is one of the biggest importers of cheap Chinese honey, which is known to be targeted by fraudsters. Honey importers say supply chains and provenance are carefully audited, but there has been no consensus on how technical tests should be applied, or which are most reliable.

The Celvia research institute in Estonia, which is partly owned by the University of Tartu, developed its novel methodology for honey DNA test with support from the EU's European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The DNA composition of the honey is compared against a database of more than 500 genuine honeys, with about half of these from Estonia.

Kaarel Krjuťs kov, director of the Celvia laboratory, said he considered r he testing was robust, in the face of criticism from other experts that the honey database was not sufficiently comprehensive and that one test was not enough to establish adulteration.

The Celviaanalysis examines between 10m and 20m DNA sequences in honey samples, with machine learning used to detect deviations from profiles of authentic reference honeys. "It is surprisingly easy to distinguish between the fake and authentic products," said Krjuťs kov. "It is a huge gap."View image in fullscreen

Beekeeper Paul Horton, the owner of Apidae Honey in Lincolnshire, would like to see a better testing regime for honey sold in the UK. Photograph: Apidae Honey

Paul Horton, a beekeeper and the owner of Apidae Honey in Lincolnshire, was among the producers whose honey was tested by the Celvia laboratory and confirmed to be genuine. He said a better testing regime was required and the UK should introduce country of origin labelling on all honey.

He also said more supermarkets should promote British honey: "We used to sell our honey in bulk to packers who would supply the supermarkets. That market has dwindled because the supermarkets aren't stocking so much British honey". Horton said he was concerned that shoppers would lose trust in supermarket honey. He said: "We just need to signal to them what is genuine quality British honey."

The Celvia laboratory has also recently tested honeys collected from German stores by the European Professional Beekeepers Association (EPBA). In those tests, 25 out of 30 samples failed, and there was widespread publicity in Germany about the findings.

Bernhard Heuvel, president of the EPBA, said: "Consumers are paying for a product that is not even close to being honey. We are sending the results to the police because this is a crime and has to be treated as a crime."

The association has analysed the cost of some of the honey being imported into Europe, which is traded for as little as 80p a kilogram. The association does

not consider it is possible for beekeepers in any country to produce honey at such low prices.

It also supports an initiative, Clean Up the Honey Market, which recently filmed undercover at an international food exhibition in Paris. Its investigators were told by foreign honey sales representatives that the lowest priced product was for the UK market, because it was less likely to be subjected to rigorous testing.

The Food Standards Agency in the UK has acknowledged that honey has become a target for adulteration, but says testing protocols are frequently contested. It is working with researchers, the honey industry, retailers and international bodies to improve authenticity testing methods.

The BHIPA said: "It is our strong belief that the vast majority of honey consumed in the UK is of a very high standard and is not fraudulent.

"We have in the past raised significant concerns over the veracity of tests being deployed as they are not independently administered and continue to be based on questionable, unverified datasets from commercial laboratories, which discriminate against honeys from certain geographies."

It said it had considered similar previous claims, which it said had been found to be "entirely without merit". It added it considered the previous EU study to have lacked "veracity" and that the tests deployed were not recognised for enforcement.

The BHIPA said: "We remain supportive of any tests that help eliminate the potential sale of any substandard honey in the UK market, but their methodology, scientific basis and application needs to be fit for purpose and independently validated before they can be recognised for enforcement."

Devina Sankhla, a food policy adviser at the British Retail Consortium, said: "Our members work with suppliers to ensure the authenticity of their honey, conducting regular checks to ensure all honey they sell is as described. Retailers continue to support the development of improved techniques to detect any adulterated honey, so they can continue to ensure customers get the best products on the shelves."

A government spokesperson said: "There is no place for adulterated honey. We work closely with enforcement authorities to ensure honey sold in the UK is not subject to adulteration."

New Members and membership renewal

There is slight confusion each year when we get to membership renewal time. All those who attended our Beginners' Course early in 2024 automatically became Associate members. That is a class of membership which means that you are only a member f Somerton Beekeepers, and is intended for those who don't have bees, or haven't got their bees **yet.**

As membership comes up for renewal at the end of December, it is advisable to review the situation. Do nothing and your membership will lapse. You could renew as a member of Somerton Beekeepers only, but if you now have bees it makes sense to take up **full membership**. It will, of course, be more expensive, but for the increased sub, you will become a member of Somerton Beekeepers, Somerset Beekeepers and The British Beekeepers' Association. That opens up all sorts of benefits and opportunities.

As a full member you will have automatic public liability insurance up to £10 million and the same degree of cover for product liability. On top of that you will have Bee Diseases Insurance for your first two hives. You will also receive the BBKA News once a month, which has very helpful hints and tips, plus all the beekeeping news from around the globe. If you are so inclined, you can also get into the world of becoming more qualified and take the BBKA modular exams.

All members have been sent an email by Somerton Beekeepers Association, with a renewal form to fill in online. Don't forget that when your membership runs out, so do your public liability, product liability & Bee Disease Insurances.

I have just paid my membership fee - £45.20, but it should be remembered that Somerset BKA and the British Beekeepers Association take the vast Majority of that money. Somerton Beekeepers will only receive £6.00 of it. You get terrific value for that £6.00

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 lat July. Check with Eric McLaughlin if you wish to visit.

All frames and foundation are for National hives

DN4 - Deep National Hoffman frames - £0.75 each
10 frames - £7.50
11 frames - £8.25

DN4 frames are self spacing Hoffman pattern

Standard wired brood foundation £1.50 per sheet
£15.00 for 10 sheets
£16.50 for 11 sheets

SN1 Shallow National frames £1.20 each
10 frames - £12.00
11 frames - £13.20

Wired Super foundation £9.50 for 10 sheets
£9.50 or 10 sheets
£10.45 for 11 sheets

SN1 frames are straight sided and will need plastic/metal spacers

Honey jars

1 lb (454g) round jars - metal lids - 72 per box. £38.88

12oz (340g) round jars - metal lids - 72 Jars per box £42.48 (12 boxes left)

12oz. hexagonal jars - metal lids - 33 jars per tray £15.18 (27 trays left)

Winter Oxalic acid treatment

December to early January is the time to apply winter varroa treatment to your hives. There are a few different treatments available for treating in cooler temperatures - **Oxuvar, Apibioxal, Oxybee** etc. There is also one being advertised on Ebay as oxalic acid treatment for bees, but it is very important to reember that any treatment applied to your bees must carry the approval of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, and this one seems a bit dubious as it doesn't even have a product name. You are best advised to stick with one of those mentioned above.

Below is a list of the companies supplying those three treatments with prices showing how many hives each will treat and p&p included.

Andermatt Home & Garden

Oxuvar (10 hives) 275g - £18.98
Oxuvar (20 hives) 1kg - £28.98

Northern Bees
Oxuvar (10 hives) 275g - £26.99

EH Thorne
Oxybee (20 hives) 1 litre - £38.00
Apibioxal (10 hives) 35g (10 hives) £22.10
Apibioxal (100 hives) 350g £118.50

Simon the Beekeeper
Apibioxal (10 hives) 35g (10 hives) £17.89
Oxybee (20 hives) 1 litre - £31.56

C Wynne Jones
Apibioxal (10 hives) £16.50

From the Apiary

Just as we were getting use to temperatures higher than normal for the time of year, it all changed very quickly. Luckily we had finished feeding, had put the woodpecker wire on and removed the queen excluders before the turn in the weather. Storm Bert tried its best but we escaped without any hives being blown over. Now it just remains for us to keep monitoring the levels of stores in the hives and feed fondant when necessary, this can be done by simply hefting the hives on each visit. The next apiary visit is planned for 26th November and then every other Tuesday until spring.

Other activities carried out by our regular group of volunteers have included repairing bee suits, cleaning and painting of hive parts, cutting back of hedges and clearing all brushwood from the meadow, the latter activity being made far easier by David Furse -Roberts bringing along his brushwood cutter.

If anyone wants to help out at the apiary between the 26th November & 19th December please get in touch with Eric (of Eric's Emporium fame) because I will be away during this period.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and good luck getting your bees through the winter.

Julian Marter
Apiary Manager

Strong Winds

Just a timely reminder that hives can be blown over if not secured. Fortunately the occupants of these two survived Storm Bert.

Christmas Quiz answers 2024

1.Honeydew is excreted by sap sucking insects.(Hemiptera). It is a sugary substance containing enzymes and is obtained by the bees from many species of trees. Although not necessarily worked by the bees honeydew can also be found on many plants of the waysíde.

2... Yellow.

3. Anne Pike

4. Honeybees can perform any task at any age, depending on circumstances. Under normal conditions feeding larvae will be done by very young bees, around 2 or 3 days old.

5. The organ of Johnson is situated on the pedicel at the base of the flagellum of the antenna. It is believed to sense air speed.

6. Rape honey has a high concentration of glucose which has a strong tendency to precipitate out of solution.

7. Germany.

8. Thorax.

9. 4.

10. 63 degrees centigrade.

11. 63 degrees centigrade.

12. About 1.5miles.

13. Greece.

14. The rose family.

15. 5.

16. 8 days.

17. Sources of nectar from the plant other than the flower. For example, the stipules of broad beans. Look at the small black dots with a magnifying glass on a hot day; you should see the nectar glistening.

18. No.

19. No.

20. Elementary, my dear Watson!

Happy Christmas

Roy White

Dates for your diary

New Beekeepers Course
Tor Ruby Club
Lowerside Lane
Glastonbury BA6 9GY
Jan 15th, 22nd, 29th,
Feb 5th, 12th, 19th
somertonbees@btinternet.com
For details

Next Somerton Committee Meeting
At the Apiary
Tuesday 8th Feb. 7.00pm

Winter Talks

Swarming
With Helen Tworkowski MB
Thursday Feb. 20th
Edgar Hall, Somerton TA11 6SB

Weather and Beekeeping
Geoff Blay MB
Edgar Hall, Somerton TA11 6SB
Thursday 20th March

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