

# The Newsletter



Volume no 25 Issue 1 February 2018

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



## Not quite Spring

It's that awkward time of year when it's too early to start goading the queen into action, but too late for api-bioxal treatment. Later in the month when the weather warms up a bit, the bees are in danger of running out of stores. They've been cooped up in that hive all winter and the pantry is getting low. If it is warm enough to forage they will go looking for the scant available food and use precious energy.

## Ged Marshall



We have an exciting speaker for our Thursday evening meeting on February 8<sup>th</sup> - 7.30 pm at Somerton Parish Rooms TA11 7NB. Ged Marshall is not only a very accomplished beekeeper, he actually makes a successful living from it, which is no mean feat. Ged will talk on that elusive topic "Practical swarm control." How to achieve it without regular 9 day inspections!

Ged will share the results of his many years of practical experience with us, and the management system that he has evolved for his own hives. It should be a very interesting and informative evening as we begin to prepare for the season ahead. Come if you can.

**Joe King            01749 890357.**

## Membership Renewal - Important

Renewals are going very well so far and according to Steve Horne we are ahead of this time last year, **BUT** if you intend to renew your membership and haven't as yet, you should do it very soon. Your membership only ran to the end of December 2017, but we give 2 months grace. At the end of February however, your name will be removed from the membership list and your insurances will expire. To get them up and running again will take 6 weeks, even if you renew on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Last year's beginners were granted associate member status, but will need to go through the official renewal process if they wish to continue, or preferably upgrade to full membership if they now have bees.

Any member who has not renewed by the end of February will no longer receive this newsletter.



**Mike's  
Bee  
Supplies**

visit by appointment  
T: 01278 445158  
E: [mikes-bees@windytor.myzen.co.uk](mailto:mikes-bees@windytor.myzen.co.uk)  
[www.mikes-beesupplies.co.uk](http://www.mikes-beesupplies.co.uk)

**Fondant  
£12 for 12.5kg**

**11lb Honey Jars £0.38 each**  
**12oz Jars £.37each**

We take  
Cash or card  
(no cheques)

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

**Suits**  
**Hive**  
**And more!**




## Behind the Scenes

It has become apparent to me in the time I have been Chairman that I don't know enough about our members. I intend to remedy this by making an effort to write little articles throughout the year about members in our Association which I hope you will find informative and interesting. These short articles are intended as a vote of thanks to the individual for the contribution they make to our Association. So can you identify the following person? No cheating now. There are not many individuals who have been such long standing members of our Association as this person. During this time exam modules have been passed and the accolade of National Honey Show Judge qualification has been achieved. (Are you warm yet?) This individual has served on our committee and has served as a County delegate for many years. Her (oops!) knowledge of beekeeping has enabled her to act as a tutor to many. She raises lots of money for the association via her raffles. She wins many prizes at our Honey Show yet despite all these achievements she is always modest and helpful. Her concerns for representation of our Association at County level is always one of her top priorities.

## Membership Survey

There has been concern for several years that we lose a lot of members each year. Some seem to disappear after one or two years and some stay a lot longer and then just evaporate. Our new vice chairman Eric McLaughlin set himself the task of trying to find out why. He sent out 24 questionnaires to the members who had not renewed last year, complete with a stamped addressed envelope. 12 replied.

Of those, 6 continue to keep bees - 1 thought that they had renewed, but hadn't. Another changed email address, but didn't let us know. 1 is giving up after developing a reaction to stings. 1 does not use the Internet, but would rejoin if there was a non Internet option. 1 lives in Bridgwater and thinks it too far to travel to meetings and the final one has no time to attend meetings.

There were 6 replies from people who no longer keep bees. 2 of those have moved away from the area. 1 has joined another division as a friend is a member there. 1 had a reaction to stings but hopes to start again. 1 had the hive robbed out by wasps, but intends to start again this year, and the final one did not take on board the time and costs involved. Swarming had been an issue and new kit was bought for each swarm.

The matter was discussed at the committee meeting on January 18<sup>th</sup> and some other reasons were discussed. A large number of people take up beekeeping on retirement, which significantly reduces the potential length of their beekeeping careers. They also give up when the hive parts become too heavy to manoeuvre easily, and sadly we have also lost members who have passed away.

50% of those who replied no longer keep bees, Two people considered they were unable to attend meetings. Two people had formed an allergy. From the results obtained, it is difficult to form an absolute conclusion and Eric thought that December was perhaps not the best time to send out a questionnaire and a better view could be formed if done at a different time.



The Beginners' practical sessions were held at her home apiary for many years.

Of course I am trying to describe Suzy Perkins. Thank you Suzy for all that you have done for the Association and congratulations for all that you have personally achieved.

**Fred Clarke  
(Chairman)**



*Invites all its members  
to the Grand Opening  
of our Apiary*

12.30 pm for 1.00 pm Saturday April 21st  
Downslade Quarry, Downslade Lane, Upton, Long Sutton

RSVP to [somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com) by February 28th  
with any dietary requirements

The apiary will be opened by our very own David Charles, ex President of BBKA and local dignitaries are also being invited.

The invitation is extended to partners as well. We intend to have a hog roast and there will be options for those with different dietary requirements. If you intend to come, please, please send an **RSVP by February 28<sup>th</sup> at the latest** to [somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com) so that we can make provision.

## Bee of the month



Early Nomad Bee (*Nomada leucothalma*)  
This bee is the earliest of the nomad bees to appear, in early to mid March. It may be a nomad, but the other description of this group of bees is 'cuckoo bees' and they do exactly as expected, they lay their eggs in the nests of other bees. In this case it's the large sallow mining bee that has to raise the progeny of another species. The sallow part of that name makes utter sense as one of the main food plants of this

robber (cleptoparasite) is sallow and other willows, then dandelions. Their foods coincide creating the ideal situation for 'piggy backing'.

## Beginners' Course

Every year is different when it comes to people showing an interest in beekeeping. Names are collected throughout the year and these people are kept up to date with details of the course due to start the following January. For some it's a long haul to the first session. I'm sure that some give their names with the best of intentions without realising quite what they have signed up to. Each year there is a significant difference between the list of names and those who actually make it to the first session. Three years ago we were caught napping when more than 75 people arrived on the first night.

During 2017 we collected over 70 names from interested parties, but just three weeks ago things were looking a bit threadbare., As only about 20 had registered. Then in the last week before the course started another 10 expressed interest and turned up.

A very warm welcome to the 30 who have joined us. As mentioned at the first session, you now have associate membership of Somerton & District Beekeepers' Association and are welcome to attend all other events that we hold (see the article on Ged Marshall).

## **County Matters**

At the recent committee meeting the matter of the suspension of Ian Homer as a trustee of BBKA was discussed and the general opinion was that, once again, BBKA had not handled the matter well. The forward in a recent issue of BBKA News did little to help the situation. Information on the exact reasons for the actions has not been forthcoming and consequently it has not been possible to form a valid opinion. Andy Bonney, our county delegate, took the decision to let our delegate to the Annual Delegate's Meeting, Richard Bache, form an opinion once there had been a discussion at the ADM. This was considered by the committee to be the best course of action.

## **Swarm Collection**

This has been a bone of contention for some members for several years. So many calls are received from people with swarms which are way out of our area. It appears that some divisions are not pulling their weight, but nobody was entirely sure how to address the problem.

The other area of concern is that, at present, merely contacting BBKA and asking to be added to their list, seems to be enough reason to be included. No consideration is given to the experience of the beekeeper in question. There was also a mention that some less scrupulous beekeepers are only wishing to increase their stocks, or worse.

It was suggested that swarm collectors should at least be in possession of the Basic Assessment certificate.

## **Apiary work parties**

There are still some little details which need finishing off at the apiary. And Fred Clarke and I are going to assess exactly what needs doing. We know that the two windows need another coat of paint, but we may well do that while we are there. The pond desperately needs aerating weed (promised, but never arrived) and finishing off around the edges. We would like to have a proper work party on Thursday February 1<sup>st</sup>, starting at 10.00 am. Apart from the things mentioned above, Catherine would like our stock of hive parts cleaned up and ready for the new season. That requires blow lamps and scrapers. Then



sanding and re-coating, so please turn up in force, bring a sanding block/sander and paint brushes, so that we can go into the new season with respectable looking hives.

We will almost certainly need one or two more sessions to get things absolutely finished. Then our only requirement will be maintaining our stock of hives, the land and the buildings, which will take a lot less effort.

We'll try to arrange future work parties to be at the weekend, so that those who work during the week can also play as part.

## Preparation for Asian Hornet arrival

I know we keep banging on about it, but the arrival of more Asian hornet queens is almost inevitable. The National Bee Unit's Nigel Semmence says in their Youtube guide to the Asian hornet that the queens emerge in February or March, so it isn't too soon to put out traps for the queens.

When the queens emerge from hibernation their immediate need is for sweet sticky food, so a standard wasp trap mixture is appropriate. The best traps however have a black lid to confuse the hornet, and prevent it from finding the exit. The one made by **Veto pharma** has a black cover above the lid too. The company claims that the yellow colour of the container part of the trap, attracts hornets. I don't know about that, but the two that I put out last year collected more insects than all my other traps. Unfortunately that included European hornets, which do little, or no harm to honeybees. Daily monitoring is necessary if you don't want to kill the local indigenous hornets.



Monitoring traps are easily made from a 2 litre water bottle. Full instructions are available on the NBU website at this web address. <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=208>. The beauty of this trap is that you can, if careful, release the harmless insects that have been lured in while hanging on to the villains, but you do have to be careful.





The bait requirement changes as the season progresses, remember that the main reason that Asian hornets are feared is because the workers predate honey bees, so they have a need for protein. Consequently as the season goes on, a protein based lure should be placed in your traps. The recommendation is to use prawns or shrimps and mash them up in white wine. Personally I can't

think of a better use for white wine. You may have guessed that this is going to 'hum' after a few days, but apparently that is all to the good. The prime season for predation starts in July and carries on until November, according to the NBU, but catching the fledgling queens could save an awful lot of trouble.

A lot of comparison photos show the European hornet next to the Asian, with the Asian larger, but in truth it is smaller than its European cousin.

### **Beware the gathering wolves**

We are rather used to receiving information on the imminent arrival of new predators that will attack our colonies, but as yet we have had no warning about wolves! The bee wolf is already here and making steady progress. Warm summers in the 1990s enabled it to break out of its tiny existing enclaves on the Isle of Wight and in Suffolk and it has now been sighted as far away as Yorkshire and Cornwall, so it must be here in Somerset.



*Philanthus triangulum* is a solitary wasp that digs its burrows in dry sandy soil. It is the female bee wolf that digs, hunts, and hauls prey back to their burrow. With a body up to 17mm long it is an imposing insect. The amount of yellow banding varies, but the females can be most easily recognised by a narrow reddish blotch on the back of the head behind each eye and by their pale faces. When egg laying, it stocks its larder with protein-rich bees to provide a food-source for the developing larvae. The adults themselves are flower visitors,

taking sugar-rich nectar as their prime energy source. These bee wolves find, or at least firmly identify honey bees by smell. Our honey bees produce a highly aromatic long chain alcohol called eicosanol, mostly used as an alarm signal in the hive, and bee wolves are attracted to this chemical. Before it attacks, a bee wolf hovers downwind of its target analysing the odours given off by its prey.

*Philanthus* is powerfully built and vicious. It grapples the bee to the ground, grasping it in its long curved jaws and strong legs, then stinging it deftly through the soft membranes behind the front legs. Paralysis sets in within seconds, though sometimes a second sting is needed



to deliver enough venom to subdue the bee properly. The toxin will not kill the honeybee, but merely immobilises it to keep the food fresh for as long as possible once it is entombed in the nest burrow.

On the ground the bee wolf may manipulate her victim's abdomen, causing the bee to regurgitate any nectar in its stomach, which it quickly sups down.

The wasp now has the problem of getting its rather unwieldy prey back home. To get itself and its prey airborne *Philanthus* hauls the bee up a nearby plant stem to take off more easily. It may have to make the journey in several stages. The female is a formidable digger and produces multi-chambered network of tunnels in which to lay its eggs and stock with bees. There may be up to five paralysed bees in each of the subterranean chambers. The males are smaller, have bluish eyes and a distinctive trident shaped mark between the antennal bases, and play no part in hunting and tunnel digging. The adults die in the autumn leaving the eggs and larvae to develop underground, munching their way through their bee larder, until emerging in the following spring.

***Joe King***

## **Somerset Beekeepers Association - Lecture Day**

There's still time to get a ticket for the annual Lecture Day. It is being held on spacious and comfortable Edgar Hall in Somerton. Tickets are available from Jackie Mosedale. You can contact her by phone on 01458 241146 or by email at [jackiemosedale@gmail.com](mailto:jackiemosedale@gmail.com). Somerset Beekeepers Association is carrying the cost of the speakers, but there is a £5.00 charge which covers your tea, coffee and biscuits during the day. Lunch is not provided and many bring a packed lunch, or you could visit one of the excellent local hostels.

This year's speakers are Michael Keith-Lucas who is a palynologist, and an expert on pollen in all its incarnations. He is often called upon for forensic examinations, where pollen can be of great assistance.

Ged Marshall is a commercial beekeeper who is very hot on the subject of queen rearing and he is mentioned in some detail earlier in the newsletter as he is talking to Somerton BKA about swarming, on February 8<sup>th</sup>. He is going to be doing a lot of travelling to and from the West Country.

Jeremy Owen of Vita Europe who, among other things, make Apiguard, will be talking about that perpetual demon of beekeeping, varroa. He will, no doubt, also be demonstrating their new Asian hornet trapping floor.

Finally, and by no means least, Simon Jones, our Regional Bee Inspector, and his trusty team will be in attendance to answer any question on bee health and predators. Given the two incidences of Asian Hornets in the West Country and the high rate of European Foulbrood experienced lately in Somerset, this could be your opportunity to find out what has really been going on, and more importantly, how it is being dealt with.

### **And Finally**

One of our new beekeepers is very keen to learn about bees, but doesn't actually want to keep any herself. She is however, quite willing to help somebody else with their bees. So if you live in the Street/Glastonbury area, and would like a hand with your beekeeping send me an email and I will put you in touch with the lady in question.

Stewart Gould - [somertonbees@binternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@binternet.com)

**Dates for your diary**

**Beginners' Beekeeping Course**  
**Tor Rugby Club, Lowerside Lane**  
**Glastonbury BA6 9BH**

**Second & third sessions**  
**Wednesday January 24<sup>th</sup> - 7.30 pm**  
**Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> - 7.30 pm**

**Swarming and swarm control**  
**Ged Marshall**

Thursday February 8<sup>th</sup> - 7.30 pm  
The Parish Rooms,  
Somerton TA11 7NB

**Somerset BKA Lecture Day 2018**

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> Feb.**  
Edgar Hall, 8 Cary Court  
Somerton Business Park  
TA11 6SB

**'Wot a Woppa'**  
**Bob Smith NDB**

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> March  
Making the most of our nectar flow  
The Parish Rooms,  
Somerton TA11 7NB

**Spring Auction**  
**of secondhand equipment**  
**Sunday March 25<sup>th</sup>**  
**Ruishton Village Hall, Taunton TA3 5JD**

**Beginners' Practical Course**  
**First Session**  
Saturday April 14<sup>th</sup> - 10.00 am  
Divisional Apiary  
Downslade Quarry, Downslade Lane,  
Upton, Long Sutton

**President**

Jackie Mosedale  
01458 241146

**Chairman**

Fred Clarke  
01278 722830

**Vice Chairman**

Eric McLaughlin  
jandemclaughlin@gmail.com  
01823 698204

**Secretary**

Jackie Mosedsale  
01458 241146  
jackiemosedale@gmail.com

**Treasurer**

Steve Horne  
01278 662335

**Librarian**

Sarah Kent  
01749 670423

**Honey Show sub committee**

David Rose, Alison Dykes,  
Fred Clarke

**Newsletter Editor**

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

**Events Programme**

Joe King  
01749 890357

**County Delegate**

Andy Bonney

**Deputy Delegates**

Stewart Gould  
Sally Lye  
Sarah North  
Keith Sturgess

**Apiary Manager**

Catherine Fraser  
01935 824711

**Extraction Equipment Loan**

John Speirs  
01458 241831