

The Newsletter



Volume no 27 Issue 1 February 2020

SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Warm winter

The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland have produced the results of their annual New Year's Day plant hunt. 615 different species of plant were discovered in bloom, slightly down on last year's 627. This picture of wild strawberry flowers (*fragaria vesca*) was taken locally on January 4th. Snowdrops have been in bloom since December in some places, and winter honeysuckle has lived up to its name by being abundant all winter. The bees have been visiting all three species, on warmer days.

February committee meeting

Chairman Eric McLaughlin reported that discussions with our neighbour, farmer Mike Brake, regarding connection of the Bee Space to his water supply, are going well and that it is hoped to arrange for the all important trench to be dug very soon. An electrical supply is still seen as being important, but it was generally thought that it would be best to get the water connected first, and then re-assess our financial situation.

Repairs to the small leak in the roof of the Bee Space have not been done as yet. Stewart Gould will hassle the builder to come back and make good.

Richard Longworth, one of our newer members has kindly offered to look after the bee meadow, and the hedgerow. There are numerous saplings to fill gaps in the hedge and Richard has offered to sort this as well.

The Fraser wing (clean equipment store) has developed a leak around one of the windows, but it was thought that a repair should wait until we have drier weather.

The redundant asbestos sheeting from the Fraser wing will be disposed of now that we have established a safe, and responsible way of doing so.

Joe King suggested that it might be a good idea to populate our pond with some frog spawn when it becomes available. There was an offer to supply some.

We need to clean equipment before the season starts, so that it can be pressed back into service, and we will hold a group session on the morning of Saturday March 14th. Volunteers will be made welcome with a hot cup of coffee and, as normal, plenty of biscuits.

We are still seeking an apiary manager, who because of Richard Longworth's kind gesture, will only need to supervise the managing of the bees. Simple! Please contact Eric McLaughlin very quickly, to avoid being beaten to the punch. Contact details on back cover.

Although many topics were covered, the meeting was conducted very speedily, as the evening was not a warm one, and one gas space heater wasn't quite sufficient.



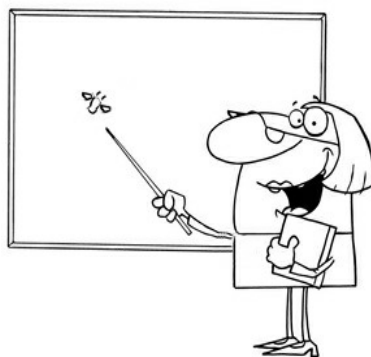
Bee Syrup only

While out for a walk over the Christmas period, one of our members found ten of these metal cans on the bank of the river Parrett, just below Burrow Bridge.. On the lid of each 5 litre container it simply says 'Bee Syrup Only'. It's a bit of a mystery really. 10 drums were found, but are there more? 50 litres is a lot of 'bee syrup', and how did that many drums get into the River Parrett? There is no sign of a maker's name, list of ingredients, or anything else. Mmmm!

Beginners' Course 2020

It's off to a very good start. 54 people have signed up for the course, and the first two sessions on Beekeeping in general, and the life cycle of bees and bee colonies are now a memory, as we head for session three, which is about hives and equipment.

Joe King headed the first session and Stewart Gould the second. The audience seem very appreciative. Let's see how they feel after all six sessions. The cost for this year's course is £35 which includes the Haynes Bee Manual.



We're very grateful to our hosts, Tor Rugby Club, who provide us with an extremely warm and comfortable environment.

Mentors and bees needed

The first season of beekeeping can be a daunting experience, and with the potential for 54 new beekeepers, we are going to need a good few mentors this year. If any member would be so kind as to offer their services, I am absolutely positive that your input will be very much appreciated.

It doesn't have to be a full time commitment, but an occasional visit, a 'hand on the shoulder', and a friendly voice at the other end of the telephone is what is needed. Remember that, in all probability, you leaned on someone in your first season. We're just asking you to recall that, and this time, you could be the helping hand or comforting voice.

You don't have to be a Master Beekeeper, just able to advise. Feeling benevolent? Contact Stewart Gould at the email address on the back page.

Thank you

Stewart Gould

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Membership Renewal

Well! It's February and your membership should have been renewed at the end of December. Full members should renew their membership as soon as possible. If not, your insurances (Bee Diseases Insurance, Public liability and product liability) will expire. If you renew after the deadline, it will take 6 weeks for those insurances to be re-instated.



If you attended the Beginners' Course in 2019, you automatically became an associate member of Somerton Beekeepers' Association. If you now have bees, you should think very seriously about becoming a full member, to gain advantage of the insurance policies, if nothing else.

During February an audit of renewals is carried out, and all those who have not renewed will be removed from the membership role. Their insurances will automatically lapse, as will their subscription to BBKA News, and they will not receive any more newsletters from Somerton BKA. At that point they will already have enjoyed two months membership without having paid a subscription.

Each year we get on or two people saying that they haven't received the renewal forms. They have now accompanied three newsletters, and are attached to this one.

Those on this year's Beginners' Course have no need to worry about any of the above, and are now associate members, having all the privileges of being a member of Somerton Beekeepers' Association.

Sorry to be so harsh. We don't want to lose anybody, but there are always a few stragglers. Renewal forms can also be downloaded from the Somerset BKA website here: <https://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk/somerton> then click on Download membership form.

How to rear your own queens when you only have two or three hives

This is a course being run by Somerset BKA, but members of all divisions are welcome to attend.

April 26th and May 3rd 9.30-4.30. At Heatherton Park Apiary by kind permission of Taunton Beekeepers.

We are always being told to rear the best of our local bees. This two day course will show you how, without the need to graft, without necessarily losing your honey harvest and without the need to buy a lot of additional equipment.

The course is spread over two sessions one week apart. There will be a mix of classroom and practical sessions and everyone will have the opportunity to carry out practical tasks.

Spaces are limited.

Cost:£0.00

Please register with Bridget Knutson, email bridget_knutson@yahoo.co.uk

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.

1 - 4 boxes @ 16 Kg £23 each, 5 + boxes £22 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.

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. 1 x 2.5 Kg bag £4.75, 1 box 5 x 2.5 Kg £22, 2 + boxes £21 each

Foundation. National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood, 16 x 10 brood

Eddie Howe. email:- redrascal@tiscali.co.uk Mobile 07812 738793 Telephone 01458 2721144

New South Wales Bush Fires

We are all aware that the fires in New South Wales have been catastrophic, destroying an area the size of Denmark, with millions of wild animals lost. Human suffering has been on a devastating scale too. Many hundreds of homes have been destroyed, and numerous lives lost.



On a smaller scale, but heartbreaking in its own right, thousands of beehives have been incinerated. The picture above shows what is left of four colonies after the fire had gone through. Only the metal roof sheets are recognisable. All and sundry are putting their hands to the pump, even the rich and famous. Stuart Anderson (Flow Hive) is pictured here in Northern New South Wales. Just a few days before, on Halloween, he and I had shared a few glasses of wine on his father's ver-

randah, in Canberra, blissfully unaware of what was coming his way.

In answer to your next questions, that's Stuart's brother on the left (below). It was Halloween after all, and yes, that is an active Flow hive behind Stu. Just for once, I'm the serious one at the end of the table, but you'll notice that I have the only bottle of wine.

Stu flew back to NSW the next day, and into the fire storm, which came within three miles of his house.

Stewart Gould



January Evening Meeting

Jonathan Powell, our speaker, drew a large crowd, especially unusual for a drek January evening. Some had travelled from Dorset, and one couple had driven from North Devon. Everybody agreed that he is an excellent speaker, and made some very good points, although there were points that some found contentious, not least the theories on thermal properties of hives and tree trunks.



On Thursday February 13th, we have Geoff Blay, one of our newer members, although he has been keeping bees in Surrey for many years, and is a Master Beekeeper. Geoff will be highlighting the benefits of health and honey.

As usual, the talk will be at the Somerton Parish Rooms, TA11 7NB, right in the centre of town, starting at 7.30pm. All members are welcome, especially our new beekeepers, and there is no entry charge.

Arms cache

Joe King gave a talk recently and the next day received this email from a friend.

I forgot to tell you that in my WW2 research I read a diary which included the story of how thousand of women spent countless hours cleaning rifles stored for over 20 years in beeswax, which had gone hard. I did know that the Home Guard's rifles and handguns came from the USA. The rifles were left over from WW1, but the handguns confiscated from New York gangsters ! The things you come across in research; anyway the clever bees had kept them all A1 but it was a filthy laborious job to remove the wax until the sun was strong enough to melt it. Who knew that !!

Gill Lindsay

Fancy your chances???

**I have received a very interesting email from
Ayrton McGurgan**

Hi, I hope you can assist...

I am currently casting for the next series of BBC Two's Quiz show Mastermind and I was hoping you could circulate a flyer among your friends and colleagues, and share via social media. I can send on response to this email.



Auditions are currently underway so please email me ASAP at: mastermind.hth@hattrick.com for an application form (it takes just 10 minutes to complete).

The deadline for applications is Monday 25th May although we will be starting auditions in the next few weeks so would encourage you to complete the application sooner rather than later. Entry is open to all UK residents (including Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) who are aged 18 or over.

Hat Trick & Hindsight Productions are committed to making programmes as diverse as possible.

Many thanks indeed for your assistance!

Ayrton McGurgan
Casting Researcher
Mastermind
E: AyrtonM.HTH@hattrick.com
T: 0207 184 5782



It's a new one on me, I have to admit, run by Ambrosia Quality (Honey Awards) There is a Somerset interest, with local beekeeper, International bee speaker, keeper of the bees at The Newt in Somerset, author and honey judge, Paula Carnell, featured in the list of international honey judges for this prestigious trade event.



Going by the list of winners from last year, it drew entries from honey producers in most parts of the World. Several prize winners came from unexpected locations like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. The main prize winners though, seem to have come from Italy and Greece.

It's a date for your diary, although I can't find a venue mentioned on the website. See the best honeys in the World, or even enter yours. It's only £120 + 20% VAT (£144.00) to enter.

Courses and Assessments

There are various courses and assessments available to members. You don't have to endure the rigours of written exam situations, if that's not your thing. Once you've been keeping bees for a whole season, you are eligible to take the Basic Assessment which, in many people's opinion, is an excellent 'hands on' test of your knowledge. It isn't complicated, or arduous, and you should have gained enough knowledge from your Beginners' course and your own experience, to pass this one with ease.

Fred Clarke has offered to organise a group to study the syllabus, and walk potential candidates through the procedure. The assessment is normally done in the middle of the season, and could be at your apiary, or at one designated

by the assessor. It's the cycling proficiency test of beekeeping - nothing more sinister than that.

Contact Fred on 01278 722830, or by email at pauline.fred@outlook.com. Dates and locations can be sorted out then.

Next up the pecking order is the Bee Health Certificate, which is slightly more stringent, and concentrates on diseases and how to deal with them. Bridget Knutson is currently trying to organise training days for that. More details later.

The General Husbandry assessment covers honey production, bee handling, queen rearing and as higher level of husbandry. It's also a practical and spoken assessment, and Roy White, our own queen rearing guru, will run a training session for that assessment. The venue will be Roy's own apiary in Kingsbury Episcopi, but dates are yet to be fixed, depending on take up.



Contact Roy on 01935 823898 or at wennets@hotmail.com

Honey Labelling

Those who attended the AGM may remember that Jeff Brewer, who was a steward at our honey show, raised the issue of labelling. A judge at the show had disqualified a number of entries in the 'for sale' section as they were labelled incorrectly. Jeff agreed to explore the legal requirements and produce a document for the guidance of your committee. He did so, and the committee were very appreciative of his time and effort which focused our discussion. During that discussion we became aware that BBKA had compiled a document "Selling Honey - Complying with the Law". It was agreed that as members of BBKA we recommend this document to the membership and circulate it with this newsletter. However, it does not address the issue of tamper-proof labels as these are not a legal requirement. The Committee would, however, recommend that members use these when selling honey.

Eric McLaughlin - Chairman

Dates for your diary

Honey & Health

Geoff Blay - Master Beekeeper

Thursday February 13th - 7.30pm
Somerton Parish Rooms
TA11 7NB

Somerset BKA Lecture Day

Edgar Hall, Somerton, TA11 6SB
9.00 -4.00

Bumble and Solitary bees

Bridget Strawbridge Howard

Thursday March 13th - 7.30pm
Somerton Parish Rooms
TA11 7NB

Apiary Equipment Cleaning

Saturday March 14th
10.00am
At our apiary

Somerset BKA AGM

Frogmary Green Farm, Green Farm,
West St, South Petherton TA13 5DJ

Saturday 28th March
12.00pm - 4.00pm

Taunton Beekeepers Auction

Sunday 29th March
Ruishton Village Hall
Cheats Road, Ruishton TA3 5JD
2.00pm

Somerset BKA Special Lecture

Edgar Hall, Somerton, TA11 6SB

With Ken Basterfield

Wednesday 22nd April
7.00pm - 9.00pm

Somerset BKA Queen rearing course

Sunday 26th April & Sunday 3rd May
Apiary of Taunton BKA, Heatherton Park, Taunton

Visit to Buckfast Abbey Bees

Poss Sunday 12th July

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