

The Newsletter

**Celebrating the official opening of
Our apiary**



Volume no 25 Issue 6 July 2018

SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Rather than making the tree bumble bee last month's bee of the month, I should have waited. There may not have been many swarm calls this year, but I have had between 15 and 20 calls regarding bumblebees setting up home in bird nest boxes, under roof tiles, in hanging baskets and compost bins, and almost without exception they have been tree bumble bees (*bombus hypnorum*).

I have one colony at home in an apidea (queen rearing hive), and one has been removed to our apiary in a blue tit nesting box, but the majority of colonies remain where they are, after reassuring the home owners that they shouldn't present a problem, and will live out their lives by the first frost – never to return. That works with some 'hosts' but raises the question, where will next year's generation choose as home?



Lack of swarms

Several people have remarked that there haven't been many swarms this year. The Rail At least, not many calls to remove swarms have been received. As the BBKA swarm collector list rules have changed, the route to getting names on the list has become a little tortuous, and Somerton names were late appearing on the website.

There are several schools of thought as to why swarm incidence was so low, some saying that the bad (for bees) summer of 2017 was followed by a lengthy warm winter, which in turn was topped off by the snow fall and a cold snap at the beginning of April.

Winter losses seem to have been very high this year, with most happening at the tail end, when the bees were at their most susceptible – low stores in remote corners of the hive, meaning that they wouldn't venture away from the cluster for food, and consequently perished as a result of isolation starvation. Several experienced beekeepers had significant losses. Opinions have been expressed that some beekeepers who would not normally consider housing a swarm, have been only too willing to rebuild their stocks, and some of the less scrupulous who, in the past, have simply let swarms go, have been a little more vigilant this year.

Whatever the reason for the low swarm numbers, finding good swarms, confirmed as disease free, with a good queen and temperament, which can be passed on to new beekeepers, have been few and far between

Reading the latest BBKA News and reports from the USA of 40% winter losses, makes the British scenario look slightly better. The USA figures are blamed on 'backyard beekeepers' and their bad practices. Go to most American beekeeping forums and you will start to appreciate why. *Apparently, replacing the queen will cure EFB – don't try that at home please, it's absolute poppycock.*

Our Visit to the Apiary and Bees at Buckfast Abbey, Devon.

By popular request, we are repeating our visit to the world famous bees at Buckfast Abbey. The apiary is now managed by Clare Densley, who gave a very successful talk to us eighteen months back. The bees at the Abbey were for many years run by Brother Adam, and his queen rearing skills were legendary. We will meet at 10.00am at **the Buckfast apiary**, please see the directions below and allow about 2 hours for the journey. The bees are not at the Abbey buildings themselves. Clare will meet us and provide coffee to allow any stragglers to join us and we will then proceed to the bees. Please bring a washed beesuit, clean wellies, and washable gloves. We make a £5.00 donation each to the running costs of the apiary. At lunchtime the Grange restaurant, in the Abbey grounds, provides a reasonable selection of hot and cold food, although some think it a little expensive. The grounds and immediate surrounds have good sites for a picnic. In the afternoon, if you would like to see more of the bees, Clare will be running her weekly "Bee Club" and we are welcome to join in. There are lots of interesting tourist attractions in the area if you want to make a day of it. Totnes and the Dart Valley Railway are no distance away.

If you would to share transport then please let me know and I will do my best to arrange this. It would be helpful, but not essential, if you could let me know that you are going.

Joe King

Programme Secretary.

Tel 01749 890357.

Directions to Buckfast apiary

Leave the A38 at the Buckfast Abbey turn off and follow the brown tourist signs to Buckfast Abbey.

Pass the Abbey Inn on your right

Just after you pass the sign for Buckfast (the town) take first the turning on your right. This is a private road. If you come to the Post office and barber shop you have gone too far along the road and need to turn around and go back.



Follow this road past the ex- carpet factory on the left until you see the 10 mile speed limit signs. Take a sharp right turn over the river bridge and follow it up the hill, past the large building on your right (tonic wine factory)

Follow the road as it bends to the left, drive past the large industrial green houses on the left with two large green barns on the right. The bee department is in the second new smaller barn like building. The door is in the far apex wall and you can park here, also opposite the wood shed.

Nucleus colonies for sale

If any new beekeepers are still looking for a nucleus colony, Sarah Kent is putting out feelers, because she has some nucs. which are ready to go into full hives. She's running out of kit to house them all.

Contact Sarah on 01749 670423

Full colony for sale

Ian Pirrie has a mild mannered, but lively and healthy full colony for sale. An absolute bargain including full hive with super, for only £100.

Contact Ian at ianpirrie@gmail.com

For Sale

Standard electric uncapping tray for sale £225. Retail price from Thornes is £301. See page 38 of their catalogue.

Contact Eddie Howe at redrascal@tiscali.co.uk

How much are you selling your honey for this year?

The answer is often a cheeky “As much as I can get for it” which probably shows that market forces are at play. Many of our members sell their honey for artificially low prices, and most have not increased their price in several years, certainly not in line with the cost of living index. To help readers assess what they could be asking for their honey, here are the figures taken from a recent survey among Bee Farmers, comparing nationwide average prices for 2014 and 2018 - **Source:** Bee Farmers Association

Year	Retail price - 454g	Wholesale price - 454g
2014	£4.75	£3.63
2018	£5.80	£4.26

Thanks to Warwickshire Beekeeper via Ebees

Just so that you can put that in perspective, The National Trust is selling apple blossom honey online for £7.00 a jar. Postage and packing will cost you an extra £4.95, so £11.95 and it doesn't even tell you what size jar you are getting for your money. They usually sell their honey in 340g (8oz) jars. Mmmm! Bargain



VOLUNTEERS FOR 2018 HONEY SHOW

Our Honey Show, “the Best in the West”, would not be the success it is without the help of member volunteers, who undertake the necessary tasks to enable it to run successfully. So while you wait for the judges to decide how many of your exhibits are worthy of a first in class why not help us, in some way or another, to run the show.

The tasks that need doing on the day are:

- Car parking attendants
- Helping Alison in the kitchen
- Assisting Sarah and Sally in the tea tent
- Setting up the Farmers’ Market with David
- Putting up and taking down direction signs
- Stewards to help our Chief Steward, Sandy Davis
- Packing tables & chairs away after the Show and brushing up hall floor
- Taking down any Association tents
- Returning items to our apiary at the end of the Show

As you can see there is an awful lot to be done to produce our Show, so please offer a hand to ensure its success.

Please let me know if you can help, telephone 01278 722830 or email pauline.fred@btinternet.com

Fred Clarke, Chairman

Mike's Bee Supplies

Please call before you visit
T: 01278 445158

E: mikes-bees@windytor.myzen.co.uk
www.mikes-beesupplies.co.uk

National
BS Deep wired foundation £1.25 each
BS Super wired foundation 80p each

For a copy of our new 2018 Catalogue
Please email mikes-bees@windytor.myzen.co.uk
with your email or postal address

We take
Cash or card
(no cheques)

**Suits
Hives
And more!**

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

Bee of the month

A common bee, but none the less beautiful for that, this is a female *Andrena fulva*, tawny mining bee and she is a charmer. Sometimes referred to as the lawn mining bee, because that's where most people find them. They are widespread over southern Britain, nesting in large aggregations where shorter grass can be found, such as lawns and footpaths, which makes them much more visible to the general public.



They are out and about from March to mid July, so spot one while you can. One thing that makes *Andrena* species very acceptable is their difficulty in stinging humans.

Apiinvert. A syrup ready to feed bees. Unlike sugar solution it requires no mixing, more readily accepted by the bees, less work required for the bees to invert (not wasting energy), more close to a natural food.

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 answer 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.

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

Apifonda. 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

Bath & West Honey Show 2018

Just a small piece to say thank you very much for all the help and support we received at this years' Bath & West Honey Show. It was great to see many of the old Faithfull's as well as several new people coming forward. Without your help we really could not run such a big honey show and marquee over four days. In my position as Vice Chairman of the Bees and Honey committee my primary role is that of the Honey show and I was very pleased this year to see an increase in exhibitors and even more pleased to see that almost everything that was entered on paper turned up at the show. The number of entries this year (2018) was 354 (2017) 307 an increase of 47.

The Bees and Honey marquee is one of the most popular on the show ground each year with children coming back year after year to draw a bee. As one of the most prestigious shows in the Country our judges, judge the exhibits accordingly. We were indeed fortunate this year in having two of the most senior judges and in fact the Judges referees for the National Honey Show Enid Brown and Hazel Blackburn. The standards were as always very high and it was



Dave Moore - winner of the decorated hive class

great to see a high level of competition between individuals and also Counties. The judges particularly commented on how much they liked the decorated hive class, and we were very pleased with the high number of entries drawing attention to the Bees & Honey marquee.

As you know there is a great deal of rivalry between Somerset and Wiltshire for the County Shield, but this year we were pleased to welcome two extremely experienced exhibitors from Devon who between them won three trophies and amassed 111 points in the coveted county shield challenge and they have both said they will be back next year as they enjoyed themselves so much at the show. Wiltshire Beekeepers won the County shield this year after Somerset having held it for the previous two years – but now Devon has their eye on it.

Once again thank you for all of your help and support this year and if any of you would like to come and help us next year by stewarding for half a day and have half a day to look around the show it is never too early to let me know.

Bernie Perkins

Vice Chairman Bath & West Bees & Honey Committee

Bernieperkins.tengor@tiscali.co.uk

Extraction Equipment for hire

Every year three or four people enquire as to if we have extraction equipment available to our members, and the answer is a simple YES. In fact, it's publicised on the back of this newsletter each and every month. The equipment can be loaned via John Speirs, who lives in Long Sutton. There are extractors, uncapping trays and a settling tank or two.

Extraction is just over a month away for most of us, so if you want to borrow some equipment, remember to contact John on 01458 241831. There is a small deposit, to ensure that you bring the items back, rather than to make a profit out of the members.



BBKA Basic Assessment Tutorial

We thank Suzy Perkins very much for giving up her time to talk us through the syllabus for the BBKA Basic Assessment, and Fred Clarke for his time & assistance too. It was an extremely useful exercise.

To take the assessment you need to have kept bees for a year & have a basic knowledge of handling bees, equipment, swarm control, pests, disease, natural history & general beekeeping, which most of you absorbed during the Beginners' sessions.

So come on all you yearling Beeks & have a go.

It's really not that scary or difficult, just a basic practical & oral test of your knowledge of keeping bees.

Sally Lye

SOMERTON BEEKEEPERS' HONEY SHOW

SAT 22nd SEPTEMBER 2018, LONG SUTTON VILLAGE HALL

Well at last the sun is shining and the bees are out doing what they can for our Honey Show. So what are you going to do?

There is no excuse for not helping the committee's aim of breaking the 300 mark for number of entries. The bees are providing the wax, honey and propolis and we have increased the number of classes you can enter.



Remember our Honey Show is the “best in the west” and we, the Somerton and District Beekeepers' Association, would like to maintain this accolade. Of course, we cannot do it without your participation in the show. So please enter as many exhibits in as many classes as you can and help maintain the high standards we have achieved in the past. In fact why not encourage your children, family friends and relatives to enter in the open classes. Let's make it a family day out.

New beekeepers, please don't be afraid to enter exhibits in the show, as it is a way to judge your own progress in beekeeping against others, and above all it is a friendly show. No one will be criticised, only encouraged, and advice will be given freely by the judges. Remember that the best in show award was recently given to a first year beekeeper.

The schedule and entry form will be emailed to you all very shortly, so that you can decide exactly which classes to enter and go to it. If each member enters just two classes we will be well on the way to breaking the 300 entries mark. Of course, I know you will make more entries than this because we are members of the best Association in the west!

David Rose, Alison Dykes, Fred Clarke

Is Honey good for you?

A high-sugar diet can have devastating consequences on your health. White granulated sugar has become the pantomime villain of the healthy eating brigade. In its place, “natural” sweeteners such as honey, agave syrup and plant extracts such as stevia have been touted as better for you. The truth is somewhat less palatable. Both refined and unrefined sugars have much the same effect on the body. While refined sugar (sucrose) is dealt with by the pancreas, which produces insulin, unrefined fruit sugars (fructose) are processed by the liver. Despite this biochemical difference, our bodies react to all sugars in much the same way - a blood sugar spike, encouraging the liver to produce glucose and high blood glucose levels ultimately cause the body to gain weight.

Studies have shown that eaten to excess, products containing fructose contribute to obesity, heart problems and liver disease just like granulated sugar. Other research has shown that fructose actually drains minerals from your body. Alternative sugars are also implicated in weight gain and tooth decay; and perpetuate your palette’s taste for sweet things as many are sweeter than sugar. The theory is that consumers will eat less of it - but who really does?

Apparently, 96 per cent of us don’t know how much sweet stuff we are consuming every day. The Government recommends no more than 30g of added sugar a day, which is about seven teaspoons but British adults eat and drink double that. A couple of years ago, sales of honey exceeded those of jam in Waitrose supermarkets, attributed to a perception that honey is healthier. Indeed, market research company Mintel estimated that honey sales totalled a staggering £112 million in 2013, meaning that we Brits ate our way through 20.3 million kilos. (*Approx. 330g per head per annum - editor*)

But is honey better for us than white sugar? While honey is often thought of as a “natural” form of sugar, how much refining is done to supermarket honey? Unrefined varieties contain some health-boosting trace minerals; niacin, riboflavin, thiamine and vitamin B6, but they make up only around two per cent of honey’s total content. Honey can be 55 per cent fructose, is that of any more benefit than granulated sugar?

Honey is marginally lower on the glycaemic index (58) than sugar (65), which means it is absorbed into the body at a slightly slower rate, but the main difference between the two is all about image. Honey appears to be more natural, yet it is higher in calories than table sugar. A tablespoon of honey contains around 64 calories whereas a tablespoon of sugar contains around 48 calories.

Nicole Mowbray

Daily Telegraph 6th November 2017 from Warwickshire Beekeeper via ebees

HONEY SHOW PREPARATION WORKSHOPS

You want to enter exhibits in this year's Honey Show but aren't sure how to prepare your entries? Well, fear no more, because the association is running two workshops to show how honey, wax mouldings, candles and cut comb can be prepared for showing.

The sessions will be run by our own members, each of whom has much experience in preparing exhibits for showing.

Session 1: Honey Preparation and Cut Comb will be held in the Somerton Parish Rooms at 7.30pm on Thursday 26th July. Our presenters will be David Rose (Honey preparation) and Joe King (cut comb).

Session 2: Wax Flowers and candle making will be held at our Apiary at 10 a.m. on Saturday 28th July. Here our presenters will be Alison Dykes (wax flowers) and David Rose (candle making). This will, as far as possible, be a hands-on session. Indeed, bring your own wax and make your own exhibits under the watchful eye of our demonstrators.

Please do attend and learn how to prepare exhibits for showing.

Fred Clarke

Chairman

Everything you wanted to know about stings, but were afraid to ask

Do you want to know how painful it is to be stung in your private parts? Don't worry there's no need to try it out, just let a bee sting you on the palm of your hand instead. Apparently a sting to the palm is just as painful as a sting to the nether region, with a pain rating of 7 out of 10.

A rigorous academic study from a guy (it had to be a guy) rated the pain levels on different parts of his body. In a very controlled manner he stung himself all over his body and gave marks out of 10 for the pain level of each sting. The neutral, middle sting level was a sting to the inner forearm. I'd agree, reasonably painful. Anyway the most painful place recorded is the nostril with a 9/10. The least painful is the skull with 2.5/10. You have to ask yourself why. He stung himself in 24 different places, 3 times in each place to average the result. If you're thinking that he'd be desensitised to stings over this time, don't worry. In the 3 months prior to the experiment he was stung 5 times a day to take this into account. If you want to read the details of this work, visit <https://peerj.com/articles/338/>

If the honeybee sting didn't contain any poison, it's unlikely you'd feel it sting you! This hasn't gone unnoticed by the medical research community who have been modelling hypodermic needles on the shape of stings so they don't hurt so much as they enter the skin, and probably just as importantly, do not flex or bend so they go to where they should do. A close-up view of a honeybee sting shows that it's serrated, making it easier to go in, and being serrated, means that once it's in, it's not going to come out easily, but that's only the half of it. Literally. The sting is actually two serrated halves, each side with independent muscles that push each side of the sting down in turn while the other half anchors it, driving the sting deeper into your skin. Quite impressive really. The poison starts to be injected from the second the sting is in your skin until it runs out or you scrape it off, so don't hang about. You probably don't want to put it to the test, but the amount of poison needed to kill you is actually quite a number of stings. Apparently 20 stings per Kg of body weight would do it. For me that is about 1,600 stings. Not going to take that risk. Obviously if you are allergic and susceptible to anaphylaxis then one sting might be enough.

Thanks to Barry Crabtree, Ipswich & East Suffolk BKA – via Ebees

Apiary Work Party

We called a work party at quite short notice, to tidy up the apiary, as Joe King's back problems had prevented him from mowing the grass for some weeks. What a turnout, especially as it was a searing hot day, and a working Tuesday for many. At least two people came before going on to their normal work. They must have been totally banjaxed by the end of the day. Thank you all.

About 20 people turned up and did some sterling work, strimming, weed pulling, hedge pruning, weed killing and re-working the rainwater overspill for the pond. At one point the noise of strimmers was almost deafening. The difference is tremendous though, as the apiary looks cared for again.

To keep the apiary looking trim and tidy, more work parties will be needed. In the near future we are going to divert the down-pipe which takes away the rainwater from the front roof section, to the pond via a 3 inch (75mm) pipe. This is going to require a shallow trench being dug from the corner of the building to the fence line and then along the fence toward the pond. As that section of roof receives the prevailing weather, we are more likely to keep the pond topped up.

There is already a staggering array of wildlife in the apiary - roe deer, rabbits, badgers, buzzard, kestrel, red kite (seen flying over), common cranes (heard), marbled white butterflies, burnet moths, meadow brown butterflies in profusion, emerald damselfly, broad bodied chaser dragonfly, water boatmen, whirligig beetles and great diving beetles. The bee meadow has produced cowslips, self heal, white campion, pyramid orchids, teasels, burdock, various thistle varieties, hemlock and weld. I have left out the commonest varieties, because there are simply so many.



We have an incredible and valuable resource which we must maintain

Beekeeping

Taster Day

2018



Sunday 5th August from 10.00 - 4.00

Downslade Quarry, Downslade Lane, Upton, Long Sutton TA10 9NW

So! You want to know about beekeeping!

DEMONSTRATIONS, DISCUSSIONS, DISPLAYS

TALKS, TIPS, & TASTING (HONEY)

HANDS ON EXPERIENCE

Just bring Wellington Boots and a pair of gloves (Marigolds are excellent)

All of this for just £25.00, which includes use of protective clothing, lunch & refreshments. If you would like to take part, return this completed form to :-

Steve Horne, Willow Barton, Hedging Lane, North Newton, Bridgwater TA7 0DG

Tel 01278 662335 or email steve.horne1@btinternet.com

Please include a cheque for the appropriate amount, made payable to Somerton & District Beekeepers Association.



Beekeeping Taster Day

Name.....

Address.....

Post Code..... Tel. No..... Email.....

Menu options

Non vegetarian

Vegetarian

Tick which applies and tell us how many of each

☐
☐

Adults	No	@ £25.00 each	
Children age 14 or less & accompanied by an adult	No	@ £12.50 each	
Total: use right hand column only			

We've held Taster Days in the past, but in 2016 we had a very poor response, so didn't hold one last year. If you know anybody who would like to know a little bit more about beekeeping, without necessarily going the whole hog, then this could be just the event for them. Email somertonbees@btinternet.com if you would like a full sized form. Earmark Sunday August 5th. And tell them to get in touch. This is an absolute bargain, with refreshments and lunch included.

Dates for your diary

**Beginners' Practical Course
third Session**

Saturday July 7th - 10.00 am
Divisional Apiary
Downslade Lane, Upton

Buckfast Abbey

A visit to the World famous apiary
Sunday July 22nd
10.00am at Buckfast

Preparing entries for the Honey Show

Somerton Parish Rooms
TA11 7NB

Thursday July 26th
7.30 pm

Candle making Workshop

Saturday July 28th
At the Apiary
10.00am

Wax Recovery and Exchange
Marin Anastasov

Thursday September 13th - 7.30pm
Somerton Parish Rooms

Somerton Divisional Honey Show

Saturday September 22nd
1.00 - 5.0 pm
Long Sutton Village Hall
Martock Road
Long Sutton
TA10 9NT

Somerton BKA AGM
Thursday November 15th

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

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