

# The Newsletter



Volume no 26 Issue 5 June 2019

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



## Well! It started well

What went wrong? The spring started so well, and then turned cool and wet. Some of those who took a spring harvest have lived to regret it, as feeding became essential, for most, in mid June. Swarming seemed to be the only thing the bees had on their minds, but they left behind weakened colonies with low stores and new queens who found it hard or impossible to get properly mated.

Quite a few of our members have been asking after replacement queens, and or a frame of eggs to get their colonies going again.

The brambles and meadowsweet are in full bloom, so will the main harvest be

## Members' questionnaire

The results are in, and they make interesting reading. In the coming months, Eric McLaughlin and chairman Fred Clarke will make use of the results and organise events around the findings.

Below are the top scoring answers to the questionnaire:

- 87% wished there was a for sale/wanted section in our newsletter
- 81% wished for more practical hands-on beekeeping techniques
- 81% would like to learn from other experienced and interesting speakers
- 76% were interested in autumn in-house equipment sales
- 78% wished to participate in visits to other beekeepers
- 42% joined the association to benefit from the insurance!

Rest assured your committee will try to arrange for your wishes to materialise. Obviously this will take time - some are easier to do than others.

**Fred Clarke, Chairman**

**Mike's Bee Supplies**

Just phone before you call  
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E: [mikes-bees@outlook.com](mailto:mikes-bees@outlook.com)  
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## **Skep making master class**

This event was originally planned for Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July , but we have had to move it forward one week to Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July . Sorry about that. So far only one person has indicated that they would like to attend, but I am absolutely sure that there are many others. Please email Stewart Gould at [somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com) if you would like to come along. You will have the chance to learn this ancient art from Diana Robertson, who is our very own skep maestro (yes it can be feminine too).

There will be a charge of £10.00 per head which will cover materials and refreshments, although you should bring your own packed lunch. It would be advisable to purchase a turkey drumstick as well. Cook and eat the drumstick, but save the bone and bring it with you on the day. All will become clear.

We have, in the past, provided cow horns as well. There will probably be enough to go around, but if you could bring a plastic drinks bottle with a slowly tapering neck, that will suffice. Water bottles tend to have too steep a slope on the neck, whereas orange squash bottles and the like, are just right.

## Fourth practical session

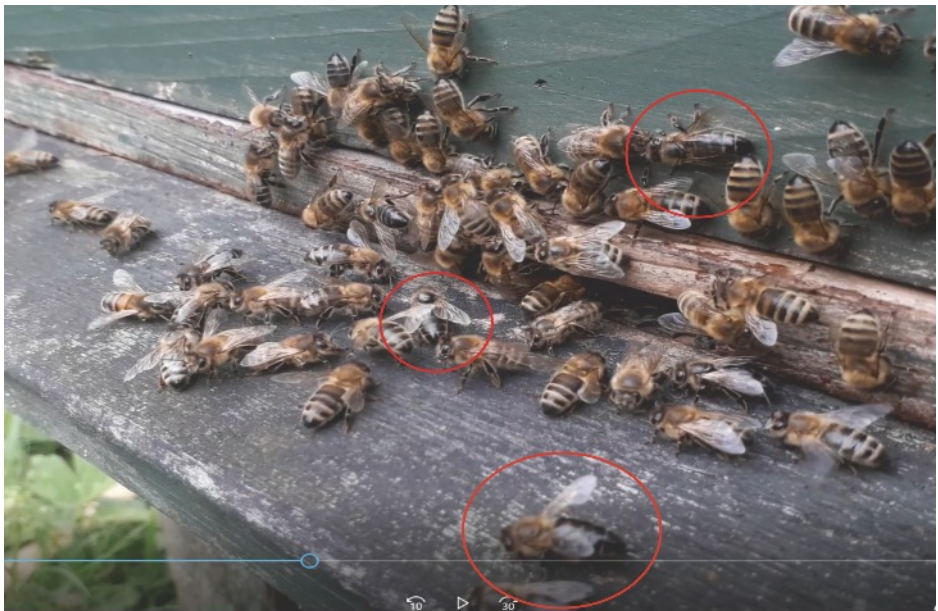
### Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July

This month we will be discussing disease recognition, although, as is always the case, we will talk about recent happenings too. Queen loss and starvation seem to top of that list.

If you want to do some research ahead of the day, have a look at chronic bee paralysis virus, failing queens, sacbrood, chalkbrood and of course varroa. There have been some unusual occurrences of disease this year, a lot of which are allied to the weather, but it's not all doom and gloom.

It's good to see a higher number of new beekeepers than normal, staying the course. There will always be a number who discover that beekeeping entails more than they thought, but it really is encouraging that this year, a higher number have got their own bees and seem to be making it as beekeepers.'

Just to keep you on your toes, I took this photo at a hive entrance yesterday. The bees were all shaking, and trying to clean themselves. I have ringed three bees that are bald, black and shiny. What could that be?







### **Somerset bee on Somerset Manuka**

This photograph was taken just feet from my hives here in Ditchheat, but the irony is that although there are droplets of nectar clearly visible on the flowers, most bees were flying straight past this to get to the borage.

### **Most Popular Request**

The most popular request in the recent questionnaire was for a 'For Sale/Wanted' section in the newsletter. It has always been the case that members can advertise items for free, unless they are operating commercially or selling products for income. If you want to sell or need anything, just send an email to the editor and it will be included in the next newsletter. Details on back page.

## Honey Show Stewards

An email did go around to all members asking for stewards for our honey show, but here it is again.

I am starting to get organised for our annual Honey Show and wanted to know if there are any members who would like to get involved behind the scenes as Stewards. Duties include assisting the judges with their admin, keeping them supplied with clean 'tools of the trade' and helping to ensure the exhibits are cared for throughout the day. You may be asked questions about honey and beekeeping as well by the general public. In return you do get a great insight into what makes a winning exhibit and a superb lunch. You will need to be available for most of the day 8:30 to 4:30 ish. If you would like to get involved or get more info please contact Sandy at [sandy.davies@rocketmail.com](mailto:sandy.davies@rocketmail.com).

**Sandy Davies**  
**Chief Steward**

**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](mailto:redrascal@tiscali.co.uk) Mobile 07812  
738793 Telephone 01458 2721144



## **Buckfast 2019**

The weather forecast wasn't brilliant, but we thought that with a little luck our morning at Buckfast might just be rain free, and it was - just. We met at the apiary shed and Clare Densley talked us through a few beekeeping points before we made our way up through the woods to visit the real 'Buckfast Bees'.

Clare refers to the bees in her apiaries as Devon mongrels, because no queens have been raised commercially at Buckfast Abbey for many years. The term 'Buckfast' now seems to mean any bee bred for favourable traits, but those traits depend entirely on who is doing the breeding. What is more, selective cross breeding is good for one generation only and subsequent generations tend to lose any special qualities, and the stock is probably going to be bad tempered.

With that myth laid to rest, Clare told us of the difficulties which she has experience, just like any other beekeeper. She has had parasitic swarms, which was a new term for a lot of people. It happens warms move in on weak colonies and take over the hive.

As always, we all learned something new from the inimitable and very knowledgeable Clare.

## Beekeeping innovations

You want to mark a frame, to remind you which one has a queen cell, or to point out a problem. You could mark the frame with your hive tool, but that's permanent. The answer is to insert a drawing pin, but with gloves on, that's not easy. You either drop the pin into the brood box, or impale your glove to on the top bar.

Incidentally, the best place to keep those pins is stuck into a wine cork.

Get a piece of 15mm copper plumbing pipe, about 125mm (5 inches) long and Araldite a couple of magnets into one end. You want a totally flat surface, so put cling film over the end and stand it up while curing. Voila! you have a magnetic pin push. The flat surface of the pin will stick to the magnets, then you simply push it into the top bar.



Choose where on the top bar you place the pin, and it will show exactly where the item you are trying to highlight is located on the frame.

Copper pipe could very easily get lost in the long grass around your hive, and the end of a piece of copper is a bit rough on the gloves, especially disposable ones. To make the end more comfortable, and to make this new tool visible in long grass, simply drill a 15mm hole into a Hi-Viz golf ball and Araldite the pipe into it.

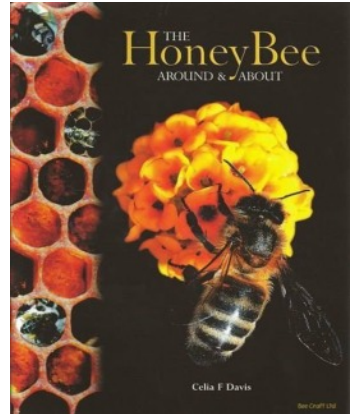
Now you have a new tool with a hand grip, and you will have to go to great lengths to lose it in the long grass.





## The Honey Bee Around and about - Celia F Davis

A good few of our members have, from time to time, suggested that we should consider those who want to advance their knowledge without go into the BBKA exam system. Well! here's a book for you. It's not too technical, nor does it get too deep in any subject, but if you want to know a little more about most elements of bee-keeping, then you could do a lot worse than read this small book.



At 150 pages, it's not a great tome of technical information, and is an easy and comfortable read, with explanations made simple. It's in our library, or will be when I have finished with it.

To borrow books (free) from the exhaustive Somerton BKA collection, just contact Sarah Kent at [translation@lawsonkent.co.uk](mailto:translation@lawsonkent.co.uk)

## Fuel change - Asian hornet monitoring traps

You should renew the bait in your Asian hornet monitoring traps now, as worker hornets (and wasps) will not be after sweet tidbits. They are looking for protein to feed their larvae, and the best bait to do that - fish. Minced raw fish or pieces cut into very small bits will attract the workers of almost all social wasp species, but please release any European hornets, as they are not a great danger to your colonies.



Furthermore, sweet attractants left in traps, will draw in friendly species, such as bumblebees and moths. Bumblebees will 'chill' and wait to be released, but moths tend to batter their pollen covered wings on the walls of the traps, rendering them useless.

Titbit or tidbit? *tidbit definition: 1. a small piece of interesting information, or a small dish of pleasant-tasting food: 2. a small piece of interesting information*

## Preparing for the honey show - Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September

That's ages away yet! Actually it's 80 days, but if you're thinking of entering creamed, or naturally set honeys, you need to get going soon. Wax flowers take time, and managing the frames in your hive so that the new ones with nice, pristine wax are not filled with pollen, will ensure that you have a good 'frame for extraction'.

*[Tip:- have the super you want to use, for that purpose, above the first one, as bees can, and do, place pollen in the first super].*

Taking photographs of beekeeping subjects is easier now than closer to the show. There will be fewer flowers available to catch your subject on in September too.



With next month's newsletter, we will be sending out the booklet, which gets an airing each year 'How to win points at Honey Shows'. Being a brand new beekeeper doesn't mean that you can't enter. We have a section for novices, although you may enter most sections, and the judge of the novice section allows new beekeepers to watch as he judges the entries, gives pointers, and explains his decisions.

Many years ago, my first ever entry was thrown out, as it was in a jar with a twist on lid - Grrrr! I've never forgiven David Charles for that. The message was simple though, be sure to read the rules carefully, and remember that it's a honey show, not a murder trial.

## For Sale & Wanted

**9 frame stainless steel electric extractor - only used once £12.57 inc. VAT**

**NOT REALLY, BUT YOU COULD ADVERTISE YOUR BARGAINS  
HERE**

## Old News, but the problem gets worse and worse

New member Barry Brown brought this to our attention. Contamination of honey with other sugars has been going on for years, but now major honey companies are getting caught out, with Australia's largest company, Capilano, being accused of 'dilution'.

Almost one in five Australian honey samples, including some expensive boutique honeys, are fake, according to a ground-breaking study that tested samples of local and international branded honey, using new NMRI methods (Nuclear magnetic resonance imaging). The study tested 100 samples, including 38 Australian-branded honey samples. Almost one in five of the Australian samples showed adulteration.



The study, conducted by a team of scientists at Macquarie University, used 100 samples of honey sourced globally, including 38 Australian-branded honey samples. It found more than half the samples sourced from Asia, mainly China, were adulterated, meaning the honey had been mixed with other non-honey substances.

Testing at the National Measurement Institute, the same high-security government lab used to test drugs seized by Border Force, found 27 per cent of overseas samples were not honey.

Meanwhile, a New Zealand company pleaded guilty on Thursday (April 18) to charges of adding artificial chemicals to its premium manuka honey, in a flagship prosecution over a product that is a high-value export for the country.

New Zealand Food Safety filed the case against Auckland-based **Evergreen Life** Ltd, whose products were pulled from shelves in 2016 by the Ministry for Primary Industries, which said they might contain "non-approved substances".

It begs the question, that if new testing is proving honeys sold in Australia and New Zealand are adulterated, what would they find with honeys on sale in UK supermarkets?

**Dates for your diary**

**Fourth  
Beginners' practical sessions  
10.00am**

Sat. June 15<sup>th</sup> & Sunday June 16<sup>th</sup>

At our apiary

**Disease recognition**

**Skep making master class  
Saturday July 27<sup>th</sup> - 10.00am**

At our apiary

**Overseen by Diana Robertson**

**Beekeeping Taster Day**

Sunday July 20<sup>th</sup>

At our apiary

**Somerton BKA Honey Show**

Saturday September 21<sup>st</sup>

**Keinton Mandeville Village Hall**

**TA11 6EB**

**(New venue)**

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