

# The Newsletter



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



## Is the June Gap over?

Did we even have a June Gap? Some people are reporting flows on at present, while others are feeding their bees. Others are claiming good Spring harvests, while most are licking their wounds, not their fingers. It'll all sort itself out, no doubt, but the seasons do seem to be more changeable than they were in the past.

The main bramble species are holding back, with only the more blousey (semi-cultivated) varieties in flower. It always seems that honeybees bees aren't attracted to these early varieties, but there are buds in the hedgerows, and it's just a matter of time until they are alive with the hum of our bees.

## Practical beekeeping sessions



As if COVID wasn't enough to cope with, we've been dogged this season with a very cold April and a very wet May. June got off to a hot start but went downhill towards the end, as you all know only too well. There have been superse- dures and swarming from early April onwards, and there are numerous reports of lost and badly mated queens.

Our new beekeepers haven't lost faith though, and nearly all of those who wanted bees have been catered for, some buying nucs. While others have been lucky enough to get verified swarms from some of our more generous members.

Onward and upward then, as we have our next session on Saturday July 10<sup>th</sup> at the apiary. We'll be looking at general well-being and seeing if the bees are starting to pack in that nectar, which must surely start flowing soon.

## BBKA Modular Exam successes

With nothing better to than twiddle their thumbs last winter, several of our members, who must have been clinically depressed, decided to deepen their problems by studying for some BBKA modular exams. Somerset BKA Education group, a dedicated band of Master Beekeepers, held Zoom sessions after having set tricky trial papers, for modules 3 & 5. Their help was invaluable & every one of the 34 Somerset members who took part in the study groups for the online exams, passed. Two of our members took two exams on the same day. Two of those, Catherine Fraser and Sally Worby, took two exams on the same day. Catherine managed a credit in one and a distinction in the other.

Those who had exam successes are:

Jackie Mosedale - module 5 (Honeybee anatomy & biology)

Catherine Fraser - module 1 (Honeybee management) module 2 (products & forage)

Stewart Gould - module 5 (Honeybee anatomy & biology)

Sally Worby - module 1 (Honeybee management) module 5 (Honeybee Anatomy & biology)

## **Boredom causes weird internet searches**

*Rebecca Hearvin, whoever she might be, got very bored and made this rather weird Google search.*

Maybe it's the stress of everything that has been going on, or I was overly tired from not having slept that well, or this was so unexpected that it caught me off guard , but I just had to Google 'Do bees f\*\*t?'

Whaaaaat? Bee f\*\*ts? Let me just let that sink in for a second. Who asks these questions? And. I'm so glad so many other people asked it so that it popped up in the "other commonly asked questions" section of my search results. Because of course if bees eat, then they must have digestive systems and that means bees might get indigestion and – well – f\*\*t

Now, I'm a middle aged woman who doesn't generally laugh at potty humour, but come on – the thought of bee f\*\*ts? Hilarious. Right? They do have digestive systems; they do possibly get indigestion and they do f\*\*t.

***Katie Tobin - our Melbourne correspondent***

## **New Leaf Life Design Award**



Just every once in a while we get some really good news in beekeeping, and this is one of those occasions. Becky

Wright, of New Leaf Life De-

sign, which is a company providing workplace and life design coaching has, very generously, donated a large percentage of her fees from sessions with Riverford Foods and Homes in Sedgemoor to Somerset Beekeepers. This money will be used to help somebody contemplating beekeeping, with the start-up costs, but of course, there are conditions. The award will be made to someone who might otherwise find it financially daunting or somebody who has suffered from a situation, not of their making. The lines are purposely blurred so that the award is flexible.

Any member who knows somebody who would benefit from this award should speak to a member of their divisional committee who can make a bid

to SBKA for this money. A decision will be made at the November SBKA council meeting. This is an award that could make a considerable difference to someone. The fund currently stands at £325.00.

See below for all conditions (at present)

1. The award will be given to a young person who would, otherwise, find it difficult to finance a start in beekeeping, or somebody considered, by SBKA, to be deserving of assistance in doing so.
2. Nominations from Divisions should be received at least 5 weeks before the November 13th SBKA Council meeting (by Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October), so that they can be considered at that meeting. That is by Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October
3. The recipient of the award will attend an SBKA divisional Beginners' Theory Course during the winter months and a Practical Course during the following season.
4. The recipient will be found suitable equipment from the award, up to the total sum of £325.00.
5. The recipient may apply for more equipment provided it is deemed relevant and within the confines of the award.
6. The recipient will be found a mentor for the first season of beekeeping, and can expect guidance during succeeding years.
7. The recipient will be given a colony of bees, when the mentor is satisfied that it is time to do so. These bees will become the responsibility of the recipient, who must endeavour to keep them well provisioned and managed in a way acceptable to the mentor.
8. Any proceeds from the sale of honey or other hive products will be the recipient's to spend as they wish.
9. The recipient must become a member of SBKA to a level determined by SBKA
10. The recipient will be expected to sustain a colony of bees and the associated equipment for a period of three years. If the recipient does not wish to continue with beekeeping during that period, all equipment and bees will be returned to SBKA in a reasonable condition. By the same token, all equipment and bees remain the property of SBKA for that three year period.
11. The recipient must take reasonable care and responsibility for any equipment while in his or her care. If it is found that such reasonable care is not being taken, it may become necessary to retrieve the equipment and bees.
12. If the recipient is seen to have reneged on this agreement, all equipment, bees and other goods associated with this award will be forfeit.

*For the purposes of this document, SBKA refers to Somerset Beekeepers' Association - registered charity no. 277803*

**Mikes Bee Supplies**

**Click & Collect**  
[www.mikes-bee-supplies.com](http://www.mikes-bee-supplies.com)  
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 T: 01278 445158

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**12.5kg**

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**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 £24 each, 5 + boxes £23 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.

**Foundation.** National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood available

**Eddie Howe email:- [redrascal444@gmail.com](mailto:redrascal444@gmail.com) Mobile 07812 738793**

**Tel. 01458 272114**



## **Wild Comb**

A cautionary tale from one of our more experienced beekeepers. If you're going to place a swarm into a full sized hive, make sure you put all 11 frames in, because if you don't the bees may well build you some nice wild comb. This was the result of their efforts after only 24 hours. Swarms are hard wired to build new comb, even if it is hanging from the crown board.

*Thanks to Pauline & Jeffrey Wilson*

## **New & unused National Hive for sale**

One of our members recently purchased a brand-new National Hive -but unfortunately has been taken quite ill and has decided to give up beekeeping. As a result, her newly acquired National is now surplus to requirements. It has never been used and is fully assembled. It comprises a floor, brood box, queen excluder, crown board and roof (no supers). There are also quite a few unassembled frames.

If you are interested, please contact **Fred Clarke on 01278 722830**. Fred is handling the sale on behalf of the owner.

## **From the Chair**

I have a favourite colony of bees. It is mild mannered and productive. A month ago it decided to supersede the 3 year old Queen. I was mildly surprised thinking it was more likely to swarm at this time of the year. However I let them get on with it and left them alone for a few weeks. On opening the colony there were eggs so I thought all was well and left them alone until Saturday - two weeks after I saw the eggs. That was when I discovered that her majesty had not mated properly and was a drone layer. Queen dispatched and a frame of eggs taken from another hive added. This lead me to ponder on the frequency of inspections and the reasons why we do it.

In the swarming season April to June it is usual to conduct weekly inspections and if Queen cells are present carry out your chosen method of prevention or control. If a colony has swarmed or been split there is little likelihood of it swarming again so perhaps the disruption of inspection can be avoided and we only need to check the supers to ensure there is enough room for storage. Some colonies will swarm in July but usually colonies in an apiary, will do so within a few weeks of each other.

Ted Hooper flags up five questions to ask when you open a colony.

- 1) Has the colony sufficient room?
- 2) Is the Queen present and laying expected quantity or eggs?
- 3a) Early season - is the colony building up as fast as the others in the apiary?
- 3b) Mid season - are there any Queen cells present?
- 4) Are there any signs of disease or abnormality?
- 5) Has the colony sufficient stores to last until next inspection?

Every inspection disrupts the colony so the fewer times we open hives the better. Basically we must have a reason to inspect and not just be conducting what one of our members calls "bee tourism".

With the summer solstice just passed, the nights are drawing in and honey harvests will soon be taken. We need to think about varroa treatments and aim to reduce infestations to give the winter bees the best chance of survival. In the summer a super frame in the brood box will usually have drone comb drawn beneath. When this is capped it can be removed and destroyed removing the varroa within. Towards the end of summer I use MAQS strips and then an Oxalic acid treatment between Christmas and New Year. This seems to keep varroa under control.

***Eric McLaughlin***



## **A component of honeybee venom kills cancer cells**

Venom from honeybees has been found to kill aggressive and hard-to-treat breast cancer cells rapidly, according to potentially ground-breaking new Australian research.

Published in the journal *Nature Precision Oncology*, the research was conducted at Perth's Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research by Dr Ciara Duffy as part of her PhD. Dr Duffy hopes the discovery could lead to the development of a treatment for triple-negative breast cancer, which accounts for 10 to 15 per cent of all breast cancers and for which there are currently no clinically effective targeted therapies. She said the honeybee venom had proven extremely potent.

Dr Duffy from Western Australia's Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research has been undertaking the study. "We found that the venom from honeybees is remarkably effective in killing some of these really aggressive breast cancer cells at concentrations which aren't as damaging to normal cells," Dr Duffy said. The research showed a specific concentration of the venom killed 100 per cent of triple-negative breast cancer and HER2-enriched breast cancer cells within 60 minutes, while having minimal effects on normal cells. Dr Duffy harvested venom from honeybee hives at the University of Western Australia, as well as in Ireland and England.

She said a component of the venom called melittin had the killing effect. The researchers reproduced the melittin synthetically and found it mirrored the majority of the anti-cancer effects of the honeybee venom. "What melittin does is enter the surface, or plasma membrane, and form holes or pores causing the cell to die,"

The researchers also discovered within 20 minutes the melittin had another powerful effect. "We found it was interfering with the main messaging or cancer-signalling pathways that are fundamental for the growth and replication of cancer cells," she said. It effectively shut down the signalling pathways for the reproduction of triple-negative and HER2 cancer cells. Dr Duffy also examined the effect of melittin used in combination with existing chemotherapy drugs such as docetaxel. She found the holes in breast cancer membranes caused by the melittin allowed the chemotherapy to enter the cell.

***Katie Tobin - Melbourne correspondent***

## Honey Sales and Household Insurance

Andy Watters has 4 hives on his allotment in Kingston upon Thames. He makes enough honey each year for his family and friends and if he has any extra, he sells it to neighbours and passers by. Over 20 years of beekeeping, he has built up a reputation, and visitors come once or twice a week to buy a small jar for £4.50 or a larger one for £6. Some years he has plenty, at other times there is barely enough for himself.



This month his insurance company Aviva told him that these small honey sales made his home cover invalid and that he would have to stop selling honey or cancel his policy.

Watters had read a story in the BBKA News last month about a fellow hobbyist who had had issues with their home insurer after a flood. So he called Aviva to make sure his policy was suitable. He expected them either to make a note of the fact that he sold honey from his home or demand a more expensive premium. Instead, he was told that he must agree not to sell honey or cancel the policy.

“I thought I would do the right thing and double check, not thinking there would be any problems,” he said. “But I was told that my policy was invalid.” He tried to reach a compromise with Aviva. What if he limited the number of jars he sold each year? What if he took down the sign at the front door, so he did not entice people off the street? Aviva would not budge, despite Watters explaining that his average annual profit has been £60.50 since 2016. Hives and equipment cost him about £500 a year.

Aviva said his situation had been assessed by two underwriters who both said that selling goods from your home was not covered by home insurance. Watters was told that he was an extra risk because people would be entering the boundaries of the property and there could be “stock” held at the site. “Hobbyist beekeepers should not be lumped together with a business or shop. What we do is for pleasure and a hobby and the honey is only a small part of that, not the means to the end,” Watters said.

When *Money* got in touch, Aviva looked at the case again. It said that its customer service team had interpreted the honey sales as Watters running a business from his home, rather than a hobby, and said his policy remained valid. They have paid him £50 compensation for the trouble caused. “We can only apologise for Mr Watters’ experience,” said a spokesman. “Unfortunately there was a misunderstanding on our side. We apologise for any confusion this has caused.”

***From The Times - thanks to Alan Brain***

## **LIBRARY BULLETIN:**

Your Divisional Library has two new books this month.

“Honey Bee Alchemy” by Valery Isidorov.

First published in Poland in 2013. This is a fascinating and original book. The author discusses the chemistry involved in aspects of bee behaviour and health, as well as bee products. A knowledge of chemistry undoubtedly helps to get the most out of this book, but there is enough that the non-chemist can appreciate too.

“Collins Beekeeper’s Bible”. Published by Harper Collins in 2010.

A beautifully presented book with lavish photography and illustrations. The chapters cover: Bees and Beekeeping History, Understanding the Honeybee, Practical Beekeeping, Honey and other Bee Products, and Recipes and Home Crafts.

This book was generously donated to the Library by David Millard.

To borrow these books and for all Library enquiries, contact Sarah Kent on 07986 965320 or at [translation@lawsonkent.co.uk](mailto:translation@lawsonkent.co.uk)

## **Removing bee colonies humanely - allegedly**

According to Dan Bailey, President of *WikiLawn Austin Lawn Care*, the best way to remove an unwanted colony of bees is to light a smokey fire near them and this is, apparently, best done at night because the bees are less active then. If that doesn’t work, spraying them with vinegar will do the trick - and it’s very green???

He goes even further. Still not working? Then use the ultimate deterrent. Sprinkle cinnamon around them every night for a week. Mind you, he’s still prepared to admit that these methods may not work. If that is the case, you’ll never guess what he suggests as a last ditch approach. You guessed it. Call a beekeeper who will come and remove it for you, and probably free of charge. Just one problem that I can see, or rather, smell. You now have an area which wreaks of a mixture of wood smoke, vinegar and cinnamon.

## Verdict on normal framed hives

This scathing article on the hives that most of us keep our bees in was written by the inventor of another hive.

I was pleased to see the article on bee hive design by Karen Bate on Page 90 (May 28). It suggests that the top bar hive is a better design for the bees. Elaine Spencer White of The BeeWayzz project postulates that traditional bee hive design is the problem for bees and I agree. What is natural for honey bees is not as important as what is the best habitation for honey bees. As designers of habitations for biological systems we can do much better than what is 'natural'.

The traditional thin walled, wood, vertical stacked hives have been in use for about 160 years unchanged, having all the environmental integrity of a cardboard box. 30% of bees die in them every winter. Even feral colonies do better so Elaine must be onto something. Traditional vertical stacked hives are the direct cause of the diseases of honey bees such as Nosema, Acarine and Varroa, because they give a cold, damp environment for the bee brood to live in and for Varroa to thrive in. Such a hive environment extends the bee pupation period, which increases the maturation period available for varroa to mature in those pupating cells. The Varroa mites exceed their replacement numbers exponentially. Winter is Varroa breeding heaven.

The traditional wood hive was modelled on the champagne crates that the Reverend Langstroth just happened to have in his basement at the time and into which he fitted his patented movable frames, within which the bees made their colonies. Not a considered choice, but they did allow the bees to be managed for the first time and was a step forward in the development of a truly mutual symbiotic relationship between us and bees. Any relationship that is not to our mutual advantage may be virtuous, but it is charity and will not survive

long term. If "natural" bee keeping involves bees taking up residence in natural cavities I suspect that we can do better for them and they for us. That is symbiosis.

The bees in a 'mutual' symbiotic relationship supply us with honey and pollination services in exchange for us looking after them. We can give them a warm dry insulated home that can be expanded and contracted to the bees needs over the year. We treat diseases as we find them and feed them when they need it. Much of that has gone on in this cold spring.

Elaine's thesis is that we are not supplying a suitable habitation environment for the bees is correct, but the top bar hive is better, not the best for them. It forms a long slim shape that is not easy for the bees to keep warm since it has a large surface area to volume ratio. It is not insulated against heat loss and with bee entry at the bottom and ventilation at the top it creates a cooling 'stack' effect. It also has no thermal 'weight' to moderate the temperature over the day and night.

Lesley Gasson's comments in the top bar hive are inappropriate. They are easier

to inspect, not harder and they carry no more disease than traditional vertical hives. They do not have to be dismantled as the traditional ones must be which and are not cheap either.

So less stress on the bees, bee keepers back and wallet.

Enrolling on a bee keeping course recommended by the British Bee Keeping Association as Master (surely Mistress) Beekeeper Lesley Gasson and being taught how

to keep bees in traditional vertical hives is to see bad practise continued. A better prospect is to find a friendly local bee keeper to get experience with rather than a paper qualification obtained at great expense for a qualification from the BBKA, which endorsed systemic neonicotinoids insecticides for money before it was banned.

**Bill Summers**  
Inventor of the ZEST hive  
Retired architect

Apologies for the small type but it was copied and pasted from The Blackmoor Vale Magazine - **Thanks to Albi Hughes**

## **Working Party**

There are some jobs which need doing at the apiary, and we're asking you for your help get the place looking more spick and span, ship-shape and Bristol fashion, spruced up and looking at its best.

Two jobs which really need doing are re-coating the Bee Space building, and the same with the Fraser Wing (clean equipment store).

We have the coating materials but we could use some help applying it. Just bring your paint brush and if you have a working platform or small transportable ladder, they would be very useful.

We'll meet on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July at 10.00am. Who knows, we may even fire up the Barbie. This is a chance for all those new beekeepers to get their hands dirty and meet some other members too.

## **Honey Jars - BULK BUY**

Every year we endeavour to buy jars in bulk and get the best possible prices for our members. After all the confusion with lids last year, we will be hoping to buy jars with lids on.

We are enquiring about 8oz. Round, 12oz hexagonal, 12oz round and 1 lb round jars.

It's still early in the season to make the decision, but if you could guesstimate how many jars, and what type you will need, we'll do our best for you. Let me know your requirement at [somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com)

Thanks

***Stewart Gould***

## **First Aid and Food Hygiene Training**

From time to time we run First Aid courses connected with beekeeping. It has been a while since the last one, and with social beekeeping events taking off again in the near future we thought that it was time to catch up.

The same is true of Food Hygiene Certificates. These need updating from time to time. There are some events and locations which won't allow you to sell honey unless you have one. The law states that if selling honey, you should be able to demonstrate that you have been trained in food handling - and what better way than to wave a certificate at the enquirer.

If you are interested in either of these courses, please contact Jackie Mosedale on 01458 241146 or by email at [jackiemosedale@gmail.com](mailto:jackiemosedale@gmail.com)

## **Ley Lines & Geopathic Stress Lines**

Are they one and the same thing asks Roger Patterson of Bee Improvement Magazine. Apparently bees placed on them are less prone to varroa infestation. He keeps divining rods in his car for when he collects swarms or see colonies that have selected their own nest site. Since 2009 he has checked every place he knows where a swarm has settled and everywhere a wild colony has set up home. They are all in a place where at least three energy lines cross, usually more. In July 2011 he was called out to a swarm that had clustered on the lawn of a large house. It was where at least 8 energy lines crossed. The queen had a damaged wing, so couldn't fly and he wondered where the swarm had come from. He noticed a large oak tree about 100 yards away on one of the energy lines that went through the swarm. The tree had bees in it. Apparently oak trees grow on ley lines too. He assumes they had gone along the ground until they found crossing energy lines. He has come across similar situations several times. In February 2013 he was asked by an entomologist to look at a "wild colony in a tree". When he got there it was in the branches of a tree that had blown down some time earlier and the bees had built their nest in the open. I found it was immediately over where at least 13 energy lines crossed.

He's checked several hundred sites and hasn't had one negative so far. He has spoken to beekeepers who say they always have swarms settle in the same places. He places all his bait hives where three or more energy lines cross and is very successful in attracting swarms.

***Alison Clewes***

**Dates for your diary**

**Online Zoom talks**

Various upcoming online talks. Watch your emails.

**Fourth Beginners Practical Session**

**At our apiary**

Saturday July 10th - 10.00am

**Somerton BKA**

**Annual Honey Show**

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall  
Chistles Ln, TA11 6FJ

Saturday September 18<sup>th</sup>  
1.00 - 5.00pm

**President**

Jackie Mosedale  
01458 241146

**Chairman**

Eric McLaughlin  
jandemclaughlin@gmail.com  
07910 764069

**Vice Chairman**

Jack Barr  
01458 252850  
jrbarrxv@btinternet.com

**Secretary**

**Alison Clewes**

[pansvpots@icloud.com](mailto:pansvpots@icloud.com)

**Treasurer**

Sarah Griffiths  
s\_e\_lund@hotmail.com

**Membership Secretary**

Alison Dykes

**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**

Stewart Gould  
01749 860755

**County Delegate**

Keith Sturgess

**Deputy Delegates**

Sally Lye  
Suzy Perkins

**Apiary Manager**

Joe King  
01749 890357

**Extraction Equipment Loan**

John Speirs  
01458 241831

