

The Newsletter



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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



What a Spring for beekeeping?

John Mosedale scales the giddy heights of one of Jackie's hives to remove the top 3 of 7 supers. Admittedly they are on double brood, but not a single flower of oilseed rape anywhere around. It really has been a bumper Spring, but will we have a June Gap? That's the question

Dr. Richard Kinsman 7th March 1939 – 13th May 2019



It is with great sadness that I let you know that Richard Kinsman passed away on Monday 13th May. Richard was a Bristol man, and worked as a chemist. Not just any old chemist, but head of Academic Studies at the University of Bath. He had also been President of the Royal Society of Chemistry and had three notable papers printed in the journal of the Chemical Society, '*synthetic and stereochemical studies directed towards anatoxin-a*', being just one.

On his retirement, Richard and his wife Patty moved to Pedwell, near Ashcott, where he decided that he would keep bees, and would have told you himself, that he wasn't very good at it. Although he continued his membership, the bees left about three years ago. They had a nasty habit of escaping, apparently. When John Webb retired from being our librarian, a few years back, Richard took on the task with relish and did an excellent job, until the task just became too onerous.

If you wanted to know anything about the chemicals we use on our bees, or any other aspect of the rich world of chemistry, you should have talked to Richard. Quiet, unassuming, with a dry sense of humour, but oh so knowledgeable, and a gentle man, this was Richard. He didn't say a lot, but what he did say made so much sense. He could also make you realise that what you were saying didn't make much sense, but the scold would end with an imitable chuckle. Unknown to many of us, Richard also played the violin and flute, but considered himself to be 'second fiddle'.

Richard was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer about 4 years ago, and told that his expectations shouldn't exceed two years. Our chairman Fred Clarke had a phone call from him a couple of weeks ago, to say that he wanted to donate his beekeeping equipment to Somerton BKA, and that it needed to be gone in a hurry. Fred and Eric McLaughlin called over to collect the equipment, and were greeted by Richard, who although obviously unwell, carried on a conversation for some time. He passed away two days later.

Swarms

At our recent committee meeting, the subject of selling swarms came up, as there are several people on beekeeping 'facebook' pages doing just that. We would advise all new beekeepers that a freshly caught swarm is generally, a totally unknown quantity, with a queen of indeterminate age and background. The health of the bees cannot be judged fully, until there is brood, and the temperament is also something that cannot be gauged. If the swarm is from a known source, then the age of the queen and the temperament may be known, but health should still be checked.

Swarms from unknown sources should be kept in isolation until such time as their credentials can be established, and they have a clean bill of health. Even then, most swarms carry unmarked queens, meaning that you can only guess at their age. Some beekeepers do not follow international marking colours, so even a marked queen may be lying about her age.

It is legitimate to pay any expenses incurred, but otherwise **avoid paying for swarms.**

The graphic is a promotional advertisement for 'Mike's Bee Supplies'. It features a honeycomb pattern of yellow hexagons on a light blue background. In the top left, a blue box contains the text 'Mike's Bee Supplies' with a small image of a beekeeper and a bee. To the right, contact information is provided: 'Just phone before you call T: 01278 445158', 'E: mikes-bees@outlook.com', and 'www.mikes-beesupplies.co.uk'. Below this, several hexagons list product categories: 'Foundation', 'Jars', 'Hives', 'Suits', and 'And more!'. A hexagon on the left states 'We take Cash or Card (no cheques)' and includes logos for PayPal, VISA, Mastercard, American Express, and Debit. A hexagon on the right provides the address: 'Find us at 72 Wembdon Hill, Wembdon, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 7PZ'. Small bee icons are scattered throughout the design.

Swarms from areas with EFB

There has been a glut of swarms this season, and there has also been an outbreak of European foulbrood affecting colonies in the Martock, South Petherton and Lambrook areas. With this in mind, the committee considered how swarms from affected areas should be dealt with, and although we had some ideas it was thought wise to seek the guidance of a Bee Inspector.

The suggestion from one of our local inspectors was that swarms in, or near to affected areas, **should be collected**, but that they should be placed in isolation and stringent hygiene observed while monitoring their progress. As soon as brood is present, your Bee Inspector should be asked to inspect the colony (swarm), in order to give it a clean bill of health, or otherwise.

Meg's Bee Safari

We couldn't have asked for better weather as we gathered in the back garden of Neil Tully's house in Croscombe. Neil keeps two WBC hives which were originally run by his grandfather, and although he is not a member of our division, very kindly offered his hives for scrutiny by Meg Seymour. Neil laid on refreshments for us, and even a swarm in a tree peony, which Meg re-homed in a polystyrene nucleus box. For a lot of those who came along, this was their first experience of seeing a swarm, and most certainly of judging how to handle it. The next task was to deal with the hive which had swarmed. There were several mature queen cells, and a virgin queen in the hive. Meg 'pulled' the mature cells, meaning that she unsealed them, and released all the new virgins into the hive. Her belief is that doing this will prevent more swarming, as the first queen to emerge will engage with the hatchlings and gain supremacy. Cells left to hatch on their own will provoke a second swarm, or 'cast'.

From Croscombe we moved to an apiary in the cemetery of Mendip Hospital, which is the final resting place for 3000 former residents of the famed institution. It is now a haven of tranquility maintained by a charitable trust. The hives are well kept, and all frames date marked. The bees were tranquil and it was getting a bit warm at this point.

After lunch we stopped off at North Wootton to visit Joe King's bees. Everything was going well until Meg spotted a doubtful larva. It gave all those who haven't experienced a lateral flow device, the chance to see a test for EFB, in

the flesh. Joe had whitened behind his veil, and was visibly relieved when the test proved negative. The bees got a bit 'fizzy' after a while and it was time to close up and move on.

The next stop off was the one that I had been waiting for. About 3 years ago



Nick Bentham-Green of the B4 project, set on re-introducing the native British black bees, had persuaded Michael Eavis that the Glastonbury Festival site would be suitably isolated for colonies to be placed there, without contamination from, and inter-breeding with the local Somerset mongrels. Unfortunately, the bees weren't let in on the plan, and as the beekeeper employed to look after them was not quite as described 'on the can', they swarmed on several occasions in their first year, and those which remained seem to have socialised with the local mongrels. The result, as you can see below is not what you could possibly describe as a British black bee colony. Joe King has been looking after them since the original beekeeper was unceremoniously relieved of his duties. They are no longer on the Festival site, but have been removed to a corner of Michael Eavis's land, close to his own garden.

Once more, we have to thank Meg for an extremely enjoyable and, as always, informative day. If you think you know all you need to know about beekeeping, a day looking over Meg's shoulder will confirm that you don't. Practically everybody who came along, made a point of admitting that they had picked up some extremely useful tips.

Book Review

Each month we are giving you an insight to some of the books in our library. Andrew Pugh took a look at three this month

BBKA Guide to Beekeeping – Ivor Davies and Roger Cullum-Kenyon

Excellent - beautifully produced and well laid out. Of interest to new and intermediate level keepers. The amount of information is about right and is not just the view of the authors. Best as a reference source.

The Buzz About Bees - Jurgen Tautz (translation)

A heavy read, full of highly detailed information on bee behaviour which must have taken years and many, many hours to obtain and collate, using modern technology. Like so many such researches, it raises new questions as fast as it answers others! Very interesting but not often relevant to small-scale practical beekeeping - a book for the entomologist. Using the 'Superorganism' concept to describe colony behaviour makes sense and has now been widely adopted in other literature.

Queen Rearing Essentials - Laurence John Connor

A small book from the USA describing methods of rearing large numbers of queens. Interesting but of limited value to the small-scale keeper.

Library Bulletin May 2019

We have recently added two books from the JD & BD Yates Study Series: *Beekeeping Husbandry and Beekeeping* and *Study Notes Modules 5-8*

These books are each essential reading for anyone contemplating taking the BBKA examination modules to which they relate. They are also a good source of information for anyone simply wanting to increase their beekeeping knowledge.

We have also acquired the *Book of Bees* by Piotr Socha. This is a big book for small beekeepers! A great big colourful book packed with all kinds of bee-related information and beautiful illustrations. It's probably aimed at approximately ages 3-13 and is a good one to borrow for your children/grandchildren but which has enough interest to keep the adults engrossed too.

With the forthcoming visit to Buckfast Abbey in mind:

We have the following books by Brother Adam. In them he describes something of his lifelong work on beekeeping practice at the Abbey and on bee breeding. All are short books and easy to read.

Beekeeping at Buckfast Abbey

Breeding the Honeybee

In Search of the Best Strain of Bee

Also, an account of Brother Adam's life by someone who was taught by him:

For the Love of Bees – the story of Brother Adam, by Leslie Bill.

To borrow these books or receive an updated Library List, contact Sarah Kent:
Tel: 01749 670423 / 07986 965320. Email: translation@lawsonkent.co.uk

Colony and apiary available

A couple of months ago we reported some hives which had been left unattended for over two years, and one of our members noticed that one had been knocked over, presumably by badgers. He managed to put it back together, and has been keeping an eye on it. It appears to be queen right, and in 'working order'.

If anybody in the Street, Somerton area is interested in taking over the site and bees, they should contact Eugene Carolan at gene@uwclub.net and he will give you the complete details.

Out apiary available

Another site at Tor View Farm, High Ham, is also available. For this one contact Gina Banfield at sukifranki@yahoo.co.uk. If you want some idea of Tor View Farm, just visit their instagram page. Search for Torviewfarm.

Just in: a visitor to the Bath & West Show Bees & Honey Tent, has offered land at Little Orchard, Sandpitts Hill, Langport, TA10 0NG. Contact Dan Marsh on 07825730063






Ideas I have had

As a beekeeper I have experienced problems that I've tried to solve using my own ideas. Some have worked, others have not!

On chatting with other beekeepers I sometimes discover they are experiencing a problem I have had and solved. By publishing my ideas in the newsletter I may have saved my fellow beekeeper lots of time and frustration.

So would it not be helpful practice for our members to write articles for publication in the newsletter describing how they have overcome problems encountered, thus helping others. Below I describe such an event.

A fellow beekeeper suffers severe dyslexia but wishes to be a good beekeeper and keep records of the results of bee inspections. To keep written records was obviously a non-starter. Although working hard to overcome reading and writing problems, recording of this nature presented a huge obstacle. We discussed this problem and decided the way forward would be to create a recording sheet using symbols to represent observations and could be usefully recorded during a weekly inspection. So between us we designed such a recording sheet which is outlined below. It is used, and has relieved the individual of a problem of how to keep meaningful records. Have you devised

ideas to solve problems in beekeeping? If so please share with us by writing an article for our newsletter editor.

Come on be a helpful beekeeper.

Fred Clarke, Chairman

Somerton Beekeepers' Questionnaire – Now Complete

We have received a phenomenal response to the recent Somerton Beekeepers' Questionnaire, having received nearly 70 responses, which has far exceeded my expectations; a huge thank you.

Without your responses we would not know what you want, and without your offers of help and participation we would not be able to make it happen.

The Committee have now received the results and over the coming months will be reviewing what the membership have said, and asked for, and creating a plan encompassing the various ideas and initiatives that will be taken forward.

Could I also add a big thank you to the small sub-committee who produced and organised the questionnaire.

Fred Clark - Chairman

Visit to Buckfast Abbey Apiary

Each year we manage to arrange a visit to this prestigious centre of beekeeping. During the time of Brother Adam, it was a commercial enterprise, breeding and selling the famed, 'improved', Buckfast bees. Not so any more, Clare Densley runs an educational facility for beekeepers and a local beekeeping club.

The visit takes the form of a chat around a table in the bee shed, over a welcome cup of coffee, then a walk up through the woods to an apiary of 6 - 8 hives of various denominations, but mostly Langstroth. Clare (and possibly Martin Hann) will then demonstrate on several hives, where you can gain some excellent knowledge and learn some good handling tips.

We will meet at the Buckfast Bee Shed at 10.00am, and you will have to make your own way there. There is no charge for this visit, but we have always donated £5.00 each to the apiary fund. Please let me know if you are joining us and I will return your email with directions to the Bee Shed at Buckfast.

Stewart Gould

somertonbees@btinternet.com



Barton St David Scouts

The scouts motto is “Be prepared”. Can the same be said of bees? It is always a challenge to devise an interesting programme to keep teenagers engaged. This was the issue for Richard Burdett, a member of our division and the Scout Leader of Barton St David scouts. Consequently, he took an empty brood box, frames and super along to a meeting to introduce the scouts to beekeeping. They were absolutely transfixed. Armed with this realisation he launched a social media campaign to get bees, hives and equipment. David Charles, who taught Richard many years ago, very kindly supplied some surplus equipment for the group.

Richard’s campaign produced marvellous results. A lady in Weston-Super-Mare, who sadly has back problems, found her three commercial hives were not being enjoyed and made a very generous gesture, offering all three hives to the scouts. With Richard in Australia and armed with hive straps and travel screens I set off for WSM. With the transfer completed with no problems the hives are now successfully located at a farm near Hornblotton. It is Richard’s intention to integrate the scouts into beekeeping fully , I am sure we all want young people entering our craft.

Have you got bees now - or more bees?

With the excellent Spring having provided opportunities to expand the number of hives you keep, your Bee Diseases Insurance may not cover you unless you have declared the correct number of colonies. There is a sliding scale of costs, and even temporary increase or nucleus colonies need to be included. You are automatically covered for up to 3 colonies, but above that, there are additional costs. If you have declared an incorrect number, you will not be insured.

4 - 5 hives	£2.00	6 - 10 hives	£5.25
11 - 15 hives	£7.75	16 - 20 hives	£9.50
21 - 25 hives	£11.10	26 - 30 hives	£13.60
31 - 35 hives	£16.10	36 - 39 hives	£18.10

Secondly, new beekeepers who now have bees should seriously consider taking out full membership, as this will give you the bee diseases insurance mentioned above, and public liability insurance, as well as numerous other advantages, such as the excellent BBKA News once a month. Contact Steve Horne for more information. See back page for details.-

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

Dates for your diary

Third Beginners' practical sessions

10.00am

Sat. June 15th & Sunday June 16th

At our apiary

The Jkune Gap

Visit to Buckfast Abbey apiary

Sunday June 23rd - 10.00 am

Guided by Clare Densley

Skep making master class

Saturday July 20th - 10.00am

At our apiary

Overseen by Diana Robertson

Somerton BKA Honey Show

Saturday September 21st

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall

TA11 6EB

(New venue)

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