

The Newsletter



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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Which came first?

Although many consider that blackthorn (*prunus spinosa*) is the first plant to give both nectar and pollen in the Spring, the willows and sallows (*salix* family) actually get in a bit earlier, with the musk willow (*salix aegyptica*) being a real early bird, showing blooms as early as February. As willows are dioecious, meaning that they have separate male and female plants, the male plants attract more visitors, as they are able to produce both nectar and pollen

Ged Marshall

We've had a bit of a 'Ged fest' in the Somerton area. He came to visit us and talk about building up his colonies for the various crops that he visits during the season, and then returned ten days later for the annual Somerset BKA Lecture Day.



Ged is a lively and informative speaker, giving views based on many years of his experience as a commercial beekeeper. He doesn't suffer swarmy queens and his driving motive is to produce honey - tons of the stuff.

He managed around 80lbs per hive last year, as compared with his normal 100 lbs, but given the harvests that some of us had, he's doing something right. He will take his hives to two or three different crops throughout the season, with oilseed rape and borage being the favourites. He used to take hives to Derbyshire for the heather, but finds it too unpredictable.

At the Lecture Day he gave two completely different talks, with emphasis on colony build up and queen rearing.

Membership Renewal

It seems the message finally got through and the renewals, according to Steve Horne, came flooding in after the rather brusque email. There was a reply from one member who thought we should have thanked those who had renewed on time, and maybe we should have, but we have sent the forms out four times in all. When all members are sent an email, they go in batches of 20, with each recipient getting exactly the same message and attachments, yet each year there will be one or two people in each block who don't seem to notice the attachment on any of the occasions and maintain that they didn't receive it. Hey ho!

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Printed Newsletter - Important

A concerned member has contacted Fred Clarke asking why a hard copy of the newsletter is not being sent by post to those 5 members without internet connection. In an extremely kind gesture, he has even offered to print a copy off for each of the 5 and post them. What he wasn't aware of, was that before taking the decision to stop hard copies, it was discussed at great length and an article was included in the newsletter, informing everybody that this was intended, but if any member wanted to continue receiving one, they could simply phone the editor and request it. No calls were received.

We repeat the offer. If any of the 5 members would like a hard copy, could they please call Stewart Gould on 01749 860755 and it will be done.



I have just rung BBwear who have historically offered associations a 20% discount on their range of bee-suits and this is normally done to coincide with introductory courses, but this year they excelled themselves and were offering a 25% discount. It was just as well I rang them, because that offer ended on the last day of February - yesterday. The 20% still stands and if a bulk order is made, then a further saving can be realised, as they will waive the p&p charges which is normally in the region of £8.00 per suit.

On a standard suit costing £98.95 the saving will be £19.79, reducing it to £79.16. We already have enough interest to make a bulk order, but if anybody else would like to take advantage, please www.bbwear.co.uk choose a style, size and colour, then let Stewart Gould know, at somertonbees@btinternet.com we will organize your new suit. Payment details will be arranged later.

Bees for sale

A lady called Candy Leaver who lives in the Bridgwater area has 6 colonies of bees for sale. They are said to be strong and on double brood, so if you are interested, give her a call on 07771 926996. She is available between now and 9th March, then after 1st April, on.

This may not be the best time to move them, but that could be discussed. If you are a new beekeeper, you could always ask for a more experienced person for assistance.

Grand Opening

So far, out of the 170 invitations sent out by email and post, only 20 people have replied, saying that they would like to be at our Grand Opening, with a partner, or by themselves. Please reply to somertonbees@btinternet.com as soon as possible. We really need to finalise catering requirements. The deadline has gone by, but never mind, everybody, and their partners, are welcome, so please let us know if you are coming, along with any dietary requirements.



*Invites all its members
to the Grand Opening
of our Apiary*

12.30 pm for 1.00 pm Saturday April 21st
Downslade Quarry, Downslade Lane, Upton, Long Sutton

RSVP to somertonbees@btinternet.com ~~by February 28th~~
with any dietary requirements

Apiary progress

There was an excellent work party last Saturday. February 24th, despite the bitter cold. The sun shone all morning and the tea urn was out to good use. Glyn Stenson and his grandson Anthony Devine, ably assisted by Eric McLaughlin, are doing a great job on the dry stone wall behind the pond. Nick Clarke whipped the tiling up in no time and Kate Parker, Sally Lye and Jackie Mosedale were wielding paintbrushes all morning. The threshold to the building is now waterproof and the logs placed around the pond by Paula Hunt, are looking great, as is the bank on the south side of the car park. Jeff White took tree pruning to a new level by including his hand in the scheme.

It is beginning to look really good



Vita Europe Calendar 2018

Dave Reynolds, pictured receiving a prize from Somerset President Ken Tredgett at our 2017 honey show, wins prizes every year. He wins prizes for his honey, but it is the photographic section where he excels. Scanning through the Vita-Europe calendar recently I saw a name I recognised - David Reynolds, and there

representing the month of March was a magnificent photo of a bee approaching a flower. If that wasn't enough, I looked through the rest of the calendar, only to find that he had done it again in July. Two months represented by one person, is a great achievement, and one of our members to boot, so congratulations Dave.



If you want to see the rest of the calendar and Dave's other amazing photograph, go to www.vita-europe.com/beehealth and look down to the calendar section. Vita-Europe also have a gallery of bee related photographs.

Somerset BKA Lecture Day

Those who didn't take advantage of this excellent group of speakers, missed a real cornucopia of extremely interesting subjects. As mentioned earlier, Ged Marshall was excellent with both his talks, and Pam Hunter covered the evolution of plants and insects extremely well, but the highlights for many were the interesting views of Argentinian Paulo Mielgo from Vita Europe, who emphasised the need to feed bees with pollen (not pollen substitute) in the Spring and Michael Keith-Lucas, retired professor of plant sciences, who now helps the police with the analysis of pollen samples in criminal cases, and the analysis of honey. The piece of information that most people seem to have hung on to is 'Don't bury a body in the woods'. There is so much incriminating pollen

Somerton BKA February Committee Meeting

As the entire meeting was dedicated to organizing the Grand Opening, there is little to report, except to say that car parking for all the anticipated extra cars has been taken care of, the hog for the hog roast has been ordered, although the size needs verifying, and an intrepid committee member has volunteered to go to France to collect the sparkling wine (at his own expense). He may just pick up some for himself while he is there.

Volunteers are needed for car parking duties and general stewarding on the day of the opening. Anybody who feels they haven't previously been able to get involved, but would like to, should reply to:- somertonbees@btinternet.com.

Your help will be greatly appreciated.

The Basic Assessment

This does what it says on the can. It assesses the basic requirements of bee-keeping, and anybody, who has been keeping bees for a full year, can apply to take it. It is not an examination, but a practical demonstration of what you know, prompted by questions the assessor will ask. Last year's new beekeepers can all put themselves forward, but how many will?

It may cost £30.00 to take the 'Basic' but that is returned in full if you pass. It's worth bearing in mind that **the pass rate is 96%**. You have to do something pretty catastrophic to fail.

The syllabus is available on the BBKA website. www.bbka.orgf.uk, then go to Exams and Learning. It looks daunting, but there is nothing in the Basic that you didn't learn at the Beginners' sessions.

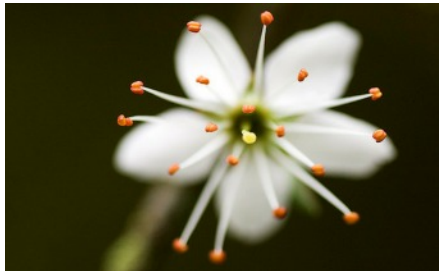
Exams and assessments are not everybody's cup of tea, as has been volubly demonstrated recently, but this one hardly falls into that category.

As we have left members to their own devices in the recent past, we are initiating some sessions where anybody, even just, considering it, can go along and see what is involved. Suzy Perkins has volunteered to run these sessions, so contact her at apicrepe.tengore@talktalk.net

Have a go. What have you got to lose?

Blackthorn getting earlier

Having said that blackthorn is often preceded by some of the sallow and willow species, it was interesting to see blackthorn in bloom on the A37 near Hornblotton on Saturday February 24th. How much nectar it was giving up in the chill of recent days isn't certain, but it would probably be in ice cube form. From records I note that it was in bloom in December in 2015, but that was a freak blossoming on one bush.



Hedge Cutting Law

As a group of people interested in the welfare of our countryside and its creatures saw the introduction of new rules for hedge-cutting under cross compliance. The prime reason is to avoid disturbing the diminishing numbers of nesting hedgerow birds.

It means that you are not allowed to cut or trim a hedgerow between 1 March and 31 August unless you have applied for a derogation from the RPA and received written permission or any of the following apply: This doesn't apply to garden hedges, but all farmland is included.

The hedgerow overhangs a highway, road or footpath over which there is a public or private right of way and the overhanging hedgerow obstructs the passage of, or is a danger to, vehicles, pedestrians or horse riders

The hedgerow is dead, diseased, damaged or insecurely rooted and because of its condition, it or part of it, is likely to cause danger by falling on to a highway, road or footpath; or obstructs the view of drivers or the light from a public lamp

It is to carry out hedge-laying or coppicing during the period 1 March to 30 April (inclusive)

It is to trim a newly laid hedgerow by hand, within six months of it being laid

Last year there was widespread contravention of this law. Please report any incidents.

Bee of the month - The ivy bee

Now that the smell of Ivy in hives is subsiding, and pigeons are beginning to discard Ivy berry seeds wherever they wish, maybe it's time to reflect on this "Bee of the Month". The relative newcomer, oft mistaken for the Honey Bee, seen merrily dancing over Ivy flowers, falsely inflating the apparent abundance of our



nurtured workers,..... is the Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederae*). First recognised as a separate species in 1993, initially recorded on UK soil in Dorset in 2001, and presently continuing its march steadily northwards. It is slightly smaller than the Honey Bee, with lighter stripes. In habit it is a solitary Mining Bee (albeit nesting in large groups), emerging late in the season to feed almost exclusively on pollen and nectar from Ivy flowers. The queen and males do not over-winter and instead die out, leaving the next generation to mature underground, before they emerge the following late summer and autumn to restart the cycle.

Jeff White

Now you see them



40 hives were taken from near Fringford/Bicester, between 17th and 24th February 2018. The bees were over-wintering prior to being moved for pollination and were hidden from general view, the hives measure about 18" (500mm) cubed and weigh about 40lb/20kg each, they were only accessible across a field margin and would have required a substantial vehicle to move them (perhaps a 4x4 and trailer). They have distinct markings and can be identified if found.

The bees would not have been happy at being disturbed and would have required some skill to move them.

The thieves will need care in relocating them as they will have a strong presence – they will require the space of at least 10 pallets and will need to be some distance from people – a town garden or traveller site would not be ideal.

Unless cared for they will become an increasing nuisance as the spring progress as they run out of space and swarm.

Please be vigilant and let Bicester Police or me know if you are aware of any suspicious activity relating to this – you can contact us via email – brackleybees@hotmail.com, twitter – @ElmTreesBees, at home – Ashanti – Hill Street Brackley NN13 6AL – or phone 01280 703151 / 07759824777.

Tony Manton & beekeeping family

Now you don't - Thanks to Bee Equipment Ltd for this





The 41st BBKA Spring Convention will be held on **13th - 15th April at Harper Adams University, Newport, Shropshire TF10 8NB**

The Convention offers over 20 lectures, 40+ Workshops and Courses, food and accommodation. Activities are also available for non-beekeepers. Saturday's Trade Show will include all the main suppliers from 8:30am to 4:30pm.

Book via the BBKA website and note there is a bookable shuttle service from Stafford station. Tickets are £25 for members if booked in advance and £30 for non-members. If purchased on the day the price goes up to £30 and £35 respectively. Entry to the Trade Show only is £5 on the day.

www.bbka.org.uk/Event/spring-convention-2018

County Matters

The AGM of Somerset BKA will be held at Wedmore Golf Club, BS28 4QT on Saturday 10th March. It may still be possible to book lunch if you wish to, but as previously mentioned on several occasions, there are several key posts remaining vacant. It is too late to make nominations now, but attending would mean that as a full member, you could vote in, or out the nominee of your choice.

Events start at 12.00 noon with lunch at 12.30pm and the speaker, Dr Peter Kennedy of Exeter University will talk on 'ecosystem service provision by insects'. Interestingly his research includes the feasibility of tracking Asian hornets using radar.

For more information contact Liz Friend at friend.elizabeth@gmail.com

Dates for your diary

**‘Wot a Woppa’
Bob Smith NDB**

Thursday 8th March
Making the most of our nectar flow
The Parish Rooms,
Somerton TA11 7NB

**Somerset BKA AGM
Wedmore Golf Club, BS28 4QT**

Saturday March 10th
12.00 noon

**Spring Auction
of secondhand equipment
Sunday March 25th
Ruishton Village Hall, Taunton TA3 5JD**

**Beginners’ Practical Course
First Session**

**Saturday April 14th - 10.00 am
Divisional Apiary
Downslade Quarry, Downslade Lane,
Upton, Long Sutton**

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