

The Newsletter



Volume no 28 Issue 2 March 2021

SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Bees on blackthorn (*prunus spinosa*)

It always gladdens the heart to see the first blossoms on prunus varieties, and although it's difficult to distinguish which is which from a speeding car, you can be sure that the bees are finding pollen and on warmer days they'll find nectar too.

White blossom is appearing in hedgerows and gardens all around the area, but it's still too early to open up the hives for that, long awaited, first inspection, as another cold snap is expected toward the end of the first week of March. If you have fondant above your crown-boards, then a sneaky peek to see if it needs topping up, wouldn't be a bad idea.

Let's hope that all colonies have come through the strange winter we've just been through.

Well! That went well.

The first online Beekeeping Course is behind us now, but all six sessions seemed to be very well accepted with three being conducted by Joe King and the other three by Stewart Gould. Joe's wife Chris was 'register monitor' keeping a close eye on anybody trying to sneak past 'Security'.

We started with 91 participants and only shed 7 along the way, which shows that we were doing something right. As letting people into the session takes along time, some of the sessions lasted over two hours, but there was very little drop off. These new beekeepers have tenacity.

Several have already found good second hand equipment bargains, but there are more out there looking for hives and bees, so if you have spare equipment, let me know and we'll forward the information to interested parties.

It is highly probable that we won't be able to run practical sessions this season, so if you would like to share your knowledge or even if you need a hand, there is almost certainly a new beekeeper near you who would jump at the chance

If you contemplate making new nucleus colonies this year, get in touch as we have several new beekeepers hoping to buy 'nucs'.



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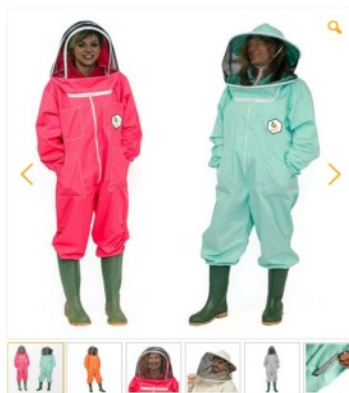
BBwear bee suits

Every year we offer the new beekeepers the chance to buy a quality bee suit at a discounted price, as the result of an arrangement we have with BBwear.

We also throw open the offer to all our members, so if your bee suit needs replacing or you fancy having a second one, let us know. Go to the BBwear website

<https://www.bbwear.co.uk/clothing/bee-suits>

and choose your style, size, colour and whether a Basic level or deluxe. Full retail prices for a complete suit start at £126.99 but there will be a 15% discount on all purchases and no p&p to pay either. The nearest equivalent suits are £139.99 and the best known manufacturer is charging £237.00 for their cheapest suits this year, so grab yourselves a bargain. We'll collect all details and then ask for a, BACS payment straight into the Somerton Beekeepers account. Send your order to somertonbees@btinternet.com by **Friday 12th March**.



Suits will be collected from our apiary, with timed slots, allowing 5 or 6 people to pick up their orders every half hour. We will not be mailing suits out.

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.

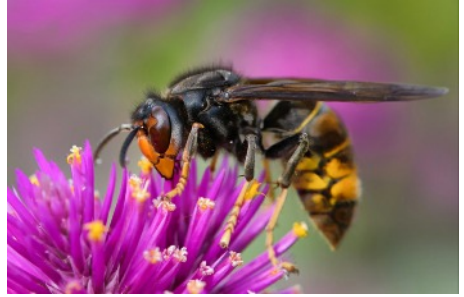
Foundation. National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood available

Eddie Howe email:- redrascal444@gmail.com Mobile 07812 738793

Tel. 01458 272114

Asian Hornet - Update

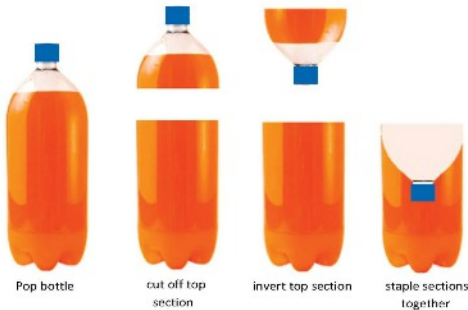
Last year we had an easy year, as almost the whole of Europe was locked down, and transport systems and deliveries ground to a halt just when Asian Hornet queens were on the wing. There were still high numbers of Asian Hornets in Europe but very few reached us or the Channel Islands.



Although we are still locked down, it is not as strict as last year, and international transport is continuing as normal, meaning that we are more likely to see Asian Hornets on our shores again this year. We need to prepare for this now as temperatures are rising, and queens are going to emerge.

Traps

As in previous years we need to put out monitoring traps, somewhere easily visible, to capture any AH queens. **This needs to be done now.** I do have a small number of traps if you need one, but your own instructions are on bee base.



Suterra

Could you all let me know **asap** if you need any Suterra as I only have a small amount. (Suterra is a proprietary bait for hornet traps).

Asian Hornet Team members

If you would like to be part of the Somerton Asian Hornet Team or can confirm your interest in remaining a member of the existing Asian Hornet Action Team please let me know.

Continued

Cascading Asian Hornet Information

As it is still unclear what events may happen this year, I will post information on facebook, so that you can then send out to friends, family, every club, interest group, or organisation that you belong to. The aim is to get information out to as wide an audience as possible - not just beekeepers. If you also do Twitter or Instagram, then please add it to those too.

Bernie Perkins

Somerton Asian Hornet Co-ordinator

Tel: 07948 408 770

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NB If placing hornet traps, please check them regularly, so that harmless species, such as moths or European hornets, can be released. Don't bait traps with sugar solution or honey, as this will attract bees, but use one of the many suggested baits (jam solution, beer and Marmite, white wine with vinegar etc.)

Family photo

The frogs in our pond have been croaking for about ten days now and finally we have a small amount of frog spawn, but our wildlife pond at the apiary hasn't attracted frogs in the four years that it's been there, so we're asking for your help. It's not advisable to transfer spawn to a pond that already has frogs, because of the risk of transmitting the fungal disease known as chytridiomycosis, which is decimating populations of many species of frog around the globe.



An empty pond is a different matter, as there are no frogs to infect, so if you have some spare spawn in your pond it would be very much appreciated. Contact Joe King on 01749 890357 or Eric McLaughlin on 07910 764069. They are at the apiary most Wednesday mornings, and could assist with dispersal.

Joe has thrown out a further request for toad spawn, which can be told from frog spawn, as it is in a long string, rather than a gloopy lump. In this photo is a toad, wrapped in its own spawn, but with frog spawn in the background, which lays lie to the urban myth that you won't find frogs and toads in the same pond.



From the Guardian Newspaper

Over the last 30 years, up to a quarter of all known bee species have fallen off international global records, despite a major increase in the number of such records available.

Around 20,000 species of bee are known to science, but analysis of a detailed international data set suggests around 5,000 of these species have not been seen since 1990.

Good News from Farmer's Weekly

On January 27th I wrote to both David Warburton (MP for Somerton & Frome) and George Eustice (Minister for the Environment). I received an acknowledgement from both, promising a response, but I have received nothing.

Farmer's Weekly posted this article online on Tuesday 2nd March.

[Sugar beet growers will not be able to use neo-nicotinoid-treated seed this spring after cold weather reduced the risk of virus yellows disease.](#)

[Low temperatures during February mean that only 8.37% of the national sugar beet area is forecast to be affected by virus yellows by the end of August 2021.](#)

This is below the 9% trigger threshold for growers to use Cruiser SB neonicotinoid treated seed to combat the disease. An independent forecast from Rothamsted Research also predicts that the first aphids which spread the virus will arrive in crops from 18 May. This is much later than in 2020, when the first aphids were seen in crops in late March – and again means the risk of virus yellows is reduced.

A bulletin from the British Beet Research Organisation said: “Cold weather has had a significant impact on over-wintering aphid populations.” This had reduced aphid numbers and was likely to delay the date of their migration into the 2021 crop, it said on Tuesday (2 March). “This is a very similar national forecast to that in 2018. Aphids were first recorded in crops in late May 2018. This is very welcome news for crops in 2021.”

Drilling into good seed-beds – as soon as possible after seed arrived on farm – would ensure beet crops established quickly, the bulletin said. “Consequently, plants will be more mature, resilient, and resistant to the impact of virus when aphids finally arrive.”

Neo-nicotinoids are banned over concern that they are harmful to pollinating insects, including bees.

Riverford Foods Newsletter Feb . 2021

The extract below, from the Riverford Newsletter is referring to the UK Government’s decision to offer derogation of the ban of Cruiser SB for a six month period.

animal welfare standards required in the UK; they have initiated a rushed consultation on gene editing, which has all the hallmarks of white-washing a predetermined position; and they have overturned the ban of a bee-threatening neonicotinoid insecticide to treat sugar beet seeds. My blood boiled when I found that the NFU had been secretly encouraging farmers to lobby for the insecticide, while in the same letter asking them to “refrain from making the letter public”. Publicly pretending to be responsible (in this case, to care for the environment), while privately lobbying to resist any restriction that will impact profits, is just what the oil, tobacco and pharmaceutical industries did so effectively for 50 years. I had hoped we had moved beyond such self-serving subterfuge, and am ashamed to find my own industry perpetuating it.

Membership Renewal for 2021

This was in last month's newsletter, but has been included again for those who wish to, but haven't as yet.

We don't want to lose any members.

Member subscriptions should all be in by now, as membership runs from January 1st - December 31st. **Renewal forms are being sent out again with this newsletter**, and should be returned to Alison Dykes, whose address is on the forms - **as quickly as possible**.

If your renewal was not received by the end of February, your membership expired, and you won't receive this newsletter, or the BBKA News anymore. Your insurances won't be valid, and it will now take 6 weeks for the processing of new insurances, and for your BBKA News delivery to be reinstated.

Those who became Associate Members as a result of attending the Introductory course last year, and now have bees, should really consider taking up full membership, as this will give you excellent insurance cover, and you will receive the BBKA News each month.

If you have been attending the online introductory course, and live in the Somerton Division catchment area, you are now Associate Members of Somerton Division of Somerset BKA, and are entitled to join in any of our activities and all participants will receive this newsletter each month.

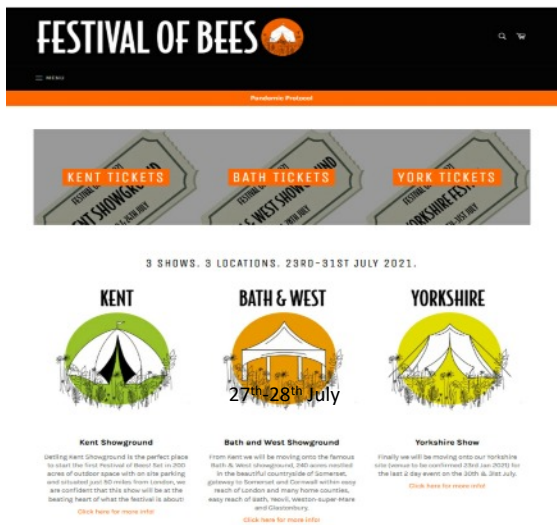
Did you know

Honey bee antennae (sometimes called feelers) have amazing sensory powers and can detect touch, smell, taste, temperature, relative humidity, carbon dioxide, stresses in the body and even speed of flight. These are detected by sense organs of several configurations called sensilla.

On a single drone antenna there are 500,000 sensilla, of which about 30,000 are sense plates.

Festival of Bees

For many years, there was a large trade presence at the BBKA Spring Convention, but as the result of a slight disagreement, a breakaway event was created and became Bee-tradex as was run by a company called Fragile Planet. It was recently sold to Patrick Murfet of Bee Equipment Ltd, from whom we have bought MAQS treatment in the past. It has now become a three site event and has been re-branded as 'The Festival of Bees'. However, it remains a predominantly commercial enterprise, with an invitation to local associations to promote their craft, and carry out demonstrations. Entrance is £10.00 for an adult. I don't know about you, but I've never paid to go into a shop.



The screenshot shows the website for the Festival of Bees. At the top, it says "FESTIVAL OF BEES" with a bee icon. Below that, there are three ticket options: "KENT TICKETS", "BATH TICKETS", and "YORKSHIRE TICKETS". Each ticket option has a "BOOK NOW" button. Below the tickets, it says "3 SHOWS, 3 LOCATIONS, 29RD-31ST JULY 2021." and then lists the three locations: "KENT", "BATH & WEST", and "YORKSHIRE". Each location has a date and a "BOOK NOW" button. Below the locations, there are three columns of text describing each location: "Kent Showground", "Bath and West Showground", and "Yorkshire Show". Each column has a "Click here for more info" link.

If the name Patrick Murfet sounds familiar, it might be because he is the person who intends to import bees from Italy, which is now illegal, through the back door of Northern Ireland. He publicised the problems he was facing with coverage in the Guardian and many other newspapers and online news sites including www.india.com, which was stretching the truth a little thinly

Brexit rules mean 15m baby bees may be seized and burned, says beekeeper

Somerset BKA do not agree with the importation of bees, and in light of this attempt to 'bend' the rules, have taken the decision not to support the event. There is still a strong possibility that COVID restrictions will prevent it from going ahead anyway.

Somerset BKA will still be represented at the Royal Bath & West Show over August Bank Holiday, provided that event is not blocked by COVID legislation.

Bees for Sale

Due to ongoing family commitments, I am having to downsize the number of colonies of bees that I currently run. I will therefore have a limited number of full colonies for sale after their first inspection (weather permitting) in the spring. All the colonies were treated for varroa in the autumn and are headed by one of my home bred local Queens.

Please contact me if you would like to be considered for one of these colonies. I also hope to produce a small number of nucleus colonies, if you are interested please let me know so that I can add your name to the waiting list.

Suzy Perkins

Tel: 0791 406 9078

Email: apicrepe.tengore@talktalk.net

Matt French

I am very sad to report the death of Matt French, a past member of the Somerton division, who passed away on 17th February 2021 after a brief illness.

Matt and his wife Nikki were members of Somerton Beekeepers Association from 1992. Matt was one of those quiet unsung heroes who contributed greatly in the background to the success and smooth running of the Somerton Division.

Between 1993 and 2001 Suzy and I produced the Somerton divisional newsletter. Back in the days when cut & paste literally meant that! Matt, realising the cost of printing the newsletter to the division, volunteered the use of his print room photo copier. We would type everything up, cut out appropriate pictures, lay out and stick on to A4 sheets of paper. I would then take the completed copy to Matt's office, Fathoms in Langport, where I effectively took over the print room for the best part of a day. The only cost to the division was the paper. (How technology has changed) I think I may have even had a cup of coffee and a biscuit from Matt's secretary!

Thank you, Matt. You will be greatly missed. Our sincere condolences go to Nikki and family.

Bernie Perkins.

From the apiary

Eric, Joe and Nigel have kept up their weekly visits to care for the bees at the Somerton BKA apiary, and as well as bemoaning the lack of frog spawn in the pond, have been carrying out limited monitoring of the hives. Sadly, two of the hives have succumbed to *Nosema apis*, a fungal disease of the gut in adult honeybees which, until 2013, we were allowed to treat with an antibiotic called fumidil B. It was considered that allowing beekeepers to treat with an antibiotic was not advisable, and since then we



have had to take avoiding action, and carry out complete comb changes in an effort to thwart it, but these are not always successful.

The remaining hives have come through winter reasonably well and first full inspections will be carried out soon.

The Korean Bee Tree planted by David Charles at the opening of the apiary continues to struggle and Joe has taken the step of planting a crab apple (*John Downey*) in the meadow to act as a memorial to David, who did so much for beekeeping.

The really good news is that we now have running water, and when Eric, finally, manages to convince Western Power Distribution that registered charities don't have to pay VAT, we will also have mains electricity. We've nearly entered the 21st century.

It is still not clear if, or when we will be able to hold practical sessions for new beekeepers at the apiary, but if possible, these sessions will go ahead.

Committee meetings, which had been held at the apiary, will resume when possible, but in the meantime, have been conducted in (what else?) Zoom sessions. Most things discussed at the meeting held on March 3rd, have been mentioned in these pages.

Dates for your diary

Online Zoom talks

Various upcoming online talks. Watch your emails.

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