

The Newsletter



Vol no 29 Issue 2 March 2022

SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Mouse-guards don't always work

This image is taken from a video which appeared on **facebook** recently. The mouse was stuck trying to get out of the hive. It did finally escape after having sustained several stings, one of which can be seen on its nose. It just goes to show how small an aperture a mouse can squeeze through.

It goes to show that we're not out of the woods yet, and only when the blackthorn and dandelions come into full bloom, will we be able to relax and start counting our chickens, so to speak.

Somerton Beekeepers February committee meeting

The meeting was again held via Zoom, and we had a very representative turn out.

Eric McLaughlin reported that all hives at the apiary are in good fettle given the time of year, and the next inspection will be on March 1st.

The treasurer reported a healthy bank balance which will be somewhat depleted by the cost of the electrical installation. This will happen eventually, when Western Power Distribution finally get their act together and sort out the way-leaves across neighbouring land.

Membership numbers are exactly the same as they were at this time last year, retaining Somerton's position as the largest division of Somerset BKA.

Sarah Kent reported that she has bought a new volume which is reviewed later in the newsletter. BBKA have revamped all the syllabi for the modular exams and there is an extensive reading list. Many of the required reading books are already in the library but she will compile a list of those which would be required to fulfil the requirements of all the modules. It's a mark of what is done for members that our extensive library already has the bulk of those books. Buying those required for module 6 alone would cost in excess of £300.

On county matters it was reported that there are 5 nominees for the New Leaf Award, 2 of whom are now Somerton members. The decision as to who receives will be made by the divisional delegates, with the successful nominee being named at Somerset BKA's AGM in mid March.

Mention was made of a member's concern regarding the perceived lack of a spending plan. Somerton is not a poor division and it was thought that we did not have a budget in place. Fred Clarke was at pains to point out that we actually do have a financial plan. This too will be reported on later in this newsletter.

At last month's meeting the subject of disabled access to the building and beehives was mentioned. Quotations for both are being sought and the results will be known soon.



Apiary visits

For many years, visiting other people's bees was a highlight of the beekeeping season, but as with many other things, COVID put paid to that. Good news!!! We're reinstating this idea.

So far, one beekeeper has offered to host a visit. If you could be persuaded to offer your hives up for a demonstration then please let me know. You don't have to give the demonstration yourself, unless you want to. I'm sure we can find somebody who will volunteer to show aspects of your bees which might be out of the ordinary, or demonstrate a certain manipulation.

The one person who has offered, so far, has expressed a wish for less experienced beekeepers to be the focus. In the past, it has been the tendency for more established members to be involved.

All you have to do to attract a healthy audience is offer teas and cake, but if you want more information contact:-

Joe King 01749 890357 or jk.pilton@btinternet.com

Visit to Buckfast Abbey bees

During the Somerset BKA Lecture Day it occurred to me that we can start visiting other people's bees once again, and one of the popular trips was always to Buckfast Abbey to visit Clare Densley and Martin Hann, who now look after, probably, the most famous apiaries in Britain.



I contacted Clare and have been given two of the last three available slots for this year. In the past we have visited in high season, and Clare has talked about managing swarms and harvests. One slot will be shared between Somerset members and is already pretty much full, but the other one will be purely for **Somerton** members.

If you are interested in visiting Buckfast Abbey bees on Saturday August 27th, please let me know as soon as possible. **Numbers are restricted to 20** so it will be very much 'first come first served'. There is no charge, as such, for the visit, but they do ask for a contribution to their petty cash fund. This would be in the region of £7.00. We will also have to find our own way there, so car sharing will be a good idea.

Contact Stewart Gould - somertonbees@btinternet.com



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SOMERTON BEEKEEPERS' Spending Plan 2022

At our last AGM one of our members suggested that the Association should devise a spending plan. This plan would outline how the Association's funds could be spent on various projects, instead of leaving monies in the bank at the present low rates of interest.

Your committee has considered this suggestion and believing it to be a sound one have identified several tasks that could be developed as future spending plan projects. These are as follows:

- a) Installation of a septic tank
- b) Improving the surface of the car park, e.g. tarmac, bound gravel.
- c) Improving disabled access to the Bee Space building and "flower meadow"
- d) Replacing gates at the main entrance.

A clean water supply has already been achieved and the installation of mains electricity is being pursued.

Your committee has given much thought to the above possibilities and have decided to look at suggestions (a) and (b) at present.

Bee Suits

For several years we have managed to strike a deal with BBwear for suits for our new beekeepers and all other members. They offered us a 15% discount and free p&p on an order of more than 10 suits. This year, however, they have chosen not to give any discounts and will charge for p&p. Furthermore they have increased their price by £40, so we shopped around and Old Castle Farm Hives, who offer sting-proof lightweight suits, will offer a 5% discount with free p&p on orders for more than 10 suits. If you're interested, let me know.

<https://www.oldcastlefarmhives.com/product-category/clothing/>



Contact me before March 15th with size, style and hood preference
somertonbees@btinternet.com

Library updates

Members who watched the recent Somerset Lecture Day on Zoom will remember that the speakers mentioned a few books in connection with their talks. Of these, we have the following available to borrow from the Divisional Library:

“Honey by the Ton” and ***“Honey Days”*** by Oliver Field. Both are easy reading.

“The Honeybees of the British Isles” by Beowulf Cooper. A collection of the author’s writings on a variety of topics, published posthumously. Lots of interesting snippets of information.

“Following the Wild Bees” by Prof. Tom Seeley. Tells the reader how to locate wild bees nests by trapping a handful of bees ‘in the wild’, feeding then releasing them and trying to follow them as they carry the food back to their nest. Just to add to the difficulties the nest is normally located a very long way up a tree. Crazy, but fascinating.

To borrow books from the Divisional Library, or ask for the full book list, contact librarian Sarah Kent .

Email: translation@lawsonkent.co.uk. Ring or text: 07986 965320.

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

Demonstrators Needed

This year we have around 45 new beekeepers wanting to join the ranks of Somerton Beekeepers, and involve themselves in our joyous, yet sometimes confusing pass-time.

Throughout the beekeeping season we run seven practical sessions to coincide with key events. These are usually held on a Saturday morning, but depending on how many people we have it may be necessary to have sessions on the Saturday and Sunday. We wouldn't ask you to do both days on all weekends but if you could spare a couple of hours on occasion it would make all the difference.

Long years of beekeeping experience aren't necessary, as you would be demonstrating the basics to new beekeepers, most of whom won't have seen inside a hive yet. To offer your help just drop Eric an email. It won't commit you, unless you want it to.

Eric McLaughlin

jandemclaughlin@gmail.com

Beeswax wanted

Steve Horne's next door neighbour is looking for a quantity of wax as she is wanting to make various items for sale. He hasn't got any left over from last year and she asked him if he knew any other beekeepers who might be able to sell some to her. She is happy to pay the going rate (not sure what that is currently?)

Contact Jan Hobbs - telephone number 01278 661488

North Newton, near Bridgwater

Ivan Chick

Some of you will remember Ivan Chick who gave a talk to Somerton Beekeepers in January of 2015. Sadly, Ivan died not long after the talk. He told some excellent tales of growing up in Montacute and 'borrowing' timber from American troops stationed there during the war, and of his times in West Molesey in Surrey. This photo was found by Julia Funnell when sorting out her late parents' estate. Ivan moved back to Somerset after his time in Surrey and lived in Pitney, near to our apiary. The photo shows him collecting a swarm of bees from a tree in the garden of Julia's grandparents home in First Avenue, West Molesey. She guesses it was taken in the late 50s.



BOOK NOW!



Spring 2022 Convention

Friday 8 - Saturday 9 – Sunday 10 April 2022

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Lectures, Workshops and Seminars covering a wide range of practical and scientific topics, directed at all levels of experience, presented by leading experts. Bumper Trade Show Saturday 9th

Speakers and Tutors include; Marin Anastasov, Mark Barnett, Shirley and Richard Bond, Norman Carreck, Lars Chittka, Celia Davis, Joyce Nisbet, Juliet Osborne, Julian Parker, Sara Robb, Nigel Semmence, Jo Widdicombe, Geraldine Wright, and more...

For further information, **and to book** from 31st January
see the Spring Convention pages at www.bbka.org.uk

John Talbot

John had been a beekeeper for about 50 years having started in the 1960s. Initially he kept his bees at home in Street but subsequently moved them to Compton Dundon and to the orchards of Heck's cider. He was well known to many other local beekeepers at that time - including the likes of David Charles and Jed Doel. After giving up the bees he remained interested in the craft and has freely shared both his knowledge and many items of equipment with me. He would say "Jeff, I've got something for you" and then produce a box of items.

Apparently, the initial move of the bees to Compton Dundon didn't go as planned - the bees were back in Street before John.

John passed away peacefully on Sunday 13th February 2022 in Yeovil Hospital. A Memorial Service for him will be held at The Mission Church, Street on Wednesday 2nd March 2022 at 12.30 pm.

My bees have been told - Rest in Peace, John.

Jeff Brewer

Auction of second hand Beekeeping Equipment

Ruishton Village Hall

Cheats Road, Ruishton, Taunton, TA3 5JD

Sunday April 3rd

Sale starts promptly at 2.00pm

Submitting items & viewing from 10.00am

Manuka honey not solely from New Zealand

The battle which has raged between New Zealand and Australian honey producers has taken an unexpected turn. The Australian Manuka Honey Association has cheered the latest victory for Australian beekeepers in the "farcical" trans-Tasman battle over the term "manuka honey".



Key points:

Britain's Intellectual Property Office said despite originating as a Maori term the word had entered the English lexicon. The UK said there was an abundance of evidence proving the honey came from places other than New Zealand

The leptospermum tree which bees forage on to produce the honey is native to both countries. New Zealand's Manuka Honey Appellation Society had its government-backed bid to trademark the term in the UK quashed by Britain's Intellectual Property Office recently.

Australian industry players have long argued their NZ counterparts should not be allowed to trademark the words, arguing that the plant from which it was produced is native to both countries. The chairman of the Australian Manuka Honey Association, Paul Callandar, described the decision as a "fair and right" outcome. "For them to claim that it's only for New Zealand is absolutely farcical," Mr Callandar said.

Small wonder that the New Zealanders are miffed with Australian producers and the UK Intellectual Property Office as exports from New Zealand are worth \$75 million Australian dollars (£37.5 million) annually.

The Tregothnan Estate just south of Truro in Cornwall wrongly claims that it is the only place outside of New Zealand that produces Manuka honey.

In the UK however, Manuka has only been cultivated since 1880. The manuka bush, has been grown at Tregothnan since the 19th Century.

Stop Honey Fraud

A petition instigated by Somerset bee-keepers and calling on government to do more to clear the supermarket shelves of adulterated honey is live.

Sign here

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/607735>

Honey selling for as little as 69p a pot has been spotted in Somerset shops. These photos were taken in ALDI Shepton Mallet. Large quantities of imported honey – mainly from China – are believed to be cut with cheap fillers. Consumers are not given the information on the labels to make an informed choice.



Somerset BKA seconded Devon BKA's propositions at the BBKA's Annual Delegates Meeting last month calling on the BBKA to join efforts to stamp out adulterated honey. They were passed by an overwhelming majority.

The petition calls for a full review of the honey market and Honey Regulations, to review evidence of honey fraud within the honey market, and reform regulations and arrangements for enforcement, to prevent future fraud.



Misinformation is also rife. Manuka honey should be predominantly from Manuka bushes, so how does multi-floral Manuka honey make any sense?

Honey is adulterated, purely for profit, on an industrial scale across the globe. We believe current measures to ensure authenticity of honey are woeful. Public health, the free market, livelihoods, food security, consumer confidence and bee health issues are all at risk.

Dates for your diary

**Beginners Practical Sessions
At our apiary
First session**

Saturday April 10th -
10.00am

Taunton BKA - Spring Auction

Sunday 3rd April

Viewing from 10.00am
Auction starts at 2.00pm
Ruishton Village Hall, Cheats Rd,
Ruishton, Taunton
TA3 5JD

BBKA Spring Convention

8th - 20th April
Harper Adams University,
Newport, Shropshire

Somerton BKA Honey Show

Saturday September 17th
Keinton Mandeville Village Hall

President

Jackie Mosedale
01458 241146

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Eric McLaughlin
jandemclaughlin@gmail.com
07910 764069

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