

The Newsletter



Vol no 30 Issue 2 March 2023

SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Spring - but not quite

Diving down to Taunton with Joe King a few days ago, I was delighted to see hedgerows bursting with blackthorn (*prunus spinosa*) in bloom. Blackthorn is an excellent early source of pollen and can be a useful source of nectar too, provided the weather is warm enough, but just as it came into bloom this year we were hit by a cold snap. Fingers crossed.

It should soon be joined by other *prunus* family members, like wild cherry (*prunus avium*), wild plum and some varieties of bullace.

Meanwhile, my bees are making do with the winter flowering honeysuckle (*lonicera fragrantissima*). Roll on the fields of dandelions.

New Beekeepers' Course

We've come to the end of this year's theory sessions, with most of the six meetings very well attended. We started with 44 potential new beekeepers, but have sadly shed 2 along the way.

The practical sessions will be starting on Saturday April 15th and will continue through the summer, at our apiary. We will, of course, be asking for demonstrators to help with these sessions. Don't be shy, just email me at somertonbees@btinternet.com. You don't need to be super-experienced. Remember that nearly all of our new beekeepers will not have been near a beehive as yet. To start with they need to be shown how and why we open hives, and to familiarise themselves with handling bees in large numbers.

From the Chairman

Our librarian Sarah Kent will be moving from the district very soon, and after several years of doing a wonderful job for the division, has to give up the post of looking after Somerton's library. On behalf of all Somerton Members I would like to thank Sarah for all her work for the division. Sarah, thank You very much and we all wish you well for the future.

Our divisional library is a very valuable resource and well used. As Sarah is leaving, it is proposed to house the library in our apiary building, where it could become slightly more accessible. We now need somebody to take it over. If you are interested in helping, please contact me (Jack Barr) on 01458 252850.

At the February committee meeting future programs / workshops / courses and winter meetings were discussed, it very soon became clear that a Programs Secretary would be required. Therefore, we also need a Programs Secretary. Could this be you. Again, if so contact me (Jack Barr) on 01458 252850.

Jack Barr
(Chairman)

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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 Mobile 07812 738793

Tel. 01458 272114

The View from the Divisional Apiary.

Although things have not changed very much from last month in the Apiary. It is very obvious that spring is around the corner and that the active beekeeping season will soon be upon us.



The snowdrops that we have planted are looking good and the first daffodils will soon be out, The buds on our trees are beginning to swell, and the cowslips promise to be as good as last year. Every two weeks we heft the hives and top up any fondant that is needed. Now is the moment that hives starve when they run out of stores, just before the spring flow. If you have any doubts, now, is the time to put on fondant to bolster their reserves. Because of the cold the bees are unlikely to be able to take down syrup yet, fondant is the supplement of choice.

We are turning to various tasks to improve the access to the apiary. The five bar gate has begun to sag and will be re-hung. We will also be laying some surfacing in the run up to the hives, which will radically improve access for mobility scooters and wheel chairs.

Now is the time to ask yourself “Do I have the correct extra equipment ready? Will I have the equipment ready if I have a swarm? Is all my equipment cleaned and sterilised ready for the new season? Don’t get caught out, it is very easy!

Soon we will be going back to weekly inspection of the bees, all of you are very welcome to come and join in on a Tuesday morning for some good company and to do all the work that is appropriate for the season. We look forward to seeing you.

Joe King
01749 890357

The Basic Assessment

If you've been keeping bees for a year then now is the time to consider taking the BBKA Basic Assessment. It's pretty much like a driving test. The one big difference being that the Assessor actually wants you to pass the 'Basic'. They will actively guide you toward the right answer, while ensuring you know it.

It's very much a practical assessment, with conversation and no written work at all. It could be conducted at your apiary, but more likely at the divisional one.

You can apply now by contacting the Somerset Exams secretary at bridget_knutson@yahoo.co.uk. Assessments are carried out in the summer by which time anybody who started last year, will have kept bees for the minimum required period. We will try to run some coaching sessions closer to the time, but for now, have a glance at the syllabus. The link is below. It may look a bit daunting, but it is stuff you already know.

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=424720d6-2f19-4d3c-9065-1dc065f1fbcd>

Who makes Mead

David Venney, one of our members has been asked by Jane Swayne in Baltonsborough if he knows anyone locally who makes mead (she wants to use it for her chocolate making).

If you know of anybody, contact David at David.venney@btinternet.com

Membership renewal for 2023

All memberships should have been renewed by now. Any membership not renewed by 1st March will be presumed to have lapsed. What's more, all associated insurance policies will automatically be voided and they will take 6 weeks from a renewal fee being paid before they can be re-instated. If your membership lapses, you will no longer receive Somerton newsletters or BBKA News, after the current issues.

Membership renewal docs. were sent out with the November and December issues of the newsletter and all members were circulated through the central Er2 system as well, so you will have received them at least three times.

New Beekeepers on our current course need not worry, as their course fee included membership of Somerton Beekeepers for 2023. Anybody else needs to get their skates on.

Bees and Equipment for sale

There will soon be bees and equipment for sale from members of Somerton Beekeepers. More detail will become available soon. In the interim, Chris Harries of Taunton Division has 5 frame over-wintered nucs. For sale at £220 each. Contact **Chris on 01823 442734**

Auction. Annual spring equipment auction

Sun 2nd Apr 2:00pm - 5:00pm

Viewing from 11.00am

Auction • Beekeeping-equipment • Taunton

Ruishton Village Hall, Cheats Rd, Taunton TA3 5JD, UK [map](#)



Come along to our annual spring beekeeping equipment auction. Doors open at 10.00am for entries into the auction.

Refreshments available and a raffle will be held as well.

Free car parking.

calendar by Tockify

Exclusive land for bees

Malcolm Beaton has been in touch to say that he has 70 acres of woodland with flowers in Babcary, near Somerton and wonders if anybody would like to keep bees there. If so, **contact Malcolm on 07786707262 or at deerpark@mbeaton.co.uk**

It sounds superb.

Demonstrators for practical sessions

As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, we are looking for demonstrators for the practical sessions starting on Saturday April 15th at 10.00am. You don't have to be a Master Beekeeper or have kept bee for 50 years. All it needs is the ability to show our new beekeepers the correct way to look through our hives, what we look for and how to deal with a situation which might arise. We check for the queen's presence, keep a constant eye out for varroa, wax moth, sacbrood, chalkbrood, drone laying queen and laying workers etc. In the initial sessions it is just a case of assuring the new beekeepers that they can do it - and how to go about it.

It's always good to see new faces helping out, but the usual suspects are as welcome as they always were. There are chocolate biscuits to be consumed, and Joe has a particular penchant for Kitkats.

The other element which some might consider a bonus is that we sometimes adjourn to the Halfway after the session so that bee conversations can be had in the comfort of a seat in the sun and a glass of refreshing liquid.

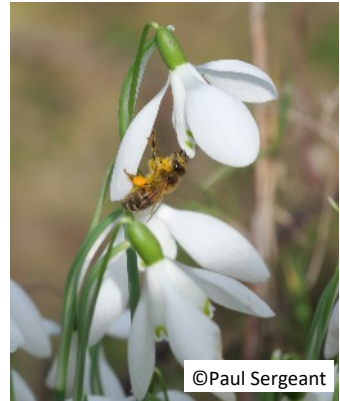
If you would like to give something back to the club then please email me at somertonbees@btinternet.com.

Thank you

Stewart Gould

Somerton Honey Show

This may seem like a million years away, but Saturday September 16th should be etched into your heart. It's obviously etched in mine as it's my birthday, but if you have an interest in photography, then getting some shots from early in the year might give you an advantage, as most photos entered into the photographic classes are of bees in the middle of summer.



Just a reminder of the classes.

41. One Photographic Print pertaining to Beekeeping. Maximum size A4, including mount if any

42. A series of 3 – 5 Photographic Prints pertaining to Beekeeping. Maximum size A3, including mount if any

43. A photograph of a honey bee visiting a flower. Maximum size A4, including mount if any

44. A photograph of a bumble bee visiting a flower. Maximum size A4, including mount if any

45. A photograph of honey bees outside the hive. Maximum size A4, including mount if any

46. A photograph of honey bees inside the hive. Maximum size A4, including mount if any

If you are good with your hands or artistic, you may also be interested in one of the following .

47. A craft or artistic exhibit pertaining to Beekeeping. (e.g. painting, model, embroidery, jewellery, etc.)

48. A Homemade Invention or Appliance pertaining to Beekeeping.

Forward thinking!

BOOK NOW!



Friday 21 - Saturday 22 – Sunday 23 April 2023

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 22nd

Speakers and Tutors include: Randy Oliver (virtually), Samuel Ramsey (virtually), Marin Anastasov, Martin Bencsik, Shirley & Richard Bond, Giles Budge, Stephen Case-Green, Julie Coleman, Michael Collier, Lynfa Davies, Stephen Fleming, Mike Garratt, Fani Hatjina, John Hendrie, Luke & Suzie Hutchinson, Lynne Ingram, Angela Kirk, Stephen Martin, Jane Medwell, Jenny Morgan, Chris Park, Tom Pope, Sara Robb, Anne Rowberry, Debbie Smith, Victoria Soroker, Sean Stephenson, Oliver St.John, Jane Stout, Jim & Val Vivian-Griffiths, Alison Wakeman and more.....

For further information, **and to book** from 30th January see the Spring Convention pages of www.bbka.org.uk

Dates for your diary

Somerset BKA AGM

Long Sutton Golf Club

Saturday 11th March.

Lunch 12.00 midday.

Meeting starts at 2.00pm

BBKA Spring Convention

22nd - 23rd April

Harper Adams University

Newport, Shropshire TF10 8NB

See Spring Convention pages at

www.bbka.org.uk

Taunton Division

Sunday 2nd April - 2.00pm

Auction of S/H Equipment

Ruishton Village Hall

Cheats Road, Ruishton TA3 5JW

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