

# The Newsletter



Vol no 30 Issue 2 March 2024

SBKA website [www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk)



## The start of the season

February 2024 is now confirmed as the wettest February since records began, with 96.6mm recorded at Reading University. Let's hope that's all behind us and that we'll now have a dryish spring with warm weather and lots of early blossom, so that our colonies can start to build up well and healthily.

Now is the time to put up monitoring traps, just in case there are any foundress queen Asian hornets in the area. Monitoring traps will catch, but not kill, Asian hornets and allow other (smaller) species to escape. If you look at the Gard'apis traps advertised in the beekeeping press, you'll see that you can make your own, much much cheaper, from a flat zinc queen excluder and two 150 mm plastic funnels.

## From the Chair

### Spot the Somerton Branch member!

It was good to see some familiar faces when I opened the latest copy of BBKA News. The photo on page 11 featured at least 4 of our members...can you spot more? This photo of the Taunton Spring Auction provides a timely reminder that it is coming up in April. The article features the pros and possible cons of buying at an auction. It is definitely a good place to get equipment if you are starting beekeeping and Stewart and Joe will be able to offer advice and try to help avoid pitfalls if you are a beginner.

### Winter Talks programme

I really enjoyed Leila Goss's talk on Thursday 19 February at Edgar Hall Conference room. I hope the 30 other members there, got as much from it as I did. Leila, who is a seasonal bee inspector, gave a wide ranging talk which was planned to ensure there was no crossover with the talk which Megan Seymour gave at the SBKA Lecture Day. I believe there was something on offer for members at every stage of beekeeping. The principle focus was on planting for bees and ensuring we do what we can to provide forage to keep our bees healthy.

Observation skills are at the heart of being an effective beekeeper and Leila's photos throughout the lecture were amazing. A lot could be gleaned from looking at them, through her eyes. Her commentary as we focused on photos of hives and frames, helped to hone skills to see indicators of pests or disease. Leila reminded us that it is good practice to undertake two in-depth inspections each year, with the **sole** focus of looking for potential pests and disease. The first one should take place when dandelions are in flower, the second when brambles are out.

There was also a pertinent reminder that it is our responsibility to ensure there is sufficient forage in the locality for the **number** of colonies that we keep. The wider the forage available through the year, the healthier the bees will be.

Leila went through varieties of planting which offer more for our bees. When looking closely at single and double headed snowdrops, it became immediately obvious that the common snowdrop with its single head, makes foraging so much easier for bees.

Inspired by her talk, I went on to various websites to look for a few plant varieties for my garden. I did smile when I saw one site offering common dandelion seeds at £2.99. Save your money...come to me if you want a few dandelions.....

Finally one really important message to pass on to everyone is that ANY bee inspector is very happy, and respectful, should a beekeeper want to send them a photo from one of their hives because they are concerned that there may be a problem. Far better for pests or disease to be caught at an early stage. She can be reached on [Leila.Goss@apha.gov.uk](mailto:Leila.Goss@apha.gov.uk) As a civil servant she is paid for through our taxes and so ensure you get your moneys worth!

**Next talk- 'Beekeeping without fuss' Joe Bleasdale Edgar Hall Conference Room. 7.30pm 21<sup>st</sup> March**

### **Committee Work**

The committee have been working hard on your behalf over the past few months. We are fortunate to have a team of such committed members who are so generous with their time. Having spent a lot of time, trying to be the voice of Somerton Division members in the change to a new SBKA Constitution, to little avail, we are now working on a variety of projects that will hopefully have a more direct impact on the facilities and services we offer our own membership. These include putting together a programme of educational and social events, responding to the threat posed by the Asian Hornet and development projects at the apiary including the feasibility of housing the Divisional library there and extending the Beespace and teaching space for inclement weather.

**Gillian Islip  
Chair**

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## **COURSES TO HELP MEMBERS GET PREPARED FOR THE SEASON**

I am arranging these courses on behalf of Somerton Division, to benefit our members. They will be delivered by a trainer who has worked with our members on many occasions.

By running these in the spring, you will all be well prepared to deal with any unexpected occurrences' when working with bees, and you will have a Food Safety certificate in hand, ready to sell you honey at the Royal Bath & West Show, other local shows and of course, SOMERTON HONEY SHOW, in September.

### **First Aid**

This is a certificated course

When? Saturday March 23rd.

Where? Edgar Hall, Somerton, TA11 6SB

Time? 09.00 - 14.30

Cost? £45 per person . ( Please note that this same course delivered by other providers can cost well over £200)

Food safety training - Level 2

When? Saturday 20th April

Where? Somerton Parish Rooms

Time? 09.00 - 13.00 approx.

Cost? £30 per person.

This is also a certificated course

If you would like to sign up to either or both of these courses, please **contact me asap**. Details of payment etc will then follow.

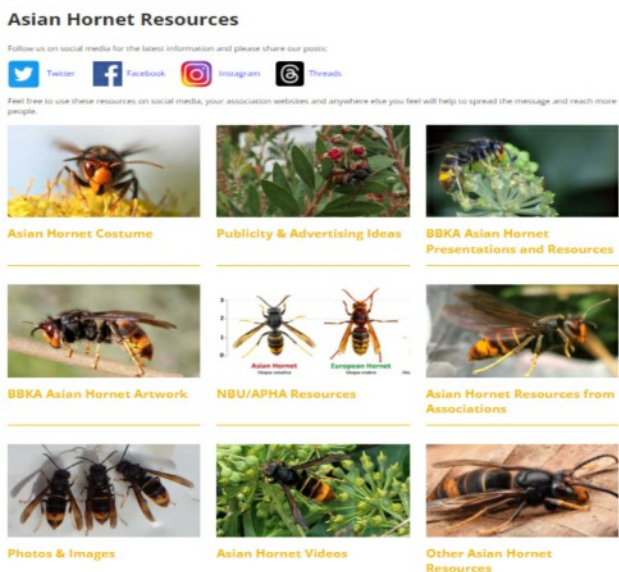
**Jackie can be reached at [jackiemosedale@gmail.com](mailto:jackiemosedale@gmail.com)**

## Useful Asian hornet resources

At the last Somerton committee meeting, David Rose very kindly provided some extremely useful web addresses which will open the doors to a plethora of information on the hornets themselves and necessary equipment, although the prices might frighten you a little.

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/listing/category/asian-hornet-vespa-velutina>

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/other-asian-hornet-resources>



This might prove a little hard to read so use the links

## Summer Apiary visits

As has happened in the past, we are hoping to hold visits to several members' apiaries during the warmer months. If you think you could manage hosting about 20 beekeepers for a couple of hours, could you please contact Alison Clewes at [pansypots@icloud.com](mailto:pansypots@icloud.com)



## February's news from the divisional apiary.

As we slide into March and begin to get the first stirrings of the new season, February inevitably seems to be rather repetitive, the only main task and it's a very important one is to heft the hives, estimate

their weight, and where they seem rather light feed with fondant as necessary. This is the time of year that you are most likely to starve your bees to death even though they are in touching distance of the spring. I think of this as the Scott of the Antarctic syndrome, Scott and his two remaining surviving explorers died of starvation and exhaustion only seven miles from a ton of food. A couple of decent days weather and a little luck and they would have made it.

Importantly, we are preparing for spring. Equipment that has been taken out of use has been sterilised and cleaned and stored in the clean shed. We have appropriate amounts of foundation ready and we are waiting for that first good warm spring day when we can go through the colonies and assess them and their needs.

Now is the time to get ready. If your bees swarmed would you have the equipment ready to hive them rather than have a panic? Eric, who kindly runs his **"Eric's Emporium"** for us at the apiary will be pleased to hear from you ([jandemclaughlin@gmail.com](mailto:jandemclaughlin@gmail.com)). Soon we will go back to our usual routine of being there every Tuesday morning rather than our winter routine of every other Tuesday. We are always pleased to see you, there will be a warm welcome and tea/coffee and refreshments. We look forward to seeing you.

**Joe King**  
**01749 890357**

## Slightly expensive honey

Harrods Food Hall is abuzz with high society shoppers swarming to buy honey on sale at a stinging price... £750 a jar! The amber nectar is in a hexagonal glass jar with a bespoke timber lid, 22-carat gold lettering, a hand-blown glass dipper and even a certificate inside a gold ring to prove its authenticity.

It has been created with the help of a 'honey sommelier' and is sold exclusively at the [London](#) store. Billed as a healthier alternative to fine wines and with a price to match, the makers of 'Australian Rare' boast it is produced by the 'world's healthiest bees'. It is said to contain powerful medicinal properties and there are 'complex' tasting notes. So tempting a target might it be for shoplifters in the food hall, the jars are kept under lock and key, watched by immaculately dressed security guards, with only the boxes they are sold in on display. One Harrods employee told The Mail on Sunday that wealthy Britons and shoppers from the Middle East have flocked to buy the Jarrah honey, with antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and low glycaemic index properties.



Rick Bains, the British co-founder of Australian Rare, made one of his regular visits to Harrods yesterday to check with staff and ensure that his honey was being displayed correctly. He said: 'We're trying to reimagine honey and reimagine luxury gifting by creating the best honey in the world, and Harrods was the best place to showcase that. It's not only some of the best-tasting honey in the world, it's the best medicinal honey, it's exceptional.' He said he works with 40 beekeepers in South-West Australia, a biodiversity hotspot where more than 8,000 rare species of wildflowers bloom, to produce just 888 jars weighing 250g each.

While 'The Supreme' Jarrah honey costs £750, shoppers can also buy 'The Exotic' for £600 and 'The Jewel' for £500 – each with its own distinct colour and flavour and coming from different species of eucalyptus trees. The suggested pairings for each honey range from creamy brie and fig to cheddar and green apple.

Mr Bains said: 'We spent tens of thousands on scientific research and laboratory testing so that we can identify the pollen source in each drop. It is at least 20 times rarer than Manuka honey.'

'I'm so proud to see it being sold in Harrods – I almost have to pinch myself.'

*From The Daily Mail*

*Thanks to Barbara Helm*

## Discounts from BBWear

Each year I contact BBWear and beg for a special discount for our members on their suits, and it works. They are offering a 15% discount on all basic suits, to all BBKA members as can be seen in the message from BBKA on page 12 **BUT they are offering Somerton Beekeepers a 20% discount** on their basic suits. All other discounts are as the BBKA message.

If you are looking for a good quality new bee-suit and are not bothered by an abundance of pockets, then the BBWear would suit you down to the ground - literally.



If you want to take advantage of this offer, we will have to buy at least 1 suits, but if we meet that criterion, the discount will apply and there will be no P&P either. Go to the BBWear website at

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

**Choose a colour, style and size, then let me know your requirements at**  
[Somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:Somertonbees@btinternet.com)



**This may look dull, but it is very important**

**All full members of Somerton Beekeepers are covered by Product and Public Liability insurance to the sum of £10 million.** Here are the details of the new policy.

We have arranged with Aviva, the current insurer for the BBKA's £10million public & product liability policy for members, to extend the description of activities for which members are covered by insurance to include more detail on Asian hornet. The description now reads:

### **The Business**

Registered charity (CIO) and member association (including members activities), representing bee-keeping in the UK. Provision of publications, education and assessment programmes, telephone support and research on bee-keeping and related issues. Promotion of bee-keeping and education of the public about bee-keeping and the importance of bees in the environment (at events, online and by members) and ordinary bee-keeping activities, manufacture & supply of primary hive products, including bee health advice. They are also involved as the authority on honey bees, and accordingly are called upon to work in a wide variety of places, from schools to prisons, advise the public, move swarms and any other activities as required, including advising DEFRA and trapping, freezing and identification of Asian hornets. BBKA will be present when the NBU are involved in destroying nests.

Please note that there is no cover for releasing Asian hornets as it is illegal at present to do this, unless you have a licence.

Members can read and download a copy of the policy and schedule on the [bbkanews.com](http://bbkanews.com) website.

We will be modifying the Insurance FAQs to incorporate these changes which we will circulate, once they have been submitted to and approved by insurers.

**Kind regards**

**Leigh Sidaway, General Manager BBKA**

## Australian stingless bees

Stingless bees produce a healthier honey, uniquely rich in a rare sugar, called trehalulose (not trehalose), which may have benefits ranging from ranking low on the glycaemic index (GI) to displaying antioxidant properties, researchers from the University of Queensland in Australia have shown.



The discovery could support the growth of stingless bee honey markets, and ultimately enable healthier sweet treats of all types, the scientists argue.

Similar to the familiar European honeybee, stingless bees form colonies consisting of one queen tended by multiple foraging workers that make and store honey from the nectar that they gather. More than 600 stingless bee species are known across tropical and subtropical regions of the world. The indigenous peoples of these regions have often considered stingless bee honey to have therapeutic properties.

Although stingless bees are typically less productive than honeybees, their honey is an established food in many regions, including Malaysia. “We had a visiting researcher from Malaysia, Norhasnida Zawawi, who was interested in analysing the sugars in stingless bee honey,” says Natasha Hungerford, a senior research fellow and an organic chemist from the University of Queensland in Brisbane, who led the analysis.

The team, including Hungerford and Zawawi — of the Universiti Putra Malaysia in Serdang — collected honey samples from two stingless bee species from Malaysia, two from Australia, and one from Brazil.

“When we characterized the sugars the honey contained, we got a surprise — we found a large amount of a disaccharide that didn’t match any of the usual standards for sugars in food,” Hungerford says. The mystery compound was the dominant disaccharide in each honey sampled. After isolating the sugar and running further analytical tests, the team identified it as trehalulose.

“It’s an exciting finding, because this sugar is not the major component of any other food,” Hungerford adds.

## Eric's Emporium

### Supplies available from the apiary

There is a stock of frames, foundation and jars at the apiary which are available for purchase every Tuesday morning and on Saturdays when there is a New Beekeepers' practical session. The stock of jars is rapidly decreasing and won't be topped up until late July. Check with Eric McLaughlin if you wish to visit.

### All frames and foundation are for National hives

DN4 - Deep National Hoffman frames - £1.35 each

10 frames - £13.50

11 frames - £14.85

Standard brood foundation - £1.30 per sheet

SN1 Shallow National frames - £1.00 each

10 frames - £10.00

11 frames - £11.00

Super foundation - 80p per sheet

**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 £26 each, 5 + boxes £25 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.

**National Foundation** Available at excellent prices.

Deep wired, Shallow wired, Shallow unwired and cut comb.

**For any of the above please ring :- 07812738793, 01458 272114 ( leave a message )**  
email redrascal444@gmail.com



# Bookings open Noon 29 Jan!



## Spring 2024 Convention

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Friday 12 – Sunday 14 April 2024

Lectures, Workshops & Seminars

***Bumper Trade Show Sat 13 April***

**Ticket prices held: Trade Show only - £6**

For latest information including full programme, visit

[www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention](http://www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention)

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Enquiries to: [scenquiries@bbka.org.uk](mailto:scenquiries@bbka.org.uk)

## **Message from BBKA**

While the BBKA does not endorse any products or suppliers, we wanted to bring to your attention a couple of discounts that are being offered to BBKA members to support the fight against Asian Hornet.

Pest Fix Trappit liquid wasp bait

<https://www.pestfix.co.uk/trappit-liquid-wasp-bait-wasp-trap-wasp-lure.asp>

5 Litre – Trade price

1-10 £42.09 each + VAT

11-30 £40.09 each + VAT

30-100 £38.50 each + VAT

To obtain the trade price, please contact Jess at PestFix on 01903 538 488 or [sales@pestfix.co.uk](mailto:sales@pestfix.co.uk) (Mon - Fri 8am - 6pm).

## **BBWear Ultra Suits**

BBWear are offering a 10% discount on Ultra suits and vests using code BKAULTRA10 (case sensitive) until end July. These suits have been tested with Asian Hornets and offer 5mm sting protection

<https://mailchi.mp/088c5b957834/association-discount-from-bbwear-17644825>

**See separate article on discount from BBWear (page 8)**

***Luke Whyatt***

## **Trip to Buckfast Abbey & the bees**

Each year we try to arrange a visit to one of the country's best known beekeeping venues, and this year is no different. I have contacted Clare Densley at Buckfast Abbey and we have agreed a date. **Put Saturday July 20<sup>th</sup> in your diaries.**

It is a low key event: not at all intense or technical. Clare is very down to earth.

I'll keep you informed of developments.

## **Asian Hornet Update February 2024**

Our First Talk of the Year was a very interesting and informative talk at the Edgar Hall, Somerton on the 25th January, by Lynne Ingram, Somerset's Asian Hornet Co-ordinator. It was good to see both old and new beekeepers present. The room was almost filled to capacity. Lynne has produced a monitoring Guide for 2024 which shows the different types of traps available and which type of bait to use - and when.

Lynne stressed how important it was to trap AH Queens in the spring before they had time to establish a nest when coming out of hibernation. Likewise it is also important to trap emerging queens and drones in the Autumn before they have time to mate and the Queens hibernate over winter.

During the summer months it is best to set up a monitoring station, somewhere that you can observe insects feeding on the bait, so that you can take a picture and send off for identification. An Asian Hornet Trap and bait has been provided to those attending our Beginners theory and practical courses this year.

It is planned to have an Asian hornet trap making session at the Apiary in the near future, when the prototypes have been designed by the Apiary team.

A few years ago, all members we issued with a trap and bait this was paid for by Somerset Beekeepers Association. If anyone is in need of a trap now, there are a small quantity available, which can be collected on a Tuesday morning from Eric McLaughlin between 10am and 12pm at the Apiary. Eric will let you know how much they cost on the day.

The BBKA held its Asian Hornet Conference on Saturday 17th of February. Nigel Semmence from the National Bee Unit gave us an update and highlighted areas of concern for this year. Another top speaker was Alastair Christie from Jersey who explained how Jersey has kept the Asian hornet at bay for a number of years.

The final speaker was Jackie Aucott from Dover & District. Jackie shared information about Dover's front line fight last year and details of what was involved.

Anybody that hasn't seen the Asian Hornet Conference can watch it on YouTube. The link is below:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/dUMk2tzaw1E?si=Cxzqztznwflgv7sf>

***Suzy Perkins***

***Somerton Asian Hornet team leader***

## **Taunton Auction of Second Hand Equipment**

This is an ideal opportunity to grab a second hand bargain. It can't be guaranteed, but there are always a few to be had.

The auction is held at Ruishton Village Hall, Cheats Road, Ruishton, Taunton TA3 5JD on Sunday April 7<sup>th</sup>. Items Can be checked in for sale from 10.00am. Viewing starts at 1.00pm, and the sale starts at 2.00pm.

It's a good idea to get there reasonably early so that you can register as a prospective bidder and have a good look around. It's also wised to make notes of any lot which has caught your eye.

You can pay by cash, cheque or card. Paying by cheque causes delays in the long queue which forms at the end of the sale.

Joe King and I will both be there to offer advice to newer beekeepers, should they fee they need it.

Refreshments and sandwiches are usually available too

## **AGM of Somerset Beekeepers' Association**

**This has already been sent to all members, but here is a reminder. This is the AGM of Somerset BKA - not Somerton Beekeepers**

Taunton Beekeepers are hosting the Somerset Beekeepers AGM on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at Taunton & Pickeridge Golf Course, Corfe, Taunton, TA3 7BY

All members are invited to attend the AGM which is preceded by lunch and a talk. Parking and attendance for the talk and AGM is free, but there's no such thing as a free lunch..

Please arrive between 1.30 - 1.50pm for the 2pm lecture on Asian hornets.

If you would like to come for lunch but have missed the deadline of the 26th February please contact Julie Husband at [tauntonsecretary@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:tauntonsecretary@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk) or ring her on 07867 782435 as they may still be able to accept late booking at the venue.

### **Programme**

**Lunch - Arrive 12:00 for 12:30pm**

Lunch there will be a beef and turkey carvery (vegan/vegetarian option on request) and pudding of choice for £16.95.

### **Talk - 2pm**

**Matthew Elmes**, from the charity **Pollenize**

<https://www.pollenize.org.uk/about-pollenize>, will talk about 'Combating Asian Hornets with Citizen Science and Artificial Intelligence'.

We are really pleased that Matthew is able to come along and speak about the work of this dynamic and exciting charity.

**3pm - Tea and Biscuits**



## **Somerton's Trustees Report February 2024**

As you will know I was elected as your delegate (Somerton's representative) to Somerset Beekeepers Association at Somerton's AGM in November 2023. Keith Sturgess your previous delegate had stepped down after three years in the role.

At the delegates first Somerset Beekeepers Association (SBKA) Council meeting, the Chairman Simon Mills said that Somerset BKA had been successful in its application to become a Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO), this was something that Somerset BKA had been working towards for a few years. Simon said that he was surprised that Somerset's application had been approved so quickly.

All of this means that Somerset BKA will now be headed by a Board of Trustees which includes the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and Divisional delegates who are also now Trustees. These are all now Governing Board members. Divisions are now known as Branches.

You have all had an email from Simon explaining all of this in more detail.

We had our first Trustees Board meeting in February where we went through the new procedures etc that involved:

- The role of the Trustee is to further progress the purpose of the Charity and public benefit.

- More information needs to be disseminated though the newsletter etc.

- The need for shorter, sharper meetings

- Adoption of Trustees

- Adoption of Officers

- Creation of branches

- Adoption of operational guidance etc

I think what we have all got to remember is that we are all in the same beekeeping Organisation and division (Somerton). We have the same aims and goals as we had before, but we now have a new name SBK Charity or the SBK Trust and decision making will be made by the trustees (delegates) who are elected by the branches.

***Many thanks***

***Suzette Perkins***

**Dates for your diary**

**Beekeeping without fuss  
Joe Bleasdale**

Thursday March 21<sup>st</sup>  
Edgar Hall Conference Room  
Somerton TA11 6SB

**First Beginners' practical session**

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April  
At our apiary

**Auction of Second hand equipment  
Ruishton Village Hall**

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April  
Cheats Road, Ruishton, TA3 5JD  
Viewing from midday  
**Sale starts at 2.00pm**

**Visit to Buckfast Abbey Bees  
With Clare Densley & Martin Hann**

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July

**Somerton Honey Show  
Keinton Mandeville Village Hall**

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September**  
Chistles Lane, TA11 6ES

**President**

Jackie Mosedale  
01458 241146

**Chair**

Gillian Islip  
[gillianislip@gmail.com](mailto:gillianislip@gmail.com)  
01458 241562

**Vice chair**

Michele Wilson  
[michelewilson1747@gmail.com](mailto:michelewilson1747@gmail.com)

**Secretary**

**Alison Clewes**  
[pansypots@icloud.com](mailto:pansypots@icloud.com)

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**Membership Secretary**

Alison Dykes

**Librarian**

Sarah Kent  
01749 670423

**Honey Show sub committee**

David Rose, Alison Dykes

**Newsletter Editor**

Stewart Gould  
01749 860755  
[somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com)

**Events Programme**

**Position vacant**

**County Delegate**

Suzy Perkins

**Deputy Delegates**

David Rose

**Apiary Manager**

Joe King  
01749 890357

**Extraction Equipment Loan**

John Speirs  
01458 241831