

# The Newsletter



Volume no 28 Issue 4 May 2021

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



## Swarming Season

This year's Bizarre Spring weather has meant that swarming started about 2 weeks later than it did in last year's bizarre spring weather. The first publicised swarm in our area was on April 17<sup>th</sup> in Godney, with others in Baltonsborough, Stathe, Parbrook and Stawell following close behind - all in the frostiest April for more than 60 years.

There have been mixed reports on colonies coming out of winter, with some reporting early spring losses and others putting a second super on in mid April. Bees never fail to surprise us.

## Practical beekeeping sessions



Last month we thought that it was going to be almost impossible to set dates for this year's practical sessions for new beekeepers, but fate has smiled on us, and as the COVID restrictions are eased here in the UK, we can now, while exercising great care, set up some sessions. We'll have one demonstrator per 5 new beekeepers.

The first three sessions will be truncated, and whereas we normally have about 4 weeks between them, we will reduce that to 2 weeks. After those sessions things might become even more relaxed and we may well have fallen back into line with the beekeeping events at that time. As it is we'll have to be a tad inventive if talking about imminent swarming in late May.

If you are new to beekeeping and were part of the winter Zoom sessions, but haven't yet signed up then email [somertonbees@btinternet.com](mailto:somertonbees@btinternet.com) for details of how to do so. We are having to restrict it to those who joined the Somerton Division, with their course fee, but if you're not sure, just ask. South East and Central Divisions are holding their own sessions.

We have about 5 demonstrators to date, so it won't be just Joe and me again and you will have the chance to get somebody else's perspective. We will, however, allocate new beekeepers to a specific group.

The total cost for all the 6/7 sessions is £20.00, which includes refreshments.

**1<sup>st</sup> session - Sat. 22<sup>nd</sup> May. 2<sup>nd</sup> session - Sat. 29<sup>th</sup> May. 3<sup>rd</sup> session - Sat. June 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Further sessions to follow**

**Mikes Bee Supplies**

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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](mailto:redrascal444@gmail.com) Mobile 07812 738793**

**Tel. 01458 272114**

## World Bee Day - Thursday May 20<sup>th</sup>



**United Nations**

World Bee Day  
20 May

   
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It's hard to say what a bee's favourite day is, but May 20<sup>th</sup> is the birth date of Anton Janša (1734–1773), a Slovenian beekeeper, the pioneer of modern beekeeping and one of the greatest authorities on the subject of bees.

Since then, beekeeping has become a vital necessity in the world's ecosystems and economic systems. However, not many people realize the importance of bees or know how to help save the bees, which led to the announcement of World Bee Day through the United Nations.

The driving sentiments behind World Bee Day won't necessarily affect you and me as the idea is to promote the importance of bees and make everybody aware, and we already do that, of course.

In fairness, there are days for nearly anything you can imagine. You've just missed 'Hug an Australian Day on April 26<sup>th</sup>, but you're not too late for World Tuna day on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. and not forgetting Star Wars Day on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

You will, however, have to get your skates on if you want to take full advantage of Hairball Awareness Day - today April 30<sup>th</sup>.

## **Response to online petition regarding Small Hive Beetle**

**Below is the response which confirms that Northern Ireland is a part of the UK but seems to be unaware of their own rules on importation into the UK, and ignores forward traffic from N.I to other parts of the UK**

We recognise the serious threat posed by small hive beetle. EU areas affected by this pest are not permitted to export to the UK. Strict controls apply to imports into the UK from other areas.

The Government recognises that some beekeepers are concerned about the new trading arrangements and the risks of exotic pests entering Great Britain, in particular small hive beetle.

Small hive beetle would present a serious threat to our honey bees if it were to arrive in the UK. This invasive pest has only been detected in one part of Europe, namely southern Italy, and exports of bees from the affected region into either Great Britain or Northern Ireland are not permitted.

Imports of honey bees into Northern Ireland and any other part of the UK are only accepted from approved countries and are subject to rules relating to notification and health certification to ensure that imports are free of key pests and diseases.

Movements of honey bee queens, packages and colonies from Northern Ireland to Great Britain remain permitted. There is, and will remain, unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods, including honey bees, to the rest of the UK market.

We continue to work with colleagues in the Devolved Administrations as part of our monitoring of the new trading arrangements.

We recognise the important role played by beekeepers and bee farmers in sustaining honey bee health. We appreciate the level of interest in this issue, and we continue to listen to beekeepers and associations as part of our ongoing work to maintain suitable trading arrangements and effective bio-security for the UK beekeeping sector.

***Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs***

## **From the apiary**

All is going well now that the eight hives which have come through winter are doing as they should.

Thanks to Jim and Caroline Dawson for their sterling efforts in re-painting the 'Gould Suite' and the 'Dirty Shed'. They are now resplendent in their fresh coat of petrol blue timber stain.

Chairman Eric and Fred Clarke have done a complete stock take and Spring clean of everything in the 'Bee Space', so there is now officially room to swing a cat.

The hedge between the car park and Joe's Meadow continues to thrive in spite of the severe 'hair cut' which we gave it the year before last.

In the interest of all the other colonies, and neighbouring beekeepers, the decision was taken to cull the colony with Chronic Bee Paralysis.

***PS: 'Room to Swing a cat emanates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the practice of using a 9 tailed whip (cat o' nine tails) to discipline military personnel***

## **BBKA Modular Exams**

Several of our members took on the challenge of the BBKA Modular Exams on Saturday April 24<sup>th</sup>. As it wasn't possible to meet and take the exams in a public space, BBKA went to a lot of trouble to provide an online opportunity to take them. Some preferred the online format, while others shied away from it altogether, preferring to wait for the written (rather than typed) option this coming November. A third, extremely brave, contingent chose to sit two exams in the same day, taking only a 1 hour break between them.

For the first time, several Somerset Master Beekeepers pooled their resources and held online mentoring sessions over several months, which proved extremely useful, particularly for those struggling with intricate and complicated detail of honey bee anatomy and biology. All hail Alan & Tricia Nelson, Lynne Ingram, Richard Bache and Bridget Knutson.

## White chocolate Honey

Sorry to all those who believed the white honey chocolate storey last month. You were not alone. A friend of mine in Canada emailed me to tell me to say that it sounded great, and as he had some friends in Mexico, he would ask them to bring some back on their return. *Meliponula ferruginea* is a species of solitary bee from Mexico but the last part of its name is simply the Mayan word for Mexico, and it certainly doesn't have any association with chocolate.



## Spilled honey



If you dropped an opened 1lb jar of honey on the lounge carpet, I'm guessing that you wouldn't be very popular. Imagine then the plight of one of our members, who will obviously remain anonymous, but stores bulk honey in a spare bedroom because of space restrictions, .

Thinking that it would be best to take a 30lb plastic bucket of honey down to the kitchen to jar it, our hapless member set off down the stairs, but not trusting the handle, gripped the rim of the bucket instead. Halfway down the stairs the rim parted company with the bucket and the bucket made its own way down the stairs, spilling the entire contents on the stair carpet and managing to create a very large pool on the lounge carpet too.

With a thought process as quick as lightening, our member managed to scrape up about 20lbs of the honey and put it into a container (I'm guessing it wasn't the same bucket) but was stuck with about 10lbs still impregnating the stair carpet and leaving a large dark sticky patch the size of 3 football pitches on the lounge carpet.

The stair carpet was obviously beyond redemption, so the careful application of a Stanley knife, relieved the stairs of all its carpet, but what to do about the lounge? A large sheet of plastic was placed over the offending lake (once most had been scraped up) and stapled into position.

It would seem that new stair carpet and a new lounge fitted carpet will soon be winging their way to this particular corner of Somerset, and the associated bee colonies will be extremely well fed.

***You will notice that I haven't said where or who this member is, as I value my life.***

## **Compulsory Varroa notification**

There has been a lot of clamour about compulsory reporting of varroa mites in hives which came into force on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

**'In the Bee Diseases and Pests Control (England) Order 2006(2), after article 3 insert—**

**"Reporting of Varroa mite (Varroosis)**

**3A.—(1) An owner or person in charge of a hive who knows that any species of the Varroa mite (Varroosis) is present within that hive must give notice of that fact to the Secretary of State as soon as is practicable'.**

However! If your bees are registered on Beebase, it will already have been done on your behalf. Sign in to Beebase and go to your hive records, where you will see that the appropriate box has been ticked. Simply go to MY RECORDS, then MY APIARIES.

This is an excellent time to register with Beebase. It's free, carries numerous advantages and helps you comply with this new law.





## 2021 HONEY SHOW UPDATE

The Honey Show Committee very much hope that you are all keeping safe, well and have been injected! We wanted to let you all know, that we have our collective fingers crossed that we will be able to hold a honey show this year, and have started planning for it. Please put Saturday, 18 September, in your diaries or phones!

Once again we will be at Keinton Mandeville Village Hall and will let you have more details in early July when and if we get the all clear from the government. Even though most restrictions will, hopefully, have been lifted I'm sure there will still be some in place that we will have to adhere to, so it will be different. We are planning to have an outside market and if you know of anyone who might like a pitch, please tell them to get in touch. So, may your harvest be plentiful, your photos be sharp and your candles burn bright!

We'll look forward to seeing you all in September, if not before!

*Alison, David, Fred*

## Out Apiary Opportunities

The new landlord of the Lime Kiln Inn, TA10 9JQ, just outside Long Sutton would like to offer some land for hives if anyone is interested. To discuss details please call

**Chantelle Stirzaker on 0796677360**

A Farmer in Long Sutton, not far from our apiary, has approached chairman Eric with an offer of land in a wildflower meadow, for somebody to place hives. This is an area close to fields containing phacelia (scorpion weed) and field beans, both excellent forage plants for bees. If you are interested, **contact Eric on 07910 764069**

## Making honey without bees



MeliBio Inc is an American company based in California. In a recent press release it said that it would shortly be launching a new product, a type of honey, identical to the natural kind in every molecule, but produced without involving any bees at all! The company's CEO, Mr Darko Mandich said "When you look at honey and how it's made, it starts with bees collecting pollen and nectar from the flowers and then converting that into the building blocks of honey, which are fructose and glucose. We are simulating that in the lab, using micro-organisms

which do the work of building the initial blocks of honey." The process essentially uses the process of fermentation whereby micro-organisms digest a food supply and excrete a useful product. By tailoring the micro-organism carefully and choosing the right feed stocks, MeliBio claim that it is possible to create anything from honey, to egg whites or milk.

"Around two-thirds of the honey sold in the markets is honey as an ingredient for other products - industries like food, beverages, cosmetics and pharma. So we as a company are starting with a business-to-business model first," says Mr Mandich. "We already have 15 companies in the US who have signed letters of intent." MeliBio expects to start its first deliveries at the end of this year.

### 3 feet or 3 miles? - A view

There is an old beekeeping saying that says if you want to move your bees you should move them less than three feet or more than three miles. Unlike many old beekeeping sayings, this one is well founded!

Bees appear to have what amounts to a natural, internal GPS system which enables them to roam anywhere within three miles of their hive and return to within three feet of it. Once within three feet of their hive, they pick up their

queen's pheromone which guides them the last few feet to the hive entrance. Manipulations such as artificial swarming rely largely on this phenomenon, but for the beekeeper who simply wants to move bees to a different location within a garden, this can be a problem. However, there is a way around it.

In most years I keep a few of the swarms I collect. I usually house and overwinter them in poly nucs containing 6, 14 x 12 frames, located around the garden. However, they do need to be re-housed into a full-sized hive as early as practical in the following season.



The technique I use is to prepare the hive they are going to go into and place

some branches in front of the entrance ensuring that the bees can readily get in or out through the

leaves. I lock the bees in the nuc the night before and move it next to the hive they are going into. Moving it the night before ensures

that they are not still agitated from the nuc being moved. The following day, once it gets warmer, I quickly transfer the frames from the nuc to the hive, ensuring that the frames are kept in the same order and direction. Any bees still in the nuc are quickly brushed into the hive and the crown board replaced. I usually add some feed at this point to minimise the need for the bees to go out foraging for a day or so. I then place the empty nuc in front of the hive. The bees outside will mill around for some time until those inside start wafting the queen pheromone from the hive entrance. They will then pick their way through the leaves to the hive entrance. Some of the bees inside, will come out, not recognise where they are, and begin to make a re-orientation flight to reset their GPS system.

After two to three days, dependent on how many the bees have been flying, I remove the branches and the empty nuc. The flying bees then re-orientate their GPS system and treat the new location as home. I have used this technique for over ten years, including with conventional hives such as WBCs, with very few failures and can recommend it.

***Courtesy of Lune Valley Beekeepers via Ebees***

**Dates for your diary**

**Online Zoom talks**

Various upcoming online talks. Watch your emails.

**International Bee Day**

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May

**Somerton BKA**

**Annual Honey Show**

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall

Chistles Ln, TA11 6FJ

Saturday September 18<sup>th</sup>

1.00 - 5.00pm

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