



Newsletter February 2021

Committee members: Ken Jeanes (President), Dennis White (Chair), Lionel Horler (Vice Chair), Richard Harris (Treasurer), Anne Collyer (Secretary), Jane Jeanes (SBKA Delegate), Tony Johnstone (Programme Secretary), Guy Clothier, Adam Morka, John Wood.

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2021 which I hope you will find interesting.

If you have any ideas or items for inclusion in the next issue then please let me know. These can be bee keeping experiences (good or bad!), photos, items for sale or wanted, etc, etc. All ideas welcome! With best wishes, Anne Collyer, Divisional Secretary SESBKA

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Message From Lionel Horler

We have joined a few other divisions of Somerset beekeepers to present our beginners course on line, this is not as good as our usual face to face course, but is better than nothing. We have ten new members from our area. Let's hope we can get together during the summer for apiary meetings when the beginners can have hands on experience with the bees.

My bees were given their Christmas dinner (on Boxing Day) this is just to top up their winter stores in case they need it. It's an insurance cover without actually opening the hive and inspecting the colony which would let out the heat. I then checked on this food in January and found that some colonies needed topping up again which proved to me that this insurance policy was worth paying.

Some bees can be seen flying on a warm day, which is nice to see, but what we are looking for are some worker bees bringing in pollen to the hive, which will tell us that the queen is laying and there are larvae to be fed. This means the yearly cycle has started again and we can look forward to hours of pleasure with our bees again

This year I thought I would try to make my own fondant as I always like to try something new.

The recipe I used is quite simple: -

1 kg granulated white sugar

300 ml boiling water

Method. Put the sugar in a pan on a hotplate.

Pour the boiling water onto the sugar

Stir to help the sugar to dissolve

Bring to the boil and let the steam evaporate

[I make a double recipe and leave boiling for twenty minutes]

Take the pan off the heat and cool quickly [I place the pan in a tank of water]. Keep stirring gently but thoroughly, the liquid will go cloudy and thicken to the consistency of porridge. Pour into airtight containers with lid. Job done.

My plastic containers hold about 1/3 kg. enough for one feed.

Event Programme - Tony Johnstone tmj67@hotmail.co.uk or 07973341557

Dates for your diaries:

Tuesday 9 March from 2.30pm @ Hadspen Village Hall Car Park

Dianne Sleigh of the Bee Depot 'Click & Collect'. Please place your order with her, details below, and let Tony know. He will then arrange a pick-up time. Payment can be made via internet banking (preferable) or by card on collection. Dianne's contact details - sales@thebeedepot.com or 07879 811967

Tuesday 23 March- at 7.30pm, at Hadspen Village Hall. Although this now seems unlikely. In which case I will try to re-arrange during April.

A talk by Geoff Blay, a master beekeeper, who has moved into our area and who is very supportive of our division. His very professional presentation will include how best to handle our bees, particularly at the start of the season

Saturday 1 May- All Day- Castle Cary Eat Festival.

This was a really successful and enjoyable day in 2019 and volunteers are needed to man our gazebo.

Saturday 30 October- All Day- The SESBKA Honey Show at the Market House with set-up on Friday evening

Apiary Visits/Safari - We are lucky enough to have a large membership but seem to lack members who will come forward to host Apiary visits. So, I am asking members to pitch up and put their names forward this year. We have a few stalwarts who carry us through year after year, but new faces are really needed.



Please sign up to one of the following together with your preferred date. The committee will happily assist in planning the visit-

May- An Apiary Visit with an emphasis on Swarm Control

June- An Apiary Visit

July- Our Safari comprising 3 visits

August- An Apiary Visit with an emphasis on Harvesting and Extracting honey

September- An Apiary Visit with an emphasis on Varroa control

Thank you, Tony Johnstone



Honey Gingerbread

Sieve together into a bowl: 6oz plain flour, 1 level dessertspoon ground ginger, 1.5 level teaspoons ground cinnamon and 1 level teaspoon bicarbonate of soda.

Blend 4oz castor sugar, 4oz soft butter, 1 egg, 3 level tablespoons liquid honey, 1 level tablespoon black treacle and 1/4 pint warm water. Gradually add the dry ingredients mixing well. Pour the runny mix into a greased lined 2lb loaf tin and bake at 150°C (140°C for fan oven) for 1 hour 20 mins. Leave to cool in tin. Enjoy!

BBKA Magazine New Readers Survey - Leigh Sidaway, General Manager BBKA

A big thank you to everyone who has taken part in the online readers' survey for BBKA News magazine. We have had some 1400 responses but we want to hear from as many of our approx 28,000 members as possible before the closing date of 28th February. If you have not already done so the BBKA would be very grateful if you could take part in the survey.

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/news/bbka-news-reader-survey>

Thank you



2020 - How was it for you and your bees?

2020 started full of optimism – this was our second season of bee keeping and we were convinced that a marvellous year would be topped by a bumper harvest of honey!! However, for us, the year can be summed up in a few words; swarms, May frost, swarms, drone laying queens, wasps and empty honey jars. Our first lesson of the year was that the bees do not read the same books as us and if they are determined to swarm, then off they go despite our best efforts! Covid put paid to apiary visits and meetings but we were still able to help with two swarm collections (other than collecting our own – again) from roof spaces – very exciting! Unfortunately, the first didn't survive but the second swarm are alive and kicking. We didn't get the queen but the bees immediately got to work and reared a new queen. Fingers crossed that numbers have built up enough to get through the winter. We have certainly been on a very steep learning curve and despite the setbacks have enjoyed it all. A huge thank you goes to our mentor Ken Jeanes



who, along with Jane, has been extremely patient with us and all our questions and cries for help!

One of our lockdown projects this winter has been to construct a new apiary and bring our hives together to make life easier. It is a bit bare at present so any tips on planting in the area will be much appreciated. The online zoom lectures run by SBKA have been very informative and well worth signing up for – details are

circulated regularly by Anne Pike (SBKA) and can also be found on <https://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk/>

Fingers crossed for 2021!! Anne Collyer



BBKA President's Letter February 2021

You will probably be aware of the publicity surrounding the derogation for the use of neonicotinoids on the sugar beet crop for the next two years.

I have sent a letter to the Rt Hon George Eustice who was appointed Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Regarding this matter, I received the standard reply that my letter had been received but still no action. Anne Rowberry, our Chair, also sent a letter to Boris Johnson and as I write this, again there has been no more than an acknowledgement of the letter.

We were approached by one of our members, Chris who is also a Barrister. He has offered to take this matter to the courts and ask for a Judicial Review, as it is thought that there was limited consultation on the use of neonicotinoids, whereas there should have been a wider consultation with all interested parties.

Chris asked for us to also provide a solicitor to help him to take this forward. He has been lucky to have the services of John who will also act for us in this matter. However, on investigation by him, it appears that the Wildlife Trust has already instructed solicitors to go for a Judicial Review on this matter.

We are investigating obtaining a Pre-Action Protocol Letter so that there will be no costs incurred. Failing that, we will try the Aarhus Convention therefore an environmental issue with limited costs.

The Aarhus Convention establishes a number of rights of the public (individuals and their associations) with regard to the environment. The Parties to the Convention are required to

make the necessary provisions so that public authorities (at national, regional or local level) will contribute to these rights to become effective.

After a meeting of the Executive, we are now pursuing the matter with some urgency.

We have also received emails regarding the importation of bees into the UK, requesting what can be done about this. We know that this has been going on for some time. The main reason is, that we in this country, do not produce enough queens to cover the needs of the UK. We are also aware that some breeders are breeding queens for sale in this country that are from imported stock.

What we should and are doing, is to get our members involved into raising more queens. Over the past few years, we have been offering queen rearing courses across the country in an attempt to increase the numbers raised. My own branch does this every year and is able to supply queens and bees to all new members and to existing members where there is a need. I have to congratulate the team who, year after year, succeed in doing this.

Please can you follow their lead? Take advantage of the courses that will be on offer later this year if, hopefully, we get on top of the Covid situation. Queen rearing is not difficult, it requires good timing but every competent beekeeper should be able to do it. Keep an eye out for the queen rearing courses that will be on offer again, later this year.

I hope that you agree with our actions regarding the neonicotinoids? I will update you as soon as I get more news.

Kind regards
Margaret Wilson, President