

The Newsletter



Volume no 27 Issue 10 November 2020

SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Fun photo competition

The Honey Show committee decided that if we couldn't have a honey show, we could at least have a photographic competition. The challenge was set. There were fewer entries than for the honey show, but as you can see, this stunning image taken by Rob Harrison of Curry Rivel proves that standards can still be very high indeed.

Congratulations to Rob. A bottle of sparkling wine is winging its way to Curry Rivel, as I type.

Fondant and how to make it

Feeding bees during the cooler months used to be considered 'bad beekeeping' but as winters have got warmer, bees are expending energy when flying out to look for food on fine days. On their return to the hive they replace that energy by devouring their stores. Fondant is the stuff to use in winter. Products like Candi-pollene (a pollen supplement) are intended for boosting egg laying in



Spring, and not the ideal food for the cooler months, although it can be used in the late summer to help the bees make winter bees, which have to survive for 6 months.

Buying fondant is fine, provided you find a source of pure fondant, and beekeeping supply companies have it in abundance, but it's not cheap. Other sources of fondant are risky, as they nearly all contain chemicals dangerous to bees. Why not make your own? It's relatively simple and much, much cheaper. Start hefting your hives soon, so that you know how much weight they are losing, but remember that hives can gain weight in wet weather, as the wood soaks up moisture.

Ingredients:

1kg granulated sugar

300ml water

Other materials:

Large plastic/wooden spoon to stir and ladle out. An electric mixer is really useful to stir as the mixture cools

Cooking thermometer

Large saucepan

Semi-transparent take away containers.

Method

Place the sugar in a saucepan and pour on 300ml of boiling water. While stirring, heat the mixture. There's no need to stir all the time, once the sugar is blended in, but an occasional stir will aid dissolving. Keep on heating until it boils, then keep on a rolling boil & monitor the temperature.

The temperature is critical, in order to set to the required consistency. Your mixture will only reach the required temperature when the correct amount of moisture has boiled off.

As soon as it reaches 232°F, remove it from the heat. Most recipes say 234°F, but I end up with a rock if I do that. Place on a tiled surface, or something cool and stir as it cools. Some recipes mention stirring once the mixture has fallen to 150°F, but I find that crystals are already forming by then. Stir thoroughly but not too vigorously, and the mixture will start to go cloudy, then milky and thicken. As soon as it starts to thicken, stop stirring and pour the mixture into the containers. **It is vital to fit lids once cool, or you will lose more moisture than required.** Fondant is hygroscopic so if you leave it for too long, it will start to attract moisture again, and become very sticky.

Notes:

- You can use multiples of these quantities.
- 1kg of fondant will fill 2 takeaway tubs.

Placing an upturned tub of fondant over the feed hole in the crown board will act as an indicator as to the state of the stores in the brood box, and you won't disturb the bees when checking.



Mike's Bee Supplies

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Robert E Snodgrass

THE ALIMENTARY CANAL AND ITS GLANDS.

85

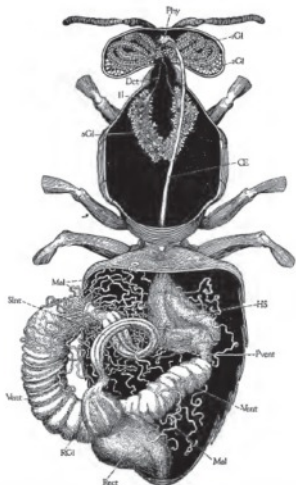


FIG. 42.—Alimentary canal of worker (*Phy-Sect.*), together with pharyngeal glands (*Phy*), and salivary glands of head (*Dct*) and of thorax (*Gd*), as seen by cutting body open from above and pushing the viscerotone (*Tron*) out to left.

The Anatomy of the honeybee by Robert E Snodgrass is undoubtedly the 'bible' for understanding the workings of honeybees and considering it was written in 1910, is relatively easy to understand. It has been updated on several occasions, but if you're interested, the original can be downloaded for free. The hyperlink is given below. Once the webpage showing the book on a black screen has opened, simply scroll down and on the right hand side is a blue list of download options. Click on [PDF](#) and it will automatically download an Acrobat file of the entire book .

<https://archive.org/details/cu31924003168865/page/n13/mode/2up>

Imagine my surprise then to find this, when googling to find out when Robert Snodgrass lived, which was incidentally 1875 - 1962,

Robert Snodgrass born 7th September 1987 is a Scottish professional footballer who plays as a Winger for Premier League club West Ham United. Snodgrass started his senior career with Livingston. He also had a loan spell at Stirling Albion before moving to England in 2008, to join Leeds United.

Furthermore, Eddie Howe finds enough time when not beekeeping, to manage Bournemouth FC and according



Apiary work parties

We've been trying to arrange work parties to tidy up the apiary before the onset of winter, but as the pandemic goes on and on, it becomes increasingly difficult. We're trying a 6 person, socially distanced work session on Monday October 26th, and for this we have a full complement.

We know you're all champing at the bit to come along and help, but we'll see how this one goes and take it from there. Your help will be greatly appreciated when we can be sure that we have a safe way of doing things .

Somerton BKA AGM

Contain your excitement! Once the drama and tension of the American elections is behind us, the AGM will be nearly here.

This year's AGM will be, by necessity, an online event, so put Thursday November 26th in your diary, and be ready to join the meeting at 7.00pm. This is the link.

<https://zoom.us/j/98083078044?pwd=elQ1N1l0Q2xlcE9yVW1RMEM4QkNFQT09>

Normally, Alex Morrice is kind enough to supply gluwein, and we have mince pies, but it's a DIY event this year, so please have a glass of cheer ready to toast in the new committee. I'm being abstemious, so I'll just have a flat red.

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:- redascal444@gmail.com Mobile 07812 738793

Tel. 01458 272114

Abandoned beehive - the continuing story

In last month's newsletter I told the tale of this nice new hive full of bees, which had been abandoned. The story gets better. Talking to the last chair of Somerset BKA I was told that the area where they were was a hotbed of EFB. I knew it was too good to be true. So I contacted our Regional Bee Inspector, Simon Jones, who lives a short distance from from where the bees were located.



Two days later Simon phoned me back to say that the bees seemed fine, although with low brood levels at this time of year, it would be a good idea to keep them away from other hives until he could have a better look in the spring. He added that they have plenty of stores in the brood chamber - oh! And a full super of honey.

Our secretary, Alison Clewes, lost all her bees to CBPV back in the summer, so she was quite pleased when I told her the story. She and chairman Eric were there like a flash, and took the bees back to Alison's orchard a few miles down the road. Sadly, the honey was as solid as a rock, so Alison has left it for the bees.

It transpires that the house was a luxury hotel which ceased trading in the summer, and the family who bought it, did so 'lock, stock & barrel'. One of the 'barrels' just happened to be a hive of bees, bought for one of the gardeners to look after. The husband had suggested to the children that if they learned how to care for the bees, they could stay, but they were less than enthusiastic.

Quelle damage?

Oxalic acid winter treatment



For the past few years, we have bulk purchased winter oxalic acid treatment for our members. The law is now very clear that only VMD (Veterinary Medicines Directorate) approved medicines may be used to treat any animal and there are requirements regarding the recording of usage. Oxalic acid is a readily available product but it must be administered in the correct quantities and strengths.

Buying a licenced product means that you can rest assured that the product meets all requirements. There are some 'off piste' beekeepers with some very strange views on what to treat bees with - and when. 'Alternative' beekeepers have been known to place rhubarb leaves under the roof.

We trawl (not troll) the internet to find the best deals and have found a source for **Apibioxal** which will allow us to keep the same price as last year - £1.00 per Hive. We can also supply 20ml hypodermics for dispensing it at 40p each, so one to your request, if needs be.

It is ideal to treat on a bright morning, during a cold spell. Predicting that isn't easy, but the whole point is that when the temperatures are low, the queen will stop laying, so hopefully, there should be very little brood in the hive. Varroa need honey bee brood in order to reproduce. The female varroa mite goes into a brood cell, containing a larva just before it is sealed, and lays her eggs. They then incubate, and emerge at the same time as the young bee. No brood means that all the varroa are out and about, on the bees in the hive (phoretic), and therefore, easier to kill.

If you would like to treat your bees this winter, and it is recommended even if you treated after taking your honey off, then please email somertonbees@btinternet.com saying how many hives you would like to treat and in reply you will get details of how to pay. r and can also demonstrate how to administer it. We always insist on payment in advance now, as we have been left holding a few babies in the past.

We'll arrange time slots for collection from the apiary, keeping social distancing in mind.

BBKA Honey survey

Each year the BBKA conduct a survey to see how honey crops have been impacted by events in the current year. The survey is now open on the website. It really does only take a few minutes to complete and we encourage as many members as possible to take part. Here is the link:

<https://wh1.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?K=16009255174>

Sugar syrup and HMF

If you want win friends and influence people, learn to pronounce hydroxymethylfurfural, and you will soon understand why it is normally called HMF.

HMF is a product of overheating honey and causes the honey to degrade very quickly. There has been talk recently of creating HMF when boiling sugar to make syrup or fondant. According to the authoritative websites I could find, HMF is the result of overheating fructose, a sugar found in honey, but when bees collect nectar, they are supping up sucrose, a disaccharide, which means it is a compound of two or more sugars. Bees add an enzyme to the nectar which inverts it (invertase or sucrase) and splits it into its constituent simple (monosaccharide) sugars. Those are primarily glucose and fructose, hence the danger from overheating, but——

Boiling white granulated (sucrose) sugar doesn't create HMF because the fructose is bound up in the sucrose and is unaffected. So fear not, your bees are safe when fed syrup or fondant.

Membership Renewal Forms

The forms are attached to the email in which you receive this newsletter. Subscriptions are due from January 1st, but it makes life much easier for the treasurer if they are paid sooner, rather than later. Several members have already paid.

Please read the swarm information sheets very carefully. Selling swarms is

New Beekeepers be aware

Your fee for the Beginners' theory course gave you associate membership for 2020, but that will expire on December 31st. If you have acquired bees during the year, it would be prudent to consider full membership, which includes membership of Somerton Division, Somerset Beekeepers Association and membership of the British Beekeepers Association.

How will those added memberships benefit you? Well, included in the subscription are public liability insurance, should your bees cause any problems - to the extent of £10,000,000, product liability to the same amount and Bee Diseases insurance. On top of that you will receive the BBKA News each month, which is brimming with beekeeping tips, and the reason that there are few in these pages. We don't want to duplicate.



You will also receive invitations to attend Somerset BKA events, lectures, study groups and events. At present there is a series of Zoom talks on a 2 weekly basis, with top speakers from all over the World - all included in your subscription.



What's going on with the honey this year?

Most years my honey is a nice golden liquid, which given time, will crystallise and make a very acceptable soft set honey without any input from me. That was true for my spring crop, beautiful stuff, the remnants of which have set as promised, but my main crop taken at the beginning of August is a rich chestnut colour, and although my refractometer tells me it has a moisture content of 15%, it is quite runny.

'That'll be honeydew then' some have said, but honeydew honey has a tendency to be thicker than floral honey, and the flavour is decidedly fruity. I'm just wondering if all those bees I caught feasting on fallen plums have affected the colour and flavour, giving me plum honey.

Preparing our Apiary Bees for the long winter snooze.

Our curious covid summer has been and gone, and our bees are approaching winter. No courses have been run this year at the Apiary for obvious reasons, so our bees must feel unusually undisturbed.



We are always very lucky that whenever problems arise there are always members, who instantly volunteer to help. Catherine Fraser looked after the bees for us during lock-down and the vital swarming season, and Richard Longworth continued with the regular job of cutting the meadow in a wild flower friendly fashion. A big thank you to both.

After lock-down Eric McLaughlin, Nigel Gregory, and I took over looking after the bees and especially preparing them for winter. The honey has been harvested, extracted, and prepared for sale providing a useful income stream. The bees have been treated with MAQS, where necessary fed with sugar syrup, the sugar being generously donated by Tesco. Our target was that we estimated that each hive should have roughly 40lb of stores for over-wintering. All colonies look to be of a sufficient size to over-winter so there was no need to unite any of the colonies. Entrance blocks have been removed, mouse-guards fitted, anti- woodpecker wire mesh fitted around the hives, and a large stone on each roof.

They are basically ready to go, although we will be meeting periodically to heft them, and when necessary provide fondant if they feel rather light later in the winter. After Christmas we will be treating for varroa with oxalic acid, and no doubt there will be plenty of odd jobs to do around the apiary all to be done with plenty of cheerful banter, coffee and biscuits.

Because of the rule of six, it is not possible to have our usual large working parties at the moment but we will be having smaller, covid compliant, working parties. If you feel like joining in then please do let me know.

Stay safe,

Joe King

Apiary manager. Tel 01749 890357

Queen Excluders in winter

There has been quite a bit of discussion recently over whether to leave queen excluders in over winter, or not. There is absolutely no benefit to leaving them in, and if you take them out, it is an ideal opportunity to clean them up for next season, or harvesting the propolis, if that takes your mood.

If you are over-wintering your bees on a single brood box with no super, then it won't actually do any harm to leave it in, but if you are leaving a super with stores or have double brood, then leaving the excluder in could present real problems. In really cold winters, the cluster may well move towards the food, and of course, take the queen with them. If those stores are the other side of a queen excluder, then the queen could get left behind, and that would spell disaster.

Take it out!

Ivy pollen

We have all been seeing ivy pollen being taken into our hives recently, and it is quite orange. Well, the ivy pollen on the rear legs of honeybees is orange, but that doesn't follow for all species. The pollen on the legs of this ivy bee (*colletes hederæ*) is quite yellow.

Honey bees use honey or nectar (*Dorothy Hodges - Pollen loads of the honey bee*) to mix the dry pollen into a paste-like condition suitable for packing their pollen loads. Bumble bees make their pollen loads in the same way, but the quantities of the ingredients are different.



Many of the solitary bees such as *Andrena* collect and carry their pollen dry. The pollen mixture, which can vary from species to species, in strength and make up, means that pollen loads of different species, from the same plant, can look completely different.

Dates for your diary

Online Zoom talks

Various upcoming online talks. Watch your emails.

A comb builder's instruction manual

Vince Gallo

November 5th - 7.00pm

Somerton BKA AGM

Thursday 26th November - 7.00pm

**The link for the online AGM is on
page 5**

**Beginners Introductory Beekeeping
Course 2021**

Zoom Sessions January 20th, 27th and February 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th.
At 7.00pm

All sessions are on Wednesdays

Apibioxal

Don't forget to order yours. Email somertonbees@btinternet.com with your requirement
See page 7 for details

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