

The Newsletter



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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Unwanted beehives

From time to time we hear of beekeepers retiring, and wanting to re-home their bees, and we endeavour to find deserving new owners. On other occasions we learn of abandoned hives which have acquired new residents and become a nuisance. In the latter circumstance, and as a public service, we turn up and deal with the situation, so that the property owners can go about their lives in the knowledge that it is safe to do so, and the bees go to a good home. Most of those abandoned hives are in a pretty poor state, and some are buried deep in hedges, but that's not always the case.

Read on!

Retiring Beekeeper

Very fortunately for us, not all hives are simply abandoned, and caring beekeepers who find that they aren't able to give their bees the attention that they used to, often contact us to find new homes for their colonies.

Tony Barnett, a spritely 86 year old, who was a Seasonal Bee Inspector in Cornwall for many years, and now lives in Othery, decided that his bee-keeping days have come to an end, and wanted his charges to go to good homes. As a result, several of us descended on his idyllic orchard apiary on a warm early September evening, and shared the company of a barn owl for a short while, before loading up 5 colonies, in Jumbo Langstroth hives, which have been re-homed with some of our members.



This is a truly magnificent gesture on Tony's part, as along with 5 colonies, there were 2 spare Jumbo Langstroth hives, a 4 frame stainless steel tangential extractor, a heated de-capping tray, a honey masher, a Langstroth observation hive, and the obligatory smoker.

Thank you so much Tony, for this terrific gift. The hives are now with members who have suffered misfortunes, not of their making, and will renew their faith in beekeeping and beekeepers.

If anybody is interested in purchasing any of the items mentioned above, they should get in touch with chairman ***Eric McLaughlin on 07910 764069.***

Back to School



Some Divisions are finding it difficult to hold Beginners' Courses in the near future, but Somerton Division of Somerset Beekeepers' Association have come up with a novel idea.

Each year we run an introductory course in January and February. The course is broken into two sections, and we start with the theory section in the cooler part of the year, when the bees aren't active. The total cost for all six sessions will be £30.00, but it is very inexpensive when you consider that we include the Haynes Bee Manual in that cost. Yes! they do publish a Bee Manual, and it is considered to be one of the best books for beekeepers in their first couple of years. The 2020 rrp of this book is £22.99, so you can see that the course fee is quite a bargain. Also included is Associate Membership of Somerton Division - but this year is different. If anybody, from across the county, wishes to take advantage of Somerton Division's course, they will be made most welcome, and their Associate Membership fee will be forwarded to the Division of their choice, so that they can continue their beekeeping as members of their local division. Dates have now been finalised, and all sessions will be on Wednesday evenings at 7.00pm, on January 20th and 27th, then February 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th. In spite of the current situation, we are hoping to hold the second (practical) section of the course, which comprises 7 sessions, each timed to coincide with key events in the beekeeping season. This will incur an additional fee. New beekeepers are usually ready for their first colony of bees after the second practical session. Nature dictates that this is also the time when bees are reproducing by splitting the colonies which have grown exponentially during the Spring. If you are interested in this course, please contact Stewart Gould at somertonbees@btinternet.com and you will be added to the growing list of those who would like to get involved.

Rebates for practical Sessions 2020

We recently offered to return all fees paid to Somerton BKA for the Beginners' practical sessions - which never happened. The response has been surprising and underwhelming. Very few people have asked for their money to be returned. Our treasurer, Sarah Griffiths, believes that it might be that an unsolicited email from an unknown address runs the risk of being seen as being fraudulent, and there are a lot of scams at present. If you are concerned about giving your bank details, so that Sarah can transfer the money by BACS, don't be put off. I'm sure that if you talk to her nicely, she will issue a cheque.

The upshot is that we are holding a considerable amount of money which belongs to those who paid for the practical sessions, and we want to repay it. Please contact Sarah at s_e_lund@hotmail.com, for your full rebate.

A few people have asked for the money to be retained and held over for the 2021 sessions, should they take place, and that is just fine. Let me know at somertonbees@btinternet.com, and we will keep a note on our records.



Honey jar lids

For a few years now we have bought honey jars in bulk and saved our members a bundle of money. This year we purchase 5 pallet loads, all from the least expensive supplier that we could find. We did run into one small problem though. The lids were separate from the jars, and in large unmarked plastic bags to

boot. This caused some confusion, to say the least, but we didn't have to count out all the lids, instead we weighed them, and got quite good at it, but the subtle size difference between the lids for 12oz round and 12oz hexagonal jars was where the problem lay. Several people ended up with the wrong lids, and a few extra journeys to the apiary were necessary to sort the problems out.

At the last committee meeting, held using the wondrous medium of 'Zoom', it was decided that regardless of the slight price increase to our members, it would be in everybody's interest to purchase jars with lids on, next time around.

The members will still get jars at a reduced price and the organizers won't have to drive miles sorting out the mix-ups.

David Morris

It is with sadness that we report the passing of David Morris who hailed himself as Somerton's longest serving member. David started keeping bees with his father in the early 1960s in a disused quarry in Keinton Mandeville, and wrote a journal of his beekeeping trials and successes, of which there were many. He was a leading light in Somerset Beekeeping for many years, and in my earlier beekeeping days, he was a frequent demonstrator at apiary visits. I recall him showing his method of cutting out a section of brood comb in a queenless colony, and replacing it with a section containing eggs from another hive. Nobody had the heart to tell him, at the time, that he had put it in upside down. David had been a teacher and trade union organiser, which made him the ideal candidate to write the rules for Somerset Beekeepers' Association, as they appear in the yearbook to this day.



He moved from Keinton Mandeville to Halse near Taunton, several years ago, and became more a part of Taunton Division than Somerton, although he still returned from time to time.

David leaves a wife Anne, and a son, to whom our thoughts go out.

Stewart Gould

Chairman - Somerset Beekeepers Association



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COVID -19 and bee stings

Could bee sting therapy possibly have a role in COVID-19 treatment? Maybe. Maybe not. Should in-depth, scientific research be launched? Yes, say a trio of researchers in an article published in sciencedirect.com. Lead author Wei Yang, an oncologist from China, and two associates related some interesting but anecdotal information about beekeepers in the COVID-19 epicenter, the Hubei province. The beekeepers surveyed didn't contract the COVID-19 virus. Neither did a group of surveyed patients receiving apitherapy.

"A total of 5115 beekeepers were surveyed from February 23 to March 8, including 723 in Wuhan, the outbreak epicentre of Hubei. None of these beekeepers developed symptoms associated with COVID-19, and their health was totally normal. After that, we interviewed five apitherapists in Wuhan and followed 121 patients of their apitherapy clinic. These patients had received apitherapy from October 2019 to December 2019, and all the five bee apitherapists have the habit of self-apitherapy for their own health care (apitherapy means making use of bee venom from the honeybee's sting to treat or prevent certain diseases). Without any protective measures, two of the five apitherapists were exposed to suspected COVID-19 cases and others were exposed to confirmed COVID-19 cases, but none of them were infected eventually. None of the 121 patients were infected by SARS-CoV-2, and three of them had close contact with immediate family members who were confirmed SARS-CoV-2 Infection cases.

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 2721144**

Abandoned beehives

On the font cover I mentioned old, neglected and abandoned beehives. It came as no surprise when I received a call from a lady who with her husband and four children, had just purchased a house in rural Somerset. 'There's a beehive in the garden', she said 'and we really aren't interested. Do you know anybody who would like it?' Having had previous experience of completely dilapidated beehives which, as I mentioned earlier, could be stuck in the middle of a hedge, or been used as a makeshift chicken house, or worse, been seen as an object of interest, and 'value', I asked if she would be kind enough to send a photo - 'Oh! and are there any bees in it?' Apparently there were bees and she would send a video she took the previous day.



Imagine my surprise when I received the footage which contained this image of a fairly new hive. The grass has been cut, a mouse guard has been placed over the entrance, there's a super on top, and bees are flying out and in. It's not in the hedge and it certainly isn't dilapidated.

The very large house, which had been an hotel up until fairly recently, was bought 'lock, stock and barrel', and there in the middle of a patch of grass stands an abandoned National hive - with bees. You see something new every day!

Ramblings from the Chair

The weeks fly by and it only seems like yesterday that I put pen to paper - or was it finger to keyboard?

You will be aware that we had to cancel the work party at the Apiary due to Covid restrictions. These also led your committee to have their first Zoom meeting which went reasonably smoothly despite the techno phobic chair.



We were very grateful to Tony Barnett, the retiring Othery beekeeper who donated his hives and equipment to the association. As a result some members have new colonies in Langstroth hives and will be pondering about the possibility of switching the bees to National hives in the spring. Shook swarm may be the preferred option giving the opportunity to home the bees on new disease free comb/foundation.

One of the apiary trees did not cope well with the move from the old apiary site and has died. It has been decided to replace it with a Rowan tree which has kindly been donated to us. The apiary bees seem to be healthy and happy. All ten hives have been fed either four or five gallons of syrup. Eight have been treated with MAQS, one with Apiguard and one left untreated as it had a new Queen introduced. It was felt that it was safer to leave it untreated until the oxalic acid treatment later in the year. We are now in the process of cleaning and sterilising the feeders. Later feeding, if necessary, will be with fondant. In a few weeks the mouse guards will be fitted and chicken wire to deter woodpeckers will be in place. As we move through autumn into winter apiary checks will decline. Hives will be hefted to check stores and monitored for predator damage. At some point we will call on members for specific tasks at the apiary. Thanks are due to Richard Longworth who has regularly kept the grass in the bee meadow at a reasonable height.

Honey crops appear to have been very variable this year. Whatever your harvest, I hope you have enjoyed your beekeeping year. Although we will not be inspecting the bees, winter gives us the opportunity to clean and repair the equipment we put to one side earlier.

Eric McLaughlin

Dates for your diary

Online Zoom talks

Various upcoming online talks. Watch your emails.

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

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