

# The Newsletter



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

## And the results are in



### **The Winners pictured with Somerton and Frome MP - Sarah Dyke**

Despite a slightly drab day, this year's honey show still proved to be a success in many ways. Yes, entry numbers of exhibits were down on the previous year, but 2022 was a record! The standard was still high and the judges were happy to award a Blue Ribbon to Paul Back for his excellent set of 5 wax blocks. Despite some usual winners, notably our Head Steward Catherine Fraser, who took home four cups, including the Somerton Trophy for most points scored, there were some new names as well. Including Anna Lowe who won this years

Novice Shield. And we'd like to take this opportunity to wish Anna and Will well with their forthcoming arrival! But don't let that be an excuse for not entering next year!

We were very much welcomed by the residents of Keinton Mandeville who turned out in numbers to support the show and the Artisan Market. Trading was brisk and just under £1000 was taken in honey sales alone. With 10 beekeepers supplying honey for sale the choice was a tough one, but everyone sold something. Although a certain honey from Ditchat did particularly well!

We were also delighted this year to have our newly elected MP, Sarah Dyke present the prizes. Sarah kept her pre-election promise to hand out the prizes if she won. A rarity indeed, a politician keeping a promise! A fellow beekeeper, Sarah took a real interest in the show, looked around the market and spoke to many of you. We hope to see her again.

As always the show involves many people helping out and offering their time freely, which as a committee we greatly appreciate. There are too many names to mention, you know who you are, but thank you and we hope that you will help out next year too. And perhaps if you didn't take part in any way this year, you might consider it in 2024. See you all on 21st September, 2024, back at Keinton Mandeville Village Hall.

### **Honey Show Committee**





## **2023 Honey Show Winners**

**THE NOVICE SHIELD AND NATIONAL HONEY SHOW AWARD Anna Lowe**

**THE NOVICE TROPHY David Furse-Roberts**

**THE CHALLENGE CUP Catherine Fraser**

**THE MORRIS PLAQUE David Rose**

**THE ALAN BROMLEY AWARD AND NATIONAL HONEY SHOW BLUE RIBBON Paul Back**

**E C. H. LANGFORD PERPETUAL CUP Fred Clarke**

**THE BILL HARRIS CUP Catherine Fraser**

**THE PEARCE COOKERY PLATE Karen Rose**

**THE JOHN LINDARS MEMORIAL TROPHY David Reynolds**

**THE PERKINS GOBLET Catherine Fraser**

**THE SOMERTON DIVISIONAL TROPHY Catherine Fraser**

**ALLCOMERS' CLASSES PRIZE GIFT VOUCHER John Speirs**

**CHILDRENS AWARD Max Landrigan**

**ALLCOMERS' HONEY CLASSES Paul Moorhouse**

**NATIONAL HONEY SHOW AWARD for Best Children's exhibit India Lukins**



But it's not just honey







Allcomers prize - John Speirs



Best Exhibit - Paul Back



Composite Classes -  
Catherine Fraser



Best Children's exhibit - India  
Lukins, collected by her father



Children's award - Max  
Landrigan



Best light honey - Fred Clarke



Best Mead - Catherine Fraser



Allcomers Honey -  
Paul Moorhouse



Novice Shield - Anna Lowe



Cookery classes - Karen Rose



Photography - Dave Reynolds

## **Somerton and Somerset BKA September Committee Meetings**

The Somerton Honey Show obviously featured strongly at the Somerton Meeting chaired by Gillian Islip (vice Chair) in the absence of Jack Barr (Chair) but a hot point of conversation was the incredible increase in Asian hornet incursions in Kent, West Sussex and Hampshire. With an upcoming Somerset Council Meeting the question of funding the fight against the hornet and who is actually dealing with the problem was at the fore. Somerset BKA's treasurer has proposed an increase in the membership fee of £4.50 for 2024, and this was discussed at the previous Somerton meeting. Although most committee members considered that, as there seems to be no funding from Central Government or BBKA, there was little choice but to mount a campaign ourselves, but they would like a detailed breakdown of where the funds are to be spent. It was also decided that Stewart Gould would draft a letter to our new best friend, and local MP - Sarah Dyke, and that it would be vetted by Joe King and other committee members before being dispatched.

The Somerset BKA meeting, the following evening, followed a similar path to the Somerton meeting, with half of the evening being taken up with this one topic. The suggestion to increase membership fees by £4.50 for 2024 to help combat Asian hornets was passed, and Stewart Gould made a strong point that members will need a breakdown of the intended expenditure. Lynne Ingram, AHAT coordinator for Somerset, made the meeting aware that NBU personnel have been diverted from their normal bee disease duties, to the task of tracking and trapping Asian hornets. There is, apparently, disquiet in the NBU ranks, as they feel that they are under funded and undermanned for the task. There is a rumour, says Lynne, that NBU are threatening to pull their staff out of the operation if more resources are not directed to the problem by central Government. This would be catastrophic but would serve to make the Government aware of the financial and human shortfall.

It was also thought that the public need to be made more aware of the danger to pollinators and posters will be obtained from the Non Native Species Secretariat for distribution by members.

The county treasurer and county secretary will have served their three year terms by the AGM in March 2024 and in order to ensure a smooth transition, their replacements should be found as soon as possible.

## Supporting Honey Bees & other Wildlife through Regenerative Farming.

Our first talk of the Winter season is from within the membership of Somerton Beekeepers, and is certainly different from the normal 'How to get the best out of your bees' talk.

In the Spring of 2022 Sara and Simon Barrett took over 41 acres of and that had been in long term arable rotation. The land has been planted with "Herbal Leys" a mix of around 18 species, including three types of clover, vetches and other flowering plants. The leys will provide grazing for cattle and sheep and will be managed to ensure that the plants have the opportunity to come into flower for the benefit of pollinators. The herbal leys are the principal part of a farm plan that includes replanting hedges, planting trees and forming new ponds, all with the objective of increasing bio-diversity on the farm.

**Mikes Bee Supplies**

**Click & Collect**  
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### Colony for sale

Colin Andrews, one of our long serving members, had a hip replacement recently, and is consequently finding it difficult to lift heavy weights. As a result he is selling one full colony in a National hive, complete with a partially filled super. The bees could be moved now or, in the right circumstances, left at their existing home in Edington over winter. A price in the region of £250 is anticipated.

**Contact Colin on 01278 722331**  
**or by email at [colcat.andrews11@btinternet.com](mailto:colcat.andrews11@btinternet.com)**



## Fondant Recipe

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 Candipollene (a pollen supplement) are intended for boosting egg laying in Spring, and not the ideal food for the cooler months, although they 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 bee-keeping 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, but ask for permission,

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 reaches

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, or you will lose more moisture than required.

#### Notes:

You can use multiples of these quantities.

1 kg sugar will fill 2 takeaway containers

Using semi-transparent take away containers means that you don't have to lift them to see what has been eaten. Just raise the roof and look – less cold drafts.

Re-using a single use plastic container means that it is no longer single use.

Fitting lids will prevent further evaporation of moisture while cooling and stop it attracting moisture when cool.

If you can depress the surface of the cooled fondant with your thumb, you've got it right.

The stirring helps to keep the crystals apart while setting, meaning a softer set.

Overheat the mixture, and it will set like a rock. Break it up, add more water and try again.

## Asian hornet Incursion

If you don't follow **facebook** you may not be fully aware of the severity of the problem. **Last year 2 Asian hornet nests** were found and destroyed. This year (as at September 23<sup>rd</sup>) **the number of nests discovered is 54 in 44 locations**. They are mostly in Kent, but there have been odd ones in Plymouth, Portland, London (near Heathrow) and Yarm in North Yorkshire.

It is now generally considered that it is not a case of 'if we get them here', but simply 'when we get them here'. To that end, The Somerton AHAT team is now ten members strong, and they are receiving training in tracking and trapping.

If you think you have seen an Asian hornet. Try to take a photo and report it using the Asian hornet watch app, which can be downloaded here.  
[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.ac.ceh.hornets&hl=en\\_GB  
&gl=US&pli=1](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.ac.ceh.hornets&hl=en_GB&gl=US&pli=1)

## 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

### SN1 frames are straight sided and will need plastic/metal spacers

**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 272114**

## Article supplied by Rob Kingsnorth

Rob doesn't know where this came from, although it appears to be from 'up north' and given the type face (font) was originally written on a manual typewriter. He was quick to point out that it isn't his viewpoint.

### Anaesthetising Bees

How can you take away the honey from 50,000 bees determined to defend it with their stings? Asked Austin Hyde, in news from the North. How do you deal with an angry colony? How can I dislodge bees that have occupied the roof of my house?

In the autumn Yorkshire beekeepers anaesthetise their bees by the million using a method little known outside the county. And this is the way of it: secure a puff ball, or fuzz ball. *Lycoperdon bovista* is its Latin name. It is like a giant mushroom with the shape of a melon and grows in our fields in the autumn. Dry this puff ball thoroughly until it will give off spores in a brown, smoky cloud. Tear off a piece as big as an egg, ignite it and place it in your smoker. Go to the hive, early morning or evening when no bees are flying. Puff the fumes into the hive entrance until the fuzz ball is exhausted and wait for ten minutes for the fumes to take their full effect.

The roar of alarm at the first puffs dies down to a murmur, then too silence. Open out the hive and you will find your bees lying in a heap, feet in the air, motionless. You will be convinced you have killed them all, but do not try to feel their pulses, for even in this deep sleep they can still sting, or as a beekeeper friend of mine in the RAF said 'Their rear gunnery is as effective as ever'. The few bees still on the combs can be lightly brushed off with a goose wing and all the 50,000 bees can be poured, like brown treacle, into a well-ventilated box, and sent to any destination. We regularly send them in the autumn to the fruit growing counties of the south where they will pollinate fruit blossom the next Spring. Within two hours the bees will have recovered all their wonted liveliness and will be humming away merrily as if nothing had happened.

Bees treated in this way can be united with other colonies similarly treated and will show no sign of fighting which often goes on in united colonies. They can be moved to another position close at hand and will have lost all memory of their former home, showing no sign of returning to the old position they knew so well. There are no ill effects, so far as I know. Indeed, we think that acarine disease is less prevalent among colonies so treated.

**Source unknown**

## SEPTEMBER NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONAL APIARY.

September is very much a time spent preparing the hives for the rigours of the winter ahead. The perceived wisdom is that because of climate change the bees need 40lb of stores to take them through the winter. Counter-intuitively one might think that a warmer winter would make it easier for the bees. The reverse is true. Years ago, the bees spent much of the winter in a tight cluster using very little food, and the queen stopped laying for considerable periods. Now the queen keeps laying because of the higher ambient temperature, forcing the bees to keep the temperature immediately around the brood at a temperature of 96 degrees Fahrenheit, almost our body temperature. To do this they burn large amounts of stores to generate heat by shivering their wing muscles.

We are about half way through the process of supplying each hive with the required amount of stores and each week we top the feeders up again gradually creeping up to our 40lb target.

Although it is a bit early yet we must think of protecting the colonies from predators such as mice and green woodpeckers. We protect them from mice with a mouse guard across the entrance, and keep woodpeckers at bay with wire netting around the hives. I find that an eight foot length of chicken wire works well for a National hive.

Once we have finished feeding and fitted our mouse guards and wire netting we will be turning to all the other tasks. We trim off all the surface growth in apiary, and collect it up and remove it. This depletes the nutrients in the soil and favours the growth of wild flowers in the future. The hedges will need cutting as usual now that bird nesting isn't an issue.

You are always welcome to come along on a Tuesday morning and join in at the apiary. The warm welcome will include tea/coffee and biscuits.

Joe King  
01749 890357



## Sugar Prices

Having given you the recipe for making fondant on page 9, it is probably a good idea to have a guide to sugar prices this year. They have gone up significantly, but you have to remember that you are replacing honey which you should have sold at around £7.00 per lb (454g) That's £15.41 per. Kg.

Supplier	Pack size	Pack price	Price per kg
Aldi	1kg	£1.09	£1.09
Booker Foods	25kg	£19.00	£0.76
B&M Stores	1 kg	£0.95	£0.95
Costco	1kg	£1.00	£1.00
Lidl	1kg	£1.09	£1.09
Morrison	1kg	£1.19	£1.19
Morrison	2kg	£2.14	£1.07
Sainsbury	1kg	£1.09	£1.09
Sainsbury	5kg	£4.75	£0.95
Tesco	1kg	£1.09	£1.09
Tesco	2kg	£2.15	£1.08

It seems that Booker Foods are the cheapest. It is a wholesale warehouse, but if you prove your full membership of a Beekeeping Association, you will be allowed to shop there. Otherwise it's B&M or Sainsbury.

## Happy shopping



Adverts on the rear of buses in Devon recently. Let's hope they are rolled out nationwide soon.

**Dates for your diary**

**Supporting bees through Regenerative**

**Farming**

**Simon & Sara Barnett**

Somerton Parish Rooms

TA11 7NB

**Thursday October 19<sup>th</sup>**

**7.30pm**

**Somerton Beekeepers AGM**

Somerton Parish Rooms

TA11 7NB

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> Nov.**

**7.30pm**

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01458 241146

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**Events Programme**

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**Deputy Delegates**

Suzy Perkins

**Apiary Manager**

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**Extraction Equipment Loan**

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