



Quantock Quest

The newsletter of the Quantock Bee Keepers Association (QBKA)

Issue 26

April 2021

Out of Lockdown? Apiary News

As the lockdown restrictions (hopefully) begin to ease we can look forward to a return to some semblance of Beekeeping “normality” (whatever that is!). Hopefully we will be able to return to some form of socially distanced face to face sessions in the Barn soon. In the meantime the Apiary Management Team have been busy ensuring that the colonies and equipment are ready for the forthcoming year. Mike Sealey has again offered to provide Queens for us as required. The 2020 intake of “Rent a Hiver’s” have yet to take their precious colonies home but plans are in place to provide mentoring assistance when that happy



day arrives. By way of reminder, the Apiary is still in a state of Lockdown as a result of the EFB outbreak. This will remain in force until the next round of Seasonal Bee Inspections can take place in April. Hopefully it will be good news and the R-a-H colonies can go to their rightful homes! But as has been shown with the events of the last 14 months, nothing can be taken for granted. We now know that there are two distinct strains of EFB doing the rounds and until Eleanor comes to do her checks

then nothing is certain. But, fingers crossed. In the meantime all Beekeepers should be checking their colonies for disease / pests now, and there is an article on what to look for later in this newsletter.

Bees—A moving tale!

Well, we have all been there. And the new crop of Rent-a-Hiver’s are about to go there! The question of “How do I transport a hive?” I remember bringing my first colony home in the back of my car. 50,000 buzzing bees on my back seat. A nervous time indeed. But as long as you take the right steps it is quite simple. It should be done in the evening when the Bees have stopped flying and are all safely in the hive. The entrance



needs to be blocked with a wedge of foam. I then put mouse guard over the entrance to keep the foam wedge in place. I then used a cargo strap around the roof and floor to ensure that



the hive stayed complete. I placed the hive in my car and again strapped it down to stop it toppling over. Once in my Apiary I removed the strap, the mouse guard and the foam and the Bees were now in their new home! Simple. However, Nick Wills has sent me the pictures of how he deals with the issue of transporting multiple colonies. To me, this is beekeeping on an industrial scale! A novel solution to moving multiple hives, in this case 6 of them! The pictures show the hives in position, blocked but yet to be strapped!

The Chairman's Musings

Chairman Barry Hulatt writes:

Dear friends,

So it's over a year since we have been beekeeping under these very strange circumstances. As I write my bees in three apiaries are flying well and consuming stores rapidly. Spring feeding may be in order, especially as I may want to make an early increase. There is plenty of pollen coming in from the early blossoms and it is interesting to try to identify these, both by using the published charts and by watching the bees working. The books tell us that bees collect pollen from hazel, and apparently pollen analysis confirms this, but I have never seen bees working on Corylus bushes. These are wind pollinated, so there would seem little advantage to the plants in attracting insects. I would like to hear your own observations on this.

I hope both you, your family and your bees have come through the winter safely. The QBKA committee have been meeting on an informal and electronic basis throughout the lockdown, and the division has also been able to continue the Wednesday night drop in meetings via Zoom. Please attend, just so we can keep in touch. At present we have 107 active members and new beekeepers are showing an interest in joining. If anyone has 'lapsed' they would be welcome to rejoin by contacting the Treasurer. It seems like the COVID restrictions are beginning to be eased and I look forward to the time we can again meet at the apiary or in a safe garden setting. As you will be aware, we are also looking forward to the time when those with bees kept at the apiary will be given the all clear to take them home. Of course, this cannot be until the bee inspector has confirmed that there is no EFB. Movement restrictions apply, just as in the case of foot and mouth in cattle.

There has been a range of online talks provided by SBKA and other bodies via Eventbrite, and these have been very useful in keeping us up to date – particularly as some of the speakers as have been of international reputation, and we would have been unlikely to hear them otherwise.

Take care and enjoy what spring has to offer to both you and your bees.



The picture on the left shows the blossom on a Prunus in March. The bees love it but I haven't a clue what it is as it grew from a sucker from below the graft of a green-gage.

Editors Note:-

Thanks to Barry there is always an interesting article for this Newsletter. However, copy and pictures from other members are welcomed. It's your Newsletter. Please send articles / copy to the Editor via email, and you can share your experiences with the group.

As the late Aretha Franklin once said - Who's Zooming Who?

The changes to the activities brought about by Covid-19 certainly had an impact on our bee-keeping year. But being the resourceful group that we are, coupled with the marvels of modern technology, we found a way around the lack of social contact! We turned to the now all encompassing Zoom Meeting! (other technology platforms are available). The Committee has been holding these for some time, but they have now been extended to the "Drop In" sessions. Whilst it is hoped that we will be reverting to proper and full face to face interaction shortly they are a useful means of staying in touch. We have also initiated "Whatsapp" groups, again, for the Committee but also for Swarm Collections matters and mentoring. If you are interested in joining the Swarm group, or dropping in to a Zoom meeting please contact our Secretary via email: ruth@penelope-pitstop.co.uk and she will add you to the circulation list.

Meet The Committee

With over 107 current members the QBKA Committee felt that it would be an idea to profile the various members of that august body! First to step up to the plate is **Bob Muckett**. Bob has written this short resume of his experience:



I have been keeping bees for over ten years, starting with a couple of hives while I was working and expanding my pastime since retirement. I operate three apiaries, the main site is near Charlinch.

This year I have taken nine hives through the winter and so far, touch wood, no losses.

I produce honey and wax products for family, friends and a farm shop in Cannington.

I enjoy processing the oilseed rape crop of honey in the spring to produce a silky smooth soft set honey. The later crop of summer flower or hedgerow honey is what I call runny 'unny which can vary tremendously depending on the forage.

I find wax can be a tricky substance to process but manage to produce a range of candles, tea-lights, wax ingots and wax melts for the Christmas market.

I have been on the committee for two years and last year joined the apiary management team, helping to keep the apiary equipment in reasonable shape, producing nucleus hives and also monitoring the apiary hives. I have learned much from working with far more experienced bee-keepers.

I found that helping out at the rent-a-hive sessions expanded my knowledge of beekeeping as there is always something new to see and learn. It's good to support those starting out on their beekeeping journey by passing on any useful hints and tips.

I like to "tinker" over winter and this year, with more time to spare than in previous years(!!!) I have made a number of nucs and a medium sized sugar syrup maker.

An update on Neonicotinoids. From The National President

Last month I indicated that we were taking steps to prevent the use of neonicotinoids on the sugar beet crop. We pursued this with the help of two barristers and a solicitor.

The Wildlife Trust was also involved and following a similar process, using a Pre-action Letter and a Judicial Review. I contacted them to ask if we could work together but unfortunately their policy is to work alone on legal matters, but they have shared information with us that has been very helpful.

The derogation is only for this year but with a proviso that it could be applied again in 2022 and 2023, each being a separate action.

Because of the frosts we have recently suffered, which reduced the aphid count, it is now low enough for the pesticide not to be used in 2021. This has just been confirmed by the Government. However, that still leaves 2022 and 2023 when the derogation might rear its ugly head again.

John Chittenden, a solicitor at Humphries Kirk LLP and Yasin Patel, a barrister who would both be acting for us, agree that there is no need to take action for a Judicial Review this year. However, we need to ensure that we are ready and keep up the pressure throughout this year to show we are determined to prevent this pesticide use in future.

The thought is that the seed manufacturers will develop a seed that is resistant to aphids in future years, but this is likely to be after a couple more years at least.

The Wildlife Trust and the BBKA have agreed to share information so that we have the best chance of preventing the use of pesticides for future years. Both John and Yasin agree with this action and they will continue to support the BBKA to ensure that we can, if needed, apply for a Judicial Review.

One concern is that there may be a cost for any action, especially if we lose the review. This could potentially amount to tens of thousands of pounds, despite our trying to defray the costs. We will take advice from John regarding this and keep our members up to date as events unfurl.

Kind regards

Margaret Wilson, President



Oilseed Rape



Sugar Beet

Two major crops where Neonicotinoids are used.

April Apiary Tasks

April is a time for a full disease inspection and a floor change, if not already undertaken. The inspection is an essential part of bee husbandry. Ideally you should wait for a warm day, preferably above 15°C.

Disease Inspection

If your colonies are healthy, they should be building up nicely, but if you have a problem it is best to know now so action can be taken where necessary. Make sure you are keeping records for each hive. To start your inspection, smoke as necessary, remove the roof and crown board, take out the dummy board and at least one adjacent brood frame, which will probably be empty, and work inwards until you reach the brood. Observe the adult bees and check for deformities caused by virus infection, such as deformed wings. Then you need to shake most of the bees off the frame so you have a clear view of the brood. This is achieved by positioning the frame in the gap you have made, then lifting the frame a little way out and bringing it down a similar distance to a sudden stop, without hitting the brood box.

You should know what healthy brood looks like: nice white larvae with good segmentation, laying curled up in the bottoms of their cells. The capped brood is light brown in colour, like a digestive biscuit, dry and slightly dome-shaped. So, if you see anything out of the ordinary you should inspect further. Remember, you are undertaking a disease inspection, so just concentrate on this aspect. If you see eggs, you know you still have a queen, and marking or re-marking her can be done on another inspection. The two main diseases to look for are American foulbrood (AFB) and European foulbrood (EFB); both are caused by bacteria. You must notify your Bee Inspector if you suspect that you have AFB or EFB and you will need to place your apiary under a 'self-imposed' standstill until given the all clear. New beekeepers may wish to contact a mentor or experienced club member if uncertain.

Other brood diseases to look out for are: sacbrood, chalkbrood, chilled brood and bald brood. At this time of year, as most colonies start to increase in size, there is a balance between nursing and foraging duties. It is at this stage that some diseases are more obvious, as the numbers of house bees can be insufficient to remove all the dead brood. Later, with additional house bees and a colony with a hygienic predisposition, the infected brood may be removed before you can notice a problem.

One specific adult condition to be aware of is dysentery, if the weather has been bad and the bees have been unable to fly, they defecate in the hive, so look out for staining on frames. This condition should improve with better weather and diet. However, if the colony was also slow to build up, this may indicate an infection with nosema. If suspected, it's best to undertake a Bailey comb change when weather and temperature permits. You are also advised to change the queen when one is available as she may also be infected.

Supers are often added in mid-April with strong colonies, which ensures room for the queen to lay in the brood chamber while providing space for stores in the super. This will also stop the brood box from becoming congested and, hopefully, prevent or delay swarming. This is particularly important if you are planning for an early crop of honey from oilseed rape and have been feeding to build up a strong workforce. With reference to swarming, keep an eye open for any natural drone brood within the colony, as drone brood is an indicator that you will soon need to start regular inspections for queen cells.

Next time you undertake an inspection and spot the queen you may need to renew her paint marking. However, if she is now unmarked, your old queen may have been superseded the previous year and you are now looking at her daughter! April's work makes for a good year's crop!

***** Equipment For Sale *****

This is a new feature for the Newsletter. A forum for QBKA Beekeepers to sell / exchange / seek equipment. If you have surplus equipment for sale or exchange then the best way for other Local Beekeepers to know is to offer it via this newsletter. Please send details of any items to the editor, using the email billmonteith@talktalk.net and it will appear in the next edition. Pictures are also useful. Include a general description and indication of condition and the price that you want.

Please note that the items for sale are offered by members and **NOT** the QBKA, unless otherwise stated. The QBKA (or its management) cannot be held responsible for items that are not fit for purpose or are mis advertised. These are private deals between the individuals concerned, not the QBKA. Please deal direct with the member.

Click & Collect
www.mikes-bee-supplies.com
 E: mikes-bees@outlook.com
 T: 01278 445158

Mikes Bee Supplies

Foundation

Hives

Suits

Jars

And more!

Bakers Fondant
12.5kg

We take
Cash or Card
(no cheques)

PayPal
VISA MasterCard Maestro

Find us at
72 Wembdon Hill
Wembdon
Bridgwater
Somerset.
TA6 7PZ

There are no items of equipment offered by members for sale in this issue.

The newsletter of the
Quantock Bee Keepers

Spaxton Rd Apiary,
Spaxton Rd,
Bridgwater
TA5 2NU.
<https://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk/quantock.html>

President : Mr G Fraser
Chairman : Mr Barry Hulatt
Secretary : Mrs Ruth Walker
Treasurer / Membership: Mrs Alison Monteith



2021 Programme of Events

This is a skeleton programme produced at a time of uncertainty in the light of the ever changing corona virus restrictions. All activities and dates are subject to change. It is intended that more detailed arrangements will be publicised via the newsletter and in divisional emails.

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Saturday April 3rd 1400 | Hive assessment / disease recognition |
| Wednesday 14th April 1900 | Zoom Drop in for all |
| Saturday April 24th 1400 | Shook swarms and making nukes |
| Saturday 1st May 1400 | Spring Management / swarm prevention |
| Wednesday 12th May 1900 | Zoom Drop in for all / Socially distanced REAL drop in. |
| Saturday 22nd May 1400 | Using Apideas |
| Saturday 5th June 1400 | Beginners' forum |
| Wednesday 9th June | Drop in for all |
| Saturday 19th June 1400 | Summer Barbeque / Social |
| Saturday 26th June 0900 - | Brymore School Open Day & Country Fair |
| Saturday 3rd July 1400 | Reading the Comb |
| Wednesday 14th July 1900 | Drop in for all |
| Saturday 24th July 1400 | Pests and diseases |
| Saturday 7th August 1400 | Assessing the crop |
| Wednesday 11th August 1900 | Drop in for all |
| Saturday 21st August 1400 | Removing honey + varroa treatment |
| Saturday 4th September 1400 | Beginners' forum |
| Wednesday 8th September 1900 | Drop in for all |
| Saturday 18th September 1400 | Preparing for winter / uniting /feeding |
| Wednesday 13th October 1900 | Drop in + mouseguards |
| Saturday 23rd October 1400 | Maintenance + stocktaking |
| Mondays throughout November | Beginners meetings begin |
| Friday 19th November AGM | Spaxton Village Hall |
| Saturday 18th December 1400 | Oxalic acid treatment |

It is hoped that in addition to the above it will be possible to run sessions on skep making, wax preparation and visits to members' apiaries.