



# Quantock Quest

The newsletter of the Quantock Bee Keepers Association (QBKA)

Issue 30

June 2022

## The Chairman's Musings!

As we emerged from the spring it became clear that there had been mixed fortunes for our members. Some colonies had come through the winter strong and unscathed, quickly building up and needing supering. Others had suffered quite severe losses and required new starts through collecting swarms and building up nucleus hives. Can I remind members who have a swarm or nucleus (perhaps taken as part of swarm control) which is surplus to their own requirements that these could be offered to others who have lost all their bees? Usually we would do this on a 'not for profit' friendly basis to fellow members, maybe in exchange for replacement frames etc? This is one of the several benefits of belonging to our division.

In addition to swarms I have had several reports of 'absconding' bees where apparently strong colonies have left their hives and completely decamped: these were not regular swarms. I got the impression that some of these were the result of 'let alone beekeeping' where many years of old black wax combs with small cells had made hygienic behaviour impossible. Not all were like this, however, and at least one experienced beekeeper who made regular comb changes also lost bees in this way.

Early May saw a large number of swarms and they were collected from the usual range of accessible and inaccessible places. There has been continuing dialogue on the Swarmcatchers WhatsApp group and this has helped people to source swarms and help the public. Just a reminder: never pay for a swarm if you are asked to do so by a homeowner as you are doing them a service. If you left the swarm they might have to call in pest control which would prove very costly for them. Also remember that you are not insured to do building work nor to work at heights (though I am afraid that I, amongst others, tend to do so on occasions). By the end of May things seem to have gone rather quiet on the swarming front, But I am told we must remain vigilant! One week to ten day inspections will still be in order.

It has been heartening to see the keen interest of new members on the beginners' course, and those who have signed on to the Rentahive scheme have now got their nucleus hives up and running. Indeed some have been able to transfer their nukes into full size boxes and have generously shared frames from their strong colonies with others whose bees have not progressed so quickly. The Wednesday evening drop in sessions and the Saturday afternoon have been well attended, though it would be good to see some old faces who have not been able to get to apiary in recent times. We all seem to be able to learn something new, no matter how long we have kept our bees.

Barry Hulatt (Chairman)

## Volunteers Needed!

It is Brymore School open day on June 25th and QBKA have a stand at the event. We are looking for volunteers to support the club by helping get the equipment that is required ready at the Apiary on Friday 24th in the evening, to transport the equipment to Brymore at about 9am on Saturday morning, to man the stand for part of the day and then return the equipment to the apiary after the show in the afternoon. If you are available and would like to help with any of these tasks please let our Secretary Ruth Walker know, and she will give you more information nearer the time,

---

# Confessions of a Beekeeper

*Barry Hulatt, our Chairman, has suggested that perhaps this can become a regular item in our newsletters? In this, the first of what could hopefully become many, he shares a few “confessions” about our hobby.*

We all make mistakes, and it doesn't seem to get much better as we get older. Take, for example, last winter. I determined to make use of the division's boiler to clean up some old frames. All went well and I produced several boxes of recycled and perfectly serviceable brood frames ready for the insertion of new foundation. Then I thought I would try boiling up some frames fitted with plastic foundation (some people and their bees really like them). Result: the plastic buckled and contorted in the heat. Be warned! I later found that some temperature below boiling point and a shorter immersion was preferable.

Another self-inflicted problem was getting a queen above the excluder. This only became apparent at the next inspection when I found that there was open brood up in the super. The hive quickly became brood and a half by the removal of the excluder, so nothing was lost. I think this situation was caused by a distortion in an old excluder, though it could have been me not noticing that the queen was on the excluder itself.

How many of us have suffered from a stupid sting by not checking that the zip on our veil has been properly fastened? Or maybe that elastic around our wrists or ankles has stretched? That new hairspray, perfume or washing powder is what is perhaps what is making the bees angry? I tend not to use much perfume myself, but I have certainly noticed that the washing powder can start bees pinging on your veil whilst your companion, who is using another product (or is just dirtier?), is unmolested.

## Smoker Fuel - Discuss!

At a recent Wednesday drop in there was a lively discussion about suitable smoker fuels. In addition to the widely used corrugated cardboard suggestions included wood shavings,



bark chippings, soft rotten wood, old sack-ing, dried manure etc. Some of these cause a lot of tar, so it's worth trying what is best for you. I also picked up in America that the seed heads of Stagshorn Sumac have a soporific effect on the bees, and, if you have a tree in the garden, it's worth collecting and drying them. Does anyone have any other suggestions for cheap or free smoker fuel? It has always puzzled me that the equipment suppliers actually ask good money for it.

*A Stagshorn Sumac (Rhus Typhina)*

# Unusual Behaviour?

Mick Stenhouse writes:-

In late summer last year we were checking the hives for Varroa and on one of the slides from below the mesh floor we found hundreds of Bees legs. We then proceeded to go through the hive and found that the drones had tried to push up through the wire on the queen excluder. They had become stuck and the under side was completely covered with dead drones. It would appear that the worker bees had decided it was time for the drones to go and had stopped feeding them. So the drones tried to get through the excluder to the honey in the super. I've never seen this before. Has anyone else?

## Poetry Corner

It would appear that we have a budding Beekeeping Poet Laureate in our midst! Over to you then, Shirley Stenhouse!



### *The New Apiary.*

*A new apiary somewhere near,  
 What a jolly good idea.  
 A site at Durleigh was soon found,  
 In the corner of waste ground.  
 Funding grants from local companies,  
 Provided a home for Quantock bees.  
 A building was soon erected,  
 And a large pond was excavated.  
 Trees and shrubs planted to provide a shield,  
 Wild flower seeds sown for nectar yields  
 Course meetings could be held at night,  
 Once we had power and light.  
 Since bees have been much in the news,  
 Programs have been filmed here by television crews.  
 Rent - a - hive is a popular scheme.  
 Beginners to own their own hives is the theme.  
 The apiary has been running for many a year,  
 A big thanks to all who volunteer.*



*Do we have any other budding Poets out there?*

## Rent-a-Hive

### Sue Anderson writes:

Back in March, and what seems such a long time ago, the Rent-a-Hivers had a great hive building day and were blessed with fantastic sunny weather. This meant that a lot of hives could be built outside to minimise the noise and the headaches!! Lots of the committee turned out to help, so lots of mentors were available to help. Everyone managed to



*This Year's intrepid Rent-a-Hivers' enjoying the March sunshine and getting busy!*

## Apiary Happenings



### Our President receives Honorary Award.

Ken Edwards, the QBKA President, has been awarded Honorary Membership of the SBKA in recognition of the hard work and dedication to the Craft at both Local and County level. Pictured, left, Our Chairman, Barry Hulatt is seen presenting Ken with his certificate for his Honorary membership of SBKA. This was awarded at the SBKA AGM. Barry then presented it to Ken at our committee meeting in March. Congratulations Ken, on this richly deserved recognition.

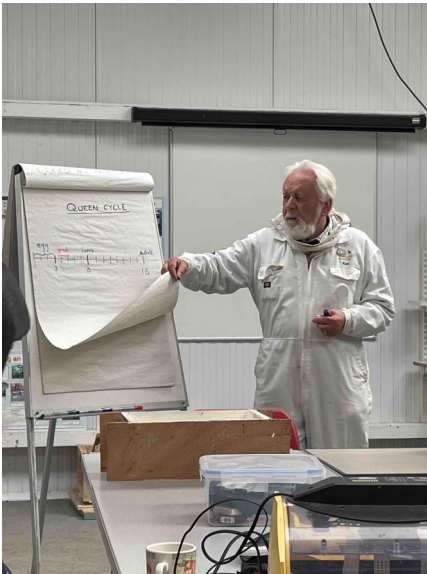
### Behind the scenes:

The second photo, right, is of Roger Puddy, Barry Hulatt and Don MacBeth making frames at the apiary recently, ready for the hives that are already filling their supers with honey.



## Queen Rearing Session

At an Apiary training session held on the 2nd April members were treated to a superb demonstration by Ken Edwards on the subject of Queen Rearing. A fascinating session was followed by lots of questions. Queen Rearing is regarded by some as a “Dark Art” but Ken showed that this is not necessarily so. Starting with the basics of the Queens’ life cycle he developed the theme up to the successful rearing of viable virgin Queens. Our Secretary Ruth took the accompanying pictures. See the Apiary calendar on the back page for more sessions where our resident experts pass on their expertise.



*Ken explains the Queens’ life cycle*



*On to the required equipment*



*Finally, a frame of developing Queens!*

## Missing Apiary Equipment

During a recent stocktake at the Apiary it has become apparent that a Large Heated Uncapping Tray, which was part of the loan equipment, is missing. Unfortunately we cannot find a record of who borrowed it, or when! Please have a look around and if you have borrowed it and omitted to return it then we would be grateful for its’ return. It is a valuable asset for loan during the extraction period.

## The World’s Tiniest Swarm Competition

As we are just (hopefully) coming to the close of the busy period of swarming the picture, left, may be of interest! **Barry Hulatt** writes: *This tiny swarm de-camped, complete with queen, from one of my Apidea!*



# Assembling the Apiary Demonstration Hive

One of the more important parts of our work as Beekeepers, and of QBKA as a Division is that of education. Apart from our Beginner sessions and the Rent-a-Hive scheme we also attend Schools and Fete's to demonstrate aspects of our hobby and also to raise awareness (and funds). One of the most captivating pieces of equipment that we have, and one that is always a draw at events is the Apiary Demonstration Hive.

This normally lives on the Southern wall of the Apiary but is also portable and can be transported to shows and demonstrations. It will be a prominent feature of the forthcoming Brymore Fayre and for those of you who are unaware of its' existence or indeed its purpose then go along and see it in action.

It has recently been assembled and populated by the Apiary management Team and Ruth Walker was there to take some pictures of the team in action.



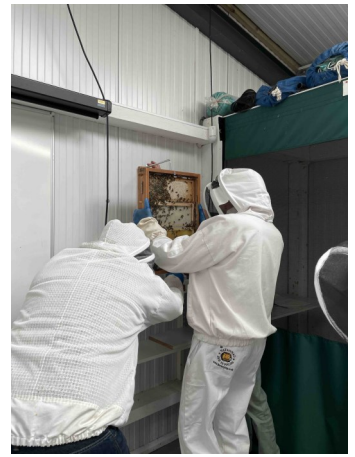
*The Demonstration Hive*



*Mick Stenhouse and the completed Hive*



*Getting it into position*



*Mick and Bob Muckett ensuring a perfect fit!*



*Final adjustments*



*Fitting the closing boards*



*"Jobs a Dandy", as they say!*



*"Lets see if Barry has put the kettle on!"*

## Keep Those Articles & Pictures Coming!

Please keep sending me any interesting articles, observations, pictures or items of equipment for sale adverts!. The Quest is only as good as YOUR input, and we would like to see more contributors. What about a regular article from a Rent-a-Hiver outlining their journey and experience. It would be wonderful to hear your side of things. I look forward to hearing from you.

Send any material or pictures to [billmonteith309222@gmail.com](mailto:billmonteith309222@gmail.com)

The newsletter of the  
Quantock Bee Keepers

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

President : Mr K Edwards  
Chairman : Mr Barry Hulatt  
Secretary : Mrs Ruth Walker  
Treasurer / Membership: Mrs Alison Monteith



## 2022 Programme of Events

The remaining programme of events for this year are as follows:

### June

Wednesday 8th 7pm- Drop In- plan for Brymore Open day- Apiary  
Saturday 11th 2pm- Using Apideas- Rent-A-Hive 6- Apiary  
Saturday 18th 2pm- Feeding a Nucleus- Rent-A-Hive 7- Apiary  
Saturday 25th – Brymore Open day (All help welcome please)

### July

Saturday 2nd 2pm- Building Up- Rent-A-Hive 8- Apiary  
Wednesday 13th 7pm- Drop In – Apiary  
Saturday 16th 2pm- Reading the Comb- Rent-A-Hive 9- Apiary

### August

Saturday 6th 2pm- Pests and Diseases/Moving Bees- Rent-A-Hive 9/10/11 Apiary  
Wednesday 10th 7pm- Drop In – Apiary  
Saturday 20th 2pm- Removing honey and varroa

### September

Wednesday 14th 7pm- Drop In – Apiary  
Saturday 17th 2pm- Preparing for winter/uniting/feeding- Apiary

### October

Wednesday 12th 7pm- Drop In – Apiary  
Saturday 22nd 2pm- Maintenance and Stocktaking- Apiary

### November

Tuesday TBC 7.30pm- Beginner's course starts – Brymore School  
Friday 18th 7.30pm- QBKA AGM- Spaxton Village Hall

### December

Saturday 10th 2pm- Oxalic Acid Treatment- Apiary

## Equipment for sale

*This was sent to us via the SBKA secretary in May but could still be available. If you don't ask, you won't know!*

My father was a member of the SBA and I have inherited his bee keeping equipment. Sadly I have developed an allergy to bee stings that makes unwise to continue with this fascination hobby. I therefore have some equipment that may be of interest for someone to purchase: Stainless Steel hand extractor, Stainless Steel strainer, Stainless Steel Uncapping tray. A complete WBC Hive, a national and commercial hive which need new frames. Then there is a variety of feeders and miscellaneous 'stuff'. The extraction equipment is in good condition the remainder is of various conditions but worked for me and my bees but not pristine. I wonder if you could circulate this information and perhaps some of your members would be interested in purchasing some of these items? My contact number is **01643 862406** and I live in Porlock Weir.