



The Quantock Quest

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A Division of Somerset Beekeepers Association



We are all one or the other, it would be a very rare thing to be both, but just when

does this preference begin? Are we born with it, does our upbringing influence it, or is it the way we live as an adult?

So, are you a morning bird or a night owl? Up with the lark, full of beans and raring to start the day at some unearthly hour of the morning, or ready to party just as the rest of us are going to bed?

I must confess to not being at my best in the mornings and it has taken a lot of self discipline over the years to go to bed at a reasonable hour, whereas the man of the house beats me to the kettle for the first morning cuppa by hours!

Of course, our bees are not so languid, as soon as the temperature is right they are off and out, beginning their busy day as the sun rises and warms the air. And they don't knock off early either—the pollen collection doesn't stop until dusk begins to welcome the night.

What a great example they set us!

Jackie

Dates for your Diary



Wed 26 Sep —3.00pm **Apiary Management**—Close down

Wed 10 Oct—7.00pm—**Last Drop In**



BRIDGET KNUTSON, WORKING WITH WAX

Those of you who have been involved in our microscopy course or have attended honey shows will no doubt be familiar with the name of Bridget Knutson. Bridget is a good friend and Associate member of Quantock Division. Following our nomination, she was recently awarded the prestigious West Country Honey Farms Rose Bowl Award for achievements in beekeeping. She will be presenting our *Working with Wax for Christmas* session on Saturday October 20th, so make this a date for your diary. I'm sure you will be inspired to produce some unique presents in the dark non-beekeeping months ahead.

Bridget is an accomplished beekeeper, being Chair of the Wedmore and Cheddar Division and Examinations Secretary for Somerset Beekeepers Association. She currently runs both National and WBC hives in the Cheddar area. She tells me she didn't lose any bees last winter – quite an achievement in what was a challenging season. Bridget has also recently become a Master Beekeeper, a very rare distinction achieved by passing the range of BBKA practical and theory examinations and culminating in success in the Advanced Husbandry Exam.



Her first foray into honey showing was in 2005 when she was persuaded to enter novice classes in wax and honey. Since then she hasn't looked back, and her impressive displays of wax flowers, mead and other hive products have become famous – and very difficult to beat. However, she is not over protective of her achievements and is more than ready to share her expertise with other beekeepers. Maybe she will inspire some of us to challenge her 'Best in Show' successes!

So save all those scraps of wax, treasure your clean cappings and find out from Bridget what you might be able to produce from them in the coming months.

Barry Hulatt (Chairman)

News from the Apiary

The lawn mower we use at the Apiary to keep the grass tidy has died on us; it is approaching the end of the season but if it stays mild we will still need a mower. If anyone has a working petrol version they no longer need we would welcome it with open arms!



We had a good Apiary Management session back in the summer, when we stocked a number of Apideas with new Queens, set up an Observation Hive, sorted out the Queenless hives and assessed the Queens.

Tue 16 Oct — **Beginners 1** — Brymore Academy

Sat 20 Oct—**Working with wax for Christmas**

Tue 23 Oct — **Beginners 1** — Brymore Academy

Fun at Fyne Court

We took part in Fyne Court's Nature Festival this year and a good time was had by all!

Owned by the National Trust, this lovely old house and grounds was the perfect location for the Festival, which was a new initiative to promote wildlife and environmental partnerships in the local area, and the Somerset Coast. The Festival will take place in a different venue each year, with many different conservation, environmental and wildlife organisations taking part.

We offered a number of different activities for people to try out and were also able to promote our courses and rent-a-hive, amongst other bee-related events. Visitors were able to have a go at candle rolling, gaze at an observation hive and learn from the virtual bee hive. We also had guess the number of bees in a match box and a firm favourite was the honey tasting!

(Ed note: Back in the day, when I was just a stripling, dad used to take me to Fyne Court. We would climb over the back wall to "borrow" some frogspawn from their large pond, then hi-tail for home!)



Beekeeper's Tip

If you do have a wasp problem do not set up wasp traps in your Apiary—this will only encourage them to loiter near your hives. Set the traps on your boundaries if possible.



Social Wasps – 6 species, all cousins, by Fred Jones

Social wasps include garden species and live in annual colonies developed from an overwintered fertile queen. This queen will produce several thousand daughter workers. The males, with longer antennae, and the new queens develop in late summer. Larvae are fed on chewed insects or animal matter. The queens that appear in early spring are newly mated from the summer before. They will have survived the winter in log piles, holes in the ground or other cavities. They are the only survivors of the old nest and live for only one year.

My first remembered interaction with these species was with what we called 'tree wasps' when pollarding willow trees. Most painful! I have since had the greatest respect for, and fear of, any stinging insect; hence I am now a beekeeper and allergic to bee and wasp stings! I have had many stings but have not knowingly put my foot in a nest again. I try to keep my distance, approach with caution, and withdraw when necessary. I generally apply the pest controllers' policy and respect others' views on preserving our insects, though I'm not sure that these considerations will be given to their cousin, the Asian Hornet.

Should you wish to distinguish between our two common social wasps, the Common Wasp and the German Wasp, this can be done through observing their different facial markings. The easy way (and the safest) is to inspect a dead wasp, the Common having a 'ship's anchor' or 'tonsil' shaped mark and the German three 'off triangled' black marks on the face. I don't think either has that emoji face we see on mobile phones or computers. The best way I have discovered to locate wasp nests is to use sunny days and the directional flight of the insects. They tend to nest underground, in hedges or in buildings. You will see a flash of yellow and black travelling either straight towards you or away from you. They will follow the ground, hedge, tree or building contours. Should you see a snaking action they will most likely be hunting for food - protein early in the season and most likely sweetish foods later in the summer. The proteins may be dismembered insects or dead meat such as road kill or on butchers' / fishmongers' slabs.

Fred will bring us more on Wasps next time.....



Dolichovespula media
(Median Wasp)



Dolichovespula saxatilis
(Dacron Wasp)



Dolichovespula sylvestris
(Tree Wasp)



Asda and Bees

We are very grateful to Asda for their gift of £200 following the finish of their summer Green Tokens scheme, where shoppers could use their tokens to vote for their favourite of three local organisations. We came second to the World Wildlife Trust at Steart and bagged £200! Thanks to everyone who shopped in Asda and voted for us and thank you, Asda for inviting us to join the scheme.