



Somerset Beekeepers' Association



NEWSLETTER

January 2021 no.143



Please send any copy for the April 2021 edition to me by 15th March.
Email: friend.elizabeth@gmail.com.



From the Chair

Sadly, we have lost two notable beekeepers in the final weeks of 2020. Fred Horne, of Yeovil Division, who had been a chairman of Somerset BKA, and was the current holder of the South West Honey Farms' award, passed away just after Christmas, and David Charles, ex chairman of Somerset BKA and past President of BBKA, lost his battle after suffering ill health for some time.

There is, however, light at the end of the tunnel. Let's just hope that the bulb holds out. We now have three vaccines approved, and most beekeepers should have received their first dose, of one of them, by the end of the Spring. So where does that leave us. We probably won't be able to offer full practical courses this coming season, but we might just be able to offer some 'hands on' experience, in small groups, or 'one on one' using mentors. I therefore urge all members to think how they gained their practical knowledge and offer to help at least one new beekeeper in their area. There should be many taking up the cudgels for bees this year, as we have over 90 participants registered for the Somerton Division online course, starting on January 20th. If physical practical sessions are not possible, we may be offering an online version. Live streaming is a new experience for me, but I am prepared to give anything a go.

If any new beekeepers get to read this, I urge you not to buy anything just yet, as you could end up with some expensive woodwork, which might not suit your ultimate, and informed, choices. Wait until you have been on a course. I would also recommend avoiding the urge to follow endless 'facebook' & 'youtube' channels on how to keep bees, especially if they are American sites. Whereas some of these transatlantic beekeepers know exactly what they are talking about, they will definitely be using equipment not widely used in the UK, and almost certainly, will live in totally different climatic conditions than we experience in Southern Britain. If you really want to follow 'youtube' sessions, and want a guaranteed source of relevant knowledge, then find Stewart's Beekeeping Basics, which is run by Stewart Spinks of the Norfolk Honey Co. His videos are informative, and cover a wide range of subjects – explained in plain English. Facebook discussion groups confuse matters completely, as they take the 'Ask two beekeepers and get three answers' scenario to a whole new level of bewilderment.

The Royal Bath & West Show are intending to hold a slightly altered event this year, with no livestock. The Bees & Honey Tent features large in their plans, and this is one of our major showcases for the year. A final decision on this is expected in April. With good results from the vaccines, we may just be able to hold our own Honey Shows again this year too, and I am looking forward to making the rounds of as many divisional shows as I can get to.

The snowdrops and winter honeysuckle (*Ionicera fragrantissima*) are out in our garden, and daffodils have been in bloom in Yeovil since early December. Hazel catkins will be releasing their pollen very soon now, and the pollen from crocuses will prove that the future is bright – the future is orange

Stewart Gould

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

SBKA Lockdown Lecture Series Programme.



January 21st - Graham Royle - Microscopy for Beekeepers

Have you ever thought about giving microscopy a try, but not known where to start? Then this richly illustrated presentation full of 'up close' photographs may be for you.

Learning to use a microscope can add interest to your beekeeping. With the aid of a microscope, you can diagnose disease in your bees, identify the flowers they are foraging on, and learn more about their anatomy. This talk covers the different types of microscope that can be used by beekeepers for pollen analysis, disease diagnosis and the study of bee anatomy, both external and internal. How to choose a suitable microscope, the sources of equipment and how to get started. Also covered are a few advanced techniques including specialised lighting techniques and photography.

Graham Royle holds the National Diploma in Beekeeping, is an experienced beekeeper, former Bee Inspector, and the author of '*Apis through the looking Glass*'.



February 4th - Ralph Buechler - Sustainable Varroa Management

The talk explores a more natural approach to integrated pest management in order to control varroa and get healthy, productive bees.

The effect of Varroosis on colony development and losses strongly depends on the relative brood infestation level. Realizing the annual population dynamic of bees and mites it gets very clear that temporary brood interruption due to swarming is a key factor for colony survival under natural conditions. Referring to this, a controlled brood interruption during the main season is recommended for sustainable Varroa management. Suitable techniques, like total brood removal, trapping comb technique and queen caging combined with a one-time treatment will be explained. Effects of those procedures on colony development, infestation levels and work load will be discussed.

Dr. Ralph Buechler is a research scientist leading the team at the Bee institute Kirchhain in Germany. The focus of his research is Honey bee selection, disease resistance and alternative varroa treatment.

The complete programme together with links to register for each lecture can be found at the end of this newsletter

REVIEWERS WANTED. I know that many of you have been very impressed with all the lectures that have been arranged and we would like to feature reviews of the talks in future newsletters so please send them to myself or to Lynne Ingram. This is the first:

Review of David Evans talk 'Rational Varroa Control'

I receive David's weekly blog by email and so was really excited when I found out that SBKA had organised for him to give an online talk. Unfortunately I was unable to watch the lecture live but caught up fairly recently by logging onto the SBKA website.

I certainly learnt a lot from this talk and this will inform my practice in the coming year. Getting that early varroa treatment on at the end of the summer seems critical to get those levels down going into the winter. Treat for varroa with the right treatment at the right time! I will also be mindful of that window of opportunity to treat, such as when a colony is broodless, not just in the winter but, for example when one splits a colony. Of course it's so vital to treat for varroa to prevent the DWV taking over the colony.

I know our beekeeping beginners at Taunton Bee Keepers learnt a lot and the talk provoked much discussion during our Zoom sessions. What I liked about David's talk is the way he so clearly explained the research, although some of the graph information went over my head. But that is what I think was so good about the talk; something for everyone from beginners to experienced beekeepers. Thank you SBKA, these talks have been invaluable. Keep 'em coming.

Julie Husband



BBKA Examinations Spring 2021

This year saw the exams system in turmoil due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which meant all exams were cancelled. It had been hoped originally that the module exams would be able to go ahead in November 2020, but they also had to be cancelled. The BBKA exams board has managed to ensure that the module exams will go ahead in April 2021, but online only. The date for the exams is April 24th. You will need a computer with a camera, and a good internet connection. This will be tested when the practice run with the new technology on March 21st/22nd, the original date for the modules. If you decide that the online exam is not for you after the practice run, you will be transferred to the November date when written exams will also take place on 13th November.

Deadline for applying for Modules is January 31st, earlier than usual.

If you applied to do an exam in 2020 you were offered the opportunity to carry your application over to next year or have a refund.

Practical Exams: at the time of writing, it is hoped the practical exams will be able to happen in 2021, but there is nothing definite yet, it all depends on Covid-19.

Lecture Day Saturday 13 February 2021

The lecture will be given by Tom Seeley live from the United States via zoom
The lecture entitled “Darwinian Beekeeping,” will begin at 7pm.
Tickets are available on [Eventbrite](#).



Darwinian beekeeping is an evolutionary approach to beekeeping, one that seeks to provide managed honey bee colonies with living conditions that are as close as possible to those of wild honey bee colonies.

Tom will review ways in which the living conditions of honey bees differ between wild and managed colonies and explain how we can pursue beekeeping in a way that is centred less on treating a bee colony as a honey factory and more on nurturing the lives of the bees.

Tom, a biologist and writer, is the Horace White Professor in Biology at Cornell University, where he is a member of the Department of Neurobiology and Behaviour.

SBKA AGM 27 March 2021

The AGM will be by Zoom
A link will be sent by email nearer the time.



There will be a change from the way the AGM was conducted last year. This time there will be a live vote on the various agenda items on the day at the zoom meeting.



Lynfa Davies will be giving the talk.

Lynfa lives in Mid Wales and has been keeping bees for about 16 years. She has worked her way through the BBKA modules to become a Master Beekeeper in 2015 and has now passed the National Diploma in Beekeeping.

The **2022 AGM** will be hosted by Burnham division.

Draft AGM Agenda 2021

- 1 Apologies
- 2 To Approve the Minutes of the 2020 SBKA AGM
- 3 Matters Arising from the Minutes
- 4 Treasurer's report and adoption of charity accounts for year end 30 September 2020
- 5 Election of Officers
- 6 Election of Executive Divisional Representatives
- 7 Appointment of independent reviewer: Burton Sweet
- 8 West Country Honey Farms Award
- 9 Hosts and venue for the 2022 AGM – Burnham division

2021 Spring Convention

16th – 18th April

The BBKA has decided to stage the 2021 Spring Convention as a virtual 'armchair' event which will be held from Friday 16th April to Sunday 18th April 2021.



The event will include lectures and presentations as well as social events and a virtual trade show.

More information will be available on the [BBKA website](#) and in BBKA News in the coming weeks and months.

The Royal Bath and West Show

A celebration of Great British Agriculture, Entertainment Food and Drink
3 – 5 June 2021



It is hoped that the show will go on as usual albeit with some changes to the normal format. Bees and honey will feature – whether there will be competitions as usual is yet to be decided. Check the website [here](#)



Honey Shows

Whether or not the usual honey shows will go ahead this year remains to be seen. I understand, that at the time of writing, Taunton have yet to decide whether they will be having their annual Flower show and therefore it is unclear whether the Taunton and County Honey Shows will take place. We will keep you posted. If any division has plans already in place then do please let me know.

The **Year book** is now available online in the Members area of the SBKA website. You will need to log in to see it.



EFB – replacement bees compensation fund

Aware of the possible problem when bees need to be replaced because of an outbreak of EFB, the Council decided in 2019 to set aside a £2,000 fund to support any member who loses all their colonies in all their apiaries to EFB.

Terms and conditions:

1. Must be a fully-paid up and registered member of SBKA, be registered on BeeBase, keep one or more colonies of bees in Somerset and to have lost all their colonies in all their apiaries to EFB in 2019.
2. EFB must be confirmed by a NBU bee inspector and infected bees and equipment destroyed under his/her instruction.
3. The NBU-issued Standstill Notice must be lifted by the bee inspector.
4. Free replacement sources of local bees eg from the member's Division, fellow beekeepers etc, must be exhausted before a claim is made.
5. One nuc/colony per member, irrespective of the number of colonies destroyed.
6. Applications will be taken on a first come, first served basis and the decision to grant or decline an application will be made by the SBKA Executive, whose decision will be final.
7. SBKA has set aside a maximum of £2,000 to support members with EFB in 2019; if claims are received after the fund has been exhausted, unfortunately they will be refused.
8. Replacement bees are subject to availability.
9. Applications to this fund should be made through the member's Divisional delegate.



Nominations for the AGM

At the time of writing we have one nomination for the executive and one for the post of treasurer but no others.

Posts which **MUST** be filled are

Vice-chair

Secretary

Treasurer

Executive members



The association cannot continue to function if these posts remain unfilled.

Please think carefully whether you would be willing to put your name forward for one of the posts.

Members are, of course, welcome to submit nominations for any other of the SBKA posts listed in the year book. Please send them to the secretary as soon as possible please

With regret we have to report the death of two valued SBKA members. An obituary for Fred Horne will be in the next edition of the newsletter.

The following is the eulogy that Chris Utting wrote for David Charles' funeral. I have added a couple of photos taken from David's autobiography.

My thanks to Chris for sending this



David Charles – obituary

My friend and mentor David Charles passed away peacefully at his flat in Glastonbury on 31st December 2020 at the age of 85.

Although both his parents were born and grew up in Wales, his father was in the RAF and was posted to

Uxbridge near London, David was

born in the local nursing home. There was a further posting to Malta in 1937 where from an early age David showed a keen interest in nature and gardening. However, World War 2 was fast approaching and forces wives and dependants were ordered back to England at 24 hours notice a few days before the evacuation of the British army from Dunkirk. David recollects the ship arriving at Liverpool docks with the whole of Liverpool greeting them from the quay singing "Roll out the Barrel".



David in Malta 1938

Due to his father's constant postings David attended nine schools before finishing his formal education at Altringham grammar school. On leaving school he was keen to follow a career in horticulture and was taken on by Belle Vue Zoological Gardens Horticultural Department as an apprentice gardener. After attending evening classes for two years at Manchester University he obtained the Certificate in Horticultural Science.



During this period he was called up for National Service in the RAF from 1953 to 1955 when he was trained as an electrical mechanic stationed at RAF Henlow in Bedfordshire ending up as an electroplater. After discharge from the RAF and determined to embark on a career in horticulture he obtained a better apprenticeship with Manchester Corporation Parks Department for four years. During this time he was able to join a two year residential course at RHS Wisley. However, during the first year he developed tuberculosis of the lung and had to withdraw from the course only to re-join to start again. His persistence paid off as he left with an RHS Diploma in Horticulture and won the Chittenden award as the top student.

In 1960 there was a change of career direction as he decided that there were minimal opportunities in horticulture. He was now in favour of a career in teaching and attended a one-year course at Newton Park College in Bath training to be a specialist in Rural Science. This is where he had the opportunity to develop a latent interest in beekeeping. When in September 1961 he was appointed to a teaching post in Slough, he was pleased to find there was a school beekeeping club. He took over the running of the club within a

couple of years. David commenced beekeeping in 1962 with three colonies built up from swarms that he had collected. He joined Buckinghamshire Beekeepers Association, became a committee member and was soon Honorary Secretary of Slough Beekeepers' Society. In 1967 David was seconded to Reading University to undertake a full time course leading to a Diploma in Education, followed in 1968 by the appointment to a Head of Department post at St. Dunstan's School, Glastonbury. It was at this point that he became a member of Somerset Beekeepers' Association.

For thirty-five years from 1970, as a welcome diversion from teaching and beekeeping activities, was his membership of the Street based Strode Opera Club, where David sang tenor, performing mainly in the chorus and in minor parts.

Whilst helping at division and county levels with SBKA David busied himself with studying for the British Beekeepers' Association examinations and in 1972 after passing the senior examinations became a Master Beekeeper being awarded the prestigious Wax Chandlers prize for the student with the highest marks. From 1986-1989 and 1992-1995 David served as President of Somerset BKA. For many years David was BBKA examiner.

The year 1975 saw an expansion of David's involvement into national beekeeping activities with his election to the BBKA Executive Committee, where he remained a very active member until 1993. During this period he was keen on improving communication with the membership and assisted Harrison Ashforth with the BBKA NEWS notes. He became responsible for creating the current BBKA NEWS, which he edited for a number of years. The culmination of his time on the BBKA EC was his election as President for his final two years in office. Subsequently, in recognition of his very considerable contribution to the BBKA, he was elected an Honorary Member.

In 1989 and by now Senior Master as St Dunstan's School, Glastonbury he elected to take early retirement from teaching. He is still very popular with many ex-students and their parents. A stroll through Glastonbury could not be undertaken without meeting up with somebody who knows him. After retirement as a school teacher his beekeeping activities continued unabated as the following year saw his appointment as part-time Somerset County Beekeeping Adviser, based at Cannington College; a post he held for over four years. During this period he established an apiary, ran educational courses and an adult bee diseases advisory service.

2002 marked ten years as a committee member of the National Honey Show with editorship of the Schedule having been his responsibility for much of the time. He was a keen and successful exhibitor for many years. David has lectured on horticulture and beekeeping, demonstrated practical beekeeping and judged honey across the country for over thirty years and is therefore a very well known national beekeeping figure. In the past he has run up to twenty-four hives.

He and I have together visited most of the European countries on beekeeping tours organised by either Devon or Kent Beekeeping Associations. We have also attended Apimondia Congresses in Canada, Slovenia and Ireland but we agreed that the highlight of our foreign trips was a tour to Trinidad & Tobago organised by one of his favourite charities *BeesforDevelopment*.

David will be remembered as a Somerset man who loved bees, trees and beekeepers.

Chris Utting



SBKA Lockdown Lecture Series Programme.

All lectures on Thursdays at 7pm via Zoom

(except Lecture Day on Saturday Feb 13th)

(Please note that these are subject to change)

You can register for these talks now by following the Eventbrite links



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Then this richly illustrated presentation full of 'up close' photographs may be for you.

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[Eventbrite](#)



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during the main season is recommended for sustainable Varroa management. Suitable techniques, like total brood removal, trapping comb technique and queen caging combined with a one-time treatment will be explained. Effects of those procedures on colony development, infestation levels and work load will be discussed.

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[Eventbrite](#)

****Saturday Feb 13th** - Tom Seeley - Darwinian Beekeeping**

We are delighted to welcome top international honey bee scientist Tom Seeley as our guest speaker in this special online lecture .

In pre-covid times we held our annual Lecture Day on this date; we're sorry not to be able to meet up in person but hope you will be able to come together to hear scientist and author Tom Seeley speaking live from the US.

Darwinian beekeeping is an evolutionary approach to beekeeping, one that seeks to provide managed honey bee colonies with living conditions that are as close as possible to those of wild honey bee colonies. The goal is to harmonize our beekeeping methods with the natural history of *Apis mellifera*, and thus allow the bees to make full use of the toolkit of adaptations that they have evolved over the last 30 million years. I will review ways in which the living conditions of honey bees differ between wild and managed colonies, how we can pursue beekeeping in a way that is centered less on treating a bee colony as a honey factory and more on nurturing the lives of the bees.

Thomas D. Seeley, biologist and writer, is the Horace White Professor in Biology at Cornell University. He is the author of *Honeybee Ecology* (1985), *The Wisdom of the Hive* (1995), *Honeybee Democracy* (2010), *Following the Wild Bees* (2016), and *The Lives of Bees* (2019)

[Eventbrite](#)



March 4th - Stephen Martin - Understanding Varroa Resistant Bees

Understand the evolution of natural Varroa-tolerance mechanisms in various beekeeping populations.

Since the arrival of the Varroa mite from Asia, millions of honey bee colonies have died. For decades, beekeepers have continued to control Varroa populations by the use of chemicals and other invasive methods. However, throughout Africa and most of South and Central America mite-infested colonies survive without any form of mite-control. This has been linked with poor mite reproduction, although what causes this has remained unknown. Throughout, Europe the USA and Wales an increasing number of naturally evolved, mite-tolerant colonies are being discovered. The talk will discuss the various tolerant mechanisms and how honey bee populations in Brazil, Africa, USA and UK all appear to have evolved similar ways to combat the Varroa mite.

Professor Stephen Martin holds a Chair in Social Entomology in the School of Environmental and Life Sciences at Salford University, Manchester. Prior to that he spent 12 years working at Sheffield University, 7 years with the National Bee Unit and 7 years in Japan conducting research into hornets.

Stephen is best known for his work on the Varroa mite and its association with viruses, especially the Deformed Wing Virus, but more recently his expertise in hornet biology is in demand, both nationally and internationally.

[Eventbrite](#)



March 18th - Randy Oliver - Reading Comb

Reading the combs: Understanding bee biology over the course of a season

By acquiring a better understanding of the biology of bees, nutrition, parasites, and pathogens over the course of the season, and by learning to "read the combs," the beekeeper can then make better informed management decisions adapted to his/her particular situation.

Randy Oliver owns and operates a small commercial beekeeping enterprise in the foothills of Grass Valley in Northern California, managing around 1500 colonies for migratory pollination, and producing queens, nucs, and honey.

Randy's website www.ScientificBeekeeping.com is an invaluable source of information on beekeeping and research.

[Eventbrite](#)

April - Focus on Swarms and Swarming

This month we focus on Swarms and Swarming, helping you to plan for the season ahead, or perhaps refresh your ideas. From the point of view of practical management, swarm control can be divided into two distinct parts with a clear (biological) threshold between them - which is **when the colony starts queen cells**.

1. **1) Pre-emptive swarm control** – the type of management that can be used before queen cells are present in the hive (to prevent their initiation).
2. **2) Re-active swarm control** – the type of management that can be used when queen cells are produced (to prevent the issue of swarms)

Wally Shaw will offer 2 talks this month focussing separately on these two areas



April 1st - Wally Shaw - Pre-emptive Swarm Control

Get your colonies ready before swarm season and keep your bees!

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This talk covers the various methods of management that can be used to prevent the colony from deciding it has reached a stage in its seasonal development where it can

swarm and has started queen cells. There are four categories of management; comb management, box management, Demaree and splitting.

[Eventbrite](#)

April 15th - Wally Shaw - Reactive Swarm Control

This is the second of our talks about swarms and swarming this season and looks at what to do when queen cells appear...

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This talk covers the methods of management that can be used to deal with colonies that have started queen cells ie when pre-emptive swarm control has failed. Artificial swarming is the method that can be used if the colony has not already issued a prime swarm. If the prime swarm has already departed there are other methods that can be used to prevent cast swarming and further loss of bees. The talk includes an explanation of the Snelgrove II (modified) method.

Wally Shaw is an ecologist, experienced beekeeper, speaker and author of *'There are queen cells in my hive – what shall I do?'* and *'An Apiary Guide to Swarm Control'* – both downloadable free from the Welsh Beekeepers Association website

[Eventbrite](#)



May 6th - David Tarpy - Diagnosing Queen Problems

Is it the queen, the colony, both, or neither?! This talk is packed with practical advice based on empirical research
Diagnosing queen problems: is it the queen, the colony, both, or neither?! This talk is packed with practical advice based on empirical research

Practical advice—based on empirical research—looking at different symptoms and attributing whether or not the problem is the queen's fault. A lesson in showing how we blame the queen way more often than is actually her fault.

David Tarpy is a Professor of Entomology and the Extension Apiculturist at North Carolina State University.

His research interests focus on the biology and behaviour of honey bee queens in order to better improve the overall health of queens and their colonies. His work has provided some of the best empirical evidence that multiple mating by queens confers multiple and significant benefits to colonies through increased genetic diversity of their nestmates, particularly through increased tolerance to numerous diseases.

[Eventbrite](#)

We hope to see you in the coming weeks,
Somerset BKA online events team