



Somerset Beekeepers' Association



NEWSLETTER

January 2022 no.147



Notes from the Chair

December 2021

Well! It's the end of another year and, as always, somebody will chime up with 'and it's been a strange one'. It now seems that every year defies what we would like to consider as the norm. It was, for most, a poor year for honey harvests with my own crop down by two thirds, but reading an article recently, I realised that honey harvests have been declining for many years, and you don't have to look far to see why. Ten years ago, the field opposite was alive with dandelions in the springtime, and the adjacent orchard, which also hosted dandelions, was awash with apple blossom in late April. No more. All fields in the vicinity have been sprayed with weedkiller and aren't produce a single dandelion, and the trees in the orchard have been left to their own devices for so long, that most have fallen over. The sheep take care of the dandelions there, and it is soon to become the site of eight up-market houses.

What good news then? There seems to be an upsurge in beekeeping interest. At the beginning of the year, because of COVID restrictions, I hosted a Zoom course which attracted 100 'would be' beekeepers from far and wide, although originally intended for Somerset residents only. They came from Cornwall, South Wales and even Whitley Bay: not to mention Channel 4 property guru Sarah Beeny. To put the tin lid firmly on that one, during October, I was sitting in a car park in Cape Cornwall, near Land's End, and I rolled down my car window to ask a passing birdwatcher if he had seen anything interesting. He pointed at me accusingly and said 'I know you!' For a moment I was worried. Still pointing, he said 'You're the bee man!'. It seems he had been on the course, and although I couldn't see him, he had been looking at my mug and listening to my voice for six weeks during the previous winter.

Most divisions of Somerset BKA will be holding courses again this winter, but thanks to the Omicron variant, only time and the wisdom of our illustrious leader will decide if these can be held in person, or will be broadcast from 'lofty garrets' all over the county. Either way, there is one element of good news. Becky Wright, who is a motivational speaker, specialising in workplace wellbeing, has donated a significant sum of money to Somerset Beekeepers Association to enable someone, or a group, who would otherwise find it financially difficult to take up beekeeping, to be able to do so with a hefty financial subsidy. Nominations (with as much background as possible) should be sent to Maggie Norris – secretary of Somerset Beekeepers Association, as soon as possible. You can nominate yourself, another person or a project, but give as much information as you can. Maggie will give you all the details and conditions of the New Leaf Award.

It only remains for me to wish you all a successful beekeeping new year, and I hope that all other aspects of your lives will bring what you wish for. In the immortal words of most beekeepers 'It's got to be better than last year'.
Stewart Gould

FORTHCOMING EVENTS



Lecture Day 2022

This will take place on
Saturday 12th February 2022
at The Canalside Centre Bridgwater.
Details to follow when available.

Please note: Bridget Knutson, the Year Book Editor is expecting the 2022 yearbook to be ready for handing out at the lecture day in February

SBKA Annual General meeting 2022

The AGM organised by Burnham division will be held at
Burnham & Berrow Golf club (TA8 2PE).
March 12 2022



The two course carvery will be £19 per head and numbers are required by 4 March 2022. Tea and coffee will be available at extra charge.

Please pay by bank transfer.

The Burnham and District Beekeepers
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Timetable

1200hrs - Arrive
1230hrs - Lunch 2 course carvery
1400hrs - Welcome
1405hrs -Lecture
1505hrs -Afternoon tea
1530hrs AGM.

SBKA Lecture Series.

All lectures will start at 7pm by zoom

Please note - tickets for Mark Winston's talk will go fast so, if you're interested, please sign up now!

Thursday 6 January 2022 at 7pm



Rivers of Honey with Alan Wade and Danielle Harden

Alan Wade from Canberra Region Beekeepers has spent his beekeeping life studying attempts to harness the workforce of multiple-queen configurations, getting to understand operations across the global beekeeping diaspora, and putting some of them into operation in his own hives.

Booking link [Rivers of Honey with Alan Wade and Danielle Harden: 7pm, Thursday, 6 January, 2022](#)

Thursday 20 January 2022



Geoff Blay MB will give a talk entitled "A Challenging season (2021) – what happened and why"

The presentation identifies where the main problems arose, explores the reasons for those problems including the theory and actual weather patterns, and looks at the effect that those had on bees. It majors on four subjects namely, colony losses last winter, swarm pressures, queen mating and "wet" honey. Finally it looks at what we can learn or change for the future management of our bees.

Booking link [A challenging season \(2021\) - what happened and why? with Geoff Blay MB: 7pm, Thursday, 20 January, 2022](#)

Thursday 3 February 2022



Mark L Winston on Lessons from the Hive

Popular Canadian biologist Mark Winston is the author of the internationally acclaimed 'The Biology of the Honey Bee'. He says: "There are powerful lessons to be learned from bees about how we humans can better understand our place in nature, engage the people and events surrounding us with greater focus and clarity, interact more effectively in our relationships and communities, and open ourselves to a deeper understanding of who we are as individuals, communities and a species. I'll talk

about my experiences over 40 years of walking into apiaries, and the lessons learned from a life spent among the bees."

Booking link [Bee Time: Lessons From the Hive with Mark L. Winston: 7pm, Thursday, 3 February, 2022](#)

And that just leaves us to wish you – and your bees – a very happy and healthy New Year!

Anne and Lynne, SBKA's event officers

Reviewers wanted: We are looking for people who would be happy to watch lectures and then review them for this newsletter. Please get in touch with Anne or Lynne if you would like to do this. Thank you.

Nominations needed for the AGM 2022

Newsletter Editor

This is the last newsletter I will be editing so someone needs to be nominated to replace me at the AGM in March ready to edit the April edition.

Please consider whether you could take on this role. There are only 4 editions per year, in January, April, July and October so it doesn't take up a lot of time. And I'm quite happy to help someone until they find their feet.

Liz Friend

Year Book Editor

I am resigning as editor of the yearbook at the next AGM. I have edited this for the past 7 years, and now is the time to pass it on to someone else.

If you want a yearbook then volunteer to take it on. If no one volunteers, the yearbook will cease to exist.

Bridget Knutson

Vice Chair

This post is still vacant and nominations for all these 3 posts should be sent to the SBKA secretary.

secretary@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Divisional AGM's

Please check that you have sent names and contact details of your committee members to the SBKA secretary as soon as possible after their AGM. Please remember that the delegates are the trustees of the SBKA and any new delegates will need to fill in a trustee eligibility form.

West Country Honey Farm Awards

Don't forget to nominate someone from your division for this award; someone who goes above and beyond others to help beekeepers out, run events, always in the background



helping out, always taking on roles others don't want to do quietly without fuss.

Give as many details as possible, and then send your nomination to Joe King jk.pilton@btinternet.com for consideration for 2022.

Those on the awarding committee are the three previous winners.

Bridget Knutson

SBKA Research Money.

You may remember that the SBKA and BDI agreed to fund Hollie Pufal, A PhD student at Newcastle University.

Hollie's research is exploring the virulent ST2 strain of EFB which is uniquely associated with Somerset and north Dorset. Hollie and her supervisor Prof Giles Budge will be involved in our Lecture Day on 12 February, 2022.

After completing her first year, she has provided a brief report on her work to date.

Winter 2021 Update



Thank you for your generous funding that has allowed me to pursue research in this exciting area. Over the past 6 months I have been establishing methods to develop a molecular workflow that could be used to generate whole genome sequencing data from infected larvae at outbreak sites, I also tested supers from infected apiaries for the presence of EFB.

I tested 4 locations on each frame for the presence of EFB, as well as capped honey and pollen, using DNA extractions and Realtime PCR. The results showed only a small trace of EFB in a couple of samples both from

the frame, pollen and honey.

I plan to sequence using handheld sequencing technology, which is a cheaper and more efficient sequencing platform, so has the potential to be used more readily in the future for assessing EFB outbreaks. The issue with sequencing infected larvae material is that most of the sequence generated will be honeybee DNA, so I originally tested various methods that deplete the bee DNA and enrich the bacterial DNA. Initially I used homogenised larvae mixed with *M.plutonius* culture and then I moved on to infected larvae from the field. I used qPCR assays to detect both EFB and insect DNA to assess the efficiency of the depletion methods, and I now have a selection of promising methods that I will take forward to sequencing and assess the quality.

The National Honey Show October 2021



Christine and Mark Gullick won a total of 16 awards at the National Honey Show for both their light and dark honey, and their rolled candles, counter displays and frames.

Christine (pictured below) won first prize for her wax flower and was awarded the Duffin Cup.



Lynne Ingram and Richard Bache successfully completed their National Diploma in Beekeeping and were given their certificates at the Show.

Names left to right: Richard Bache, NDB, Lynne Ingram, NDB, Margaret Thomas, President of the NDB, Lynfa Davies, Secretary to the NDB

The Devon Apicultural Research Group (DARG)

The Devon Apiculture Research Group (DARG) was formed over 40 years ago to enable beekeepers having a sound experience of beekeeping to get together regularly to consider current research into beekeeping problems and organise trials and experiments with their own bees. My own awareness of the group was via two publications, "Managing Mini Nucs" and "A Simple 2 Queen System" by Ron Brown who was a founder member of the group. They are an invaluable part of my Bee Library and are frequently read. They are available from Northern Bee Books.

We are very fortunate in having, as our Chairman, Richard Ball. Richard is a sometime South West Regional Bee Inspector (and sometime Speed Cop) and a mine of information, always being able to see the wood for the trees and always giving sound advice and guidance when it is sought. He is also a great listener.

Our programme is wide and varied and includes presentations, ongoing research projects and cooperation with Exeter and Plymouth Universities.

Presentations this year were Assessing colonies; Ley Lines (Roger Patterson); Neonicotinoids (Dr James Cresswell; Feeding; Wasp & Bee Viruses (Dr Andrea Highfield); Brood breaks & varroa; Pests & Predators; Hive weights and temperatures; Microsporidia (Dr Bryony Williams);

Previous projects have included: Drone movement between colonies; Winter Apiguard efficacy; Brood stimulation by feeding with water; Devon Nosema survey; Other hive organisms; Queen rearing; BeeGYM efficacy; Predator mites for varroa control; Drone Laying queens.

Current research projects include Hive weights; Drone Congregation Areas; Pollen ID and diversity; Climate change; Hive temperatures. Possible future projects include looking at the effectiveness of long hives; the observation of feral colonies; Brood stimulation with pollen patties. We have also recently updated our publication 'Variation on a beehive', and are reviewing others.

Although based in Devon we also have members from Somerset and Dorset. Although we don't have our own apiary, we visit various apiaries in Devon and Somerset for practical activities.

Along with everyone else we have been bound by Covid rules so recent meetings have been held via Zoom. We are hopeful to return to normal in the coming year. Our meetings always start with a chat before the business of the day is undertaken. This is a very useful period; current problems can be explored, and ideas developed for future investigations and research activities.

If you have a few years' experience in beekeeping and would like to hone your skills and understanding of the craft, if you are simply inquisitive, or if you would simply like to pick the brains of some very skilled and approachable beekeepers, then DARG might be for you. It doesn't cost much to join (currently £10 p/a), there are no exams to take, hardly any forms to fill in, no committees, there are thought provoking questions and occasionally EUREKA!

It is, I promise you, all about bees and beekeeping, and the environment that sustains them. If you would like to give it a go then contact Richard Ball at buzzybeeball@yahoo.co.uk

Roy White

Adulterated Honey



Concern over the authenticity of some honey which is on sale in the UK has led to the formation of a pressure group called Honey Adulteration Network UK (HAN UK) which is calling for stricter labelling of blended honey. Some of the jars for sale in supermarkets claim to be “pure” honey and can be traced back to their country of origin but there is no requirement to identify the countries of origin of honey blended from more than one country. It is also a fact that many of

the honey jars for sale in supermarkets are bulked out with sugar syrup

Lynne Ingram is the Chair of this group and Anne Pike is a committee member.

The Observer carried an article about the group which you can read [here](#).

Meanwhile, the group has set up a [Facebook group](#) to raise awareness of honey adulteration. Anyone interested in the subject is warmly invited to join.

A Star is Born!

Fame at last for Mr Horler.

It was delightful to see Lionel appearing in the Chanel 4 series “New Life in the Country” mentoring Sarah Beeny, a new beekeeper.

Here they are having caught a swarm.

