



# Somerset Beekeepers' Association



## NEWSLETTER

July 2019 no.137



Please send any copy for the September 2019 edition to me by 15th August  
Email: [friend.elizabeth@gmail.com](mailto:friend.elizabeth@gmail.com).

### Letter from the Chairman.



'Somerset is in the midst of an EFB crisis': to paraphrase some of the local media channels which picked up on the issues of bee disease and BeeBase in recent weeks.

Their interest was sparked by the appearance of Defra's Dame Helen Ghosh at the Commons Public Accounts Committee who admitted that bee disease had not been given 'the high priority we should have done' and added that £1.1m would be spent over the next few years to get more beekeepers

registered on BeeBase. BBC Points West filmed bee inspector Megan Seymour in action and BBC Somerset talked to us.

The news story broke just days after a very successful 'Read the Comb Day' run by SW Regional Bee Inspector Simon Jones and his team together with former National Bee Inspector Richard Ball. It was heartening to see more than 80 beekeepers attend the day-long event hosted by South East Division at Wincanton and I'd like to thank all those who made the day hugely informative and enjoyable.

EFB is a particular focus for us this year; Somerset has the ST2 strain of the disease and outbreaks this season are keeping our bee inspectors busy. Regular colony inspections are essential: if in doubt, call in the inspectors! And, of course, beekeepers on BeeBase receive timely alerts, including if EFB occurs within a three kilometre radius of a registered apiary.

Also, we received media attention when we launched our Asian hornet roadshow at the Royal Bath & West Show. Press interest reflects the public's concern about *Vespa velutina nigrithorax*, the yellow-legged black wasp. I'd like to thank the Asian hornet action team who gave up their time to talk to show visitors for four very busy days.

Certainly this is a challenging season with some colonies starving after a promising start, disease, Asian hornet reports (at the time of writing all are unconfirmed) and lots of swarms. While we must keep vigilant, it's good to remember to celebrate the wonders of our craft: the forthcoming County Honey Show is the perfect place to display the bees' industry and our skills: good luck to all competitors!

*Anne Pike, Chairman.*

**Don't forget that we still need a Treasurer to take over from Chrisi next year. Please help!**

## A note from the treasurer



### Research

The County has a policy to ask members to donate £2 per year with their subscription to support bee research.

Whilst the collection methods and amounts, varies in divisions its really important to us all as beekeepers to help support research to safeguard the honey bee population.

It's just one small way we can help provide a sustainable future for us all.

It is accepted that in past years research commissioned by County hasn't been very targeted and this has resulted historically in some members choosing not to donate. However, in the past couple of years we have supported research, which is particularly relevant to our members such as the Asian Hornet problems, through Exeter University.

We want members to be aware that funds are clearly ringfenced for research and cannot be used for any other purpose without the members' agreement. County have recently agreed to direct funds to research of EFB, in particular the strain affecting Somerset. Anything we can do to understand this to help eradicate this devastating disease will be a great benefit to our members. The cost of commissioning research is still to be determined but is expected to be around £5-6k.

We do have some funds, and **we would encourage all members to reconsider the donation process when they renew their membership**. If we collect £2 from each Registered Member that's a fund of £1,600 per year, towards this research.

Members are encouraged to also have some input into the decisions to select research projects and if you have any particular comments or suggestions for future research can you please put these in writing to your Divisional County Delegate for them to bring to County.

### Please support us



*Christina Kennedy*



### Reminder re BASIC EXAMS

From the Exam Secretary, Bridget Knutson  
A reminder that if anyone wants to take their Basic Assessment this year, I need the application in by Mid July, to ensure we can find a hive in all its glory for you to use.

Please pay BBKA direct, and then send me the form, either by email [bridget\\_knutson@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bridget_knutson@yahoo.co.uk), or by post, 6 Wideatts Road, Cheddar, BS27 3AP, so I can arrange your assessment.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS



### County Honey Show

**August 2 and 3** as part of the Taunton Honey Show held at Vivary Park

The 2019 County Honey Show Schedule is out now!  
The County Honey Show is incorporated within the Taunton Honey Show and is held as part of the Taunton Flower Show.

There are classes for all SBKA members – juniors, newbees and the more experienced.  
Don't miss out on prize cards & silverware!

The County Cups are:

The Jubilee Cup - Most Points in Classes 1-18

Miss M.D. Bindley Cup - Class 2 Medium Honey

Terry Arnold Perpetual Challenge Trophy - Classes 18-22 inclusive

Duffin Challenge Trophy - Class 12

Clifford Langford Award for Mead - Most Points in Classes 8 & 9

### Queen Rearing Course - Quantock. 3rd and 4th August 2019.



Cost: £75.00 including coffee, tea and biscuits but not lunch

Places are limited to 12.

There will be two tutors. The lead tutor will be Sean Stephenson who has a lot of experience in queen raising and delivering courses.

Book via the BBKA website

If you want more information please contact Anne Rowberry (Frome) or Tricia Nelson (Exmoor).

The course is focussed on the General

Husbandry standard with the objective of each attendee being able to go away able to run their own queen rearing matched to their needs. It will not be prescriptive and will enable the attendees to make up their own mind about the method they would like to employ. It will not focus on grafting although it is a method that everyone should at least have tried at some point.

The course will be theory plus time in the apiary when different methods of queen rearing will be discussed and demonstrated. There will also be several queen related manipulations again to the General Husbandry standard. The timing for the course will confirmed later but will start on Saturday morning and on Sunday afternoon.



## THE 88<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL HONEY SHOW

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October – Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October

At Sandown Park Racecourse KT10 9RT

Schedules and entry forms are now available

Details on the [honey show website](#)

The Lecture programme is on the website [here](#)

Lectures include: **Ralph Büchler** on varroa resistance, varroa sustainable management, environmental adaptation and selection, and the link of honey bee complex biology to its health; **John Donoghue** on managing bees for the honey crop; **Mary Montaut** on bees & plants; **Shona Blair** on honey against superbugs; **Jo Widdicombe** on bee improvement; **John Chambers** on basic honey bee genetics; **Irene Power** on efficient beekeeping and Simon Rees on the Langstroth story, and how bees fly.

There is also plenty to do for children and the organisers are keen to attract the younger generation who will, of course, be the future beekeepers.

The **Beginners Programme** will be held on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> – this is aimed at people with up to 2 years experience and the lectures are appropriate for that level of experience

There will also be the usual Friday “Bee Craft” lectures.

For those who can't get to the show, previous lectures can be viewed on the National Honey Show site via YouTube. [link here](#)

**This is your chance to shine on the national stage – so why not enter and show people what good beekeepers Somerset has!**

## Somerset Beekeepers Annual Lunch 2019



The County Lunch 2019 will be held on the  
**17th November at Long Sutton golf club.**

The cost is £14 for the main carvery lunch with a choice of puddings.

Please advise when booking if you would like the Vegetarian or Gluten free options.

Please send cheques made payable to Somerset Beekeepers Association for the full amount to Suzy Perkins, Tengore House, Tengore Lane, Langport, Somerset, TA10 9JL.



## PLEASE SUPPORT OUR LOCAL HONEY SHOWS

I'm sure they'll be delighted to have some entries from outside their own division so do consider entering or just go along to support them.



Dates are as follows

18 Aug	Central	21 Sept.	Somerton
2 Nov.	Exmoor	19 Nov	Yeovil

Details are on the SBKA website or contact the divisions direct for entry forms



## Events in 2020

Please make a note of these dates in your diaries.



### Lecture Day

15 February 2020

Edgar Hall, Somerton

Full details of all the speakers will be in a future edition but one of them will be Prof Lars Chittka who is Professor of sensory and behavioural ecology at Queen Mary University of London.

### Annual General Meeting

Next years AGM will be on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2020 hosted by Yeovil Division.

Venue: Frogmary Green Farm, West St, South Petherton TA13 5DJ

All members are encouraged to attend.

The speaker will be Lynfa Davies

### Special Lecture

will be on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020 at Edgar Hall, Somerton

Details to follow when I have them

## Past events

### Royal Bath and West Show



After another successful Show I should like to thank everyone who once again gave up their valuable time to set up the Bee & Honey Marquee on Sunday and dismantle it at the end of the Show.

Thanks must also go to all the stewards who took part in manning the Marquee during the Show,

sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm for bee-keeping with the visitors. Hopefully, everyone helping, particularly the newcomers, enjoyed being involved and are already looking forward to returning next year. The County Cup was again won by Wiltshire - we graciously accepted lending it to them for another year.

*Ken Tredgett*

**Chris Rawlings**, Bath and West Steward, would also his thanks passed on to all those who helped at the show.

### Prizewinners at the Show



Axel Knutson, Bridget Knutson, Christine Gullick and David Pearce were among the prizewinners .

Thanks to Mark Gullick for the photo which shows from L to R David Pearce, Christine Gullick and Bridget Knutson.

Photos from Bridget Knutson of two of the prizewinning entries from her and Axel.





## Special Lecture

You may remember that Joe King was awarded the West Country Honey Award and, as he couldn't attend the AGM to receive the award, it was formally presented to him by SBKA President Jackie Mosedale at the Special Lecture in April.

She gave a run through of some of Joe's activities stretching back many years - from marching on Westminster, to protest against the government's stance on neonicotinoids in 2013, to his work for Somerton Division in a multitude of capacities, running the County Honey Show in 2014 and his role as Somerton delegate on SBKA Council.

## BDI RESEARCH PROJECT ReViVe



You may remember that the SBKA gave money to the BDI research project ReViVe (rolling out the evolution of resistance to varroa and deformed wing virus), which looked at the relationship between the honey bee and the parasitic varroa mite.

The final paper on the ReViVe project has now been published.  
The following letter was received from Martin Smith the BDI President.

*I am pleased to enclose a copy of the final paper that has been published by Jessica Kevill, the PhD student that worked on the ReViVe project that both BDI and a group of its member associations supported.*

*This project looked at the evolution of the A, B & C strains of deformed wing virus and its interaction with Varroa.*

*The paper has been published in an open access journal and can be found here*  
<https://www.mdpi.com/1999-4915/11/5/426>

*As some of you will know the Salford team is now working on a follow up project looking at ways in which this information could be used to manage colonies with Varroa in a non chemical routine.*

*Regards*  
*Martin Smith*

ED: A pdf copy of the paper is now on the SBKA website



## Asian Hornets – reports from AHAT coordinator Lynne Ingram

As mid-summer approaches in Asian Hornet colonies, the first workers have emerged, and take over the jobs of foraging and nest building from the queen, leaving her in the nest to lay eggs. Nests grow much more quickly from now on, with the numbers of workers building up quickly. Once the nests reach a certain size, 70% of them will relocate to a new higher location – often 50 - 100 feet up in a tree. Workers will search for a new nest site – perhaps trying a few different places. Once they have chosen the spot, they will start to build a new nest, and in time the queen will join them. The original nest will still have eggs and larvae, so the two nests will run in parallel for about a month until the new workers have emerged.



The nests found in Fowey, Cornwall last year were found to be a primary and secondary nest from the same queen. These secondary nests can become quite large, housing many hornets. When the hornets wish to enlarge the nest, they remove 'papier mache' from the inside, and apply it to the outside – effectively building an extension. What appears to be porches or ventilation vents are examples of the nests being extended as show in the photo right.



It is at this stage of rapid growth in late July, August and September that we might spot Asian Hornets hawking our bees, as they look for protein to feed the larvae. They often wait low down, underneath or just to side of the hive stand. When a bee laden with nectar flies in, they will pounce and grab the bee. They head for the nearest tree where they hang from a back leg while dismembering the bee, retaining the thorax, which is full of protein rich muscle. Flying back to the colony with the protein pellet, they feed the larvae, in return receiving a sweet substance produced by the older larvae.



### Protecting our bees

We can help protect our bees by letting grass or flowers grow long outside the hives to prevent the hornets hawking low down.

You may also want to make a 'skirt' for your hive to prevent the hornets from hiding underneath the front of the hive stand. In Jersey and France beekeepers have also been using 'muzzles' on the front of their hives, which create a safe space for the bees. Bees can quickly fly through the wire mesh, but the hornets are reluctant to enter as their wings would touch the wire.

David Pearce made us a prototype muzzle for the Bath and West show – see left.



## Somerset AHAT teams

The AHATs have been busy fielding calls or emails from members of the public who believe they have spotted an Asian Hornet. Most have been European hornets or hornet mimic hoverflies.



The Exmoor team headed out to check out a possible sighting but after a day in the area did not find anything. The photo in that case seemed to show a melanistic European Hornet with the yellow headband visible.

These almost all black European hornets have added to identification confusion, but they are distinguished from Asian Hornets by a having brown legs and a yellow 'headband'. See left.

## Bath and West Show

Members of various AHATs were very busy at the Bath & West show manning the Asian Hornet Roadshow.



Over the 4 days tens of thousands of people visited the stand to learn how to correctly identify and report Asian Hornets.

People were fascinated to see actual Asian and European hornets and to be able to compare them with wasps and bees.

Children coloured in pictures of Asian Hornets and received stickers – everyone took away further information.

We were also glad to be able to link up with organisations such as Western Power, Network Rail, tree surgeons, woodland workers, garden centres and educational establishments while we were there.

## Book Review

### **The Asian Hornet Handbook by Sarah Bunker (entomologist, beekeeper and hornet hunter),**



**contains** everything you need to know about Asian Hornets – and is therefore essential reading for every Somerset beekeeper! This handbook is bursting with information - from hornet identification to the most up to date scientific findings on Asian Hornet biology, behaviour and ecology.

It is a practical book, split into 3 distinct parts. Firstly, there is a very comprehensive section covering life cycle and ecology – crucial knowledge in order to understand Asian Hornet behaviour and be able to try and control their spread – without damaging our already fragile ecosystem.

The second section explains the context – the way that the Asian hornet has spread so successfully throughout Europe (and is heading into the UK) after a single mated queen was accidentally introduced into France in 2004.

The third section is the most practical with lots of information on tracking techniques, nest destruction, and ways to protect your bees. It also discusses biological control and trapping, outlining the experience of European researchers and beekeepers on the effect of trapping on native species.

Finally, the Asian Hornet Handbook has a comprehensive glossary, resource section and references.

This book is a very enjoyable read, with strong scientific roots. It is packed with fascinating information, and is full of photos and illustrations.

I would definitely recommend this book - buy it directly from the author at [www.asianhornethandbook.com](http://www.asianhornethandbook.com)

*Lynne Ingram*