



Somerset Beekeepers' Association



NEWSLETTER

July 2020 no.141

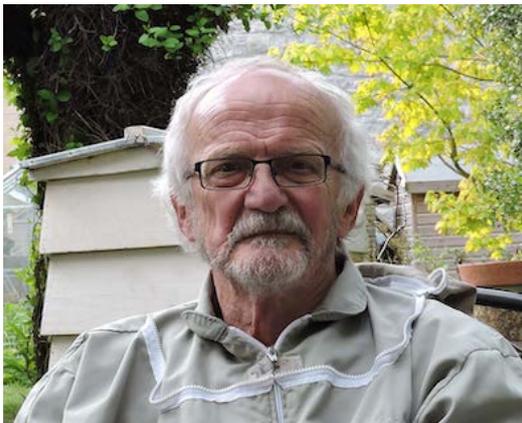


Please send any copy for the October 2020 edition to me by 15th September.
Email: friend.elizabeth@gmail.com.

URGENT: To all members - Please register on BeeBase if you haven't already done so.

EUROPEAN FOUL BROOD has now been found in several apiaries in the Axbridge postal area, and also in the Blagdon postal area. This is the first time in 17 years I have known it this close to the Mendip area. If you are not in the SBKA yearbook, or registered on Beebase, then the local bee inspectors are not going to be able to notify you, or check your bees for you. We have a different strain in Somerset to surrounding areas which is difficult to control. Megan Seymour, the local Seasonal Bee Inspector wants anyone not registered on Beebase to do so, just so she knows how far she has to look for control measures. At the time of writing she is following up on 132 leads and knows there will be more. Please, check your bees carefully, register on Beebase, and call the Bee Inspectors if you have any doubts about the health of your colony/ies.

Bridget Knutson



From the Chair

Because of the coronavirus lockdown our AGM which was held on 28th March, went by almost unnoticed by most, as it was completely 'virtual' and all officers were elected by means of an electronic vote. That seems an age away now, although coronavirus, or Covid 19, to give it its correct name, is still very much alive, but we are now able to get out and about more. Social distancing seems to be the key to the situation at present, although the only permanent answer is a vaccine, and as I write, there are 13 on test around

the World. One in particular, being developed by Imperial College, London, is showing great potential to return our lives to normal. Meanwhile, we have some excellent Zoom talks, organised by Lynne Ingram, to look forward to.

What has Covid 19 got to do with beekeeping? There is, of course, no direct link, but beekeeping is experiencing its own impending pandemic virus. CBPV has been with us for a while now, and is even mentioned in Ted Hooper's Guide to Bees and Honey. My copy was published in 2008, and has a whole page on the subject of Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus. What differs between opinion in 2008 and the present day is that we no longer think of CBPV as being associated with acarine, and it can certainly be more virulent and deadly than as described by Ted Hooper. *'With this type of paralysis the colonies are often very little affected and seem to be able to breed fast enough to keep the population up. From the literature, however, it is clear that many cases have occurred where colonies with paralysis have dwindled badly or died out entirely'*. There has been a considerable upsurge in the number of cases in the last 2 or 3 years, with many experienced beekeepers reporting that they have only

come across it in that time period. It can't really be blamed on acarine any more, as the treatments (miticides) which we use to attack varroa will also knock out acarine, as they are both mites. There are two distinct forms of CBPV, in type one, bees are found crawling outside of the hive, on nearby plants, and have bloated, elongated abdomens with partially spread or dislocated wings. It can be serious with the colony succumbing completely, but what Ted Hooper didn't do was separate out the two forms of the disease. Type two CBPV is, in the early stages, spotted when black greasy looking bees are spotted on the frames, and it can stop right there, but if it progresses, which it seems to be doing increasingly, bees will be seen trembling on the top bars of frames. If that wasn't enough to grab your attention, the black



greasy bees, as seen in the photo above, which appear to be smaller because they are virtually hairless, will also be present, and you may soon notice bees trembling on the landing board, if you have one, or around the entrance, as in this video [click here](#). Other bees will nibble at them, as if removing the hairs. Perhaps the most disconcerting evidence is a large pile of dead bees which may well appear immediately beneath the entrance. There could be hundreds and hundreds.

Where did CBPV come from? It's been here a good while, but present thinking is that it has been exacerbated by the increase of imported queens. There are varying reports on how much it affects the queens, but it is most obvious in adult workers, possibly because there are more of them than anything else, and the brood doesn't seem to be affected at all. Bees are social insects, and when out and about, will greet each other by touching antennae, or make contact with their proboscises. Any virus would easily be transmitted from one to the other.

Like Covid 19, we have no treatment for CBPV, as anything strong enough to kill the virus, would kill the bee – at present. We all know a littler bit more about viruses these days, and the best advice so far, is to wash your hands, because soap and water can break down the outer coating of the virus. The same applies to CBPV. Practising a healthy regime in your apiaries

should help to contain any outbreak you may have. Changing hive tools between hives when inspecting, and washing both the hive tool and your gloves in a washing soda solution, will minimise the risk of introduction or transmission.

It's not all doom and gloom, some colonies do recover from CBPV. Of the six current cases I



know, 3 hives have recovered, but please be mindful and keep a weather eye on your hives. CBPV can exist at a low ebb and just bumble along without becoming a major problem (asymptomatic) – in that hive, but it can easily be passed on to other colonies, and other beekeepers' apiaries.

It's perhaps a little late now, but swarms can easily transmit the problem over miles at a time.

Swarms have been extremely plentiful this year, but I hope you have managed to contain them, and following the reported bumper Spring crops, can look forward to an excellent main crop.

Stewart Gould

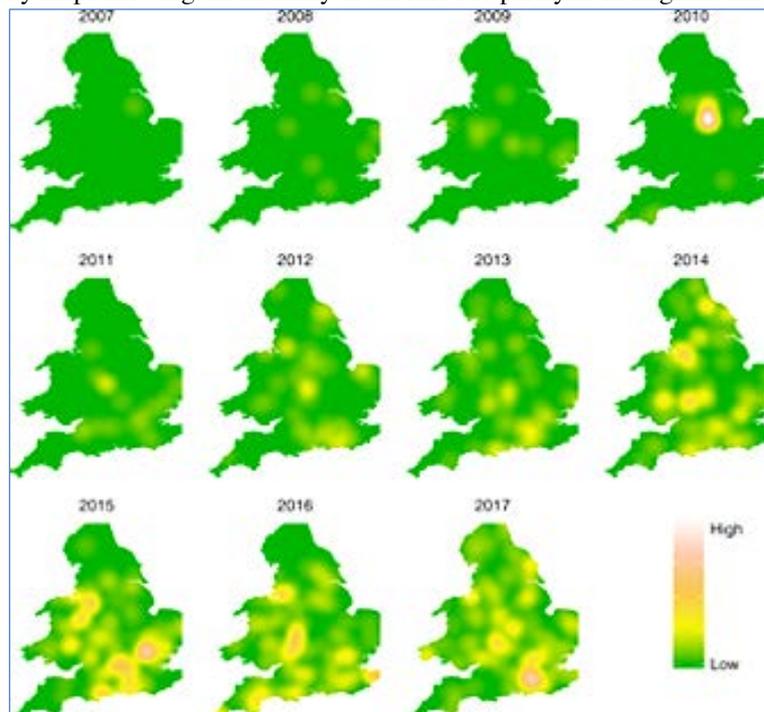
Ed: On the subject of CBP there is an interesting paper in Nature (May 2020)

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-15919-0> entitled

Chronic bee paralysis as a serious emerging threat to honey bees.

Although it's an increasing problem the pattern of cases indicates that disease clusters do not appear in the same positions year on year as you might expect.

Fig. 4: Kernel density maps showing the intensity of chronic bee paralysis in England and Wales 2007 - 2017.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

SBKA 'Introduction to Study Groups' webinar – Tuesday 7th July @7pm.

We recently sent out a survey asking SBKA members if they would be interested in becoming part of a study group and had a wonderful response with over 120 members interested in taking part.

The aim of the study groups would be to study the BBKA modules, as a way of deepening our knowledge about honey bees and improving our practice as beekeepers. There would be no pressure to take the exams, although the opportunity to do that to check your own knowledge, will be there for those who want to.

We would now like to invite you to a brief webinar to introduce you to the idea of a study group, to explain the possible format, and to discuss which of the modules we will go for first. The webinar will be held via Zoom on Tuesday 7th July at 7pm. You will need to register for the meeting via the link below.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sbka-introduction-to-study-groups-tickets-111939147002>

Looking forward to seeing you there

The SBKA Education Group edgroup@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

Zoom Lectures

SBKA Lockdown Lecture Series Programme. All lectures on Thursdays at 7pm via Zoom. (Please note that these are subject to change)

Since lockdown we have been offering a very successful Lecture series via Zoom. We have been extremely pleased by the huge audiences these have attracted, and have decided that these will continue to be part of the SBKA programme for members. There will be 2 lectures per month, with a range of top-class speakers and subjects on offer. These are free to members, and allow you to increase your knowledge of beekeeping practice, or hear about the latest research on honey bees.

The following is the provisional programme for the next few months – new lectures are being added all the time, so keep an eye on your emails where we will send out invitations and the updated programme.

July 16th. Norman Carreck.

Global pandemics, bee imports and native bees.

The Covid-19 crisis has coincided with several new scientific papers which confirm that global movements of bees have led to the spread of bee viruses. In recent years the number of queens being imported into the UK has increased, despite evidence that “local” bees survive better. There is growing evidence that native dark European honey bees are alive and well in Britain and Ireland, but efforts to conserve them can be hampered by imports of exotic bees, and can such bees act as “invasive alien species” outside their native range? UK beekeepers say they would favour local bees, but queen rearing in the UK is hampered by

the weather. Nonetheless, nationwide efforts could be made to improve the quality of UK's existing stock of bees for varroa tolerance and docility.

Norman Carreck has been keeping bees for forty years and has been a bee research scientist for twenty-nine years. He has lectured about bees on all continents where bees are kept, has written many scientific papers, book chapters, conference contributions and popular articles, has edited several books and regularly appeared in the media in many countries. He is a director of Carreck Consultancy Ltd and Bee Publishing Ltd and is based at the University of Sussex, UK.

Book here on [Eventbrite](#)

July 30th(tbc) David Evans

Rational Varroa control

The Varroa mite and the viruses it transmits represent the greatest threat to honey bee colony health. Effective control is possible by using miticides in a rational manner. This talk will briefly cover the biology of the Varroa mite, before considering virus transmission and the consequences for the individual bee and the colony. Honey bee behaviours that influence environmental mite transmission will be discussed before covering the importance of timing autumn and winter treatments properly for maximum effect. Very many beekeepers get this wrong. Additional aspects of rational mite control that will be covered include rescuing heavily infested colonies, mid-season mite management opportunities and geographically coordinated mite management. The talk will be followed by a Q&A session.

David Evans is Professor of Virology at the University of St Andrews and has held previous academic positions in Warwick, Glasgow and Reading. He writes "The Apiarist" weekly blog (www.theapiarist.org) which covers a combination of honey bee biology, science and practical beekeeping, with a monthly readership fast approaching 50,000. He is a member of Fife BKA, the East of Scotland BKA and Lochaber BKA and also currently writes the monthly Q&A column for the BBKA Newsletter. His honey bee research includes studies of the biology and control of deformed wing virus, rational Varroa control and the emergence and management of chronic bee paralysis virus. His beekeeping interests include very amateur DIY and queen rearing.

August 6th - Jamie Ellis

Colony Reproduction

“The swarm: reproduction at the colony level – Most people are aware of reproduction at the individual honey bee level: queens produce the other bees in the nest. However, few people consider that colonies also reproduce, a feat accomplished by the swarm. In this lecture, Dr Ellis will discuss bee behaviour before and during swarms and place this within the larger context of a colony's biology.”

Jamie Ellis is the Gahan Endowed Professor of Entomology in the Department of Entomology and Nematology at the University of Florida. He has a BS degree in Biology from the University of Georgia (USA) and a PhD in Entomology from Rhodes University in South Africa. At the University of Florida, Jamie has responsibilities in extension, instruction and research. Regarding his extension work, Jamie created the UF, South Florida, and Caribbean Bee Colleges, and the UF Master Beekeeper Program. As an instructor, Jamie supervises PhD and masters students. Currently, Jamie and his team have over 30 active research projects in the fields of honey bee husbandry, conservation and ecology, and integrated crop pollination.

August 20th – Stuart Anderson

Flow Hive

Stuart Anderson, co-inventor of the Flow Hive, will be joining us to update us on the Flow Hive. He will also discuss using a Flow Hive in the UK whilst considering the vagaries of the English climate, oil seed rape and ivy honey.

September 17th – Bob Smith

Pollen - Superfood for honeybees

Honey bees obtain all their food from flowering plants in the form of nectar and pollen. These nutrients are required in considerable quantities and there needs to be continuity of supply if a colony is to thrive. As beekeepers, we are rather keen on the nectar and honey aspects but less observant on pollen? This talk will explore the function of pollen and examine the several constituents that make it a super-food for our bees. Options will be discussed for providing nourishment when pollen is scarce.

Bob Smith has kept bees for 40 years but still experiments with their management, this year running all colonies on double (14x12) brood; strong colonies make lots of honey! 6 years as a Seasonal Bee Inspector in Kent provided insights into bee health and the proactive management of these fascinating insect colonies; that led to continuous investigation of the how and why of beekeeping. With interests in botany and pollen, Bob has run microscopy courses aiming to identify our bees' foraging behaviour. Pollen is wonderful stuff

October 1st. Martin Bencsik

Predicting swarming in honey bee colonies using accelerometer sensors

The scientist who discovered that Honey bee queens toot and quack to communicate with the workers rather than to each other, will talk to us about the amazing insight he is getting into the world of the honeybee through the use of accelerometers

Martin Bencsik is an experimental physicist with research publications relevant to Magnetic Resonance Imaging, Bioacoustics, and automated condition monitoring. He has pioneered the use of accelerometers in the long-term monitoring of honeybees. He also enjoys collaborating with artist Wolfgang Buttress and has contributed to his major piece 'The Hive' presently exhibited at the Kew Royal Botanical Gardens, UK. Martin's wife Deirdre is a professional cellist who regularly plays on stage during his academic seminars. His son Sebastian helps him every year to extract the honey that their bees produce in Nottingham, UK



The National Honey Show

October 22nd – Saturday 24th 2020

At the time of writing there is no update on whether this will take place and it is still scheduled for October according to their website.

Details for the event are on the website with the usual programme of lectures and workshops. <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/index.php>

And don't forget that all the lectures from last year can be viewed on YouTube from [Lecture Videos](#).

PAST EVENTS

SBKA webinar programme

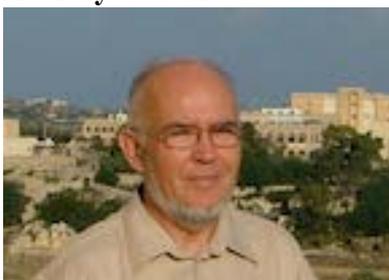
As you may be aware, SBKA has been broadcasting a series of live lectures through the webinar platform Zoom. Early on in lockdown, Council agreed to allocate funds for the software and speakers. The events are free for participants.

To date we've welcomed nearly 1,500 people, averaging several hundred members at each event, to the following:



Ken Basterfield B.Sc.(Hons), C .Eng. MIET, NDB who has given two talks on Processing Beeswax and, thanks to a throwaway remark about his preference for running his colonies on double brood boxes prompting huge interest, he returned to talk about this way of working. Ken said: "There is no logic to the design or size of the beehives we commonly use, and more importantly little consideration of what the bees need. In the transition from skep to movable frame hives, convenient boxes like the Kentish apple crate, which begat the WBC and from that the National; or in America, the Rev. Langstroth's convenient to hand champagne crates led to the Langstroth pattern hive. No design and suitability criteria there then! And so debates about which is the "best hive" are futile. What we should be looking for as caring, considerate and aware beekeepers is - Do the bees have enough brood space?"

Healthy Colonies



Richard Ball, a former National Bee Inspector and Chairman of the Devon Apicultural Research Group, proved a popular guide to maintaining healthy honeybee colonies. 'Observing the Colony' covered aspects of examining a hive of honeybees for signs of disease and the causative organisms. Illustrated with pictures of the signs of health and disease, the talk was rounded off with a picture quiz with 24 pictures of bee colony issues.

Swarming

Two hundred and seventy-five members registered for the timely talk 'Swarms, Swarming, Swarm Prevention & Controls' led by **Eleanor Burgess** with support from her mother Rosemary. Mother and daughter Rosemary and Eleanor Burgess have been keeping bees together in Somerset for 20 years and throughout that time have been dealing with bees which want to swarm. Their webinar explored how to understand, predict and deal with the natural swarming impulse of honey bees. Naturally, this prompted lots of questions!



Mating biology of the honeybee

We were delighted to welcome renowned US honeybee scientist **Jamie Ellis** live from his home in Florida who gave a highly informative and entertaining presentation.

Dr Jamie Ellis is the Gahan Endowed Professor of Entomology in the Department of Entomology and Nematology at the University of Florida. At the University of Florida, Jamie has responsibilities in extension, instruction and research. Currently, Jamie and his team have more than 30 active research projects in the fields of honey bee husbandry, conservation and ecology, and integrated crop pollination.

Individual honey bees and honey bee colonies both reproduce. In this lecture he talked about the mating and reproductive habits of queen and drone honeybees.

[sub head] practical beekeeping

SBKA webinar programme continued

Graham Royle NDB drew a large crowd to his talk 'If Heath Robinson had been a beekeeper'. His practical and light hearted talk, based on 30 years of trying out new ideas for beekeeping equipment, struck a chord with members and prompted lots of questions. Graham, also a Master Beekeeper, manages 24 colonies in three apiaries. He has been heavily involved with the education of beekeepers at all levels from encouraging beginners to take up the craft to preparing more experienced beekeepers to take the BBKA modular and practical assessments. Recently he spent several years as a Bee Inspector for the North of England and Cheshire.

BBC focus on Asian hornets took in SBKA

The BBC ran material across multiple channels about the threat Asian hornets pose to UK pollinators on one day at the beginning of June.

Among the experts interviewed was SBKA's AHAT co-ordinator Lynne Ingram. Justin Rowlatt, the BBC's Chief Environment correspondent, visited Lynne in her home orchard apiary to talk about the impact Asian hornets would have if they became established.



Lynne said: "This was a great opportunity to get the information about Asian yellow legged hornets out to a wider public; to encourage everyone to keep their eyes open for this invasive species; to be able to identify it, and then to report it. Also, Justin was interested in the way beekeepers have formed themselves into Asian Hornet Action teams across the country in readiness for any possible incursions."

The stories appeared on programmes including Breakfast, the Today Programme and online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/science-environment-52896891/asian-hornet-uk-beekeepers-on-lookout-for-bee-eater>



Queen Rearing Course

Two very successful courses have run so far on Zoom with the numbers restricted to 12 participants, each course comprised two sessions. The course was aimed at small scale beekeepers, with two or three years experience who do not want to graft.

Feedback so far has been positive. If any of you tried it do let us know how you got on for the next newsletter

If there is interest further courses could be run! Contact the education group if you're interested: Email edgroup@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

BBKA news

Since the government's announcement we have received a number of calls and emails in the office. We have put an updated statement on the BBKA website which we hope you will find helpful:

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/tending-hives-during-covid-19>

An update on the office staff for you is that thankfully everyone is safe and well. During July we will have four staff working in the office with others on furlough or working from home. The cancellation of the spring module exams and the summer practical assessments has impacted on office workload but we are hoping that when the Exam Board meets 19th July they will feel able to proceed with the autumn module exams. Then we will be able to call all staff back from furlough and 'normality' can be resumed.

Whilst writing can I thank all the volunteer swarm collectors. We often receive phone calls and emails to the office singing the praises of a swarm collector who has visited. They are generally fascinated by the whole process and feel they have learnt a lot about honey bees. Your time and effort is appreciated!

Kind regards
Leigh Sidaway
General Manager

BeeBase



As you may know, they have been unable to carry out any Bee Health Day training, evening Association talks or attend any national events due to COVID restrictions.

To part mitigate this, Fera Science have prepared for us several You Tube training/educational videos, which are now available via BeeBase and are freely available to beekeepers and Associations. We have initially released three of these videos looking at the following topics:

Asian hornet Biology
Asian hornet Genetics
European Foulbrood

Access to them may be via BeeBase news page: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/News/news.cfm#251>

Alternatively links may be found at the foot of our Advisory Leaflets, Training Manuals & Factsheets page: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>

ED: Please remember that it is in your interest to register with BeeBase so that the bee inspectors can contact you in the case of an outbreak of disease. There is an option to add your location for where your bees are kept.

Ask the Experts

The education group (Tricia & Alan Nelson, Bridget Knutson, Lynne Ingram, Geoff Blay and Richard Bache) are happy to answer any queries you may have about beekeeping and this will be a feature in future newsletters.

Please send your questions to questions@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

We begin with some answers to questions about re-queening

The ups and downs of requeening.

‘My “best” hive, that I did a Swarm control on three weeks ago, has not requeened even though I left them a perfect looking queen cell. Seems odd as they were doing fine, but now there is no young brood for them to raise a queen from and I can’t find a queen.’

When you read the books rearing a new queen seems easy; after all honeybees have managed it unaided for millions of years. However, what the books don’t tell you is that colonies make choices throughout the entire process and as you will see, one of those choices is timing.

Which queen cell should they keep?

The books will tell you the biggest straightest one will be the best fed and the one you should leave. This is true. However, a colony is made up of several families of half-sisters and the ‘best cell’ may not come from the most favoured family.

The queen has emerged. She only has 25 days in which to mate.

This is a biological fact.

If she cannot get mated in that time period, she will become a drone laying queen.

Examples would be:

- If the weather is bad
- there are insufficient drones within reach
- she has become trapped and is unable to fly out of the hive at all.

The queen isn’t laying.

- She never returned from her mating flight.
- She died/ has been killed
- They are having a brood break because the weather is terrible, and stores are low.

NB. As long as there is brood in the colony there is NO RISK of laying workers, so don’t panic.

Although new queens in small colonies lay within a few days of mating. This is not necessarily the case with a big strong colony. The colony probably decides when to let the new queen start laying, which is very stressful for an anxious beekeeper if you can’t find the queen.

Signs of being queenright:

- Quiet
- Drawing comb
- Lots of drones
- Polishing brood cells.

Signs of queenlessness:

- Roaring
- Defensive
- Chaotic
- Eventually laying workers

Still in doubt?

Give them a test frame. This is a frame with lots of eggs and larvae from a healthy colony. Leave for a week and then check for queen cells.

No queen cells = you have a queen. Wait and see how she progresses

Queen cells = You do not, and you should unite this colony with another or requeen.

What's that nest?



As Asian Hornet Team Coordinator for Somerset, I am used to a steady stream of insect photos appearing in my inbox, that are suspected of being an Asian Hornets. Generally, this year they have been European hornets, but I have also seen hoverflies, Giant wood wasps and Maybugs.

I rarely get photos of nests, but a couple of weeks ago I received urgent communication from a beekeeper who had seen a nest in a nearby bush. A photo appeared shortly afterwards and although it was somewhat fuzzy, I could clearly make out the nest. I decided a visit was in order, and on the very hottest day of the year so far, I packed my bee suit and headed over for a look. Sure enough, there was the nest in a bush in someone's garden, at a height of about 7 foot, and overlooking the pavement. Because of the angle, the sun in our eyes, and the leaves and hedge in between it was difficult to identify the insects flying in and out, but they definitely had the shape of a hornet. After speaking to the householder, and giving her lots of

Asian Hornet information, I donned my bee suit so that I could get a little closer, (but well out of sight of the entrance and not in the line of flight) and was able to push my camera in between the leaves from below and zoom in on the nest entrance. I then enlarged the photo I had taken and saw this..... Median wasps. I did breathe a sigh of relief at that point!



Median wasps (*Dolichovespula media*) are very handsome insects, first recorded in the UK in 1980. They make aerial nests like an Asian Hornet, although their nests are usually finished by August, whereas the Asian Hornet nest may continue to be active until November. Like Asian hornet nests, this too was a thing of great beauty.

Median wasps are distinguishable from Asian hornets by their more extensive yellow abdominal markings (multiple yellow lines), and yellow 'tick' markings on each side of the thorax (resembling the Nike logo).

In contrast. the Asian Hornet has a totally black thorax and a black abdomen with a broad orangey yellow band across the 4th abdominal segment. There is often a thin orangey yellow line across the second segment.

At this time of year, Asian Hornet primary nests are building up in size, and the amount of workers will be rapidly increasing. Primary nests are generally in sheltered low level places – maybe in a shed, a low bush, hedge or in a bramble patch. As the nest increases in size, the colony may outgrow this location, and 70% of them will relocate to a secondary nest that they develop in a much higher and inaccessible position – often in a tree. For about a month, the two nests will continue to function in parallel until the larvae in the primary nest have all emerged.

As we move towards mid to end Summer, the number of workers in the nests increase hugely and they will start to become more visible if they are in your area. Keep your eyes peeled for the sight of an Asian hornet in your garden or around your bee hives. Continue to monitor any traps in your garden or apiary. If you think you have spotted an Asian Hornet then take a photo so that we have some evidence of it. If you are sure, then report it through the Asian Hornet Watch app. If you are not sure, or need help identifying an insect or getting a photo, then contact your local Asian Hornet Team Coordinator or email:

asianhornet@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk.

Although this wasn't an Asian Hornet nest, it could have been – we never know when or where the next one will be found!

If you want to know more about Median wasps, here is an information sheet:

https://bwars.com/sites/www.bwars.com/files/info_sheets/Dolichovespula-media-info-sheet.pdf

And finally: Please save this much-loved extractor from being scrapped!

Backwards

Almost sixty years ago I bought a second-hand eight frame extractor from the son of Arthur Rolt, Somerset County Bee Instructor (those were the days!). Eventually it started to go rusty, so, horror of horrors, I painted it with new-fangled paint called Hammerite. We have six children, fourteen grandchildren and three great grandchildren, so the question of *selling* honey doesn't arise!

And forwards

But this year one of our sons has taken up beekeeping, and has bought a super-duper stainless steel extractor, so my dear old eight framer is on its way to the tip. Years ago I fitted it with an electric motor with variable speed switch.

Pity to scrap that.

Anyone want it?

David Berkley, Hemyock. 01823 680952

