



Somerset Beekeepers' Association



NEWSLETTER

May 2020 no.140



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

Chairman's introduction- Stewart Gould



It's a brave new world out there - foreign to every single one of us, but we have to carry on with life, and also looking after our bees, in the best way that we can, while being mindful of our safety, and that of those around us. For those new to the craft, it is going to be even harder, as learning first hand is not going to be easy, or perhaps, even possible.

The same applies to my new position as chairman of the Association. Anne Pike has done an admirable job over the last three years, and her contribution as chairman will be remembered and valued for years to come. She hasn't run away screaming, as she claimed she was going to, but is still with us, acting in a promotional role, and will be adding content to the website, among many other things.

I know quite a few of our members, but there are many that I have yet to meet, and who have no idea who I am. Well, here's a little insight. I hail from Bath, and spent a lot of the 1960s enthralled by and involved with the music of the time.

After spending 17 years involved with sales of construction materials to the unsuspecting architects of the South West, I spread my wings and headed for Saudi Arabia, where I actually sold sand to the Arabs, admittedly in the form of lightweight concrete, but on my return, the UK had gone into recession, and construction was particularly badly hit. I did what any red-blooded male would do, and diversified. A friend was running a woodworking business that needed a little help, so I invested, and used my sales skills to put the business on the tracks. He bailed out about three years down the road, and so I carried it on with my slowly improving woodworking skills, and a small group of cabinet makers.

That worked well until 2008, when I realised that something was amiss, my energy levels had dropped severely, and small items were slipping out of my grasp without me knowing. I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Again, I did what I thought best, shed the business, retired and took up beekeeping. It's been a great distraction, and has helped by making me plough on through physical difficulties. At one point I had 12 colonies running, but have now reduced that to six.

I joined the committee of Somerton Division in 2010, and took over their newsletter the same year, before also taking on the county newsletter and yearbook. Gerald Fisher, who had run the Beginners' course for many a year, wanted to hand over the reins, and being a total glutton for punishment, I took that on about eight years ago, and now run it in tandem with Joe King. I shed the Somerset newsletter and yearbook when elected chairman of Somerton Division. During my three year tenure we managed to acquire $\frac{3}{4}$ acre land in Long Sutton, as the result of a generous gift, and with help from the county and a few small grants, converted that piece of 'filled quarry wasteland' into an apiary with wildflower meadow and an apiary building, with car parking for 30 cars.

I had been a Somerton deputy county delegate for several years before being elected vice chairman three years ago, and at this year's virtual AGM, became chairman.

It's not going to be easy, but I aim to draw the divisions closer, so that we can function more as a single entity, and get together (albeit virtually at present) with more combined events. The ones that we have work so well. The Lecture Day and Special Lectures are praised highly. The Special Lecture, being an evening event has been slightly hampered by the distance that a lot of members would have to travel, for a two hour session, only to drive back again the same evening.

The lock down has caused lateral thinking, and Lynne Ingram of Taunton Division has gained us Educational Status with **Zoom**, which for those who have no experience of it, is a free to use, online conferencing facility, so that we can have mass audiences for virtual lectures. The virtual Special Lecture on April 23rd attracted applications from over 200 members, kick-starting a repeat, which Ken Basterfield was only too delighted to accommodate. There are live Q & A sessions afterwards too.

Further talks are coming up, with excellent guest speakers, and topics relevant to the moment. What's more, they can be enjoyed from the comfort of your armchair. There is, however, nothing quite like being in the presence of the speaker in real time. You wouldn't consider watching a music concert on your computer to be the same as actually going to the concert, would you? But in a slightly bizarre way, we can turn this situation to advantage, and gain some knowledge at the same time.

See you at the next **Zoom** session.

Stewart Gould

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Special Lecture

7th May at 7pm

Ken Basterfield has kindly agreed to deliver a second webinar about processing beeswax after tickets for his first were snapped up within a few hours of being released.

Book the FREE webinar through [Eventbrite](#) and you will be automatically emailed a link to the Zoom event on the day.

Ken will be talking about processing beeswax, from cleaning through to making foundation and lots more besides.



The National Honey Show

October 22nd – Saturday 24th 2020

This is currently scheduled to take place but they will be following government guidelines so who knows! 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](#).

SBKA AGM 2021

As you all know it was impossible for Yeovil division to host the AGM this year but they have offered to do it in 2021 and Burnham division, who would have been hosting it, have agreed and will do it in 2022.

Cancellations

Sadly the **County Honey Show** which was scheduled for August 7 & 8 2020 has been cancelled. The County Honey Show is held within the Taunton Flower Show and that too has been cancelled.

It has also just been announced that the **Bath and West Show** has also been cancelled.

Should we hear of any local bee-related events that **are** taking place this year we'll let you know!!

Past events

Lecture Day 2020



Another very successful Lecture Day was held at Edgar Hall, Somerton with a record number of over 220 people attending

As usual there was a packed programme of entertaining and informative lectures and an impressive AHAT

stand (pictured right). Everyone enjoyed meeting up with fellow beekeepers from Somerset, Dorset and further afield and a small band of volunteers provided them with teas and coffee. Thanks to Ken and his team for arranging the day



Special Lecture

Wednesday 22 April 2020

Processing Beeswax. A talk by Ken Basterfield



Obviously this could not take place at Edgar Hall but was very successfully done via Zoom and was indeed so over-subscribed that it was run a second time. On the basis that the Council had agreed the money to run the event at Edgar hall it was decided to use that money to take out a month's subscription to Zoom to allow more people to attend the re-run and this also allowed an additional talk by Eleanor Burgess on swarm control which was attended by 250 people.



Eleanor's talk on 29th April was another very practical and informative talk with lots of useful tips and advice.

It is very interesting that these talks via Zoom have attracted a lot more people than normally attend in person. Part of this is, perhaps, that some people have to travel a long distance to attend and for that reason a lot of people have suggested that this is the way forward for the Special Lecture.

I'm sure everyone would agree that a virtual meeting is no substitution for a physical meeting and wouldn't, therefore, want to lose the Lecture Day but it is worth thinking about how we conduct our meeting in the future

SBKA Annual General Meeting 14th April 2020

Due to the circumstances connected to COVID-19, this year's AGM was conducted through an online and postal vote.

The full list of those who were elected or confirmed in office is as follows:

President: Jackie Mosedale

Vice Presidents: M Barnes-Gorell, M Blake, S Blake, C Butter, AD Charles, K Edwards, G Fisher, F Horne, A Morrice, D Morris, J Mosedale, S Perkins, N Trood, J Friend, AK Tredgett

Chairman: Stewart Gould

Vice Chairman: vacancy

Secretary: Elizabeth Friend

Treasurer: John Smales-Cresswell

Executive Committee: Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Cathy Edge, Sharon Blake, Bridget Knutson

AHAT Coordinator: Lynne Ingram

Archivist: David Charles

BBKA Delegate: Richard Bache

BDI Dele Suzette Perkins

Bee Diagnostic Officers: Simon Jones and others

Education Officer: Richard Bache

Education Support Group: Alan Nelson, Tricia Nelson, Bridget Knutson, Lynne Ingram

Examinations Secretary: Bridget Knutson

Gift Aid Secretary: Rosemary Brooks

Membership Secretary: Alison Dykes

National Honey Show Delegates: Suzette Perkins, Neil Trood, David Charles, Mark Gullick

Newsletter Editor: Elizabeth Friend

Publicity Officer: Anne Pike

Spray Liaison Officer: Chris Harries

SWBKF Representatives: Stewart Gould, Sharon Blake, Richard Bache (deputy)

Webmaster: Neil Cook

Yearbook Advertising Manager: Alex Morrice

Yearbook Editor: Bridget Knutson



Please note that the post of Vice-Chair is vacant. –

The Vice-Chair normally goes on to become Chair so please give some thought within your divisions as to who might be a suitable candidate.

The appointments are for 3 years only.

West Country Honey Farms Award:

This has been awarded to **Fred Horne**. Normally the award is given at the AGM but Fred is having to make-do with a photo of the trophy until COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.



The Citation reads:

Fred's contribution to SBKA has been considerable both at County and Divisional levels during his 43 years of SBKA membership. Fred joined the Yeovil Division of SBKA in 1976 when it was then known as the Southern Division. Within two years he became the Divisional Treasurer, held the post for three years before taking on the role of Divisional Secretary for seven years. At SBKA level he was Vice- Chairman in 1985 and 1986 before election to Chairman in 1987, 1988, 1989, finally a Vice -President in 1990. For almost his entire period of membership, he has been a valued and loyal member of his Divisional Committee. His most recent office was that of Divisional President, 1999 to 2017 and in recognition of his service to SBKA he was elected an Honorary Member in 2010. This long period of service is commendable.

For all the current membership Fred has always been there. Modest in mind and the epitome of a skillful mentor, Fred offers a master class example of how to communicate. Good mentors, like good teachers, are rare to find but he certainly fits the category well. His empirical knowledge of bees, inspires, encourages and motivates. Not one for gaining qualifications and post nominals, Fred made you think logically, rationally and reminded us that bees are doing what they want to do (usually for good reason) and that we need sometimes to just watch and listen and sometimes leave them to it. Fred, like some other rare individuals, has clearly mastered the art of communicating during his career as a teacher and is able to effectively impart his knowledge at a level commensurate to both the individual and the complexity of the question.

Many of the Division's new members now realise the value of having Fred as their mentor and have appreciated the knowledge and passion that he has been able to transfer. Many inexperienced beekeepers have learned much, and more importantly, limited the potential damage that could have been done to their precious bees by seeking his counsel. By having this sound knowledge base available, either in person, or at the end of a telephone, their beekeeping has improved considerably.

To quote a relatively new member: "It has been a privilege to know and seek the President's advice at times when apiculture was proving demanding and each and every time, his wise and thoughtful words made sense and clarified the mire. The value and importance of a skilled mentor should never be underestimated".

Fred could always be relied on to understand a beekeeping situation and share his 'reading of the bees' and thereby make sense of the chaos perceived by the beginner. He would suggest a plan of action that usually worked and left the beginner much wiser. His ability to articulate and reassure instilled confidence and trust in all who he mentored.

Fred stopped keeping his own bees a few years ago and has now stepped down as Divisional President. However, he has not really retired as he is still available to provide advice to the less knowledgeable and experienced members of the Division. He has made a considerable contribution to beekeeping and the SBKA and is therefore nominated for the West Country Honey Farms award.



Zoom webinars are helping us to get together

SBKA is embracing Zoom webinar technology during COVID-19 restrictions to continue delivering education, run the Association and bring beekeepers together. To date we've used it to deliver the Special Lecture, a presentation about swarms and more events are planned.

Also, it's assisting us to conduct business as usual: Somerset's AHAT team used it for an early season training session; SBKA has held a meeting of the Executive Committee and will use it to facilitate its May Council meeting.

It's going down well with members - within a couple of hours of email notifications, hundreds had registered for each of the webinars.

Feedback through Survey Monkey is giving the initiative a big thumbs-up – and there's a demand for more webinars; also, individual member emails and phone calls are welcoming the opportunity to get together.

Zoom has provided us with a free educational account for the duration of the emergency which enables us to have multiple 'hosts' ie many people can use the package at the same time to run meetings. We have set up Zoom email addresses for all Divisions and emailed them a user guide.

In addition, we've signed up for a one-month trial of a second, paid-for Zoom account so that we can boost the number of people attending talks from a maximum of 100 to 500 to accommodate the demand. The software enables speakers to deliver their presentations – including PowerPoint – and take questions at the end through the chat facility. Lynne Ingram is our Zoom 'pilot' – she's secured the software, introduced and managed the talks, set up training sessions with the speakers and also has helped individual members who have run into technical difficulties.

The Special Lecture – Processing Beeswax by Ken Basterfield – was ours, and his, first Zoom event and was so popular that he is delivering it again on May 7.

Eleanor and Rosemary Burgess's talk - Swarms, Swarming, Swarm Prevention & Controls – attracted an audience of more than 250. Following question time we trialled 'break out rooms' when 10 participants were grouped together to chat about all things bees. Members are emailed invitations using the eReturn2 membership system to register for these free events on Eventbrite and on the day are emailed the access links. Webinars can be recorded and uploaded to the website but, to date, our speakers have asked us to keep the lectures live and personal enabling audiences to interact with speakers and each other.

The platform has been taken up by some of the Divisions including Exmoor and Taunton who are using it to deliver sessions for their beginners.

It's likely that life will take a while to return to normal even when COVID-19 restrictions are eased or lifted, and getting together while staying at home to learn more about the craft and to meet up will be as essential then as it is now: Zoom could be an important part of SBKA's future as well as its present.

Anne Pike, events team online support

The third in our series of educational articles written by Tricia Nelson MB.

Some thoughts after Somerset Special Lecture day.

Some of us were lucky enough to watch Ken Basterfield's special lecture on Zoom thanks to technology and the extraordinary ability of Lynne Ingram and Anne Pike to 'make it happen'. It was great and will certainly get many of us thinking about how we change comb, clean wax and what we do with it afterwards!

The topic of double brood boxes came up and it is clearly a topic worthy of discussion. Ken and Dan use Modified Commercial hives (bigger than Nationals) and he explained he rarely uses shallow supers nowadays ie.all his boxes are the same size.

Please note- a commercial deep box FULL OF HONEY IS VERY HEAVY. In fact a Commercial frame is very heavy of itself when full of honey!

I think he was making three points:

A single National brood box is generally too small for a good going colony and can promote swarming. This is undoubtedly true.

A well known way to manage swarming is to use two brood boxes and rotate the boxes when the queen has filled the upper one.

Using all the same size boxes reduces a lot of hassle and is common practice amongst professional beekeepers; also the key benefit of 'the Rose hive' design- lots of drawn comb after extracting the honey!

We started using double brood Nationals as a matter of course quite a while ago and swarming was certainly less likely, and there is plenty of room for stores in the winter. However I would argue that the main purpose of a double brood box is to produce bigger colonies (as in USA) and consequentially more honey. We have recently stopped doing this. We get plenty of honey and are not commercial!

For enthusiastic beginners wanting to give it a try please note:

1. You will have 22 frames to look through for the queen and queen cells.
Are you good at finding the queen?
Do you have time to check through 22 frames?
Can you do it quickly?
2. Foundation takes a lot of work and a 'flow' to draw and does not count as 'space' for the bees
3. All your supers are going to be higher up than they were, so if you are vertically challenged like me you need to consider the consequences!
4. You will need more boxes.
5. A double National brood box provides a greater brood area than a deep National or a Langstroth.

We have tried out lots of permutations and have finally settled on Langstroth hives (which have nothing to do with champagne crates- the first was actually double or even triple walled!)

We have 9 or 10 Langstroth frames as standard brood but use a second brood box for Bailey and Demaree manipulations. This means the bees have more space, inspections are quick and they readily go into the supers.

I know of many beekeepers who carry out the same techniques very successfully using Nationals.

The colony expands in the spring and shrinks from mid-summer filling the brood nest with stores for the winter. It only needs extra brood space for a short period of time. Honey bees collect pollen, nectar, propolis and water.

They also swarm. In the past beekeepers have not grasped the fact that there is a good reason for all these behaviours, one glaringly obvious example being colony health! Brood breaks are a key part of reducing parasites, especially Varroa and associated viruses, and swarming is an obvious part of this.

I would strongly recommend watching the National Honey Show lectures 2019, which you can find, free of charge on YouTube, specifically the four given by Ralph Buchler and particularly the third lecture.

Picture Quiz



This was found in use, in a wet, rotten and propolised state.

This standard item of beekeeping equipment has been made in an unusual and totally impractical shape.

The size is approximately 215mm x 105mm x 7mm.

But what is it?

Answer at the end

Some helpful advice from Garry Rucklidge of Wedmore and Cheddar division.

Transferring bees and brood from a mini-nucleus onto full size frames

In mid July in 2019 I needed to do a rather late swarm prevention and decided to park the queen into a mini-nucleus obtained from Abelo. (see blue/brown nuc)



This is a hard polystyrene nuc and comes with floor, “brood box”, frames, a feeder and a roof. I bought another nuc brood box and made up the frames myself with plastic Hoffman adaptors. Wax foundation was fitted and sealed in with melted wax. There were a total of five frames for each box. Three cupfuls of bees were shaken into a washing up bowl and sprayed with water to confuse them. The queen was added and the nucleus closed up and moved to another site and the feeder added and filled with syrup.



After a couple of weeks the queen was seen to be laying on the freshly drawn comb but a week later she had disappeared and queen cells were being drawn. Fortunately the virgin mated (now in mid-August) and started to lay, I decided to let her lay on and continued to feed the colony and when she had laid out these frames another mini box was added and

again I thought I would give it a go and try to get it through the winter. With firstly heavy liquid feeding and fondant on top in the late winter she made it and started to expand in the spring. Now the problem was to get the colony from the small frames onto standard National frames for someone who wanted a colony.

The difficulty was the different frame size. Using a polystyrene brood box (Maisemore) on a mesh floor I screwed a strip of wood of National frame length to the top of the small frames. A plastic end was placed at each end and a divider placed into a slot cut in the brood box as shown



A brood box with six National frames of drawn comb with a divider on each side was placed on the top of this “ex nuc box” and all closed up. A feeder was added and syrup fed.

A week later the queen was seen to be laying in the full National frames and the queen marked yellow and a queen excluder placed between the two boxes and left for twenty one days to allow all brood in the bottom box to hatch completely.

After three weeks the queen has now laid out six National frames in total and thanks to the good weather and a good dandelion flow there is plenty of stores but this will be monitored now the flow is over and may need more liquid feed. The bottom chamber with the small frames was removed and the National frames box moved down onto the floor and a queen excluder placed on top and a super full of drawn comb added. The bees on the little frames were brushed into the main box and the hive was closed up.

This should turn into a nice colony for the later flows of clover and blackberry given that this is a young queen.

I was surprised and so pleased that this small colony made it through the winter. It was a bit of work to give it the TLC needed but very satisfying.

ASIAN HORNET WATCH

This has all been said before and you should all be familiar with what Asian hornets look like and what to do if you see one – but just as a reminder:



Photo courtesy of Jean Haxaire, The French Natural History Museum

Asian hornets are rather like large black wasps. The abdomen is mostly black with a single orange band, it has an orange/yellow face and yellow tipped legs. Queens are up to 30mm long, workers up to 25mm and the queens buzz quite deeply like a bumble bee.

Please monitor for Asian hornets this spring. Lynne Ingram, the AHAT coordinator has written a very useful guide to help you [useful guide](#)

And do download the Asian hornet app which has photos to assist with identification and can be used to report any sightings:

[Asian Hornet Watch app for iPhone](#)

[Asian Hornet Watch app for Android](#)

Sightings should be reported immediately to the [Non-Native Species Secretariat](#) (Please take some photos and /or capture a specimen if possible to aid identification.

The current lockdown has limited our ability to disseminate information to the general public so it's even more important for us to keep a keen eye out in our apiaries. If anyone is involved with local magazines, then I'm sure Lynne will be happy to send some copy for you to send them. Experience shows that more hornets are spotted by the general public than by beekeepers and a lot of people are taking more walks now that the roads are not so busy.

**Picture Quiz answer.
Yes, of course, it's an entrance block.**