

The Newsletter



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SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Penultimate Practical Session

Joe King is showing a small group of new beekeepers, who are just a representation of those who have made the journey from being interested, to becoming beekeepers. This year, a higher percentage have gone all the way to keeping bees, than in many previous years. It's very rewarding to see that they have stuck with it, and unusually, a good few are going to have a decent honey harvest in their first year.

Let's hope they enter some in the Honey Show on Saturday September 21st

Honey Show 2019

Just over three weeks to go now, and Fred Clarke has started to panic already. Mind you, it happens each year. So far there have been no entries. I have just been looking at the schedule and to this point can see seven classes that I could enter.

Although there are numerous classes for honey, there are many more which you could enter. The photographic classes have been expanded this year, and with mobile phones now having lenses and resolutions as good as many cameras, it's much easier to catch a good shot.

Preparing entries for the wine classes means starting months in advance, but cakes, bread and fudge are all made immediately before the event, so you don't have to do a lot of organizing, and the recipes are all in the attached notes. **There is also a poster for the show, please print it off and display locally.**

Most importantly, as has been said before, the novice classes are the ideal opportunity for newer beekeepers to get an idea of what showing is all about. If you win, your name goes up in lights, but otherwise it's totally anonymous. Go on, have a go. What have you got to lose?

The poster is designed with a honeycomb pattern. In the top left, a blue hexagon contains the text "Mike's Bee Supplies" and a small photo of a person in a beekeeping suit. To the right, contact information is provided: "Just phone before you call T: 01278 445158", "E: mikes-bees@outlook.com", and "www.mikes-beesupplies.co.uk". Below this, several yellow hexagons list products: "Foundation", "Jars", "Hives", "Suits", and "And more!". In the bottom left, a hexagon states "We take Cash or Card (no cheques)" and shows logos for PayPal, VISA, MasterCard, and American Express. In the bottom right, a hexagon provides the address: "Find us at 72 Wembdon Hill Wembdon Bridgwater Somerset. TA6 7PZ". Small bee icons are scattered throughout the design.

Beekeepers Question time

It's all taking shape now, with Alex Morrice (ex chair of Somerton BKA), Roy White (Queen rearing expert) and Bridget Knutson (Master Beekeeper) already on board, and one other Master Beekeeper in the wings.

They are all very approachable, so get your questions ready.

Our experts will be trying to help you with your problems at the Somerton Parish Rooms, TA11 7NB, on the evening of Thursday September 12th

Bees and Elephants

Once the honey show is done and dusted, we get into our winter season of speakers, and the first is Brian Durk, a founder member of Bees Abroad, which is a charity set up to help disadvantaged people, in sub Saharan Africa, earn a living through selling the products of their beekeeping.



As an add on to their businesses, beekeepers supply hives to place on land which borders wildlife reserves, so that elephants, which are frightened of bees, are deterred from wrecking farm crops.

This will certainly put a different slant on beekeeping talks.

Registration of all beekeepers

There was a whisper, a few weeks back, that the Government will introduce compulsory registration for all beekeepers in the UK. It was thought that initially it would be channelled through The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), and its **Beebase** website.

Since the initial flurry of discussion, things have gone quiet. Perhaps the Government have other things to worry about at the moment.

Spilled honey

We've all left a dribble or two on the floor while extracting honey, but this is what happens when three 30 lb buckets are put on a table with a wonky leg. This catastrophe was featured on **facebook**. Apparently, the whole lot fell on to the floor. What a sad waste, but probably the best thing to do is feed it back to the workforce, so that they can clean it up and recycle it. Done in the spring, it will give a cracking start to the season.



Somebody suggested leaving it outside for the bees to clean up, but all that will do is create one almighty slaughtering spree. If you don't know what internecine conflict is, this is one way to find out.

Dictionary definition: Internecine conflict, war, or quarrel is one which takes place between opposing groups within a country or organization.

Apiinvert. Syrup ready to feed bees. Unlike sugar solution it requires no mixing, more readily accepted and less work required for the bees to invert (not wasting energy), more close to a natural food.

1 - 4 boxes @ 16 Kg £23 each, 5 + boxes £22 each

Apifonda. If you are venturing on a Queen rearing project this fondant is what you need. Very similar to Apiinvert, it is a paste not a liquid. If a colony becomes light through the course of the winter a dollop of fondant could well be the difference between life and death of the bees.

The Apiinvert can be fed as a 'gee up' in the spring, emergency feeding during the 'June gap' and of course at the end of the season when preparing for winter. 1 x 2.5 Kg bag £4.75, 1 box 5 x 2.5 Kg £22, 2 + boxes £21 each

Foundation. National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood, 16 x 10 brood

Eddie Howe. email:- redrascal@tiscali.co.uk Mobile 07812 738793 Telephone 01458 2721144

Somerton BKA Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting. This year will be held at 7.00pm on the evening of Thursday November 14th in Somerton Parish Rooms, TA11 7NB. This year's AGM is even more important than usual, as our treasurer and secretary are both standing down after many years' service, and our chairman's three year term of office comes to an end. This means we need to appoint a new chairman, treasurer, secretary and vice chairman. These are all vital posts, and must be filled. There have already been nominations for those posts so hurry if you wish to be considered.

As is always the case, all committee positions are up for re-election each year, and although some are time limited, they are still reviewed at each AGM. If you would like to stand for any committee post, or know somebody who you think would make a useful contribution to the running of our association, then please, after seeking their approval, submit their name to our secretary Jackie Mosedale, by email at jackiemosedale@gmail.com, or by post to Mrs J Mosedale, Catcombe Farm, Ricksey Lane, Somerton, TA11 7JH. Nominations must be received at least 14 days before the date of the AGM.

Foxgloves - *digitalis purpurea*

While on holiday in North Wales recently our vice chairman Eric McLaughlin spotted this interesting article in 'Sibrydion Cymunedol' (Community Whispers), the Parish Magazine of Arthog and several other nearby villages.

Foxgloves are one of the most imposing wildflowers of the summer, with their tall spikes of richly coloured purple flowers standing head and shoulders above the surrounding vegetation. Not only are they beautiful to look at, but they are also perfectly designed to maximise their pollination prospects. The main pollinators of foxgloves are bees, particularly several



species of bumble bees, and the plants have developed a few crafty adaptations to try and ensure successful cross-pollination. Firstly, they are tall and therefore highly visible, even when crowded by bracken or tall grasses. They are a vivid purple colour, which is in the colour spectrum highly attractive to bumble bees. The trumpet shaped flowers have broad flat lower petals, which provide a perfect landing strip for the bees. Look closely and you will see a group of spots on the petals, called nectar guides, which act as sort of 'landing lights' for the insects.

Now it gets really clever. It might seem as if bumble bees just randomly buzz around from flower to flower, but they are in fact extremely methodical. They will start off at the lower, older flowers and work their way up to the upper, newer flowers. The lower flowers are 'female' and the upper ones are 'male'. The male flowers being newer are smaller and are a tighter squeeze for the bees, so although the bee is after the nectar, it cannot help but collect pollen at the same time. Then off it flies to the next foxglove, starts at the bottom and inadvertently deposits pollen in the female flower – collects more pollen from the male flower and flies off to repeat the process. So it is a win – win situation all round really. The bee gets its share of tasty nectar, the foxglove gains genetic diversity by being assured of cross-pollination and hey ho! Life goes on. Clever or what?

Thanks to Rennie Telford of Friog, Gwynedd

Beeswax wanted

Stuart Gibbons is looking for beeswax, lots of it, so if you have some you wish to part with, contact Stuart. He is willing to pay £7 per lb

gibbonsstuartc@gmail.com
07518 130381



The Sad Tale of Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus

My story begins in July 2018 when I got my first nuc. of bees. I brought that precious cargo home from high on Exmoor and settled them lovingly into life at a much lower altitude on the Levels. I looked after those bees with such care and diligence; I checked them each week, I applied Apiguard, I fed them with syrup and then fondant and I kept my records. How I loved those bees and in return the colony grew...and it grew and like Topsy it grew more!

The colony grew so much that over winter myself and my long suffering mentor, who turned up at a moment's notice to mop my furrowed brow whenever I needed help, decided to put a super underneath to accommodate their ever expanding community.

Deep winter came...and went. Then we were overcome by the unexpected heat of February and my beautiful calm and happy bees set out into the spring sunshine in search of supplies. Along with their searching they also began multiplying as well. Then as soon as the hot February departed the cold March weather set in. This proved to be hugely bad news for my poor colony.

In April I began to notice far more dead bees than was usual in front of the hive. The bodies began stacking up in alarming numbers. Not only were they dead, but many other bees were simply crawling about on the floor, and when I say many I mean hundreds. I quickly posted a video to Somerton Beekeepers Facebook page and got lots of advice back...none of it sounding good. It looked as though they had some sort of virus. After much head scratching and re-researching, one of our top men (!) showed my video to a chap from the NBU who confirmed that in his opinion my wonderful bees had developed Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus.

My mentor came down clutching a big book of words and I spent hours trawling the net looking for information on causes and treatment of CBPV. None of it was good. I was spending each day collecting bodies on what became known as 'The Death Tray', weighing them and working out how many a day I was losing. Just for info an average honey bee weighs about 0.10gm, and by my estimates I was therefore losing around 400-500 each day. It became a daily trail of 'sweeping up the dead' weighing and examining them. Eventually I went out one evening and found the Queen had been booted out of the hive and was dying on the death tray.



There still remained the small hope that the colony would recover before it completely collapsed and to that end opening the hive showed that the bees were trying to raise emergency Queens. This they did successfully and a few weeks later I found eggs and brood. My spirits were raised: they may yet survive! Sadly this was not to be the case. Despite all the efforts of both myself and Eric McLaughlin, the bees slowly declined.

It was very sad to watch, the once thriving huge colony slowly drifted down to nothing. A sad empty hive stood where there had once been this citadel of bees.

So what had caused this? It seems that most hives carry the virus but it is not spread by varroa. Like humans, when living together in very cramped moist conditions disease can break out. The colony, cramped together in the cold March weather, had simply become too big. Rubbing together they lift the scales on their bodies and pull hairs out leaving gaps for the virus to take hold. Once the virus starts, it spreads rapidly through the hive. Sometimes colonies recover, sometimes, like mine, they don't.

There are two types of CBPV, Type 1 & Type 2. Type 1 is the most common in the UK, bees will look like they're trembling and are generally disorientated. They struggle to fly which is why so many are usually found crawling around the front of the hive. Adult bees also appear bloated due to swelling in the

honey stomachs. The symptoms are very similar to seeing bees that have been poisoned and the two conditions can be confused, and it can also look like the bees are swarming.

There is very little that can be done and certainly talking to commercial bee keepers who have experienced it, it's a survive or die situation. I now have a new nuc. of bees and am starting again. Can I prevent it happening again; I don't know. I have dug out the ground around the hive and scorched it. Scorched the boxes and set new frames and foundation. If the colony is huge again by spring I will add another brood box to give them more room and keep feeding them. Hopefully lightning won't strike twice but I'm not counting my chickens...or bees.

Only time will tell but it was a sharp learning curve for this novice bee keeper and one I really, desperately hope isn't repeated!

Alison Clewes

Footnote: CBPV is passed from adult bee to adult bee, although queens can sometimes tolerate it, and keep laying, producing healthy brood, which matures into healthy adults. The disease is also only apparent in adults. The source of the virus remains something of a mystery.

Glut of Manuka Honey

There has been huge growth in honey production over the past decade. Karin Kos, chief executive of Apiculture NZ, said hive numbers had reached nearly 925,000. In 2008 there were 343,000 hives. Honey exports were worth \$350 million last season while in 2006 they were worth \$36m, but with the popularity comes increased production, and many beekeepers are finding that retail prices have dropped by as much as 10%, consequently they are stock piling .

There's no mystery over the growth in numbers. Kevin Gibbs, chairperson of the Southern North Island Beekeeping Group, said. "Mānuka honey is why they are here."

Mānuka's profile and premium price has put pressure on apiarists and bees. In many places there are too many hives for available forage.

Autumn feeding

Once your bees have been treated for varroa, you'll be looking to buy inverted sugar syrup, or bulk sugar to turn into strong syrup (2lb sugar to 1 pint of water). These days people talk in litres and kilos, and the equation should be changed, but most simply feed 2kgs sugar to one litre of water. That will give pedants something to mull over, but in truth, as long as the bees can move a strong syrup, you won't hear them complaining. Weaker syrups are used in the spring to encourage the bees to draw comb, something they aren't likely to do at this time of year. Fondant is fed in winter, and we'll give you the recipe next month.

Where is the best place to buy sugar? I have scoured the web and come up with the following, but you can bet that somebody will find it cheaper somewhere. I can only publish the prices I can find. If you are a full member of Somerton BKA, you can buy from Booker Cash & Carry. They have branches in Yeovil, Bridgwater and Taunton. It is important to remember that the most obvious places to buy sugar, aren't always the cheapest.

Supplier	Package	Price per kg
Aldi	1kg	64p
Asda	5kg	62.8p
B&M Homestore	1kg	50p
Booker Foods	1 x 25kg or 2 x 25kg	62p or 44p
Lidl	1kg	64p
Sainsbury	5kg	70p
Tesco	5kg	64p

Branches of Farm Foods are usually inexpensive, but I can't source their prices.

Remember to feed only white granulated sugar to your bees. Raw cane and other brown sugars are too rich for their constitutions.

Australian Department of Agriculture

Preparing for our upcoming visit to Australia and New Zealand, I was looking for source material for a talk to Melbourne's beekeepers, on the subject of varroa, which worries them greatly, and I came across a document published by The Australian Department of Agriculture which states that the Australian honey bee industry is composed of about 13,000 registered beekeepers. Of those, about 1,300 are considered to be commercial apiarists, each with more than 50 hives.

The European honey bee contributes directly to the Australian economy with the industry valued at around \$100 million per annum with total honey production ranging between 20-25,000 tonnes each year.

If you take an average of 22,000 tonnes, it means that the average Australian beekeeper is producing 1.69 tonnes of honey each year, or 3726 jars at 454g (1 lb) each.

Until I read that, I thought I'd had a good year, but to my reckoning, they're only getting an average price of \$4.545 per kg. That's £2.50 per kg, or £1.14 per lb.

In the same document, entitled 'Bees and Pests and Diseases' it goes on to say 'Australia is one of the few countries in the world to remain free of varroa mite (*Varroa destructor*). If varroa mite were to become established in Australia our healthy population of honey bees, and the pollination services they provide, **could be reduced by 90-100 per cent**. Restrictions may be put in place on the movement of hives to limit the spread of varroa, which could reduce the availability of hives in some regions. The effects would be significant for apiarists, who would face higher costs to manage their hives, and producers of crops such as almonds, apples and cherries that rely on pollination from bees'.

Slightly alarmist.

Last time we were in Australia, they asked me to talk about European wasps, which they now have in some areas, and seem to fear nearly as much as varroa. The upside was that I happened to meet Stuart Anderson, co-inventor of the FLOW hive, who came to Somerton, gave us a talk on his hive, and even gifted us one. I wonder who I'll bring home with me this time?

Dates for your diary

Beekkeepers' Question Time

Thursday 12th September 7.30pm
Somerton Parish Rooms, TA11 7NB
A panel of expert beekeepers
answering awkward questions

Somerton BKA Honey Show

Saturday September 21st

Keinton Mandeville Village Hall
Christies Lane, off Queen Street
TA11 6EB
(New venue)

Bees and Elephants

A talk by Brian Durk
Of Bees Abroad

Somerton Parish Rooms

Thursday October 10th - 7.30pm

Somerton Parish Rooms

TA11 7NB

Used Equipment Sale

Saturday 12th October 10.00am

At our apiary

Somerton BKA

Annual General Meeting

Thursday November 14th
7.00pm

Somerton Parish Rooms,
TA11 7NB

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