

# The Newsletter



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SBKA website [www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk)



## IT'S SHOW TIME!

The Best Honey Show in the West is back. But it will only maintain its title if we have entries from you and all the other members.

We know it's not been a bumper year, but it's the same for everybody, so have a good look through the schedule, which is attached, and get your entries in to the show secretary. There is a real variety of classes, with baking and beeswax through to photography and handicraft. So no excuses.

For all the new beekeepers there is a novice section and a novice cup too. If you have never won a prize in a honey show, this is the place for you. The novice honey classes will be judged in the presence of those entering, and there is plenty of constructive advice too.

Also attached to the mail with this newsletter is the very helpful 'How to win prizes at honey at honey shows' file. Always worth a read.

There are many open classes as well, so friends and family can enter. There are no entry fees, and consequently no cash prizes, but a prize card is always very precious.

### **Apiary wildflower meadow**

The apiary team have been trying to convert the wasteland which we inherited, into a wildflower meadow, and to a very large extent it has been a success. What they would like to do now, is log all the different species which have been attracted, been introduced or have just arrived. This will mean a periodic survey of what can be identified, either from the flowers, or the leaves.



We already have some unusual and uncommon plants, such as the pyramidal orchid in the picture above, and bladder campion, as in the picture to the left. Another which appeared a couple of years ago, is weld, or dyer's rocket, which is described as frequent, rather than common.

If you have wildflower knowledge or would like to gain some, then please get in touch with Joe King, on 01749 890357, or by email at [jk.pilton@btinternet.com](mailto:jk.pilton@btinternet.com). He'll be very pleased to hear from you.

## Apiary work party

The apiary work party was a real success and the stars of the show were definitely Caroline and Jim Dawson who managed to clear the scrub from around the Bee Space building and burn most of it on the 'barbecue'. Thanks also go to all those who wielded paintbrushes and strimmers. The Bee Space has had a first coat of a dark oak stain on three sides, but hopefully it can be finished and receive a second coat at the **next work party on Saturday September 25<sup>th</sup>**.

It would be really good to see some different people come and give a hand. Members get a great deal from the Division and It would be nice to see some new faces giving something back, instead of the usual suspects every time. New beekeepers and members are welcome too.

Bring a large paint brush, ladder, hedge trimmer or secateurs.

## The Bath & West Country Festival

The Bath & West Country Festival was a slightly depleted version of the full show, but it was nice to be back after two years away. The weather held, and the queue for the burger van was never shorter than 20 metres for the whole three days.

The show was reduced and numbers of attendees were down significantly. This was reflected in the Honey Show entries, with less than 80 jars of honey in total.



The Bees and Honey tent is normally comfortably crowded, but the vastness of the Mendip Hall, usually reserved for livestock exhibits, of which there weren't any, meant that it looked slightly empty.

## Tom Done

It is with great sadness that we have to tell you of the death of one of our longest serving members. Tom Done passed away at his home in Butleigh recently after a heart attack and a spell in Musgrove Park Hospital.

Tom told me recently that he had kept bees for 32 years and although sad to be giving it up, thought that the time had come. For the most part, he passed his bees on to new beekeepers and his good friend Ian Forster is cataloguing his equipment, which will also to be passed on to other beekeepers.



Tom was a quiet, gentle man, but willingly imparted advice to newer beekeepers. For many years, he kept the bees at Chalice Well in Glastonbury, but downsized to keeping just a few colonies closer to home as his mobility reduced. He accepted help from Ian Forster, who he mentored, for three years, and in return, Ian looked after the bees when Tom could no longer manage.

Tom was born and grew up in Wales where he was a cattle farmer before meeting and marrying his second wife Jill, and he moved to Butleigh. During his time in Monmouthshire, he would go to visit his cows close to Rockfield Farm, which became World famous as a recording studio in the 1970s, when Queen, Led Zeppelin, U2, Oasis and many other bands went there for months at a time to record landmark albums. On one sunny day Tom happened upon a recumbent, and totally naked, Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin, who was in the process of getting an all over tan. They became unlikely friends and Tom's daughter Delyth went on to baby-sit for Robert and his partner.

Tom is succeeded by a son and a daughter.

Tom's funeral will be held at St Leonards church, Butleigh BA6 8SA, on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September at 2.00pm.

## A familiar story

For several years now, British beekeepers have tried to raise the subject of honey adulteration, whether diluted manuka honey from New Zealand, or syrups, primarily from the far east being sold as honey, when they contain virtually none. Then there are the extremely ill informed, like a beekeeper in Bruton, who are selling their honey as sugar free, when most of us are only too well aware that real honey is



predominantly nothing more or less than the two sugars glucose and fructose, with a few nice contaminants which give it its flavour. Well, there is another story to add to the mix.

To the untrained eye, leatherwood looks much like other honey, but in fact it is a premium product produced only in Tasmania's rainforests that sells for about double the price. "It's such a beautiful, strong and distinctive honey," says Lindsay Bourke, who has been making the liquid gold for decades, while winning prizes along the way, but he and other Tasmanian beekeepers can only produce so much.

"In Tasmania we can put about 20,000 hives in the rainforests every year and there's limited sites that are all taken up," he said. "So we can only produce 1,000 tonnes a year." That has created high demand for Tasmanian leatherwood honey, which some overseas producers have chosen to exploit by diluting pure leatherwood or mislabelling blends.

"A few years ago I sold 1 kilogram pails and some bulk honey in drums, and someone reported to me they'd seen my honey in 3kg pails. So these people had produced the buckets and the labels and put it together," he said. "I don't know what was in that honey. Rice syrups are hard to detect and they mix it in to make a fraudulent honey and sell it as the premium stuff.

Want to know more about honey adulteration, then click on this link to join a Zoom talk on Thursday September 2nd, brought to you by Somerset Beekeepers Association

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcrdeGtqz8qGdzW2OUHmdiU--2eTyVkswgp>

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**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.

**13kg 1 - 4 boxes £24 each, 5 + boxes £23 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.

**1 x 2.5 Kg bag £5.00, 1 box 12.5 Kg £25, 2 + boxes £24 each**

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.

**Foundation.** National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood available

**Eddie Howe email:- [redrascal444@gmail.com](mailto:redrascal444@gmail.com) Mobile 07812 738793**

**Tel. 01458 272114**

## Failure of MAQS supply

I must again offer an unreserved apology for EH Thorne's failure to meet our bulk purchase order for 200 treatments of MAQS. Strangely, they accepted an order form one of our members on the following day, admittedly, for somewhat less than 2000 treatments.

Other treatments are readily available, but at slightly higher prices.

## Illegal varroa treatments

Please be aware of several treatments being advertised on the internet, which claim all sorts of efficacy against varroa mites, but they are not authorised or licensed for use in the UK.

These are just some I found with a quick search

**Varolom**



**Flocontact**



**Antivaro**

Check the Veterinary Medicines Directorate's website for permissible treatments.

<https://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/search>

In the bottom right hand corner of the page is a box marked predefined searches. Open this box and go to products for use in bees.

## Extracting the honey



The penultimate practical session focused on extracting the honey and because the Bee Space is a tad cosy with a few warm beekeepers in it and the doors shut, Stewart Gould and Alison Dykes did a dry run outside for those who felt uncomfortable going indoors with so many others. Meanwhile Joe King did some real extracting inside. We were lucky with the weather and managed to carry out both demonstrations quite easily.

Sadly, the apiary bees haven't performed well this year, but in the final session on Saturday September 4<sup>th</sup> at 10.00am, we will be showing

how to get your bees ready for the cooler months and protect them from invaders such as mice, green woodpeckers and badgers, whilst also ensuring that they have been treated for varroa, and provided with enough stores to see them through until the Spring.

As it is the 'end of term' we will certainly repair to the local hostelry for liquid refreshment after the session. Please feel free to join us.

## Borrowed Bee Suits

**Several of our new beekeepers have borrowed suits from the apiary for use during practical sessions. We Ask that you bring them to the final session this coming Saturday - in a clean state. We have a list, with contact details, of all the borrowed suits, so please return them to avoid the embarrassment of flashing blue lights outside your front door.**





## Flow Hive Developments

Some month ago Stuart Anderson, of Flow Hive fame, told me that me that he had some interesting ideas up his sleeve that he, and his son Cedar were contemplating, but he wouldn't tell me what. Well, he emailed me about two weeks ago to say that he would like to have a Zoom catch up between his family and mine, and that he wanted to discuss some beekeeping topics too. Finally! I thought, I'm going to find out what the new developments are that he was so secretive about in our last conversation.

Flow hives are a real 'Marmite' product, with some loving them to bits while others have no time for them. If you do like them, all I can say is that you will be very pleased with the way that, father and son, Stuart and Cedar are thinking of developing the products.

Flow hive have been around for about 6 years now, and there have been little or no improvements on the original product, but you may well like the latest thinking, even if you sit on the negative side of the Marmite debate.

Am I going to tell you any more? Sorry, no I'm not. They kept me waiting for months, so I'm sure you won't mind me doing the same to you, but as soon as it becomes more of a certainty, you'll be the first to know.

second

## **Thoughts from the Chair.**

The beekeeping year is winding to a close. Most of you will have taken, or will be in the process of taking your honey crop. Yields this year seem to have been lower than average with some members only taking a third of their usual crop. Others have done better. The weather has not been kind to us and the mating of new Queens indifferent, with reports of failed matings and drone laying Queens.

Now is a good time to treat for varroa. If we can reduce the mite load, our winter bees will have a better chance of survival. Sadly, we were unable to process the usual bulk order for MAQS as Thornes had sold out. There is still time for you to obtain the alternative treatment of your choice, if you have not already done so.

The one bulk order to go ahead was for honey jars. Stewart Gould, who locates the jars, and Sarah Griffiths, who deals with the payments, devote a significant amount of their time on a voluntary basis. The delivery of the jars involves a lot of work for a small group of volunteers at the apiary unloading and sorting boxes of jars and weighing lids for collection. When the boxes have been socially spaced around the car park it is disheartening to have to carry a significant number back into the building as the owners had not turned up, nor advised us that they were not coming to collect.

On a more positive note we have now agreed a price with WPD for the electricity supply to the Beespace.

***Eric McLaughlin.***

**Dates for your diary**

**Online Zoom talks**

Various upcoming online talks. Watch your emails.

**Seventh Beginners Practical Session**

**At our apiary**

Saturday September 4th - 10.00am

**Somerton BKA**

**Annual Honey Show**

**Keinton Mandeville Village Hall**

**Chistles Ln, TA11 6FJ**

**Saturday September 18<sup>th</sup>**

**1.00 - 5.00pm**

**Apiary Work Party**

**10.00am**

**Saturday September 25<sup>th</sup>**

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