



Inside this issue...

- Bee farmer's review of the year
- Honey Show – results!
- Making candles with rubber moulds
- Dates not to miss



tauntombuzz

the newsletter of Taunton & District Beekeepers



Anne Pike - Editor



Welcome to issue 4 of tauntonbuzz

I hope you're having better luck with your bees than some beekeepers I've met recently.

As the beekeeping year draws to a close, and I busy myself with cleaning equipment, bottling golden honey and cleaning wax for candle making, I allow some time for reflection.

Can I be a better beekeeper in 2016? Will I (finally!) be able to prevent swarms, rather than chasing around the village with a tall ladder trying to retrieve them? Can I make my garden (apiary) even more pollinator-friendly and encourage my neighbours to do the same?

Will I have the courage to despatch the queen of a 'feisty' colony and find a replacement with the almost mythical attributes of gentleness, fertility, hard work, cleanliness and beauty?

I take my inspiration from the contributors to this edition of the newsletter. Here you will hear the voices of experience, discover more craft skills and, the editorial team and I all hope, feel the club's passion for the craft and willingness to share knowledge and fun with all-comers.

If you have something you'd like to share with fellow members – whether that's a new way of doing something, have enjoyed seeing beekeepers abroad, or have photos of bees – please get in touch. We'd be delighted to hear from you!

Meanwhile, all that's left for me to do in 2015 is to wish you a very happy Christmas and excellent beekeeping in the year ahead,

Anne Pike - Editor

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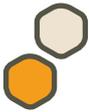
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Word from the Chair

It is now almost a year since I stepped into Mary's shoes and the mix of experienced and new committee members has worked well with various working groups organising several functional aspects of the year including next year's programme, which I hope you will find varied and interesting. You will have an opportunity to put forward new members at the AGM [November 14].

I thank all the members who have given their time to speak knowledgeably and generally help in delivering the 2015 programmes.

The beginners' programme in particular takes up a considerable amount of time to organise and man but is considered essential for teaching good practice. It is hoped that some of those who have benefited can put their names forward to help out in 2016.

On a personal note, I hope you had a better year than myself with a Nuc killed off by wasps and all other colonies coming under attack. Several queens failed to mate in mid-summer leaving my split colonies in trouble. Heatherton Park apiary experienced the same problems with wasps, so I guess it was just a bad year.

May all your colonies come through the winter unscathed.

Peter Maben - Chair



Our Chairman
relaxing on
holiday!



Taunton Buzz – editorial committee

Barbara Drakeford
Chris Harries
Simon Jones
Peter Maben
Dave Parry
Anne Pike



Join the conversation with TBK on:



2015 has
been one of
the poorest
of the last
10 years





2015 – How was it for you?

For me, as far as honey production is concerned – and that after all, is my bottom line - 2015 has been one of the poorest of the last 10 years.

Spring came and went almost unnoticed, with an on/off honey flow. I only managed to extract about two thirds of my spring crop. The remainder, having granulated in the comb, will have to be melted down during the quieter winter months.

All the sticky supers were put back on the hives by the end of June, in anticipation of the July flow. What a mistake! The flow never really got going. First the weather was too dry, then too wet; but my biggest problem in July was that some of the queens stopped laying altogether. This, I think, was due to the mild winter of 2014/15, throughout which the queens continued laying eggs. By July they appear to have run out of semen and the colonies just dwindled away. Had they kept going for another month or so the queens would almost certainly have been superseded.

The sticky frames were cleaned up, but not refilled. The bees appear to have played with most of the comb honey supers, creating some weird shapes and very thick wax. Masses of dark yellow pollen appeared in the supers, mostly from ragwort, and will have to be cut out to avoid waxmoth damage during the winter.

The highlight of my beekeeping year was undoubtedly on the heather. Like last year, the heather flow was quite late, being early September, but there was actual heather honey in the supers – an average of eight and a half pounds! Plus all the brood boxes were full of honey, so well worth the trip. [My wife would disagree, as she was stung & suffered a severe allergic reaction, but that's another story!]

Chris Harries

Taunton Member & commercial honey farmer
(Sedgemoor Honey Farm)

Winter Survival List

Have you:

1. got your bees in a weatherproof hive?
2. got a good queen?
3. treated for varroa?
4. given them plenty of food [finished by now]?
5. mouse guards ready to go on?
6. raised your hives off wet ground?
7. ensured your apiary is livestock-proof?
8. ensured your apiary is not a target for vandals?
9. woodpecker protection ready to be set up [end Nov.]?
10. made plans for regular apiary visits all winter – just in case?

Another great photo taken by June Harries of a bee foraging in the autumn



Taunton and Somerset Honey Shows – results!

Our President Jenny Gammon, along with husband Sid, scooped seven trophies in the Somerset and Taunton Honey Shows.

Jenny and Sid's skills with the products of the hive ranged from first placed pots of honey to blocks of wax, dipped candles and even photography.

Judy Crosher from Brompton Ralph, West Somerset, was awarded the blue ribbon for the best exhibit in Show with a stunning floral arrangement featuring some of the bees' favourite plants and Mike Dillon from Wellington won the novice trophy.

Afterwards Neil Trood, who has been organising the Honey Show for nearly 30 years, thanked all the exhibitors and everyone who helped create and run the very busy marquee.

Thousands of visitors enjoyed an unrivalled display in a beautiful marquee full of honey tasting, information on keeping bees, bee-friendly plants and candle rolling for children.

An observation hive and an outdoor demonstration area gave visitors plenty of opportunity to see honeybees at work.

2015 Somerset Honey results

The Blue Ribbon for the best exhibit in Show in the judges' opinion went to:

Judy Crosher

Taunton - trophies, cups & awards:

The Pat Barter Silver Trophy

Sid & Jenny Gammon

The Stoker Perpetual Silver Trophy

Sid & Jenny Gammon

The Downes Perpetual Clup (cookery)

joint winners Mary Adams and Maggie North

The Gammon Perpetual Trophy (novice)

Mike Dillon

The Taunton Honey Show Plate

David Pearce

The Priscott Perpetual Skep Plate

Sid & Jenny Gammon

The John Spiller Mascot

David Pearce

The Taunton Perpetual Challenge Trophy (winner of most points)

Sid & Jenny Gammon

The Tom Tucker Trophy for Cookery

Maggie North

The Andy Coles Mead Trophy

G. Welfare

The Taunton Honey Show Perpetual Trophy

David Pearce

The Sally Bennett Novice Trophy

Anne Pike

The W. Elmsall Perpetual Observation Hive Trophy

Anne Halpin & Adam Robbins

Somerset County Cups:

Jubilee Cup

Sid & Jenny Gammon

Miss M.D. Bindley Cup

Sid & Jenny Gammon

Terry Arnold Perpetual Challenge Trophy

Maggie North

The Duffin Challenge Trophy

Sid & Jenny Gammon

The Clifford Langford Award for Mead

Graham Welfare



Class 1 Two lb jars of light honey

1st Mike Dillon
2nd Bridget Knutson
3rd David Pearce

Class 2 Two lb jars of medium honey

1st Sid & Jenny Gammon
2nd David Pearce
3rd David Sanderson

Class 3 Two lb jars of dark honey

1st Maggie North

Class 4 Two lb jars of naturally crystallised honey

1st Bridget Knutson
2nd Graham Welfare

Class 5 Two lb jars of soft set honey

1st David Pearce
2nd -
3rd Graham Welfare

Class 6 Two lb jars of heather honey

1st -
2nd Graham Welfare

Class 7 Three lb jar of identical honey any colour

1st Suzy Perkins
2nd Sid & Jenny Gammon
3rd David Pearce

Class 8 One bottle of dry mead

1st -
2nd Graham Welfare

Class 9 Bottle of sweet mead

1st Suzy Perkins
2nd Graham Welfare
3rd Mary Adams

Class 11 One shallow comb of honey suitable for extracting

1st Mary Adams
2nd Bridget Knutson
3rd Suzy Perkins

Class 12 One cake of wax

1st Sid & Jenny Gammon

Class 13 Composite

1st -
2nd Sid & Jenny Gammon

Class 14 Artistic/ decorative exhibit relating to beekeeping

1st Sid & Jenny Gammon

Class 15 Artistic/ decorative relating to beekeeping

1st David Pearce
2nd Sid & Jenny Gammon

Class 16 Observation hive

1st Anne Halpin & Adam Robbins

Class 18 Novice one 1lb jar of honey

1st Mike Dillon

Class 19 Competitor's own choice - sugar craft with beekeeping theme

1st Maggie North

Class 20 Honey fruit cake

1st Maggie North
2nd Mary Adams
3rd J. Trood

Class 21 Cornish Fairings

1st Judy Crosher
2nd Mary Adams
3rd Maggie North

Class 22 Honey & banana tea bread

1st Suzy Perkins
2nd J Trood
3rd Maggie North

Class 23 Three photographs in a single mount

1st Sid & Jenny Gammon
2nd Judy Crosher
3rd Anne Halpin & Adam Robbins

Class 24 Single photograph

1st Suzy Perkins
2nd Anne Halpin & Adam Robbins

Class 26 One decorative wax object

1st Sid & Jenny Gammon



Class 27 Display of beeswax flowers

2nd Sid & Jenny Gammon

Class 27 Display of bees wax flowers

1st -
2nd Sid & Jenny Gammon

Class 28 Beeswax furniture polish

1st Bridget Knutson
2nd Anne Halpin & Adam Robbins
3rd Sid & Jenny Gammon

Class 29 Two moulded beeswax candles

1st Anne Pike
2nd Sid & Jenny Gammon
3rd David Sanderson

Class 30 Two dipped candles

1st Sid & Jenny Gammon

Class 31 Honeybee fudge

1st Judy Crosher

Taunton Honey Show

Class 32 Two lb jars of light honey

1st David Pearce
2nd Mike Dillon

Class 33 Two lb jars of medium honey

1st Graham Welfare
2nd Sid & Jenny Gammon
3rd David Pearce

Class 34 Two lb jars of dark honey

1st David Pearce
2nd. Maggie North

Class 35 Two lb jars of crystallised honey

1st Lyndsay Stone
2nd Graham Welfare

Class 36 Two lb jars of soft set honey

1st David Pearce
2nd Lyndsay Stone

Class 37 Five wax blocks

1st Sid & Jenny Gammon

Class 39 One standard container of cut comb

1st David Pearce

Class 40 One commercial block of wax

1st -
2nd Sid & Jenny Gammon
3rd Graham Welfare

Class 41 Three lb jars of honey labelled for sale

1st David Pearce
2nd Sid & Jenny Gammon
3rd Graham Welfare

Class 42 Novice lb jar of honey & 1 rolled candle

1st Anne Pike





Somerset Honey Show – latest

Your committee has stepped into the breach to secure the Somerset Honey Show for the next five years at least.

We've agreed to incorporate the Show in our Division's Honey Show, which is held annually as part of the two-day Taunton Flower Show.

This arrangement is for a period of five years, 2016 - 2021, and subject to review by us in the event we are no longer able to stage the event.

Doubt was cast over the future of the Somerset Show following a decision by SBKA to rotate the Show around the Divisions. Unfortunately only Somerton has been able to take on the Show, hosting it in 2013, and, at present, doesn't want to repeat the experience!

Previously we've hosted the County show for around 30 years and stepped in on a pro-tem basis this year.

In January your committee will review the honey shows with a view to refreshing the feature and, hopefully (!), reducing the considerable commitment required by a substantial team to stage and run the event

Honey harvest

What a year it's been!

According to member David Morris, who has been keeping records for 50 years, there have only been eight harvests this bad ie 20lbs and under per hive.

And fellow member, and beekeeping supplier, David Pearce says the syrup suppliers sold more in the summer months this year than the average autumn.

The Bee Farmers' Association described the picture as 'disastrous' in the Westcountry with harvests around 40 per cent down.

The BBKA survey, due to be published in a few weeks, will give us more detail about what's been going on in the South West but anecdotally I'm hearing of very low harvests indeed.

The Club's harvest totalled 260lbs from 12 colonies which works out at an average of just over 21lbs per colony.

Member Russell Loarridge said on Facebook that he had no honey from his bees in Wellington while, our Chairman Peter, whose bees are in an orchard near Norton Fitzwarren has also had a terrible year.

But here in North Curry the harvest hasn't been too bad while Therese Aldridge on Facebook said she was enjoying the best harvest for seven years.

But Bee Farmers are warning that honey will be in very short supply this year and prices will be expected to be going up.

Not only has the season been bad for honey, the weather hasn't done queen rearing any favours, either.



Editor Anne turns the kitchen into an extraction room and welcomes some family help!



Turkish Beekeeping

by our Chair, Peter Maben

It was to be a walking holiday in southern Turkey where it meets the Mediterranean. Plenty of coastal scenery and Lycian (pre-Roman) archaeological sites and so it proved to be but I was unaware of the honey producing capability of the Antalya area.

It seemed like every landowner had at least 50 hives and many 100-200 all set out in long uninterrupted lines (who said drifting was a problem?). None of the brood boxes had any supers on which puzzled me at first. See above picture. Nor did they bother with hive stands.

The forage at the time seemed to be wild thyme, sage, other wild flowers and pine trees. There was an audible buzz in the forest tree tops wherever we went.

There was no “commercial” production that could be seen but each owner seemed to extract the honey very simply at home. Translation determined that comb from the brood box was uncapped manually (ignoring the brood comb) and then spun to produce a rich dark honey. It wasn't considered necessary to use queen excluders and supers as the large number of hives produced enough for their needs. See photo to the right.

It tasted good with a strong flavour is all that I can say.



Waxy Corner

Making candles with rubber moulds

By Jenny Gammon

Rubber moulds are cheap and handled with care can last a long time. After using them, clean with warm soapy water, dry off and powder the inside. Stuff with kitchen paper and keep in dark place.

To make these candles you will need cocktail sticks, a wicking needle, wick, glycerine and a suitable stand to rest the mould onto to let the wax set. (example shown).

1. Turn the mould inside out and coat the inside with glycerine. Remove extra. Don't flood the mould. (Get glycerine from cake section of the supermarket)
2. Select the wick you require and cut slightly longer than the length of the mould. Put the cocktail stick through the end of the wick - the cocktail stick goes across the open end of the mould. Run the wick through the mould with a wicking needle and out through the hole at the top.
3. It is a good idea before pouring your wax that you place the mould into your freezer for a couple of minutes. This gives the wax a lovely shine when you take the candle from the mould.
4. Place the mould into an empty jar or stand which should be standing on a flat surface and safely away from being jarred. (See picture of a stand) If the candle can fall through the hole at the top use a piece of cardboard cut into a collar shape. Make sure you can get the candle out of the holder after the wax has set.
5. Pour your wax into the mould (see previous Waxy Corners to see clearing of wax – do not have the wax boiling)
6. Make sure that you have squeezed the mould slightly, especially if it has places where air can gather. Make sure that if there are any heads etc. you have turned the mould out correctly. You may end up with a headless "bird" candle.
7. When the wax has partially set, gently pull the wick through from the top end until the wick does not show on the bottom end of the candle. Allow the candle to set completely.
8. When you are ready to remove the candle from the mould, coat the outside of the mould with a little washing up liquid. This will allow the rubber to slide on itself. Remove the candle from the mould over a basin in case you have tried to remove the candle too early and it is not set.
9. Trim off the wick at the top of the candle to make it look good. If you have forgotten to pull, or could not pull, the wick through before it is set, you will need to trim off the wick on the bottom of the candle. Use an old type flat iron to smooth the wax.



Jenny Gammon - Taunton President,
2015 winner of seven trophies her wax and a tutor

Next time - Rolled candles

News In Brief

Subs for 2016

Now that the beekeeping year is drawing to a close, it's time to think about renewing your subscription for 2016.

Renewal forms will be sent out to all members in mid-November and I would be very grateful if you could renew as early as possible and certainly by the deadline of January 31st.

Your BDI certificate will be emailed to you once payment has been received – do check that you have been insured for the correct number of hives and keep the certificate in a safe place in case you should ever need to make a claim.

Why not consider taking out a BeeCraft subscription if you don't already have one – full of interesting articles and tips, it's a good way to keep in touch with what's going on in the beekeeping world, and is available in magazine or electronic format.

The subscription fee remains great value for money, especially as we have a packed programme for our Taunton members for the coming year, so I do hope you will want to continue supporting us through your membership.

Lyndsay Stone
Membership Secretary

The 2016 programme

Currently the programme for the coming year is being finalised and there promises to be plenty of new, interesting and entertaining events open to all members. Don't forget to renew your membership!

Did you know?

Edmund Hillary used to be a commercial beekeeper in New Zealand. Keeping over 1,200 hives with his brother, he spent his summers tending his bees, leaving the winters free to concentrate on his climbing ambitions. He eventually gave up after being invited to join the Everest expedition of 1953.

The Joint Himalayan Committee was later to compensate Hillary for loss of income from honey sales whilst he was engaged in the race to the summit, and, well, the rest is history!



Skep beekeeping talk at our AGM on Saturday, November 21

The AGM gives you the chance to find out what's been going on within the Division, choose the new committee and enjoy a social afternoon talking beekeeping.

This year's speaker is skep beekeeper Chris Park who will explain what's won him over to these straw constructions from fixed frame hives and how he manages varroa and honey-harvesting amongst other things.

We're an outward-facing, forward-thinking organisation which runs a tight ship in financial terms but is not afraid to take risks and think creatively when it's in the best interests of the club.

We're looking for more people to join the committee, including a treasurer to take over from Raymond Smart, who is standing down. Our thanks go to Raymond for all his hard work and support.

Our AGM takes place at 2pm at the apiary – tea and cakes will be served!

Research on the Somerset Levels finds that strawberries need bees with a varied diet

Strawberries need pollination by bees and it turns out that the berry will be bigger and better looking if it's pollinated by bees which have visited wild flowers on field margins first rather than those who have just visited crops.

These are the findings of Jane Memmott, Professor of Ecology at the University of Bristol, who conducted field trials at strawberry farms on the Somerset Levels.

"There are a couple of hundred species of insects which visit strawberries and all the flowers that grow in the hedgerows. What we were looking at was the movement of pollinators between the crop and the semi-natural vegetation. You do that by swabbing the bees for pollen. So you catch the bee on the strawberry plant but when you swab it for pollen you find clover pollen, wild geranium pollen and so on. So you know its history, where it's been."

She said because pollinators need a varied diet, the researchers looked at how the insects moved between commercial crops and way-side vegetation like verges and hedgerows.

"We found that when strawberries are grown close to adjacent fields with a diversity of wildflowers that the fruit was both bigger and more perfectly formed."

She added that a US study into blueberry pollination showed the profits went up even when taking in account the costs of planting and maintaining wildflowers.

"We need more of that sort of work with ecologists working with economists to show that it is a kind of a no brainer for the farmer to put the wildflowers in because then you have a win, win situation."

Wasps

This year could be renamed the 'year of the wasp'! They've killed three full colonies and one nuc in our club apiary. And some beekeepers report losing more hives to wasps this year than to any one single factor in the last decade.

Jobs for November

- continue to monitor Varroa drop and plan further treatment if needed eg. oxalic acid
- check that your hives remain secure against predators, weather and flooding
- check your hives for damage after strong winds and adverse weather
- check that hive entrances are clear of debris, dead bees, snow etc
- cut back grass and foliage under and around your hives to reduce dampness
- keep varroa floor inserts clear of debris that may allow wax moth to breed
- complete cleaning, repairing, sterilising and storing your equipment
- de-coke your smoker, clean your hive tool, wash your bee suit
- complete your colony records and your varroa treatment record card
- continue to evaluate your beekeeping season and make plans for the new one
- read or re-read those beekeeping books and maybe enrol on a course
- melt down and clean all those bits of wax and make candles, hand cream, soap

With thanks to Nottingham Beekeepers' Association who published this list first.

Help needed for the 2016 Royal Bath & West Show

Help is required for both the setting up of the Bee & Honey Marquee before the above dates and for stewarding during the week of the Show says organiser Ken Tredgett.

Setting up the marquee on Sunday, May 29

The Show runs from Wednesday, May 1 to May, 4 2016.

The rota for stewards is as follows: either all day, 9 to 6 or a half-day, 9 to 1.30pm or from 1 to 6pm.

Contact Ken at tredg@talktalk.net or call on **01373 464736**

Shopping list

As we start to build up funds following the investment in the new building, we're drawing up a shopping list of improvements to the apiary and buildings. In no particular order:

- Hearing loop
- Fully accessible paths and landscaping in the apiary
- Tree condition survey
- Car park lighting
- Coat racks/hooks
- New lawnmower
- Display materials and marketing materials
- Extracting equipment



For Sale!

Used National hives for sale (no bees)

consisting of:

Varroa Floor

Cedar brood box

Zinc queen excluder

Crown board

Cedar super

Miller feeder with floaters

Roof

Price: **£ 90.00** each o.n.o

Please ring **07788 407497**



Caption competition

Test your wit and come up with a caption for this picture of Chris Harries with his bees on the heather of Exmoor. Photo taken by Tony Buckland.

Send your entries to the editor by November 30.
anne@ashford-media.co.uk



Dates for the diary

Every Wednesday until November 18
7.30pm

Autumn improvers

Heatherton Teaching Apiary
These sessions are available to everyone

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14
2pm

OUR AGM

Speaker: Chris Park talking about skep
beekeeping
Heatherton Teaching Apiary

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12
2pm

LATE VARROA TREATMENT

Heatherton Teaching Apiary

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 2016
1pm

ANNUAL LUNCH

Venue to be confirmed

Saturday, February 20, 2016
9am – 5pm

SBKA Lecture Day

The Kings of Wessex Academy
Station Road, Cheddar BS27 3AQ
Theme research, pests & diseases
Speakers: Dr Jamie Ellis,
Prof Stephen Martin & John
Whitaker Tickets available from
our secretary Barbara Drakeford
tauntonsecretary@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

Saturday, March 12, 2016
2pm

Somerset Beekeepers' AGM

Orchardleigh Golf Club (BA11 2PB) on the A362
Frome - Radstock

Speaker: pollen expert Dr Michael Keith-Lucas

Lunch will be a two-course carvery and coffee at a
cost of £11.00; afternoon tea and biscuits will cost
£1.50, payable at the time.

Bookings for lunch together with your
cheque, made payable to Somerset
Beekeepers' Association, should be sent no later
than March 5 to:

Ken Tredgett
26 Gould's Ground
Frome BA11 3DW





**Beekeeping veil and suit repairs:
Ring Jenny on 07788407497
or 01823 270465**

***If you want to buy or sell
beekeeping equipment, you can
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classified ads for Members and
their families.***

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**Email your advert to:
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Remember caveat emptor – it's your responsibility to check out the goods/buyer! Plus, clean any beekeeping equipment thoroughly if you're selling or buying to prevent the spread of disease.