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Summer  
2018

# tauntontb Buzz

the newsletter of Taunton & District Beekeepers



Cover photo courtesy of  
Somerset Beekeepers'  
Association



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we're up to by following us on  
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Check out our Facebook page  
**@TauntonDistrictBeekeepers** for  
snippets of news from the apiary,  
events and beekeeping chat.

## Introduction

The swarming season is well underway and I expect like many of you I've picked up several swarms and had to undertake emergency swarm control measures for a number of my colonies. There are many methods of swarm control but the article from Buckfast Abbey beekeeper Claire Densley is a pretty simple one – as long as you can find the queen!

Rosemary Burgess, in *Life in the Apiary*, talks about the necessity to inspect for disease. Unfortunately more incidences of EFB (European Foulbrood) are being reported here in Somerset this season and you may remember that last year we had more than any other county in the country. Rosemary urges us all to be familiar with the symptoms, carry out disease-only inspections, and be ready to call a bee inspector if this notifiable disease is identified/suspected.

This season, when inspecting the bees as well as working in the garden, I make a conscious effort to check for Asian hornets. If one can turn up on a cabbage in Lincolnshire, I guess they could turn up almost anywhere. An article about Somerset's Asian hornets' policy explains that we must all be able to accurately identify this significant threat to our bees and wildlife.

These are just some of the responsibilities that come with being a beekeeper but there are also very many pleasures, too (fortunately!). Uncapping an early comb of spring honey and making a thunder and lightning cream tea (clotted cream and honey) was just one of them. Please let us know your stories – good or bad – this is your newsletter, be part of it!

**Anne Pike**, editor  
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## Report from the Chair

For this edition of Buzz I thought I would share with you some news from your committee.

Our major income is from your subscriptions together with sellers fees at the annual auction at Ruishton and honey/produce sales at Vivary Park during the Taunton Flower Show in the summer. Certain members giving talks kindly donate their fees to the division for which we thank them.

Our major expenditure is on insurances, talks by external speakers, together with consumables and equipment for the teaching apiary.

After all this, our treasurer has reported a reasonably healthy bank balance at the moment.

However, having invested a great deal of money in our facilities at Heatherton Park in recent years and conscious of the need to maintain financial security, we feel we must be prudent and consider a “sinking fund” to safeguard our assets. To this end we are looking into the best and safest way of investing some monies, hence ensuring the division’s long term future. We will report back when we are further advanced in our decision making.

**Peter Maben - Chair**

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### **Taunton Buzz – editorial committee**

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## News from our apiary

Heatherton Park Apiary, apart from being a teaching apiary, is also a volunteer sentinel apiary. This means we are linked to the National Bee Unit in Sand Hutton, York. Twice a year during the season we remove floor debris for testing during the periods March to June and July to October. The two samples are carefully removed from the hive floor or tray and packaged up and sent to the bee unit where they are tested for any diseases or irregularities. So far the report has only shown that we have varroa present in our hives. Twice a year we also carry out a thorough inspection of the hives for any exotic pests. This involves slowly working through the hives, avoiding any vibration, as this can cause any pests to hide. All walls and frames are checked carefully paying particular attention to the corners. Because the

apiary is quite shaded, we use a torch as an aid to look into the dark areas of the hives. As with all beekeepers, we are advised to be on the lookout for the Asian hornet to help stop them getting established in this country.

**Andrew Perry**, Apiary Manager

## Youngsters love bees!

Jenny Gammon and Lesley Garner visited West Buckland School to talk about beekeeping. The youngsters clearly loved the visit – and the honey – and sent 21 thank you letters!



## Taunton Honey Show incorporating the County Honey Show

We organise and run both honey shows as part of Taunton Flower Show on Friday and Saturday, August 3 & 4 respectively.

Although last year was rotten for many of us, we hope there will be an improving picture this season and you will have plenty of honey and other products from the hive to enter the Show come August.

Take a look at the schedule and see what you can enter.

There are trophies, cups, prize cards and prize money at stake!

If you spend £10 or more on entries (you can combine honey show entries with other classes), the flower show will offer you a free one-day ticket.

The honey show schedule and TFS schedule are available to download from the SBKA website.

<https://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk/>





## Asian hornets - recognition and reporting

As the threat of Asian hornets is ever present, I thought it may be useful to share the County's Asian hornet policy drawn up by education officer Richard Bache which focuses on identification and reporting. Advice from our regional bee inspector, and Taunton member, Simon Jones is that this is the most useful course of action to take at present.

Anyone who visits France, Spain, Portugal, Majorca and the Channel Islands should be on the lookout for the hornets which have become prevalent in many parts. The photo was taken by Stuart Gould when on holiday in Brittany earlier this year.

### Asian Hornet Policy

#### Background

The Yellow-legged or Asian Hornet (*Vespa velutina*) is a significant threat to honeybees in the British Isles and experience on the continent and through early outbreaks have told us that early recognition is key to eradication. More people have heard of the Asian hornet than can reliably identify it and almost all reported sightings in the UK have been false reports. The Non-Native Species Secretariat therefore requires good evidence before they can commit resources. This evidence typically takes the form of a good photograph or an insect specimen. This species of hornet is an agile flier and getting this evidence may be difficult.

Continued overleaf >

# Asian hornets (cont.)

## Recognition and reporting

Members should be encouraged to use the Asian Hornet Watch application produced by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology:

**iPhone:** <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/asian-hornet-watch/id1161238813>

**Android:** <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.ac.ceh.hornets>

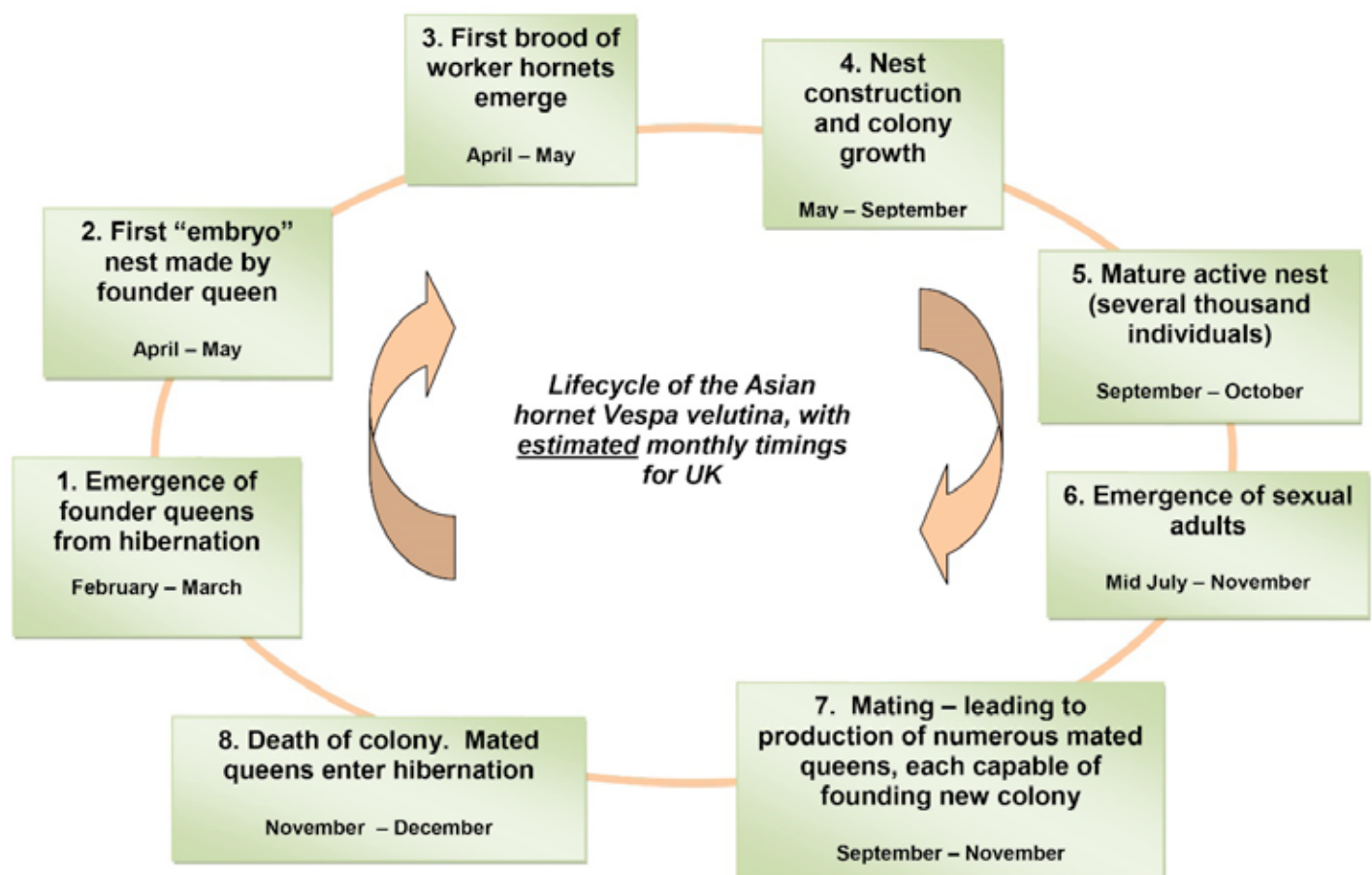
Alternatively the online form can be used [http://www.brc.ac.uk/risc/alert.php?species=asian\\_hornet](http://www.brc.ac.uk/risc/alert.php?species=asian_hornet) or photos and location details can be emailed to [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk)

Sightings should be reported as soon as possible.

## Action teams

Where resources allow, divisions may form Asian Hornet Action Teams (AHAT). In such instances, contact details should be made clear to local members and it is recommended that they be in a position to offer assistance to all local beekeepers when requested. The AHAT members should be able to work with beekeepers, their neighbours and the bee inspectorate to accurately and swiftly identify hornets and identify the location of their nest and ensure that positive identifications are appropriately reported and documented. AHAT members should be able to offer their time and be a reliable and accurate resource for the identification of hornets. It is recommended that AHAT members work in pairs.

AHATs may benefit from entomological nets and pots, suitable photographic equipment, badminton racquets (to knock down airborne hornets, for identification) mobile phones and suitable mapping and documentation equipment.





# Beekeeping and Culture of Morocco trip

One of our members, Lynne Ingram, is arranging a week long holiday, exploring not only Moroccan culture, but getting to know aspects of Moroccan beekeeping. Set in the Souss Valley between the Atlas and Anti Atlas mountains, the holiday offers delicious food, a fascinating culture, and stunning landscapes.

Based initially in Taroudant, you will visit local beekeepers, and visit the world's largest traditionally-built communal apiary at Inzerki. We then head off through the Anti Atlas Mountains to Skoura Oasis where

the Yellow Saharan Bee project began. We will stop at Talouine, the saffron capital of Morocco, en route, and may also have time to visit Ait Benhaddou, a remarkable fortified settlement & World Heritage Site.

Staying at Sawadi eco-lodge you will have time to relax and explore the area around Sawadi. Returning to Taroudant, we will stop at Tazenakt, a carpet making centre en route. You will then have another day to relax and explore Taroudant.

## Further details:

<http://cecu.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Beekeeping-Holiday-with-Lynne-Brochure-2019-final.pdf>





# Life in the Apiary

Well April was not exactly what we thought it would be, May heated up and now June is here and the weather has improved for our poor bees and, of course, us.

Now is the time the queen will be working hard laying eggs and the colony will be expanding. The workers are foraging on may blossom, dandelions, willow, sycamore, field maple, horse chestnut, oil seed rape and fruit blossom.

Inspections are underway and the hives checked for disease, stores, room and swarming preparations.

It is recommended that an inspection is carried out specifically for disease by checking for healthy brood, anything not quite right needs to be checked thoroughly. A good working knowledge of bee diseases is invaluable. There are many good basic books and information and encouragement from the local association to help new and not so new bee-keepers. If you suspect either of the foul broods your local bee inspector is there to help and advise.

Hygiene in the apiary is very important starting with a clean bee suit, washable gloves and footwear; plus a bucket containing a solution of washing soda and a dash of washing up liquid to be used to sterilise hive tools and gloves between each hive examination.

It is helpful if you have a container to put all the wax scrapings into. The wax accumulates quite quickly and when melted and filtered is another hive product of value with many uses.

General inspections are now done every seven days or ten if you have clipped queens. We are looking to check for a viable queen that is laying worker brood.

The bees need sufficient room to expand. Now is a good

time to remove old comb and replace with new. We have some combs on the outside of the brood that still have winter stores these can be removed providing the bees have enough remaining in case of bad weather. As a general rule if there are nine combs of bees the queen excluder and a super can be added.

In some areas there is a lack of pollen and this can affect the colony, so check the combs for this often around the outside cells around the brood, pollen substitute or supplements can be bought.

The other important thing is swarm prevention. With young queens and plenty of room a swarm is still a possibility so check for queen cells.

A plan of action is good practice, be prepared with extra equipment to house an artificial swarm. Do you want to make up another colony? Make up nucs or have a go at queen breeding? It pays to do some research.

Make sure you know what to do if your bees swarm with the priority being safety.

Finally, if you have a head like a sieve or not, it's still good practice to keep a record of hive visits and note at least the basics such as identity of hive, age and origin of queen, amount of brood, stores, disease seen, treatments or supplements, temperament and of course date of visits. The records give the progress and quality of each particular hive throughout the year.

For those tech savvy people a dedicated beekeeping record app is available on certain iPhone android phones.

Good luck with the season may your bees be healthy and bring in some surplus honey and hours of enjoyment.

**Rosemary Burgess**



# Waxy Corner



## Thinking of making wax flowers:

You will first need to make sheets of wax.

You will need a bowl for melting the wax / saucepan to put it in / wax / wax dyes/ a piece of marine ply approx. 9" x 5" with a buffed surface / a large basin of cold water / some kitchen roll / a ladle.

You will not need a large amount of wax. The wax must be clean and free from propolis etc.

Put the marine ply into the bowl of water to soak. The water will stop the wax sticking to the wood.

Using a shallow bowl standing in an old frying pan of water, melt the wax in the bowl. Remember to top up the water and not let the pan run dry. Put the colour in with the wax when still hot –powder can be purchased from Thornes or small blocks from Candle Makers supplies. Or use a sheet of foundation. Remember wax is yellow so you will need some blue as well as green when making wax for leaves.

Take the piece of ply from the water and dry on either side with the kitchen towel. Hold the plywood at an angle above the wax bowl. With the ladle pour the wax onto the plywood letting the excess run back into the bowl. You

should with practice get a sheet of wax. If you want more than one layer thickness, pour over what has already been done. Every layer will thicken the sheet. If you are making flowers one layer is usually enough-depends on what type of flower you have selected to make. Lilies possibly need two layers, roses one.

When you have poured on the required number of layers, dunk the ply into the cold water to set. This will take about half a minute. When you take the ply out of the water you will find that the wax has gone over the bottom edge. Peel the wax off the wood from this edge. If the wax sticks you have not left it in the water long enough.

If the colour is not to your liking-too dark or too light-put in either more wax to lighten or more colour to make darker or a little white wax. You can put the correct colour sheet on some kitchen towel to dry or if you feel it is not right-put it back in the pot to melt and use again.

White wax is specially made and you can buy this from Thornes. 1oz blocks or larger.

**Jenny Gammon**

**Making flowers continues next time!**



*A few years ago Clare Densley from Buckfast Abbey visited the club and talked about swarming. This is one of her methods – if you're a newbie, keep a copy handy in your apiary kit when taking swarm control measures. Any colonies with more than about six frames of brood will need inspecting weekly. At the first sign of occupied queen cups/cells, the colony should be divided using an artificial swarm method. Ed*

*I arrived at a garden apiary for a regular weekly inspection in early May and heard that familiar roar. Fortunately the swarm alighted on shrub and it was an easy job to catch the bees and re-home them elsewhere.*





## Quick version: Swarm control by taking a queen right nucleus hive.

1. Find the queen
2. Put the frame she is on with bees into a nucleus hive. Cut out any queen cells on this frame. Check by gently patting the bees out of the way with the back of your hand. Hold the frame over the nuc box while you are doing this and be careful of the queen. If she does fall off at this stage at least she will land in the nuc box below.
3. Brush or shake in some extra young bees. If you brush or shake in bees from comb which contains open brood with lots of young larvae and eggs you will be selecting young nurse bees. Do this from 2 frames of bees.
4. Select 1 or 2 more frames with mostly food in them and place them either side of the brood frame containing the queen.
5. Fill out the rest of the box with foundation or drawn comb.
6. Move to another spot in the apiary – this doesn't have to be far, even next door is fine. The young bees will stay with the queen and the open brood. If you can't find 2 frames of food – feed later that evening.
7. Select a nice queen cell in the parent colony – preferably open. Mark the frame it is on with a drawing pin or some other way of identifying the chosen cell – make sure there are no other queen cells on that frame by gently patting the bees out of the way.
8. Cut out all other queen cells on the other frames by shaking/brushing the bees from each frame. Don't miss any. If you have taken out 3 frames from the parent colony to make the nuc, you must replace them with frames of foundation or drawn comb.
9. After a week check again for queen cells in the parent colony. Cut them all out except your chosen one. Don't shake this frame because you could separate the royal larva from her food. Gently pat the bees out of the way so that you can see – or use a bee brush.
10. The next week it would be a good idea to see if your chosen queen cell has hatched in the parent colony (I only say this because something may have gone wrong with the cell particularly if you had to select a sealed one- sometimes these can be duds!) There is no need to go through all of the frames because the bees won't have made any extra cells as they didn't have eggs or young larvae to create them from.
11. Your virgin will hatch and hopefully mate. This will take time and she may not be laying eggs for 3 to 4 weeks. If there is no sign of eggs or a mated queen after 4 weeks you can check the colony's status by inserting a frame of eggs from a queen right colony. This is called a test comb. If it has all gone pear shaped the bees will raise emergency queen cells from this frame. If they have a queen – they won't.
12. If for any reason a new queen isn't raised and mated successfully, you can unite the nuc you made back to the parent colony – make sure you take out emergency queen cells from the test comb first



# Calendar dates

**Thursday June 14**

## **QUEEN REARING - ALTERNATIVE METHODS**

Time 7.30pm

Tutor: Marin Anastasov

Location: The Apiary

**Saturday July 14**

## **PRESIDENT'S DAY**

Time: 2.30pm

This is a very special day in our annual calendar held in honour of this year's President.

Enjoy a relaxed afternoon and a scrumptious tea!

Speaker: John Cossburn - past Bee Inspector & bee farmer

Location: The Apiary

**Saturday July 28**

## **TAUNTON FLOWER SHOW - GETTING READY!**

Time 1pm

Help needed!

Come to the Apiary

**August 3 & 4** Friday & Saturday

## **TAUNTON FLOWER SHOW**

Our "Bees and Honey" marquee is one of the most popular at Taunton Flower Show. We stage the Somerset Honey Show in addition to our own Honey Show. Help is required!

Vivary Park, Taunton

**Friday, August 3 & 4**

## **Taunton Flower Show**

### **KNOWLEDGE MARQUEE**

Time: 3.15 pm

Speaker: Dr Anne Halpin

"Pollinators in your garden"

How bees and other pollinators can improve your flowers and fruit crop

**Saturday, September 1**

Wiltshire BKA is sponsoring a

## **HONEY BEE HEALTH DAY**

Venue: Bromham Social Centre, New Road, Bromham, near Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 2 JB (ample parking)

All Taunton members are welcome to attend

The provisional programme includes talks by Nigel Semmence, the NBU's lead on non-native species, on Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle plus an opportunity to observe frames with AFB and EFB. Details will be posted on the Wiltshire BKA website shortly.

There will be no entrance fee but it would be helpful nearer the time if we can advise WBKA how many of us they might expect. Please email: [chairman@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:chairman@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk)

Those attending should bring a packed lunch. Tea, coffee and squash will be available for a small charge. Attached to the Centre is The Owl should anyone require something more substantial though only 45 minutes has been set aside for lunch.

**For more information about this Division's events, and those taking place in other SBKA Divisions, check out [www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk](http://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk)**



## Offers of out apiaries

### Taunton allotments

Bruce Chadwick, chairman of the local allotment association in Stoke Road, Taunton, is interested in siting some hives on our land wondered if one of your members might be interested. Contact Bruce on 07803 715372

### Orchard in Chelston

Russell Crisp from Heyward's Farmhouse, Chelston, Wellington is interested in renting a hive to help pollenate his fruit trees and hedgerows. If you can help contact Russell on 07774 159318

### Taunton Meeting House

The warden of the Quaker Meeting House has asked if anyone would like to put a hive in their garden. Interested? Contact Lynn Shorthouse: [lynn@TauntonMeetingHouse.co.uk](mailto:lynn@TauntonMeetingHouse.co.uk)

## Classified adverts

Two second hand National supers with frames, spacers and starter strips - £25

Tel: 07788 407497

## Classified adverts

If you want to buy or sell beekeeping equipment, you can do it here! We're offering free classified ads for Members and their families.

Email your advert to:  
[anne@ashford-media.co.uk](mailto:anne@ashford-media.co.uk)

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.