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Autumn
2018

taunt**on**buzz

the newsletter of Taunton & District Beekeepers



Introduction

Cover photo:

An Asian hornet on ivy in Brittany
taken by Stewart Gould

Buzz artwork:

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This issue is unashamedly Asian hornet focused. Lynne Ingram, is coordinating the county's Asian Hornet Action Team and also is leading our divisional response to the very real threat these non-native and highly invasive insects pose to our honeybees and the environment. Lynne spent several weeks this summer tracking Asian hornet nests on the front line in Jersey and she talks about her experience. Also, we have put together a real rogue's gallery of images to help us identify what some describe as a large, black wasp.

We take a look at the impact the hottest summer on record has had on our apiaries and honey harvest by dipping into the archives, while highly experienced and accomplished beekeeper Rosemary Burgess looks back at this year's trials and tribulations.

As a club we've been busy! Catch up on recent, as well as forthcoming events including the AGM at 2.30pm on Saturday, November 17 – your chance to find out more about what's been going on and to get involved. Hope to see you there!

Anne Pike, editor
anne@ashford-media.co.uk



Keep up to date with what we're up to by following us on Facebook

Check out our Facebook page **@TauntonDistrictBeekeepers** for snippets of news from the apiary, events and beekeeping chat.

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Report from the Chair

Following responses from some members we are organising what we describe as drop-in sessions this autumn. These are open to all and will be informal meetings where we can all discuss any problems we have experienced this season. I hope you will be able to attend to either raise questions or impart your knowledge - they should be a great opportunity for a chat with tea and biscuits supplied!

Your committee spent a considerable time at the last committee meeting discussing the Asian hornet threat. Recently we held a session about Asian hornets with Eleanor Burgess and Lynne Ingram at the apiary; if you missed out, see all the work Lynne Ingram has been doing in Jersey on the SBKA website. Lynne has been appointed to co-ordinate a county-wide Asian Hornet Action Team and is our Division lead. Please also set up DIY monitoring traps recommended by the National Bee Unit.

Peter Maben - Chair
mail@maben.plus.com



Membership update

There are a few changes afoot involving membership – one you will hopefully all know about is the creation of a members' only page on the SBKA website to which all those of you with an email address will have been invited to access. There is limited information to view at the moment, but the plan is to make agendas and minutes of Council meetings available in the future. Do have a browse through the rest of the website though if you're not familiar with it – there's a host of information from a blog about the hunt for the Asian hornet, forthcoming lectures to video guides for newer beekeepers, and of course, Taunton Division's own programme of events.

Somerset is also trialling a new system for managing membership data which should simplify the maintenance of membership records whilst ensuring GDPR compliance. It will also, we hope, give existing members the opportunity to renew their membership on line in future should they wish to. More details to follow.....!

Meanwhile, I will be contacting you all as usual at the end of November to remind you to renew your membership – the good news is that there is no change to subscription fees for 2019! Don't forget though that it will be extremely important to sign the data policy agreement at the bottom of the form- without this I will not be able to renew your membership.

Lyndsay Stone, Membership Secretary



Taunton Buzz – editorial committee

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



Taster Event

This year's Taster Event was a great success with 22 people taking part, including 10-year-old. The afternoon programme was full-on and included talks about the basics of beekeeping, clothing and equipment. Then it was out into the apiary. There people were able to have a good look in a hive, handle the frames of bees, given an explanation of what they were seeing and how a beekeeper manages their colonies.

Back inside there was a welcome cup of tea and cake which gave people a chance to try a range of honey, look at the different types of hives available and to ask many questions.

There were some very positive comments made on the evaluation sheets and an overwhelming majority said they would go on to do the Beginners Course next year.

Many thanks to the people who made this event so enjoyable and informative including Lynne Ingram, Barbara Drakeford, Peter Maben, Dave Parry, Andrew Perry, Mike Dillon, David Pearce, Vanessa Woodford and Maggie North.

Julie Husband, Taster Day co-ordinator



Getting Taunton buzzing!

The weekend of September 29 and 30 saw Taunton Beekeepers in a small marquee in the Norman Garden of the Castle Hotel in Taunton.

We were invited to have a stand at the Festival of Food and Drink, so we took our apiary honey to sell, information about Asian hornets, and Vanessa Woodford put some of her bees into the portable observation hive.

The Castle kindly provided us with a small marquee. Saturday provided us with superb weather, so we were kept busy all the time. The weather was a lot cooler on the Sunday, so we were less busy, but all enjoyed lots of visitors and bee-based conversations.

Those of us involved all felt it was a really worthwhile experience - and it took a lot less time to set up and take down than we're used to! And we sold some honey, too!

Barbara Drakeford, Secretary and event organiser



In pictures...



This looks like a witches' brew as joint apiary manager Dave Parry and a willing volunteer (!) take part in the annual apiary clean-up!

Bees where they aren't wanted!

This photo is a cautionary tale of what happens when the door to the extracting room is left open for several hours! It took days to clear the tens of thousands of bees which were attracted by stacks of honey-filled supers. *(Something similar happened to me when bees discovered my uncapping tray in the house – it looked like there was a swarm; the upside was that the cappings were beautifully cleaned! Ed)*

Club extraction day

Once again David Pearce and his wife Joan very kindly hosted our annual extraction day at their beautifully equipped premises in Bathealton. The total haul included 5 x 30 lb buckets of extracted honey, 3 x 30 lb buckets of tray honey and 90 pieces of cut comb. As you can see from the photo, it wasn't all hard work and there was time to relax in the sunny garden!



From the archives: a heatwave summer

This year was the joint hottest summer on record for the UK as a whole, and the hottest ever for England, according to the Met Office. England's average temperatures narrowly beat those seen in 1976.

The sizzling weather prompted our longest serving member, David Morris, to dig out his apiary records from 42 years ago:

"This year during the prolonged absence of rain there were various comparisons with the last time this happened in 1976. I thought it would be of interest to visit the notes I made in 1976 and they are reproduced below.

Mild winter.

Flow very good in the spring.

June heat wave lasted till September.

No honey brought in after June.

Honey is dark with high % of honeydew.

Heather yielded well – surprising.

Nuc queens slow to mate and high % failure rate.

Total honey yield was 600 lb from 19 hives – an average of 31.5 lbs.

The total take was far better than in 1975 when the total was 310 lbs from 18 hives. Is this following a pattern as 2017 was poor and 2018 looks to be much better?

Also, for the record, in 1976 I entered 10 honey shows across the West of England and got my name engraved onto seven cups!"

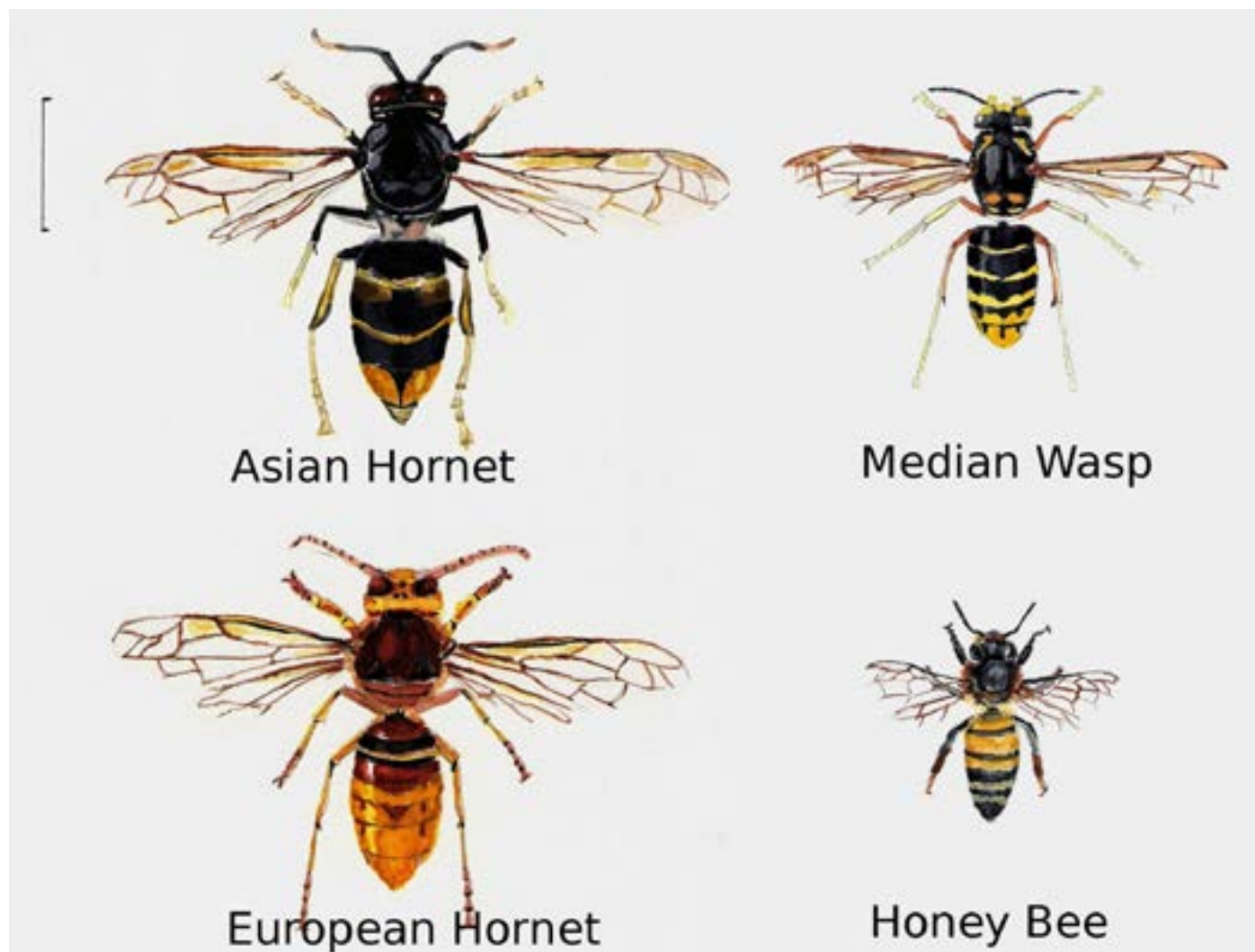
This season David's honey yield was 195 lbs from seven hives, averaging 28 lb. Anecdotally, some local beekeepers report that their colonies have been going like the clappers with harvests upwards of 200 lb per colony, while others have seen their bees struggle; there appears to be more dark honey around than for many years, but the lack of rain has impacted on heather honey yields.



Congratulations!

Our hearty congratulations to Maggie North who passed her General Husbandry assessment at the first time of asking – a fantastic achievement! We hope Maggie will share her preparations for this practical exam in our next issue.

Watching for Asian hornets



Having struggled to make a satisfactory hornet monitoring trap following the rather fiddly instructions from the National Bee Unit, I was also wondering how on earth I was going to be able to check my trap daily, given that I live a fair distance from my apiary. Fortunately, Eleanor Burgess and Lynne Ingram gave an informative update at Heatherton Park last Saturday on the hunt for the Asian Hornet, which included some useful tips:

1. A simpler alternative to the NBU's model is to simply place a yoghurt pot containing your bait and covered with a piece of thin gauze held in place with an elastic band inside the lower part of the bottle. There is no need to cut around the lower part of the bottle to create a sleeve effect, or to fit a mesh platform. Just follow the NBU's instructions for cutting off and attaching the top portion of the bottle, and making the cover, to complete your trap.
2. The Asian hornet may not only be found in the vicinity of your bee hives, but also flying along hedgerows in your garden. It is therefore worth hanging a monitoring trap in your garden too – and much easier to monitor it daily!
3. Watching the entrances to your hives for signs of Asian hornet activity can be very tiring and a little tedious, as Eleanor and her team have discovered in recent months! Beekeepers are being encouraged to do this especially as sightings of the Asian Hornet may become more frequent. If you do have time to spend an hour or so doing this, relieve the tedium by taking a Bee Identification guide and learn to spot the difference between a leaf-cutter and a carder bee! The Wildlife Watch website has some downloadable ID guides, or take a copy of *At The Hive Entrance* by H Storch to peruse!

Lyndsay Stone

Tracking Asian Hornets in Jersey

Lynne Ingram, Somerset Asian Hornet Action Team co-ordinator



Asian Hornets were first spotted in Jersey in 2016. In 2017, 11 nests were found, and the 'hornet hunters' were sure they had found all of them, but so far this year 46 nests have been found! Asian Hornets spread at about 100 km per year, so once they come to England, we will need to be extremely vigilant to stop the rapid expansion they have seen in Jersey.

I had arranged to go to Jersey to help and learn from Dr Pete Kennedy from Exeter University (who has developed the use of radio telemetry to track Asian hornets) when there was a request for help from the team hunting hornets on the island. The sheer number of sightings and nests to be found was proving overwhelming, so I managed to change my flight and go earlier than planned.

It was extremely busy in Jersey. Every day new reports of sightings would come in, and would need to be followed up, confirmed, and then the hornets tracked back to the nest. It was not always easy to find the nests, and we sometimes stood under trees where they were later found, without seeing them. Nests once found were photographed, and filmed, put on social media, and then destroyed by specially trained pest controllers. That was unless the nest was needed for analysis, or for research. In those cases, the nests were removed and destroyed by gas or freezing. We discovered, however, that Asian hornets are extremely resilient and new (tertiary) nests were sometimes started by the hornets after their original nest was destroyed.

Working with the hornets was fascinating and I learnt a huge amount about their life cycle and behaviour.

So much is unknown about them. When feeding, hornets are docile, but if their nest is disturbed they are extremely aggressive, and will attack continuously for some time. I had the opportunity to don a 'hornet suit', and view one of the nests close up, from a cherry picker. It was a thing of great beauty. As in the UK, nests were found high up in trees, in hedges, at ground level, and in buildings. The lower nests can present more of a risk to humans, as there is a higher chance of an accidental encounter with a nest, while hedge cutting, strimming or walking the dog.

At the time of writing there have been seven confirmed sightings and four nests destroyed in England. This time of year the nests can produce up to 350 new queens, which will hibernate over winter. Not all will survive, but perhaps 60 of those will do. This means that we all need to remain extremely vigilant, as just one missed nest could result in 60 more next year.

So keep monitoring your traps, and observe your apiaries. It is also worth watching your ivy, flowering plants and fallen fruit, where you may see Asian hornets preying on bees and other pollinators. And please talk to other non-beekeepers about Asian hornets.

If you do see an Asian Hornet, take a photo and report it:

on the Asian Hornet Watch app

or online at:

www.brc.ac.uk/risc/alert.php?species=asian_hornet

or email:

alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Somerset has set up an Asian Hornet Action Team to help beekeepers identify and get evidence of any Asian hornets, and to support the Bee Inspectors in their search for the nests.

If you think you have seen one, or need any help with identification, contact Lynne Ingram on 07846165877 or lynneci@hotmail.co.uk



Taunton and Somerset Honey Show 2018

by honey show coordinator
Dave Parry



This year's County and Taunton Honey Show attracted a high number of entries; the number was 15% up on 2017 so thanks everyone who submitted an entry. Entries from other divisions were also up and of high quality.

The Show is an important part of Taunton Flower Show and once again proved a big hit with the public. The footfall on Friday was noticeably less than usual; perhaps the hot weather kept people away. Members of Taunton Beekeepers were present on both days to meet the public and answer their questions; knowledge about bees and other pollinators never fails to impress!

Beautiful displays of honeys, wax and other products and an observation hive (on the second day) attracted plenty of attention in the marquee while an outdoor netted demonstration area let us show visitors how

we open the hive and examine the fascinating life within.

I would like to thank everyone who responded and helped in any way towards making this a successful Show. It was great to see both regular helpers and some new faces helping with all aspects of putting on a show like this.

A big thanks to the vehicle drivers, flower and plant providers and those who provided time and energy - the Show wouldn't happen without you all.

The full list of results is published in the autumn edition of Somerset Beekeepers' newsletter and on the website, but the cups and trophies deserve an extra shout-out:

The Blue Ribbon for the best exhibit in Show – Christine and Mark Gullick

Taunton – trophies, cups & awards:

The Taunton Perpetual Challenge Trophy

- Sid and Jenny Gammon

The Taunton Honey Show Perpetual Trophy

- David Pearce

The Priscott Perpetual Skep Plate - David Pearce

The Stoker Perpetual Trophy

- Sid and Jenny Gammon

The Pat Barter Trophy - Sid and Jenny Gammon

The Andy Coles Memorial Trophy for Mead

– jointly Graham Welfare & Mary Adams

The Tom Tucker Trophy for Cookery - Mary Adams

The Downes Perpetual Cup

– jointly Lyndsay Stone & Graham Welfare

The Gammon Perpetual Trophy (novice)

- Barbara & Mike Shaw

The Taunton Honey Show Plate - Maggie North

The Sally Bennet Trophy - David Pearce

The John Spiller Mascot - Anne Pike

Somerset County Cups:

Jubilee Cup - David Pearce

Miss M.D Bindley Cup - David Pearce

Terry Arnold Perpetual Challenge Trophy

- Mary Adams

The Duffin Challenge Trophy

– Christine & Mark Gullick

The Clifford Langford Award for Mead

- Graham Welfare & Mary Adams

Honey tasting results

- David Pearce's set honey was the clear winner





A Reflective of 2018

by Rosemary Burgess

What an interesting beekeeping year we have had.

Firstly the long, very hard winter followed by the glorious blossom-filled spring and the long and baking hot summer.

The bees were able to take advantage of the hawthorn, blackthorn and oil seed rape that arrived in abundance and the colonies built up rapidly. The spring honey produced was good flavoured and did not set in the comb as soon as your back was turned, a real joy to extract.

As the season progressed the bees continued to enjoy the warm weather; the tree blossoms were amazing, the wet winter providing ground water for the deep roots. The hot weather was not so good for us beekeepers making our inspections in what felt like mini sauna bee suits.

As the summer progressed the lack of rain became more of a problem as the nectar flow was being affected though in our area

our honey production was good.

This year our bees showed little interest in swarming but we had made up some nucs from the best colonies early in the season.

One interesting event late this year was seeing two queens laying eggs on the same frame two inches apart; a supersedure in harmony I have not seen before.

One of my favourite highlights of the year is the Taunton Flower Show, always a great showcase for the association. Some of the show entries were really exciting and worthy of the National Honey Show and congratulations to all those who exhibited and those people that make it all happen.

The season is rapidly coming to an end; varroa treatments and winter feeding have been carried out and clean-up operations of equipment are being undertaken in preparation for next year. It is good practice to keep equipment clean and ordered to save time and problems such as wax moth or rodent damage.

After final inspections for the year to check that stores are sufficient to keep them through the winter, it will soon be time to batten down the hatches - that is lids on properly and weighted down or strapped if exposed to strong winds, mouse guards and woodpecker protection if needed.

Finally, if you are out and about in October keep a look out on the ivy or other flowers or fallen fruit attractive to insects for the Asian hornet predating on them. If seen take a photo and notify altrnonnative@ceh.ac.uk or the National Bee Unit.

When all the chores are finished its time to sit back, get out the bee books and find out a bit more about our 50 million years in the making bees.



Watermelon

This year's Honey Show attracted exceptional artistic exhibits which were hugely creative and very skilfully executed. In future issues of Buzz we hope to bring you the low-down on Maggie North's first-prize winning wax honey pot (recommended for entry to the National Honey Show) and Jacob Trood's exploration of beekeeping in art and writing. To start us off, Jenny Gammon explains how to recreate her striking watermelon exhibit.

You will need beeswax sheets:

- 3 fuchsia
- 1 pink
- 1 medium coloured green
- 1 darker green
- 1 black sheet (*I poured black wax over a board and used the sheet to cut and make the seeds*)
- 3 lengths of 1" wick.

Cut two 1 ½" x 16 ½" green strips.

Cut all the remaining sheets except the black into Five 1 ½" x 16 ½" strips.

Use the fuchsia strips to make a basic rolled candle, omitting the wick. Wrap the pink strips around the fuchsia. Follow by wrapping the medium green strips and then the darker green. As you have to butt-join one strip of wax to the next, I found using pins with coloured heads useful in keeping wax from coming away as you roll it

Stand the roll on its face on waxed paper. Heat a kitchen knife blade in hot water and cut directly across the middle of the roll. The hot blade will slightly melt the wax on each side helping to hold it together. Heat the knife again and cut one of the halves in quarters. I found that to keep the sheets together I had to use some wax glue (obtained from Thornes). Trim the wick to ¾" above the candle and insert the length into a hole with a skewer. Cut the seed pattern and press evenly spaced onto the fuchsia wax.

Managing a brood and half hive

by Jenny Gammon

This is a brood box with a super on top being used for the Queen to lay in, thereby increasing the brood capacity.

On top of the 1½ brood is the Queen excluder and it follows that you put the supers and crown board on top in a conventional manner.

When checking the brood you need to go through the brood box as well as the brood super to find Queen cells etc. Invariably these would

be on the lower edge of the super brood frames.

When you take off the brood super box – make sure you put it onto a suitable surface e.g. inverted roof – to ensure the safety of the Queen, should she be within.

If you want to take the colony back to a single brood:

Shake each of the brood super frames into the brood box thus making sure that the Queen is in the brood box. Put the Queen

excluder on top of the brood box and put the brood super above in the conventional manner. You will need to check the hive each week – if there was any drone brood in that brood super the drones will not be able to get through the Queen excluder and will block it up and die. Make sure they are released fairly regularly – for at least 24 days.

You must leave time for all the brood in the brood super to hatch.

Wanted! New Taunton Chairman

Peter Maben is standing down as Chairman at the AGM in November and we need someone to take his place! Taunton benefits from a large and supportive committee, an excellent club house and apiary and a well-established programme of events. If you are interested in getting more involved in your club, get in touch with Peter to discuss what's involved. mail@maben.plus.com

Calendar dates

Wednesday, October 10 Beekeepers' Question Time

This informal session is your chance to come and ask about the season gone by, what should we be doing with our hives now, the Asian Hornet situation etc – in fact anything you want to know.
Time: 7.30pm
Everyone welcome!
Location: The Apiary

Saturday October 13 The Flow Hive experience

Speakers: Lynne Ingram & Anne Pike
Time: 2.30pm
Everyone welcome!
Location: The Apiary

Wednesday October 24 'More than Just Honey'

A new venture for us – a DVD night! Tea & biscuits will be served in the interval! This DVD comes highly recommended, so do come along and see what you think.
Time: 7.30pm
Everyone welcome!
Location: The Apiary

Wednesday November 7 Getting your bees through the winter

This is the last general Open Forum session of the autumn. Please come and have a get together with your fellow beekeepers.
Time: 7.30pm
Everyone welcome!
Location: The Apiary

Wednesday November 17 Our AGM! Human removal of bee colonies from buildings

Speaker: Peter Higgs of Beegone
Honey Bee Removal
Time: 2.30pm
Everyone welcome!
Location: The Apiary

Saturday, January 2019 – date tbc Late varroa treatment

Time: 2.30pm
Everyone welcome!
Location: The Apiary



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Call Jenny on **01823 270465** or **07788407497**



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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

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.