

Somerset Bee-keepers' Association NEWSLETTER



Photo from Guardian online

EU vote on neonicotinoids

The votes are cast and it seems that the UK is in a small minority opposing the proposed ban on neonicotinoids. Confirmation is still needed, but that now seems like a foregone conclusion, with the ban taking effect from July of this year and for a trial period of two years.

The viewpoint of the visiting American Professor Maryann Frazier, is expressed in another part of the newsletter, and her views are strong. Our own members, who express an opinion, are divided into four distinct camps. There are those who are adamant that they



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should be banned – no questions, just ban them, until such time as they are proven to be safe. There are those who are against the ban, using the same argument as the government and the BBKA, that the jury is still out and whereas they agree that that neonicotinoids kill bees, they hold to the theory that how many has not been ascertained and only the third category believe that the toxicity has been proven, but would only want them withdrawn when a suitable, and less harmful, replacement is found. There is, they claim, the possibility that a more harmful solution could be introduced following the ban. Owen Patterson – Environment Minister and a proponent of this theory said that although a large amount of people signed petitions and the like, they are largely emotive and ill informed, which begs the question - how many of the people who voted for him at the last election. did so without emotion and in full possession of the facts. There is always a fourth camp, who are prepared to let everybody else sort the problem out.

The BBKA is holding to the same policy as the British Government and want to wait for the outcome of the Healthy Bee Programme. It seems that some hold strong views on the principles and the politics of this issue. A spokesman for Fera (Food & Environment Research Agency), which is a government body, said that If neonicotinoids are banned, they may be replaced by something far more lethal to bees. That is indeed a great danger. Neonicotinoids are known to do damage pollinators and a replacement may do even more damage, unless of course, the government prevent that from happening. ❖

editor

New Editor

This is my first issue as editor and I take over the baton from Dr Richard Bache who goes to pastures new, as County Secretary. Richard has done a sterling job over the last eight years and I will do my best to maintain the standard, although the style may be slightly different.

I have now put my head squarely on the block, so let me introduce myself. I am vice-chair of Somerton & District Division and was until recently Somerset Yearbook editor. This qualifies me for absolutely nothing, so I was asked to edit the newsletter.

Stewart Gould



Special Lecture – Hazlegrove School

This year's special lecture was given by Maryann Frazier of Penn State University and there was an extremely good turnout, with members coming from most divisions to listen to a professor of etymology. Her focus was on neonicotinoids, a subject presently close to the hearts of most beekeepers. Her views were forthright and based on years of research in the American beekeeping world. Like last year's speaker, Maryann Frazier went into minute detail of her research and findings, which went over the heads of many, but there were salient points that stuck out and shocked many.

We are all aware of the problems being faced by beekeepers and bees in the USA, but the findings could be related to British beekeeping also. Specific pesticides are specific pesticides on either side of the Atlantic, but one of the prime points made was that neonicotinoids alone are not the entire problem. Although they will kill bees in very small doses and they have an extended half life, the real problem is that mixed with herbicides and fungicides their toxicity is embellished and this happens as a matter of course in the areas foraged by bees. Fruit farmers spray fungicides and herbicides in these areas, in the belief that no harm is being done to the

that is not the case. Furthermore, there are ingredients in the product as supplied, called adjuvants and these further enhance the power of the insecticide, says Dr. Frazier. Ingredients stated as being inactive, do not have to be tested and it is her opinion that they are simply not inactive, and serve to increase the toxicity further. These drug cocktails are responsible for shortening the lives of bees and their foraging capabilities while they are alive. In some cases they reduce the life of a worker bee to two days.

In tests carried out at Penn State University, by Dr Frazier and her team there were, on average, six herbicide, fungicide and pesticide contaminants in pollen samples, whether they were collected from backyard beekeepers or large scale bee farmers. These contaminants are absorbed into the beeswax comb and survive melting down for re-use. It is her conclusion that cut comb honey should not be sold in the USA, because of the scale of these contaminants.

In charts shown during her powerpoint presentation, I noticed that one of the contaminants in beeswax was a substance called DDD. This is a metabolite of DDT, a substance which was banned in the USA in 1972, yet its metabolites are still found in beeswax forty years later. It is the belief of Dr. Frazier that neonicotinoids should be banned universally and that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the USA is not fulfilling its duties❖.

editor

Somerset Beekeepers meet Minister of Agriculture

Agriculture Minister David Heath met with a delegation from Somerset beekeepers' Association on Friday (March 8th). The three-strong delegation headed by Somerset Beekeepers' Association President Ken Edwards, Vice President David Morris and Pat Lehain, called on the Minister to fully staff its vital Bee Inspection Service. "The bee inspectors are essential in helping beekeepers to control the highly contagious and fatal diseases which are hitting local colonies hard," said David Morris. "At present we have only one part-time inspector rather than a full complement of three as in previous years to cover the whole county which is woefully



inadequate given the size of the area, number of apiaries and likely level of disease.” In recent years there has been an increase in the incidence of deadly European Foul Brood disease which was found in 130 colonies in 2012, the highest level in the country. David Morris added: “That happened when we had three seasonal bee inspectors who were fully stretched. Failure to staff the service adequately will undoubtedly increase the incidence of disease problems across the county.” The delegation went on to explain that whilst the Government is funding several beekeeping organisations to run training programmes, levels of knowledge about disease amongst local beekeepers is inadequate to safeguard the health of honeybee colonies.

“We believe it makes sense to support a tried and tested route and allow local associations to work with their members alongside the support of the Bee Inspectors who, being employed by the National Bee Unit that is part of DEFRA, can also promote the services and the excellent free guidance notes they produce to the benefit of all bee keepers”. Somerset Beekeepers’ have an outstanding record of encouraging its more than 500 members to attend training and lectures and to gain qualifications from their local branches.

After the meeting, that lasted over 45 minutes, David Morris on behalf of the delegation said that meeting David Heath had been ‘very worthwhile’. David Morris added: “The Minister listened carefully to the points we made on behalf of the beekeepers in Somerset and indicated he was sympathetic to case we were presenting. He promised to bring our concerns to the attention of the Minister directly responsible for beekeeping, namely Lord de Mauley.”

Alison Pike - Publicity Officer

Bee Rustlers *(email to County Secretary)*

Please can you send a message to secretaries to forward to warn members. I have had a hive of bees stolen in the last 48 hours from my home apiary. They were behind locked gates. It must have been a beekeeper. I hope no one else has to lose bees in this way.

Thanks
Bridget Schneiders
Ilminster

PTO

Dear Secretary

Thanks for circulating my previous email. Here is the next part of the story. Half an hour ago I was lamenting the loss of my hive - and hoping the thief was stung - when a Land Rover pulled up in my drive. A man from Chard had my bees in the back. He is a new beekeeper who lost his bees, and local people knew he wanted more. He was offered a hive this morning for £20 which had still had wet paint on it. He realised they were stolen, challenged the 2 young men (20 years old or so) and they ran off. They said they had bought them from a bloke in Donyatt (my village). Iain drove around Donyatt looking for bees, saw mine from the lane and knocked on the door. AMAZING!!!

Thanks very much to those of you who emailed or called to commiserate.

Thanks especially to Iain. I will make sure he gets some bees when the season warms up.

Beekeepers are generally a great bunch of people and some thieves are pretty stupid.

However - they were stolen by someone who thought they could sell them on and I will be much more wary in future. The warning is still relevant, despite the happy ending.

Bridget

Somerset Beekeepers AGM

The AGM was held this year at the Crossways Inn, North Wootton and the principal guest was Michael Eavis (a local farmer). There are changes to the council and starting from the top, Ken Edwards has reached the end of his term as President and has been superseded by Caroline Buter from Wedmore & Cheddar Division (*see photo on next page*). Jackie Mosedale remains as chair and the new vice chair is Jonathan Friend of Wedmore & Cheddar. County secretary is Dr Richard Bache of Somerton Division, the new treasurer is Steve Horne, also from Somerton Division. As Richard Bache has become secretary, Stewart Gould of Somerton Division will take over the county newsletter and he hands the county year-book to Jill Purdie of Yeovil Division.

Most other positions have remained unchanged, but there is a serious void, in that we desperately need an Education officer. If you can help in any way, please contact any member of the council, or your divisional committee, who will point you in the right direction.

The main speaker and star attraction was Margaret Couvillon, who is a postdoctoral researcher in the laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects (LASI) at the University of Sussex. She is interested in the behavioural and evolutionary biology of social insects, where she works with Professor Francis Ratnieks. At present, her team are studying the intricacies of the Waggle Dance and she has discovered that there is a high degree of inaccuracy in the dance itself, particularly when the bees are dancing across the frame, rather than up or down, and the reason is simple. Gravity comes into play and the bees find it hard to follow a straight horizontal line. The talk was peppered with a batch of salient points related to the efficiency of the dance and foraging success❖.

West Country Honey Farms Award 2013



Ken Edwards pictured with new President of Somerset BKA Caroline Butter

Kenneth Edwards, has been a member of Somerset Beekeepers' Association since the 1970s, presently through the Quantock Division. He came into prominence during the 1980s when he was chairman of this association and is now our retiring president. He was awarded the Rose Bowl previously in 2003 and thus, under the rules pertaining to this award is eligible to receive it again. In the last ten years, the work Ken has done in advancing the status of this association puts him streets ahead of any other member, making the task of the judging panel a very easy one.

Seven years ago, conscious of the vacuum created in the county following the demise of the Bridgwater and District Division, Ken made a sound case for the establishment of a new division called the Quantock Division. Ken went ahead with this and his initiative, foresight, drive and leadership qualities has been the leading light in building up this division which is one of the largest, most active and go-ahead divisions in the association. This spring sees the opening of the new Quantock Divisional bee centre and educational apiary from which there will be benefits extending beyond the division.

The association and its twelve divisions are all in a sound financial state owing to Ken's initiative and implementation of the funding administered through Cannington College and the former Learning Skills Council. This means that every member has benefited in being able to participate in educational functions and events that could not otherwise have been afforded.

Through Ken's knowledge of the structure of beekeeping education and examinations he has influenced the type of courses being run in our county. Only recently Ken organised an extremely successful beekeeping microscopy course at Brymore School which was attended by over thirty beekeepers from this county and beyond. He is responsible for raising SBKA's standing and recognition beyond our borders.

During his presidency Ken has attended numerous functions at county and divisional level and fulfilled the duties of his office in a conscientious manner, quietly but with great energy and enthusiasm. The benefits he has acquired for the association are immeasurable.

As Ken, in accordance with our rules, retires as President at the forthcoming annual general meeting, and as the new Quantock beekeeping centre will shortly be formally opened, this is the ideal year in which to recognise what he has achieved on behalf of the beekeepers of this Association ❖.

Simon Jones Regional Bee Inspector



After seven years of the pressures of being Regional Bee Inspector, Adam Vevers has decided to go for an easier life and will no longer grace us with his presence in Somerset. He has been superseded by the extremely capable and experienced Simon Jones, who is already known to many of us. The announcement was made by Andy Wattan, who is the National Bee Inspector with Fera, based at Sand Hutton in Yorkshire. The somewhat official statement reads as follows:-

The National Bee Unit is pleased to announce that following interviews and testing of candidates at Sand Hutton, Mr Simon Jones has been appointed as Regional Bee Inspector (RBI) for the National Bee Unit's South

Western England Region which covers the counties of Avon, Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and the Isles of Scilly.

Simon will replace Adam Vevers who has decided to take partial retirement although he will continue to work as a Seasonal Bee Inspector in Devon. Adam has been the Regional Bee Inspector for South Western England Region since 2006.

Simon's handover and training with Andy Wattam - National Bee Inspector will commence on the 1st March 2013 with him taking over the management of the Region and its team of Seasonal Bee Inspectors from the 1st April 2013.

Andy Wattan - National Bee Inspector
Food & Environment Research Agency

Head of Bee Health Field Inspection Service for England & Wales.

Hive Security

Theft of hives and their valuable content is on the increase, as highlighted on page 5. What steps can we take to protect our colonies and their homes?

These are just some ideas which have been suggested that can easily be applied by almost any Beekeeper, novice or otherwise.

- Brand the brood box with your postcode
- Using permanent marker, postcode the frames
- Anchor the floor to the ground
- Microchip your hive
- Screen the apiary from public view
- Vary the times you visit the apiary
- A motion sensor camera in your Apiary (not cheap)
- Don't tell everyone where you keep your bees



From Ebees - courtesy of Taunton BKA

The Basic Assessment

If you have been keeping bees for a full beekeeping season, you may like to take the Basic Assessment. This is assurance that you have picked up the necessary information at the Introductory Courses and is the first of many qualification opportunities from BBKA. You can see it as a cycling proficiency test. It is conducted on an informal basis and the examiner is there to help, not hinder. As a guide, the general finding is that the weakest area for most candidates, is knowledge of disease and pests. The pass rate is high, with the majority succeeding. The fee for the Basic, as it is known is £15.00. Should you pass, you will receive a certificate, a Somerset BKA badge for your bee suit and the BBKA will return your £15.00.

The Basic exam lasts up to an hour and consists of practical beekeeping and oral questioning. It can be conducted in the candidate's own apiary, or elsewhere by mutual agreement, sometime between April and July. Please apply to the examinations officer, Bridget Knutson by email at bridget_knutson@yahoo.co.uk You should apply at least a month before you wish to take the examination and leave enough time, in the beekeeping season, to do so.

Quantock Beekeepers' New Apiary



Things have moved on a bit since this photograph was taken back in March. It was towards the end of the particularly long and wet winter.

Quantock Beekeepers are opening their new Divisional Apiary and Barn in Durleigh TA5 2NU (just outside Bridgwater) on 18th May 2013 at 12.00 and would like to thank Somerset Beekeepers Association for the financial support offered to help this venture get underway.

In recognition of this support we have invited the SBKA Committee and 2 representatives from each division as official guests to the opening ceremony and the Pig Roast.

Other SBKA members from across the Divisions are welcome to attend and see our new premises and have free hot drinks but in order to limit our costs anyone apart from QBKA members without a special guest invitation will need to provide their own lunch.

A map of the site is on page 51 of the SBKA Yearbook..

Spring Auction

The weather probably didn't help and the previous season certainly didn't, but the turnout for the Spring Auction on March 24th, at Ruishton was well down on previous years, as was the amount of equipment for sale. That said, the quality of goods was as high as usual and many new beekeepers went away with a smile on their face and a bargain in the back of the car. Still, nobody seemed to want the second hand computer keyboard. Chris Harries tried his best and an extremely exuberant young lady, at the front of the room, even declared that she would have one item before the bidding started. Chris therefore started the bidding at £200, but relented in the end.



Dates for your Diary



MAY

5th	Somerton	Apiary Visit - Abbey House, Glastonbury - David Charles
11th	Central	Queen Rearing - Phil Stevens - Shepton Mallet
11th	Somerton	Practical 2 - Swarm Control - Lytes Cary & Chilton Polden
?	Exmoor	Swarm Control - Rodhuish
11th	Exmoor	Introduction to Bbeekeeping Weekend
11th	South West	Apiary Visit
11th	Taunton	Beginners Practical 2
12th	Frome	Apiary Meeting
12th	Burnham	Apiary Meeting - Mark Beekeepers
15th	Taunton	Queen Rearing Talk - Simon Jones
17th	Exmoor	Workshop - 7.00pm - WSCC - Products of the Hive
18th	Taunton	Queen Rearing & Grafting - Simon Jones
18th	Mendip	Setting up a 2 Queen System - Dave Maslen
18th	Quantock	Opening of New Apiary
18th	South East	Maintaining Colonies in a Productive State - David Charles
18th	Yeovil	Swarming and Lay - Roger Patterson
19th	Wedmore & Cheddar	Making Nucs. AMH
25-27th	Burnham	Exhibition Stand - Secret World
25th	Quantock	Practical 4 - Nucleus Making & Queen Rearing
27th	Taunton	Beginners Continuation 3 - 7.00pm
28th	Taunton	Harvest Queen Cells, Making up Nucs.
29 - 1 Jun		150th Royal Bath & West Show - Honey Tent

JUNE

1st	Taunton	Beginners Practical 3 - Heatherton Park - 2.30pm
8th	Burnham	Apiary Meeting - Ray Reddish, Christine & Mark Gullick
8th	Central	General Inspection - Hilary Perkins, Downside

8th	Exmoor	Visit to Peter Little's Queen Rearing Apiary
8th	Somerton	Practical 3 - The June Gap
8th	South West	Apiary Visit
9th	Frome	Apiary Visit
15th	Somerton	Apiary Visit - 2.00pm - School House, Bere - Simon Jones - Managing Disease
15th	Yeovil	At the Hive Entrance - Bernard Diaper
15th	Quantock	Practical 5 - Main Crop prep. - New Apiary
15th	South East	Apiary Visit - Bee Nutrition - Richard Bache
22nd	Exmoor	Beekeeping Taster Weekend
23rd	Wedmore & Cheddar	AMH - 12.00pm
22nd	Taunton	Beginners' Practical 4 - Heatherton Park - 2.30pm
29th	Taunton	Talk by Tony Richards - Heatherton Park - 2.30pm
29th	Quantock	Brymore School - Open Day
29th	Mendip	About the Basic Assessment - Lynn Sykes - Ross Sykes' Apiary
29th	Mendip	Picnic - Laurel Farm, Carlingcott - 4.00pm

JULY

6th	Exmoor	Dave & Mary's Barbeque and Apiary Inspection
6th	South East	Beekeeping Without Fuss or Chemicals - Joe Bleasdale Apiary
6th	Taunton	Beginners' Practical 5 - Heatherton Park - 2.30pm
6th	Somerton	Practical 4 - Disease Recognition - Lytes Cary & Chilton Polden
10th	Taunton	Beginners' Continuation 5 - 7.00pm - tba
13th	Taunton	President's Afternoon - Heatherton Park - 2.30pm
13th	South West	Apiary Visit to Bee House
13th	Quantock	Practical 6 - New Apiary
13th	Burnham	Apiary Meeting - Thomas O'Neill
14th	Wedmore & Cheddar	Removing & Clearing Supers
14th	Frome	Apiary Visit
14th	Somerton	Beekeeping Taster Day - Avalon Marshes Centre - 10.00am
20th	Somerton	Apiary Visit, Broadacres, Chilton Polden - 2.00pm
20th	Taunton	Beginners' Practical 6
20th	Mendip	Correct Supering, cut comb honey, Prince of Waterloo, Winford
20th	Central	Extraction, Earth Science Centre, Stoke St. Michael
27- 28	Burnham	Open Day - Secret World
27th	Taunton	Preparation for Flower Show - Help Needed
27th	Wedmore	Uniting Colonies
31st	Taunton	Beginners' Continuation 6

AUG

2-3	Taunton	Taunton & County Honey Show - Vivary Park
7th	Taunton	Putting on Varroa floors and clearing - 6.00pm - Heatherton Pk
9th	Taunton	Remove Supers - 6.00pm - Heatheron Park
10th	South West	Apiary Visit
10th	Wedmore & Cheddar	Reading the Colony
10th	Taunton	1 st Varroa Treatment
10th	Somerton	Apiary Visit - Tengore House, Langport - 2.00pm
10th	Somerton	Practical 5 - Taking the Honey - 10.00 Long Sutton Village Hall
10th	Quantock	Practical 7 - Final Crop Management - New Apiary
10th	Exmoor	Minehead Flower Show
11th	Exmoor	Porlock Show
13th	Central	Show Preparation - Earth Sciences Centre
16th	Exmoor	Dunster Show
17th	Burnham	Apiary Meeting - Heather Bennett & Keith Whitting
17th	Yeovil	Use of a Sallow Box - Preparing for Winter - Ian Homer
17th	Mendip	Assessing Varroa - Simon Jones - Old Stables, East Harptree
17th	Quantock	Apiary Visit 4
17th	Somerton	Practical 6 - Taking the Honey - 10.00 Long Sutton Village Hall
23-24	Quantock	Bridgwater Honey Show
24th	Taunton	2 nd Varroa Treatment - Heatherton Park
?	Frome	Barbeque
25th	Wedmore & Cheddar	AMH Varroa & Nosema Testing and Feeding
20th	Qantock	Apiary Visit 3
24-26	Burnham	Open Weekend - Secret World
31st	Exmoor	Visit to Bees on Honey
31st	Somerton	Practical 7 - Preparing for Winter - Lytes Cary & Chilton Polden
31st	Taunton	Extract ion Day - Bathealton - 10.00



Members are welcome to attend the meetings of any SBKA division, but I would suggest checking with the host or secretary when attending the meetings of another division as the time or venue may have changed. Further details are often available on the website or divisional newsletters. This list is taken from the Yearbook and may have changed or been



SOMERSET BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

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Welcome to the Somerset Beekeepers' new website.

We've increased the range of material on the site and added many new features. If you've visited us before, you'll still find the helpful introductory descriptions, of how to take up beekeeping, and what makes it such a fascinating craft. We have however, substantially increased the range of advice and guidance, in the form of 'How To...' papers and videos in our new Knowledge Centre section.

NOTICES
2013 Special
Lecture Day

Somerset BKA website

It's up and running, so make good use of it. There are forums and information, newsletters and assistance. It's got something for everybody and it is so much easier to use now. A big cheer to Phil Stevens of Central Division who put it all together. www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

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