

Somerset Bee-keepers' Association NEWSLETTER



Honeybee on Manuka

The best honey in the world (allegedly)

It may be all doom and gloom here, but down under in New Zealand the sun is shining, the manuka is in full bloom and all is well with the world - almost. Well, it would be if there hadn't been an earthquake on the south island, if the Australians weren't trying to steal your brand and if there wasn't a manuka 'turf war' going on. Yes, that's right, making manuka honey isn't as easy as it used to be.



Issue 128
Spring 2017

www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

The hills are alive with the flowers of manuka, but if you're looking for trouble, then you've come to the right place. It all used to be so simple. As soon as that invasive scrub weed came into flower, and it does, in profusion, you simply moved your bees closer to it, then harvested the honey and sold it for a blooming fortune.



8 colony beehive in Keri Keri with roof from normal Langstroth in circle

Not so much now, as the rest of the world seems to be able to make it without their bees ever having seen a leptospermum plant. New Zealand provided the world with 2000 tonnes of manuka honey last year, and we sell 1800 tonnes of that in the UK alone . Worldwide, 10,000 tonnes are sold annually. That means that the vast majority of manuka honey is thinned down, at best. If that wasn't enough to outrage your average honest Kiwi beekeeper, then having your beehives stolen, vandalised or set on fire, might just upset you a little bit. According to the Guardian newspaper, one beekeeper has had 200 hives poisoned. It seems that a holy manuka war has broken out in the land of the long white cloud. Manuka honey has become such a golden goose that people are prepared to go to great lengths to get their hands on some, and it now presents a major crime statistic at this time of year.

In most airports, the duty free shops are pushing wines, spirits and perfumes, not so in Auckland airport, as the first thing you see is manuka honey - stacks of it, on sale for as much as \$89 per lb (that's £57.00) - but it's duty free.

The New Zealand government once considered manuka to be an invasive nuisance species, which needed controlling until they realised its potential. Now they plant it as infill on motorway embankments, not that they have many of those, and roadsides generally, because it is now seen as the 'golden goose' . Problem is, my old Kiwi dears, that manuka, being invasive, isn't fussy and will grow almost anywhere temperate, and the Australians are planting it like there is no tomorrow. Now the New Zealanders are claiming that it can only be considered manuka honey if it comes from New Zealand. What about all that New Zealand Cheddar cheese then?

Jack Fieldhouse Beekeeper, Teacher, Artist and Hedgeman.

December 1919 – November 2016



Jack kept bees for most of his life and combined his passion for beekeeping with his remarkable talent as an artist. This is illustrated by the large 8 x 4 foot picture hanging on the wall at the BBKA in Stoneleigh, and the oil painting of Leonard Snelgrove which is also at Stoneleigh. Both Jack and his daughter hung paintings at the Royal Academy in the same year. Jack was always enthusiastic in his ventures. At various times he was the Secretary of the Bridgwater Beekeepers Association until it closed in 1992; he has been the SBKA Yearbook editor and latterly the President of the Quantock Division until his death this year.

An example of his success as a teacher was that he used to take his pupils and his family to Colonsay (in Scotland), Jack was a believer in discipline (in the classroom) and Simon Jones has had the 'honour' of being the only pupil who was 'given the slipper' for misbehaving.

Until very recently Jack would attend bee meetings and make sketches of the activities - he rarely wore a veil. David Charles has a set of the sketches which he has published as cards. Jack also produced a (different) set for Quantock Beekeepers.

At the request of Jack and his family the funeral was to be one of colour. So family and mourners wore bright clothing and two QBKA members came in beesuits. The coffin was decked out in paper bees and funeral donations in lieu of flowers were passed on to QBKA for the Teaching Apiary of which he was very proud. The President of SBKA (Ken Tredgett) represented SBKA. Jack was buried in his home apiary.



Goodbye Jack -
your smokers' gone out !

Ken Edwards

Somerset BKA November meeting - extracts

Anne Pike reported that Taunton division felt that it was inappropriate for council to reverse a relatively recent decision for the county honey show to continue and that flip-flopping of decisions is not in the rules of the association. Jonathan Friend replied that it is within the rules of the association and that it was the delegates that made the decision and that it was a valid decision. David Morris was concerned that the BBKA standing orders should be used here and that there should not be a change in decision within 3 years. He went on to state that he found it rude and insulting that the proposal had not been circulated prior to the meeting and that divisions had not had the opportunity to discuss it and that Taunton division had not been consulted. He also suggested that it ought to be declared out of order and the proposals should have been circulated. Jonathan Friend replied that it was not out of order, that the BBKA standing orders refer to the annual delegates meeting of the BBKA (where the association delegates are not trustees) and are not applicable to SBKA. Furthermore delegates had the ability to raise, vote on and pass motions without it being circulated prior to the meeting.

Suzy Perkins stated that members are often not consulted on matters arising. Christina Kennedy stated that it had to be within the powers of the trustees to discuss and vote on operational matters and that there is input from divisions as they bring their representative. Christine Bragg asked to clarify that there would not be a County Honey Show in 2017. Christina Kennedy replied that there had been much discussion and some felt that it should be stopped altogether. The impression was that there was little input from other divisions and concerns with the deal that has been brokered with the Taunton Flower Show. Jonathan Friend stated that very few members have any input and that the BBKA rules do not refer to the quarterly meetings of SBKA council. Lynne Ingram stated that it is the division that actually runs the show. Suzette Perkins stated that Somerton division would be amenable to hosting it again in the future. Richard Bache stated that there is nothing precluding divisions from having open classes in their own honey shows. Jonathan Friend stated that there was little need for a county honey show as divisions have their own show and the subject has been the source of much grief. Christina Kennedy stated that the division does not want to see it go, but that it needs support and strategic direction.

Anne Pike stated that it was misleading that there was no support. Christina Kennedy proposed that we support and review the role of the county honey show. David Morris stated that procedure is the issue and not the honey show and that this was a delegate's meeting. Christina Kennedy stated that SBKA is not bound by the BBKA standing orders as it would not be able to pass many propositions and the trustees would not be able to fulfil their duties. Anne Rowberry and Barry Hulatt made the point that delegates are represented and mandated by the divisions. Lynne Ingram proposed that Taunton carries on with the show and agree for it to be reviewed for the remaining four years. Seconded by Anne Rowberry, 16 voted in favour, 2 against with 1 abstention. Motion carried.

It was reported that Christina Kennedy had agreed to be treasurer for up to three years.

Malcolm Blake asked what is happening to the yearbook this year. Jonathan Friend stated that it will be printed if an editor is found. Richard Bache suggested that the usual information from the yearbook be sent to him so that it is in a position to be compiled. Anne Pike questioned whether this ought to be sourced out to a commercial typesetter and quotes obtained. Ken Tredgett reminded the meeting that this was done in the past and that when Stewart Gould took over he did this himself and saved £300 a year. Liz Friend stated that there is no need for the association to save £300. David Charles stated that he was keen for it to continue to be printed, and that digital copies tend to get lost and therefore are not so good from an archival perspective. Cathy Edge made the point that the postage costs also need to be considered. Anne Pike stated that it also needs to be legible- ideally a B5 format and reported that Alex Morrice has already got some of the advertisers in place.

Along with the position of yearbook editor, the positions of Newsletter Editor, and Education/Events Organiser are vacant or will become vacant at the next AGM. If anybody wishes to take on any of these posts, please contact Richard Bache (County Secretary) at secretary@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

A full set of minutes is available from the secretary.

SBKA County Lunch October 2016

I am very pleased to report that a grand total of forty six people attended our County Lunch this year, with members from seven of our twelve divisions, from the far reaches of the county. The range of members attending from across the county was very diverse, from new beekeepers in their first year to those that had been beekeeping for sixty years - teenagers to octogenarians.

Comments I received on the day indicated that everyone had a good lunch, it was a good venue and why don't we have more events like this so that new beekeepers can meet more experienced beekeepers, make friends and exchange information.

As the lunch has proved to be a success over the last two years with numbers increasing, everyone likes the venue, it is centrally situated in Somerset and the food is good I will go ahead and provisionally book us in for next year in October. The only downside is that they have said that they can only cater for fifty and we nearly met that number this year, so to avoid disappointment people will have to book a bit earlier.

Given the feedback I have had, if members would like another social event at a different time of year, please email me with your suggestions and I will see what I can do.

Suzy Perkins - Vice President

Lecture Day - Saturday 18th February - 9.00 am

Details and Cvs of the speakers were given in the last newsletter, but to remind you, the speakers are Margaret Murdin (chair of the trustees of BBKA, Nigel Semmence and Michael Maunsell.

The subject matter should be of particular interest in the light of the previous article, with talks on Drones, Workers – the supreme defender, The Queen, How to become a proficient beekeeper and not least of all - Exotic Pests.

Tickets are free to Somerset BKA members. Refreshments will be provided, but you will have to organise your own lunch. There are excellent hostelrys close by the venue, which is Edgar Hall, Somerton TA11 6SB



8 frame Langstroth with 6 frame Flow super

During my recent visit to Australia I was involved in a Skype conference call with Stuart Anderson, inventor of the Flow Hive system. When asked if he would consider a similar session with British beekeepers, he willingly agreed to the idea. He also mentioned that he may well be in the UK in 2017. I am endeavouring to set something up with him, and as soon as I have anything concrete I will contact all divisional secretaries, but it may yet come to nothing.

The Flow system is highly controversial here, but it has taken off with a vengeance in Australia, where the bulk of hobbyist beekeepers use 6 or 8 frame Flow supers on 8 or 10 frame Langstroth hives. As Flow have now introduced a super for use on Modified National hives, we can expect many new beekeepers and Natural beekeepers to want them.

The photo shows a 6 frame Flow super over an 8 frame Langstroth brood body. A pipe is inserted into the bottom of the frame and a crank into the top. When the crank is turned, the frame splits vertically, releasing the honey which flows out of the tube and straight into a jar. The first thing that struck me is that it might just attract other bees, and secondly that there seems to be no filtration. Hmmm! Not so sure about that.

Future Newsletters

It was mentioned in the extracts from the last Somerset BKA Council meeting that the post of newsletter editor will become vacant at the AGM in March 2017, but it was also decided at the previous council meeting, that in future the newsletter will only be available in a digital format: no hard copies will be printed at source.

Should you require a hard copy, you can print off the digital copy, but if you wish to save on the cost of ink, ensure that your printer is set to print in grey-scale, or black and white.

Newsletters have been published prior to council meetings, so that delegates can pick up the printed copies, but as that is no more the case, it seems far more sensible to publish immediately after a council meeting, so that the reporting of that meeting is much fresher.

The Rest of this page is blank because of the lack of information sent in for publication. If you would like future events publicised, or would like the rest of Somerset Beekeepers' Association to know of notable happenings in your division , then please send information to the editor before the deadline set out in the events calendar and on the back page.

Bees for Development

Dear fellow beekeeper,

with Christmas approaching Bees for Development offers you three great ways for you to support bees and beekeepers in the poorest countries:



1. Donations to our Big Give Christmas Challenge are doubled until Friday. We are raising funds to help young people in Ethiopia to earn their livings from beekeeping. Your donation will be doubled as long as match funds last, so please donate to our Project now if you can. The Challenge ends midday Friday 2 December.



2. Bill Turnbull will feature our work on his BBC Radio 4 Appeal Sunday 11 December at 7.55am and 9.26pm, and Thursday 15 December at 3.27pm: read here for details.

3. For family and friends that 'Already have everything', why not give them one of our new Good Bee Gift cards? Prices of these virtual gifts range from £10 to £100

Please do share this message with your organisations, friends, and family who might be interested to support our work. If you have any questions just contact us at trust@beesfordevelopment.org or call 01600 714848. Below are some easy links that you could add to your e-mails. With sincere thanks from our small and dedicated team,

Dr Nicola Bradbear, Director

Dates for your Diary



Saturday 10 th Dec	Quantock Division	Winter Varroa
Saturday 10 th December	Taunton Division	Late varroa treatment at the apiary
Saturday 7 th January	Somerset BKA	Council Meeting - Ash Village Hall - 2.00 pm
Sunday 8 th January	Somertset BKA	Deadline for next newsletter
Thursday 12 th January	Somerton Division	Talk on Green Plant Swap by Jeremy Wright - Somerton Parish Room - 7.30 pm
Friday 9 th December	South East Division	Christmas Dinner
Saturday 8 th February	Somerset BKA	Lecture Day, Edgar Hall, Somerton TA11 6SB

If you would like to see your division's activities here, just forward details to the editor. There is not room to include everything during the active season, but there seems to be a dearth of social gathering in the winter.

Members are welcome to attend the meetings of any SBKA division, but it is suggested that you check with the host or secretary 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 added to since it was originally published.

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Copy deadline for next newsletter:
8th January 2017

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