



YEOVIL BEE NEWS

March 2017

Welcome to the newsletter of the Yeovil & District Division, Somerset Beekeepers' Association. See also our website: www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

**Next Meeting –Yeovil Divisional March Meeting:
Brigit Strawbridge talks about:
"The Importance of Bee Diversity & Pollination"
7:30pm Tuesday 21st march
at the West Coker Village Hall**

Brigit Strawbridge is an enthusiastic environmentalist and bee-gardener. She is an experienced speaker, having given talks to such august bodies as the BBKA Nation Honey Show and Glastonbury Festival! She says about herself:

I love this planet. Don't like what we are doing to it. Trying to help by raising awareness about the importance of biodiversity and other important issues such as: bees; soil; permaculture; food; ethics; animal rights; growing food; sustainable living and more...

Her talk will be, as the title suggests, about biodiversity, which includes bees and pollination flora, pollution and much more

Directions

To find the West Coker Village Hall BA22 9AL, take the West Coker Road (A30 West) out of Yeovil. Pass through the traffic lights in West Coker, past The Castle pub on your right hand side and 50yds later, turn left and then immediately right into the West Coker Village Hall car park.

February Meeting Report: The Importance of the Beespace with Malcolm Blake

If ever you have experienced 'sticky' problems when inspecting colonies (i.e. access) then you need to understand 'beespace'. The beespace for our bees is approximately 6-8mm and ignoring this will lead to congested and angry bees. If the beespace is too small the bees will propolise (or wax) the lesser gap, if too great they will fill it (burr comb); both make manipulating the hive difficult, clumsy and will consequently annoy the bees. Dimensions are not precise but rest assured the bees will let you know if you get it wrong.

Key is appreciating this beespace either as a top bee-space or bottom-bee space hive. They each have their pros and cons but generally top bee spaces are more common with British Nationals. Top bee-space is where the bee space is present at the top of the brood (and throughout the hive, including the supers, Queen Excluder and crown board. In fact the only exception is between the brood box and the floor (be it solid or open mesh) whereby the bees tend to tolerate the larger gap without filling the space.

Key is appreciating that individual cells are 11mm long (longitudinally) and the back-back dimensions are therefore 22mm. Leaving a single beespace of 6.5mm (average) between frames which is the normal arrangement for colonies. For developing (and accessing) brood, two beespaces (i.e. 13mm) gives therefore a frame centre to frame centre distance of 35mm (11+6.5+6.5+11mm). A single beespace allows the bee access to the frames, whilst a double beespace (supers and brood) allow the bees to draw out the comb.

Key in appreciating top bee space is most obvious at the brood-super or brood-Queen excluder-super interface. Incorrect or poorly manufactured equipment (it should be checked as tolerances and manufacture designs are not precise at all) should be checked with a ruler at the construction stage before the bees check it and tell you its wrong! Incorrect or ignorance of the beespace will lead to the bees either gluing or filling any excessive gaps making the hive difficult to manipulate. Different hive design types addressed this in different ways however the key is in understanding the 6-8mm gap in the 3 dimensions i.e. between the frame and the 'box', box to box interface (be it separated with a Queen excluder or crown board) and between the frames. Waldron type Queen excluders were illogical in design (centred on a 8mm batten) and didn't take into account the correct beespace whereas Herzoy wire-battened (8mm batten on one side only) were demonstrably of benefit.

Cheaper and many poorly designed queen excluders were shown and generally you get what you pay for; cheaper narrow slot flexible excluders tended to sag (causing problems) and even modifications to this limited their ease of use. Key information was that cheaper pressed metal flexible excluders had sharp edges that could play havoc with the delicate wings of bees passing through – food for thought. Even expensive excluders often had incorrect beespace dimensions (too small or too large), beespace present on both sides of the wire, excessively wide surrounding frames and poorly design reinforcing metal strips leading to the bees sticking the excluders to the frames/box sides. Bottom line is to check and stick to wired long slot (don't forget running parallel to the frames); you can always modify existing equipment to better suit. Use of castellated slots and their disadvantages was explained mainly associated with their inability to slide frames across the box during manipulations. Interestingly access space for the bees across the surface area of the queen excluder was dramatically explained in that older flexible slots reduced the accessible surface area by 80% yet more-rigid (longer slot) reduced the same area by only 27% - allowing more access for the bees. Wider side frames (battens) would obviously reduce this figure so keep them thin!

The methods used by manufacturers to maintain beespace between frames was explained (35mm centre to centre again) and discussed Hoffman frames with their limited points of contact between

frames offered many advantages, not least maintaining the beespace more easily without the need for various (many types) of spacers. The recommendation was to use the hive tool to squeeze-up the frames in order to re-obtain the correct bee space between all the frames. Various examples of frames, both wide and narrow bottom bars were explained – and left me with the conclusion that I'll stick to my Hoffman frames for my brood/supers although extracting supers (using a knife anyway) is easier if the frame sides run continuously parallel as in wide top/bottom bar frames – useful in larger frame sizes such as 12 by 10 or Langstroth frames. My Nationals will stay as self-spacing Hoffman DN4 (brood) and SN4's (supers).

If you get burr comb the bees are telling you something is wrong. Understanding and observing beespace improves the quality of the bees. Never assume manufacturers and other bee experts do things right – check your beespace.

A very enjoyable evening, thank you and it were good to see new faces (fresh from our chairman's beginner's course this year).

Steve Atrill

Chairman Carnegie

I have been a busy bunny what with talks to the garden centres on the Pleasure of being Beekeepers. Poundbury gave me a free lunch which was nice.

My beginners group are excellent, and last night one brought in a Flow Hive. It is based on a Langstroth hive base. One looks at that and the horrors of bee space appear. It seems so unfair that someone would spend all that time and money to design something to try to turn the world of beekeeping upside down but leave a beginner puzzled and have to make a dummy board or insert extra plywood to make the box the correct size to fit the frames. It very typical for a 66 year old sceptical about new things and I stamp on my brain to stop negativity. Time will tell. One would not market something which did not work-surely?

That ties in with Malcolm's Talk on Bee Space which was poorly attended. You missed a treat. We ran through top and bottom bee space and all the pitfalls that one falls into if you don't know why the critters glue that up and fill other bits with brace comb you would have expanded your knowledge and understanding on that night.. If my memory serves me right wasn't it Malcolm who bought some frames at a show and found that they were the wrong size? I seem to recollect he took them back. I am in my shed a lot this time of year and have been making frames. Why don't my Hoffman frames fit together properly? I have had to widen a gap or the sidebars split into two. What have I done? I suspect I have mixed suppliers of frames and therefore they have ever so small differences and it takes me three times as long to make my frames as I have to file and trim each. Most annoying. Worst still there I was with the beginners talking about big spacers in supers. The box below had a full set of frames with small spacers. Not one beginner asked the question as to why my top bars were all different widths !

I got a parcel of Maisemore Catalogues which I had time to skip through before the beginners arrived. I have bought 5 Cedar National Deep online and in the Catalogue they are twice as much. I defy any beginner to understand page 16 and the nomenclature regarding wedge top bars and the various sizes. I never got it either and that's why my top bars are all mixed up.

As I say to myself all the time. Must do better.

John

Chairman

Subscriptions for 2017 are now due

Subscriptions for 2017 are now due. The cost is £32 for a full member, to include BDI cover for three colonies. This is £19 for BBKA, £5.50 for SBKA, £2 for BDI, £2 to the research fund and £3.50 for Yeovil Division. If you have more than three colonies you will need to add the following amount for BDI cover:

Total number of colonies :

up to 3 - nil up to 5 - £2.00 up to 10 - £5.25 up to 15 - £7.75 up to 20 - £9.50
 up to 25 - £11.10 up to 30 - £13.60 up to 35 - £16.10 up to 39 - £18.10

The cost for Partner members is £23.50 and Associate members £6.

Any queries about this please phone Sharon Blake on 01460 242 124.

I will be at the February meeting and able to collect subscriptions or if you prefer to send your subscription by post please make your cheque payable to SBKA Yeovil Division and send it to:

Mrs Sharon Blake, Stratton Court, Over Stratton, South Petherton, Somerset, TA13 5LQ.

The membership form is attached to the newsletter email.

Coming soon ...

Event	When	Where	Details
Committee and Yeovil Show Meeting	Wednesday 7:30 15th March	Airfield Tavern, Yeovil	All members welcome to discuss division and show matterd
Divisional talk The Importance of Bee Diversity & Pollination	Tuesday 7:30pm 21st March	West Coker Village Hall	A talk by Brigit Strawbridge
Auction of Equipment	Sunday 2:00 26th March	Ruishton Village Hall	Auction of beekeeping equipment
BBKA Convention	7-9 April	Harper Adams University, Newport, Shropshire	Annual convention: talks and trade show
Apiary meeting	Saturday 2:30 22nd April	Steve & Marie Atrill's Apiary	Bernard Diaper demonstrates
SBKA Special Lecture	Wednesday 7:30 26th April	Edgar Hall, Somerton	Dr Giles Budge talking about "The Foulbrood Gang"
Flow Hive Lecture	Saturday 2:00 6th May	Long Sutton Village Hall	Stuart Anderson tells the story of the Flow Hive

Somerton Talk: The Flow Hive

Somerton have invited all our members to come to the talk about the revolutionary Flow Hive. This is a honey super which you can extract the honey without removing the super And the talk is by one of the inventors, Stuart Anderson. Tickets are £5 from Steve Horne. Contact : steve.horne1@btinternet.com

Wax Recycling into New Foundation

Do you have any rendered wax and would like it to be change into foundation?

Malcolm Blake is attending the BBKA Spring Convention at Harper Adams University, Newport on 7 April 2017 and is willing to take your wax to the convention and return with new foundation ready for you to use as the beekeeping season gathers pace. The value obtained for old wax is far better this way than in exchanging it for other goods or for cash. Even better value is achieved if Malcolm takes more than 50lb of old wax to swap for foundation. The old wax must be clean and free from dross, dead bees, honey and general debris.

Many of our members have benefited from this service over the years; could it be you this year? Your wax and a completed wax-to-foundation order form (see attachment/enclosure) must be with Malcolm by Monday 3 April 2017. Any questions - contact Malcolm on 01460 242124 or email at sbeditor@yahoo.co.uk

Taunton Division Annual Auction of Equipment

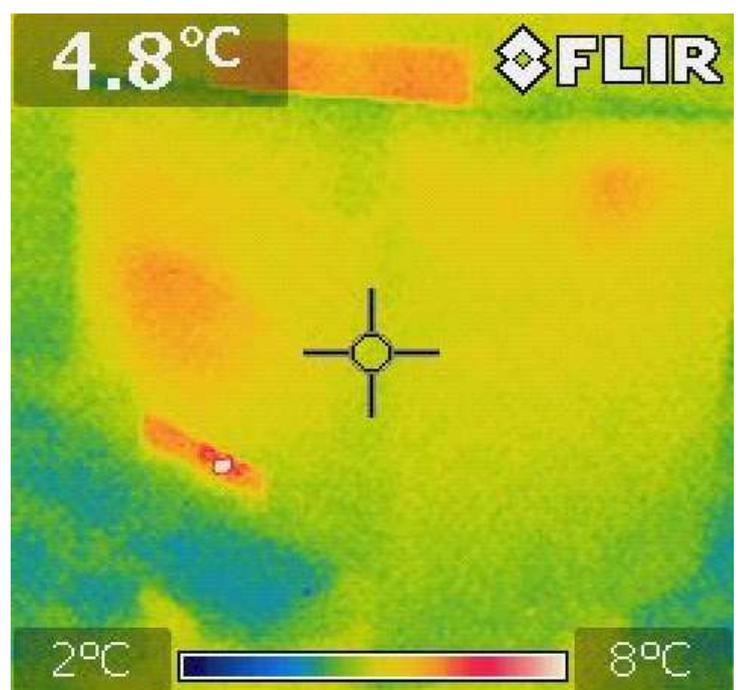
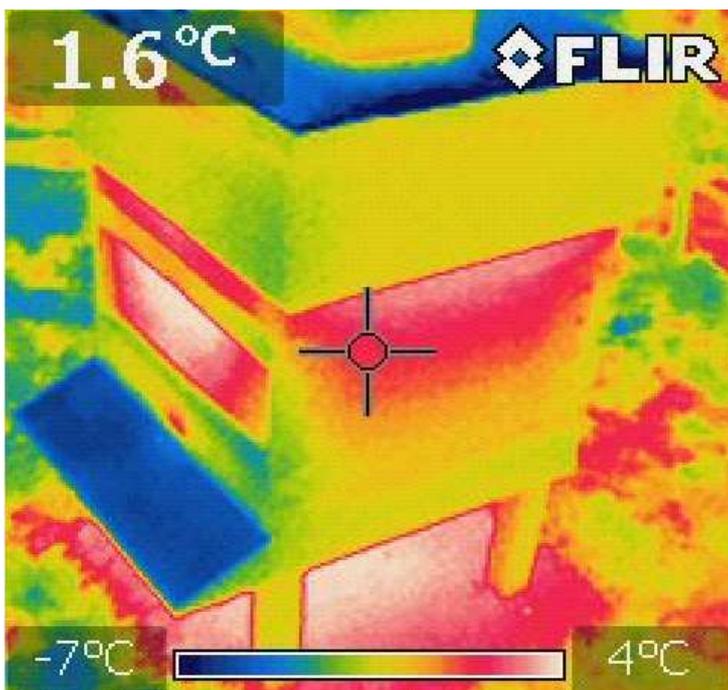
Taunton are holding their annual auction at Ruishton Village Hall (TA3 5JD) on Sunday 26th March. If you have any equipment to sell, please present it at 10:00. The sale will start at 12:00.

The Yeovil Show Preparation

We are progressing with plans for the Yeovil Show. We now have a tent for the indoor displays and are looking for a display net for the live display. If you can help, just come along to our next meeting at 7:30 on Wednesday 15th March at the Airfield Tavern in the meeting room beyond the restaurant.

Hive Insulation

Do you remember the talk by Derek & Elaine Mitchell on hive insulation? Well, Steve Attrill has put his idea to a practical test. He has insulated his existing hive with some proplex - it looks like plastic cardboard - which protects it from the wind and rain. Below are the before (left) and after, showing that the heat loss is at least halved with this simple add-on. He will update us with the progress of the colonies as the season progresses.



Somerset Lecture Day Report

The first challenge for the SBKA members was in finding Edgar Hall itself, but the effort was definitely worthwhile (top tip follow the brown signposts). After booking in, obligatory brew, perusing the vast array of books (spooling through is always a good idea prior to buying) and chatting to friends and colleagues we settled down to the opening by Ken Tredgett (SBKA President).

The first lecture by Michael Maunsell was a fantastic treat all about 'drones'; delivered with entertaining (and amusing) Irish wit underpinned by vast quantities of experience and (maths) teaching skills – it made you wish that you had more teachers like him! If you weren't there, I'm afraid that you missed an absolute gem of a lecture, one that it difficult to articulate in written summary. We heard chronologically about our understanding of drones (it changed significantly) and reminded me of what 'we think now' may not be all the truth. Polyandry, parthenogenesis, plenty of facts and figures, more genetics (definitely food for thought stuff), diploid drones, their job description, sex alleles and breeding all came under the expert presentation. The lesson was that there is no such thing as bad mating, bad drones are the issue.

The second treat was Margaret Murdin who expertly talked about the 'Queen', her physiology, characteristics and behaviour. Margaret defined for me what beekeeping is about in that it varies according to the beekeeper and that desired traits are not universal; my idea of a perfect hive is different to others. The lecture on queen hormones was particularly fascinating and some pheromones (and glands) were new to me; I was reminded just how complex bees are and that we really have just scratched the surface of our understanding. It was good to know the queen can fly at 15mph for 5km for 10-30 minutes and the physiology of the mating process.

A quick coffee and chat break was followed by Nigel Semmence on 'Exotic Pest Update', a truly thought provoking lecture on the Small Hive Beetle and the Asian Hornet. The ability to spread (through mankind's greed and carelessness) left me in no doubt about the importance of recoding our bees (BeeBase) and regular checking. The talk included lessons learnt from the recent Gloucestershire outbreak and how vigilant we really all must be. The fact that a single Asian Hornets; produce 100 queens per colony was shocking; can fly 15km per day, their average spread across Europe is at 60km per year (we are next!), prefers urban (trees >10m) sites and can squirt venom was fascinating. The talk included improved methods for baiting and trapping, their diet, their hunting methods and what to look for (not just in our Apiaries!).

Lunch (bring your own style) was quickly digested and we were welcomed back to the 'graveyard slot' (Michael Maunsell words). Graveyard slot it was most certainly not! He talked about the 'Worker Defender' and covered; the need to defend, the colony response, swarms, alarm pheromones, aggression (complex polygenic trait), mandibular biting (as an anaesthetic) and more about pheromones, to name but a few. I was again treated to things I didn't know in a manner that was contagious to listen to. This concluded talking about the modified ovipositor (sting), venom contents and our reaction to it, which was interesting and quite sobering.

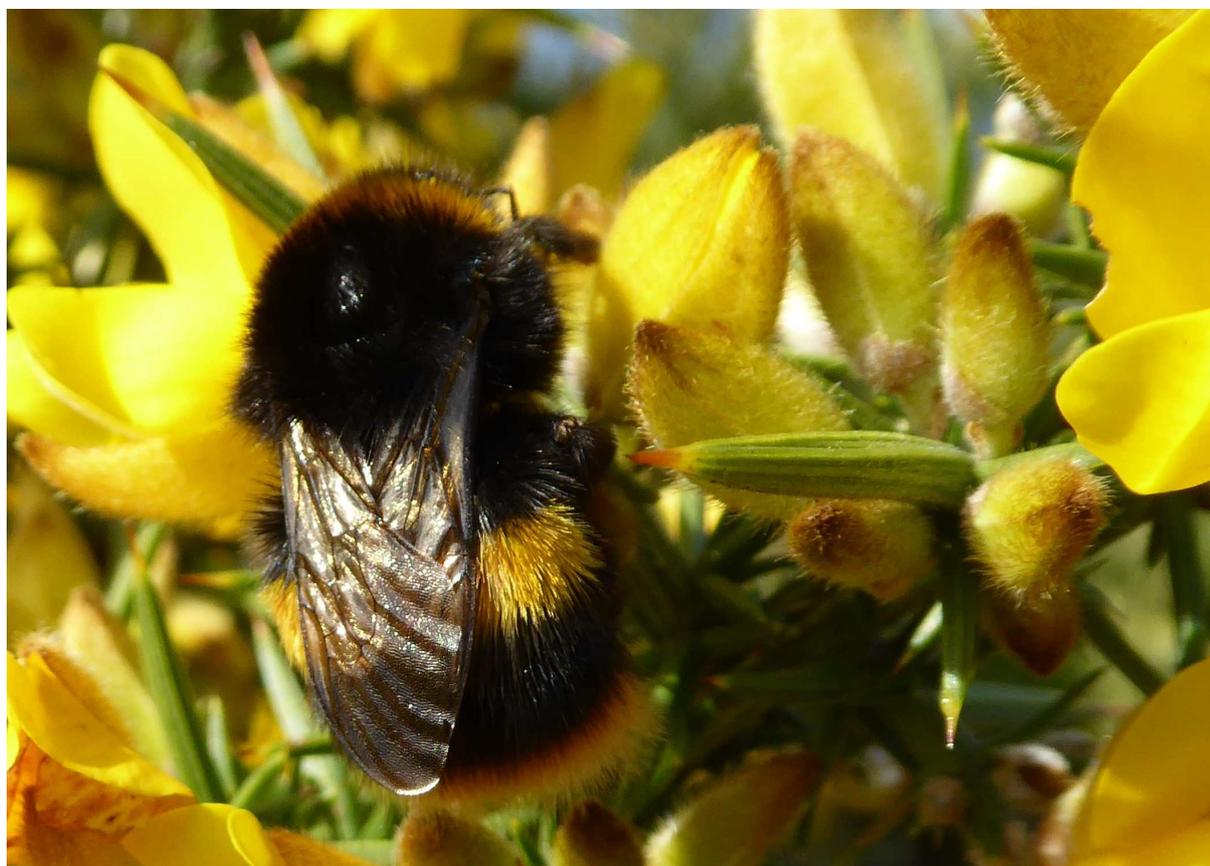
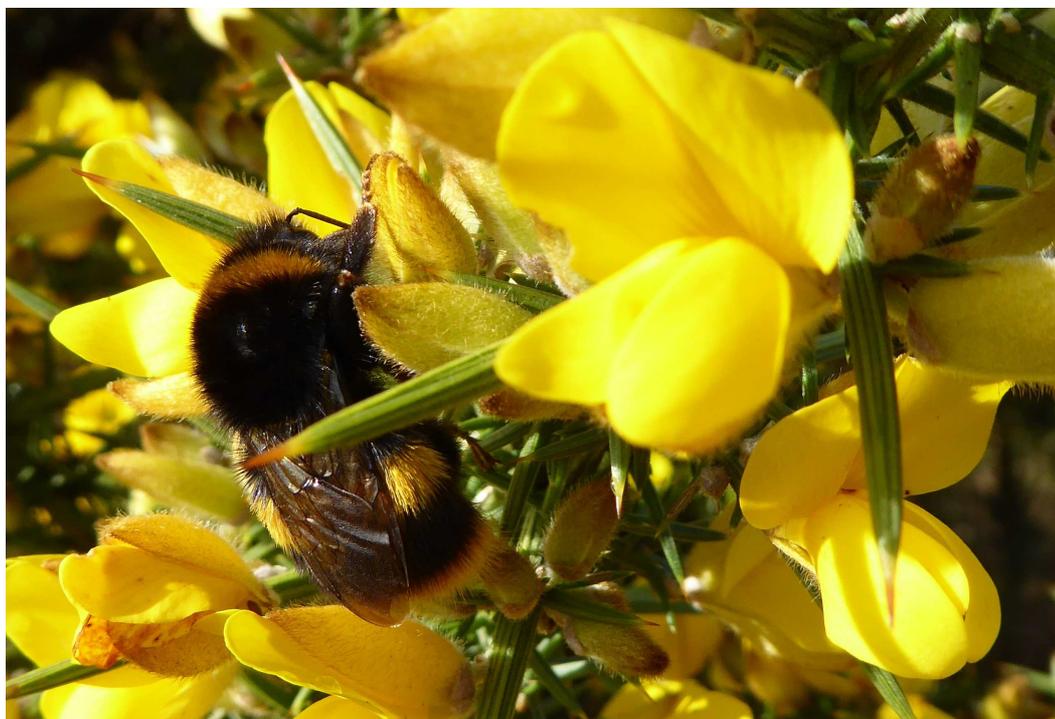
A quick raffle (in retrospect this raised £231.50 which was really good) and brew and we settled down to Margaret Murdin and 'How to Become a Proficient Beekeepers'. She talked expressively about her thoughts on beekeeping goals and the need to develop novices. Continual improvement and becoming proficient were everyone's duty as a beekeeper. Margaret explained that the BBKA 'lose' 5000 beekeepers every year (but thankfully we gain this number too) but lose an awful lot after a few years. She explained that only 10% of beekeepers have kept bees for 10 years and discussed the finer points of Ted Hooper's 5 points although she reiterated the absolute need to 'read the bees' and balance experience (practical) with knowledge (theory). After rightly plugging Dave Cushman's website as a continued resource of knowledge, she raised a smile with the answer to every beekeepers question as, 'it depends'. We should all do what works for us and to remember that bees like weeds.

The day included some significant awards including 60 years of beekeeping (!), microscopy, and Master Beekeeper award. Another entertaining and interesting (well attended) lecture day and I am looking forward to next years already.

Steve Attrill

Bees on the Gorse.

A lovely warm sunny day catches a queen bumble on the gorse in the Arne Nature Reserve



SBKA Special Lecture

This year's Somerset Special Lecture is Dr. Giles Budge talking about "The Foulbrood Gang". The lecture is at the Edgar Hall, 8 Cary Court, Somerton Business Park, TA11 6SB. It is on Wednesday 26th April at 7:00 for 7.30pm start.

A short biography of Dr Giles Budge: He is currently the Science Lead for Crop and Bee Health at FERA and a Senior Lecturer at Newcastle University. He has 20 years' experience conducting applied research in honey bee and crop pathology. His current research interests include combining modelling and experimental approaches to elucidate disease epidemiology and predicting the spread of emerging threats to pollinator health. He has authored over 50 scientific publications and currently supervises PhD students at York, Exeter, Liverpool and Aberdeen. Giles is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Entomology and a member of Defra's Bee Health and Advisory Forum.



Title of his talk: The foulbrood gang: Tracking and tracing honey bee killers

Giles will run through the history of American and European foulbrood disease, and describe the most recent research findings that enable outbreaks to be linked thereby helping with disease control.

The Special Lecture is open to all. There is no charge for attending this special talk.

Divisional officers

President	Fred Horne	01935 421623	Treasurer & membership secretary	Sharon Blake	01460 242124
Chairman	John Carnegie	01935 851234	Librarian	Tasha Stevens	07814 742653
Vice-Chairman	Marvin Collins	01935 426153	Newsletter editor	Nic Bard Nic_bard@hotmail.com	07877 284545
Secretary	Andy & Lorraine Dobson	07825 912274	Mentor Liaison Officer	Jacqui Taylor	
Swarm Coordinators	John Carnegie Tasha Stevens	01935 851234 07814 742653	County Delegates	Malcolm Blake John Carnegie	

The Yeovil division secretary email address is : yeovilbee@gmail.com.

Please contact any officer with your comments or suggestions.

Please send any suggestions, articles or comments or ideas to share with our other members directly to the editor at nic_bard@hotmail.com.

Yeovil 2017 Programme

2017

- 21st Mar '17** – Brigit Strawbridge “Importance of Bee Diversity & Pollination – who pollutes what and how?” at West Coker Village Hall
- 22nd April '17** – Bernard Diaper (TBC) at Steve & Marie Attrill’s apiary
- 26th April '17** – SBKA Special Lecture, Giles Budge at Edgar Hall, Somerton.
- 20th May '17** – Ken Edwards at Tasha’s apiary
- 17th June '17** – Apiary demonstration at Andrew Cooke’s apiary
- 15th July '17** – Yeovil Show
- 22nd July '17** – Apiary demonstration at Crispin Bond’s apiary
- 19th Aug '17** – Apiary demonstration at Sarah Theo-Jones’ apiary
- 19th Sept '17** – Anne Rowberry at TBD
- 17th Oct '17** – AGM at TBD
- 30th Oct '17** – Joint Meeting with SW at Over Stratton Village Hall
- 2nd Dec '17** – Skittles social evening, The Phelips Arms, Montacute (TBC)

2018

- 16th Jan '18** – Ken Basterfield (TBC) at TBD
- 18th or 19th Feb '18** – Lecture at TBD
- 20st Mar '18** – David Maslen at TBD

TBD - venue not yet decided!

April to August outside apiary meetings 2.30pm