SOMERSET BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

April 2022, no. 148

Photo by Sophie Prestige

Please send any copy for the July 2022 edition to me by 15th June.

Email: sophieprestige@gmail.com

Notes from the Chair

It hasn't been a bad winter, all in all, but Spring has finally arrived and all but one of my hives came through in good shape. That's a relief. A new season is starting.

Spring also marks the Somerset BKA AGM, and it was the first physical Somerset BKA meeting which we have been able to hold in my two years as chairman. It was so good to meet up with old acquaintances in person, after so long.

There will be a change of charitable status to CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organization) soon, which will be advantageous in many ways. It's been a long uphill struggle but thanks to the welter of work undertaken by Christina Kennedy and then Lance Moir, Peter Derbyshire and some help from a member with expert knowledge of this exercise, we are all but there.

I'm very pleased that our 'press ganged' secretary and treasurer have both decided to continue in the posts, which they were airlifted into with almost no notice. It was a baptism of fire for both, and I thank them very much for the sterling work they have done. We also have a new vice chairman. Geoff Blay has stepped into a breach which has been open for two years. Geoff moved to Somerset about two years ago and brought his large cohort of hives with him. He was formerly a member of Reigate Beekeepers and has contributed to several initiatives since arriving. He is also a Master Beekeeper and has a lot to offer, I'm sure. A new member was voted on to the Executive as well. Lynne Ingram, who is also a Master Beekeeper and is one of only 95 people ever to hold the prestigious National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB). Lynne has been central to the extremely comprehensive and informative online talks which have drawn international audiences and World class speakers to Somerset during the cooler months. Her right hand 'man' Anne Pike (former Somerset BKA chair) is also to be congratulated for her superb handling of the nuts and bolts of those talks. We now have a full team at the helm of somerset BKA, and a pretty capable bunch they are.

A huge vote of thanks also goes to Tricia Nelson, Alan Nelson, Lynne Ingram, Bridget Knutson & Richard Bache who have hosted online BBKA Module exam study groups for the last two years. Their input has helped numerous members, including me, through several modules, and they have smoothed the passage through a veritable minefield or two.

Retiring from key posts after several years are Bridget Knutson, who I thank for doing all the back-room slog needed to publish the county yearbook. She hands over to Bill Monteith. Liz Friend is standing down from editing the county newsletter and handing that over to Sophie Prestige. Thanks, Liz, for all your hard work.

Hopefully this year I will be able to drop in at the various Honey Shows around the county, which had been impossible during the times of COVID. I look forward to meeting a lot more members during my final year as chairman.

Stewart Gould

News from the AGM

Dr Peter Kennedy, a Research Fellow at The University of Exeter's Environment and Sustainability Institute, provided an update on work to monitor and control the spread across Europe of the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina)* at the AGM.

The Asian hornet Vespa velutina, an invasive alien species, continueS to spread rapidly through parts of Europe. Living in large nests of 5,000 to 20,000 individuals, Asian hornets are voracious predators of insects – including honey bees, wild bees and wasps. They are having a significant impact on the viability of beekeeping and honey production in mainland Europe, and they have been poised to spread into the UK over the last five years, where they could pose a significant threat to both wild and managed pollinators. This could jeopardise the essential pollination service these species provide to crops and wildflowers.

"Efforts to halt or limit the spread of the Asian hornet in the UK are reliant upon finding and destroying nests as soon as possible. In 2017, in response to a request by Defra, we developed a new method for finding Asian hornet nests, by radio-tracking individual hornets as they flew back to their nests (Kennedy et al 2018). We now have two research projects, collaborating with our European partners (funded by BBSRC and funded by EU Interreg Atlantic Area) to further develop this technique and find new ways of managing the spread of the Asian Hornet. At the same time, we are actively measuring and modelling the potential impact of this invasive species on wild and managed pollinators to understand the level of threat posed by this invasive species."

Somerset Beekeepers' Association Chair receives beekeeping Oscar

Stewart Gould from Ditcheat near Shepton Mallet is the winner of the greatest honour Somerset Beekeepers' Association can bestow in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the craft.

He received the magnificent West Country Honey Farms trophy at the Association's annual meeting.

Photo caption: Joe King, Chair of the West Country Honey Farms Award committee, presents Stewart Gould, Somerset Beekeeper's Chair, with the silver trophy.

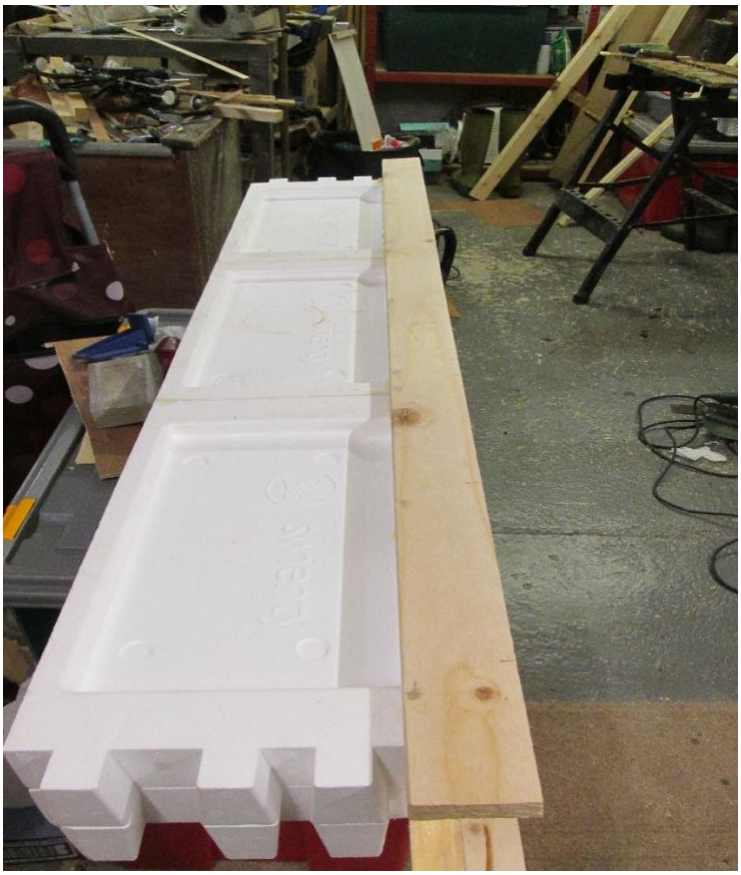
Long hive based on polystyrene brood boxes

By Garry Rucklidge

Increasingly it seems that some of the beekeeping fraternity are realising that they are ageing and still wanting to continue with their lifelong hobby. The lifting of supers prior to examining a brood box is no easy task with a full super weighing 40lbs (in "old money") and a box full of brood and stores likely in excess of that. Attention of these beekeepers has been grabbed by the proliferation of the top bar or long hive. I have recently joined the ranks of gentle back pain sufferers and with an eye to the future have designed and constructed a long hive which I shall be trying next year.

Based on over 40 years of beekeeping I wanted to incorporate a few features which I felt are important. Firstly, the colony has to be warm and in the case of the long hive this is less achievable as heat from the brood and supers rising upwards in a standard format is just not going to happen. Heat will have to travel horizontally but helps to be somewhat retained by good insulation by the walls and above the entire colony. This can be achieved by the use of Celotex, Kingspan or polystyrene. At this point I appreciated that my woodworking skills are not sufficient to make a hive with insulated walls with a perfect bee space over the length required for a long hive. For many years I have kept my bees in a poly Langstroth hive modified so that National frames with shortened lugs are used at right angles to the direction of the Langstroth frames for which the box was designed thus utilising the insulation properties. I therefore designed the long hive using two Swienty polystyrene brood boxes which were dowelled, and butt jointed using the two spare ends to increase the length which I calculated would hold 31 National Hoffman brood frames plus dummy boards and queen excluders of which more later.

The big plus is that the Swienty hives arrive in the flat and go together with dovetail joints as can be seen laid out above and below, being glued clamped to a straight edge and the two sides ready for the ends to be fixed to the sides with the dove tails



Another essential was that there had to be an open mesh floor in one section of the hive and that this floor should be level with the entrance to allow easy removal of the hive debris by the bees as it was not going to be possible to lift the entire hive off the floor for cleaning. This section is built in the centre of the hive where there are 22mm holes drilled into the supporting floor and box bearers as many as you want centrally so that any mated queen will return there into the brood box area and not into the stores area.

New Regional Bee Inspector

Congratulations to Megan Seymour who has been appointed as the new Regional Bee Inspector for Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.
She takes the place of Simon Jones who has stepped down after spending the last 12 years helping the region's beekeepers.
Megan said in an email to members: "I am sure you will join me in wishing him all the best with his future pursuits."
She explained that there have been a number of changes of staff within the National Bee Unit over the last year and recruitment is still ongoing for replacement staff. "Therefore, please bear with us if you see an unfamiliar name in an e-mail from one of us or get called by a new bee inspector.
We welcome Cathy Mudge in South Devon who will largely be covering Martin Hann's old area (for those that know it) and will be accompanying other members of the team while she is being trained. There will be large parts of Somerset that will be covered by several of us while we adjust to no longer having Simon and to changes in the adjacent regions.
My old 'patch' of North Somerset and Avon will mainly be covered by Western Region Inspectors, with Jon Axe being the Regional Bee Inspector for that area. His contact details are: jonathan.axe@apha.gov.uk mobile: 07867 151641. However, we will be working closely together to cover any problems so either one of us will do!
Please feel free to contact me via e-mail, WhatsApp or text using the information below.
Once we are all back in April, you can find your local Inspector here although there will still be changes during that
month: https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/Contacts/contacts.cfm
Megan Seymour
Regional Bee Inspector for Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.
National Bee Unit
Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)
e-mail: Megan.Seymour@apha.gov.uk
M. 07775 119475
Photo: A frame of pepperpot brood with chewed cell cappings © **Crown copyright**

Examination Secretary's report March 2022

10 people sat and passed modular exams in November 2021. Congratulations go to the following:-

Jim Elliott, Modules 1 and 3

Catherine Fraser, Module 6 and 7,

And the following all took Module 3, after participating in the zoom evenings.

Neil Wellum

Ross Willis,

Anne Pike

Stewart Gould – who also achieved the Intermediate award for passing 4 modules.

Vanessa Woodford

Kathryn Warner

Jessica Lane

John Speirs.

Another 5 also took modular exams in March, but the results of those won't be out until May.

There will be another zoom session for a different module starting in September, not just for those who want to do the exams, but for anyone who is interested in the subject. More details to follow in the next newsletter.

If you have anyone who wants to take the Basic Assessment in your Division, then please contact me for the application form, and any further details if you require them. Bridget_knutson@yahoo.co.uk, 01934 742187. Deadline for applications is July 31st, but I would appreciate them earlier than that.

SPRING EQUIPMENT AUCTION – 3 APRIL 2022

Taunton's popular spring equipment auction is back after a two-year absence! It takes place on Sunday, 3 April 2022 at Ruishton Village Hall, Taunton, Somerset TA3 5JD. There's sure to be a miscellany of second-hand hives, smokers, and honey extraction equipment.

Auctioneer Chris Harries will be wielding the gavel for the 36th time and urged beekeepers to make sure they were well prepared for the coming season.

“Bees don’t wait for anybody!” said Chris. “This is a great opportunity to get ahead of the bees. Beekeepers need to have their equipment ready to go if they’re going to be able to cope once the bees ‘wake up’.”

Beekeeping involves a considerable amount of equipment, protective clothing, hive tools, a smoker, a feeder to provide bees with sugar syrup if needed in the winter, a good reference book, honey extraction equipment and among many other items of paraphernalia.

Chris, who runs Sedgemoor Honey, added: “We always get a good selection of equipment and someone just taking up the craft could quite easily get started and save money. But buyers need to remember to thoroughly clean any equipment to prevent the spread of diseases.”

Items received from 10:00am
Auction starts at 2:00pm
Refreshments
Raffle
Free car parking

Petition to get rid of adulterated honey

A petition instigated by Somerset beekeepers and calling on government to do more to clear the supermarket shelves of adulterated honey is live.
https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/607735
Honey selling for as little as 69p a pot has been spotted in Somerset shops. Large quantities of imported honey – mainly from China – are believed to be cut with cheap fillers.
Consumers are not given the information on the labels to make an informed choice.
Somerset BKA seconded Devon BKA's propositions at the BBKA's Annual Delegates Meeting last month calling on the BBKA to join efforts to stamp out adulterated honey. They were passed by an overwhelming majority.
A petition created by some of the people behind the propositions – from Somerset and Devon – is calling for government to do more.
There's been a long standing, but lighthearted, rivalry between Devon and Somerset. Let's carry on that tradition and see if we can get more signatures than Devon!
The petition calls for a full review of the honey market and Honey Regulations, to review evidence of honey fraud within the honey market, and reform regulations and arrangements for enforcement, to prevent future fraud.
Honey is adulterated, purely for profit, on an industrial scale across the globe. We believe current measures to ensure authenticity of honey are woeful. Public health, the free market, livelihoods, food security, consumer confidence and bee health issues are all at risk.
Current regulations, testing and enforcement are inadequate to protect and inform consumers, and there is a need for an urgent comprehensive review in order to detect honey fraud.
Please sign this petition and share it with everyone you know!
https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/607735
[When you sign, you'll receive an automatic email asking you to confirm your signature].
Visit https://www.facebook.com/groups/588674292271458 to find out more about honey adulteration.

SBKA LECTURE SERIES

Thursday April 21st - 7pm

Alex Walton - The long reaching effects of developmental environment on honey bee worker health and behaviour

The consequences of early-life experiences are far reaching. In particular, the social and nutritional environments that developing animals experience can shape their adult phenotypes. In honey bees, larval nutrition determines the eventual social roles of adults as reproductive queens or sterile workers. However, little is known about the effects of developmental nutrition on important adult worker phenotypes such as disease resilience.

Our findings show that both forms of early life nutritional stress, whether induced by lack of alloparental care or diet quality restriction, significantly reduced bees' resilience to virus infection and affected the expression of several key genes related to immune function. These results extend our understanding of how early life nutritional environment can affect phenotypes relevant to health and highlight the importance of considering how nutritional stress can be profound even when filtered through a social group. These results also provide important insights into how nutritional stress can affect honey bee health on a longer time scale and its potential to interact with other forms of stress (i.e. disease).

Alex Walton

Alex is a Postdoctoral Fellow studying honey bee behaviour and stress resistance in Olav Rueppell's lab at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. He has been studying the biology of social insects, including honey bees, for over a decade, beginning with his undergraduate work on ant collective behaviour and bumblebee task specialization at The University of Arizona. After graduating, he worked at the USDA-ARS Carl Hayden Honeybee Research Lab, where Apis mellifera left its indelible mark on me and Alex decided he wanted to study honeybees for the rest of his life. He completed his PhD in Professor Amy Toth's Lab at Iowa State University, where he used honey bees and paper wasps to examine the role of nutrition in the regulation of individual variation in social behaviour. He continued his wasp research during his first postdoc position where he worked to develop functional genomics tools for the study of paper wasps. Alex is broadly interested in the causes and consequences of behavioural variation in social groups, and the evolution and maintenance of cooperation.

Thursday May 5th - 7pm

Photo credit – BeeCraft

Clare Densley & Martin Hann - Swarm control

It's that time of year again when bees and beekeepers turn their minds to swarming! Following their fantastic presentation at the SBKA Lecture Day, Clare & Martin will today present two methods of swarm control explained in pictures and video. Do not miss this one.

Clare Densley & Martin Hann

Clare has been keeping bees since 1992. When in 2008 she got the chance to become assistant beekeeper at Buckfast Abbey she thought that she had 'died and gone to heaven'. Since then, the department has changed from a honey producing unit to a gentler approach to beekeeping involving education, environmental awareness, and wellbeing. She now runs the department with Martin and it's still the best job ever.
Martin has been keeping bees since 2008. He was a seasonal bee inspector for the Southwest region for 6 years but has been working alongside Clare at the Abbey for the last 5 years. He now does this full time and the list of benefits to the department are too numerous to mention!

Both are self-confessed "Beeks" and share a passion for understanding the nature of the honey bee and colony life.

Thursday May 19th - 7pm

Beth Harris - The electric ecology of bees.

In recent years, research has shown that bees can detect and learn about electric fields in their environment, providing evidence for a new sense, aerial electroreception. In bumblebees and honeybees respectively, aerial electroreception has been shown to play a role in foraging and pollination and social communication. However, as an emerging field of research there is still much to understand about the electric ecology of bees. In my talk, I will highlight current evidence for the ways in which electric fields constitute a form of sensory information for bees and the sensory mechanisms by which aerial electroreception operates.

Beth Harris

Beth is a PhD student in the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Bristol. She is interested in insect sensory systems, and in particular, how bees perceive their sensory environment. Specifically, her research focusses on the biophysical mechanisms of aerial electroreception in bees and the ecological contexts in which this sense is used. For further information on SBKA lectures and workshops click here

2022 Spring Convention

Friday 8th – Sunday 10th April

Advance bookings have now closed but for more details click here

Several presentations from the 2021 Spring Convention are still available on the BBKA YouTube Channel: click here

The Royal Bath and West Show

Thursday 2nd June – Saturday 4th June

Returns as normal this year. Check the website for details here

Asian Yellow-legged Hornet News

Asian Hornet stall - Bath & West Show – 2-4 June 2022

This year we will again have an Asian Hornet stall at the Bath & West Show in the Bees & Honey tent. We are looking for volunteers to help man the stall. It is always very busy but enjoyable. If you can help for a day (or more) then contact Lynne on lynneci@hotmail..co.uk or 07846165877. Thanks

March 2022 - Analysis of 2021 Asian hornet nests from DEFRA

During the 2021 season, two Asian hornet nests were located and successfully destroyed by NBU inspectors and APHA colleagues, following sightings reported via the Asian Hornet Watch app.

The nest found in Ascot, and destroyed on 11th October, was 35 cm in diameter and contained six combs. Results from genetic analyses suggest that all Asian hornets collected in the surrounding area were likely to have come from this nest, and that the nest hadn't reached the stage of producing adult sexual stages.

The nest found in Portsmouth, and destroyed on 31st October, was 31cm in diameter and contained 4 combs. Results from genetic analyses suggest that all Asian hornets collected in the surrounding area were likely to have come from this nest. The nest had reached the stage of producing sexual stages but was highly inbred and a large proportion of the offspring were triploid.

The queen and drones for both the Ascot and Portsmouth nest were highly unlikely to be direct offspring of the Gosport nest from 2020.

Further information regarding Asian hornet can be found on Defra's Asian hornet sightings page and on our BeeBase Asian hornet page. Please direct all media enquiries to the Defra Press Office: 0330 0416560.

Use the Asian hornet Watch app for Android and iPhone to report sightings.

Confirmed Asian Hornet sightings in the UK 2016–21

Asian Hornets were first discovered in the UK in 2016. Since then, some hornets and nests have been found every year. Below we can see the complete list as provided by Defra. Although things seem to have gone quiet – perhaps because of transport disruption due to Covid - we still need to remain vigilant. The unseasonably warm weather we have had will mean that Asian Hornet queens will be coming out of hibernation, will be on the wing, and could end up in the UK.

2021: confirmed sightings

- Ascot, Berkshire - confirmed 8 October and the nest was destroyed on 11 October
- Portsmouth, Hampshire - confirmed 29 October and the nest was destroyed on 31 October

2020: confirmed sightings

- Gosport, Hampshire - confirmed 8 September and the nest was destroyed on 11 September

2019: confirmed sightings

- New Milton, Hampshire – confirmed 3 July – single hornet captured
- Tamworth area, Staffordshire – confirmed 2 September – nest destroyed
- Ashford, Kent – confirmed 9 September – single hornet captured
- Christchurch, Dorset – confirmed 1 October – nest destroyed
- Christchurch, Dorset – confirmed 10 October – nest destroyed

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2018: confirmed sightings

- Bury, Lancashire – confirmed 13 April 2018 - single hornet sighted with photograph
- Fowey, Cornwall – confirmed 3 September 2018 - nest destroyed
- Liskeard, Cornwall – confirmed 7 September 2018 - single dead hornet
- Hull, Yorkshire – confirmed 9 September 2018 - single dead hornet
- Fowey, Cornwall – confirmed 20 September 2018 - nest destroyed
- New Alresford, Hampshire – confirmed 24 September 2018 - nest destroyed
- Brockenhurst, Hampshire – confirmed 26 September 2018 - nest destroyed
- Guildford, Surrey – confirmed 28 September 2018 - single dead hornet
- Dungeness, Kent - confirmed 15 October 2018 - single hornet captured

2017: confirmed sightings

- Woolacombe, Devon – confirmed 26 September 2017 - nest destroyed

2016: confirmed sightings

- Tetbury, Gloucestershire – confirmed 19 September 2016 - nest destroyed
- Lower Langford, Somerset – confirmed 30 September 2016 – single hornet captured
- Bath, Somerset – confirmed 13 October 2016 – single hornet captured

Monitoring for Asian yellow legged Hornets 2022


Spring (Asian Hornet Spring watch - April 11 – 24)

We are approaching the time of year when temperatures are rising, and Asian Yellow legged Hornet queens will be emerging from hibernation, so **we need to start monitoring for their presence.** We don't think that any queens have overwintered in the UK, but we need to keep our eyes open for any that may have been accidentally introduced in deliveries or transport from Europe**.** Research suggests that the South West is an area where incursions are likely to occur, so we cannot be complacent even though the last couple of years were quiet. We still need to be vigilant. The earliest sighting of an Asian Hornet in the UK was **April 13th**, in 2018.

We would like to suggest that we have Spring Monitoring fortnight (April 11 -24) when we monitor carefully. We strongly recommend the use of **monitoring stations**, rather than killing traps. This allows us to get the evidence of Asian Hornets that we need, without killing our native beneficial insects, in particular European Hornets.

This time of year, Asian Hornet queens will be searching for sugary foods to build up their energy, not preying on your bees. This means that all monitoring stations need to be

positioned **where you cannot help but see them** and **where you can easily check them daily** - e.g. outside the kitchen window, or in a sunny spot in your garden. All **beneficial insects must be released** from monitoring stations **daily.**

We are recommending the adaptation of Thornes traps to include the wick stations inside. This allows wasps and small flies to escape. (See Instructions below)

Liquid bait – get Suterra (now sold as Trappit wasp attractant) from your AHAT Team leader or buy online.
If you cannot get it due to current restrictions try one of these French recipes:

- Dark beer mixed with 25ml strawberry dessert sauce and 25ml orange liqueur
- 350ml sweet white wine (or white wine sweetened with sugar) + 20-30ml mint syrup

Please also observe your flowers where Asian Hornet queens may be feeding. Any trees that may be oozing sap are also very attractive to AH queens in Spring.

Summer

(Asian Hornet week September 5th – 11th)

From August onwards, Asian hornet workers may be found preying on your bees, so monitoring stations may also be hung in your apiaries. Again, we need to be monitoring regularly so that we protect our beneficial insects, and so that we have live samples that could be tracked if necessary. Please register your apiaries and monitoring stations on **BeeBase**.



What to use

- Monitoring stations as above
- Open bait stations – plastic tray with screwed up kitchen roll, a stone, and your liquid bait. Stand these on something so that they are off the ground. Ideally protect these from rain.

If you think you have seen an Asian Hornet

- Get a photo (or sample)
- If you are not sure or are struggling to get evidence, contact your local Asian Hornet Action Team – asianhornet@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk
- If you are sure and you have evidence, then report on the **Asian Hornet Watch App** or on alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk and to your local AHAT.

Monitoring stations instructions

This is the new design monitoring stations as used in Jersey. They are designed to allow beneficial insects to escape. The wick pot also prevents all but the smallest flies etc. from getting down the side. They still require **daily monitoring.**

The trap

Drill 3 x 6mm holes in the flutings around the top of the Thornes trap.

The wick station

The wick stations in these pictures are cut down sample pots that when unmodified are 7cm high and just under 5cm diameter. **You can use other similar size small pots.**

The sample pot is cut at half its height i.e 3.5cm and the lower section is fitted through the top section base first. Place a small block of wood or similar over the top of the pot and tap the two parts together. That way you retain the screw top and the modified pot fits snuggly into the trap.


A 12mm hole is drilled in the lid to take the wick which is made from paper towelling / Jeye cloths etc. Fill with your liquid bait.

The wick pot prevents all but the smallest flies etc from getting down the side, and the Suterra/Trappit doesn't evaporate so quickly. The holes in the trap allow beneficial insects to escape. **Please monitor regularly.**