



Somerset Beekeepers' Association



NEWSLETTER

October 2020 no.142



Please send any copy for the January 2021 edition to me by 15th December.
Email: friend.elizabeth@gmail.com.



From the Chair

What a troubled summer we've had. COVID-19 has not gone away, and if I were to make any comment at all, it would be out of date before I send this to the editor.

The weather has been bizarre, and I use the term advisedly, leading to early Spring build up, and the first swarms in Somerset being reported on April 7th. At the other end of the scale, the latest that I know of was reported on September 14th. In the interim, we had a very hot May followed by a cool and wet June and July.

Badly mated, absconding and lost queens were again a feature of the summer, so where did the good news come from? Spring honey harvests were generally good, but the Spring blossom was soon over, and for most, there was a dearth in the main foraging period. I have heard reports of some members not taking any honey at all this year, but others are reporting bumper crops, with one member having extracted 250lbs from just two colonies.

Sadly, the hot weather at the beginning of the season allowed other creatures to build up well. From mid - August onwards the talk was of wasps, wasps and more wasps. Many colonies were lost to wasps, but those which might have withstood a normal vespid onslaught, weren't able to fend off the huge numbers that were produced this year. One species of social wasp did not do so well though. There was one confirmed sighting of an Asian hornet (*vespa velutina*) in Gosport, Hampshire, and several other unconfirmed reports, but nothing concrete. Fortress UK's defences held, and we can relax over the winter months.

With social gatherings becoming a distant memory, Somerset BKA's Education group have produced some wonderful stuff for all the members. 'Zoom' has proved a godsend and we have to thank Lynne Ingram who managed to persuade 'Zoom' that we needed more time and attendees for our sessions, and so Somerset BKA, and any of its Divisions can hold meetings of unlimited duration, with up to 500 attendees.

We have been overwhelmed with the quality and diversity of British and International experts who have spoken to us on a myriad of topics. Apart from the incredible diversity, the cost has been absolutely minimal, as Stuart Anderson (Flow Hive) speaking from NSW in Australia, and Jamie Ellis from the University of Florida USA, haven't needed to travel, or be put up in a hotel.

I believe I am right in saying that the total cost for both speakers was **absolutely nothing**. There was a budget set for lecturers at the Annual Lecture Day, and The Special Lecture, normally held in the Spring. As this wasn't required for the normal events, the county delegates, from each division, agreed that it should be re-directed towards these Zoom lectures, and what a tremendous success they have been, with over 250 attendees on some occasions, and beekeepers joining us from all over the country. That has been reciprocal, and we have been invited to several other groups' talks too.

Holding Introductory beekeeping courses is going to be difficult next year, but Somerton Division have opened the doors to all other divisions. If you know of any potential new beekeeper who wants to join a theory course, but can't find one locally, point them in Somerton's direction. The course will be online and cost £30.00 for all 6 sessions. That includes a copy of the Haynes Bee Manual, and £8.00 will be returned to the division of the participants choice – making them an Associate member of that Division for 2021.

It's not about stealing recruits. It's all to do with consolidating resources.

Full details (minus dates at present) can be found on the Somerset BKA website at:-

<https://www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk/somerton-beginners-course.html>

*Stewart Gould
Chair SBKA*

Honorary members.

At the last Council meeting it was decided to confirm nominations for honorary membership at the November Council meeting rather than leaving it until the AGM. This allows those nominated to have free membership for the full year.

Could divisions please send nominations to the secretary by the **end of October** so that the names can be verified in time for the November meeting.

Rule 16f states: Nominees need to be full members of the SBKA of thirty years standing who have given exceptional service to beekeeping in the county, upon reaching age 60, shall be eligible for Honorary Membership upon the recommendation of the Divisional Committee.

SBKA County Luncheon



Sadly, delegates decided that it was not sensible to hold a lunch this year but thanks were recorded to Suzy Perkins for offering to arrange it and for doing so in the past.

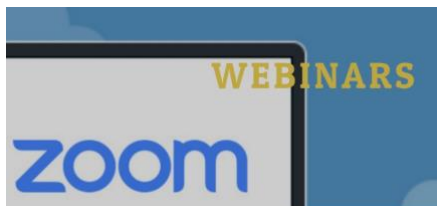
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

SBKA Lockdown Lecture Series Programme.

All lectures on Thursdays at 7pm via Zoom.

(Please note that these are subject to change)

Since lockdown we have been offering a very successful Lecture series via Zoom. We have been extremely pleased by the huge audiences these have attracted, and have decided that these will continue to be part of the SBKA programme for members. The lectures are free to members, and allow you to increase your knowledge of beekeeping practice, or hear about the latest research on honey bees.



The following is the provisional programme for the next few months – new lectures are being added all the time, so keep an eye on your emails where we will send out invitations and the updated programme.

October 15 Celia Davies *Plants Bees and Honey*

This talk explores the relationship between bees and plants and the importance this is to both the bees and to us as beekeepers. It is a wide-ranging talk covering the natural food of bees, how the food is used, where it comes from, how bees make honey and why honeys vary in colour and taste.

November 5: Vince Gallo; *A comb builder's instruction manual*

In this session he will explain his analysis of the bees methods, and resulting understanding as to how individual decisions regarding the placement, or removal, of each speck of wax combine to produce well-formed comb even when presented with complications.

November 19: Prof. Maria Spivak; *Staying healthy: honeybee hygienic behaviour and propolis collection*

Her research efforts focus on protecting and enhancing the health of honeybees, and on propagating floral rich landscapes to support all pollinators and she will provide an overview of the most important findings of their research

December 3: Dr Anna Oliver; *The national Honey Monitoring Scheme: using citizen science to understand the foraging habits of UK honey bees*

The scheme, backed by both the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) and the Bee Farmers Association (BFA), was set up in July 2018 and aims to monitor how the foraging habits of UK honeybees respond to a changing environment. She will report on the results so far.

To find out more about the speakers and to register, please follow these links

[Plants, bees and honey](#) with Celia Davis on October 15

[A comb builder's instruction manual](#) with Vince Gallo on November 5

[Staying healthy: honeybee hygienic behaviour and propolis collection](#) with Prof Marla Spivak on November 19

[The National Honey Monitoring Scheme: Using citizen science to understand the foraging habits of UK honeybees](#) with Dr Anna Oliver on December 3



The National Honey Show

22nd to 24th October 2020

This will be a professional, online conference – the first event of its kind in the UK beekeeping world!

Everyone is welcome to attend the event, free of charge.
Registration will go live in early October.

Attendees will be able to attend lectures, demonstrations, visit our trade hall and take part in other exciting activities.

Planning for the virtual conference is evolving so visit our website and Facebook page for more news as we add content to the show over the coming weeks.

The show will feature a series of lectures and demonstrations, followed by live online Q&A sessions, with the opportunity to ask questions via the 'chat' facility.

Live Lectures:

Michael Palmer, A year at French Hill Apiaries

Etienne Bruneau, The honey market in turmoil

Jeff Pettis, Long live the queen, please!, why are queens failing?

Live Demonstrations:

Gwyn Marsh, Making Beeswax Wraps

Chris Park, Skep Making

Sara Robb, Making Beeswax soap

John Goodwin, Showing honey

Evening events will be hosted on Thursday by The Central Association of Bee-Keepers, with a live lecture by Medhat Nasr from the Canadian Prairies; and on Friday, Bees for Development welcome you to their live online Quiz evening.

Trade Hall. All your favourite traders will be represented in the Trade Hall, where you will be able to keep in touch with their latest offerings.

We know the lack of a physical Show will be disappointing, as it is for us all, but we hope to offer an exciting armchair event, where the National Honey Show Community can come together online.

For further information please see their website

<http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/index.php>

And don't forget that all the lectures from last year can be viewed on YouTube from [Lecture Videos](#).

Lecture Day 13 February 2021

The preference of delegates at the last Council meeting was that the Lecture Day be held via Zoom. Richard Bache will be contacting the prospective lecturers to see if this is possible and a final decision will be made at the November Council meeting

SBKA AGM 27 March 2021

It was agreed by the delegates at the last Council meeting that the AGM will be by Zoom. Details will be sent out nearer the time.

Lynfa Davies will be giving the talk



We asked Lynfa to introduce herself:

"I live in Mid Wales where Rob and I are part of Aberystwyth and District BKA. I have been keeping bees for 15 years after Rob bought me a week's beekeeping course as a birthday present. I was immediately hooked and over the years worked my way through the BBKA modules to become a Master Beekeeper in 2015. This year I passed the National Diploma in Beekeeping.

I have 20ish hives (if Rob asks it is a dozen!!) that are on Nationals with most of them on double brood. We have had two exceptionally good seasons; we thought last year was amazing but this year has almost equalled it despite the weather being more unstable.

I rear my own queens and sell a few nuclei locally. I really enjoy teaching new beekeepers and sharing what I have learned with others and hopefully help make a difference to their beekeeping. When I am not with my bees I can usually be found on my bike cycling up all the hills near my home or going for a dip in the sea. "

Nominations needed for the AGM

Please note that there are several posts that need to be filled.

We currently have no **vice-chair**. The person in that role normally becomes chair which would be in two years time and it makes sense for them to be in post from 2021 to ensure a smooth take-over. The tenure for the chair is 3 years.

The **secretary** is also resigning from the role and is happy to offer full support to whoever takes over.

There are 2 **executive members** whose tenure ends in 2021 so replacements also need to be found for them.



Please consider whether you would like your name to be considered for any of the above posts and if you need to talk to someone about it please contact the secretary who will be only too happy to help.



Divisional AGM's

With the current restrictions on movement and meetings delegates agreed, with regret, that divisional AGM's this year will have to be done via zoom or by post.

Would secretaries please send names and contact details of their committee members to the SBKA secretary as soon as possible after the AGM. Please remember that the delegates are the trustees of the SBKA and any new delegates will need to fill in a trustee eligibility form.

Please note: When membership forms are issued this Autumn for the new year there will also be a box to tick if you sell honey and if you want to have your details published on our website. This will be managed via your divisional treasure or membership secretary so that if, for example, you sell out and want your details removed this can be done.

Research money

The County has a policy to ask members to donate £2 per year with their subscription to support bee research.

Whilst the collection methods and amounts, varies in divisions its really important to us all as beekeepers to help support research to safeguard the honey bee population.



It's just one small way we can help provide a sustainable future for us all.

It is accepted that in past years research commissioned by County hasn't been very targeted and this has resulted historically in some members choosing not to donate. However, in the past couple of years we have supported research which is particularly relevant to our members such as the Asian Hornet problems, through Exeter University.

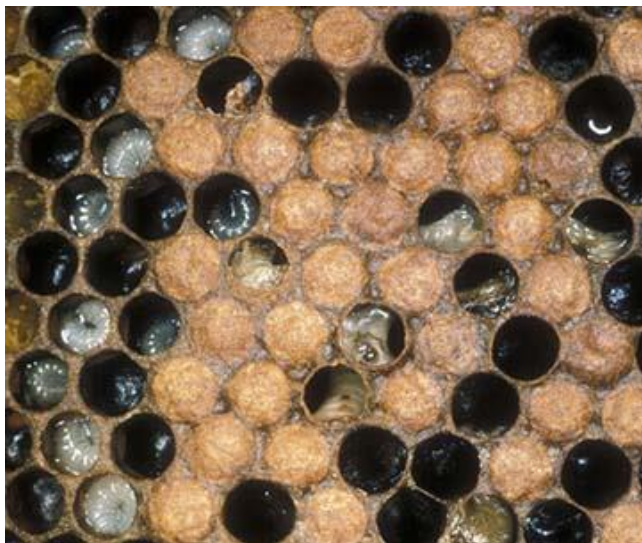
We want members to be aware that funds are clearly ringfenced for research and cannot be used for any other purpose without the members agreement. County have recently agreed to direct funds to research of EFB, in particular the strain affecting Somerset. Anything we can do to understand this to help eradicate this devastating disease will be a great benefit to our members. The cost of commissioning this research is £8K

We do have some funds, and **we would encourage all members to reconsider the donation process when they renew their membership**. If we collect £2 from each Registered Member that's a fund of £1,600 per year, towards this research.

Members are encouraged to have some input to the decisions to select research projects and if you have any particular comments or suggestions for future research can you please put these in writing to your Divisional County Delegate for them to bring to County.



Somerset BKA to Support Research into European Foulbrood



Healthy larvae are white coloured (left); unhealthy/dead larvae are a darker, yellowish colour (centre). Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera), Crown Copyright

European Foulbrood (EFB) has been a problem in Somerset for a number of years with some beekeepers having colonies being infected year after year. Taking all the advice on offer from the National Bee Unit (NBU) about cleanliness and not mixing equipment has not stopped these repeats.

Then a few years ago some NBU research into EFB found from their data that there were difference strains of EFB, some more prevalent than others. But it was interesting that the strain in Somerset and north Dorset was not found anywhere else in the country. Why?

Now EFB is the most prevalent bacterial brood disease in England and Wales with up to 350 cases each year and, in some years, Somerset had the dubious honour of leading the way with the highest number of cases. Somerset and north Dorset contain a dense cluster of highly related *M. plutonius* sequence type 2 (ST2). ST2 has been associated with this part of the country for at least 10 years with very few outbreaks of other sequence types.

Somerset BKA wanted to see if they could help to move this research forward and find out why this was the case. So two years ago they started discussions with NBU about supporting more research specifically into this strain. There have been some delays along the way, with funding systems changing, staff at NBU changing and then Professor Giles Budge, who had worked on the original research, offered to help.

Along with Bee Diseases Insurance Ltd, Somerset BKA will be financially supporting a PhD student over the next four years. The student will investigate this local EFB cluster using modern molecular methods in an attempt to improve the understanding of disease transmission and to try to understand why this disease cluster is so persistent in the area.

Dr Ed Haynes at Fera has developed a bioinformatics pipeline to sequence genomes of the causal agent of EFB, *Melissococcus plutonius*. Hollie Pufel at Newcastle University is the PhD student who will refine this protocol and then use it to assess transmission events using Somerset as the case study.

Hollie will be working with beekeepers across Somerset as well as with the NBU Bee Health Inspectors to improve disease local control measures. Her supervisor will be Professor Giles Budge.

The work will start this autumn so, if you are contacted, please give Hollie all the help and information that she needs. Then we hope her work will be able to help beekeepers in Somerset deal with this strain of EFB.

Sharon Blake, Somerset BKA Executive Member and BDI Treasurer

West Country Honey Farms Award



This is the highest acclamation that a beekeeper in Somerset can attain and can only be obtained by a nomination from a fellow beekeeper. The person nominated should have contributed to beekeeping within Somerset both at divisional and county level. If you know of anyone who has contributed a lot to beekeeping in Somerset, in your division or another one, please nominate them.

Please make the nomination as full as possible. We, the committee, need to know as much about them as possible.

We can't take any nominations from Yeovil this time, as Fred Horne won it last time.

The committee usually consists of the winners from the three previous years, but due to Fred's ill health, Jackie Mosedale has agreed to take his place, Jackie having won it 4 years ago. Only the successful person will be announced and there will be no discussion about other candidates.

Please send any nominations to me by email to bridget_knutson@yahoo.co.uk, or by post if you prefer.

Bridget

Asian Hornet week 2020 7-13 September



Asian Hornet week is normally a great opportunity to be out there spreading the word to the public about Asian Hornets and making sure that they can identify them and know where to report them. This year was a bit different, as Coronavirus made it more difficult to have a physical presence across the County.

We did manage however to have an all-day stall at Taunton Market during the week, and the Taunton Asian Hornet Team did a great job giving out information and engaging with the public.

We sent out press releases a couple of weeks before Asian Hornet Week, and these were found to have been picked up by papers across the Country. Unfortunately, although we are very careful to be accurate and to enclose a range of appropriate photos, some papers



still managed to publish articles with photos of the wrong sort of hornet. Strangely some also misinterpreted the press release and seemed to think that we were predicting that the hornets were going to arrive on September 7th!

Luckily a hornet was found in Gosport and the nest reported on the 8th so our supposed predictions appeared to have come true! We also did radio interviews for BBC Somerset, Irish TV and Heart radio, and I was told that there was also a mention on Points West.

We have been very encouraged by the response to the press releases – and have so far responded to over 40 reports of possible Asian Hornet sightings from as far afield as Birmingham, Kent, Hampshire, Watford, Devon, Reading and Bath – and Somerset as well. Most people included good photographs which enabled easy identification.

The majority of ‘sightings’ were of European hornets, Hornet mimic hoverflies and wood wasps, although there was also a swarm of bees, a giant dark horsefly, and some median wasps. Everyone receives a comprehensive reply with identification sheets for Asian Hornet and whatever insect it actually is, as well as additional photos of Asian Hornets on flowers and fruit. If there is no photo, lots of information is also given, and the local Asian Hornet team is contacted to follow up and possibly put out a monitoring station.

As you will know, one nest has already been found and destroyed in Gosport, Hampshire,



but please keep your eyes open for hornets on flowers, fallen fruit and ivy, as nests can still be active until November/ December.

Report any sightings (with a photo) through the AsianHornetWatch app, or if you need advice or help to get a photo contact asianhornet@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

Study groups



After the success of the Zoom Lockdown lectures, the Education Group asked SBKA members and lecture attendees if there was any interest in the idea of setting up study groups via Zoom. We were very pleased to have over 100 replies saying 'Yes please', so we set up an 'Introduction to study groups' Zoom session to talk about the possible format, and to explore exactly what we might study. 136 people attended that session, and the group voted for studying Modules 1 (Honey bee Management) and 5 (Honey bee Biology).

From the beginning it was emphasised that although we would be studying the module syllabi, the aim of the groups was to increase knowledge and make us better beekeepers, rather than aiming solely for the exams (although we thought that some people may want to take an exam).

We were encouraged when 50 people eventually signed up for Module 1 and 51 for Module 5. The study groups are held every fortnight on Monday and Tuesday nights, with participants studying sections of the syllabus in between sessions. WhatsApp groups have been set up for each module so people can continue to support each other and easily share information. Each session is hosted by 4 members of the Education group, and that allows the group to separate into breakout rooms for small group discussion of the subject in hand. This format seems to have worked very well, and we have had great feedback from participants. These groups will continue until March when some people will take the exam.

Discussions have already been taking place about what we do next, and although no plans have yet been made, requests have come in for Modules 3 (Pests and Diseases) and 6 (Honey bee behaviour).

We have been really impressed by the commitment and hard work of everyone in the study groups, who come not only from Somerset but also Cambridgeshire, Dorset, and North Somerset. Using Zoom has allowed this geographically widespread group to study together from the comfort of their own homes, in a way that otherwise might not have been possible.



Taunton division also have a group studying the Basic Syllabus via Zoom.

The Education Group

Stewart Gould (Chair) writes: There have been two study groups set up to cover BBKA Module exams 1 & 5, under the expert tutelage of several Master Beekeepers. Thanks to Geoff Blay, Tricia & Alan Nelson, Richard Bache, Lynne Ingram (again) and Bridget Knutson. These sessions have been far more comprehensive than the standard BBKA correspondence courses could hope to be, and because of the informed and immediate input, of more advantage to the participants.

I appreciate that the Modular Exam System is not for everybody, and being a part of the module 5 group, I concur. It's a hard slog, but worth nearly every minute expended. Knowledge is power (*Thomas Jefferson*), and whereas you have to want to be a better beekeeper, knowledge will most certainly help you.

With regret we have to report the death of two valued SBKA members

David George Morris

On 7th August and in his 80th year, Somerset Beekeepers' Association has lost an outstanding member and vice-president who had kept bees and been involved with the beekeeping scene, man and boy. David's name first appears in the yearbook for 1959 as a member of Somerton and District Division but he commenced beekeeping prior to this. He was probably the last surviving member to have met the renowned L. E. Snelgrove.

The family lived in Charlton Mackrell and David's father, George, was divisional secretary. David became a very skilled beekeeper and teacher who was always willing to share his knowledge and experience with others. He learnt the craft not only from his father but also from Fred Sparks, who lived and operated from the Quarry apiary at Charlton Mackrell and where David, as a youth, spent much of his time.



David demonstrates beekeeping at Midsomer Norton, 1968

David became a primary school teacher in Taunton and was keen to interest his pupils in beekeeping too. He was proud of the fact that one of his pupils was William Kirk, now Professor of Applied Biology at Keele University. It was at junior school that William Kirk, so keen on butterflies added bees and other insects to his list of interests. Later in his professional life David became a deputy headmaster but eventually he was seconded and became the regional executive officer for the National Union of Teachers.

In adult life, David, with his family, lived in Taunton and later at Halse, a few miles west of Taunton. I first met David through exhibiting honey. There were many shows in those days, nearly fifty years ago. David was a leading showman and took many prizes for honey and other products. He ceased showing when he had accumulated one thousand prize cards.

The highlight of David's showing was in 1971 and 1972 when he won the prestigious "Bristol Silver Queen" which is one of the finest and most valuable trophies in this country. He also wrote articles on various beekeeping topics for the now defunct British Bee Journal.



The Bristol Silver Queen trophy and David's award card

Over time David became a prominent member of the Taunton and District Division, playing a major role in teaching, demonstrating and generally being involved in helping other beekeepers. He was President of the division between 2011 and 2014. For many years he was editor of the divisional newsletter called Beelines and edited one hundred editions before passing on the role. As archivist he ensured that the Division's past was guarded and that documents were deposited with the South West Heritage Trust, Norton Fitzwarren, where many of the Association's records are held. With his background knowledge of the association and particularly with regard to the Heatherton Park apiary he provided me with information that helped me compile a complete history of our association for its centenary. He was also on the team that assembled our centenary exhibition at the Somerset Rural Life Museum.



David and Ann, (right) at the Association's centenary lunch, Langport

David was one of Taunton Division's delegates to Somerset BKA Council and made valuable contributions particularly on matters of procedure and played a major part in the revision of our constitution. David was one of a small team, who with Gerald Fisher created the Association's first website. It was entered in the website competition at Apimondia, held in Dublin in 2005. It took first prize and David received the medal on the association's behalf.

David, at one time, ran a large number of hives and worked closely with his old friend Milns Priscott, another lifelong beekeeper, and with Jeff Tinson. They co-operated in their beekeeping, especially on such tasks as taking their bees to the heather and with the extracting. I was once with a party who visited their impressive heather site at Weir Water Valley, near Oare on Exmoor.



David receives his 60 years certificate from Margaret Murdin

In 2017 David received a certificate from the British Beekeepers' Association in recognition of sixty years of beekeeping and contribution to the craft. It was presented by the then chairman of BBKA, Margaret Murdin at our spring lecture day.

Over all this time David's input and achievements were vast.

Members of Somerset Beekeepers' Association extend their condolences to David's wife, Ann, and to Jonathan and Sandra, their son and daughter.

**David Charles
Past President.**



LES KIMBERLEY

I first met Les and Carole when they were introduced to me as new members of the South East Division and found they lived just around the corner from me. This was about eight years ago.

Three years later I found myself chairman of the SESBKA and was lucky that Les became secretary and Carole became treasurer. They were a good team to work with, both knew how to use computers to the advantage of the division which is where I fall down.

Some of the things we were able to get going included the promotions around the villages in our area and also moving our honey show to the centre of Castle Cary where it has become a regular attraction encouraging the public to come in and talk about honey bees.

It's one thing to have an idea but it takes someone like Les to make it work correctly. He could always spot a possible problem before it occurred and had a way around it. Les always relaxed but was always busy. We both enjoyed the Castle Cary rambles which meant one day a fortnight on a ramble, he always enjoyed a good view, and there are plenty around Somerset.

Both he and Carole volunteered for the National Trust at Stourhead and were at the forefront in saving the Library at Castle Cary.

They seem to have travelled the world on their holidays which he planned down to the last detail including where to stay and where to eat. He loved good food and wine and enjoyed a good ale. He loved cookery and was always interested if my wife suggested a variation of some recipe she had tried. I don't think there was anything this man has not done.

Les died suddenly on 24th August and will be missed from all the many and various things he was involved in not least in the SE division. Our thoughts are with Carole at this very sad time.

Lionel Horler