

North Somerset Bee Keepers



October 2018

Welcome to the 14th edition of our branch newsletter. As usual your feedback and contributions are very welcome. Please send items to the editor by 25th of the month.

Annual General Meeting – date for diary

This year's AGM will be held on Saturday 17th November at 2pm in Churchill Memorial Hall. The guest speaker will be Marin Anastassov who will be speaking on the subject of *The Mind of the Honeybee*.

Annual club membership renewal – Stan Wroe

As mentioned last month, our membership year starts on 1st November and you will have an opportunity to renew your membership at the AGM. Further information to follow soon.

Apiary Team – Annabel Lewis

David Capon has reached the end of his term as our Apiary Manager and Eric Sortwell has agreed to take over that role going forwards. We would like to put together a small team of people to work with Eric to support him with the duties that go along with being Apiary Manager. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Maintain and develop the branch apiary
- Assist with practical training at the apiary
- Care for the branch colonies and equipment

The team needs to be made up of a mix of experience and practical abilities to ensure that the apiary can continue to go from strength to strength, so we are looking for a mix of people from across our membership.

If you are interested in being part of this team then please contact Annabel on foot.print@btinternet.com or 07814 225 319.

Club Apiary – Stan Wroe

We are considering relocating the apiary following various changes being effected by Solarsense at our site in Brockley.

Briefly, for those of you who have not been to the apiary recently, we relocated to the field below the one adjacent to the car park to allow Solarsense to make changes to their site.

The route on foot to our apiary is now somewhat circuitous and changes by the week. Furthermore, Solarsense has put two residential plots of land up for sale. It would appear from draft plans that the gardens to these properties will be adjacent to our current apiary location.

With this in mind, we have been considering our options in terms of moving to a new permanent site. This is where you, as members, could be invaluable. Do you know of a paddock, field, orchard, landowner, farmer etc who has a plot of land that they might consider selling or leasing to the club to enable us to secure a new home?

Obviously, it will need to be within our geographic area. The site would need space to hold a shed for equipment together with up to 30 hives. At Brockley, we currently occupy a space approximately 50 feet by 20/25 feet.

Car parking is another consideration as at the Sunday new beekeeper sessions we can have 15/20 cars to accommodate. However, we could manage this number down with car sharing etc.

We do have an option to relocate to the other side of the solar panel field at Solarsense but that is reliant on the purchase of the site by Low Carbon Gordano which seems to be taking some time - hence why we need to consider other options.

Please send your ideas or comments to northsomersetbeekeepers@gmail.com by 19th October.

A Bee Auction? – Rob Francis

One or two members of the branch have expressed an interest in having an auction of bee equipment next year. If you have any ideas about this or would be interested in helping to run one could you please contact Rob Francis (robfrancishere@gmail.com).

Courses update – Rob Francis

Improvers Course (Basic) Starts Tues 8th January 2019

If you have been keeping bees for a season or more then this is an excellent way of sharing your experience and expanding your knowledge and understanding. We meet for 7 sessions on every other Tuesday in St Andrews Church Hall in Backwell. It's fun as well. At the end of the course you will have the opportunity of taking the BBKA Basic Assessment which acts as a gateway to further assessments. However, there are some who just take the course to gain further understanding about the craft of beekeeping. If you are interested then contact me (robfrancishere@gmail.com) and I'll add your name to the group or provide you with further information.

The Winter Cluster starts again

Inevitably the pendulum swings back down to Autumn, bringing thoughts of THE WINTER CLUSTER again after a long hot summer.

The first meeting will be at THE STAR INN Star Inn, Rhodyate Hill, Congresbury, Bristol BS49 5AJ on Tuesday 23rd October at 12 noon.

Come and have a chat about bees or anything else that comes to mind. Everyone is welcome.

Committee focus

Over the last few months we have been raising awareness of our committee members by providing a short profile of individual members. This month:

Janet McCulloch - Branch Secretary

I have been branch secretary now for 5 years and this is my second term. I joined the committee originally as a member without portfolio in my first year as a beekeeper. I thought they had made a mistake when the secretary rang me to ask if I'd like to join. As secretary I try to ensure the committee meetings run smoothly and take the minutes. I also manage enquiries and communications from the



public and other branches. More recently I have taken over as editor of the branch newsletter, this role may eventually be undertaken by the communications officer. I live in Portishead with my partner Bob and dog Buster, who keep me busy. I love ballroom and Latin

American dancing and am trying to learn the piano using online apps.

My term of office ends next year and I would encourage anyone to take it on. You'll get to learn a lot about the running of the branch and it's not too onerous.

Informal home apiary visits - Rob Williams

Last July, with several other club members, I visited an apiary run by a natural beekeeper in Yatton. The flower filled garden was delightful, the sun shone, the bees industrious and the cake delicious.

Sitting around the tea pot and discussing all the usual problems of beekeeping, it struck us that the club should arrange informal "home visits" on a more regular basis. Arrangements could include:

- The agreed number of visitors in a group, e.g. 6.
- Quick run through the history of the apiary.
- Tea and (homemade?) cake would be provided.
- Local honey tasted, of course.
- Hives and bees observed.
- Full inspection of a hive might be possible, time & weather permitting.
- A relaxed atmosphere, essential!

Arrangements for scheduling the visits would depend on how many members are interested in participating. Each group of six means a rotation of six visits, hosted by each group member. Probably the scheduling would be during the 12 weeks of May and July. Which suggests one visit a fortnight. If required several groups could run simultaneously. Mid-week sessions are more likely to be popular, as weekends tend to get packed out with family commitments.

If you are interested or have any comments/suggestions, please contact me: rob.williams.longashton@gmail.com

Local events - *John Banks*

Visit our website regularly for any changes to the 2018 programme: [Bee Keeping Diary 2018](#)

Next branch meeting – 6th October *Brains Trust*

Do you have any questions, peculiar to your honey bees, that you need advice about?

If so, come along to Churchill Memorial Hall, Churchill at 2pm on Saturday 6 October 2018 and ask our team of experts for their opinion. Our experts comprise: Stephen Brain, Ivor Davis and Martin Stickland.

So please come along with your questions and listen to the responses from our Brains Trust of well-seasoned and acknowledged honey bee experts.

Even if you have no questions or problems with your bees, the responses from our experts should prove interesting.

The event will be a bit like Gardeners Question Time, except it will little to do with gardening and a lot to do with bees!

Additionally, we may stump the panel, because if your bees are like my bees, they do not read books and often surprise us.

Wider events coming up in next couple of months – *Jenny Wakenshaw*

National Honey Show

Sandown Racecourse 25th-27th October

Maisemore Apiaries

End of season sale 1st October – 30th November

Bee craft monthly online “hang outs”

All are invited to join the Bee craft online discussion of topical issues. Watch the discussion or ask questions or comment live by email. Hangouts are recorded for future use. Future dates for your diary are: Oct 31, Nov 28, Dec 19. Access here:

<http://www.bee-craft.com/beekeeping/bee-craft-live/>

Winscombe Michaelmas Fair – Heather Pitch

There was a steady stream of interested visitors to the North Somerset Beekeepers stand at the Winscombe Michaelmas Fair on 8 September. The club had set up an observation hive showing the queen and her worker bees

plus a demonstration brood box illustrating frames in different stages. Visitors could also try rolling beeswax candles and chat with the knowledgeable club supporters. But most popular was the honey tasting which resulted in an early sell-out of members’ produce!



All the competition entries for the Fair’s honey classes were on display too: honey cake, shortbread, fudge, cut comb, clear honey and honey frames.

Congratulations are due to all the prize-winners, especially Belinda Kumpel for scoring most points in the overall honey section thereby winning the Honey Cup this year.

Winscombe: A coordinator’s perspective - *Adrian Wells*

The show kit was collected from the Apiary on Friday afternoon. It was thoughtfully set out by the door. When loading I noted that the expanding display was missing. I had already had to take the table cloths, grubby with mud, home to wash and iron.

We were using some new tabards and I felt that they were a good start, with a large logo on the back and was an improvement on the T-Shirts (I wore mine) but lacked that *je ne sais quoi*.

The kit was dropped off in the marquee ready for the morning - this proved to be a challenge since it appeared that the ‘management’ who were very stressed, were at loggerheads over what and who went where! I waded in to defend our stand to be sure that we had enough space, and then offered a sweetener by untangling and helping to lay out the very long string of lamps. All smiles at the end.

There have been changes at the show that included the re-location of the marquee to the far end of the field. The shape of the marquee also resulted in a change of layout, with our stand now being opposite the door. In front of us was a table and seating area for use by those drinking at the newly introduced bar. This additional space allowed the observation hive to move in front of the stand, helping with flow around the candle area. There was live music (guitar/singer) who on occasion was a bit loud but playing

was not constant. We were told that we could ask him to lower the volume if we wanted.

It appeared that we had far less visitors to the marquee this year, in past years it has been very congested at times. This may have been due to a lower attendance, or perhaps because the marquee was so far away from the main building.

The on-line registration for entrants seemed to work well, but I would like feed-back from users. It was well received by the show, and as mentioned before, the fair organizers have shown an interest in using it too.

There are always issues with our prize cards being delivered. The flower and veg department want nothing to do with us, and so we have to deliver our details to the office in the main building; and wait! Often the prize cards for the cake & fudge etc. end up with the cake show in the main building. Quite why there was an issue with the honey classes this year I don't know, but I think that about three attempts were made to get this right, with cards being written at our stand!

We had very little honey to sell, from just two producers, which of course sold out. In past years we have kept large stocks under the bench and even so, often little is left.

After paying for the pitch (£15.00), honey sales and candle rolling returned to the club the sum of £14.80! (Some of this being a donation from Paddy whose honey was not correctly recorded. Thank you for your generosity Paddy, and apologies for any mix-up).

All-in-all the show was very positive, the stand looked very professional and eye catching. It was very well looked after, despite having few volunteers. We had several people interested in taking up bee keeping and of course were directed to our beginners' course.

I would like to extend my thanks again to the following, hoping that I've not missed anyone, since without their help we couldn't have put on such a brilliant display or passed on so much education and knowledge.

- Paddy "I was duped" Brading
- David "Hollywood" Capon
- Belinda "T.M.I" Kumpel
- Garry "keep calm" Packer
- Heather "early riser" Pitch
- Wendy "I'm not wearing that" Welham
- Stan "will you have a pint" Wroe

BIBBA Conference 2018 – Jenny Wakenshaw

The BIBBA Conference is a biennial event and this year it was held at Cirencester Agricultural University. I attended all the three days. The Conference was held in a beautiful location and was very well organized with lovely accommodation, great food and plenty of it! All the lectures started promptly and ended on time.

There was so much content; each session had three themed streams, and you switch between them. But it was difficult to choose between: 1. Bee improvement 2. General beekeeping 3. Newer beekeepers.

Unfortunately, Tony Jefferson was unable to get to the conference but the organizer, Roger Patterson, covered with his talk "The Patterson unit." He is always interesting. John Donoghue was good with "good Spring management" and I picked up a few tips on maintaining apideas from Jim Pearson.

Saturday was a good day with another talk by Roger on "small scale queen rearing." He certainly makes you think. I also attended a seminar on "bee improvement groups: a case study" which was impressive. The stand out talk for me was "Variations on Demaree: more than just for swarm control" again by Jim Pearson. Finally, a talk by John Chambers on "The use of honey in the management of skin wounds" was also thought provoking.

Sunday morning started with "Controlled mating: the key for conservation and breeding" by Dylan Elen. Some of his methods could be easily adopted. Two talks by John Donoghue "Bringing nucs through the Winter" and "Managing bees for the honey crop" were worth staying for. Finally, it was lovely to hear Jo Widdicombe talk on "Improving bees: what works for me" and I got him to sign his book.

I thoroughly enjoyed the weekend and I just hope that some of it stuck and that I can read my notes! I met lots of nice people and would recommend going to anyone.