



North Somerset Beekeepers

(a Branch of Avon Beekeepers Association Reg Charity No 271717)

Minutes of Committee meeting held on Thursday 19th June 2023 at The George

1. **Apologies received from:** Paddy Brading, Eric Sortwell, Garry Packer, Annabel Lewis
2. **Approval of minutes:** Minutes of meeting of April 24th approved
3. **Matters arising (not covered below):** Apiary WhatsApp group (DC) In Eric's absence this item was postponed to the September meeting.

The hive sponsored by the 'Hive' now has bees, Holly Salmon attended the apiary on Sunday and is going to report back to the Hive. She is writing a blog keeping the sponsors updated with the progress of the bees.

Eric has updated apiary stock, three new suits purchased.

He had suggested that if the new electric extractor goes out, then ideally it should be passed from one hirer to the next, not returned to the apiary each Sunday.

4. **Feedback from Training Day Cancellation (HP):** It was agreed to make a £50 goodwill payment to the caterer.

There was a lengthy discussion on the cancelled training day and a variety of opinions and suggestions were put forward: A couple of people had mentioned in feedback that it might be better in winter, but this would preclude practical sessions in the apiary, and also a barbecue. It was felt that the logistics of a mix of practical and social events is difficult; we could have a social event but has to be entirely self-funded. Jodi mentioned pressure on the apiary team of running hives and there was

limited capacity for them to take on extra, the meeting acknowledged the hard work that all the apiary team put in.

Tony mentioned the success of the bee safari, where the various apiary visits were combined with a sociable lunch at his house (and at Ginny Gibbs' on a previous occasion). Jen mentioned other pressures on members and time constraints on people. RW thought the training day was an excellent balance of things to do and well planned, Rob thought that the advertising was not good, and people were drawn to the Grand opening last year and that was more successful. Maybe this should be considered in the planning for next year in September meeting.

- 5. Swarm report from Adrian Wells (HP):** Adrian had sent his thoughts to the committee (attached). It was agreed that although we cover swarm control in the Introductory course and at the apiary, it is in their first or second year of going solo, that many people get into difficulty with their colonies swarming. It was proposed that we hold a meeting in March. Specifically targeting beekeepers in their second and third years, on swarm control to demonstrate and compare several different methods. The role of the mentor was discussed briefly, and how we allocate mentors, and relationship between mentors and mentees. (this is currently done by Eric who was not at the meeting, so could maybe be discussed at September meeting)).

The Committee put on record their thanks to Adrian for the work he does coordinating swarm collectors.

- 6. Clutton Show (RW):** Rob had been approached to see if we would consider attending, but we agreed it was out of our area so we would not attend.

- 7. Treasurer's report (TS):** Refunds for Apiary training session had been completed, some members had not claimed the refund so £50 was donated to club, our current balance is £8653 last year the comparative sum was around £7000. We need to update our inventories, so Tony requested that relevant members do a stock take of all our physical resources and replacement cost: for apiary equipment, extractors, laptop and Av equipment, and show equipment. Deadline by end of September.
- 8. Membership secretary update (HP):** Membership currently stands at 215 (6 country, 1 hon, 3 junior, 1 school, 8 local, 12 partner, 184 registered).
- 9. Secretary's report (DC):** David informed the meeting of his intention to stand down at the AGM.
- 10. Education Co-ordinator's report (PB):** Paddy had circulated prior to the meeting.
- 11. Apiary Manager's report (ES):** Eric had circulated prior to meeting.
- 12. Programme Manager/ Webmaster's report (RW):** Rob reported on a successful visit to Buckfast, but noted it was only viable because he had opened it to all of Avon; 12 people attended, but only Rob from N Soms. AGM speaker, Rob had approached someone in Wales, but it was too far away, so we still need a speaker for AGM. HP suggested Lars Chittka.
- 13. ABKA Rep's report (ES):** Nothing to report.
- 14. Members without portfolio:** Nothing
- 15. Chair's Report (HP):** Our AHAT team currently has Annabel as leader, and David as our only other member. Jen Stallwood agreed to train up (update, Jen has now completed online training), HP to target a new group to join AHAT.

The BBKA are planning to plant a tree in branch apiaries to celebrate their anniversary, It was agreed we could look to accommodate one.

Honey hall solar farm proposal, Lee Silver had sent the committee a communication he had had from Honeyhall solar farm, which is planning a substantial development near Langford, and were prepared to support the club in some way. Tony felt this might be a bit of PR on their part and suggested they looked at the planting they put in the area to benefit our bees. Tony agreed to accompany Lee on a visit to gather more information.

Mark Hunter had won poly hive at the Avon spring day school and has donated to the branch. David would message Mark thanking him on behalf of the committee.

16. Any other business: Jodi reported that The Old Farmhouse, Nailsea could accommodate us for Christmas Dinner, but had not published menus yet. Various menu options available. Rob had contacted Priory at Portbury for availability.

17. Date of next meeting: Sept 4th , 7,30pm at The George.

Meeting closed at 20.50

Addendum: Swarm report from Adrian

Spring 2023

Dear Committee members and Apiary Managers,

I would like to bring to your attention the issue of swarm control, or rather lack of, amongst our members. This is provoked by year-upon-year observations as well as members like Michael Batchelor bringing swarm hotspots to our attention.

I will start with mitigating circumstances; we all have pressures on our lives; namely personal time constraints and of course warm winters and weather that is often not conducive to opening a hive when we have time!

There are two areas that I would like to concentrate upon, namely swarm control and swarm collection.

Swarm control:

- New beekeepers are understandably in need of advice, and many appear to have no practical experience of the mechanics or an understanding of the theory. I have spoken to many panicking BKs who are not confident in their ability, leave it too late or else simply leave the bees to their own devices for lack of knowledge or confidence.

When a novice only has a single hive, with prime swarms snaffled by others or else lost, and the hive is issuing castes, it is extremely difficult to give advice that the novice can confidently use, if their skills or confidence is lacking. Ideally a site visit is required. Novices need support to ensure a positive experience.

- We also appear to have a number of supposedly more experienced beekeepers who have no clue about swarm control, or just don't care.

What are the consequences of this? Husbandry and colony considerations aside,

- we have a moral and social obligation when bees are kept in a suburban environment.
- additional and unnecessary work is created for the swarm collectors.
- and probably stress to the beekeeper if they truly consider any of the consequences.

Swarm collection:

- Every beekeeper should be armed with this skill, and I believe it is important that all beekeepers at the very least try to gather in their swarms, even if they can't house them. They have a duty of care to their neighbours! The very least that they can do is to ask for help.

I often get calls like "I have a swarm, the beekeeper down the road said I should call you" this washing of hands is outrageous!

Or "My bees have swarmed and I don't want them", again, it is outrageous that they do nothing and expect someone else to step in.

- Beekeepers should know how to reintroduce a swarm when additional nucs or hives are unavailable. "I don't have space for them, or want them" is a very poor excuse.

Solutions:

I don't claim to have any solutions, but clearly this is about education and reminding people about social obligations. I am keen to encourage all bee keepers to keep bees their way, but they should still consider the consequences of their hobby.

I offer some thoughts that might be a useful springboard. I understand that some of the following might already be in place, but perhaps needs reinforcement or expansion, it's just brainstorming, please don't be offended.

- Winter and beginners' courses should cover the moral and social aspects of swarm control as well as the theory and mechanics.
- Prompt members more strongly about when they should be carrying out swarm control inspections, and how frequently.
- We need to be careful not to make pariahs of repeat offenders, but they need some encouragement to be responsible beekeepers.
- A method that encourages people to come forward and ask for help or training, without stigma.
- Apiary visits for new beekeepers should expand upon swarm control, uniting colonies, the social impact of swarming, as well as the effects upon the colony.
- New beekeepers should be "enforced" to join the swarm collectors' group. Any that join are encouraged to participate by their mentor, even if they don't want a swarm; one person has attended a collection so far this year to my knowledge.
- Regular (winter/early spring?) Swarm control courses. I'd be happy to explain how simple, efficient, flexible, and cost effective Snelgroving is for both swarm control and uniting colonies.

I would appreciate the committee taking some time to discuss this subject.

Currently we have a remarkably good relationship with the public, but It will only take one Facebook keyboard warrior to start a process whereby back-garden beekeeping becomes almost impossible. We must take the initiative.

Whatever else is taught about beekeeping husbandry, I am of the opinion that swarm control is probably one of the most important.

Kindest regards

Adrian Wells