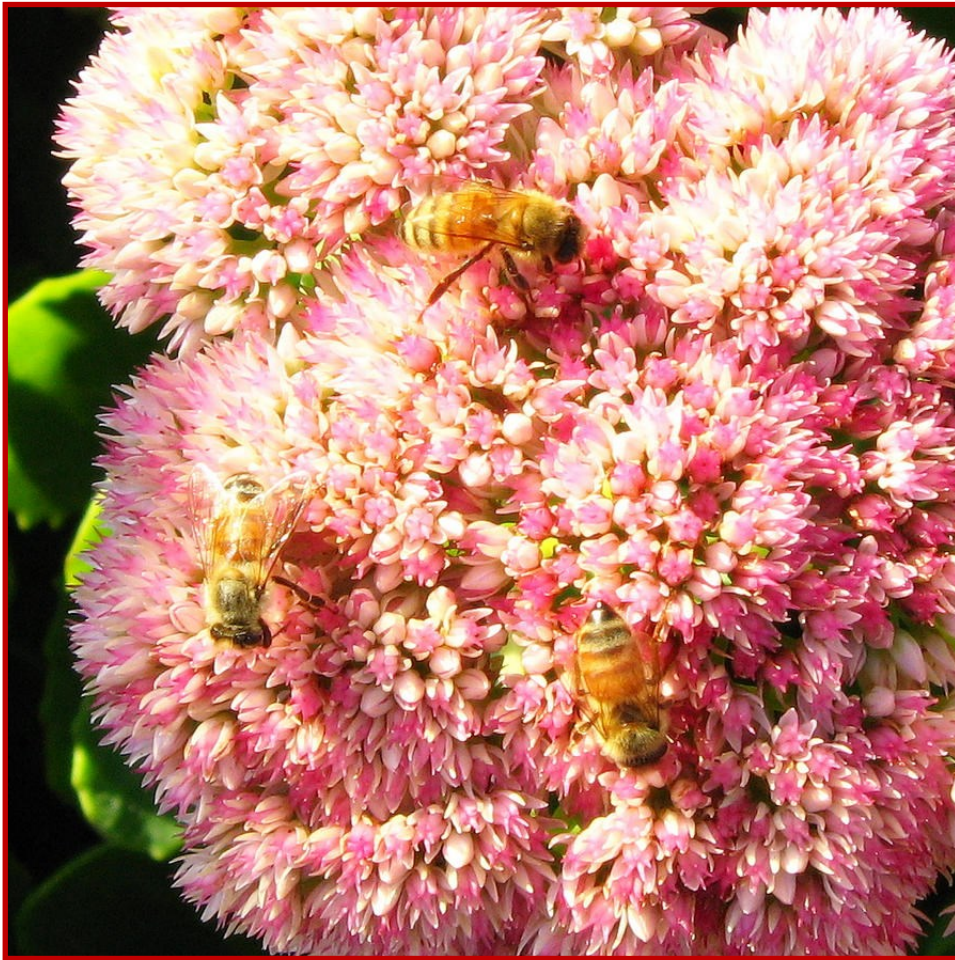


HONEYCRAFT

October 2021



Bees on sedum flower

Dorset County Beekeepers Association



Editor's note

A short issue of HoneyCraft brings the beekeeping year to an end. The branch notes generally record that 2021 has not been an easy year—Covid has restricted activities, particularly training, while the weather has been variable and honey harvests have been disappointing in many cases. However there have been bright moments along the way, such as the Sunflower Trail near Dorchester.

Our Seasonal Bee Inspector, Kevin Pope, reports on the diseases he found as he went about his summer's work, while Stephen Potts attended a Zoom meeting of the South West Beekeepers' Forum. A short article on the National Bee Unit, courtesy of Beecraft, brings the issue to an end.

The minutes of the Dorset BKA council meeting held on 15 September are held by branch secretaries where they may be seen by members.

Enjoy—and may I be the first to wish all readers a very Happy Christmas and the hope that 2022 will be an improvement on 2021!

Tim Villiers

P.S. To start the new year with a bang, North Dorset BKA is offering places to all Dorset beekeepers on three courses based on BBKA modules 1, 3 and 6—see the NDBKA notes on p.10 for more information.

Don't forget

National Honey Show

at Sandown Park racecourse

21-23 October 2021

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Chairwoman's chatter

This is the time of year we all hope that the bees are tucked up nicely, well fed and ready to face the winter. It may not be cold but it certainly can be windy so anchor your hives if they are in exposed positions.

I want to remind everyone about wax moths because this is the moment they are also tucked up nicely in our brood frames ready to create havoc if given a chance. Wax moths feed on the cocoons of the larvae that have hatched in the combs. They are not that interested in clean honey supers; they prefer brood comb. You can deal with them in a variety of ways:

- You can freeze the combs in a freezer for at least 24 hours. This kills the eggs as well as the larvae but many people do not have space in their freezers for bulky combs.
- You can treat them with acetic acid which is very powerful stuff and needs to be treated with care. Wear protective clothing as it can eat through concrete. Read the instructions before you start.
- Finally you can steam your brood combs, collect the wax and re-wax them with foundation. This is time-consuming and expensive in wax but at least your queens will have lovely clean combs to lay in.

There are no easy answers to wax moths. Keep an eye out for them now; they need warmth to mature and we have had a very mild September.

Lesley Gasson

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SouthWest Beekeepers Forum

meeting held on 7th September 2021 – by Zoom

Stephen Potts attended this meeting as the representative of Dorset BKA. These are his own notes with his own emphasis and interpretation—they are NOT the minutes of the meeting.

Apologies, Previous minutes and Matters Arising all went through with no comment except a request that the minutes be released earlier so that we have more time to peruse them and an opportunity to take them to our Association before the next SWBKA meeting. It was agreed this was desirable with the caveat that the minutes are still in draft form until approved by the next SWBKF meeting.

Effect of Covid on Associations

Many were nervous about using Zoom at the start of the lock downs but confidence has grown amongst those of us who have persisted. There was concern that some members may have been left out or just did not want to participate in Zoom sessions.

There has been a mix of activities on the Zoom platform. Somerset have embraced Zoom in a big way with their lectures. Zoom meetings have meant we can use lecturers from far afield.

Other associations have had a mixture of lectures and meetings. In addition there have been wild flower planting sessions and conservation projects which, being in the open air, have been possible under partial lock-down.

In addition, Somerset have set up individual Zoom accounts for each division. Some divisions have made more use of this facility than others. They have also set up WhatsApp groups and these have been well used and possibly resulted in getting to know other members better than just “face to face” meetings. One association found WhatsApp was useful for beginners to flag up issues but they were best resolved via a phone call rather than short messages.

There have been several virtual Honey Shows which have been very successful.

The training programmes for beginners have been well attended on Zoom and it has been necessary to limit numbers because of the difficulty of organising practical sessions.

The online exams for the modules have been successful though there were some candidates who would have preferred a written paper.

BBKA ADM 2022

Hopefully this will be a hybrid meeting. BBKA are sounding opinion on who wants a physical meeting and who wants a Zoom meeting. They need to know asap so that they know what size hall they need. All comments went with the caveat that circumstances could change. It was also observed that the use of Zoom was more environment friendly though not as sociable.

It was suggested that the physical meeting be restricted to delegates who wished to attend and visitors and observers use Zoom.

Devon were concerned about honey adulteration and had three similar proposals to encourage the BBKA to lobby National Trading Standards or the Government or ask the BBKA to embark on an active programme to discourage the importing of adulterated honey. Devon have yet to decide which of these proposals they will back but they will decide on Saturday. As they need a seconder I have suggested that Dorset could consider it at our meeting on Tuesday. (Other associations were prepared to do the same but they were meeting on Saturday which is at the same time as Devon are choosing their final wording.)

The Inspector Reports

In the last edition of HoneyCraft, I wrote about the spectacularly odd year regarding the weather; it did settle a little but not completely. I think every month of the summer was not quite what we would normally expect but then again, you have the question of what is normal. What it did mean was that with a few exceptions most people in England had a bad honey crop; bizarrely, though, it seemed that Wales had a really good year. I have heard of one commercial beekeeper quoting £8 a pound in a 30lb bucket as he was so short; it had to be really worth his while to sell it, as he thought he only had enough honey to service his existing outlets.

Now on to disease. Dorset seems to have bucked the national trend this year of very high levels of English foul brood. We had five apiaries with positive cases; one between Dorchester and Yeovil, one between Blandford and Wimborne and three between Wareham and Swanage. Then, in only the third hive in 12 seasons, I found a hive with American foul brood between Blandford and Shaftsbury. Where that came from, we cannot be sure; it could simply have come from someone not washing out an empty jar of honey before they put it in the recycling. After all, a large percentage of imported honey has AFB spores in it!

In the last edition of this journal, I included some photos for you to peruse and come up with a diagnosis; only one person has been in touch with me and as far as I know no one has been in touch with the Editor. Just for the record it was “neglected brood” and yes, the only person to ring me about it got it right.

I am including another photo for this edition, this time of bald brood. I have seen a large increase of this over the last few seasons; there is an increasing amount of evidence that the bees are uncapping brood in order to control varroa. The exact mechanism for this is not yet completely clear: is the uncapping enough to disrupt the varroa or do the bees actively remove the mites? However they do it, if the bees uncap 40% of the cells with varroa, the numbers of varroa stay at a sustainable level. I listened to a lecture from Professor Steven Martin who believes that within 10 to 15 years most of us will not have to use any treatments for the control of varroa. We cannot just stop using some form of treatment, as the professor said. In order to stop treatment you have to put in a lot of monitoring and gradually cut down on the treatment as and when the bees can deal with the level of infestation. We will have to go from two treatments to one each year and then to every other year and so on. Also we will have to breed from the best bees for dealing with varroa on their own.

There is not a lot more to say at this time on the disease front, apart from the fact that it has been a very stressful year for the bees with the on-off weather; so please make sure you do everything you can to help your bees through the winter with enough food and a low level of varroa; after all, all any of us really want is a nice house that is dry and warm with plenty of food and to be healthy.

Happy overwintering. See you next season.

Kevin Pope



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Dorchester & Weymouth BKA



Events

We managed to do two events this year, one over a three-week period which was the Sunflower Trail. This finally ended on Bank Holiday Monday, having gone on for an extra week so it was three weeks in total. We managed to attend over three weekends plus four weekdays.

This was an event tailor-made for us in that it was all about bees and pollination. Although it started as a small local event, thanks to the power of social media, it soon became very popular and there was a good footfall of up to 1,100 on one day alone. We were very busy candle-rolling! Over the nine days we attended we took £558 for the association. A percentage of this will go towards the Special-Care Baby Unit (SCBU) at Dorset County Hospital which was the chosen charity of the organiser.

There was a lot of interest in buying honey so those who took their honey managed to sell it all. In fact Hazel, the organiser, said the days we didn't attend were a disappointment, particularly with one person who had come again specifically to buy more honey. As well as this, we had the Asian hornet banner there and talked to many people about it. Stephen, our AH Co-Ordinator, went to do a follow-up visit on a farm in North Dorset where the farmer was convinced he had seen an AH. It was a false alarm luckily but at least the public are becoming more aware of the AH.



The event was held in a sunflower field close to Maiden Castle -- a very iconic setting.

The second event was held at Maumbury Rings, Dorchester, and formed part of the Dorchester Heritage Days. It was a one-day event and despite the forecast of showers it was hot and sunny. We took our three new information boards which are light and easy to store and our Asian hornet banner.

By now, none of our members had any honey to sell so we did some sunflower honey tasting instead. The more we can get the public to appreciate and understand what "real" honey tastes like, as opposed to supermarket honey, the better.



As well as information we did candle-rolling and skep-making. There was a steady footfall throughout the day so it was well worth our attending. We signed-up a few more members and two for our 2022 Beginners course.

It was another iconic setting to hold an event and it was good to be involved in the Dorchester Heritage Days.

Sally Leslie

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East Dorset BKA

We are delighted EDBKA's apiary hives are now all refurbished with Danish queens so that their colonies are, without exception, a joy to inspect and make a wonderful "playground" for our new beekeepers. Our apiary manager, Robin Oliver, has also been busy preparing nuclei, built up to get them through the winter and be ready as an alternative to swarms for our new cohort of enthusiasts. We concluded our Saturday afternoon apiary meetings with discussions and practical exercises on treating bees for varroa and preparing colonies for the winter.

Back with a flourish is the EDBKA Honey Show which, this year, will take place on Saturday 13 November at West Moors Memorial Hall. Please drop in for tea and cake at around 3pm if you can.

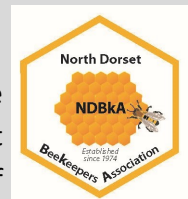
Next year, we hope all will be well and we will be able to return to our winter meetings in the usual way at Broadstone Arts Centre rather than using Zoom. We will be concentrating on improving our skills in "making increase", queen-rearing and swarm control.

Our quota of eager newcomers looking to undertake our beginners' training is full and we are contemplating running two courses this year. We are happy that they will be joining an association that has so much to offer them.

Ivor Kemp

North Dorset BKA

NDBKA is gearing up to raise money to fund their new apiary. We have a building designed to be state of the art for the environment and beekeeping which is going to cost us over £100,000 so it is all hands to fundraising. Tim Villiers is the chairman of the subcommittee and has all sorts of ideas as to how the sums will be raised. We hope to raise some through grants as well as members' efforts. It will probably be two years before the apiary is completed but it will be an asset for Dorset as well as NDBKA.



We are too late for the November modular exams but NDBKA hopes to run three modular courses in time for the March exams. You may be interested in attending one or more of the courses but not be prepared to sit the exam. Please come on a course even if you do not sit the exam you will have learnt something and used the winter evenings well. The exams we intend to run for six sessions each from January are as follows.

Module 1 Honeybee Management which is concerned with looking after the bees during the year and is an easy step on from the Basic Exam

Module 3 Honeybee Diseases which looks at both brood diseases and adult bee disease and how to treat them. It is a very useful module for anyone worried about symptoms but not sure what they are looking at.

Module 6 Honeybee Behaviour. This module is a joy. It looks at pheromones, and explains some of the activities we see in our colonies.

There will be six sessions on each module; they will be held in the Shillingstone Church Centre from 7.30-9.30pm on some week ay nights depending on the take-up. The cost will be £10 a session and so £60 will be the cost for a module.

If you are interested in joining a course please let me know on 01258 861690 or email lesleygasson@btinternet.com

Lesley Gasson

Sherborne BKA

Attendance at apiary inspections has been good this year, culminating in the start of winter feeding in early September. We'd had a pitiful honey crop, as did most Associations I know of.

SBKA had its AGM on the 5th October and the committee is as follows:

Chairman: Richard Baker (as caretaker)

Treasurer: Judy Easdale

Secretary: Richard Baker

Apiary Manager: Marc Caretta

AHAT Co-ordinator: Tony Thorp

Committee Members: Greg Broadbent (Assistant Treasurer), Stewart Bryant (Apiary), Suzanne Chant

We thank Richard Hale for his commitment over the past few years; he is stepping down. Also Gill Worthy who has been Treasurer over the past few years and had to grapple with the new e2Return system in its infancy. She is moving to Cumbria.

Congratulations to Deborah Bathurst for attaining a Distinction in Module 3. We hope that encourages more take up in doing the Modules.

I'd like to remind members that we have a small library which can be utilized. It is housed at the treasurer's house in Poyntington if anyone is interested.

We hope to be holding winter talks at The Mitre Inn starting in December, as we did before the pandemic.

Judy Easdale



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West Dorset BKA



Another year has galloped by, still with Covid restrictions being around and some folk still wary of attending sessions. Thankfully we have been able to have group meetings at the apiary on a weekly basis, though sadly not many have turned up. Those who have, hopefully had a good time and learnt a few things or gone away thinking “maybe I will do it that way” — but as we all know beekeepers have their own way of doing things!! All the bees have been fed and treated for varroa mites this year with Apistan strips for a change. We found them very easy to put in and the bees took the syrup down much better without the aroma of Apiguard, which we think stops the bees from smelling the syrup. Our final members’ meeting will be held on 2nd October — for a good clean-up of equipment and a good sort-out of super/brood frames, before we have the last boil-up of frames at the end of October, ready to start off with next spring.

Our honey crop was down by approximately 100 lbs this year with the same number of hives at the teaching apiary and I believe that was about the same loss for most of the West Dorset beekeepers.

Hopefully the Melplash Show will be held next year in August, on the Thursday before the bank holiday. We are preparing for our Beginners Course which will start in January 2022 at the Christian Fellowship Hall if all goes to plan, on condition that the during the winter period Covid does not take off again. If that happens we will have to rethink our plans. Fingers crossed.!

Carole Browne



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About the National Bee Unit

Editor's Note. *This article and photograph are reproduced by the kind courtesy of Beecraft magazine and appeared in the June 2021 issue of that magazine.*

After the Second World War, a government unit was set up to look into best farming practices, including looking after honey bees and other livestock. The NBU, formed in 1979, has gone through various changes and today is part of the Animal Plant Health Agency (APHA), which in turn is part of the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The purpose of the NBU is to identify notifiable bee diseases (European foul brood and American foul brood) and to look for non-native species (such as the small hive beetle, *Tropilaelaps* and the Asian hornet – all pests that could enter the UK at any time) that affect the honey bee and other native pollinators. The NBU also researches best practice for beekeepers to control pests and diseases. Varroa continues to be a problem to bees, so the NBU also advises beekeepers on how to manage this parasitic mite.

Beekeepers are encouraged to sign up to BeeBase, the National Bee Unit's website. BeeBase is an excellent source of beekeeping and honey bee health information. Beekeepers who sign up will receive important alerts about health concerns in their area and can arrange a visit from their bee inspector.



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Who's Who in the Dorset County Beekeepers' Association

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