

APIARY NEWSLETTER



April 2024 Volume 111, Issue 2

Founded in 1913

FIRST CONFIRMED ASIAN HORNET SIGHTING OF 2024



ASH, KENT



Asian hornets may possibly have become established in the UK after the earliest ever sighting of the predatory insect was recorded by the government this month.

This is an alarming development for Britain's bee population and could have serious repercussions for the agricultural industry that rely on them as pollinators. As has been seen on mainland Europe once hornets are established it is almost impossible to eradicate them.

Asian hornets (*Vespa velutina*) are thriving in France, where they have caused concern because of the number of bees and other insects they have dismembered and killed. They 'hawk' outside honeybee hives and capture bees as they enter and exit. They chop up the smaller insects and feed their thoraxes to their young. Just one Asian hornet can hunt down and eat 30 to 50 honeybees in a day. Which is 5g. per hornet per day.....link that to the fact that it is estimated that around 6000 Asian hornets will emerge from a nest of which 180-500 will be new queens.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs have confirmed that a hornet was captured on 11th March in Ash in Kent. After laboratory testing it was confirmed to be an Asian hornet .

Last year, the earliest sighting of a hornet was on 11th April. They are thought to be imported in goods from Europe, and occasionally can fly or be blown off course across the Channel. But a sighting so early this year indicates the hornets may have overwintered in the UK , meaning they may have become established. Diane Drinkwater, the British Beekeepers' Association Chair, said: "I suspect this is a winter queen that was born here. That has not been confirmed, but that would be logical"



The Association's 2024 AGM took place on Saturday 16th March 2024 at the Northfield Centre in Stafford

The South Staffordshire & District Beekeepers' Association's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held on or before the end of March each year. This is the association's keynote meeting and as such is open to all to elect / re-elect members of the Committee.

Each year a number of people are voted into office to perform specific roles, also a number of general committee members are elected. Committee members must be nominated and stand for election each year. Committee members are expected to step down after undertaking 3 years in the same role, other elected members must stand down from their 'officer' role also after 3 years.

Although Officers and Committee members are elected for a period of 3 years they still have to be re-elected each year.

Any member of the association can be nominated. All that is asked of the nominees is that they have a willingness to be involved and work as part of a team for the benefit of the association and its members!

The AGM is also a time to recognise the achievements of individual members and groups of members within the Association.

Current Officers:

- Chair of Committee – Wendy Woodward
- President – Paul Twibill
- Treasurer – Ed Bennett
- Secretary – Penny Twibill

The agenda of this years AGM was as follows:

- Apologies for absence
- Minutes of 2023 AGM
- Introduction of SS&DBKA Committee 2023
- Chair and President's Reports.
- Treasurer's Report & Independent Accounts Examiner's Report
- Other Officers' Reports:
 - * Education & Examination Secretary
 - * Apiaries Co-ordinators
 - * Events Co-ordinator
 - * Membership Secretary
 - * Quartermaster's Report; incl. Honey Sales
- Proposed Constitution Changes
- Proposed General Data Protection Regulation policy changes.
- Presentation of BBKA Certificates and the David Battersby Shield
- Election of Standing Officers and Committee 2024
- Asian Hornet Lead- Preparing for Spring Incursion
- Any Other Business
- The Association's year in pictures
- Closing of meeting

Full details of all of the above reports can be found here: [AGM](#)



Members of the Committee

JAMES SAVAGE:

WWII PRISON CAMP BEEKEEPER

[STALAG 383]

The long forgotten story of a beekeeping Scottish prisoner of war came to light after librarians discovered a record of the former head of beekeeping at the West of Scotland Agricultural College.



Company Sergeant Major (CSM) Savage was captured and taken Prisoner of War in St Valery en Caux in Normandy in 1940 after the 51st Highland Division were left behind following the Dunkirk evacuation. Despite refusing to “slave” for Hitler and having to endure a bitter forced march across Europe after his capture, CSM James Hamilton Savage persuaded the Nazi guards in Stalag 383, near Hohenfels in Bavaria, to allow him to set up beehives behind the barbed wire fences.

In 1942 the ‘*Captive Drones Association*’ was started by CSM Savage – who first learned beekeeping from his father in Ayrshire.

They talked the Germans into provided equipment in exchange for cigarettes and other things from their Red Cross parcels. CSM Savage was taken out to meet a beekeeper in the neighbouring village. The beekeeper wasn’t impressed to start with because he was a PoW, but when he realised he was a knowledgeable beekeeper they got on like a house on fire. In fact, the German provided the first hive and bees.

CSM Savage began making hives from Red Cross crates sent to the camp and when bees swarmed above the camp CSM Savage caught them to put in subsequent hives.



Prisoners at Stalag 383 demonstrate the honey-making process

The prisoners, however, only got to taste a little of the honey with their meagre rations. Most of it stayed with the bees to help them survive winter, with the PoW’s actually giving up some of their sugar rations! Rather than a source of food, beekeeping was something to keep them occupied, it was keeping them interested in something rather than mulling over their situation.



When war ended he hid in a coal heap with other PoW’s, worried about reprisals from the Germans. “The Germans were running scared and they moved everyone out of the camp. The prisoners would have been worried about their fate.”

CSM Savage joined The Queens Own Cameron Highlanders in 1922 and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery in Palestine in the 1930’s - despite chest and knee injuries in an ambush he covered Capt. CS Clarke in a counter-attack, using a Lewis gun.



He left the military after the war and went to West of Scotland Agricultural College where he was employed as a lecturer in beekeeping, eventually becoming the Head of Beekeeping. His work there was directly influenced by his experiences in Stalag 383

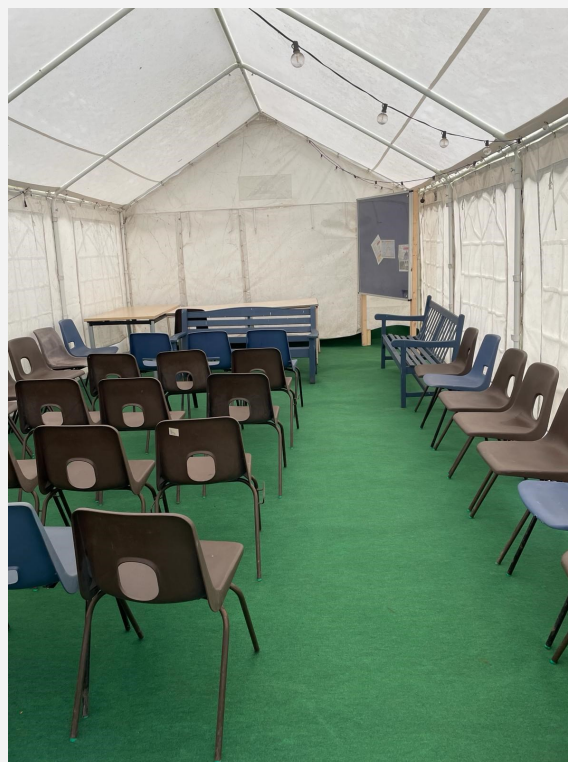


NEWS FROM THE SHUGBOROUGH APIARY

We have been working very hard at 'The Kennels' in preparation for the upcoming season. As can be seen here, when members turned up in force to clean equipment and make ready the ground inside the marquees



BEFORE.....



.....AND AFTER.....

WHAT A TRANSFORMATION !

Just a gentle reminder the Apiaries are open to members from Saturday 27th April at 10:00 hrs.

At Shugborough we have been hard at work laying new matting in the marquees ready for the start of the season.

Chris & Alan Brewin

SUGAR IS NOW AVAILABLE

A maximum 2 buckets per member at the usual cost of £3.00 in exchange for an empty bucket. Please ring Chris 07423-011239 or Penny 07758-161744 to order sugar and arrange collection.

HILTON GREEN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

2023 was the first time the Hilton Apiary was used for Beginner Beekeeper Training, it went very well, however it became clear that the arrangement of the Apiary was not suitable.



So plans were hatched to redesign the layout and attempt to slab for of the site.



Thanks to all those who helped in anyway. We think it's looking good and will hopefully work better in the future.

Paul Twibill



Thanks mainly to Peter Illidge slabs were obtained and over a couple of sessions the hives were moved and slabs laid.



WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERY



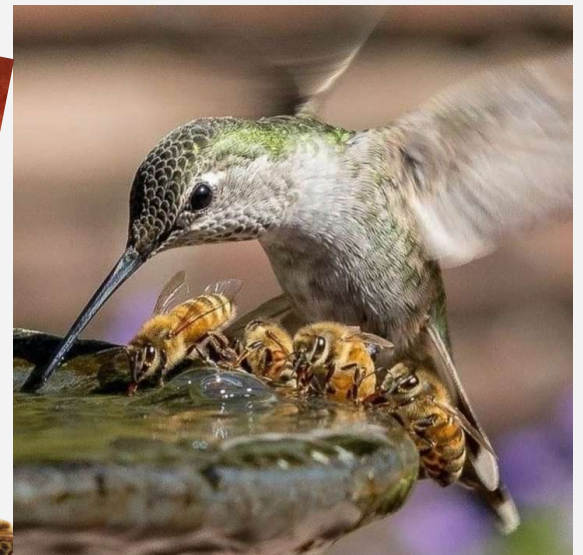
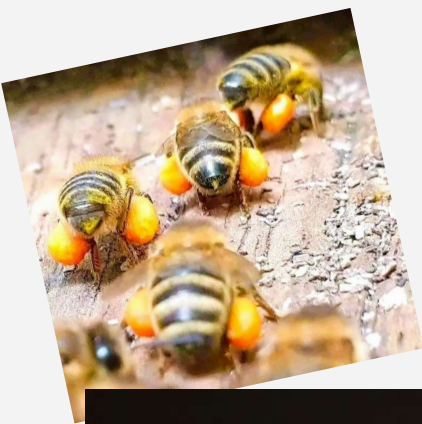
How to get Started

Do you have one, or more of your recent photographs that you're particularly proud of..?, then here's your chance to impress your fellow members with your creative skills in the Wildlife Gallery in our newsletter.

Maybe photographs which show unusual behaviour.....or maybe a surprise moment caught for posterity !

It doesn't have to be bee related....any photos snapped while you've been out and about.

Here are a few notable examples spotted recently from a variety of different sources.....



Send your entries to :

ssbka-mail@southstaffsbeekeepers.com

PLANTS FOR POLLINATORS

Bees, Butterflies, Moths, Lacewings and Hoverflies all play a vital role in helping plants to set seed, fruit and reproduce. Sadly though these pollinating insects are in decline. Two of the main factors in their decline are lack of food and shortage of suitable nesting sites.



Grow Single Flowers for Bees

Most double flowers are of little use, as they have so many petals the bees can't get to the central part of the flower, where

the nectar and pollen are found. [Roses](#) and [Dahlias](#) are often bred to have double flowers, but there are plenty of beautiful single-flowered varieties to grow, instead.

Grow Purple Flowers for Bees

Bees can see the colour purple more clearly than any other colour, and some of the best bee plants, such as [Lavender](#),

[Alliums](#), [Buddleia](#) and [Catmint](#), have purple flowers. That said, many flowers in other colours will still attract bees, so don't pull them up!



Grow Tubular-shaped Flowers for Bees

Tubular shaped flowers such as [Foxgloves](#), [Honeysuckle](#), [Penstemons](#) and

[Snapdragons](#) are an important source of food for long-tongued bees such as the garden Bumblebee, *Bombus hortorum*.



Spring Flowers for Bees



- Bluebell
- Bugle
- Crab apple
- Crocus
- Flowering cherry and currant
- Forget-me-not
- Hawthorn
- Primrose
- Pulmonaria
- Rhododendron
- Rosemary.

Early-Summer Flowers for Bees



- Campanula
- Comfrey
- Delphinium
- Foxglove
- Hardy geranium
- Honesty
- Hollyhock
- Potentilla
- Snapdragon
- Stachys
- Teasel
- Thyme
- Verbascum.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Seville Orange, Honey and Whisky Marmalade

[Thanks to Nigel Slater and Beeswax Alchemy]



What to do with a large quantity of fermented (baker's) honey when the seal on your honey bucket is breached!! I make marmalade in January when the bitter and thick-skinned oranges from Seville are available and add a measure of whisky for a slight alcohol taste!

Ingredients:

- 2.5 kilos of Seville oranges
- 2 lemons
- 1.5 kg of baker's honey {don't use your best honey!}
- 100 ml of blended whisky

Equipment:

- Preserving pan or heavy bottomed stainless-steel pan
- Sieve
- Jug
- Ladle
- Small plate
- Sterilised jars with lids and wax seals (8 lb jars approx.)

Method:

- Wipe the fruit (oranges and lemons) and using a small paring knife, score the skin and pith into quarters, don't cut into the fruit.

- Cut each quarter of the peel into thick or thin slices-this is individual preference; I like mine thickly sliced.
- Squeeze the fruit with a potato masher and strain the juice from the pulp and pips. Put the pulp and pips into a muslin bag and the juice into a large jug.
- Add water to the fruit juice to make 2.5 ltrs of liquid and place this in a very large bowl. Add the peel and muslin bag containing the pulp and pips to the bowl, cover and leave overnight to steep.
- Next day put the liquid, peel and muslin bag into a jam pan or large stainless-steel pan and bring to the boil. When it's up to temperature, lower the heat and allow to simmer until the peel is soft and translucent- this can take between 40-90 mins.
- When the peel is ready, remove the muslin bag of pulp and put it in a dish to cool and then squeeze the muslin bag to get out all the juice from the pulp and add this to the pan.
- Add the honey to the pan of preserve, turn up the heat to a rolling boil and allow to boil for between 15-30 mins.
- Put a small plate in the fridge and when cool take a tablespoonful of the preserve and put it on the cooled plate and place it in the fridge for a few minutes. Then run a teaspoon along the surface of the test sample and if it forms a skin, it is ready.
- If the 'test' sample is still liquid, continue the rolling boil, **but** be careful that the marmalade fruit doesn't 'catch' on the bottom of the pan. This can take up to 50 minutes to be of a setting consistency.
- When ready, turn off the heat and if adding whisky stir this into the liquid; I use cheap blended whisky, the single malt is too good even for this! Ladle into sterilised jars and seal immediately.

Eat on hot buttered toast or make a delicious brioche bread and butter pudding!

RANDOM THOUGHTS FROM THE APIARY



- One of the biggest mistakes I've ever made.....??

Back in 1987 these two came knocking on my door about a sponsored walk....and I ended up sponsoring them for £2 a mile....



- We have all heard that a million monkeys banging on a million typewriters will eventually reproduce the entire works of Shakespeare. Now, thanks to Facebook, we know this is not true ”
- You can judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him
- What if there were no hypothetical questions?
- A duck goes into a bar and flaps up onto a bar stool and says to the barman.....

“Have you got any bread?”

The barman says“No sorry”

The duck repeats.....“Have you got any bread?”

“No sorry”.....

“Got any bread?”.....

”No”.....

“Got any bread?”.....

”No”.....

“Got any bread?”.....

”No”.....

“Got any bread?”...

Finally the barman in exasperation says.....

“No and if you ask me that one more time I'm going to nail your beak to the bar...!”

The duck thinks for a while and says.....“Got any nails?”

The barman says“No!”

“GOT ANY BREAD?”



If anyone has a ‘Random Thought’ they would like to add to this article..... maybe something you would like to get off your chest...then please send it to: ssbka-mail@southstaffsbeekeepers.com

CAN YOU FIND THE QUEEN



Have a good look around this edition of the Newsletter and see if you can spot where she is ?

In the January edition she was drinking from the bowl of honey on Page 5

Click on any word in the Newsletter highlighted in blue for more details.....or the logos either side of here to go to the website

