

The Auricle

Moray Beekeepers Association Newsletter
Hot off the 'press'

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WAXING LYRICAL

In late march over 30 members enjoyed an interesting talk by John Salt on the subject of 'Beeswax' along with a demonstration on various methods of candle making. It was pleasing to see some youngsters and some new faces at the first meeting of the year, evidence that beekeeping still retains its appeal!



John Salt alongside Sarah and Adam Tassell

An impromptu Q & A session at the end tested John's knowledge to the full but even he was unable to answer or demonstrate the question from Barbara Westie, who asked, 'At what temperature does beeswax explode?' If anyone has managed to test this out Barbara would love to hear from you.

The afternoon was concluded with an excellent tea and refreshments and it was agreed by all that it had been an excellent meeting. Thanks to all involved in running it, particularly John, and to those members who supported it.

BEESWAX FACTS: produced by worker honeybees aged 12- 20 days, who gorge themselves on honey and hang in festoons for about 24 hours with a temperature of between 33C and 36C. The wax is produced from the 4 pairs of wax glands positioned on the underside of the bee. Beeswax melts at 147F, has an agreeable honey-like odour, and is coloured white (only becoming the usually observed yellowy/brown colour because the bees, 'don't wipe their feet' before they enter the hive – right John?)

NEXT MEETING IS ON SUNDAY 26th APRIL AT ERIC & ERICA CLAYTON'S APIARY IN CLOCHAN WHEN WEATHER PERMITTING WE WILL BE OPENING SOME HIVES AND MARKING QUEENS. (Full details including directions at www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk under 'summer programme'.

By the way, 'Waxing Lyrical' means to talk about something with a lot of interest and excitement, and John certainly fits that category!

THIS MONTH IN THE APIARY . by John Salt

April heralds the start of the active beekeeping season and the bees will need your undivided attention. It will be the weather that will determine when you can make the first full inspection of the brood chamber. It is crucially important to avoid damage to the brood through chilling and I'd recommend a temperature of at least 13° - 14°C.

Never open a hive unless you know what you are going to look for and what you are going to do when you have found it. Don't spend too long with the hive open.

Before you lift the roof off have a look at the outside of the hive ... the doorway. You can learn a lot! Are the bees flying as well as the next hive? Are they taking in Pollen? Heft the hive by lifting one corner, is the hive heavy ... do they have enough stores? All okay ... what does this tell you?

In the brood box ... does the queen have enough room to continue laying eggs? Have the bees sufficient room to store nectar?

Add the first super when about three quarters of the frames in the brood box are full of eggs, larvae, capped cells and stores. To attract the bees into the super, try to have some of its frames contain built out comb.

Is there a queen present? You don't have to see her, seeing eggs at the bottom of the cells and properly spaced out will tell you she is there somewhere.

Sealed brood should have the correct cappings. Flat for workers and domed for drones in drone cells. If there are domed cappings on worker cells, it is probable that the queen has become a drone layer ... or the workers have started laying. The pattern of the brood will tell you which it will be. In either case your hive is doomed unless you can manage to unite with another box ... ask advice.

Do the bees have sufficient stores till your next inspection? Do they need feeding? Are there any signs of disease? If you can recognise a healthy colony you should instantly see if something is out of place ... call for help if in doubt.

Finally ... it is almost impossible to remember all these details from one inspection to another ... so keep a record. Scribble something down on a piece of paper and take it back to your bee shed ... you can read it before your next inspection and arrive at your apiary prepared.

ASSOCIATION APIARY

Moray Beekeepers aim to set up an Association apiary this season which can be used for Queen rearing, making up Nucs of bees, and for education/demonstration purposes, especially if the 'Bee-ginners' Classes are resurrected or we start 'Basic Beemaster' courses. With the right sort of venue, the apiary could also become a sort of MBA 'HQ' to be used for monthly meetings etc.

At present, a suitable location still has to be found so can all members scratch their heads and have a good think of any possibilities. You know the sort of thing - it doesn't have to be too big (a tennis court sized piece of land would be great), and ideally the apiary will have vehicular access, parking and not be in an obvious location, or too near to any dwellings.

In addition the Apiary will obviously need hives and bees so again can all members consider making a gift or a loan of any hives, bees or equipment which will help in the set up.

The aim is to end up with an apiary of approximately 6-8 hives from which a number of Queens and Nuc boxes of bees can be reared each season, to help those members who lose Queens or bees or any new comers who are finding it hard to acquire local bees acclimatised to North East Scotland.

So if you can help with any of the above please contact the Secretary, Tony Harris, or any member of the MBA Committee.

MEMBER PROFILE - Eric & Erica Clayton



Q. How and when did you guys get together?

A. We met in 1980 when we both worked for British Telecom. Eric was a supervisor and I was a telephonist (and he's still my boss!) We married in 1989. We moved here from York in 1990 and have never regretted it.

Q. How did you start off in beekeeping?

A. Eric saw a beekeeping course advertised in the P & J but decided Aberdeen was too far for a night class. A year or so later Alidair Joyce took a night school course at Portgordon. Initially I just went to keep Eric company having no interest in either bees or honey but was won over on the first night by these fantastic little creatures. On Alidair's advice we joined the M.B.A. before we got our bees and gained invaluable practical skills. After a few meetings our bees finally arrived from a gentleman who had inherited his father's bees but did not want to take up the hobby. That was fourteen years ago.

Q. Do you have bees at present and if so how many colonies?

A. We have about eight hives at the moment but only four are home to bees. We initially got W.B.C. hives because we felt they offered more protection against the elements but must admit that the nationals are easier to handle. We also have a Smith hive and a couple of Langstroths.

Q. What is your best and worst beekeeping moment?

A. The best beekeeping moment must be when we took our first honey harvest - sticky and messy but absolutely glorious! The worst? Well, I think the stings are the worst thing. The bees insist on using Eric for target practice - he usually comes home with multiple stings, and if I catch one on my head, my eyes are closed for two or three days - but lets face it - beekeepers are fair game!

Q. What are your beekeeping ambitions for this season?

A. Our ambition for this season is to keep our bees alive and healthy - a honey harvest would be a bonus.

Q. What else are you passionate about?

A. Eric is passionate about his garden, D.I.Y. and his collection of cigarette cards. With me, it's all creatures great and small - always has been and always will be.

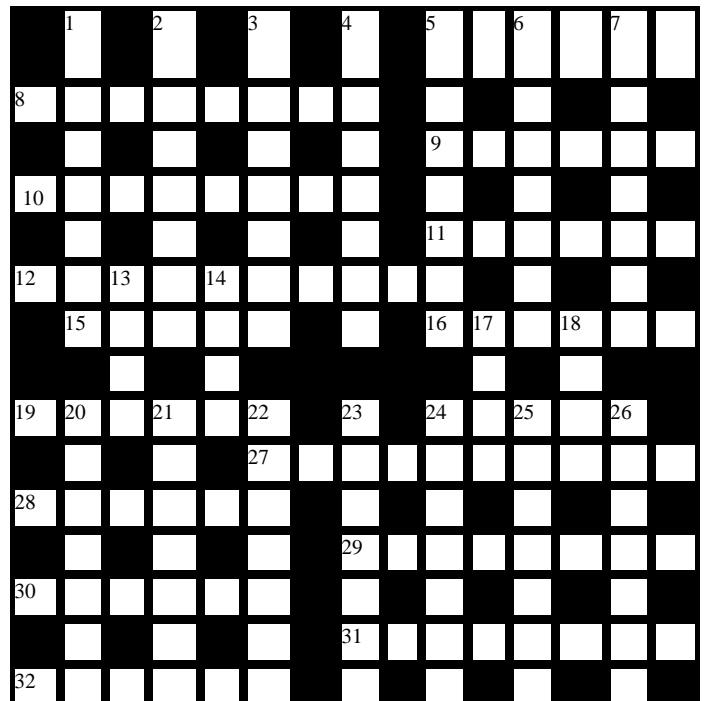
CROSSWORD (answers on page 4)

Clues across

5. Administration card
8. Transparent cover board (5,3)
9. Plover
10. Approximate stores check
11. Radio signal receiver
12. Controls moisture
15. Overreaction to sting
16. Winner's cup
19. Low joints
24. Added value
27. Bees to be rejected
28. First check of show judge
29. Used to wire foundation
30. Covering for larvae
31. Honey flow in Yukon? (4,4)
32. Funds provider

Clues down

1. Last operation of manipulation
2. Relieves pain of sting
3. Migratory beekeeping
4. Advantage
5. Hive roof
6. Goodbye
7. Tombstone inscription
13. Found on Queen
14. Dreadful
17. Appearance of disturbed bees
18. Flow in a stream
20. Caused by overheating honey (2,5)
21. Opening WBC hive on launch pad? (4,3)
22. Response to call for volunteers ?
23. Severe reaction
24. Small part of feather
25. Brood box
26. Action of OSR honey (3,4)



THIS MONTH'S FORAGE

With some decent weather this month bees should be coming and going with whatever forage is available to them at this time of year.

Not every one knows that bees collect pollen and nectar from trees as well as flowers and in early spring they will be busy visiting Hazel, Willow and Horse Chestnut.

Other plants in flower in April include Flowering Currents, Dandelion, Blackthorn, Cherry and Gorse (which seems to flower all year).

If you follow the advice in the article by John Salt on page 2, i.e. have a good look at the hive doorway to see if the bees are coming and going, you should be able to see if pollen is being taken in, and if you can see the colour it should tell you what the bees are foraging on. Look closely at the outside of the bees rear legs! This is where the Corbicula or 'Pollen Basket' is situated, which is used by the bee to hold the pollen and transport it back to the hive and it is clearly displayed on the photo below.



You can buy a useful little card from Thornes, a pocket 'Pollen Colour Guide' which lists spring, summer and autumn flowering plants and then gives the colour of each particular plant's pollen. For example, of the plants listed above, here is the colour of the pollen the bees will be carrying if they are foraging on them.

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hazel | <input type="checkbox"/> Willow | <input type="checkbox"/> Flowering Currant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dandelion | <input type="checkbox"/> Blackthorn | <input type="checkbox"/> Gorse |

So, go on, get to know what your bees are foraging on – it is really quite fascinating!

BEESUITS/GLOVES /SMOCKS

Quality bee suits and clothing from BB Wear, for MBA members only (please order via the MBA Secretary)

BB1 Full suit £78.63

BB3 Smock £58.61

BB10 Washable leather Gloves £17.00

The above prices include a 15% discount and postage costs. MBA members get 15% of BB Wear's full range so check out their web site and grab yourself a bargain

www.bbwear.co.uk/

BEES FOR DEVELOPMENT TRUST

This charity promotes beekeeping in developing countries as one way of fighting poverty. Information on all aspects of beekeeping is provided: how to build hives, market honey, manage bees sustainably, and create resilient livelihood. Your committee feel this is a very worthwhile cause and have therefore made a gift of £50 to them from Association funds.

A WARM WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

Colin (Barney) Barnes, Graham Hill,
Archie Bain & Sheila Wiseman

Crossword Answers:

Across

5. Ticket, 8. Glass one, 9. Peewit, 10. Estimate, 11. Aerial, 12. Humidifier, 15. Panic
16. trophy, 19. Ankles, 24. Bonus, 27. Ill natured, 28. Jarful, 29. Embosser, 30. Cocoon, 31. Gold rush, 32. Raffle

Down

1. Close up, 2. Aspirin, 3. Nomadie, 4. Benefit, 5. Top part, 6. Cheerio, 7. Epitaph
13. Mark, 14. Dire, 17. Riot, 18. Pour, 20. No aroma, 21. Lift off, 22. Silence
23. Allergy, 24. Barbule, 25. Nursery, 26. Set easy

The Association website is packed with lots of useful information on beekeeping and bees and has links to national associations, suppliers and other bee sites around the world. It is well worth a visit - the address is shown below.

www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk

Items for inclusion in the Newsletter to be sent to the Editor: Tony Harris, Cowiemuir, Fochabers, Moray, IV32 7PS or you can e mail: tonyharris316@btinternet.com

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR SUBS