

# The Auricle

Moray Beekeepers Association Newsletter  
Hot off the 'press'

Issue No: 2/10

April 2010

**THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER IS SPONSORED BY LLORNA LLOYD BAKER – THANK YOU!**

## M.B.A. APIARY TAKING SHAPE!

On a fine sunny morning in March a hardy group of M.B.A. members assembled at the Association Apiary in Nether Birnie for a working party, hopeful of finally preparing the site for our first meeting at the site which is taking place on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April. Some of those present didn't know whether to chop the shed/garage donated by Tony Harris into firewood or to begin the arduous task of actually assembling it. While Fiona, Adam and Sarah Tassell planted willow around the perimeter, and her better half Andrew, assisted by John Salt, fitted the farm gate (donated by John), the rest got to grips with levelling the ground for the shed. An hour or two later and the parts started coming together until finally the roof was lifted on, and it was generally agreed that it had been a good idea NOT to burn the shed as it looked quite the part in the corner of the apiary.



*'your end looks a bit low'*



*'bend the knees now!'*



*'nearly there!'*



*'cheese!'*

So a big THANK YOU is due again to all those volunteers who have helped prepare an apiary site we can all be proud of. All we need now are the bees and we are hopeful of having 3 or 4 hives in situ very soon.

Thanks to M.B.A. member Lynda Anderson and hubby James, we now have a load of hardcore at the site, waiting to be laid on the paths. The hardcore was donated by Ed Walker, from Tarmac, who have the quarry behind the apiary – thank you Ed!

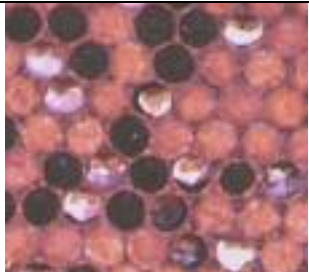
Our next meeting will take place at the **Association Apiary, Nether Birnie, on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> April, commencing at 2.30pm**, when weather permitting we will be marking and clipping Queens. (Directions to follow) See you there!

Stop press! The hardcore has now been laid on the pathways so its 'all systems go' from here in!

## IAN CRAIG'S BEEKEEPING YEAR - 'APRIL'

This month bees will be collecting nectar and pollen from flowering currant, dandelion, willow, cherry, gorse and blackthorn, leading to rapid colony build-up. Continue to monitor the food supply and the number of varroa on the hive inserts. On the alighting board, hard grey old pollen pellets the size of a cell may be seen. If crushed between the fingers they will break up and show layers and sometimes a trace of colour might still be visible. The appearance of old pollen pellets is a good indication that the bees are expanding their brood nest.

Chalk Brood mummies can also be observed at the hive entrance. These do not crumble into layers, they are usually smaller and flatter than pollen pellets and are often recognisable as poorly developed pupae. Chalk brood can appear if bees have wintered in damp conditions and can be seen in nuclei which are short of bees. In other words, where the bees have been under stress. Some strains of bees are more prone to it than others. If widespread, chalk brood can hinder colony build up. There is no 100% cure, but I have found that Apiguard encourages hygienic conditions within the hive and reduces the occurrence of chalk brood. In severe cases the colony should be requeened from a different strain and any badly affected combs replaced with acetic acid treated combs. In mild cases I sprinkle table salt on top of the brood frames to encourage hygienic conditions. This is repeated twice at weekly intervals.



Chalk Brood



A fine looking Queen



Varroa mite on adult bee



Varroa on larva

If you have to treat varroa in spring, it should be carried out before the hives have honey supers added. I do not use Apiguard or any other thymol-based treatment prior to the honey flow as its odour can remain in honey for some time.

Towards the end of April, when the sun is warm and there is little wind, a first inspection can be made. The hive entrance should be smoked and the beekeeper should wait for two minutes before opening the hive in order to allow time for the soothing effect of the smoke to take effect. Gently lever up the crown board and give it a sharp shake above the open hive to dislodge the queen back into the brood chamber if perchance she has been driven on to the crown board by the smoke. Two manipulating cloths are laid on top of the brood chamber such that only the particular comb which you are going to remove is exposed. This assists in controlling the bees and prevents brood becoming chilled.

The first thing I do at this first inspection is to find the queen. She is more easily spotted at this time because there are fewer bees in the colony and as there are no, or few, drones, she is the largest bee. She is likely to be found on a frame containing eggs in the top brood chamber. She might not be the queen which you are expecting to find. The queen that you saw during your last autumn inspection may have been marked and/or clipped, but a younger unmarked queen may now be in the hive, the old one having been superseded in late autumn.

April is the best time of the year to mark and clip the queen. (Editor's Note: more on marking and clipping queens next month)

Check that the colony has enough food to last it until your next visit. The opportunity should be taken to remove any misshapen combs or combs clogged with old hard pollen and replace them with drawn combs which you had stored from the previous autumn. The renewal of three or four brood combs per year helps to rid the brood chamber of the spores of bee disease pathogens and residues of pyrethroid varroa treatment.

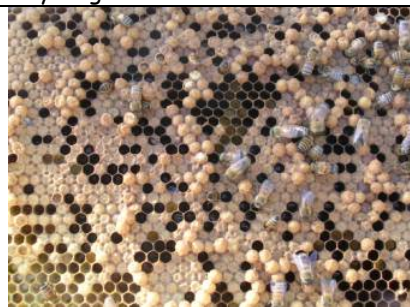
Finally, don't forget to release the queen before closing the hive. Do not reverse the brood chamber at this, or any other, time as you will split the brood nest and give the colony a severe setback. Let the brood expand downwards naturally as nature intended.

Some beekeepers raise queens in May and requeen their colonies as early as possible in the knowledge that queens of the current year rarely swarm. It is also true that the most prolific colonies are the first to raise drones. So the beekeeper who can requeen in May/June with current years queens shouldn't have swarming worries and drones should be from good stock. I prefer to concentrate on maximum colony strength, with the potential to produce a large spring honey crop, by not using bees and brood to make nuclei at this stage and rely on controlling swarming if and when it comes.



## DRONE LAYING QUEENS / LAYING WORKERS

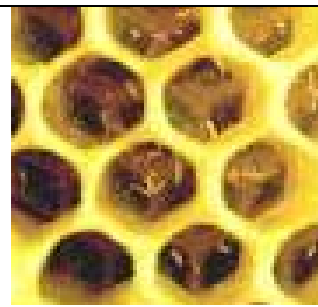
If, during your first inspection in April you find enlarged worker cells with drone cappings (raised), small stunted drones running about, with areas of neglected drone brood, and the brood area just doesn't look right, you may well find that you have a drone Laying Queen (DLQ) or Laying Workers (LW's). A queen can become a drone layer due to inadequate mating meaning a shortage of sperm, a physical inability of the queen to fertilise the eggs correctly or it may be due to a genetic fault. LW's appear due to queenlessness (for more than 3 or 4 weeks), i.e. the queen failing to return from a mating flight, when there are no fertilised eggs or young larvae for the bees to make a new queen.



drone brood among worker - DLQ?



scattered laying pattern-LW's?



Multiple eggs in cells -LW's?



Multiple larva in cells-LW's?

If you see the queen you will know it is a DLQ but how else can you tell the difference? Well, a DLQ will keep a tidy brood area. The laying pattern will be orderly, i.e. compact patches of brood with very few empty cells whereas with LW's the laying pattern will be scattered and haphazard. Additionally, a DLQ will lay usually one egg in the base of the cell while LW's will lay multiple eggs in the same cell and they are more often than not on the sides of the cell wall because a worker's abdomen is much shorter than a queen. A DLQ will often lay areas of drone brood in the middle of larger patches of worker brood as she runs out of sperm. And finally, if the colony is trying to build charged queen cells it is more likely that LW's are present in your hive.

The recommended procedure for dealing with a DLQ is to re-queen (if you have a queen available) or to unite to a queenright colony after removing the old DLQ. It is virtually impossible, however, to re-queen a colony with LW's as the colony usually kills an introduced queen, and the bees from the LW's hive are just as likely kill the queen of any colony it is united with. The best thing to do is to shake the bees out in front of a large colony and let them sort themselves out, entering any hive that will let them in. There is one way to save the LW's colony but it is doubtful whether it will work. The bees are shaken and brushed out of the brood chamber a good distance away from the hive, e.g. 25 metres, and they will fly back and enter the hive, which has been replaced on the original site. Laying workers, however, cannot fly and thus don't return to the hive! Efforts can then be made to introduce a new queen BUT remember, the experienced beekeeper is unlikely to waste time trying to save a colony with LW's.

## SHOOK SWARM

The shook swarm technique replaces all brood frames in a single operation thus removing all potentially diseased equipment at a stroke and minimising disease transfer.

It should only be carried out on a strong colony (at least 6 frames of bees) capable of enduring the stress it undoubtedly creates.

The colony should have a satisfactory laying queen and not be heavily infested with varroa.

Usually a good nectar flow should have started but in spring, feeding with sugar syrup will help the bees draw out the foundation.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: a clean brood chamber of new foundation, a queen excluder, a clean floor and a contact feeder

### METHOD:

9. Move the existing hive to one side and assemble the new hive in its place with queen excluder between the floor and brood box.
10. Take out the centre four frames from the new hive and place to one side.
11. Place the queen from the old hive into a queen cage.
12. Transfer the bees from the old hive into the new hive by shaking frames and brushing off any reluctant bees, and then shake the remaining bees from the old box into the new hive.
13. Remove the queen from the cage and place her in the centre of the new hive, then carefully replace the four missing frames into the new hive.
14. Fit the crown board and feed with heavy syrup (2:1) ideally using a contact feeder.
15. Continue to feed until there is a good nectar flow or 75% of combs are drawn out.
16. remove the queen excluder and make sure you destroy the old comb from the old hive.

### ADVANTAGES

- It is a good swarm prevention technique
- The bees produce new comb which seems to give them renewed vigour
- It removes any old 'clogged up' comb, and,
- It removes ALL incipient disease including varroa.

### DISADVANTAGES

- Loss of brood so a slower build up ensues
- Loss of drawn comb
- Loss of honey
- It is stressful to the bees and could therefore result in chalkbrood

## FIRST AID COURSE

An opportunity has arisen for MBA members to attend a first aid course run by the Red Cross in mid April in Elgin. The course is free, is certificated and will be 2 x 2 hour sessions on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> April, between 7-9pm. To book your place phone or e mail MBA Secretary, Tony Harris, tel 01343 821282. Numbers are limited so places will be allocated on a 'first come first served' basis. All that is asked in return is that you be available to administer first aid, if it is ever required at any MBA meetings you attend.

## ASSOCIATION APIARY UPDATE

The groundwork is 90% complete and the apiary is ready for our first meeting of the season on **Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April** – all we need now are the bees and these should be in situ soon. There are still a few things we need so here's the begging list if anyone can help out.

We are looking for a gas stove so we can make tea/coffee at our meetings and a large kettle to go on it would be great! The shed is now up and is quite a size, 15ft x 10 ft so if you have any old chairs, desks, worktops, picasso's etc that we can use to furnish it please let a Committee member know.

Management of the hives in the apiary will be conducted by a group of volunteer beekeepers initially carrying out 14 day inspections. As this is a training apiary, and it belongs to the members, MBA members are welcome to attend these 'Open Apiary sessions' and we are hopeful of getting the times and dates posted on the moray Beekeepers' website when finalised.

## M.B.A. BEEKEEPING COURSES 2010

**TASTER DAYS** Association Apiary, Birnie Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April, Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> May, Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June. Time: 1.00pm – 3.00pm

These afternoon 'taster sessions' are for those who are interested in bees and beekeeping but don't necessarily wish to keep bees. It is a 2 hour outdoor session looking at the many threats to our native bees, what can be done to help them and attract them into the garden, and participants will also be shown the inside of a hive. The cost of the afternoon is £10 and numbers are limited.

**INTRODUCTION TO BEEKEEPING** Location: Elgin Library, Cooper Park, Elgin (Fri evening) and Association Apiary, Nether Birnie, Elgin (Sat/Sun afternoon)  
Dates: Fri 7<sup>th</sup> and Sat 8<sup>th</sup> May, Fri 11<sup>th</sup> and Sun 13<sup>th</sup> June, Fri 16<sup>th</sup> and Sat 17<sup>th</sup> July  
Time: Friday evening 7pm – 9pm, Saturday or Sunday afternoon 1.00pm – 3.00pm

This course is for those interested in keeping bees and would like to know more. It is held in the classroom on the Friday evening followed by a 2 hour practical session on the Saturday afternoon, looking inside a hive.

The classroom session will include: The Honeybee colony; Inside the hive; Getting started; Swarming; Disease; The Honey Harvest

The practical session will cover: Protective Gear/Safety; Opening the hive; What's inside; Recognising workers queens and drones

The cost for the weekend is £25.00 per person, £40.00 per couple, under 12 years free.

Numbers are limited and places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. For further details please contact: Tony Harris, Tel. 01343 821282 or any member of your Committee

## BASIC BEEMASTER PRACTICAL EXAM

This is a final warning that the closing date for this practical examination is 16<sup>th</sup> April so if you want to have a go you'd better get a move on. Contact the Secretary.

### BEE BOOK WEBSITE

Northern Bee Books have a wide and varied selection of books on beekeeping many of which cannot be purchased elsewhere. They now have a new site where you can view and purchase the books and the address is shown below

[www.GroovyCart.co.uk/beebooks](http://www.GroovyCart.co.uk/beebooks)

### BEE SUITS/GLOVES /SMOCKS

Quality bee suits and clothing from BB Wear, for MBA members who receive a 15% discount (please order via the MBA Secretary)

BB1 Full suit £78.63,  
[www.bbwear.co.uk/](http://www.bbwear.co.uk/)

## A WARM WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

Gordon Cumming, Lady Gordon Cumming, William Hill, Kasia Walker & John Willoner

Baseball caps, T-shirts, sweat shirts and fleeces are available with the Moray Beekeepers logo embroidered on from:  
**EMBROIDERY DESIGNS**, Easter Lochend, Balcroy, Nairn IV12 5NY  
Tel:01667 404635  
E-mail: [user@embroiderydesign.dial.netmedia.co.uk](mailto:user@embroiderydesign.dial.netmedia.co.uk)



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](http://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](mailto:tonyharris316@btinternet.com)

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR SUBS, NOW £10 ADULT, £5 OVER 65YRS AND 12-16YRS!**