

# The Auricle

Moray Beekeepers Association Newsletter  
Hot off the 'press'

August

Issue No: 5/09

**THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER IS ANONYMOUSLY SPONSORED BY AN M.B.A. MEMBER – THANK YOU!**

## 'I'M A BEEKEEPER, GET ME OUT OF HERE!!!'

Approximately 30 members attended the August meeting at Andrew Tassell's apiary in Fochabers and those who managed to forge the swollen burn, scramble up the muddy bank, overcome the assault course and navigate through the 'jungle' enjoyed an informative talk and demonstration by Andrew entitled, 'Preparing Bees for the Heather.'

Heather honey is the 'Rolls Royce' of honey and Scottish heather honey is much sought after demanding premium prices so it is worth making the effort to get some, particularly as most of us live within easy reach of the heather.



*Andrew demonstrating how to secure a hive watched by MBA member Adrian Wardlaw*

Andrew moves his best hives to the heather during the last weekend of July for about five weeks and if the heather secretes nectar for a couple of weeks there should be at least one super of honey on each hive.

Hives for the heather should be absolutely packed full with bees so Andrew adds up to 2 frames of emerging brood from another disease free hive a couple of weeks before the move. Other tips include moving frames of eggs and brood to the outside of the brood frame and frames of honey to the centre. As the bees usually like to store honey in the outside frames, leaving the centre frames for the queen to lay in, they usually move this honey to a super, and this should be done a couple of weeks before and then again a couple of days before the move. If you have your hives in pairs, as long as there is a honey flow on you can move one to another part of the apiary, allowing the flying bees to safely enter the remaining hive going to the heather – this will give you a very large number of foraging bees! Young queens are also an asset for heather going hives as they tend to lay longer, again meaning less space in the brood frame for the bees to store the precious honey – we want the honey in the supers.

Andrew places one super of thin unwired foundation on each hive, secures them with foam in the entrance, lock slides on the sides and gives them plenty of ventilation with a travelling screen on top. An early start is the order of the day and the bees are moved to the heather at first light, about 4 am but can also be moved at dusk when the bees have stopped flying. If weekly checks show a good nectar flow Andrew will add supers as required.

Heather honey is naturally in a gel like state so cannot be spun out of the frame – it has to be cut from the frame and pressed through a Honey Press and you can borrow one of these from the Association.

This really was a Tassell family enterprise so a big thank you to Andrew, Fiona, Adam and Sarah for making the afternoon a success. And those members who successfully completed the 'Bush Tucker Trial' were rewarded with some fine 'tucker' and the cakes were very nice, thank you Fiona – just glad witchetty grub wasn't on the menu!

One member was however heard to say, 'I will be taking the easier option next time we come here – I think I'll parachute in!'

**THE NEXT MEETING IS ON SUNDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> AUGUST AT 2.30 PM AT DALLAS (directions to follow) WHEN WE WILL BE LOOKING AT BEES ON THE HEATHER AND THERE WILL BE A TALK ON 'PREPARING BEES FOR THE WINTER'.**

## THIS MONTH IN THE APIARY by John Salt

August and some beekeepers will consider it to be the start of winter. Yes, a depressing concept but if we must have odd ways of looking at the seasons, I prefer to think of it as the start of the beekeeping year. To quote from Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* is: 'If Winter comes, can spring be far behind?'

Whatever your view, any actions you take now will bear fruit next season and especially for those who have just started beekeeping the successful continuation of your new hobby depends on what you do now.

Sound hives! I don't think you would put up with a leaking roof or holes in your house walls, the bees wouldn't either, so fix it. Roofs are meant to keep the water out and the occupants dry and a determined wasp can get through a very small hole. You might also notice wasps waiting on the ground just in front of your hive at this time of year. They are waiting for those heavily laden bees returning home who miss the landing board. The wasps then pounce on them, off with their head and suck out the contents of the bee. That's nature for you!

If you have a spare brood box, make sure it is well treated it with Cuprinol, dried out and clean. Now swap it over with the one you have been using all season. Bees can stand the cold but do not like damp conditions. Clean out the area surrounding your hives and if you haven't yet done so, elevate them off the ground to give good ventilation. There is a lot of discussion whether to fit solid floors over winter. Bees in the wild do not have gaping great holes in the base of their nest cavity, ahhh! but what about varroa?



Wasps attacking bees



Hives in snow



Guard bees



Heather moor above Tomintoul

If you have weak colonies, think about uniting them. A stronger colony is more likely to survive. Your colony will require about 35lbs of stores for the winter depending on its size, you will have to judge what the bees have and then top up with sugar syrup (*Editor's note: Dissolve 2lb of sugar in 1 pint of hot water*).

When you feed your colonies, look out for robbing, bees are terrible thieves and will take every opportunity to relieve other hives of their precious honey. With the brood nest getting smaller, the colony will also be shrinking in size and there will be fewer guard bees on duty. Reduce the size of the entrance hole down to about 'four bees wide' or 10 mm. Feed the colony at dusk to prevent robbing and don't slop the syrup on the ground around your apiary.

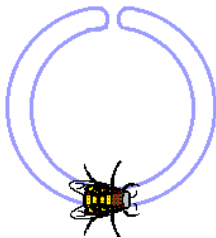
Plans for next year. Review your beekeeping activities for this year and make plans for next. Do you plan to expand the number of colonies you have? If so, extra equipment needs to be sourced. Maybe you don't like the type of hive you are using, can do a deal and swap or make your own? Go into partnership to breed new queens?

Those of you how are lucky enough to have had some honey, should by now have extracted it. Ever thought you might like to save a couple of jars to put into Moray Beekeepers honey show in September in Forres? [http://www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk/honey\\_shows.htm](http://www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk/honey_shows.htm)

We are very lucky in this part of the country to have ling heather and the first week of August normally sees it in flower and it can produce, depending on the weather, vast quantities of nectar which is very high in protein, much sought after by some and was to my recollection being sold in Inverness two years ago for £7 per lbs. Best of luck!

## HONEY BEE' DANCES

Bees have a very effective method of communicating information about sources of food using a ROUND DANCE and a WAGGLE DANCE.



The ROUND DANCE is used when the source of food (nectar or pollen) is less than 100 metres away. The bee dancing goes in a circle on the comb first one way, she turns round and then the other way round the circle. Food is passed from the dancing bee to those watching and following giving information about its taste and smell. The round dance does not tell the bees in which direction to go to the food source just that the food "is close to the hive and tastes and smells like this". The bees will then be seen flying to and fro around the hive looking for the food, a sight you may well have seen if you feed sugar syrup to a colony during the daytime (not recommended).



For food supplies more than 100 metres the WAGGLE DANCE is used. The bee will run in a direction on the comb which indicates direction relative to the sun's position. The bee uses the force of gravity (vertically downwards) as the position of the sun and if say the food is 30° to the left of the sun then the bee will dance 30° to the left of the vertical on the frame. Whilst the bee is indicating direction she waggles her body from side to side to indicate distance to the food source. The more waggles the closer the food source is to the hive. The waggle dance gives both direction and distance to the food source and by tasting the food the bee knows what to look for. Click on the following link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7ijI-g4jHg> to watch a 1 minute video of the waggle dance

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## PREPARING HONEY FOR THE SHOW BENCH

The Honey Show season is upon us with shows coming up thick and fast in August so now is the time to prepare your exhibits. There are many different classes for you to enter but this article is concentrating on the easiest and that is liquid honey, usually referred to as 'blossom honey' in the show schedule. There are three classes for liquid honey and they are light, medium and dark, and this refers to the colour of the honey. You must enter two identical jars in whatever class you are entering. If you are unsure as to the right class for your honey seek advice when you attend the show to set up your exhibits, this usually being the evening before or morning of the show.

With the lid on the judge will consider both jars for:

**COLOUR**, which must be uniform throughout the exhibit,

**BRIGHTNESS**, a dull appearance may be due to what is called insipient (the start of) granulation or fermentation,

**CLEANLINESS**, exhibits will be examined for foreign material such as black specks, hair and parts of bees, and

**JARS AND LIDS**, your exhibit may be rejected if the jars and lids are not identical, if the jar is not filled to the correct level, if there is rust on the lid or if the jar shows signs of old labels.



*Entries at last years Forres Show*



*Light, medium and dark honeys*



*Judging taking place*



*Borage honey would be in the light honey class*

When the jar is opened the judge will test for **AROMA**, **VISCOSITY**, and **FLAVOUR**, while also examining the surface of the honey for contaminants such as dust and bubbles at the edges.

Here are a few tips in preparing liquid honey for the show. After you have extracted your honey strain it through a fine straining cloth into the settling tank or large bucket and leave to stand for about 24 hours - this will allow any air bubbles etc to rise to the surface. Meanwhile, wash your jars in washing up liquid, plunge into hot water and leave to drain, or you can wash them in the dishwasher. Use identical jars and make sure they are from the same manufacturer by looking at the base of the jar for their mark. Choose lids carefully discarding any that are dirty or scratched. Fill the jars to the correct level, almost the top of the jar, put the lid on and leave to stand overnight. Then remove any air bubbles that may be on the surface by pricking with a needle. Clean the top of the jar with a damp sponge, replace the cap and do not take it off again. The next person to do so will be the judge.

Keep your jars in a warm place with a temperature of 75F. If the honey does become cloudy it has started to granulate and you can clear it by putting it in a warming cabinet at about 100-110F or in a saucepan of water with a trivet in the bottom for a few hours. Make sure that the temperature does not exceed 110F or it will ruin the flavour.

When taking your jars to the show, handle them only by the lid with a cloth. Give them a final polish and place on the display stand. Don't forget to register your entries with the officials and then come back after the judging to reap your due rewards!

## UPCOMING FLOWER SHOWS INCLUDING HONEY SHOWS

The Banff Show, Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August.

The Keith Show, Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>, Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August.

The Buckie & District Show Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> August

The Cornhill Show Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> August

The Forres Show Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September

Entrants are usually allowed to stage (leave at the show) their exhibits for a couple of hours on the evening before, or on the morning of the show but you will have to check for yourself if entering (check local press). Moray Beekeepers hold our own Honey Show as part of the Forres Flower Show in September so please support it by entering your exhibit. Honey shows are good fun and although competitive, everyone is friendly, and you will learn lots of useful tips.

# EFB - GOOD APIARY HYGIENE

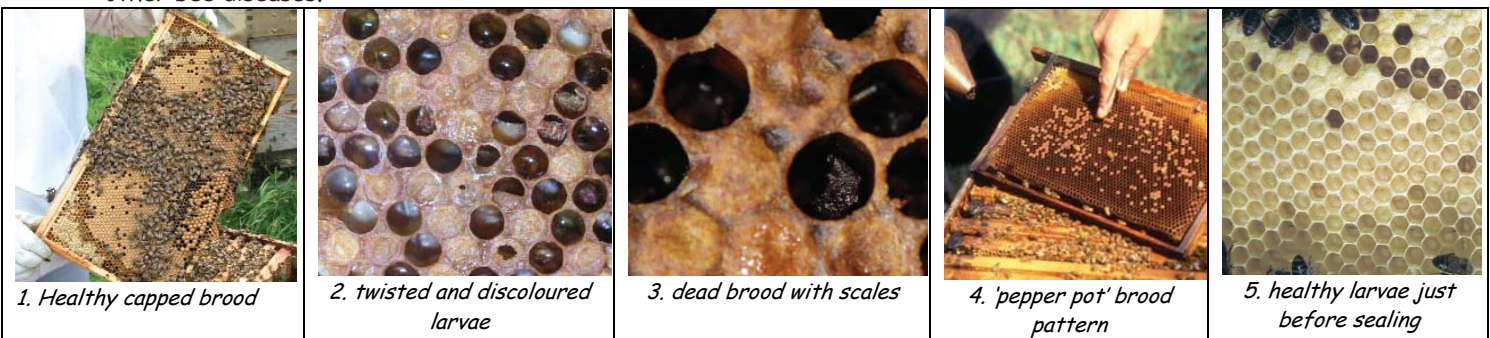
With the recent outbreak of European Foul Brood (EFB) in east Scotland the following '10 Rules for Foul Brood Control' are worth highlighting and adhering to.

1. Make sure you are familiar with the signs and causes of foul brood and other brood disorders.
2. Inspect your colonies at the very least every spring and autumn, **specifically** to check for brood disease. If you are unsure, seek expert advice.
3. Never transfer combs between colonies, or divide colonies, without first checking for signs of brood disease.
4. Never bring colonies, combs or equipment into the apiary unless you are sure that they come from a disease-free source.
5. Never buy old combs. Always sterilise second-hand hives by thoroughly scorching them with a blow lamp before use.
6. Control robbing in the apiary. Never leave combs or honey exposed to robbing bees. Never feed honey from another source.
7. If a colony of bees dies out at any time, seal the hive to prevent the remaining stores being robbed out, pending examination of the brood combs for signs of disease.
8. If any colony is not thriving, and the reason is not already known, examine the brood for signs of disease.
9. Be suspicious of stray swarms. Hive them on foundation rather than drawn comb, keep them "isolated" from the rest of the apiary as the colony expands and inspect them for disease once they have become established.
10. Regularly and systematically replace old brood combs in the apiary by melting them down and replacing them with frames fitted with foundation.

EFB is caused by bacteria that multiply in the mid-gut of an infected larva, competing with the larva for its food so that those that succumb actually die of starvation.

## SIGNS OF EFB

- EFB affects mainly unsealed brood, killing larvae before they are sealed in their cells.
- An easy way to remember is that EFB = *E* (early infection before sealing of the cell).
- The EFB infected larva moves inside its cell instead of remaining in the normal coiled position characteristic of a healthy larva of the same age.
- When it dies it lies in an unnatural attitude twisted spirally around the walls, across the mouth of the cell or stretched out lengthways from the mouth to the base.
- The dead larva often collapses as though it had been melted, turning yellowish-brown and eventually drying up to form a loosely attached brown scale. (fig 3 below)
- The gut of an infected larva may be visible through its translucent body wall. It has a creamy white colour caused by the mass of bacteria living within it. An unpleasant smell (like rotting fish) may be present
- A minority of infected larvae may die after the cell is sealed. In such cases, there may be sunken perforated cappings resembling AFB infection. However, the cell contents although brown and sticky cannot be drawn into a 'rope' as with AFB.
- Where larval remains dry to form scales, these are variable in colour, loose within the cell and somewhat "rubbery", unlike the hard black firmly attached scales of AFB.
- Because the bees move the dead larvae, then a 'pepper pot' brood pattern must always be a possible sign of EFB as well as other bee diseases.



So please be vigilant and make sure you check your brood frames for signs of EFB. Bees should be gently shaken from the frames to allow full inspection, as abnormalities are then easily spotted.

Carefully examine the whole frame by holding it to the light and checking both sealed and unsealed brood for abnormalities such as unusual brood patterns, discoloured larvae, perforated cappings, or loose EFB scales in the cell (completely dried out larvae).

Open any cells with abnormal looking cappings and check the consistency of any dead remains by probing with a matchstick (ropy - AFB, not ropy - EFB). Dispose of the matchstick into the lit smoker, do not discard it as it will be infected.

If EFB is suspected then you must immediately contact your local Bee Inspector who is Kirsteen Sutherland, Inverurie, Tel 01467626247, or e mail: [kirsteen.sutherland@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:kirsteen.sutherland@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

For more information on EFB and other foul brood diseases you can follow the links below.

Apiary Hygiene Guidance <<http://www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk/services/documents/Apiary%20hygiene%2017%20July.pdf>>

Foulbrood Diseases (CSL) <<http://www.edinburghbeekeepers.org.uk/downloads/foulbrood.pdf>>

Outbreak of EFB in Scotland <<http://www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk/services/documents/EFB%20Outbreak%2017%20July.pdf>>

EFB Recognition and Management <<http://www.edinburghbeekeepers.org.uk/diseases/EFB.pdf>>

# ASSOCIATION APIARY UPDATE

Thanks to MBA member Mike Reid, the site at Birnie has been skimmed with a JCB, and is now awaiting the laying of paving flags which will hopefully be completed in August.

Thank you to those members who have offered paving flags and other items for setting up the apiary. We still need fencing posts, any lengths of wood in order to make a fence, hive stands and if anyone has or knows of an unwanted shed, we will gladly come and take it away.

Just to remind you all, we have 7 donated or lent hives, a number of mini mating nuclei, a Jenter queen rearing kit, the promise of 3 nucs of bees so far (more would be appreciated!) and if all goes to plan we should be in a position to source locally bred queens and bees if not next season, the season afterwards. Please support this project!

## MBA HONEY EXTRATORS



If you don't have your own honey extractor you can borrow one of the Associations. The one on the left is a heather honey press and the one on the right is a manual radial extractor for liquid honey



You can borrow them for free (although you may wish to make a small donation to club funds) by contacting either:  
Andrew Tassell (Keith area) Tel 01466 771243  
or  
John Salt (Rafford area) Tel 01309 673703



## GUESS THE WEIGHT WINNER

MBA member, Graham Hill receiving his prize of a jar of creamed honey from Sarah Tassell at the July meeting.

Instead of the usual raffle there was a 'Guess the Weight' competition of a full super of honey.

Graham guessed 28 ½ lb and this proved to be the closest, the correct weight being 29lb.

### 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

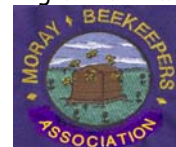
Quality bee suits and clothing from BB Wear, for MBA members who receive a 15% discount (please order via the MBA Secretary)

BB1 Full suit £78.63, BB3 Smock £58.61  
BB10 Washable leather Gloves £17.00  
[www.bbwear.co.uk/](http://www.bbwear.co.uk/)

### A WARM WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

Sylvia Wood and Donna Clarke

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!**