

The Auricle

Moray Beekeepers Association Newsletter
Hot off the 'press'

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WARRE HIVES

Another glorious day for Moray Beekeepers Association' July meeting saw over 40 members and guests assemble at Rob & Angie MacKenzie's apiary, at their home and beautiful gardens near Pluscarden. Rob gave an interesting talk on his recent change over to the Warre hive and demonstrated the principles involved. Those present then split into 3 groups and were shown the hives in operation. Although one of the main principles with Warre hives is that the bees are left undisturbed, so the hives weren't opened up, members were able to see through perspex covers that the bees had been very busy building natural comb.

Some of the more experienced beekeepers then examined Rob & Angie's remaining hives and identified those in best shape to go to the heather.



Rob MacKenzie showing off one of his warre hives



New member Stephen Palmer examining a brood frame

Warre hives are based on the views of Frenchman, Abbe Warre, who in the last century advocated leaving the bees alone so that they built natural comb, were free from manipulations and could swarm if they wanted to. The hive is somewhat smaller than say a National hive but is capable of being as high as the bees wish to build the comb (boxes are added to the bottom, not the top). Rob has promised to keep us informed on the success or otherwise of his project.

As usual, the afternoon was finished off with a fine tea. Thank you to everyone involved and to Rob and Angie for opening up their home to us.

OUR NEXT MEETING IS A BBQ AT KEV & SHEILA WEST'S HOUSE, LONGMORN ON SUNDAY 15TH AUGUST, FOOD SERVED 2PM-3PM. TO HELP WITH CATERING ARRANGEMENTS MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO INFORM THE SECRETARY, TONY HARRIS, (contact details bottom of last page) IF THEY ARE ATTENDING, IF THEY WILL BE BRINGING ANY GUESTS AND IF VEGETARIAN OPTIONS ARE REQUIRED.

Full details of all Monthly Meetings, Open Apiary Sessions and Courses are at
www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk

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*: '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 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 who are lucky enough to have had some honey, should by now have extracted it and you might like to save a couple of jars to put into **Moray Beekeepers Honey Show on September 11th in Forres?** 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!

AIM FOR A PRODUCTIVE COLONY OF BEES

The colony should be 'bubbling over' with bees and should be disease free.

The queen should be young and fertile producing sufficient queen substance to satisfy the needs of the colony and producing progeny with little inclination to swarm, good temper and resistance to disease characteristics.

The brood box should be sufficiently large so that the queen's laying rate will not be hindered by insufficient comb space.

The bees should be encouraged to store any surplus stores in the supers. This can be achieved by use of a dummy board during the rapid expansion in the spring. Adequate space must be allowed for the conversion of nectar to honey. Super early in the spring but do not over super towards the end of the season. Too many supers will result in the bees storing honey in a column through the centre of the supers.

A queen excluder should divide the brood box from the supers. This confines the brood to the brood box and reduces the pollen stored in the super frames.

The honey stored in the supers must be free from any contamination e.g. sugar syrup, Fumidil 'B', etc

The external structure of the hive parts containing the colony should be weather and insect proof except for the entrance.

The internal surfaces and frames should all be arranged so that 'bee space' is observed in all directions facilitating easy inspection with the minimum of disturbance to the colony and occupying the minimum amount of the beekeepers time.

Inspections for swarm prevention and control should be carried out throughout the active swarming season.

Records should be kept at each inspection noting the presence of the queen, the expansion of the brood nest since the last inspection, correct ratio of eggs, larvae and pupal stages of the brood, any signs of disease in brood or adult bees, any signs of swarming and that there are adequate stores to last until the next inspection.

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 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 and sterilise them in the oven. 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 hot 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!

For more information on the **Moray Beekeepers Honey Show**, as part of the Forres Flower Show, please contact the Organiser, Viv Hill, telephone 01343 542919 or visit the Moray beekeepers web site - http://www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk/honey_shows.htm

UPCOMING FLOWER SHOWS INCLUDING HONEY SHOWS

The Banff Show, Saturday 7th August.

The Keith Show, Sunday 8th, Monday 9th August.

The Buckie & District Show late August

The Cornhill Show Saturday 21st August

Moray Beekeepers Honey Show, Forres Saturday 11th 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.

GUARD & ROBBER BEES

Bees fighting outside a hive is an early sign of robbing and can be confirmed by the flight of the robber bees on approach – it is nervous and erratic and in a characteristic 'zig zag' pattern. Guard bees will recognise this flight pattern and will be on high alert!

If you watch the entrance to the hive carefully you will observe the behaviour of the guard bees. They challenge and examine all entrants for a period of about 1-3 seconds by antennal contact, the time it takes to determine a nest mate from an intruder - the nest mate will have the same colony odour, recognisable to the guards. If an intruder it is usually mauled by the guard, clamping onto a leg or a wing, and curling the abdomen into a position enabling it to sting the intruder. A fight ensues, and the robber is marked with 2 heptanone from the mandibular glands. Other guard bees recognise the alarm and raise their abdomen and sting chamber, releasing a further alarm pheromone, isopentyl acetate that smells of bananas. The robber struggles and may escape but sometimes is stung and dies.

If the intruder has tried to enter the hive by accident, when challenged, it often offers food and begs its way into the hive.

By the way, if your sense of smell is good you will be able to smell the alarm pheromone 'banana scent' released by the bees, and if you smell this when examining the hive, be prepared for an attack, or close up the hive till a later date.

When a robbed colony succumbs and silent robbing ensues, the robbed colony continues to work normally, while at the same time robbers also enter and leave the hive. The only tell tale sign now is the flight of the bees returning directly to another hive. Also, robber bees leaving the robbed hive, laden, will have the rear legs forward as opposed to a bee leaving the hive on a forage flight, unladen, when the rear legs will be trailing askew. Eventually, the robbed colony will be devoid of stores, may abandon the nest or even die off



guard bees evicting a robber bee



contact feeders



reduced entrance block



nucleus being robbed

When robbing starts in an apiary it is difficult to stop it so it is important for the beekeeper to know how to prevent it and what to do if robbing has started. Robbing is more often than not brought on by the actions of the beekeeper. This can be due to spilling sugar syrup on the floor when feeding the bees, leaving brace comb in the apiary or leaving hives open longer than is absolutely necessary. So make sure you don't do any of these things. Also, make sure every hive or nucleus is bee proof, the only way in being via the entrance. Also important, when making up nuclei to remain in the same apiary, don't feed the nuc for 4 or 5 days as any of the flying bees returning to the parent hive could recruit nest mates to return to the nuc for a feed and it could be robbed out while in this vulnerable state.

Feed your bees at dusk when flying has ceased as this will reduce any excitement and the darkness will prevent the flying bees from leaving the hive and searching for the source of food. Feed all your colonies at the same time. With the brood nest getting smaller in late summer, the colony will also be shrinking in size and there will be fewer guard bees on duty so reduce the size of the entrance hole down to about 'four bees wide' or 10 mm. You can do this by inserting a 'reduced entrance block', easily made at home (see photo above), which is pushed into the hive entrance.

HIVES FOR THE HEATHER

The first week in August is the time to take your bees to the heather, and if you prepare the hive right, and there is a couple of weeks of warm, sunny weather, you should earn a reward of at least a super of heather honey.

Hives for the heather should be absolutely packed full with bees and you can supplement this by adding up to 2 frames of emerging brood from another disease free hive a couple of weeks 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 essential for heather going hives as they tend to continue laying longer, again meaning less space in the brood frame for the bees to store the precious honey - Remember, we want the honey in the supers!

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.

The day before the move, remove these supers and place a super of drawn comb, or thin unwired foundation for cut comb on top. Secure your hives with ratchet straps or the like, and move to the heather at dawn. It is easy to block the hive entrance with a strip of foam rubber and it is always a good idea to add a travelling screen on top to allow greater ventilation during the move.

Hives can be brought home from the heather in the 1st or 2nd week in September and you then have to get your hands on the honey - more on that next issue!

'BEE'GINNERS' CORNER

Q. How and when do I feed the bees for winter?

A. The bees should be fed with sugar syrup (mix 2lb of sugar with 1 pint of hot water) about the 1st or 2nd week of September. There are various types of feeders for doing this (check suppliers catalogues). It is very important to pour a small amount of syrup down the feed hole in the crown board so that the bees know it is there, as sugar syrup has no smell that the bees can recognise.

How much syrup do we have to feed? Well, this will be different for each colony so first of all open up each hive and assess its stores by eye and then decide. If you bear in mind that 1 B.S. brood frame, full on both sides, has about 5lb of honey, and that Ted Hooper recommends 40-45lb of stores, you should be able to work out how much syrup is needed. And if you are still not sure you can do what I do - feed syrup until they stop taking it down, on the premise that the bees know best. It is best to feed the bees in the evening, so that darkness will help quell the excitement, and to feed all your colonies at the same time, as this will help to reduce the likelihood of robbing.

Lift your hive and get to know its weight when stores are plentiful so that you can take action if it you feel it weighing a lot less during winter. If it does, DON'T feed with more syrup, as the excess moisture can easily cause dysentery / nosema in weak colonies. Instead, you can place a block of candy or bakers fondant (available in supermarkets), or sugar bags soaked for a minute in a bucket of water, over the feed hole. I place the fondant in a margarine tub from which I cut out a small hole with a strip of queen excluder on the inside. This allows the bees into the tub but when the temperature rises when brood rearing begins, the queen excluder prevents the melted fondant from falling into the hive in a sticky mess. Once started with the fondant, keep feeding until the spring nectar flow begins.

SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (SBA)

Moray Beekeepers Association is affiliated to the SBA and you are encouraged to join. Membership of £25 a year will give you a monthly magazine, £2 million Public and Product liability insurance and access to beekeepers throughout Scotland,

Contact membership convener: Mr. Phil McAnespie, 12 Monument Road, Ayr, KA7 2RL

SBA web site: www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk

SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (SBA) EDUCATION SYLLABUS

The SBA has an education syllabus whereby you can earn qualifications in beekeeping to whatever level you wish and this can be practical, oral or in written form. Studying for these exams is a great way of increasing your beekeeping knowledge and it will also improve your beekeeping management skills. You can start the ball rolling by taking the Basic Beemaster's Certificate, a practical examination when an experienced beekeeper comes to your apiary and observes while you examine your bees asking basic beekeeping questions as you go along.

You can then progress as far as you wish with the remaining syllabus and as the exams take place in March, you have the dark winter months, when the bees are confined to the hive, to swot up.

You can view or download a copy of the syllabus along with application forms at the Scottish Beekeepers Association web site, address here: <http://www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk/learning/html/syllabus.html>

THE SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN CONVENTION
Saturday 11th September 2010
8.45am – 5.10pm

At KINELLAR COMMUNITY HALL
Fintray Road, BLACKBURN, Aberdeenshire, AB21 0JG

Tickets £25 including coffee, lunch and tea

TRADE STANDS

Bookings for the Convention to Iain F. Steven
4 Craigie View, Perth, PH2 0DP. Telephone 01738 621100
(cheques payable to 'SBA' and enclose SAE for programme/receipt)



July raffle winner, Tom Balch (right), receiving his prize from MBA Chairman Andrew Tassell

FOR SALE **Formic Acid at 60%** ... £4. Please provide your own container/bottle with plastic/cork stopper.
Expanded wire mesh, cut to your size, @ £1.70 sq ft. Ideal for varroa floors or travelling screens.
Contact John Salt, telephone 01309 673703

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 £82.00

www.bbwear.co.uk/

WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

Willie Beattie, Stephen Palmer, Alvina McNair, Chris Nurser-Stephens, Dougal Simpson, Helmut Pibernik, Peter & Becky Hindley, Julie Jessett, Lynn Stewart, Morag Henderson & Wendy Jamieson.

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 or phone 07884 496246

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