

The Auricle

Moray Beekeepers Association Newsletter
Hot off the 'press'

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HONEY EXTRACTION DEMONSTRATION

Approximately 24 members and guests gathered at the Association Apiary at Birnie in September and despite the cold, rainy weather, for once, no one was complaining. Unusual for beekeepers you may think, but as this was the afternoon for a 'Honey Extraction' demonstration, everyone was happy that the bees were confined to their hives and not trying to recover their lost honey! The apiary shed has turned out to be an asset and MBA Secretary, Tony Harris, gave a step-by-step demonstration on how to remove a super of honey from the hive, extract and strain the honey, all the way to the end product, a sparkling jar of pure natural honey, and several pieces of cut comb. Straight from the suppliers! Yum, Yum!



Uncapping a frame of honey



Sarah and Casper had the best seats in the house!!



Tea, cake ...!



And a good natter!

A big thank you is due to Tony and everyone who 'chipped in' to make the afternoon a great success. WELL DONE ALL!

OUR NEXT MEETING IS ON FRIDAY 26TH NOVEMBER AT ELGIN LIBRARY, 7.00-9.00 PM WHEN M.B.A. MEMBER, STEPHEN PALMER WILL GIVE A TALK AND PRESENTATION ENTITLED, 'MY BEEKEEPING YEAR'.

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

THE HONEY HARVEST

After a long hard summer looking after your bees, stopping them swarming and checking them every week, you may be fortunate enough to have a super or two of honey to extract and this is how to do it.

The warmer honey is, the more easily it runs so after you have taken the honey from the bees it is best to extract it straight away. If you are unable to do this then the next best thing is to store the supers in a warm room until you can.

Your honey handling room (usually the kitchen) should be spotlessly clean with washing facilities available. Where honey is extracted for your own and family consumption, and not sold, the odd bee wing in it is not a disaster, whereas honey for sale, if unsatisfactory in any way can theoretically bring a visit from a Trading Standards officer to scrutinise every part of the business. The honey room layout should be planned so that there is a rational easy flow from one task to the next. Honey and wax will inevitably reach every corner of the room, floor, door handles, taps - and anything else touched by hand or foot. A good tip is to keep a bucket of warm soapy water handy for washing surfaces as you go along, plus another container with water for washing hands and utensils.



a frame ready for extraction



uncapping



then into the extractor



one way of filtering the honey



Fine straining the honey



ready for jarring



Cut comb



Liquid Gold

Once you have everything ready you will first of all have to uncap the honey. Cappings are removed from comb in a number of ways. They can be cut off using a warmed or cold knife, scratched off using a multi tined fork, melted open by using a hot air gun (this gently peels back the capping to expose the honey) or they can be taken off using a special uncapping machine.

This is how I do it. Lift each frame from the super and then cut through the wax cappings with a knife (see photo). I rest the frame on a nail that is hammered through a wooden batten that sits on top of a plastic washing up bowl so the cappings fall into it.

Once the cappings are removed the frame of honeycomb is placed in the extractor with the others. They are arranged around the centre like spokes on a wheel making sure the weight is well balanced. Frames of honeycomb are valuable and we want to keep them undamaged so they can be put back on top of a hive either this season or the next so the bees can fill them again and again.

When the extractor is full, if it is electric, the motor is switched on, increasing the speed slowly so as not to damage the comb. The same principle applies if it is a manual extractor as the handle is turned slowly at first gradually building up the speed until you can hear the honey hitting the sides of the extractor, before hitting the sides and gathering at the bottom of the tank.

When you have finished extracting the honey from the frames it needs to be run through the honey tap and filtered as it runs into your storage bucket. Special filters can be bought that fit on top of the bucket, coarse filtering at first and then fine filtering. Another good tip is to purchase stainless steel equipment if you can afford it. The plastic equipment just doesn't last and it is worth spending a few pounds more for quality that will last.

When you have run your honey through the filters and into the storage bucket you now need to leave it for about 24 hours in a warm room so that it can settle. This means that bubbles and any bits that managed to get through the filter can either rise to the top or fall to the bottom.

The next day you should have your clean jars ready and it is a simple operation to run the honey from the bucket into the jar. Put a lid on each jar and that's it. If you are going to be selling the honey you need proper legal labels but if for your own consumption, simply enjoy as it is.

If storing, it is important to keep the lid on tightly and fill the bucket to the top if possible, as honey is hygroscopic, i.e. it absorbs moisture, and this can bring problems with fermentation as the water content rises. Store at 14C for rapid granulation and then below 10C once granulated, as this will prevent yeasts growing.

Unlike running water, running honey makes no noise so double check that all honey taps etc are closed properly, otherwise, like my first attempt, you may end up with honey all over the kitchen floor! Be assured, it happens to the best of us!

PROPOLIS

Propolis or 'bee glue' is the resinous secretions of trees and it is collected by honeybees, and used for various purposes in the nest or hive. Collection is a lengthy and messy affair as the bee has to bite and pull off small pieces before kneading it in the mandibles and transferring it to the pollen basket where it is carried like pollen.

On return to the hive, the forager will need the assistance of another bee to unload it. Unloading can take up to an hour as the propolis is very sticky and is used straight away at the point of requirement - it is not stored in the hive!



bee collecting propolis



and again!



carrying propolis in pollen baskets



reducing hive entrance



propolis inside the hive



on the top bars



propolis health products



propolis cream

The bees use propolis for a number of reasons:

- Varnishing the inside surfaces of brood cells before polishing for the queen to lay in
- Smoothing the interior of and the entrance to the hive
- Filling gaps and cracks to keep out draughts and rain
- Embalming objectionable objects that are too large to remove from the hive, e.g. a dead mouse, and
- Reducing openings, e.g. the size of the entrance to the hive

Propolis has some amazing properties and it is widely used in human medications. Research shows it offers antiseptic, antibiotic, antibacterial, antifungal, and even antiviral properties. It is believed to promote heart health, strengthen the immune system and reduce the chances of cataracts. Older beekeepers recommend a piece of propolis kept in the mouth as a remedy for a sore throat and propolis lozenges and tinctures can be bought in many countries.

Natural medicine practitioners use propolis for the relief of various conditions, including inflammations, viral diseases, ulcers, superficial burns or scalds.

If you want to harvest propolis from your hive you can scrape it off top bars with your hive tool or you can place a propolis net over the top bars instead of the crown board. At this time of year the bees will quickly propolis it and after a week or two you can remove the net from the hive, place it in the freezer till frozen and then knock the propolis from the net. What you do with it next is up to you! Small quantities can be mixed with home made beeswax creams, soaps or lip balms but if you have a sore throat, sucking on a strepsil seems the better option!

WINTER PROGRAMME 2010/11

Sunday 17th October, Association Apiary, Birnie, 12 noon start, 'Apiary Tidy Up'.

Friday 26th November, at Elgin Library, 7-9pm, a talk by MBA member, Stephen Palmer, 'My Beekeeping Year',

Dr Stephen Palmer PhD; Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (FRGS) and Fellow of the Linnaean Society (FLS). Stephen is a qualified Master Beekeeper and has kept bees for nearly 30 years. He has recently retired to Turriff but he continues to serve as Chaplain to HM Queen.

Monday 24th January, 2011, at Elgin Library, 7pm start, 'Annual General Meeting'

WASP TRAPS

Wasps can be real nuisance at this time of year, robbing hives of valuable honey as well as chomping through bees as they return from foraging flights. They just love anything sweet, i.e. honey and sugar syrup, and if your hive is left unprotected, wasps can quickly outnumber and over-run your bees, destroying the colony. There are however, a few things you can do to help your bees.

1. Put a reduced entrance block in place so the hive entrance is easier for the bees to guard.
2. Placing a wasp trap next to your hives will catch hundreds of wasps and surprisingly few bees.
3. Take care not to spill any honey, wax comb or sugar syrup near your hives or in your apiary as this will attract every wasp in the neighbourhood. Once they have started visiting the apiary, they will stay around until the frosts kill them off but by this time your bees may have been killed off as well.

You can buy wasp traps from suppliers or you can save a few pounds and make one yourself – it will work just as well. The following is taken from the SBA interactive forum, http://www.sbai.org.uk/sbai_forum/forum.php, (thanks to Gavin Ramsay for this)

'The one that worked the best was a clear Tesco Perthshire (of course) Spring Water 2l bottle. The idea came, I think, from the Irish Beekeeping list and involves cutting small holes (about 5 for me) about 1/3 of the way up. Above that, 2/3 of the way up, a couple of bands of duck tape. In goes the magic mix, then screw the top back on and sit on the ground beside the hive or just park it on the roof. The small holes were originally supposed to be the diameter of a thick straw and round, but now I just make two quick cuts with a Stanley knife blade and fold back a triangle to expose a small triangular hole. The clear plastic bottles filled quickly with wasps whereas the green one seemed less effective.



wasps will try and enter a hive



clear bottles worked best



commercial wasp trap



it definitely works!

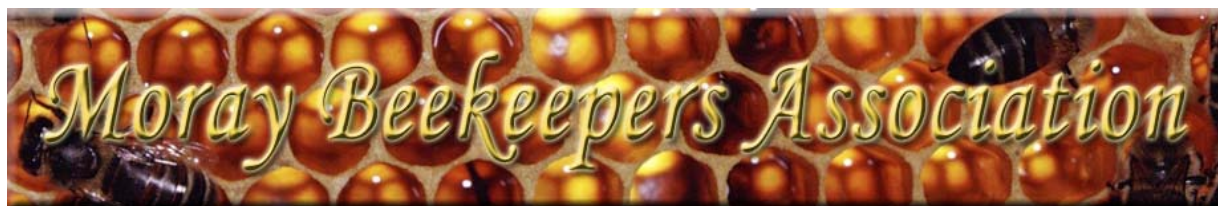
The idea seems to be that the odour of the mix attracts the wasps in quickly, and when they wish to leave they fly up to the light above the dark bands. Soon they fall into the mix until the bodies are too thick and drown.

One of those white rectangular 4 pint milk containers was also tried. This caught wasps, but not nearly as many as the other traps. I also tried just a water bottle with the mix in and the blue top removed - it worked quite well too.

The mix? Something fruity (fruit juice, jam, actual fruit) plus a small pile of sugar, plus more water and a good glug of vinegar. Then a couple of drops of washing-up liquid to hasten the drowning and make escape unlikely'.

Editor's note: Thanks for those tips Gavin, these wasp traps really work. I caught hundreds of wasps over just a few days!

NEW WEB SITE LAUNCHED



Well done to M.B.A. Committee member and Webmaster, Allison Laws for designing and launching the new Moray Beekeepers website. It went live on 19th September and includes lots of beekeeping articles, a Members area, Committee & A.G.M. Meeting Minutes, details of upcoming events, meetings and courses, as well as a Blog.



'BEE'GINNERS' CORNER

Q. What is the best fuel to use in a smoker?

A. The key in using a smoker is to get it to produce cool smoke as if it burns too hot it will make the bees angry and this will lessen your beekeeping enjoyment. There are many different types of fuel used by beekeepers and a few are mentioned next. Hessian sacking is popular (roll it up tightly) and is easier to light if left to rot for a few months in the garden before drying out in the greenhouse if you have one. Another favourite is rotting wood that can be collected from the woods and this produces a cool, pleasant smelling smoke. Oak and silver birch is particularly good. Once the smoker is lit, it doesn't matter if the wood is slightly damp. If the wood is dry, it is a good idea to damp it down with a handful of green grass. It helps to produce a nice, fragrant smoke and prevents the smoker from becoming a flame-thrower. Some beekeepers use rolled up corrugated cardboard but increasingly these days, it has been treated with fire resistant chemicals and is hard to light, and it is said to produce a hot smoke. More fuels include dried pony dung, pine cones, compacted hay, wood shavings all of which, along with the others mentioned above, can be improved to produce a nice, cool, fragrant smoke, by the addition of dried lavender heads. A good tip when lighting your smoker is to buy yourself a small gas burner as this will make lighting your fuel much easier! And don't forget that practice makes perfect so have a go before you need to open the hive!

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

'BASIC BEEMASTERS' CERTIFICATE'

The Basic Beemaster's Certificate is 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.

IF ANY MEMBERS WOULD LIKE TO COME TOGETHER AS A SMALL GROUP TO PREPARE FOR THE BASIC BEEMASTERS' CERTIFICATE THIS WINTER THEN PLEASE CONTACT MBA SECRETARY, TONY HARRIS.

Tony, along with Viv Hill has agreed to coach anyone interested through the syllabus to prepare them for the assessment that normally takes place in May/June. The idea is that we will meet weekly, probably commencing in January and go through the theory and practical issues involved. It is not rocket science, in fact it is enjoyable and will increase your beekeeping skills.

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>

MORAY BEEKEEPERS HONEY SHOW

The Honey Show, part of the Forres Show had a disappointing entry this year probably due to quite a poor honey season and a clash with the S.B.A. Autumn Convention in Blackburn.

However, our thanks are due to Organiser, Viv Hill and Judge, John Salt for their efforts. Congratulations to the trophy winners who are shown below:

Peter Stuart Trophy

Highest overall points in classes 1 – 14 *Tony Harris*

The 'Emslie Cup

The best frame for class 10 *Andrew Tassell*

Steele Cup

The best entry in class 1 – 6 *Tony Harris*

Best overall Exhibit *Andrew Tassell* wins a bottle of malt!

Morayshire Cup, Best Novice Entry *Mike Reid*



Raffle winner, Loraine Larkworthy, receiving a bottle of wine from Chairman, Andrew Tassell, at our September meeting!

BEESUITS/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 £86.00

www.bbwear.co.uk/

FOR SALE

Apistan – 1 pack (treats 5 hives) £17.00 or will split into strips (2 strips treats 1 hive) at £3.50 for 2 strips
Contact Tony Harris 07884 496246

The new 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

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING DATE - MONDAY 24TH JANUARY, 2011, ELGIN LIBRARY, 7PM START!