

The Auricle

Moray Beekeepers Association Newsletter
Hot off the 'press'

Issue No: 7/10

September 2010

THIS NEWSLETTER SPONSORED BY MBA MEMBER BILL COPLAND – THANK YOU!

AN AFTERNOON TO 'RELISH'

Approximately 35 members and guests turned out for the Moray Beekeepers Barbeque in August at Kev & Sheila West's place in Longmorn and were treated to fine food and a lovely sunny afternoon in pleasant surroundings.



Bernard & Kevin get to grip with the sausages & burgers



Blue skies and good food - perfect!

A big thank you is due to Kevin & Sheila for their hospitality and to everyone else who helped to make the afternoon a success. WELL DONE ALL!

OUR NEXT MEETING IS ON SUNDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER AT THE ASSOCIATION APIARY, BIRNIE, 2.30 PM START WHEN THERE WILL BE A PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION AND TALK ON 'HONEY EXTRACTION'.

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

NEW COMMITTEE

With quite a few members of the Committee standing down for various reasons over the last couple of months Moray Beekeepers have a new Committee to take the Association forward. Donna Clark, (Lhanbryde), in her first year as a beekeeper is our new Treasurer, and Allison Laws (Glass), also a novice, has taken over as Webmaster (a new website should be up and running soon!). Gerry Thompson, (Knockando), who has had bees for a few years has been co-opted onto the Committee joining Andy Watson (Cairnie) and Graham and Viv Hill (Elgin). Andrew Tassell (Grange) remains in post as Chairman and Tony Harris (Fochabers) as Secretary.

The Committee exists to serve you, the membership, and to promote beekeeping and honeybee conservation in Moray and Scotland. In the interests of clarity and to improve communication, the Committee recently decided that minutes of all meetings will be sent to members and will be published on the website. If you wish anything to be discussed by the Committee or have any suggestions to improve anything in the Association please contact the Secretary, Tony Harris or any of the above. We meet every two months and a vote is taken on all matters.

PREPARING BEES FOR THE WINTER

by Tony Harris

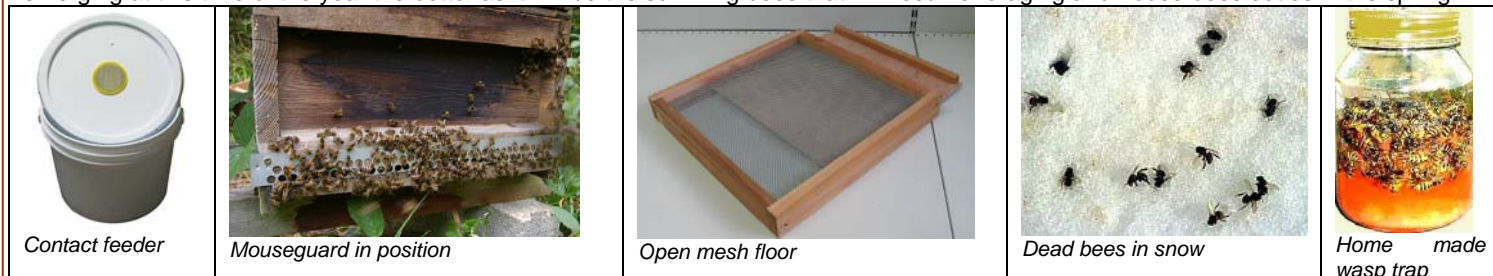


The optimum condition for a colony going into winter is:

1. The colony should have a young queen and plenty of bees,
2. Stores should be sufficient to last until the spring flowers arrive,
3. It should be disease free and protected from pests and predators, and
4. The bees should be in a sound, waterproof hive so that they are dry, preferably on stands with good air circulation around them, and, situated in a dry, warm, unexposed apiary.

Is that all, you ask? Well, it sounds a lot but there are practical steps the beekeeper can take to help the bees through the winter.

It goes without saying that a **YOUNG QUEEN** is less likely to die or become a drone breeder, but more importantly, the younger the queen is, the later in the season she will lay, which means more bees that don't have to live as long under winter conditions. And the more bees emerging at this time of the year the better as it will be the surviving bees that will resume foraging and house bees duties in the spring.



SUFFICIENT STORES The old adage that 'bees never freeze to death, they only starve to death', is very true, so it is vitally important that we provide sufficient stores for them to last until spring. 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) 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.

Your bees will normally collect sufficient pollen for winter but if one of your colonies looks short you can insert a frame of pollen from a bountiful colony. And you can help the bees by planting flowers that are good sources of early and late pollen: hazel and willow for spring, and Michaelmass daisy and ivy for autumn.

DISEASE FREE AND PROTECTED FROM PESTS AND PREDATORS Space does not permit a lengthy article on varroa treatment – you can read all about it on the Association web site. On a practical point, I suggest one thing you do, after any honey has been taken off, is to treat your colonies with apistan. You can buy this from suppliers and you insert 2 strips into the brood box and leave it there for a minimum of 6 weeks and no more than seven, otherwise the mites can become resistant to it.

MICE are a problem in the winter. If they get into your hive while the bees are clustering, the bees will leave them alone, and they will eat and remove comb, and can lead to the demise of a colony. So fit mouse guards over the entrance now and leave in place till the spring.

Other predators include **BADGERS** and the way to keep them out of your apiary is to erect a strong wire fence, sunk at least 2 feet into the ground. **WASPS** can also be a problem as they try and get into the hive to rob the honey. An easy way to deal with this is to sink a jam jar filled with sugar syrup or runny jam into the ground – this will catch lots more wasps than it does honey bees.

SOUND WATERPROOF HIVES, GOOD AIR CIRCULATION, IN A DRY, WARM UNEXPOSED APIARY Make sure your hives are waterproof and there are no holes in them. Although bees do not freeze to death due to low temperatures, they can die off due to cold winds, so it is especially important to protect the hives from northerly and easterly winds – if necessary build a wind break!

During winter, the honey bee colony adopts 3 mechanisms to ensure its survival down to very low temperatures. These are, 1. clustering, 2. generating metabolic heat by micro vibration of indirect flight muscles, and 3. ensuring the nest is draught free by use of propolis.

And it is number 3 that can cause a dilemma for beekeepers, because if the bees proplise any cracks to reduce draughts, what degree of ventilation should we provide in the hive over the winter? – the experts can't agree! Ventilation is always necessary in order to expel CO₂ and this is true also in winter. Here are some of the options for ventilating your hive - experiment and take your pick!

1. Open mesh Floor with or without floor insert,
2. Raising the crown board by inserting a matchstick under each corner.
3. Crown board completely removed,
4. Feed hole in crown board left open, and
5. having differing sizes of roof ventilation holes

Something else to consider is **INSULATION**. Many beekeepers place additional insulation under the hive roof for winter, e.g. polystyrene, loft insulation rolls, but others do not – again experiment and do what suits you.

SNOW can be a problem for the bees because if it settles around the hive it can give the bees a false sense of brightness that can cause them to leave the hive on a cleansing flight, and this can prove fatal at low temperatures. If snow does settle around your hive then simply place a piece of wood over the entrance so that it is kept in the dark and that should prevent the bees from flying.

If your bees are in more than one box and you have a queen excluder between them, please remember to **REMOVE THE QUEEN EXCLUDER**, otherwise the queen can get left in the lower box if the cluster moves above, and that will be the end of her!

And **FINALLY**, tie down the hive or place a large brick on the roof, and then, **LEAVE ALONE** during winter. It won't be long before the first sunny day in February, when your heart will be gladdened as you see the girls bringing in the first of the season's pollen – a sure sign that the queen is present and has resumed laying.

MY BEEKEEPING YEAR - SEPTEMBER by Ian Craig

The main nectar flows are now over except for the end of the heather and Himalayan balsam. The bees will continue to store honey from late sources, which I leave for the bees themselves and any shortfall is made up to about 25kg by feeding sugar syrup (1kg white sugar to 550ml water) or ready made liquid feed purchased commercially. I use Miller feeders for autumn feeding which allows the colonies to be fed in a very short time, certainly in less than a week. When feeders are first put on the hives they should be 'primed' by running some syrup down through the feed hole to entice the bees up into the feeder. I try to have all my colonies fed by mid September. Some beekeepers are of the opinion that if bees are fed too early they will use some of the food for breeding and will have to be given more food later. I do not agree with this. What better preparation can there be for next spring than to have colonies going into the winter with an abundance of young bees, even if it means having to top up their food stocks later in the month. Bees are thrifty insects and do not waste food. Some beekeepers make the mistake of feeding syrup far too late in the autumn, causing the bees to become exhausted trying to reduce its moisture content and trying to get it sealed before the onset of cold weather.



Miller feeder



Himalayan Balsam



Wax moth damage



Wax moth cocoons

After honey has been extracted I usually put the wet supers over the open feed holes of hives that are lightest in stores. When they have been cleared of honey the dry supers are taken home, sprayed with 'Certan' as a preventative against wax moths and stored in my bee shed for the winter. The supers are stacked, with a sheet of newspaper between each, in piles that are made rodent-proof by placing a swarm-board top and bottom. Another, quicker method of deterring wax moths is to store the supers 'wet' as they come from extraction. This is successful, but it produces a sticky mess in the bee shed the following spring. One advantage is that bees enter the supers very rapidly in spring to mop up the honey that has more than likely fermented due to dampness over the winter.

Around the middle of the month the heather hives should be brought home. Their honey supers must be removed, the colonies put on sixteen combs, treated for varroa and fed. The air temperature is too low for Apiguard to be used, so some other method of treating varroa must be used. I try to top up the winter stores by feeding autumn syrup. In order to prevent robbing, all colonies needing food in an apiary should be fed at the same time, in the evening. Care must be taken to avoid spilling syrup in the vicinity of the hives and entrances should be reduced to 25mm to deter robbers and wasps. Beekeepers who have many colonies at the heather usually do not have time in September for liquid feeding. They winter their bees on fondant or dampened sugar bags, neither of which encourage robbing.

Cut comb and sections can be prepared for market as soon as they are removed from the hive. Bees should be removed from the frames using some type of clearer board, never by shaking the combs as they are easily damaged. The use of smoke should be severely curtailed as it can be detected on the comb for weeks. When preparing cut comb for exhibition it should be cut to the exact shape of the plastic container in which it is going to be exhibited and put on a wire baking tray to allow exposed honey to drain out before it is put in the container. If I am preparing cut comb for the market it is cut out using a 'Price' comb cutter and not drained. I have never had any complaints about liquid honey being in the bottom of the opaque container. It is all good stuff! When using a 'Price' comb cutter, I cut close to the bottom of the frame, this leaves 12mm of comb at the top of the frame which will act as a 'starter' for the following year and the frame won't require to be re-waxed. I put the cut comb supers above the feed hole back on the hives to let the bees clean up the surplus honey remaining in the starter comb.

All honey extraction equipment should be cleaned and stored until required the following season. The extractor, metal strainers and tanks should be washed with cold water to remove most of the stickiness, followed by hot water to which washing soda has been added in order to remove any dirt or wax particles. They should then be rinsed in hot water, thoroughly dried, wrapped in polythene and stored in a dry place.

I still use two Porter bee escapes fitted in the crown board when clearing bees from supers. They should not be left on the hives after the supers have been removed otherwise the bees will propolise the springs to close off the air space. After using them, Porters should be submerged in a pot of water to which a handful of washing soda has been added and heated to a temperature above the melting point of wax. Before storing, the distance between the tips of the springs should be checked and adjusted, if required, so that they are about 3mm apart.

HARVESTING SINGLE FRAMES OF HONEY

You don't need expensive extractors to enjoy honey from your bees, as it is quite simple to reap a harvest from individual frames. One of the benefits of harvesting single combs at different times throughout the season is that you get to sample honey from multiple flora sources because the bees are collecting from different nectar flows at different times during the season and you will be amazed at the differing flavours.

Also, you may only have a couple of frames of honey and if you wish to harvest them you can do it like this



The comb is completely cut from the frame into a bowl and thoroughly mashed until the comb cells are broken up and it has a nice even consistency.

Spoon or pour this honey wax mixture into a large jar as shown in the photo. Place a piece of shaped metal mesh over the mouth of another similar jar. Now take the jar with the mesh and turn it upside down, setting it on top of the filled honey jar and duct tape the two together forming a honey hourglass

When a good seal is made, flip the honey hourglass over and put it in a warm place and wait for an hour or two. Your honey will flow right from the honeycomb into the jar, leaving behind the beeswax and you can fine filter it later. Yummy!

QUEEN REARING PROJECT 2011 - VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT!

The Moray Beekeepers' Apiary at Birnie now has 8 colonies of bees and the plan is to start a 'Queen Breeding Project' next May which will enable us to provide queens and nuclei of bees to members at a reduced cost. Any MBA member who has the experience, or enthusiasm, and time to lead, or simply help with this project is asked to contact the Apiary Manager, Tony Harris, tel. 07884 496246.

We will need lots of mini nucleus boxes such as Apidea or similar, and National brood boxes so if you have any of these that you can loan or donate it will be much appreciated!

MORAY BEEKEEPERS HONEY SHOW SATURDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER, FORRES TOWN HALL

Extracted Honey

- Class 1 - 2 x 1lb jars of light blossom honey
- Class 2 - 2 x 1lb jars of medium blossom honey
- Class 3 - 2 x 1lb jars of dark blossom honey
- Class 4 - 2 x 1lb jars of heather honey (granulated)
- Class 5 - 2 x 1lb jars of heather honey (liquid)
- Class 6 - 2 x 1lb jars of creamed honey

Comb Honey

- Class 7 - 2 x sections blossom or heather honey
- Class 8 - 2 pieces of cut comb Blossom Honey (8-16oz)
- Class 9 - 2 pieces of cut comb Heather Honey (8-16oz)
- Class 10 - 1 Shallow frame Blossom or Heather

Wax and Honey products

- Class 11 - 1 cake of Beeswax (minimum weight 8oz)
- Class 12 - Wax Products e.g. Candles & Polish
- Class 13 - 4 small Honey Cakes
- Class 14 - 1 Bottle of Mead

Prizes: 1st - £1.50 ... 2nd - £1.00 ... 3rd - 50p

Trophies and Silver Plate to be awarded

Bottle of Malt Whiskey for Best Overall Exhibit

Exhibits can be staged on Friday night until 22:00 and on Saturday morning from 07:00 until 09:00.

PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR HONEY SHOW!

And if you haven't any honey to exhibit then why not come along and support the exhibitors - you never know, it may inspire you!



For more information contact the Organiser,
Viv Hill on 01343 542919

'BEE'GINNERS' CORNER

Q. Do I need to insulate the hive for winter and if so, how?

A. Some beekeepers do, some don't! Remember the old adage, 'bees never freeze to death, only starve to death'! If you have fed the bees well and they are protected from the cold easterly and northerly winds with a hedge or fence they should be OK. For extra protection, you can place expanded polystyrene over the crown board and at either end of the brood box next to the dummy board (wrap the polystyrene in plastic or gaffer tape to stop the bees chewing on it). Ventilation is another issue within the hive in winter and some beekeepers who do not use open mesh floors place a matchstick under two corners of the crown board, in November to allow CO2 produced by the cluster to escape. Finally, if your bees are overly exposed to the cold winter winds you can wrap the outside of the hive in greaseproof paper, insulating foil or you can actually make a complete outer cover of wood or similar to protect it.

Q. What is the best time and way to treat the bees for varroa in Autumn?

A. If you haven't done anything to combat varroa since last winter then you need to treat your bees in late August or early September with apistan strips, after any honey supers have been removed. Two strips are placed in the brood box for about 6 weeks and will get to work straight away killing varroa attached to adult bees. This is important because any bees emerging from August onwards are your winter bees and you want as many as possible to get through the winter and to start brood rearing again in spring. In December, when there will be hardly any brood at all you can treat your hives with oxalic acid either by the trickle method or by vaporization (see Moray Beekeepers website for instructions). If you attack varroa using these two methods and your bees have enough stores to get through the winter, they should be in fine fettle in spring as far as varroa is concerned. You should then insert a shallow frame in the brood nest on which the bees will build drone brood in which the varroa breed, and if you cut it this out regularly you will remove a lot of varroa with it. Once removed, simply replace the shallow frame in the hive and let the cycle repeat itself, before removing the next lot.

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)



Kevin West (left) receiving a bottle of wine from Chairman, Andrew Tassell, as a thank you for his and Sheila's hospitality with the August BBQ!

FOR SALE Formic Acid at 60%- £4. Expanded wire mesh, cut to your size, @ £1.70 sq ft. Contact John Salt on 01309 673703

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 £82.00

www.bbwear.co.uk/

WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

John & Diane Baillie, Bruce & Ann Colwell, Tom & Andrea Pearce

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

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 FOR 2010, NOW £10 ADULT, £5 OVER 65YRS AND 12-16YRS!