

# The Auricle

## Moray Beekeepers Association Newsletter

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### Contents:

<a href="#">Chairman's Message</a>	1
<a href="#">July in the Apiary</a>	2
<a href="#">Wasp Traps</a>	3
<a href="#">The Swarming Season is Upon Us, part 2</a>	4
<a href="#">Introducing a Queen to a Colony</a>	5
<a href="#">Basic Beemaster Success</a>	5
<a href="#">Notice Board</a>	6

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



*MBA Chairman, Tony Harris*

Moray Beekeepers Association (MBA) Training apiary at Birnie has been a hub of activity again this season with beekeepers courses for beginners, improvers as well as an advanced queen rearing course taking place in June.

A Honeybee Health and Diseases Day is planned for the end of July (see back page for details) so beekeepers in Moray certainly have access to some excellent training to improve their skills at what must be said is an excellent venue.

All of this is the legacy from our Bee Aware in Moray project from last year, funded by Moray Leader, Awards for All Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Co-op Community Fund and others.

Our apiary is the envy of many associations in Scotland but we really do need more volunteers to get involved if we are to continue to provide the training and facilities you have become used to. Most importantly, we need a team of Duty Beekeepers to look after the bees as well as people to maintain the apiary grounds. We need a strong committee to run MBA affairs to the satisfaction of the Office of Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) so I am appealing for your help.

With over 100 members we should be able to raise a team of volunteers to maintain the high standards set in the past. If you can spare a few hours a month, or every other month, to help out or would like more information on what would be involved if you joined the Committee, please contact any of those named on the left hand side of this page. It can be good fun being part of a team and you will improve your beekeeping knowledge and enjoyment along the way!

Tony Harris

# JULY IN THE APIARY

July is a month of bounty and given half decent weather, honeybees will be hard at work, foraging on white clover, bramble, lime, charlock, bell heather and rosebay willow herb. It is now that all your efforts in managing your colonies and preventing swarming will reap a harvest and the strongest colonies will fill one, two or maybe three supers with honey.



*honeybee on clover*

Your chosen swarm control technique should continue until mid July by which time the swarming season should be over and provided you have enough supers on the hive you can go on holiday for a week or two. If you previously left a sealed queen cell in a hive as part of your swarm control, you need to check that she has managed to mate and is laying well. If she has been slow to mate due to bad weather she could become a drone laying queen (DLQ), i.e. capable only of laying unfertilized eggs and she will need replacing. If you find more than one egg in each cell, the young queen has either just starting laying or there are laying workers (LWs) in the hive but how can you tell the difference? Well, with laying workers, you will find that the eggs have been laid on the cell walls as the worker's abdomen is too short to reach the bottom of the cell.



*Multiple eggs from laying workers*

Laying workers will develop if the queen has died or been lost, on a mating flight for example, and the colony is 'hopelessly queenless', i.e. the bees have no means of raising a replacement queen on their own. It usually takes about 4 weeks for the

workers' ovaries to develop until they start laying the unfertilized eggs that will only produce drones



*tidy compact brood nest of a drone laying queen*

Other indications are that a DLQ will keep a tidy, compact brood area and lay single eggs in cells while LW's will have a haphazard laying pattern while laying multiple eggs in the same cell. Both will have raised cappings over worker cells and many miniature drones running around.

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.

When adding foundation to an expanding brood nest during a honey flow, it should be put two positions in. It is a mistake to add it to the flanks as the bees will draw it out and quickly fill it with honey before the queen has time to lay in it and we want the honey upstairs in the super, don't we? Whilst you should super early in spring it is wrong to over super towards the end of the season as you will find that the bees will half fill one and then half fill the second, whereas if you leave just the one it should be filled and capped nicely.

You should continue to monitor for varroa and should be thinking about which treatment you will be using when the honey flow is over. Fit and check your floor inserts. Count the number of mites and divide by the number of days you have had the insert installed and this will give you an idea of whether you need to treat. (if in doubt seek advice)

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 your hives are 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, preferably of the current year's hatch, 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!



*heather moors*

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 few weeks before and then 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 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week in September and you then have to get your hands on that beautiful heather honey! (Editor's note: see next month's Auricle if you want to see how to extract your honey)

# MAKING A NUCLEUS OF YOUNG HOUSE BEES FOR INTRODUCING A QUEEN

Nurse bees are the best for forming nuclei, first, because they haven't flown (apart from maybe a cleansing flight) so won't abscond and second, because they accept a new Queen more readily.

To make up a nucleus without finding the Queen take 3 combs, at least one containing plenty of unsealed brood and the others plenty of honey and pollen, out of the hive and shake all the bees from these combs back into the hive. Place these brood frames, now devoid of bees, into a fresh brood chamber, with the unsealed brood in the centre. A Queen excluder is placed over the original brood chamber and the 3 comb box is placed on top and this is covered with a crown board.

In a very short time, about 30 minutes, young bees will have come through the excluder and will be covering the 3 combs, and these can be safely removed, knowing that the Queen will be below the excluder in the original box, and placed in a nuc or spare hive. Feed this nuc thick sugar syrup, as there will be no flying bees in it.

You can introduce a queen immediately in a cage or leave 7 days till there are no eggs or larvae left for them to make a new queen. Destroy any queen cells before releasing the new queen.

## BASIC BEEMASTER SUCCESS!

Congratulations to the 2014 Basic Beemaster students who were assessed at the end of June and all passed with distinctions.

The Basic Beemaster Assessment is the first step on the ladder of the education syllabus run by the Scottish Beekeepers Association. It is both practical, assessing your ability to handle bees, beekeeping equipment and to interpret what you can see in the hive, and it is oral as you are asked questions on your understanding of basic beekeeping theory.

So well done to **Martin Bridges, Mike Collins, Maria Dawson, Garry Forbes, Susan Hermiston, Charlie Kennedy and Raefe Letty**

# WASP TRAPS

Wasps start to 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 from a clear 2 litre plastic bottle, as shown in the photographs below. – it will work just as well.



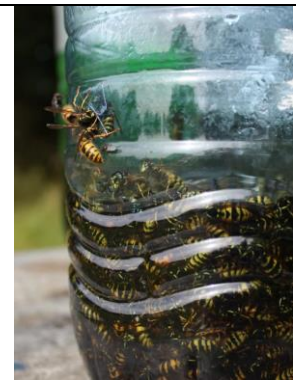
*wasps will try and enter a hive*



*clear bottles worked best*



*commercial wasp trap*



*it definitely works!*

Cut about 5 holes in the bottle, about 1/3 of the way up and above that, about 2/3 of the way up, wrap a couple of bands of duck tape. Pour in 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 two quick cuts with a Stanley knife blade and folded back to expose a small triangular hole is equally effective. If it is windy you can secure the bottle by trapping between a couple of boulders or attaching it somehow to the side of the hive.

The idea is 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 of duck tape. They eventually fall down into the thick mix and drown.

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.

If you are new to beekeeping or haven't experienced wasps robbing a beehive you will be shocked at the numbers involved. Last summer I caught hundreds of wasps in the bottle over just a few days!

## THE SWARMING SEASON IS UPON US! PART 2

So, despite your best efforts, one of your hives has swarmed and the swarm is hanging on a branch about 5 feet from the ground just waiting for you to come and collect it (well, we can but dream!). There are several ways to collect a swarm but this article explains how the swarm behaves once it has issued from the hive and how and why a new home is chosen. If you can get an understanding of this you will be able to increase your chances of picking up a passing swarm.



A clustered swarm



Bee exposing its Nasonov gland



Bees fanning Nasonov pheromone at hive entrance



Natural comb



More natural comb



Varroa mite on adult bee



Bait hive, a few metres off the ground



Swarm lure

Assuming that the weather is favourable, the swarm will emerge at about noon, and with the queen will settle, usually within 10-20 metres of the hive, the bees attracted initially by the queen pheromone and then by the Nasonov pheromone from the worker bees that find her first. (also known as 'the come and join us' pheromone, it comes from the Nasonov gland on the base of the bees abdomens, and the bees raise their abdomens (bums) and fan their wings when releasing it). As the bees will have gorged on honey before leaving the hive, swarms are usually good tempered although they can cause alarm to members of the public when settling as there are thousands of bees flying to and fro!

They cluster to conserve heat and the scout bees continue their search for a new home. Ideally they are looking for a cavity of between 20 and 80 litres, with a relatively small entrance of less than 70cm square at the bottom of the cavity. They prefer the cavity and the entrance to be about 5 or 6 metres above the ground and if the cavity has comb in it, built by a previous colony, it is particularly attractive to the bees as they can use it to store nectar and pollen and the queen can commence laying earlier.

Returning scout bees perform different dance routines on the surface of the cluster indicating the site of a new nesting place, and eventually the most vigorous dances are accepted and a decision reached. Sometimes the bees are unable to reach a decision or find a new home and they commence comb building where they are clustering, and although they may thrive in the summer, they are unlikely to survive the winter.

Prior to leaving for the new nest site, the scout bees perform the 'whirr dance' on the surface of the cluster and the swarm takes off for the new home. Upon arrival the scout bees begin fanning the Nasonov pheromone telling the other bees to 'come and join us' and before long the swarm has taken up residence.

It is quite surprising how quickly a swarm can draw out a few frames of foundation into comb but they do so using the stores of honey they previously gorged on. The colonies survival depends on them building comb quickly, collecting and storing nectar and pollen, and the queen commencing laying as soon as possible!

So, with this knowledge what steps can you take to try and catch yourself a swarm? A bait hive is a good idea, fitted with a few frames of old comb and/or frames of foundation. Some beekeepers smear the inside of the bait hive with beeswax and remember that it needn't be a proper beehive; any similar container can be used! You can place your bait hive in your own apiary or better still 50 to 100 metres away, or, you can place it a similar distance from where you know a feral colony of bees is located. If you place the hive a few metres off the ground all the better!

Beekeeping suppliers sell a product called 'swarm lure' that you place in the bait hive and it is said to be even more of an attractant to passing swarms! And if you are fortunate enough to 'catch' a stray swarm, it is a good time to treat for varroa, as any mites will be on the adult bees until comb is built and brood is sealed. This could give you a few days or a week or so to insert one or two strips of apistan or a thymol treatment for example, enough time to kill off lots of varroa mites!

## INTRODUCING A QUEEN TO A COLONY

As with most things beekeeping there are various methods described for introducing queens, from simply running a new queen into the hive, to caging her for a few days inside the hive, half drowning the queen in water or even weirder still, dunking the queen in royal jelly and then placing her in the hive. But when the time comes for you to introduce a queen, how are you going to do it, and how should you prepare the hive to ensure the bees accept her?

We can do no better than to quote from Ted Hooper's, 'Guide to Bees and Honey' in listing the general conditions for introducing queens. 'When introducing a new queen to a colony it must be done in such a way that both the colony and the queen are in the right condition to accept each other. The colony must be queenless, should not be in an excited condition from any cause, and should come into contact with the new queen fairly slowly. The queen should be in an undisturbed condition, should be hungry enough to solicit food from any worker who comes into contact with her, and if possible, her odour, which will be that of a stranger, should be masked or her direct contact with the bees delayed until her scent has changed to something nearer their own.'

The time of year is also important as queen introduction is usually easier during late August and September when the main flow is over, and in April and May, only where there is no oilseed rape to producing foraging excitement. If you were to introduce queens into large colonies any time between, when swarming, the excitement of foraging and bad weather confinement can make the bees 'edgy', many queens will be lost.

So what I am going to describe is considered to be one of the safest ways to introduce a queen and that is by introducing the queen first to a nucleus and then introducing the whole nucleus to the full colony. This is particularly relevant if you have received an expensive bought queen in

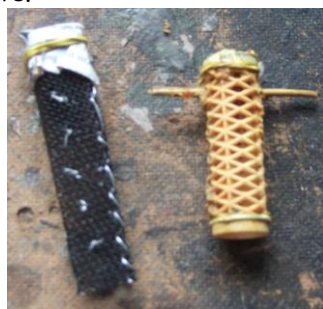
the post and you want to minimise any risk of getting her killed and this is what you do.

Make up a 3 frame nucleus, ideally of young house bees, from the colony to be re-queened and place next to it but facing the other way, so it is ready to receive the new queen. If you want to make sure the nuc is hopelessly queenless, i.e. the bees are unable to raise a new queen, you should make up the nuc and seven days later go into it and remove any queen cells the bees have made. It is a good idea to feed sugar syrup, 2lb of sugar to 1 pint of water, as there will be few flying bees in the nuc.



*Queen in travelling cage with attendants*

When a queen arrives through the post she will be in a travelling cage along with half a dozen or so workers to look after her and a small amount of food in the form of candy or fondant. She will likely be in a poor condition physically and not in lay so a slow introduction to the nuc is called for. Take the travelling cage to the bathroom (with all doors, windows and plug holes closed) or to the car, again with doors and windows closed (and ventilation slots below windscreen covered up) and release the attendant workers.



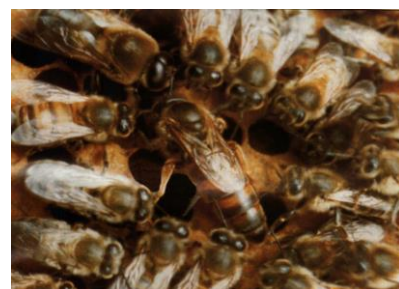
*Home made cages*

Being very careful, introduce the queen into a Butler cage, one end being plugged permanently and then cover the other end with newspaper and an elastic band. If she manages to fly off at this stage she will fly towards the bathroom or car window but won't be able to escape and you will easily be able to catch her. Be careful if handling a queen and only hold her by the wings or thorax not her abdomen but better still, try and coax her into the cage without touching her.



*Cage is fixed onto the top of a brood frame*

Attach the Butler cage or you can keep the queen in the cage she arrived in, near to the top of the frame of brood with a nail so that it hangs down over the brood, close the hive and top the feeder up with syrup. The mesh in the cage allows the bees to have contact with the queen, to feed her but they cannot harm her. The bees normally release her after 24 hours or so but if you want to be extra careful you can plug both ends of the cage and supervise her release yourself. Then leave the nuc alone for 2 weeks by which time the queen should be laying. You can then unite the nuc with the parent hive, after removing the old queen, via the newspaper method, or by simply placing the 3 frame nuc back in the hive in the same place the frames were removed from a couple of weeks before. Introduce the nuc immediately after the old queen is removed and it is also a good idea to spray both the colony and the nucleus with sugar water to stop the bees running about. A quick examination of the colony from which the queen has been removed is also advisable in case there are signs that the bees are starting to think of swarming and if any queen cells are present you must destroy them. Queen introduction using the nucleus method is a very safe method at any time although, as any beekeeper knows, there are no guarantees!!



*Good result - Queen laying well!*

## NOTICE BOARD

THE SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

**AUTUMN CONVENTION**  
**Saturday 27th September 2014**  
**8.45am to 5.10pm**  
in SRUC Barony Campus,  
Parkgate, Dumfries,  
DG1 3NE

**Ian Molyneux** – Regional Bee Inspector, North of England  
Long Range Beekeeping – Management of my bees in Ireland  
The development of the Manchester BKA's centre of  
beekeeping excellence

**Simon Rees** – FIBKA, Dublin  
How Bees Fly  
Langstroth and His Breakthrough  
(The development of the moveable frame hive)

**Alan Riach** SBA  
Polymerase Chain reaction in the SBA

**Tickets £30 inc coffee, lunch and tea (students half price)**

TRADE STANDS  
BeeCraft, Bee Books New and Old, SBA, Brunel information,  
Solway Bee Supplies, Scottish Govt Bee Inspectorate, Abelo,  
British Bee Feeds, Beehivemaker

**Bookings for Convention to Mike Thornley**  
Glenarn, Glenarn Road, Rhu, Helensburgh, G84 8LL  
Tel. 01436 820493 Email: masthome@dsl.pipex.com

There will also be two 90 minute Brunel Microscopy Workshops on 'Set  
up and Camera work' at a cost of £5.(numbers are limited)  
To book contact: Peter Mathews on 01461 205525

## MORAY BEEKEEPERS HONEYBEE HEALTH & DISEASE DAY

MBA will be running the above course

**on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2014 from 10am to 4.30pm**  
**at Birnie Training Apiary near Elgin**

This is a fun day but very important as we will cover the  
practicalities of keeping your bees healthy with an  
emphasis on varroa and brood diseases.

Useful information for all beekeepers but particularly for  
new beekeepers who want to give their bees the best  
chance of getting through winter.

Cost for the course is £20 for members, £30 non  
members (includes lunch and course hand outs)

To book your place or for more information  
Contact: Tony Harris on 07884 496246  
Email: [tony@moraybeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:tony@moraybeekeepers.co.uk)

Please note that numbers are limited so book early to  
avoid disappointment

## ASSOCIATION HONEY EXTRACTORS



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 and we  
have 2 of both



You can borrow them for free by contacting

Anne Black, Tel. 01343 810899, or  
Andy Watson, 07786247327

## SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (SBA)

Moray Beekeepers Association is affiliated to the SBA and you are encouraged to join. Membership of £30 a year will give you a monthly magazine, £2 million Public and Product liability insurance, a compensation scheme if you lose your bees 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](http://www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk)

### 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 £84.00  
[www.bbwear.co.uk/](http://www.bbwear.co.uk/)

### FOR SALE

**LOCALLY BRED 2014 QUEENS £20**  
**5 FRAME NUCS, HEADED BY LOCALLY BRED**  
**2014 QUEENS £170**  
**CONTACT TONY HARRIS Tel. 07884 496246**  
**(last few remaining)**

The Association website is packed with lots of useful information on beekeeping and bees and has an interesting blog that you are encouraged to contribute to. It is well worth a visit - the address is

[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: [tonvharris316@btinternet.com](mailto:tonvharris316@btinternet.com) or phone 07884 496246