

# The Auricle

## Moray Beekeepers Association Newsletter

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## STOP PRESS - FUNDING SECURED!

Moray Beekeepers Association (MBA) has been awarded over £21,000 by Moray Leader, and £5,600 by Scottish Natural Heritage, to run a major honeybee conservation and education project in Moray.

Entitled, *'Bee Aware in Moray'*, the project will promote all aspects of beekeeping and conservation amongst community groups and schools, set up and equip a number of community apiaries, and provide beekeeping courses and Honeybee Taster sessions for a wide section of local people.

It will allow MBA to re-furbish and upgrade Birnie Training Apiary with solar power and a disabled toilet so that it will become a 'state of the art' educational establishment and apiary.

MBA members will benefit from training in disease and health monitoring, queen rearing and 'Improver courses' for those wishing to improve their beekeeping knowledge and skills.

It is very early in the process and more match funding still has to be found but it is good news for honeybees and beekeepers in Moray.

MBA Chairman, Andrew Tassell said, *'We are delighted that this funding will safeguard the future of the honey bee in Moray and allow us to promote beekeeping.'*

If you wish to get involved in this exciting project, please contact MBA Secretary, Tony Harris or any member of your Committee.



Tom Balch demonstrates how to make wax Queen cells watched by Kerri & Ian Stuart

## MEAL AT THE DELNASHAUGH HOTEL 12 NOON SUNDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST

As part of our August meeting we will be enjoying a meal at the Delnashaugh Hotel, Ballindalloch, before heading off to our heather stance at Doug & Lynn McLeish's apiary nearby. It is a 3-course meal and the cost is £14.95. Obviously we have to give the hotel the final numbers attending so if you want to join us (there are quite a few places still available) please contact Tony Harris a.s.a.p.

Full details of all Monthly Meetings, Open Apiary Sessions and Courses are at

[www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.moraybeekeepers.co.uk)

# EXTRACTING HONEY

by Tony Harris

If you are fortunate enough to have a super or two of honey on your hive mid to late August is a good time to extract it!



*crown board with porter bee escapes*

To remove the bees from the super, place a crown board with porter bee escapes in the feed hole(s) between the brood area and the supers and a day or so later you will be able to simply pick the supers up and carry to the house with only the odd bee inside.

It is important that the honey is ripe, i.e. with a water content between 17 and 20% and it will be if it is all sealed. But if you have partly sealed frames, the way to check water content is to shake the frames over the hive and nectar will fly out of the cells if it is not ready for extraction. If no nectar flies out then carry on with the extraction but bear in mind to use this honey as soon as possible because a slightly higher water content can lead to fermentation.

Honey is easier to extract and strain when it is warm so do it immediately or leave it in a warm place until you can. Now, if your honey is just for your own use you can strain it through your granny's old tights and store it in the coal bucket if you want but if you are selling it, cleanliness and hygiene are most important. Your extraction room must be clean, equipment of stainless steel or food grade plastic, a washbasin with hot and cold water must be provided and first aid material available.

The aim is to extract the honey from the comb, strain it so it is free from debris, e.g. bees' legs, pollen, and present it in clean jars so that is sparklingly clear, with no loss of aroma, flavour or colour due to overheating! It can be a messy and sticky business so have plenty of hot and cold water available in bowls to wash your hands, towels to dry them, and clean as you go otherwise your kitchen could look like a bomb blast area at the end of the day!



*using an uncapping knife*

I extract honey in the kitchen and place supers on a tidy tray. This is invaluable and has kept me out of the wife's bad books for a few years now as the honey doesn't drip everywhere! Get all your equipment ready. Uncapping knife, cappings bowl, extractor, strainers, conical straining bag and settling tank. I uncap the frames with a bread knife over a plastic bowl. I cut through the wax cappings and they fall into the bowl. Each frame is then placed in the extractor (honey gate closed) being careful to balance the weight evenly.



*large radial extractor*

I use a 9 frame manual extractor. After uncapping both sides of the frame I place them in the extractor, close the lid and then, starting slowly at first, turn the handle, speeding up smoothly, and then spinning for about 5 minutes. You should hear the honey splashing onto the sides of the extractor, a rather sweet sound and one to be savoured.

Empty combs are very valuable to the beekeeper so take care of them and you can use them year after year. Remember that it takes between 6 and 8lb of honey to make 1lb of beeswax so using drawn comb in your super will help the bees out and give you a greater honey harvest.



*stainless steel strainers*

The honey now needs to be strained and again it is best to do this whilst it is still warm. Buy stainless steel strainers if you can afford them as the cheaper plastic ones are false economy, not lasting more than a couple of seasons whereas stainless steel should last a lifetime. I strain the honey from the extractor through coarse and then fine stainless steel strainer into a settling tank that is basically a large plastic bucket with a lid and a honey gate at the bottom.

If the honey is to be sold or entered in a show, or if it is oilseed rape honey to be stored, it needs to be fine strained and I do that through a 200 micron conical straining bag into another bucket (ensure the honey is warm or it will not pass through the fine cloth). I plan to jar the honey the next day so I leave the bucket



*conical straining bag*

with the lid on in a warm room to allow bubbles to rise and debris to settle on the bottom. I then jar the honey the next day into clean, sterilised jars that have been washed in the dishwasher or by hand, rinsed and then placed in a hot oven for 20-30 minutes.

The wax cappings you have removed make the very best beeswax exhibits and should be used if entering any honey shows. The wet supers can be placed back on the hive at dusk and the bees will clean up the frames till they are dry and free from honey. Cleaning up is easier if you do it straight away. I take the extractor outside and rinse thoroughly with cold water via the hose pipe and then a few times with hot water.

Before sale, heating the jars of honey in a pan of hot water for 45 minutes delays granulation and gives an attractive bright sparkle in the jar. Labels can be bought from suppliers and are also governed by rules and regulations.

Finally, **what can go wrong?** Well, **RUNNING HONEY**, unlike water makes no sound so if you leave the honey gate open or overfill a bucket the first you will notice will be honey all over the kitchen floor.

If the honey is not warm enough when **STRAINING** it can take an age and can clog up strainers, so heat first if necessary –up to 95F (35C). Honey is degraded if heated above 95F – 104F (35C – 40C) so be very careful as this will destroy the taste, aroma and will darken it!

Water content higher than 20%, i.e. unripe honey, can cause **FERMENTATION** evidenced by a sour flavour, unpleasant aroma, bubbles on the surface caused by CO2 and a heaving surface. So best to get it right first time and enjoy your honey just as the bees do!



*the finished product  
YUM, YUM!*

# 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.



*Light, medium and dark honeys*

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.

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.



*Judging taking place*

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 about 30 minutes (don't overheat it!).

Make sure that the temperature does not exceed 110F or it will ruin the flavour.



*light honey*

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

There are local shows throughout Moray and further afield that include a Honey Section. Listed below are just a few we have managed to find.

The Keith Show, Sunday 12th,  
Monday 13th August.

The Cornhill Show Saturday 25th  
August

Dufftown Show, Saturday 8<sup>th</sup>, Sunday  
9<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 will be holding a meeting in October when committee members will be bringing in some exhibits for judging by a Honey Judge. There will then be a talk on judging and preparing exhibits for the show bench with some useful tips.

Honey shows are good fun and although competitive, everyone is friendly, and you will gain useful experience that will benefit your beekeeping enjoyment!

## DO A GOOD DEED- RESUSCITATE A BUMBLEBEE

(courtesy of Harrogate and Ripon  
Beekeepers Website)

It is not unusual to find a bumblebee flaked out on a windowsill, barely able to move, only able to raise one leg in self defence. It probably entered through an open window looking for food or a nesting site and has flown against the glass until exhaustion supervened. If the Bumble is particularly large, she is probably a queen, so her loss means the loss of a whole colony. Fear not, all is not lost. She has probably simply run out of fuel, like a little aeroplane, and it is well worth trying to resuscitate her.



You will need a drop of honey, syrup or jam (in that order of preference) and a card and glass or jar so that you can move her outdoors without the risk of Her Majesty stinging you. Place a small drop of honey in front of her head and watch out for the following sequence of events; Firstly, the antennae move around, noting the scent of sugary salvation. Then the tongue comes out and sucks up the droplet. If she finishes one drop, give her another. After several minutes she will start to walk about and then suddenly fly, usually straight back to the window! This is the time to put the jar over her then slide the card between the jar and window pane. Then you will have her safely contained and though she won't thank you for it, you can now take her outdoors and release her. Now you can bask in the warm glow, having done your good deed for the day.

Bumblebees are in decline and we owe it to these useful and beautiful creatures to help, particularly as we unwittingly set traps for them, ie. windows, which must kill many thousands every year.

You can do the same for trapped and exhausted honeybees too!

## DO YOU HAVE PYRETHROID RESISTANT VARROA MITES?

Pyrethroid resistant mites are now present in Scotland and it is therefore unwise to simply treat your bees with a pyrethroid such as Apistan without testing for resistance. The following method is simple and will guide you in your varroa treatment this summer/autumn.

1. Cut a 9mm x 25mm piece from an Apistan® strip and staple it to the centre of a piece of thin card about 75mm x 125mm in size.
2. Place the card in a 1lb. honey jar, with the strip facing inwards.
3. Prepare a 2-3mm mesh cover to close the jar. Plastic green house shading mesh is ideal. Cut a piece larger than the opening so that it can be folded back over the open end of the jar and secured using a strong elastic band.
4. **Find the Queen and cage her!** Shake adult bees from 1 or 2 brood combs into a container such as an upturned roof or washing up bowl. Gently scoop up bees with the jar until it is half full.
5. Place a sugar cube in the jar and seal off using the mesh. Store in the dark at room temperature with the mesh uppermost.
6. After 24 hours hit the upturned jar with the palm of your hand over white paper. Repeat two more times to dislodge any mites. Count the mites knocked out.
7. Immerse the bees in the jar into a solution of water and washing up liquid (strong washing up strength).
8. Wash the dead bees to remove any remaining mites. Place the bees in a coarse kitchen sieve that will hold bees but let varroa mites through. Secure a honey straining cloth or jelly bag under the sieve to retain mites. Place under a fast running tap or tap with a shower fitting to wash any remaining mites off the bees. Count the number of mites washed off. Dispose of the dead bees and mites in a suitable way, such as composting.
9. If the total number of mites is less than 5 discard the results.
10. Calculate the efficacy as a percentage. Multiply the number of mites knocked down by 100 and divide by the total number of mites i.e. the number knocked down plus those washed off. If the answer is less than 50% it indicates resistance is likely and you should therefore use a pyrethroid free product to tackle varroa.

## 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 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week in September and you then have to get your hands on the honey - more on that next issue!

# AUTUMN AND WINTER TREATMENTS FOR VARROA



varroa mite on adult bee

As the season comes to a close and the honey harvest is removed from the hives, it is an ideal time to treat your bees for varroa. Even if you have been removing drone brood and sugar dusting your bees in the summer it is important that you treat again in the autumn or winter when brood rearing diminishes or stops altogether and that you don't just leave it to chance that your bees will survive.

With so many differing treatments available, however, new beekeepers can be confused about what to use so this article will mention just a few of the options available. Whatever method you choose, it is very important to follow the manufacturer's instructions to the letter.

'Apistan'. Strips impregnated with pyrethroids are inserted into the hive in late August or early September after the honey harvest has been removed for at least 6 but no more than 8 weeks. It is a highly effective treatment but pyrethroid resistant mites are now present in the U.K. including Scotland so Apistan may not work if you have resistant mites. (see page 4 for a simple way of testing).



inserting Apistan strips

'Apiguard' is a thymol based gel, very easy to apply, safe to handle and environmentally friendly. It comes in shallow trays that are placed on the top bars of the brood chamber until the gel has disappeared. It is also a high efficacy treatment (90%) although an outside minimum temperature of 15C is required for it to work so it is not always viable in Scotland if using later in the season.



Apiguard trays and eke

'Oxalic Acid' is now used by many beekeepers and one of the simplest ways of applying it is known as the 'trickle' method. 35gm of oxalic acid and 200g of sugar are dissolved in 3/4 litre of water and then more water is added to make up to 1 litre in total. 5 ml of this solution is trickled into every bee-way of occupied comb in the brood box using a syringe (for 10 combs use 50ml of solution in total). As oxalic acid doesn't affect varroa in the sealed brood it should only be applied when no brood is present, about late December, and it should only be used once every year. The treatment is well tolerated by the bees, there are no queen losses and it has a 95% efficacy rate when applied to a broodless colony. You can buy the oxalic acid solution ready to use from equipment suppliers or you can measure it out yourself to make the final mixture. Storing the mixture is not recommended so any left over should be disposed of.



oxalic acid being trickled

'Formic Acid' (60%) is the only treatment for varroa that penetrates the wax cappings of sealed brood to kill the mites. There are various commercial applicators available but it is also simple to make your own by inserting a flat kitchen sponge inside a freezer bag and punching holes in the bag to give 35 sq.cm of evaporating surface. The bag is placed on a couple of wooden slats, on top of the top bars with the holes facing downwards and a 20mm eke is put on top to give extra space between the top bars and the crown board. 2ml of the acid per occupied frame is squirted onto the sponge and this is repeated twice more on day 4 and 7, removing the sponge on day 10. **Total amount is 60ml over the 10 days for a full hive!** You normally have to dilute the acid from 85% to 60% as 85% will damage queens. The acid also damages the brood and causes some bee mortality but both effects are negligible. It has an efficacy of between 85 and 98% depending on the evaporation rate and temperature. Needless to say that these acids are corrosive and harmful to humans. Full protective clothing, i.e. gloves and goggles should be worn as well as a gas mask! Avoid skin and eye contact and do not inhale vapour.



If you do suspect resistant mites you can use another varroacide, **Apivar** that is only available from a vet under prescription, and they have to import it under a licence from abroad.

Vet Robert Thurlow of Bridge Veterinary Clinic in Dumfries will supply it, but it has to be on an individual basis, and after a 'consultation' to cover the legal aspects of supplying Apivar. His website has a consultation form you can download and fill in and once he is happy that Varroa appears to be showing signs of resistance he can prescribe Apivar.

Apivar uses the chemical Amitraz to combat the mite, and it is impregnated on strips hung in the hive in a similar way to the use of Apistan. The cost of Apivar is approx. £30 for 5 hives, which at £6 a hive is still relatively cheap.

If you have previously treated with Apistan and then had a high mite drop after oxalic acid trickle treatment in December that will be enough to convince Mr Thurlow that you have resistant mites. He can be contacted on 01387 259111 or his practise website is at: [www.bridgevets.com](http://www.bridgevets.com).

You can also have a go at making your own 'Emulsified thymol pre mix' and here's one recipe and method.

Place 30g thymol crystals placed in a honey jar, add 5ml of isopropyl alcohol to the crystals, place jar into a water bath of boiling water to speed up the dissolving process.

In another jar pour in 140 ml of boiling water and add 1 teaspoon of lecithin granules (available from health food shops). Stir well and place this jar into a water bath of boiling water, stirring often for about ten minutes or so until most of the lecithin granules have dissolved. You can then strain this mixture through a tea strainer or similar to remove any granules that have not dissolved fully. Then simply add the dissolved thymol to this mix and shake well. Will look just like a jar of milk.

To use, add 5ml to each gallon of syrup and stir well – it will go milky. If the mixture forms any crystals at a later date, tip into old small pan and reheat - do this outdoors.

There are also organic treatments available such as Beevital Hiveclean, and new products are coming onto the market all the time.

Use only UK authorised treatments and always follow the manufacturers instructions, making sure that you have reliable up to date information on the legal status of treatments you use. Keep accurate records of what treatments you use, this is a legal requirement, because you could be requested to provide a sample of your honey for residue analysis.

## 2012 SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is a final reminder that your membership ceases if you haven't renewed by the end of August and to re-join you will have to pay a £5 re-joining fee.

So, if you want to continue membership with all the benefits that brings please pay our Treasurer, Donna Clark before the end of the month. You can download a membership renewal form from the Moray Beekeepers website.

## SUMMER PROGRAMME 2012

Sunday 19th August. Trip to the Heather & Meal, 12 noon  
Delnashaugh Hotel, Ballindalloch  
Doug & Lynn McLeish's apiary, 2.00pm

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September, Talk & Demonstration, 'Extracting Honey'  
Birnie Apiary, 2.30pm

## The Scottish Beekeepers Association celebrates its centenary in 2012.

The main celebration will take place on **15th & 16th September 2012 at the Stirling Management Centre, University of Stirling.** Over the two days, there will be a series of lectures by Prof Robert Paxton, Prof Keith Delaplane, Prof Robert Pickard, and Dan Basterfield NDB.

Accompanying the lectures will be trade stands, local associations' displays, workshops, demonstrations and beekeeping exhibits. The highlight of the celebration will be a centenary dinner and ceilidh. *Booking open now.*

To download a booking form, visit <http://www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk/About/SBACentenary.aspx>

## M.B.A. SHOP

It has been the first year we have sold equipment to members so it is a learning curve for us all. To make it easier for all concerned the following rules will come into effect if you wish to purchase equipment from the Association.

You must have paid your subs for the current year and **produce your membership card** at the time of purchase! (if you haven't received a membership card or have lost it please contact Donna Clark)

Equipment will only be on sale at advertised Apiary Sessions or Monthly meetings (see website or membership card).

Pre-ordering to Andy Watson by phone, tel 01466 760277 is recommended as your journey will be wasted if your item is not in stock.

A maximum purchase of 20 frames and 40 sheets of foundation only will be allowed.

## 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 either

Andrew Tassell (Keith area) Tel 01466 771243

Or

Tony Harris (Fochabers area) Tel 01343 821282

## 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/)

## WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

Michael Collins, Brian Jackson, David Latie & John Ledger

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: [tonyharris316@btinternet.com](mailto:tonyharris316@btinternet.com) or phone 07884 496246

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR SUBS FOR 2012, NOW £12 ADULT, £7 OVER 65YRS AND 12-16YRS!**