



Profile of a President

Tony our new President, has been keeping bees since 1973. His interest in beekeeping began when a previous neighbour made a chance remark about bees. This planted the seed in Tony's mind, but nothing happened until a friend who did keep bees, but was away most of the time, suddenly thrust a box of bees in Tony's direction and said "Here you are - you said you were interested in beekeeping!" At this stage Tony had no real knowledge about beekeeping, and the only person he could turn to for advice was the Rev. J.G. Digges. Tony had only one hive and was working shifts so had time to spend on his bees. In his inexperience (and enthusiasm) he looked at them every three days. Nevertheless he remembers the bees producing lots of honey that year.

In his second year he had two hives - he also had American Foul Brood, and on advice destroyed the infected combs, so was virtually back to one hive, but the infected hive recovered over the winter period.

In the third year his bees swarmed just as Tony had left for work. Elizabeth managed to catch them and put them into a box where they stayed till Tony came back home and rehived them.

Tony joined the Ayr and District Beekeepers Association in 1975. At this time talks were held and out-Apiary visits took place. The main focus however was the Scottish National Honey Show which was supported by Ayr Council until 2000 when the Council was no longer able to sponsor it, and it moved to Dundee.

In 1975 Tony became involved in the Ayr Flower Show with setting up and Stewarding, and at this time it was held in Dam Park. He subsequently became Secretary to the Scottish National Honey Show Committee, retiring from this in late 1990s.

Ayr Horticultural Society resurrected the Flower Show in 2001, and Tony was asked to organise the Honey Section and he therefore involved the Ayr and District Beekeepers Association. Tony has been on the Scheduling Committee since 2001.

Tony has always been keen to pass on his interest in and knowledge of bees to the next generation, and has been actively involved in giving talks and demonstrations to the children in Cairn Primary School, Maybole, for the past fourteen years. This has now developed to include Secondary school classes as well. He gives talks to Women's Guilds and other Community groups, often with other Association members. Tony continues to be very involved with

the practicalities of the Flower Show, including the ever popular Open Hive demonstration, in conjunction with Phil. Other shows include Neilston, Gardening Scotland and the Highland Show.

Tony and Elizabeth moved from Dunure to Monkwood Main on Burns Day in 1986. Moving house is one of the most stressful events as most of us know, moving house and moving bees - well! The stress obviously caught up with Tony at one point as he left his smoker on his car roof, and on driving off the smoker fell off and was crushed under the wheels of a following tractor.

Tony, with Phil and Ian, have taken the ADBA forward to now having regular beginners classes. This is a relatively new venture, but classes are growing and evolving with a dedicated committee meeting regularly to look at ways of improving what is being offered to the beginners. A wide range of beekeeping topics is available in the classes which are taken by Association members who give of their time and expertise, and who are willing to listen to beginners or other members if topics need to be adapted. Guest speakers are also regularly invited to give talks. Tony is very involved in these talks both as President of the association and as a speaker.

Tony also generously allows the Association Apiary to be situated on his property at Monkwood Mains, and this is used not only for giving practical lessons to beginners, but hands on experience to pupils from Carrick Academy taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme.

The Association continues to develop with new ideas for shows and events coming from members, and the committee, and is indeed fortunate to have as its President someone in Tony who is so obviously enthusiastic about beekeeping, and willingly gives of his time and advice to beginners.

Tony passed on his enthusiasm for beekeeping to his son who gained his Beemasters Certificate at the age of thirteen years. After lapsing for a few years he has recently taken up this fascinating hobby again.

Tony's advice to those new to beekeeping is: don't try and do it by yourself - ask for help. There will always be someone who is willing to assist. Beekeepers are by their nature generous folk who understand and appreciate the importance of honeybees to the world at large and the need for people to continue keeping bees.

GLOBAL WATER SHORTAGES AND BEES

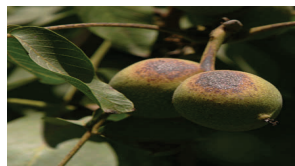
We complain about having too much water falling out of the sky, but spare a thought for those parts of the world where a lack of water is a very serious problem. Millions of people, their animals and huge acreages of agricultural land are suffering due to a drought affecting mainly the southern hemisphere. From Asia to South America and California, China and Africa, drought is having a devastating effect. In China half the country's wheat crop has been destroyed. From Kenya and Ethiopia to Uruguay and Argentina animals are dying of thirst and governments are being urged to do something.

California is having its third year of drought, and state officials are urging conservation. The almond and citrus growers think many of their crops will not survive this summer, indeed some say if this state of affairs continues Californian agriculture could disappear. Some farmers are diverting scarce water resources to save their almond trees, while others are simply abandoning their almond trees this year hoping things will improve next year.

The decline in the number of almond trees has led to a glut of bee colonies. As we all know bees are used to pollinate almond trees, and beekeepers now face the prospect of economic collapse as the almond market literally withers away.

Profligacy by town dwellers is being blamed by some farmers as people continue to water their lawns with scarce water.

Almonds burning in the Californian sun.



IAN MAXWELL'S TALK TO MEMBERS OF ADBA.

Ian spoke on "50 years of Beekeeping"

Ian was a student at West of Scotland College where Theory was taught at Blythswood Square, Glasgow, and Practical Sessions held at Auchincruive. Equipment for beekeeping students was very poor at this time with brown coats, socks tucked in and soft hats the main protection. 1955 was a good summer with lots of Willowherb at Culzean. Ian remembers a happy time of Ice Cream and warm honey.

Ian then did two years of National Service. Following this he wanted to buy a nursery, but his mum dissuaded him from this idea. It was at this time an advert appeared for a Horticulturalist and Beekeeper at Auchincruive. He obtained this post, did more training and received the National Diploma in Beekeeping; because of his background Ian knew more than the Advisors at Auchincruive did and they had to sit the exam too!

In 1968 every county in Scotland had Beekeeping Advisors, approx. twenty -eight. The job was eventually combined with Horticulturalist and Ian was the first person appointed. Fewer people were therefore required and retirees were not replaced. He was asked to be lecturer when advisor numbers reduced. The full range of lectures were give, also honey was extracted and an out apiary of fifty colonies was managed with heather at New Galloway and Pennyburn. Ian also taught at the Open Prison.

Bee diseased at this time were Acarine, Nosema and some Foul Brood. These are not seem so much now.

Ian moved to Stranraer around this time. Honey cost 1/6d or 2/6d per jar = 15p. Bees were £3 per hive and sugar £3 per cwt. At this time invert sugar was used to feed the bees.

In Wigtownshire The West of Galloway Beekeeping Association was formed and monthly meetings were held. Social events, visits to Ireland and a busy time of beekeeping with beekeepers acquiring certificates of competence.

Ian is well known among beekeepers for the quality of his photography, and the group was pleased to see his slides of sycamore, clover and heather, also his home site which is South facing and consists of ten hives; and by way of a reminder to be vigilant, a slide of a mouse which had made a nest of leaves inside a hive.

There followed some words of advice - don't overfeed in spring as there may be no room for laying and you may have to take out frames of honey. These can be used in June or July if weather bad. At the end of the Oil seed, swarming preparations may start therefore the amount of room may need to be doubled, or Demaree. Keep manipulations to a minimum.

Ian explained that nectars have varying sugar contents, e.g. Plum is low whilst Dandelion is high. Sycamore is the most reliable tree in spring with dark green nectar. Bluebell is light in colour and very viscous. Bird Cherry is very reliable but if bees use it the leaves drop off very quickly. Horse Chestnut is a unique plant with brick red pollen. Oil seed rape is the mainstay of British beekeeping with 500 acres at the Mull of Galloway.

Honeybees, Bumblebees and other insects all love Phoselia which produces very dark pollen and lovely honey. Culzean set aside an area for Phoselia to be grown. Ragweed is unfortunately spreading. The bees like it but the honey is not nice. It also stains the combs and frames. Willowherb flowers every year with very clear, thin honey. Bell heather has grey pollen and is a lovely honey for colour, smell and taste.

Ian is clearly still enjoying his beekeeping even after fifty years, and spoke with great erudition and easy enthusiasm to the members present. A pleasure to listen to and learn from.

SCOTLAND'S BUMBLEBEES.

A talk by Jeanne Robinson, Curator of Entomology at Glasgow Museum

Jeanne explained how Bumblebees are vital for pollination. Crops such as raspberries, beans and many others depend on Bumblebees for pollination which are also used to pollinate greenhouse produce. They are also important as bio-indicators. Bumbles have longer mouth parts than Honeybees, and can access clover more easily. They have hairy bodies which are adapted for cooler weather. They can fly at 10 degrees C and can control their temperature by shivering. Some are active throughout the winter, however if it is too cold they can't fly. One may be seen on the ground - if so it is best to leave it to sort itself out. The hairs on Bumblebees become electrostatically charged as they fly. When visiting a flower the pollen is attracted to the hairs by static electricity .

Jeanne continued by describing how Bumblebees live in nests which can contain up to 400 workers, each of which forages more than a Km from the colony. Child care is shared, and the young are cared for during foraging. Nest sites may be shared but this makes them an easier target for predators such as foxes, badgers and birds, the Coal Tit being the most common, especially if the nest is under Lime trees; however this sharing makes the nests easier to defend. Duties are similar to Honeybees ie. foragers, house bees and guards. Nests may be at the base of trees made up of vegetation and dried grass. Custom made boxes are a good idea. If you see a Bumblebee in your garden at ankle height, it will probably be looking for a new site.

Nectar is only processed two days at a time as small stores are kept. Queens are big and rule by brute force.

Bumblebees do orientation flights with a range of 1—5 Km but have been known to go up to 20Km. The Bumblebees actually learn the landscape, they do not just memorise the routes. They can cope with high winds and low temperature and can fly at 15Km per hour. Honeybees fly at 8Km per hour. Bumblebees will constantly go to the same flowers in an area and when they used are up will then go to a similar patch. Colour is most important. They do not do a waggle dance but leave a scent which can be recognised by more than one species. They may eat into the side of a flower therefore that flower will not pollinate.

Defensively they try to conceal their nests and use warning colouration. They have a postural defence of raising their legs. They have a smooth sting and only the female stings. They are actually gentle natured creatures.

Bumblebees are subject to attack by parasites such as Nosema. Worms attack hibernating Queens and can cause sterilization. Thick Headed Flies lay eggs in workers and pupate in the bee. Cuckoo Bees which are non productive, very large with thick skin, venom and large

Continued from previous page.....and large Jaws.

British Bumblebees:

Jeanne explained that there are 25 species of Bumblebees, with 6 Common species. 7 are designated species in a precarious situation. 15 species have undergone major range contractions and 3 are presumed extinct.

The 6 Common species are:

- Red Tailed Bumblebee - a coastal bee in Scotland. Emerges in early Spring. Very common.
- Common Carder Bumblebee - Fox or brown which emerges in late April
- Buff and White tailed Bumblebee - 2 and 3 banded.
- Garden Bumblebee least common of the 6.
- Great Yellow Bumblebee - seen more so in the Western Isles.
- Bilberry Bumblebee - a moorland bee doing better in Scotland declining in the rest of the UK. Seen in early Spring and has a bright red bottom.

In 2004 the Tree Bumblebee arrived from Europe and came to England. It is moving north.

The male Bumblebees are fewer in number than their Honeybee counterpart. Fewer are needed because after insemination of the female they use glue to seal her up!

Jeanne gave a very lively talk which gave new insights into Bumblebees which are such an important member of our family of pollinators. There followed many questions from the audience, an indication of the interest generated by Jeanne's talk, and proceedings had to be brought to a close by our Vice-President so that tea and biscuits could be taken.



CLEAR UP AT ASSOCIATION APIARY.

On the 31st January, a group of intrepid volunteers descended on the Apiary and set to work clearing out old bushes, cutting hedges and trees, and laying a new path. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, they will be appearing on the Association Website soon. It was a good day out enjoyed by all who were there. I took the photographs and I think I was the only person who did no actual work!

TOPIC S FOR DISCUSSION

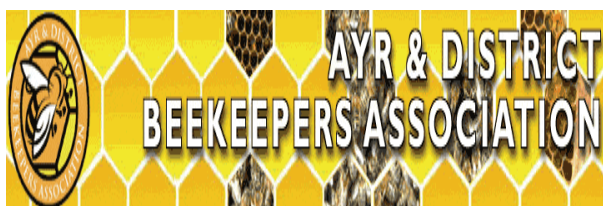
Concern has been raised about inbreeding of bees due to the small gene pool available to the average hobbyist beekeeper. Would members care to consider the idea of Queens being raised by members to swap/sell to others in order to mix the genetic code of their bees.?

Would members consider the utilization of the Vince Cook Ring as described by Graeme Sharp as an interesting experiment for the Association Apiary?

Ayr and District Beekeepers Association

Newsletter Email: bees5@btinternet.com
Tony 01292 443 440
Joyce 01290
Lindsay 01292 570 659

We love Honeybees.



PRESIDENT Mr. Tony Riome
VICE-PRESIDENT Mrs. Joyce Duncan
SECRETARY/TREASURER Mrs. Lindsay Baillie
LIBRARIAN/NEWSLETTER Mrs. Suzanne Clark
COMMITTEE MEMBERS:
Mr. T. Riome Mr. P. MacAnespie
Mrs J. Duncan Mr. B. Clark
Mrs. L Baillie Mrs. S. Clark.
Mr. I. Jamieson
Mr. V. Hepburn
Mrs. J. MacAnespie

We are sorry that Evelyn can no longer be on the committee due to work commitments, but Bill has agreed to take her place.

Association Library.



Several new, up-to-date books have been obtained for the

Association Library. They are available to members and beginners alike and can be kept for two weeks.

There will be a modest fee of 50p to help recover the cost of the books, and to

enable the Association to purchase more in the future.

Some DVDs and CDs are also available. They are relatively more expensive and will be £1 to borrow.

Thanks again to Ian for his suggestions -

e.g. Natural Beekeeping.

Borrowers will be asked to sign out a book and leave their phone no. We know how easy it is to forget things when we are all so busy, and if a book is delayed a gentle reminder usually does the trick.