

Buzzword

Ayr and District Beekeepers Association Newsletter.



June 2013

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Winter losses have been considerable due to the long wet winter which followed a miserable wet summer. Despite extensive, and in many cases, intensive feeding, bees went into their winter cluster poorly prepared. Now that we are experiencing a rise in temperature and a few sunny days, the bees are at last working. However nature is a month behind in her provisions. This means that the expansion of the brood nest will be the main activity of the hive for several weeks to come. This does not mean we can forego our weekly inspections, as a fecund queen will rapidly fill her brood nest. Supering in plenty of time to prevent the brood box being used for nectar storage, and appropriate action taken if signs of swarming are found, will still be necessary. We will all be aware by now, of the shocking theft of a hive of bees from Ian Jamieson's apiary. This is a warning of how careful we must all be in where we place our hives, and to tell no-one where they are. This act was obviously carried out by beekeepers.



MID-SUMMER UPDATE FROM THE COMMITTEE

In the last *Buzzword* we were still feeling the effects of the long cold winter and wondering whether our bees would be in good shape when we finally looked into the hives. Sadly some of them were not and colony losses in Scotland have been high. Many people are now looking for bees to replace stocks or to obtain bees for the first time having completed a Beginners' Course. There were no colonies lost at the Association Apiary and the hives have expanded well. It's as if the bees know it might be a short season and are working extra hard to make up for lost time and to gather in stores.

The Committee discussed how we could help folk who have lost hives and we are now concentrating on bringing on nucs, though unfortunately they will only go some way to helping out, and not provide bees for everyone.

Please keep an eye on the NEWS part of the website for how these nucs will be allocated, and let Lindsay know if you would like to be included. It is planned to do this on a fair basis where all on the list will have a chance.

The Queen-rearing Course had to be cancelled. As May progressed it became obvious that, although the hives had overwintered successfully, they were simply not strong enough to provide the necessary bees and brood for the Course. We hope to go ahead with it next year.

On Sunday 15th June a party of about a dozen beekeepers from Galloway visited the Association Apiary. Stories and ideas were exchanged and a good time was had by all. We look forward to seeing them again at the Quiz night when they are fielding two teams. * See Winter Programme for date.

The first Show of the year was Ayr County Show at the beginning of May, followed by Neilston Show and Gardening Scotland. One or two of us stewarded at the Royal Highland Show at Ingliston, a long day but worth the visit meeting a wide variety of people and of course talking about bees!

Ayr Flower Show will be upon us in a few weeks and preparations are under way. Please help out if you can. **If anyone can loan plants for display at the Show please let me know.** Recipes for the cake making can be found in this edition of *Buzzword*. What about trying them out – you may win! (I know one beekeeper who makes beautiful wax models that would win first prize but is too modest to put them in!) Without entries there would be no Show! Please give it a try and let's have a great display.

Finally I hope those who have lost bees manage to obtain some and those who have bees have a bumper crop!

Joyce Duncan. President, Ayr and District Beekeepers Association.



For those among you who would like to exhibit some baking, here are the recipes. Please remember that entries must be in by **Friday 24th July** at the latest.

Products made with honey. All products to be the work of the exhibitor.

- 721 **One bottle of Mead**
Mead to be shown in plain, clear glass bottles with a round punted bottom of 70 to 75cl capacity, only a flanged cork to be used, (to be filled to within 25mm of the cork; any name, fluting or ornamentations will disqualify the entry). Mead to contain no addition of other wines, ales or spirits, or addition of fruit juices.
- 722 **Honey Tablet.** Exhibits must be made to this recipe
Ingredients: 1kg Sugar, 50g Butter, 1 tin Evaporated Milk, 175g Honey.
Method: Place all ingredients in a pan and dissolve slowly. Boil till showing signs of setting. Beat well with a wooden spoon till creamy. Pour into greased tin and mark when cool.
- 723 **Honey Date Loaf.** Exhibits must be made to this recipe
Ingredients: 175g plain flour, 25g margarine, 25g sugar, 1 egg, 100g dates, 225g honey, pinch salt, 5 tbsp boiling water, tsp baking soda.
Method: Grease loaf tin. Stone and chop dates and pour boiling water over them, allow to cool. Beat egg; dissolve baking soda in water drained from dates. Sift dry ingredients, rub in margarine then add the sugar. Make a well in centre, add egg, water, dates and honey. Mix thoroughly then turn into prepared loaf tin. Bake in moderate oven for about 1 hour.
- 724 **5 Honey Buns.** Exhibits must be made to this recipe
Ingredients: 125g Butter, 100g Sugar, 1 dessert sp Honey, 2 Eggs, 125g SR Flour, little milk if required.
Method: Cream butter, sugar and honey. Beat in 2 eggs. Fold in SR Flour and a little milk if required. Bake at 170°C for 10-15 minutes.
- 725 **5 Small Honey Biscuits or Cookies.**
Not in paper cases. Recipe to be submitted

AYR & DISTRICT BEEKEEPER'S ASSOCIATION WINTER PROGRAMME 2013/2014

Meetings in Belmont Academy, Ayr starting at 7.30pm

2013

- 2 Oct. CHRIS CONNELLY – Update on Research Project *
- 23 Oct. QUIZ NIGHT with other Associations
- 6 Nov. ENID BROWN – Swarm control and making nucs
- 20 Nov. AGM
- 7 Dec. SOCIAL NIGHT

2014

- 8 Jan. ALAN RIACH – My beekeeping methods and experiments
- 22 Jan. IAN STIRLING, LINDSAY AND JANE- Bees under the Microscope.
- 5 Feb. JOHN SMITH, Local Bee Inspector – Pests and diseases
- 19 Feb. 1st Beginners Talk
- 5 Mar. 2nd Beginners Talk

* Please note there will be a short EGM after the talk on 2nd October

Contact Tel. Numbers – President 01290 550132
Secretary 01292 570659

Has this happened with your colonies?

The virgin queen has ‘disappeared’ – gone on her mating flight and not come back.

Your colony swarmed but there was no queen in the swarm. Apparently one queen-rearing specialist has had a whole batch of queens just ‘disappear’. He suspects it may be swallows or swifts taking them on the wing.

He also tells me that last year he had reports from beekeepers that colonies had swarmed but on examination had no queen. The number of beekeepers reporting this has increased this year.

(I had a 4-frame well-stocked nuc with a sealed queen cell which threw a small swarm. I retrieved it but the bees then flew back to the nuc presumably as they had no queen.)

Has anyone else had any such experiences? If you have or had any other incidents, send them in to Suzanne for *Buzzword*. She is always pleased to receive reports from beekeepers and items for the magazine. Email www.bees5@btinternet.com with your articles.

Joyce Duncan.

Winter Losses.

At all the association meetings and events I have attended so far this year winter losses seem to be the hot topic of conversation. It seemed obvious to me that the unseasonal weather at the end of summer and the protracted winter/late spring caused this. I recently read an article by Randy Oliver of www.scientificbeekeeping.com that made me rethink. Although this article focused on US losses it certainly translated across and made me think that I could have contributed to my losses this year.

According to Randy the high winter losses seen over 2012/2013 started way back in the spring of 2012. The unseasonal good weather prompted queens to

start laying very early in the year. Early colony build up usually bodes well for the coming season and everyone was in good cheer. This early build up prematurely increased the Varroa population.

Randy does not imply that Beekeepers are negligent in there husbandry but does point out than many treat for Varroa on a seasonal basis rather than direct hive observations.

His point is that if based on a seasonal schedule many colonies with an early high Varroa count could be in decline long before treatment was applied. As he points out being proactive is better than reactive – if you wait until a colony is already going downhill, it is much more difficult to turn them around! **Strike one!**

Colonies that are in decline are less likely to forage. Combined with reduced foraging opportunities because of the inclement weather in the late summer, colonies with a high Varroa count that have yet to be treated could be really struggling. **Strike two!**

Then came the winter that never ended. It felt like I had climbed out of the Wardrobe and was in Narnia with its perpetual winter! With little respite and no early forage those weakened colonies had little chance of survival. **Strike three!**

What did I learn from this?

I am one of those that treated for Varroa on a seasonal basis - ApiGuard in early September and Oxalic Acid in mid winter. In my own defence I'm fairly new to beekeeping (one season in) and still read "What I should be doing this month"

in all the glossy beekeeping magazines and the beekeeping books. But that is not the whole picture. It has been said many times that bees do not read the same books we do and I now know pests and diseases don't read them either. Realising that I was one of those that treated for Varroa on a seasonal basis, I re-read the FERA published leaflet on Managing Varroa.

FYI The recommendation is to monitor for Varroa **at least** four times a year: early spring, after the spring honey flow, at the time of honey harvest, and late autumn. If you think significant mite invasion is taking place then the frequency with which you monitor should be increased.

Methods of monitoring vary and you should choose the one that best suits your circumstances. The best course of action can then be determined based on those results.

Julian Stanley

Thanks to Julian for reminding us to be vigilant with regard to Varroa.



An article from [Joyce MacAnespie](#) well worth reading by those who have an interest in showing their wax candles etc.

National Honey Show Wax Classes.

Last year Phil and I went to the (BBKA) National Honey Show where I entered every available wax class and won a couple of firsts.

I also took the opportunity to book myself into a workshop titled “Judging Candle Classes” not because I want to be a judge, but to find out what the judges are looking for.

Much of the information imparted was logical and you could even say obvious but having attending this workshop I then had another look at my entries and those of the other competitors and was surprised to see that many of the entries did not even meet the most basic criteria of conforming to the class schedule.

So, for the benefit of anyone considering submitting entries in the Ayr Flower Show here is a summary of the Judging Grade Descriptions as used by the judges:

1. **Wax – colour and scent.** Wax should have a bright colour and a scent if prepared correctly. Overheating or poor preparation will result in khaki, sludge yellow or dull colours. **(3 marks)**
2. **Wax – cleanliness.** Wax should be free of dirt, hairs and honey. It should not feel sticky. **(3 marks)**
3. **Wick – centered and waxed.** Make sure the wick is the correct size for the diameter of the candle and that it is centered top and bottom. A little wax on the end of the wick impresses the judges and aids lighting. **(3 marks)**
4. **Moulding – straight, good quality and finish.** Make sure the bottom of the mould is well finished. **(5 marks)**
5. **Moulding – similarity.** If class calls for 2 or more items they should be identical in every respect – height, colour, moulding and finish. **(3 marks)**
6. **Moulding – within class size.** Candles should conform to class schedule. **(3 marks)**
7. **Burning – lighting, guttering, smoking, afterburn.** Candles should light easily first time. They should burn without guttering (dribbling), smoking and should not smoulder too long after extinguishing. (These would indicate the wrong size of wick.) **(5 marks)**

8. **Burning – relight and subsequent burn.** Candles should relight easily and burn without guttering, smoking etc. The judge will look for ‘pigtail’ of wick, ‘cauliflower’ soot deposits on wick, square or oval wicks. **(5 marks)**

Total marks + 30

Not included in the above but again an obvious one is to check the schedule to see if colour or wire is allowed.

I hope that we have plenty of entries this year. Make sure you check the Ayr Flower Show Website for closing dates and good luck to everyone.

Joyce.

Congratulations to Joyce on winning two firsts in what must have been an exhibition of very high standards.

Visit to Ayr and District Beekeepers Apiary.

A special thanks to Elizabeth for catering for the group of visiting beekeepers to the Association Apiary at Minishant. Also thanks to Jane for providing a delicious sponge cake. This time the group were from the West of Galloway Beekeepers Association, and they thoroughly enjoyed their visit. They particularly appreciated the fact the bees were all at different stages and consequently they were able to see a variety of things.

Lindsay

ZOO JOB

- A bloke starts his new job at the Zoo and is given three tasks. The first is to clean the exotic fish pool of weeds.
- As he does this a huge fish jumps out and bites him. To show who is boss, he beats it to death with a spade.
- Realizing his boss won't be pleased, he disposes of the fish by feeding it to the lions, as lions will eat anything.
- Moving on to the second job of clearing out the Chimp house, he is attacked by the Chimps who pelt him with coconuts.
- He swipes at the Chimps with a spade killing them both. What can he do?
- Feed them to the lions, because lions will eat anything.
- He hurls the corpses into the lion enclosure.
- He moves on to the last job which is to collect Honey from the South American Bees.
- As soon as he starts he is attacked by the bees. He grabs the spade and smashes the bees to a pulp.
- By now he knows what to do and shovels them into the lion's cage, because lions will eat anything.
- Later that day a new lion arrives at the Zoo. He wanders up to another lion and says "What's the food like in here"?
- The lion says "Absolutely brilliant. Today we had Fish and Chimps and Mushy Bees."

Thanks to Suzanne Flynnne for this entertaining contribution.

The Cornish black honeybee, once believed to be extinct but still extremely rare, could be key to saving worldwide bee populations from colony collapse disorder.

According to the [BBC](#), research from [Paignton Zoo](#) has shown the black bee is better at fighting off [varroa mites](#). They carry the deformed wing virus, which has been implicated in the deaths of bees around the world.

Colony collapse disorder is a term that applies to a range of unknown factors that has led to the widespread decline of honeybee populations around the world.

It is likely to be a mix of many different issues coming together to kill millions of bees every year, threatening the human food supply chain. Colony collapse disorder is thought to be exacerbated by the limited range of bees that are bred by beekeepers.

Black honeybees like the Cornish variety were thought to have been driven to extinction by a virus more than 100 years ago, with beekeepers having since relied upon southern European varieties.

However, new populations were [discovered](#) on the fringes of the British Isles in 2012 by the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders' Association, which has run a conservation program dedicated to the black bees since 1997. Less than one percent of British bees are native black bees, however.

With larger bodies and thicker hair, the black bees are believed to be better able to survive longer and colder winters -- something that has become more of an issue with climate change causing irregularities in the British climate. A third of US honeybees [were killed](#) last winter, too, so winter hardiness is of major importance.

It now seems that those larger hairs are also good at preventing the mites clinging onto each bee, making it harder for them to get infected with the deformed wing virus.

The zoo hopes to encourage beekeepers to take on the breed, with the advantage that, at the very least, an increase in biodiversity will hopefully make one single colony collapse factor less devastating if it does strike.

By Ian Steadman June 2013 [Wired.co.uk](#)



From Honey Bee Zen via Apis Newsletter June 2013:

Two Alberta honey producers fined for using unregulated pest control methods.
www.honeybeezen.com

What do readers think that this shows about the control and regulation of beekeepers in Canada? Do you think it is a good thing? Would we be willing to have spot checks on our hives? How else would Bee Inspectors know what we are doing?

Would you like a database of Scottish beekeepers as proposed in the Honey Bee Strategy published by the Scottish Government in 2010. The SBA strongly supports this and believes compulsory registration of beekeepers is required. What do you think the advantages to beekeepers of this could be?

Any thoughts on this to www.bees5@btinternet.com please.



An advert has appeared in the Sunday press from **friends of the earth** who “see things differently” and asks for a donation of *just* £15 which will help save our bees.

For this you receive a Bee Saver Kit which provides information on your step-to-step guide to becoming a Bee Saver, a pack of British wildflower seeds, how to build a bee-haven in your back garden with information on flowers and a Bee identification guide.

To receive this you can call 0800 581 051 or text Bees to 66777 and they will call you back.

This may seem rather an expensive way to buy some flower seeds but the large advert should help to raise awareness – never a bad thing – and the donations will hopefully go towards further work in environmental good causes.

Suzanne Clark (Editor)

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this month's *Buzzword*. It is great hearing about all your bee-related experiences. Please keep them coming in.



My grandson aged 7, earlier this year. Suzanne Clark.