

May 2015

BUZZWORD

Ayr & District Beekeepers Monthly Newsletter



IN THIS ISSUE:-

- President's Message
- At the Association Apiary
- Urban Swarms
- Ted Talk
- Beekeeping In June
- Gardening Scotland 2015
- Book Review – Bees - Laline Paull
- Nosema ceranae
- Obituary – Colin Watson
- Ayr Flower show

Presidents Message

May has been a dreadful month, unseasonably cold, wet and miserable. Even today, a hailstorm forced me to retreat from the garden. It has been difficult to find suitable days to go through the hives and we have been reduced to having to feed some of our colonies. We have yet to see a charged queen cell ourselves but I know that Ian Robertson, one of our urban Beekeepers, has had problems with swarming despite the weather.

Changing tack, I would like to congratulate the Buzzword team and the many members who have contributed for maintaining the high standards set by Suzanne. The format is proving very successful and I would encourage all members to consider submitting articles and comments. I am sure there is a lot of journalistic talent out there just waiting to be discovered.

Hoping for some sunshine now summer is upon us.

Best wishes for June.

Alan
Club President

At the Association Apiary

The apiary is where we all learn but is essentially to help beginners learn the craft of beekeeping. It's a very steep learning curve. Indeed as one person remarked to me "I'm still getting to grips with the terminology". At this busy time of year there are many manoeuvres being carried out – making up nucleus hives, artificial

UPCOMING EVENTS:-

Saturday 6th June
Association Apiary
1:45pm for 2pm start

Saturday 13th June
Out Apiary – Ian Stirling
1:45pm for 2pm start

Thursday 18th – Sunday
21st June
Royal Highland Show
Ingliston, Edinburgh

Saturday 20th June
Association Apiary
1:45pm for 2pm start

Saturday 27th June
Association Apiary
1:45pm for 2pm Start

swarms and “what’s the difference between one of those and a Demaree?” No time to check the book, er, what module was that in?! You put the queen down here with foundation and the flying bees will join her, then on with a queen excluder, any supers and ‘that lot’ (the brood) can go up there! From a beginners point of view this must be very baffling. Let’s face it experienced beekeepers might be scratching their heads. So, if you are unsure about anything don’t hesitate to ask (preferably the person who has been with you whilst going through that particular hive). Sometimes we hesitate to ask in case it seems as if it’s a silly question or that you should already know the answer. Never mind that, just ask – it’s the only way you will learn why things are done and don’t be surprised – just to confuse you - if the same manoeuvre isn’t done in an entirely different way by a different beekeeper. There are many ways of doing things in beekeeping but it doesn’t necessarily mean one is wrong and the other way right – just that they’re different.

In a nutshell, if you don’t understand how or why something was done just ask!

Joyce Duncan

April in the apiary:

- Several colonies have been split and nuclei taken. It will be two or three weeks before we know if they contain mated queens. If you are looking for bees, give your name to Lindsay Baillie.
- Two hives were taken to Gardening Scotland. They were moved in the apiary a few days prior to the show to bleed off the flying bees. Phil McAnespie provided supers for them for the show. They are now safely back in the apiary – they came back a day early because of the weather and we left half a dozen bees en route from Edinburgh to Minishant!

Yes, bad beekeeping is to blame for unwanted urban swarms

It’s swarming season. Across southern England the warm weather and abundance of flowering plants and trees (food for bees) make the ideal conditions for colonies of honeybees to propagate. The queen bee flies out from her hive with around half her workers in search of a new home, leaving behind a host of queen cells – one of which will emerge as the new queen to begin a new colony in the hive.

So are we responsible for these town centre swarms? The answer is yes, if we’ve not been vigilant for tell-tale signs that the bees are preparing to swarm.

From the beginning of April – or even earlier during a mild spring – beekeepers ought to be looking for clues during weekly inspections of their hive and taking steps to manage unwanted swarms by splitting the colony. If they’ve learned their craft well – on numerous courses run by beekeeping associations and organisations - unwanted swarms would be a rarer occurrence.

The problem lies with novice beekeepers who aren't cut out for their new hobby. You can't just stick a hive at the bottom of the garden or on the roof and collect the honey at the end of the summer. You have to ask yourself, do you really have time in your busy schedule to check your bees at the same time each week? A day late and they could be off. And could you forgo Easter and May half-term holidays?

Even once you've learned the basics of good husbandry, novices would do well to have a bit of hand-holding from an experienced mentor in the second season when the bees will be strong enough to swarm.

That's not to say that new urban beekeepers are less skilled, or irresponsible than their rural counterparts, just that in a built-up area

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

- What is the world's largest Honeybee?

LAST MONTH WE ASKED

- What are the primary functions of bees located in the centre and on the outer surface of the winter cluster?

Answer on Next Page

a swarm of bees has more chance of coming to the attention of people than in a field, and of causing disruption if a high street has to be closed for a hour while the swarm collector is called.

By Alison Benjamin of the Guardian

links.adbka.com/urbanswarms

From: *I loved beekeeping. Then the swarms escaped* by Richard Dyson in The Telegraph

Richard kept bees in grimy, densely-populated Vauxhall, a mile from Parliament. After a few years the stress of urban beekeeping became too much and he gave up. He gives some very sensible things to consider before beekeeping in town:

.. **Space**

I thought I could keep just one hive, for which there was enough room. Wrong. If your bees are happy you'll need to split the colonies or, as mine did, they'll swarm repeatedly. When you retrieve the swarms you'll end up with more hives. The kit also needs lots of storage space, especially in winter.

...**Time**

To prevent swarms you have to examine your bees closely from March to May, so no Easter holidays. As you can't open hives in rain or howling winds, you need flexibility. My spring weekends were centred on the bees and, even then, I failed to stop swarming. If you've got a full-time job, it's tricky.

... **Money**

It's not the most expensive hobby, but I reckon I sank £2,000 over four years into clothing, tools, hives, frames, stands, treatments of bee pests, a honey extractor and the initial queen and colony. I'd be sceptical about any hopes of making cash selling honey, wax or pollen. It won't pay for itself, let alone turn a profit.

... **Support**

I joined the London Beekeepers' Association, which was fantastic. I used the meetings to grab phone numbers from as many experienced beekeepers I could find. And I shamelessly rang them during every crisis."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/goodlife/11621655/I-loved-beekeeping.-Then-the-swarms-escaped.html>

April Question of the Month

What are the primary functions of bees located in the centre and on the outer surface of the winter cluster?

Bees on the winter cluster surface serve as insulators to conserve heat. Bees in the centre of the winter cluster generate heat and care for brood if it is present.



Ted Talk

I came across this Ted Talk the other week and wanted to share it with you all, Anand Varma has some very interesting photographs and a time-lapse video showing the development of an egg into a honeybee.

"We've heard that bees are disappearing. But what is making bee colonies so vulnerable? Photographer Anand Varma raised bees in his backyard — in front of a camera — to get an up close view."

<http://links.adbka.com/anandvarma>

Also while filmed in 2013, Marla Spivak gives a fascinating talk on pollination and the problems faced by modern honeybees.

"Honeybees have thrived for 50 million years, each colony 40 to 50,000 individuals coordinated in amazing harmony. So why, seven years ago, did colonies start dying en masse? Marla Spivak reveals four reasons, which are interacting with tragic consequences. This is not simply a problem because bees pollinate a third of the world's crops. Could this incredible species be holding up a mirror for us?"

<http://links.adbka.com/marlaspivak>

Chris Urie

Did you Notice This?

At the end of the season we usually notice a pile of drones on the ground outside each hive. This is normal - the ejection by the workers of unwanted drones who would just eat up their stores. In 2014 I didn't see any heaps of drones outside any hives. In all my years of beekeeping this has never happened before. They must have thrown them out I decided and you just haven't noticed. It was only recently that a fellow beekeeper mentioned to me in conversation "..... and they didn't throw out the drones at the end of the season. They must be the only drones that have ever died of old age!"

Glad to hear someone else had noticed this I wondered why? Could it be because the bees continued to forage (in this area anyway) well on to the end of November in fairly mild weather? Has anyone else observed this unusual behaviour?

Joyce Duncan

Beekeeping in June

- Much of the work in June follows the pattern for May,
- With weekly inspections to check for swarm preparations or brood disease.
- Even if there are no signs of queen cells but you have ten or more frames of brood, it is worth performing a Demaree on the hive. Phil McAnespie has promised us an article on swarm control – soon!
- It is difficult to predict the honey situation this year – although it has been so cold, the blossom has been exceptionally good and the bees have been going out en masse in any good intervals. You should have supers on your hive and check them regularly to see whether they are filling and being sealed. Will there be a June gap? Who knows - it may be a July gap. Be vigilant in case colonies (especially nuclei or splits) need feeding.
- Keep checking for varroa – drone brood uncapping is helpful at this time of year as one can quickly see if there is a heavy infestation. If the count is up it may be worth putting a shallow frame or drone foundation in the brood chamber and doing some drone brood trapping. If there are signs of deformed wing virus you may consider treating with MAQS. Be aware that weaker colonies may have a gap in laying or even lose the queen.
- Any old or deformed combs can be moved to the outside of the brood nest with a view to removing them next spring. If any combs go mouldy as the outside ones sometimes do, it may as well be those that are to be replaced.



Gardening Scotland 2015

Gardening Scotland was held on Friday 29th – Sunday 31st May (The reason for this edition of Buzzword being late!) The show got off to a good start on the Friday with some ‘mixed’ weather - some sunshine, some medium winds and then some heavy hail during an open hive demonstration. Four open hive demonstrations were completed – or at least started – Saturday brought some better weather and although cold in the wind it was a reasonable day, again completing four open hive demos. The tent was very busy with members of the public and a common question posed to most beekeepers – How are the bees doing?

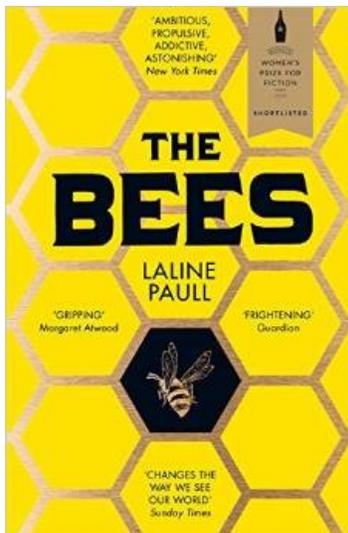
The weather forecast for Sunday was less than favourable with predicted winds of 20-30mph and gusts of up to 50mph. It was such a concern that the show organisers warned us and allowed us to take whatever precautions required to ensure the safety of the hives and equipment. For the first time in our history of attending the show, it was decided we would pack up early and everything was dismantled and packed in the trailer on Saturday evening, the bees also accompanied us home that same evening. The show organisers were kind enough to offer us a small pitch in the Highland hall and this allowed us to put up the two information boards and sell off most of the remaining honey.

The show was well attended by members of the public and we would like to thank all who gave up time to come and help out at the show. Also, apologies to those who were looking forward to attending on Sunday and were not required - there will be plenty more shows to come!

Chris Urie



Book Review – *Bees* by Laline Paull



Perhaps I should admit at the beginning of this review that I am not that keen on anthropomorphic books. Although I enjoyed *Wind in the Willows* as a child, I've never really enjoyed *Watership Down* and the like.

This has proved to be a very popular book, not least amongst beekeepers and I did find it an easy read – perhaps a bit too easy – intriguing but a bit childish. The author states that she has done a lot of research using Winston's and Seeley's books amongst others. The book is about sanitation bee *Flora 717* (all sanitation bees are called *Flora*) – and here is my first source of irritation: the author treats bees as though they have a fixed caste system like ants.

She is a unique bee rising above her station eventually to forage. She is also a laying worker. Second irritation – she lays an egg that becomes a queen. Whilst thelytoky (the laying of diploid female eggs) is possible in honeybees it is very rare except in *Apis mellifera capensis*. I found it stretching belief in this case.

On the positive side, I did read the whole book and fairly quickly. Many people regard this book as giving them significant insight into being a bee – this worries me more than anything! Read it yourself and see what you think.

Jane Šik

White House makes bid to save honeybees but ignores toxic pesticides

The White House has announced an ambitious plan to “promote the health of honeybees and other pollinators” in the United States in a bid to help reverse a worrying trend that has seen the honeybee population fall by half over the last seven decades.

It includes making millions of acres of federal land more bee-friendly, an explicit ambition to increase the population of the monarch butterfly, and the provision of millions of dollars to be spent on research.

But the plan announced on Tuesday falls short in one capacity that has environmental groups up in arms. It does not ban the use of any form of toxic pesticides, despite a large body of scientific research showing many of them – specifically neonicotinoids, or “neonics” – to be closely linked to widespread bee life loss.

The massive decline in bee population is the subject of broad ongoing academic and scientific research. Two of the most commonly used reasons for the mass decline are loss of habitat, which today’s plan expressly addresses, and widespread use of toxic pesticides, which it does to a far lesser degree.

Nosema ceranae Can Infect Honey Bee Larvae and Reduces Subsequent Adult Longevity

Daren M. Eiri , Guntima Suwannapong, Matthew Endler, James C. Nieh

“*Nosema ceranae* causes a widespread disease that reduces honey bee health but is only thought to infect adult honey bees, not larvae, a critical life stage. We reared honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) larvae in vitro and provide the first demonstration that *N. ceranae* can infect larvae and decrease subsequent adult longevity.”

<http://links.adbka.com/Nosemaceranae>

Obituary

Colin Watson, a past President of Ayr & District BKA, died during the month and his funeral was held on Tuesday 12th May at 12 noon at Ochiltree cemetery. While there may be very few members left who would have known Colin, we felt it appropriate to let you all know, our thoughts go out to his family and all who knew him.

Also thanks to Ian Jamieson for letting us know.

Ayr Flower Show

The 2015 Ayr Flower Show will be held from **Friday 7th to Sunday 9th August**.

Set in Rozelle Park, with its feature trees, ponds, and woodland walks near to Burns' Birthplace in Alloway, today's Ayr Flower Show is much more than an opportunity for gardening enthusiasts to admire bonny begonias and dazzling delphinia, or to purchase plants and related gardening items. There are 26 classes in the Honey section from Extracted Honey, Observation Hives, and Products made from Honey. This year will also feature for the first time the Ayr and District Beekeepers' Association Open Trophy to be awarded to any person for the highest number of points accrued in the Honey classes.

A full schedule of classes and entry form can be found at - <http://ayrflowershow.org/trade>

Picture of the Month

Queen Bee



Buzzword is produced by Ayr & District Beekeepers Editorial Committee. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

