



# Aberdeen and District Beekeepers' Association (SCIO)

- promoting the study and development of apiculture, and advancing the heritage, culture and science of beekeeping amongst its membership and throughout the wider community

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## BEEKEEPING - but not as we know it!

Have you ever taken a queen cell from a swarmed stock and jammed it between the combs of a queenless colony, hoping for the best? For most of us, that's as far as we go with queen rearing.

What a revelation, then, to visit Murray McGregor's queen rearing unit in Coupar Angus.

More than 30 ADBKA members along with our friends from the Tarland and Kemnay beekeeping groups made the trip on 25 June, spending a hugely enjoyable afternoon wandering around an eye-popping array of mating nucs, listening to Murray and queen-rearing expert Jolanta explain how to go about managing more than 900 of them. This is beekeeping on an industrial scale, not to mention the small detail that Murray also runs more than two and a half thousand colonies!

We are very grateful indeed to Murray and Jolanta for taking time out of their extremely busy schedule to talk to us and show us around the unit.



Established 1910

Scottish Charity Number SC031754

**CONGRATULATIONS** to the following ADBKA members who have been awarded the Basic Beemaster Certificate after undertaking the Scottish Beekeepers Association examination:

**Yvonne Seed; Kathryn Seed; Erling Watt; Joan Gilbert-Stevens; Jenny Lewis**

*Now for the written exams!*

We are also delighted to announce that, after attaining his Expert Beemaster Certificate last year, ADBKA member Hugh Donohoe has been appointed as an SBA examiner. Well done, Hugh.

Since the issue of last month's newsletter the Scottish Government has announce three outbreaks of American Foulbrood (AFB) disease in our area; two around St Cyrus and another in Dunecht.

The Bee Inspectors have dealt with these cases and beekeepers with apiaries nearby the outbreaks have been informed of what, if any, action they should take - that is, if they have registered on BeeBase.

To sign up to BeeBase go to <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/public/register.cfm>  
If you need to update yourself on how to identify AFB and European Foulbrood (EFB) disease, you can download Defra's excellent advisory leaflet, 'Foulbrood Diseases of Honey Bees', at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>

You can also obtain a copy by writing to:

The National Bee Unit  
National Agri-Food Innovation Campus  
Sand Hutton York  
YO411LZ UK

or by calling 0300 3030094

# AFB ALERT

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## Members' Events

**DEMONSTRATION/THEORY/PRACTICAL**

- with Rosie and David Crighton

Wednesday 27 July 2016 at 7.15pm

29 Marcus Crescent  
Blackburn AB21 0SZ*Limited to 6 places. Call Rosie on 01224  
791181 to book by 25 July***TURRIFF SHOW**

Sunday 31 July and Monday 1 August

*For more information,  
call Rosie on 01224 791181***BEEKEEPING CONFERENCE**

Saturday 27 August 2016

9.30am - 4.00pm

Kinellar Community Hall  
Blackburn AB21 0SS**TALK****TONY HARRIS** - queen rearing:  
theoretical perspectives

Sunday 4 September 2016 at 2pm

Kinellar Community Hall  
Blackburn AB21 0SS

I have several colonies of bees that I keep at Hazlehead Park in Aberdeen along with other association members; some of my beekeeping colleagues are Rob and Helen Rowe who have links with the local council. During our weekly inspections at Hazlehead I was discussing with Rob and Helen that my husband Lindsey was in the process of manufacturing an observation hive so that we could show the bees to the public.

Sometime later Rob advised that he had been invited by Riverbank Primary School in Aberdeen to conduct a presentation on Beekeeping to pupils and staff and asked if I would be interested in taking the observation hive complete with bees along to the school on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May. The observation hive had only recently been completed and had never contained a single bee but I agreed in any case.

Rob and I attended the school on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May; Rob did a fine job of explaining the technicalities of beekeeping along with the associated paraphernalia and equipment whilst I presented the bees and explained a little about them. Such was the interest we were invited back to do it again on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June.

The pupils were supervised by their teachers and taken to the beekeeping demonstration in groups within their classes from P1 through to P7; each pupil had an eagerly prepared question for the beekeepers.

When the first group viewed the bees and observation hive the teacher asked the pupils to raise their hands if they had a question to ask the beekeepers, instantly there was a sea of eager hands and the teacher selected Molly to ask her question. Molly said that she had a cat called Tiddles and when she put her hand on her she makes purr, purr. Tiddles was a black and white cat that stayed with her and her parents; the teacher thanked Molly for her question and advised the pupils to keep the questions beekeeping related.

The teacher asked for the next question and again another sea of eager hands to which the teacher selected another pupil to present the question. David was selected and he eagerly asked me "are you Polish?"

The following questions were asked by the pupils: "Is the white dot on the Queen her crown?" "What does the Queen do?" "Where is the King?" "Why is there more than one King?" "Are you Spanish?" "What do the Kings do?" "What language do you speak?" "What kind of language is Russian?" "What language do Russians speak?" "Why cannot the bees be nice and not sting us?"

The demonstrations concluded each day at 3:30 and I was pleased to confirm the observation hive is bee proof without a single escapee during our presentations. The technicalities of the hive we hope to show members at this year's association honey show.

*Olya Macaulay*

## TALES BY THE RIVERBANK



*Olya answers questions from the eager pupils*

## TOP BAR HIVE PROJECT

Our top bar team, Jenny Lewis, Alison Goss and Wayne and Debbie Riddell, keep us updated on progress with this exercise in natural beekeeping at our Crathes Castle apiary.

### Week 3: 12-JUNE-16

This was the first full week after the transfer of the bees from the National into the TBH. A general hive inspection was carried out after the normal Crathes weekly activities and other hives had been inspected. There were plenty of pollen and nectar stores, many frames of brood at all stages and the queen was identified easily with her blue mark. The bees were very gentle and didn't mind being disturbed adding to the feeling the transfer went well and they were settled in well. We were quite astonished to find the bees had already been working the new frames and had drawn out comb on a new frame (which was one with an inch of starter wax) into the classical pendant shape of natural comb. The majority of the new comb looked to be made for drones but there was a good part of the middle which was for worker bees. The drone comb may be useful for varroa control once sealed for drone comb sacrifice.

### Week 4: 19-JUNE-16

Two weeks into their new home the bees are very established now and seem quite relaxed to handle. On this inspection we did notice there was a bit of water in the bottom corner of the hive which raised concerns about the integrity of the TBH. On conclusion this is thought to be rain water which has been blown in through the entrance board and has travelled the length of the TBH to pool at the opposite end of the entrance. Since the varroa floor was in place the water must have run across it. There were actually a few bees enjoying the close proximity and having a drink however knowing damp is a big issue to the bees we dried it up with some paper towel and put a slight wedge under the corner to try to level it off a bit better – we will check it out with spirit level and correct until the TBH is even.

There were many questions from the other members as to how we were going to manage this colony going through the year. How will we harvest any honey? How will we carry out swarm control? How will we treat them for varroa? How will we feed them in winter? How will we insulate them in winter?

The answers – we don't know at the moment! Top Bar Beekeeping is seen as a more natural beekeeping method where a TBH is set up in an Orchard and nature takes its course; the bees have free will to do whatever they want. We want to adopt a similar approach and manipulate them less where possible. One thing we do know is that we do have to be aware of swarming and the need to control it. The apiary is situated in quite a public area, especially around the time of summer and swarming. We need to investigate this a bit further to determine the best way forwards.



### Week 5: 26-JUN-16

A general hive inspection was carried out. It was noted the brood wasn't expanding much farther than the original size, they had drawn new frames but these were towards the entrance side of the hive, one was being used for brood and the others, as much as had been drawn was being used for stores. The bees were notably calm and were happy to be handled. This is giving us a positive indication they are enjoying the new hive and aren't experiencing any issues with drawing frames or storage of nectar, pollen or brood. There is still plenty room left in the hive for expansion of the colony.



### Week 6: 03-JULY-16

The bees were very calm, there was brood in all stages and stores were checked to see if feeding was required. It wasn't. The hive was dry inside and we are satisfied that it is now level. They were continuing to draw comb and had extended to start on another two frames. The Queen was found and there was a great view through the hive of frames at different stages of comb building. Many thanks to Joan for supplying some corrugated metal that we placed on top of the hive to protect it further from the rain and which is held down with a breeze block until a more permanent solution is found.



### Aberdeen Bee Supplies

Jock McGregor is the local agent for Thorne Beekeeping Equipment. Contact him on 01224 790468 or e-mail: [aberdeenbeesupplies@hotmail.com](mailto:aberdeenbeesupplies@hotmail.com)

**9-FRAME RADIAL EXTRACTOR** (electric) – FOR HIRE £10 per hire period

**STEAM WAX MELTER** – available ON LOAN £10 deposit

Both items available from: Jock McGregor, 11 Marcus Road, Blackburn. Tel. 01224 790468

### NUCS FOR SALE

Five frames with a 2016 queen: £150

Email Bill and Rosemary Legge at [lotsw33@gmail.com](mailto:lotsw33@gmail.com)

### WANTED:

Smith hives for sale, or spare  
Contact Johannes Van Midden at

[lembas@businessmailbox.com](mailto:lembas@businessmailbox.com)

**BIBBA Conference 2016** will be held on 20-22 September on the Isle of Man. Three full days of quality international speakers with lectures on many aspects of beekeeping: from beginner to expert there will be excellent content for all of us to improve our beekeeping.

Disease occurrence and spread and future threats to our bees are high profile; now is the time to focus on breeding from the best, locally, for less defensive, robust stocks of honey bees. Where better than a conference with like-minded beekeepers?

Speaker profiles, lecture content summaries and booking are all now available online, links below. Please take a look and whatever you do **don't miss the Early Bee prices, available now**. Large choice of accommodation, conference dinner, lots to see, so why not extend your visit? See you there!

"This weekend's conference was excellent and more than met expectations - I hope this sets the standard for future UK beekeeping events and look forward to the next one!" ~ *Delegate feedback, Llangollen 2014*.

[bit.ly/ConferenceLinks](http://bit.ly/ConferenceLinks) for direct interactive links

<http://bit.ly/Conf03> for the website, also with full details

## NOT WHAT IT SEEMS TO BEE



*Andrena nigroaenea*

Photograph by Donald Morrison

ADBKA member Donald Morrison discovered this bee and others like it living in a concrete wall in an industrial estate in Blackburn. At first glance it looked familiar - a feral colony of honeybees? However, on closer inspection this was something very much more unusual.

After some research, Donald identified it as a mining bee called *Andrena nigroaenea*. There are around 100 species of mining bee found in Britain, though this one seems to be rare up here in the north east of Scotland.

Sad to say, Donald's latest report is that the local Great Tits have been hanging around the opening to the nest and have been picking off the bees as they come and go. Things aren't looking good for the mining bee.