

Newsletter

December 2015



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

Established 1910

Scottish Charity Number SC031754

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BEEKEEPING AT CRATHES

Whilst researching the history of the Crathes garden, I came across a couple of references to bees in the mid eighteenth century which I thought might be interesting to the beekeepers at Crathes today. The first comment comes in a letter written from Andrew Burnett in Edinburgh to Robert Burnett, son of Sir Alexander 4th baronet of Leys. The letter, written on 4 October 1750 is mostly about legal matters. Andrew, possibly a cousin, begins:

Dear Sir

I have yours of the 1st instant this morning and am glad that you have got me a Beescape for without it I should have made a bad breakfast all winter.

At this time most of the bees were killed off in the autumn in order to get the honey and wax. It conjures up a good picture, the skep in the carriage or cart bumping its way over the hills to Edinburgh, and Andrew's pleasure at the thought of honey on his porridge and toast. Surely there would have been some leakage from the skep?

The other reference to bees comes in 1760 when Thomas, the 6th baronet, inherited Crathes. 'Five old skeps', 'six

In last month's newsletter we featured a beautiful photograph taken by Susan Bennett, a volunteer guide at Crathes Castle garden. Here, Susan reveals how beekeeping was important to Crathes long before the arrival of the ADBKA apiary.

skep broads' and 'a beehive in the gairden' are listed in an inventory of household furniture. Presumably the broad will be the board that the skep stands on.

The garden at that time was less ornamental, with a kitchen garden in the southern part of the walled garden. The fruit trees and bushes, and the many varieties of beans that were grown would have provided an abundance of nectar and pollen.

Burnett, George, *The family of Burnett of Leys*, (New Spalding Club, Aberdeen 1901) 1760 inventory p295-315
Crathes Papers, Special Collections University of Aberdeen AU MS 3361 2/107

Circulated along with this newsletter is the 2016 subscription renewal form. You can help us manage the association for the benefit of members by renewing your subscription without delay.



Some of the 2015 Honey Show winners receiving their trophies at a well attended and thoroughly enjoyable social evening on 14 November.

Members' Events

TALK:
BEE BEHAVIOUR- Gavin Ramsey,
SBA Bee Health Convener

Saturday 16 January 2016 at 2.00pm

The Kinellar Community Hall, Fintray
Road, Blackburn AB21 0SSTALK:
NEONICOTINOIDS AND THE
HONEY BEE- Nick Balfour,
Sussex University

Saturday 20 February 2016 at 2.00pm

The Kinellar Community Hall, Fintray
Road, Blackburn AB21 0SS

I miss her company, we don't do anything together.
She takes her bees to Scotland, they go camping in the heather.
Then, when they come back again, her one and only topic
Is honey Caledonian and glories thixotropic

When buying birthday presents I am overwhelmed with gloom,
She's not a gal contented with a bottle of perfume.
Her needs are very complex. Can I find? Can I afford?
A solar wax extractor, straining tank or Snelgrove board?

Autumn is upon us; bleakly now the leaves are lost,
The hives are cosy in the cold, no matter what the cost.
Varroa has been taken on with remedies assorted,
Mice are disappointed; Woody Woodpecker is thwarted.

My wife's on the extractor and the house looks like a slum,
She makes me wind the handle which in turn rotates the drum,
Thickly in the warming tank we watch the honey pour
With hands stuck to the table and with feet stuck to the floor.

*From 'Stuck on You' by Pam Ayres, as beautifully recited by Joan
Gilbert-Stevens at our social evening last month.*

Welcome, Leona!

We are delighted to welcome on board our new
Honorary Treasurer, Leona Lowe. Leona
works in the Accounts Department of Aberdeen
City Council and takes over from **Louise
Forbes**, who steps down from her role as
treasurer and committee member after holding
the association's purse strings since May 2012.

Also leaving the committee after many years'
service is **Innes Simpson**, who preceded
Louise in the treasurer's post.

We would like to offer our sincere thanks to both
Louise and Innes for the huge contribution they
have made to the management of Aberdeen
and District Beekeepers' Association and we
look forward to working with Leona as we move
into a new membership year. Talking of which,
make sure you forward your subscription
renewals to Leona, whose contact details are
on the membership form and on page 1.

Araujia sericifera is a South American plant that is pollinated by moths, which sometimes get caught in its flowers. Following a report in The American Naturalist in 1879 of honey bees apparently observed eating trapped Common Looper Moths (*Plusia precatonis*), Charles Darwin wrote to the journal: "I never heard of bees being in any way carnivorous, and the fact is to me incredible. Is it possible that the bees opened the bodies of the *Plusia* to suck the nectar contained in their stomachs? Such a degree of reason would require repeated confirmation and would be very wonderful. I hope that you or some one will attend to the subject."

the american naturalist 14 (1) (January 1780): 48-51

Visit the ADBKA Honey Jar Store for:

Ragus Candy
Apistan (10 strips, sufficient for 5 hives)
Ambrosia Syrup
Honey Jars and Lids
Mesh Floors – National size (wire only)
Hessian Squares for smoker fuel

Free loan of:

Honey extractors
Mini-melters
Heather honey press
Wax extractor
Wax foundation press

MEMBERS' BENEFITS

Approximately half a mile along Laurel
Drive, turn into Laurel Place on your right
- it's a semi-circle so take the second
entrance into this street. Now turn left
into Laurel Avenue. Danestone Market
Garden is signposted, on the left, about
100 yards along.

**Danestone
Market
Garden
AB22 8AJ**

For the loan items, a returnable £10 deposit is required, with the maximum length of loan being two weeks. As other members may be waiting to borrow extractors, etc. these must be returned on time and in a clean condition.

The store is open between 6.30pm and 8pm on Wednesday evenings and at other times by arrangement with Sandy Gordon (Tel: 01224 484540)

As part of our winter tasks at the association apiary at Crathes we've been sterilising our supers and extracted frames. Sulphur dioxide fumes will kill all stages of wax moth and will stop pollen from going mouldy.

We made stacks of six supers, each with a full complement of frames with drawn comb. On top of this we placed an empty super to accommodate a sulphur burner.

The joints between the boxes were sealed with masking tape, and for each stack we prepared a roof by using masking tape to seal off the two air vents.



You'll find these sulphur sticks at most beekeeping equipment suppliers. They come in packets of 20 and cost around £4.50.

The sulphur burner in the picture cost £9, but it's essentially a tin can with holes in it, so it's easy to come up with a cheaper solution yourself.



If you place the burner directly on top of the frames, you'll find that a smelly sulphurous residue leaks out and runs onto the tops of the frames and down the combs, ruining them. The way to avoid the problem is to put the burner in a metal takeaway tray, which will contain any run off.

Once everything is ready, it's time to light the bottom of two sulphur sticks and pop them in the can. Then quickly put the roof on. Leave the stack for seven days before dismantling and storing.

Sulphur fumes are extremely dangerous and should not be inhaled. Make sure you follow the safety instructions that come with the sulphur sticks.



Neonicotinoids: new warning on pesticide harm to bees

There is a strong scientific consensus that bees are exposed to neonicotinoid pesticides in fields and suffer harm from the doses received, according to a new analysis of the all the scientific evidence to date.

The Guardian, at

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/oct/28/strong-consensus-that-neonicotinoids-harm-bees-analysis-shows>



**Confused?
No wonder!**



No sign of damage to honeybees from neonics, review shows

Honeybees are avoiding any significant damage from neonicotinoid insecticides according to an academic review of all in-field research carried out so far.

Farmers Weekly, at

<http://www.fwi.co.uk/arable/no-sign-of-damage-to-honeybees-from-neonics-review-shows.htm>



Next year, Moray Beekeepers' Association (MBA) is running a course in microscopy. See the following message from Tony Harris:

I will be running a 10 week microscopy course starting in January to prepare students for the SBA Microscopy Exam. This takes place on Saturday 2nd April at Portmoak Hall, Portmoak.

To take the exam you need to have passed the SBA Basic Beemaster assessment with a distinction

Ideally, if you sign up for the course you will take the exam but spaces may be available for those just wanting to attend the course.

Microscopy is a fascinating subject and will open your eyes to the wonderful world of flowering plants, pollen and the inner and outer workings of the honeybee.

The venue will be Spey Bay Hall and hopefully on a Wednesday evening (dates to be confirmed). The course will cost £35 for MBA members and £45 for non-members as we need to pay for the hire of the room and consumables etc.

You will also be expected to purchase your own microscopes and I will be available to give advice on that.

Numbers are limited so if you are interested in this course please let me know asap.

Best wishes, Tony

Tony Harris
MBA Training Team Leader

morayba@gmail.com

Tel. 07884 496246

To see an amazing documentary about brave Nepalese honey hunters taking honey from the huge **Himalayan Cliff Bee**, go to:
<http://www.indiatimes.com/news/weird/himalayas-are-home-to-the-world-s-largest-bees-which-produce-a-potent-variety-of-honey-247203.html>



Aberdeen Bee Supplies

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

MEN WITHOUT HATS!

Echoing events last year, another tweed hat has been left at our recent members' event at the Kinellar Hall.
If the cap fits, contact Jock McGregor on 01224 790468

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

Many congratulations to the following ADBKA members who have been awarded certificates in the Scottish Beekeepers' Associations practical examinations:

Junior Beekeeper Certificate: Georgina Milne

Basic Beemaster Certificate: Claire Horsfall and Karl Breeman

Intermediate Practical Certificate: Graham Torrie

And three cheers for **Hugh Donohoe**, who joins a select handful of ADBKA members who have gained the SBA's

Expert Beemaster Certificate.

Aberdeen and District Beekeepers' Association encourages all its members to aim for the Basic Beemaster Certificate as an endorsement of their practical beekeeping skills.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There has been a lot of research into the mechanism that directs a newly hatched female larva down the pathway to becoming either a queen or an infertile worker. Now a new study by scientists at the University of Illinois has added another piece to the jigsaw.

Larvae that are destined to become queens are fed exclusively on royal jelly, and this will also be the diet of the adult queen for her entire life. In contrast, from the fourth day of their larval stage, worker bees are also fed some honey and 'bee bread', or processed pollen. These both contain a substance called p-coumaric acid, which alters the way in which the larvae's genes are expressed. A key effect is to retard the development of the bees' ovaries.

You can find the Illinois study at <http://advances.sciencemag.org/>

According to.....

.....Thomas James in his 1852 book *The Honey Bee*: "It is for the higher classes to set the example by presents of cheap and simple but better-constructed hives - by personal interest being taken in their bee-management - by supplying them with the best-written books on the subject - above all, by adopting the merciful system in their own gardens, and intrusting their hives to the especial care of one of the under-gardeners, whose office it should be, not only to diligently tend and watch his master's stock, but also to instruct the neighbouring cottagers in the most improved management. It would be an excellent plan to attach a stall of bees to the south wall of a gardener's cottage or lodge, with a glass side towards the interior, so that the operations of the bees might be watched from within. The custom of placing them within an arched recess in the wall of the house was one of old Rome, and is still observed in some countries. We look upon this as a very pretty suggestion for a fancy cottage in any style of architecture. Perhaps the directors of our normal schools would find no better way of teaching their pupils-schoolmasters how to benefit and gain an influence among the parents of the children they will have to instruct, than to put them in the proper way of making and managing the new kinds of cottage-hives, of taking honey, joining stocks, and hibernating the bees. We spoke in a late article of Gardening being a common ground for the rich and poor. We would mark this difference with regard to bees, that we consider them especially the 'poor man's stock'. No wealthy man should keep large colonies of them for profit in a neighbourhood where there are cottagers ready to avail themselves of the advantage. A hive or two in the garden - good old-fashioned straw-hives - for the sake of their pleasing appearance and kindly associations, and for the good of the flowers - is only what every gentleman would delight to have."