

Newsletter  
May 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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## BEGIN THE BEE GEAN

Conventional wisdom has it that the beekeeping season begins in September with preparations for overwintering the following year's stocks. The truth for most of us, though, is that *now* is when things really get underway. Many will be moving their colonies to take advantage of the spring oil seed rape, and there will be few whose hives aren't within striking distance of one of the most important bee plants of the early part of the season, Wild Cherry or Gean.

Over the past three or four weeks the gean trees have been bursting into bloom, providing a rich source of nectar and pollen for bees. Although the flowering season is short, given decent weather, strong stocks might yield a surplus of honey. Either way, this nectar source will play a crucial part in building up your colonies in preparation for greater things to come in the summer.

And the gean tree holds a secret. Not only does it provide bees and other pollinating insects with nectar from within the flower structure, it also has another outlet. Just below each



*Prunus avium* - Wild Cherry or Gean

There's a French word for cherry: 'guigne'. Do you think that the Scottish word 'gean' echoes the strong historical links between Scotland and France?



*The extra-floral nectaries, on the petiole beneath the leaf*

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide

*AE Housman*

leaf on the petiole (the stalk that attaches the leaf to the stem) there are two small, red raised lumps. These are extra-floral nectaries, where a mix of glucose, fructose and sucrose is available for anyone with a sweet tooth or mandible.

But why would a plant that has evolved a partnership with pollinating insects provide nectar remote from its reproductive apparatus? Well it used to be thought that these extra-floral nectaries were simply an additional excretory system for getting rid of excess sugars; the plant needs to maintain a fine water/sugar balance. However, it's now considered that they have evolved to attract ants, which in turn repel browsing plant eaters like deer.

All too soon, the gean will be gone, but, as Robbie Shepherd might have said, there's sic-a-more to come.

## 2015 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our 2015 AGM will be held at 7.15pm on Wednesday 20 May at The Kinellar Community Hall, Fintray Road, Blackburn AB21 0SS. The agenda and other important papers were circulated with last month's newsletter. If you are planning on coming along to the meeting, please bring copies of the papers with you.

Following the business part of the AGM we will have light refreshments and a short presentation on the history of Aberdeen and District Beekeepers' Association.

Did you know that the SBA now has a Facebook page? It can be found at:

<https://www.facebook.com/scottishbeekeepersassociation?ref=hl>

**Wax tax facts, page 6**

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Members' Events

**DEMONSTRATION:  
HIVE INSPECTION**

Sunday 17 May at 2pm

Association apiary, Crathes Castle, Banchory, AB31 5QJ

This session will be particularly useful to members thinking about taking the SBA's Basic Beemaster assessment.

*(Park in the lower car park, then walk up the footpath leading to the upper car park and enter the gate on the right marked 'staff only'. You'll see the cabin ahead of you. PS - remember to shut the gate behind you.)*

**ABERDEEN AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Wednesday 20 May at 7.15pm

The Kinellar Community Hall, Fintray Road, Blackburn

**DEMONSTRATION:  
SWARM CONTROL**

Sunday 7 June at 2pm

Association apiary, Crathes Castle, Banchory, AB31 5QJ

*You might notice that the subject matter for these two events have changed places from their billing on your membership card*

**WORKSHOP:  
MAKING NUCS**

Sunday 21 June at 2pm

Green Apple, Auchry Walled Garden, Turriff, AB53 5TP

Scientists are working to develop a flying robot with a bee's brain. By drawing on information gained from neurological research into honeybees, they want to "build and deploy a modular model of the honeybee brain describing detection, classification, and learning in the olfactory and optic pathways as well as multi-sensory integration across these sensory modalities". The ultimate aim is to "create a robot that thinks, senses, and acts like a honeybee!"

You can read more about this at <http://greenbrain.group.shef.ac.uk/>

Thanks to Joan Gilbert-Stevens for this item.

Meanwhile, researchers at Lund University in Sweden have been looking at the effect on bees of neonicotinoid pesticides in field conditions. They've reached the surprising conclusion that the chemicals have no negative impact on colony growth in honey bees, but they do show clear signs of harming 'wild' bees. You can watch an interesting short video about this at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPI-R43\\_B3k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPI-R43_B3k)



A mini swarm?

**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

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**

You may be asked to show your ADBKA membership card when you visit the store, so remember to take it along

**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)

## Pyrethroid Resistance

### THE BELTSVILLE TEST

Beltsville is a small town in Maryland, USA, with around the same population as Peterhead. It began life in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a plantation community, growing tobacco to feed the new fashion for smoking in England, but is now home to one of the largest centres of agricultural scientific research in the world. This includes a bee research laboratory, where a test was developed to determine whether specific populations of *Varroa* mites were developing resistance to synthetic pyrethroids, the active ingredients in the common *Varroa* treatments Apistan® and Bayvarol®.

Here is the UK's National Bee Unit's simplified version of the **Beltsville Test**:

Synthetic pyrethroids are a class of chemicals that mimic the properties of a naturally occurring substance called pyrethrum, which was originally extracted from East African chrysanthemums and was known to have an insecticidal effect. The particular pyrethroid in Apistan® is called tau-fluvalinate; Bayvarol® strips contain flumethrin.

1. Cut a 9mm x 25mm piece from an Apistan® strip and staple it to the centre of a piece of thin card about 75mm x 125mm in size.
2. Place the card in a 500ml jar, or 1lb. honey jar, with the strip facing inwards.
3. Prepare a 2-3mm mesh cover to close the jar. Plastic greenhouse shading mesh is ideal. Cut a piece larger than the opening so that it can be folded back over the open end of the jar and secured using a strong elastic band.
4. **Take precautions not to sample the queen.** Shake adult bees from 1 or 2 brood combs into a container such as an upturned roof or washing up bowl. Gently scoop up bees with the jar until it is half full.
5. Place a sugar cube in the jar and seal off using the mesh. Store in the dark at room temperature with the mesh uppermost.
6. After 24 hours hit the upturned jar with the palm of your hand over whitepaper Repeat two more times to dislodge any mites. Count the mites knocked out.
7. Immerse the bees in the jar into a solution of water and washing up liquid (strong washing up strength).
8. Wash the dead bees to remove any remaining mites. Place the bees in a coarse kitchen sieve that will hold bees but let *Varroa* mites through. Secure a honey straining cloth or jelly bag under the sieve to retain mites. Place under a fast running tap or tap with a shower fitting to wash any remaining mites off the bees. Count the number of mites washed off. Dispose of the dead bees and mites in a suitable way, such as composting.
9. If the total number of mites is less than 5 discard the results.
10. Calculate the efficacy as a percentage. Multiply the number of mites knocked down by 100 and divide by the total number of mites i.e. the number knocked down plus those washed off. If the answer is less than 50% it indicates that a resistance problem is likely.
11. Please complete the Voluntary *Varroa* Resistance form VVRT(1) and return it to the National Bee Unit. A copy of this form is obtainable at [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com) or the NBU



The equipment you'll need for carrying out the test



#### Some thoughts on the ethics of this:

The 150 or so bees that you take for the test are destined to be trapped in the jar for 24 hours, and then drowned. This is certain to strike some beekeepers as excessively cruel. On the other hand, *Varroa* infestation holds the prospect of a devastating and ultimately fatal outcome for the whole colony. Where there is no resistance amongst the mite population, these pyrethroid treatments are highly effective. So, knowing the degree of resistance can lead to informed decisions when it comes to dealing with your *Varroa* problem.

Having said that, the procedure set out by the National Bee Unit provides for a food source for the jarred bees, but not for water, which they will surely need to dissolve and consume the sugar cube. A few drops of water can easily be placed on the top of the mesh cover by touching it lightly with a finger wetted under a tap.



## Notice Board



### BEES FOR SALE

Contact Mr Christie on 01651 821 236  
(Rothienorman)

### 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

Why not look in on the next **BeeCraft live 'webinar'**, which will be discussing the issue of honey bee health? It's on 20 May at 8pm and you'll find it at <http://www.bee-craft.com/beekeeping/hangouts/>

### BBwear DISCOUNTED CLOTHING OFFER for ADBKA MEMBERS

In order to get the 20% discount, you will need to contact BBwear directly, by email at [sales@bbwear.co.uk](mailto:sales@bbwear.co.uk) or by phone on 01872 562731, and place your order. You'll also need to ask the ADBKA Chair or Secretary (see contact details on the front page) to email BBwear to confirm that you are a member of the association. Your order will then be processed.

You can see the range of clothing on offer at <http://www.bbwear.co.uk/> or you can request a catalogue by calling the above number.

*Please note that you will not get the discount if you place your order online via BBwear's website, and discounts cannot be refunded after the order has been placed through the website.*

(NB. Free gloves are not included with the full suits, however, a 50% discount is offered on washable leather gloves or spats.)

To advertise on this page free of charge, email [adbkanewsletter@btinternet.com](mailto:adbkanewsletter@btinternet.com) or ring Graham on 013398 82038

Last month's newsletter contained an elaborate description of how to construct an eke with an entrance with strips cut from a polyfoam sheet. ADBKA member Kitta Potgieter offers this useful tip: "Wouldn't it be easier and stronger simply to cut a hole of the correct size inside a 460x460mm square of polyfoam (or 500x500mm if you're making an eke for one of the larger polystyrene Nationals)? The original size of the foam sheet is big enough for that. The inside bit can then be used as insulation inside an eke. (Of course, if you're going to make lots of ekes, then strips would be better.)"

## According to.....

.....Thomas Cowan in his 1908 book, *Wax Craft*, "Pinarius, after defeating the inhabitants of the island of Corsica, imposed on them a tax of 100,000 lb. of wax, and this contribution was doubled two years afterwards. The inhabitants of Trezibond also paid tribute to the Romans in equivalents of wax. In the Middle Ages taxes in the form of wax were paid to kings, and certain officers had the right to demand a given number of candles and pounds of wax.

"In all religious ceremonies in France large quantities of wax were consumed, and the incumbents neglected no means of procuring it. Among the annual revenues of the Bishop of Puy was 20 lb. of wax. In 1330 the farmers of the domain of Beaugard had each to pay 2 lb. of wax annually. In 1632 John de Frettar, sexton of the monastery of Chaise Dieu, stipulated for an annual rent of 600 lb. of wax, to be of good merchantable quality, that the tenant was to bring to his house yearly on St. John's Day."