

Newsletter

November 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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## 2015 HONEY SHOW AWARDS

A complete list of class winners is enclosed with this month's newsletter

	Awarded for	Winner
The Bill MacKenzie Quaich	Best exhibit of Ling Heather Honey	Graham Torrie
The Thorne Trophy	Most points in the show	Graham Torrie
The ASCD Trophy	Best exhibit in the show	James Donald
The Cut-Comb Trophy	Best exhibit of cut comb	James Friend
The President's Trophy	Most points in the wax section	Rosie Crighton
The Anne C Beddie Trophy	Best exhibit in the wax section	Rosie Crighton
The Henry Simpson Trophy	Best exhibit in the medium/dark honey Member's class	John Steele
MTM Construction Shield	Best exhibit in the light honey Member's class	Graham Torrie
The Captain Manson Trophy	Most points in the Industrial Class	Anne Daniels
SC Rae Memorial Trophy	Best Frame of ling heather honey	John Cooper
Jim Tocher Trophy	Most points in the Novice Class	Erling Watt
ADBKA Junior Shield	Best exhibit in Junior Class	No entry
Gift Table	Best exhibit in the Gift Class	John Cooper
John D Walker Trophy	Best exhibit in the creamed /soft set honey class	Terry Daniels

*In the Newsletter this month:*

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Each year we donate the honey and other items from the Honey Show Gift Table to a worthy recipient. This year we were very pleased to pass on members' gifts to St James's Court, a residential care centre for disabled people in Inverurie.

Sincere thanks to all those members who contributed to the Gift Table.



One of our bees gathering the last of the pollen from Ivy at Crathes

The fine October weather coincided with the flowering of a fine Bottle Brush (Callistemon) plant in one of the greenhouses in the formal gardens at Crathes Castle, and our bees found their way inside to collect pollen. How many of them managed to navigate their way out and return to the hives is anyone's guess. Working the ivy on the Crathes estate was a safer bet for our bees and they were very busy on it in the fine weather. The photograph was kindly provided by Susan Bennett who is a volunteer garden guide at Crathes Castle.

Thanks to John Cooper for this item, and to Susan Bennett for the photograph

**TALK:  
BEE BEHAVIOUR**

**- Gavin Ramsey, SBA Bee Health Convener**

Saturday 16 January 2016 at 2.00pm

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

**TALK:**

*subject tbc*

**- Nick Balfour**

Saturday 20 February 2016 at 2.00pm

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

Each month, BeeCraft runs a **live beekeeping discussion forum** - a 'Hangout' - on the web. Go to <http://www.bee-craft.com/beekeeping/hangouts/> at 8pm on the following dates to see what it's all about. If you want, you can submit questions in advance - find out how on the web page.

18th November	Winter projects - DIY ideas
16th December	Relax - Beekeeper to Beekeeper
13th January 2016	Beekeeping with Children

## DANCES WITH BEES

### – WAGGLE TO A REGGAE BEE CALYPSO!

*Part 2 of ADBKA member Philip Barlow's encounter with beekeeping Caribbean style!*

Just as with Beekeeping here in the UK, at Ambois, they are affected by the Varroa mite and Open Mesh floors the norm; which appear to help keep any mite problems at bay. John's assessment being that the hives have not suffered greatly and when they do spot the Varroa mite they make note of count and their treatments seem to keep them under control as part of their Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practice. Perhaps because of the islands isolation he considered that Varroa was not a great problem.

Discussion then focussed on other pests, and John considered that the destructive nature of the Wax Moth was more of a problem for them if allowed to take hold; vigilance at all times was essential, though he noted this pest rarely took hold in healthy hives. A more frequent threat has been ants attacking hives, however, of late this has lessened.

Other matters that require their regular inspection, mainly on out apiary hives, has been the disruption to hives (and destruction) from roaming farm stock. The island practice of free roaming of farm stock has sometimes ended up with hives being tipped over by cows and pigs as they push past them, despite their prevention measures.

Noticing the bees foraging from the hives, we discussed Forage in some detail. The forage varies throughout the year, as does its contribution to flavour and appearance of the honey. Depending on which part of the island the hives are sited the honey can range in colour; John likens this (using Scottish brewing references) from 'lager' coloured, to IPA, or to Belhaven/80shilling colours! The hives on the French House estate & on the island in general feed predominately on Coconut, which tend not to have a season, but fruiting trees; Mango, Papaya, Lime, Grapefruit, Apple, all contribute, as do the wild flowers when they can.

However, in recent years the failure of the top fruit and other fruiting trees has been a concern, with loss of blossom and no clear understanding of the reasons for the failure in those seasons. A few years prior, they went through a 'real bad patch' with the effect lasting for about 30 months, where production was cut to less than a third. Nothing seemed to bloom at all during this period, or very little, but now appears on the mend and this downturn is attributed to some sort of unknown global nastiness & climate change.

The issue of forage also drew a sad reflection from John.

Every so often the government decides to 'fog' for mosquitoes, in efforts to control outbreaks of Dengue Fever and more recently Chikungunya. Some years ago fogging process were seen to have very little effect on the larvae of the mosquitoes, as they can last in discarded water bottles in undergrowth or in any container that offers to hold small amounts of stagnant water; landfill sites being commonly prone to the spread of the disease through larvae. In such conditions the larvae can survive for many years until conditions are right then mature into mosquitoes that cause the sickness.

The 'fogging' does kill the mosquitoes, but has no effect on larvae. However, the toxic nature of the 'fogging' chemicals



*Typical forage habitat*

originally used was seen to harm many species: - a local indigenous bird the 'grackle' was wiped out, along with many spiders, lizards and other natural mosquito controllers and sadly all honey bees on Bequia suffered accidental poisoning, circa late 1970's.

That said, through re-education to prevent accidental poisoning events & greater chemical awareness about these insecticides, and gaining the attention of significant government figures to the disaster; measures have been introduced to curb the 'fogging'. As a consequence, Bee Conservation has drawn on support from several plantation estate owners for a Honeybee Reintroduction Project, bringing benefits to the island, resort owners & to tourism. Estate owners have seen benefits by producing their unique estate bottled honey, which is sold to residents & tourist. Most importantly, in recent years the project, through John's efforts, they have managed to keep officialdom away from spraying & 'fogging' around apiaries, so a repopulation project for the island's honeybees has taken place.

Initially, the Ambois Apiary started repopulation by importing 12 hives from St. Lucia but they showed latent aggressive characteristics, so much so 'you couldn't go near them' and had to be culled. 10 years ago they then imported queens from Hawaii (Kona) which has been very successful and, for the most part, they don't need to suit-up when tending the hives, these are now the predominant strain on Bequia.

Despite the honey drought they went through, as mentioned above, they now see a slight increase in Honey production and now seems fairly consistent. The Apiary logs all honey production and the years work runs to 4-5 harvest periods, (much to the envy I am sure of Scottish & UK beekeepers), with the peak flows around Christmas and a lessening just at the start of the wet season (May or June). The Sugar Reef resort "French House honey", as I tasted, has distinct citrus flavours running through it and dependent on the forage, is more or less intense from bottle to bottle. This year they hope to deliver 1200USgal.compared to their peak of 1600USgal/year previously.



Labelled honey

In their brood frames & supers they use plastic foundation dipped in wax and all honey is spun from the frames; honey is their principle product; the volume of honey production and management of the bees takes up most of John's available time, even with assistance from local employed labour as trainee beekeepers. John did emphasise that they get lots of requests for comb honey, but as yet they don't produce wax foundation it is impossible to produce, since that would mean changing to waxed foundation.

St Vincent & The Grenadines Government has a more relax regime for the food labelling of honey, quite different from the UK & EU, and, so long as the labels accurately state the food then, by and large, the label is compliant; the Apiary works with the Ministry of Agriculture on such matters and adjusts labels accordingly.

Occasionally they have to inspect for the presence of African Bee strains; however on some islands the check for, and eradication of, any signs of African Honey Bees (AHB) is a weekly job for apiary managers. All Caribbean ports are monitored for their presence. Swarm traps for these aggressing bees are all at ports as AHB's are a threat to all beekeepers in the Caribbean; most beekeepers consider that once 'they are establish on an island, there is no turning back, they are there for good'. The State Government has port control checks on Bequia and so far this strain has been kept away, with no reported cases.

### The Future is Bright

Beekeeping can be a lone practice, but now there is a growing number of Beekeepers both on the island and on St Vincent. More widely, the Caribbean has established colleges, set up on larger islands, to run courses on beekeeping. With enterprise encouraged, considerable educational activity is established within the island's Ministry of Agriculture to spread the word, this is seen a bolster against unemployment, (running at >30% in St.Vincent), and there are now at least 6 beekeepers on St Vincent.

The Ambois Apiary fits in well with seasonal tourism into the Grenadines and is now a small scale tourist attraction. People coming to Bequia for the honey, to the delight of the Apiary & Tourist Board, this project & enterprise for Bee conservation now appears in guided books and the internet.

Finally, as John reflects on the hefting of his honey supers in the tropical climate, he commented that "at least with this climate I'll never get arthritis", he is also sanguine to judge that whilst it will probably never turn a profit, the project is now locally recognised as the "canary in the coal mine" and one that is very much needed; it does employ people and is enjoyable and the bees never fail to fascinate.

### Acknowledgements:-

*Grateful thanks to John Whitney for his endurance and patience in answering my many questions, his enthusiasm was a delight to behold;*

*Also to Emmett Pace, for his encouragement to make contact with John and to showing me around the Sugar Reef Plantation and to his local island knowledge.*

*To Dan at 'Rastabee' (<http://rastabee.com/bequia.html>), for his input on local Beekeeping matters and on SVG, this was considerable.*

*Also to the Bequia Island Government & Tourist Board for their support to the re-population project and to Emmett and other entrepreneurs who also saw value in the conservation project to contribute.*

### SBA Honey Harvest Survey

The Scottish Beekeepers' Association is conducting its annual survey of how well or otherwise our bees performed their honey making duties during 2015. A link to the online survey form is included in the November update from SBA North-East Area Representative, Neil Mathieson, circulated with this newsletter.



### 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)

#### Dear Candlemaker

We are delighted to let you know about our candlemaking equipment sale starting today. We have 10% off polycarbonate moulds, natural and coloured beeswax sheets, beeswax blocks and very special prices on our Bain Maries, metal nightlight holders and wick sustainers. The sale will finish at midnight on Wednesday 25th November 2015 but some items are limited so don't leave it until the last minute!

Now is the right time to organise your candles for Christmas and the New Year!

See

<https://www.thorne.co.uk/www.thorne.co.uk/candle-sale>

E.H. Thorne (Beehives) Ltd, Beehive Business Park, Rand, Market Rasen, LN8 5NJ Tel 01673 858555 email [sales@thorne.co.uk](mailto:sales@thorne.co.uk)

**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

You can advertise on this page free of charge. If you want to sell or buy bees, beekeeping equipment or services, email Graham at [adbkanewsletter@btinternet.com](mailto:adbkanewsletter@btinternet.com) or ring 013398 82038.

The science journal Nature reports on new evidence suggesting that humans had developed a sophisticated relationship with honeybees as far back as the dawn of agriculture almost 9,000 years ago. It's likely that, as well as exploiting honey as a food source, early beekeepers used products of the hive in rituals and as medicine. The report points out that a more basic relationship with bees is evident much earlier in human history, up to 40,000 years ago. A lump of beeswax dating as far back as that has been found in a cave in South Africa and it has been speculated that the wax was used to fix stone points to wooden spear shafts.

See <http://www.nature.com/news/early-farmers-minded-their-own-beeswax-1.18771>

Thanks to Jim Moynagh for this item.



Congratulations to the following ADBKA members who passed **Scottish Beekeepers' Association examinations** in November 2014 and March 2015.

Ian Mackley, Malcolm Watson, Kitta Potgieter, Hugh Donohoe, David Morland and Graham Torrie

Marking the successful completion of four of the examination modules, Kitta Potgieter has been awarded the Intermediate Certificate; for completing all seven modules, Hugh Donohoe and Graham Torrie have been awarded the Advanced Certificate.

## According to.....

.....A.J. Cook in his 1883 book *The Bee-Keepers' Guide*: "The principle upon which bees are 'lined' is this: that after filling with honey, a bee always takes a direct course - 'a bee line' - to its hive. To hunt the bee-trees we need a bottle of sweetened water, a little honey-comb, unless the bees are gathering freely from forest flowers, and a small bottomless box with a sliding glass cover, and a small shelf attached to the middle of one side on the inside of the box. A shallow tray or piece of honey-comb is to be fastened to this shelf. If the bees are not found on flowers, we can attract them by burning a piece of honey-comb. If on a flower, set the box over them after turning a little of the sweetened water in the comb or tray on the shelf. It is easy to get them to sipping this sweet. Then slide the glass, and when they fly, watch closely and see the direction they take. By following this line, we come to the bee tree, or more likely to some neighbor's apiary. By getting two lines, if the bees are from the same tree, where the lines meet, there the tree will be. We should be careful not to be led to apiaries, and should look very closely when the bees fly, to be sure of the line. Experience makes a person quite skilful. When a tree is found, we must use all possible ingenuity to get the combs whole if we wish to transfer the bees."