



February  
2017



# 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

## Meet the ADBKA Committee members

Your committee members have recently redistributed the tasks they undertake on a voluntary basis and we thought it is important for the membership to know who they are and what they do within the association. Over the next few issues of the newsletter we will run a series of articles to introduce the committee members to you.



Acting Chair- David Morland



Membership Secretary - Earling Watt



Malcolm Watson

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## Malcolm Watson.

I am a retired oil industry safety officer and have been keeping bees North of Ellon for 6 years. I currently have 6 stocks, split between two locations. I am currently working my way through the S.B.A. examination system and took module 7 last November.

I have entered honey and wax into the Association Honey show each year, but have so far only achieved modest results - more practice required. I recently joined the committee and am currently in discussions with a view to taking a more active role within the committee in the near future.

## TALK

Saturday 18 February 2017 at 14-00

The Kinellar Community Hall, Fintray Road, Blackburn, AB21 OSS

## OILSEED RAPE AND BEEKEEPING

Oilseed rape is perhaps the most obvious forage plant for honey bees and produces more honey in the UK than any other. The crop has been at the centre of a number of controversies over the years. Is it safe, might it give me hay fever, will it contaminate my honey with GM pollen, do modern varieties still yield as well as the old ones, what is biodiesel rape all about, and, not least, are any pesticides used on it going to harm my bees? Most beekeepers in OSR areas end up relaxed about most of these issues and instead concentrate on how to manage their bees for a wonderful honey crop and how to handle that honey. Those beekeepers with the most data on their beekeeping, the most to lose if things go wrong, and the greatest experience tend to agree that oilseed rape is an excellent spring forage for their bees, sets them up well for the rest of the season, gives substantial honey crops in most years and poses no additional risk compared to any other spring forage.

Rapeseed is an old crop that had limited use until modern breeders improved the oil quality and the levels of toxins in the remaining meal. Reducing both the erucic acid and glucosinolates gave the 'double low' types of oilseed rape which expanded in area dramatically from the 1980s and grew internationally to become the third most important oil crop. Currently, oilseed rape has the largest area of any non-cereal arable crop in the UK and Aberdeenshire is particularly blessed with 12,000 ha or over one third of the Scottish area.

In the talk on 18<sup>th</sup> February I will cover some of the controversies that have dogged this crop and explain the management and the honey harvesting procedures that beekeepers have to put into place for this important honey crop. Beekeeping in oilseed rape areas brings both its challenges and its rewards. Ignore it at your peril!

Gavin Ramsay

## FUTURE ARTICLES

MEET THE  
MEMBERS  
(Sandy Gordon)

PRINCES TRUST

MY BEEKEEPING  
YEAR  
(Murray McGregor)

## Members' Events



### Launch of Scottish Native Honey Bee Society

*Saturday 1 April 2017 - 10.00 to 16.30 hours*

*The Lovat Hotel, Perth*

*£35pp to include 2017 membership booking available from mid-February - see [www.snhbs.scot](http://www.snhbs.scot)*

Kate Atchley has been kind enough to prepare an article for February edition of our newsletter.

### SPRING 2017 LECTURE SERIES

To be held at Aberdeen Grammar School Skene St, Aberdeen AB10 1HT.

- 16 February - The biology of the bee
- 23 February - The beehive
- 02 March - What do I need to keep bees?
- 09 March - The products of the hive
- 16 March - Help! There's something wrong with my bees!
- 23 March - The beekeeping year

Starting each evening at 7.30pm, the six-week programme will cost £15, payable on the first evening of attendance.

The programme is ideal for those thinking about starting out beekeeping, but would also be of interest to novices preparing to take the next step, or even experienced beekeepers wishing to update their knowledge.

It is our intention to offer attendees the opportunity to take part in hands-on beekeeping sessions at our Crathes apiary on the conclusion of the programme.

**NO NEED TO BOOK. JUST TURN UP.**

### ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW

**will be held in Ingliston, Edinburgh and will take place from 22 - 25th June.**

The SBA participate in the show with a large display tent which showcases entries of honey, waxes, candles etc as well as the normal honey tasting and candle rolling opportunities. The ADBKA would like to consider an entry to the show - either individual entries from members or an overall display entry by the association. Details of how this would be co-ordinated will be advised after discussions with the SBA however any member who would be keen to provide an entry for the show can start to consider what type of entry would be submitted. There is always a call for volunteers to help with the running of the Honey Tent and that is a great opportunity for meeting like minded people and seeing all of the great entries. Look out for more info on the above.

Joan Gilbert-Stevens

### TURRIFF SHOW

will be held this year over the weekend

**Sunday 30th - Monday 31st July.**

ADBKA will be there as normal providing information on Beekeeping along with honey tasting and purchase of produce from the local honey suppliers. The industrial section has a Honey Competition and all of the details can be found on the show website with all entries to be advised to the Secretary of the Show on their official entry forms no later than Saturday 8th July. Entry to the honey section is free and members are welcome to submit items for judging. As per previous years there will be a request for assistance during the two days to help with the honey tasting and sales. Look out for more info in future newsletters.

Joan Gilbert-Stevens

### The Scottish Beekeepers' Association

will be holding their annual convention over the

**weekend 8 - 10th September**

with the venue being

**at Ayr Racecourse.**

Details of this event will be well publicised on their website and monthly magazines.

Joan Gilbert-Stevens

## MEMBERS' ADVERTS

### BEES FOR SALE.

We have 7 colonies in all and after the first spring inspection they will be available for sale. We've also got lots of empty hives and parts of hives etc. Our bees are all in poly hives but we have spare wooden hives as well.

Contact Bill and Rosemary Legge

Tel: 019755 81239,

The Manse, Muir of Fowlis, Alford, AB33 8JU.

### BEES FOR SALE.

I have three colonies which were all treated for varroa at the end of last year. Good strong stocks.

Contact Sandy Watson Tel: 07856653419

or landline 01224868370.

### OXALIC ACID NEEDED

If anyone has any spare oxalic acid to treat our 2 hives (for which we would be happy to pay for).

Please contact Rob and Helen Rowe Tel: 07733 421385

or email: [robandhelenrowe78@gmail.com](mailto:robandhelenrowe78@gmail.com)

## LAUNCH OF SCOTTISH NATIVE HONEY BEE SOCIETY

The granting of reserve status in 2013, to protect Andrew Abrahams' native bees on Colonsay and Oronsay; the wish to avoid importing bees given the threat of small hive beetle; the commissioning by the Scottish Government of Gavin Ramsay's research into Restocking Honey Bee Colonies in Scotland, published in 2015: all these have contributed to a growing interest among beekeepers in breeding local stock and in our native dark bee, *Apis mellifera mellifera*, in particular. This is the sub-species which gradually moved north through western Europe after the last ice age.

The decision to launch the new native bee society built slowly from online discussions on the Scottish beekeepers forum (SBAi) and in various gatherings over the last few years. Some of us got together at the 2015 SBA autumn convention, and that nucleus invited others known to us to form a 12-person team to share skills and effort to prepare the launch.

We see the need for a concerted effort in Scotland to preserve and promote our native honey bee which is under threat from breeding with non-indigenous bees in a similar way to the Scottish wildcat, now the focus of significant conservation effort. Some of our inspiration comes from witnessing the enthusiasm and action stimulated in Ireland by relatively recent forming of the Native Irish Honey Bee Society.

### SNHBS's aims

Our provisional aims and objectives are 'to promote the conservation, maintenance, breeding, study and widespread reintroduction of the Scottish native honey bee, *Apis mellifera mellifera*.' These aims will be discussed and refined with those who attend our launch meeting when we will also seek feedback on the type of events and activities of most value to members and interested beekeepers.

Andrew Abrahams will give a talk on "Why we should bother about Native Bees" and there will be short 'soapbox' sessions from beekeepers around Scotland sharing about their local or research activities. Participants will learn about the appearance and attributes of the native bee and its current distribution in Scotland. The day will offer time for group discussion and networking with like-minded beekeepers, some of whom we hope will join the founding group to contribute to the society's early years.

We hope to encourage beekeepers and groups of beekeepers to improve stocks locally and make them available to the beekeeping community. For the first time, there will be a means for beekeepers sympathetic to keeping native honey bees to: come together; learn from each other; exchange breeding lines; promote native honey bees in the media; and influence government and regulators. We anticipate that workshops on breeding and queen raising will be part of our activities and that we hope that the organisation will produce a regular publication. The scale of the ambition of the new society will, to a large extent, be governed by the new membership at the first meeting. We see our activities as complementing those of the Scottish Beekeepers Association, the main organisation for all beekeepers in Scotland.



### Sustainable beekeeping

We strongly support the sustainability of beekeeping and to promote this, beekeepers need to possess the skills to maintain and propagate their own stocks and know how to minimise their winter losses. Relying on high volumes of imports to satisfy a demand from inattentive beekeepers who lose their stocks due to Varroa, inappropriate feeding or poor swarm control do little to help the cause of beekeeping. Importation also risks the spread of additional bee pathogens or new strains of pathogens. This risk is borne by the whole beekeeping community and not simply those importing or using imported stocks.

We invite all those interested in native and near-native bees in Scotland, and the sustainability of our craft without imports, to attend our launch day and share in the interactions we plan. Membership of SNHBS is also being available for those who cannot be with us on 1 April but wish to be involved from day 1.

Please contact me if you need further information ... and I very much look forward to meeting some of you on 1st April.

Kate Atchley and Gavin Ramsay  
[bees@kateatchley.co.uk](mailto:bees@kateatchley.co.uk)

## A Follow up to the Talk about Varroa mites, Honey bees and Viruses

On Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup> of January members of Aberdeen & District Beekeepers Association met at Kinellar Community Hall to receive a talk from Dr Ewan Campbell and his PhD student Craig Christie. David Morland opened proceedings by introducing himself as acting chair of ADBKA before introducing the committee members together with their role within the committee. David then introduced Dr Ewan Campbell and Craig Christie.



Ewan outlined that in layman's terms how the building blocks for our cells and for life can be split up into three categories; DNA – RNA – Proteins. If these components were to be split into the construction of a building for example then DNA (genome) can be likened to architectural blue prints. From this DNA, messages are sent out, known as RNA, which can be likened to individual instructions to build a window for example. This RNA messenger is finally used to build the protein, also called cellular machinery, which could be likened to the builder making a window or a component of the overall building. Ewan outlined that his research is focusing on disrupting the RNA messenger signal within Varroa mites. The real advantage of disrupting the RNA is that the chemical formula can be accurately targeted to specific species, in this case the mite, without affecting others, like the bee. It is not a GMO technology and cannot be inherited or spread through a population or be found in honey and hive products. Ewan said we could drink a large quantity of the solution without any ill effects, but to Varro it would be deadly. Ewan has run laboratory trials with great results in collaboration with Vita Ltd and the national bee unit and the system is almost ready to be adopted and commercialized.

Interestingly Ewan outlined that the same RNAi technology for destroying Varroa can be used for the destruction of mosquitos and other pests and that similar systems are being used to treat specific cancers based on an individual's genetics. This will be a huge step change in how we treat not just pests and cancers but other diseases and will form the basis of moving toward personalised medical care in the future.



PhD student Craig's research is focused on finding a way to culture Varroa mites separate from the bee hive, in laboratory controlled conditions. It may be strange to think that breeding and feeding Varroa mites is actually beneficial but this system would have multiple benefits. Firstly, many mites are needed to conduct research and normally they are available during the bee season which leaves us with a huge shortage throughout the winter months. Breeding our own supply is paramount to us, and labs throughout the world, in continuing research throughout the year. Secondly, by having a feeding system we can learn more about the way mites transmit and spread bee viruses, like deformed wing virus, and how these viruses change over time. Thirdly, a feeding system is a perfect way to test new anti-varroa treatments in a controlled environment and without having to treat entire colonies in the wild, which is time consuming and prohibitively expensive for companies. Feeding systems in tick research were responsible in a huge surge of treatments and testing and it's hoped a similar outcome would happen in Varroa research because of Craig's work!

Finding a suitable artificial food source for Varroa has been one of the major challenges but Craig has discovered and experimented with various ingredients that Varroa need to survive and this knowledge may be critical in finding a successful treatment against them. Next step is to get the Varroa successfully reproducing in the system.....a huge challenge!

The talk was well attended and at one time Margarete McGregor was concerned we did not have enough cups for tea and coffee but being ever resourceful, she located a few extra for us. Margarete did a fine job of supplying refreshments and has recruited a willing helper in the shape of 10 year old Alexander Watt.

Dr Ewan Campbell re-joined ADBKA on Saturday and has offered to provide a few articles and updates for our newsletter on the progress of his work and from similar establishments around the world.

Dr. Ewan Campbell and Lindsey Macaulay

**If you have an item for the newsletter, please contact Lindsey Macaulay on 01224 315276, or by e-mail at [lindsey\\_macaulay@lde.nu](mailto:lindsey_macaulay@lde.nu)**  
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