



**AUGUST  
2018**

# **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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**FUTURE  
ARTICLES**

**ADBKA HONEY  
SHOW 2018  
(in October)**

**BEECHGROVE  
GARDEN VISIT**

## **MEET THE ADBKA COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Mr. Lindsey Macaulay-committee member since May 2016,  
now ADBKA newsletter co-editor**

My Grandfathers kept bees as did my Great Grandfathers on both sides of my family. When I was about eight years old in the 1970's my father decided he would like to keep bees. He had the romantic idea that he could be sitting at the breakfast table where he'd announce to me to 'fetch a fresh section of honey from the bee hive' at which point I would rise from the table and walk to the hive and simply lift the lid and take one out before

returning to the breakfast table to enjoy the honey.

I was sold on the idea and could not wait for the bees to arrive.

My father located a colony for sale in Cromdale which is a few miles from where we stayed in Strathspey on the Ballindalloch estate. The bees were previously owned by a beekeeper who had died some years earlier and were now left with his widow.

The bees were in a state of neglect and over the years the beehives had slowly rotted

into the ground. My father decided to buy one of the colonies and we loaded a severely rotten beehive into the back of a van he'd borrowed and paid £20 for our prize. On the way back to our house we noticed two hitch hackers thumbing a lift so off course my father stopped and offered the young couple a lift in the back of the van with the hive. Back in the 1970's there were numerous hitch hikers on the road and my father would always stop to offer a lift and hear their news.

With the hitch hikers duly loaded we continued on our journey and my father asked them where they were from and where they were going, the hitch hikers had recently arrived in Scotland having travelled from Norway. As my father was speaking to them he was turning his head to face them and he took his eyes off the road ahead. Whilst in mid conversation the van hit a massive hole in the road and a shock wave was sent through the vehicle and the bottom of the rotten bee hive fell out; sixty thousand angry bees filled the interior of the van and attacked us with all their might. The rear door of the van did not have an interior handle so the hitch hikers were trapped inside until we could stop the van and run out the back to open the door. Once we opened the rear door our hikers bolted out and shot away like scalded cats, we never saw them again. My father's cry of 'Welcome to Scotland' was never answered.

The bees were all over the inside of the van but we had no option but to put on our veils and continue our journey, we did not have one piece bee suits at the time and we counted over sixty stings each before we got home. The bees were all over the place; the hive was completely rotten and fell apart and the frames were stuck together in a solid gooey mess. My father made a new hive and we eventually transferred them into their new home and we returned to buy another two hives without incident.



At the time I thought our bees were perfectly normal but now I know they were extremely bad tempered and the queen should have been replaced with a more manageable strain. Any person or living being that straying within two hundred yards of their hives would be attacked and stung. Our dog received the same treatment and it soon learned to give them a wide berth. We were always troubled by sheep coming into the garden but the bees soon sorted that problem.

The bee's natural predator is the European black bear, any person in dark clothes or with dark hair can expect to receive unwanted attention from aggressive European honey bees. Unfortunately my mother and older sister both had thick, bushy, jet black hair and our dog was completely black. When our bees had settled into our garden I'm sure they were surprised to see two black bears in our garden together with a bear cub. Facing immediate danger the bee's returned to the hive to gather a main battle group to see off the black bears.

The bees exited the hive like a squadron of Spitfires from World War Two Fighter Command and immediately climbed towards the sun to assess the enemy. The bees positioned themselves between the sun and the bears and then peeled off in formation to launch their attack. My Mother, Sister and pet dog were completely taken by surprise and all three exited the garden area in a starburst formation with much shouting and alarm. Garden tools were thrown in the air and arms and hands were wind milling furiously trying to swat the bees and rid them from their tangled hair. In an attempt to make a hasty exit garden plants were destroyed, a vegetable bed was trampled on and early shoots broken. The green house proved to be a safe haven, the dog had to head for the hills to evade the

bees. I laughed so much it brought tears to my eyes, my self-preservation instincts kicked in and I decided to make myself scarce until the situation had cooled down somewhat.

The bees were moved to a location about three hundred yards from our house and slowly the local wildlife moved away.

During the summer, at the age of eight, it was normal for me to go into school with half closed eyes and swollen hands from the effects of bee stings, the teacher simply asked me how the bees were doing.

We joined the Moray Beekeepers association and attended a visit to Pluscarden Abbey and to a local beekeepers apiary in Elgin city. When we visited the apiary in Elgin I was astonished to see five large hives sitting in the small back garden and could not understand how the population of Elgin could live so close to the bees. Before the demonstration started my father and I got dressed in preparation to approach the bees, ankles and wrists were secured with duct tape so that not a piece of skin was exposed, if we had a suit of armour or a divers helmet available we would have worn it.

World renowned beekeeping authority,

Bernard Mobus conducted the demonstration and as he approached the hives without protective clothing of any kind I thought we'd have to phone for an ambulance. He was not wearing a veil or gloves in fact his shirt sleeves were rolled up to his elbows. I urged my father to tell Bernard that the bees would attack everything in sight as soon as he approached the hive and the least he should do was to put on as much protective clothing as possible and warn the neighbours. I thought Bernard must be very inexperienced working with bees and far less bee battle hardened compared to Dad and I. After being told to 'be quiet min' by my father I stood back and waited for the carnage to begin.

Bernard smoked the hive entrance and then opened the hive and I was utterly shocked to see that he was not attacked by thousands of stinging bees; the bees simply few around us. Bernard was conducting a demonstration on rearing Queens and he gave me a batch of Queen Cells that he advised I keep in my pocket and use to re-queen our hives.

On the way home we stopped for a coffee in a busy coffee shop in the centre of Elgin. In my pockets the Queen bees started hatching and soon the population of the coffee shop was in disarray as they attempted to catch the hatching queens and put them into empty match boxes so that I could contain twelve queen bees for me to transport home.



Re-Queening our hives was unsuccessful and when the bees died out many years later my mother gave a huge sigh of relief and prohibited my father from sourcing replacements.

About six years ago whilst now living in Aberdeen I had the urge to try a section of heather honey again and for weeks I looked everywhere but could not find any for sale. When I was growing up it appeared that just about every second farm in Strathspey and Deeside offered honey for sale, now it has largely disappeared.

I decided I'd like to keep bees again to satisfy my need for the taste of honey. A quick call to the ADBKA chairperson John Cooper and Olya and I were enrolled in the Aberdeen and District Beekeeping Association and our apiary within Hazlehead park of Aberdeen was founded. Once enrolled in the Association we spent an intensive summer visiting the association apiary on Sunday mornings under the guidance of Graeme Torrie and Hugh Donahoe before setting off for Turriff in the afternoon to join the mentoring group of Steven Palmer. It was an intensive few months but we both learned a huge amount of information in the shortest possible time.

We bought some heather honey from Sandy Gordon and Jock McGregor a few years ago and ever since we've tried to find the perfect heather honey gathering location so that we can get close to producing a honey as good as theirs. Steven Palmer had some of the largest honey gathering colonies I've ever seen and now we try to reproduce what he nurtured and created.

We've a long way to go but every year we get a little bit closer to replicating our mentors and Master beekeepers.

Mr Lindsey Macaulay

### SUMMER BBQ

The annual BBQ was hosted this year at Craigmill near Alford and was well attended by a number of our association members. Fortunately the weather continued its dry spell for the day and everyone that came along enjoyed some excellent food, drink and "bee" chat with like minded colleagues discussing their experiences over the recent dry and hot spell. The opportunity was also taken to stock up on winter feed which despite the present weather we all know will be needed in the near future. Thanks to all that attended - the tents were dismantled before the rain came along the following day which was an added bonus.

Joan Gilbert-Stevens



### MEMBERS EVENTS

**SEPTEMBER, 22<sup>ND</sup> 23<sup>RD</sup>,**  
**SBA AUTUMN CONVENTION,** Glasgow

**OCTOBER, 5<sup>TH</sup>,**  
**SBA TOURING LECTURER,**  
Kinellar Hall, Blackburn. 7:30 p.m.  
**An additional event not included in this**  
**year's programme card:**

The SBA 2018 touring lecturer Marin Anastassov will visit Aberdeen as part of his autumn tour around the country. Marin is a master beekeeper and currently, amongst other accolades, a Trustee of Gloucestershire Beekeeping Association. The subject will be "Nutritional requirements of honey bees and supplemental feeding".

Malcolm Watson – ADBKA Secretary

**OCTOBER, 20<sup>TH</sup>,**  
**ADBKA HONEY SHOW,**  
Kinellar hall, Blackburn. Details to follow.

**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)**

## TURRIFF SHOW 2018

The Turriff show was its usual eclectic mixture of opportunity to view and buy everything from orthotic insoles through to that monster tractor you have always wanted. The new ADBKA double gazebo got its first public outing between the National Fostering Agency and a stand selling clothes for dogs! This year we decided to be located outside amongst the trade stands rather than in the Industrial Tent; the move, and the gazebo, were thought to be successes with a steady stream of visitors throughout the show. We were certainly doing better business than the 'grand-daughter of Gipsy Rose Lee' in her caravan opposite!



Kitta kindly stocked and ferried the observation hive to and from her apiary each day and, placed at the entrance to our stand, it proved a popular attraction. Once thus lured into our stand, visitors were able to taste around a dozen different honeys and then buy their favourite should they wish; over 250 jars were sold, plus cut comb. It was interesting to watch the purchasing psychology of the visitors and I was left wondering how the public vote would compare with a honey judge!

The observation hive and the honey tasting were undoubtedly the main draw for the public but we had a good display of books, the recently purchased hive models and various other beekeeping paraphernalia.



Over in the Industrial Tent there was some keen and friendly competition amongst members and prizes were won in various Classes.

My favourite incident of the day was Graham T enthusiastically trying to persuade a lady to buy some honey. 'Oh no,' she said, 'my husband has rooms full of the stuff.' Unbeknownst to Graham, he was speaking to Mrs Morland!

Donald managed to sting himself! By midday, foraging bees had found our tent and were gathering around spills from our honey samples. Donald removed a bee which stung him on his finger. Ok, not too bad, but Donald subsequently stuck his finger in his mouth to lick it clean of honey without seeing the sting was still in place; the sting stuck in his lip and was still active. So not only did he sting himself, but one sting stung twice.

We were pleasantly surprised later on the Sunday afternoon when a delegation from the Show organisers arrived and told us we had won second prize in the 'Best Presented Small Trade Stand' category. Unfortunately the prize was merely the honour and not a Caribbean holiday for fourteen!



**With lots of thanks to all the volunteers who made this another successful event for ADBKA, roll on 2019!**

**Ian Mackley**