



Newsletter

April 2021



# 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

## BOB WOOD

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Former Chair and President of our association, Bob Wood, died suddenly but peacefully at Inchmarlo Care Home on 5 December 2020. He was 96. Bob was appointed as ADBKA Chairman in 1966 and held the post for nearly 40 years. After handing over that office, he served as our Honorary President up to 2019.

In 2004, Bob gifted the Association a sum of £2000, asking that the interest earned be used as ADBKA funds. He also specified that in the unlikely event that the association was ever to be dissolved, the original capital should be donated to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

At our Annual General Meeting on 18th March 2021, it was proposed that this aspect of Bob's legacy be put into effect and that the £2000 should be donated to the RNLI in his memory. This drew the overwhelming support of members.

Before bringing the proposal forward, our Treasurer, John Adams, contacted Bob's family to ask what they thought of the idea. Bob's son Kenneth replied that he was very much in favour of the move. Here is an extract from his lovely email:

"Thank you very much for letter. I was more than aware of my Dad's work with the ADBKA as I remember very clearly "helping" my father with his apiary when I was about 6 years old. Keen to get involved but a bit scared of the bees at the same time, Dad encouraged me to watch him work. He equipped me with an old tweed, brimmed hat with the upper part of the veil held in place with elastic round the brim and the lower part tucked into my collar. Thus equipped, along with a pair of gloves I would hold the smoker and pass him tools and feel quite the expert!

"Now my Dad was never one to spend money "unnecessarily" so my veil was one of his old ones with a slight tear in it. One day a rather angry bee managed to find its way through the slight tear and give me the most painful sting in the back of my neck. I was never quite so keen to get so up close and personal with the hives after that, although I still hung around with Dad and Mr A.S.C. "Alec" Deans on many, many occasions and helping Stuart Rae and Dad to unload boxes and boxes of new 1lb glass jars which were duly sold to members.

"Happy days."

### WEEKLY BEEKEEPING ONLINE CLINIC - BEE BLETHER

The weekly Q&A Zoom sessions for this year's online Intro course have been well-attended and hopefully useful. As we are unable to run follow-on activities at the apiary, we have decided to experiment by continuing the online sessions as beekeeping 'clinics'. Everyone is welcome - beginners and experienced beekeepers alike.

Graham T and I will host these on Zoom. We'll discuss what to be doing with your bees at the time and try to answer any questions or problems participants may have. According to the laws of beekeeping, two of us will come up with at least three different answers!

**APART FROM THE FIRST WEEK WHEN IT WILL BE ON WEDNESDAY**, the sessions will be on Tuesdays at 7.30 pm and last about an hour. There is no need to register in advance - just use the following links to join the Zoom calls:

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April, 7.30pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88135374021?pwd=V0w4WGg5TzFwNFBKU043UUl3S1lBdz09>

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April to Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May, 7.30 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81484075763?pwd=dy9weDE0MTR0UXJrSjJBYzBMZmFTdz09>

**Please note** that the practical demonstration of swarm control methods planned for 16 May has had to be cancelled due to ongoing Covid restrictions. Instead, we have an online talk on the subject.  
*See the notice on page 2*

TALK: **THE USUAL SUSPECTS:  
THE MYSTERY OF THE VARROA MITE, DWV AND THE HONEYBEE**

Presented by **Amy Cooper**

Wednesday 21 April 2021 at 7pm

To book your place for this online talk please register at:

<https://adbka21apr2021.eventbrite.co.uk>

TALK: **SWARM MANAGEMENT: THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS**  
- a look at swarm prevention and control in the context of the people and ideas that shaped what we practice today

Presented by **Graham Torrie**

Wednesday 19 May 2021 at 7pm

To book your place for this online talk please register at:

<https://adbka-swarm-management-19may2021.eventbrite.co.uk>

## THIS MONTH IN THE APIARY: APRIL

April and May are two of the busiest and most important months in the beekeeping year. Inspections start about the middle of April.

Don't be in a rush to do your first inspection but ideally you do want to have completed at least one full inspection before the end of the month. A traditional indicator that it is a suitable time to inspect is when flowering currant (*Ribes*) is in flower. Choose a dry, calm and relatively warm day in the early afternoon if possible. (Ignore sources that suggest things like a minimum temperature of 15°C. We'd be waiting until July up here! Our bees are tough.) The first inspection should only involve the hive being open for a few minutes. Remember the five key questions for every inspection:

**Is a queen present?** It's reassuring to see the queen but don't spend a lot of time searching at first inspection. Her marking may have worn and be hard to see, or she may have been superseded since last seen.

**What stages of brood are present?** If you haven't seen the queen, the sight of eggs is the next best indicator that she is there somewhere. Look for brood at all stages (eggs, larvae, and sealed brood).

**Are there any signs of disease?** Not really a focus for the first inspection unless blatantly obvious (Deformed wings etc.)

**Has the colony room to expand and are there any signs of swarm preparation** Once there is brood on about five-six frames and bees on most of the rest, it's time to add a super.

**Has the colony got at least a week's supply of stores?** This is about the equivalent of two deep frames. You can remove any fondant and feed with thin 1:1 syrup if you wish, or just leave the fondant. Do not feed with a super on though.

Keep records of your inspections.

If your colony has died out, most likely of starvation (dead bees head-first into cells), close the colony up completely to avoid it being robbed. Take it away to clean it up.

### Queen (re)Marking

Perhaps not at first inspection, but if you want to mark or re-mark (and/or clip) your queen to make future inspections and manipulations easier, late April or early May is the time to do it whilst the colony is still relatively small, making the queen easier to find. Take it slowly and gently to avoid damaging the queen, and if you are using a paint pen, test it first to avoid flooding the queen in paint.

### Supering-Up

Extra space should be provided as the colony expands, although April may be a bit early unless it's been a particularly good spring, as congestion is a factor in swarming. When you add your first super, and especially if your super frames contain only foundation, the bees are sometimes reluctant to move upwards, especially if there is no nectar flow. Try leaving the queen excluder out for two or three days if so.

*Ian Mackley*

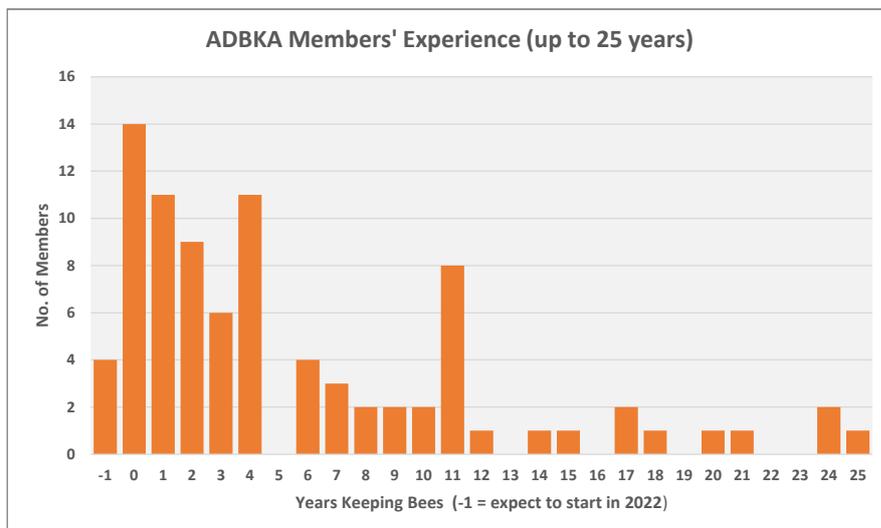
## HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN KEEPING BEES?

Thank you to the nearly one hundred members who completed the short survey to enhance our membership database. You might be interested in some of the results.

This survey reveals that 37% of respondents (who represent about a third of the membership) might be considered relative novices with less than two completed seasons' experience. Almost all of us are relative novices compared with the members not included in the chart who responded with 32, 40, 41, 43, 45, 60 and a remarkable 76 years' keeping bees!

If you have not completed the survey but would still like to do so, we'd appreciate it as it will help us to help you and it will only take a minute. Please use the following link:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/186vL5\\_d53jSbuTr9y0H9arFYwRs8FpU\\_e-2zU9MJCME/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/186vL5_d53jSbuTr9y0H9arFYwRs8FpU_e-2zU9MJCME/edit?usp=sharing)



## Diary of a New-bee

**2021** - If you have been following my story you should be reading this in April and will know how I was looking forward to getting a colony through winter and into spring with plans to split & expand.

Sorry to disappoint but there are learning points especially for those planning on starting this year to share that I hope will save others going through this.

During my checks through the Perspex cover I noticed in the latter part of December the odd spot of waste on the top bars, but at the time there was little I could do to investigate further due to the low temperatures and the bees were still visible & alive.

So when I went up mid January to check again I saw a larger amount of bees outside the entrance but as weather was milder thought and hoped it was just the hive getting a chance to bring out the dead.

Upon lifting the lid the amount of waste on the top bars was far worse than before & I could not see any bees in the seams, so I removed the Perspex & took a closed look to find the colony all deceased.

As I removed frames to check further the problem was far worse as one wall was covered and of the 11 frames seven still had ample stores so starvation should not have been an issue unless they had become isolated.

I check SASA's site & due to Covid they were not accepting any samples unless it was for any reportable diseases, but there was an option to contact Graeme Sharpe by supplying as much info as on the colony management as well as any photographs.

Whilst I waited on a reply I took a sample of the bees and used a microscope at home to see if I could identify if Nosema was present, but this proved negative.

Graeme replied back that from my information he said the most likely cause was the colony was not as strong I had suspected to survive winter which would explain their demise, despite knocking them back from a double brood to a single brood box.

I don't know if the brood break when I used the Thymopar strips in August/September was a factor or if I over fed them limiting the queens opportunity to raise enough winter bees but the one thing I do know is this & is something for all new start to follow....

**GET A MENTOR.....**I have managed to catch & combine swarms, do checks on the general well being of the hive but over wintering is my Achilles heel.

So if anyone based in Aberdeen or not far outside are able to offer me support in this area I would be glad of the assistance

I have received offers to get started again & have also made up a few swarm traps to see if I can get at least two hives started to compare against each other & looking for a 2nd site to keep the any swarms segregated until I know they are disease free.

*John Beagrie*



Overwintered local hybrid Inverurie **bees for sale**, nucs and colonies. Bees on frames only. Will negotiate delivery time, place and price. Please contact me via email at: [atkinsonp@live.com](mailto:atkinsonp@live.com)

Retired Gent WLTM experienced beekeeper. Non-smoker, but hoping to have own one very soon.

Fit, able & willing to help out as 'Buddy' in return for your help as a 'Mentor' in sharing bee experience with novice. Central Buchan area preferred but willing to travel. Phone/text Colin on 07765 111057 to discuss opportunity, thank you.

Lorna Clark is offering a **site for hives** to any interested bee keepers. She is based at Ordiquill near Aberchirder  
Tel: 07718454928

#### For Sale:

2 Smith's hives (floors, brood boxes, supers, crown boards and 1 queen excluder) £30 (to make space!)

Phone or text Anne Shearer on 07507 815277

If any ADBKA member is looking for an **out apiary near Kemnay**, perhaps they could 'foster' their bees at this property and share their knowledge with the owners. They have a HUGE garden and a lot of vacant land - it is well sheltered to the N and E and would make a great apiary site.

For further information and contact details, get in touch with Innes Simpson at [burndalebees@yahoo.com](mailto:burndalebees@yahoo.com)

The Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association (BIBBA) is currently running a series of online lectures. Find out what's on and register at:

[BIBBA Events - Beekeeping.events](https://www.bibba.org.uk/BIBBA-Events-Beekeeping-events)

Good luck to those members who are sitting the SBA Modules examinations on 24 April. Due to Covid restrictions, the exams are being held online.

To find out about the SBA education and examination system, visit

[Scottish Beekeepers Association - Exams - Scottish Beekeepers Association](https://www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk/Scottish-Beekeepers-Association)

## A Beekeeping Alphabet

### D is for Drone Congregation Area (DCA)

DCAs are areas where drones from different colonies gather to mate with virgin queens, which are only attractive to the drones once in the DCA. Both the DCA and the behaviour are presumably evolutionary mechanisms to avoid inbreeding in or near the home colony. DCAs are typically described as a vertical cylindrical bit of airspace, around 100 metres in diameter, starting a few metres above the ground and rising to perhaps 40 metres. It is not really known what features attract the bees to create a DCA in any given place but they are often found in open, rolling land. Drones will fly up to 6 km to DCAs, although they prefer closer, and queens may fly even further. Remarkably DCAs persist in the same place for years, yet the drones do not live from year to year, so how is the location knowledge passed on between generations? Or is it somehow relearned each year? And when the virgin queen leaves the hive on her first mating flight, how does she know where to go?



*Ian Macklev*