

HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No. 154 NOVEMBER 2010

TERRY CLARE THURSDAY 25 NOVEMBER 7.15 pm RHU CHURCH HALL

We are delighted that Terry Clare, president of BIBBA (Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association), will be speaking to the Association on Swarming, with all its implications for the beekeeper. Terry, who lives in Kent, is in Scotland for the one day Course being held on "The Future of the Black Bee in Scotland" organised by Enid Brown who will be accompanying Terry to our meeting. Anybody who heard Terry talk at the Autumn Convention two years ago and, more recently, at the bee breeding weekend in May run by Dunfermline and West Fife Beekeepers Association, will realise how fortunate we have been in obtaining a speaker of his calibre and with such a wide knowledge of beekeeping. Please can we ensure the usual warm welcome for Terry and a good turnout.

CHANGE IN DATE ON THE PROGRAMME

Margaret Thomas who was booked to speak to us on 21 April 2011 will now be doing so on the following Thursday 28 April. Please alter your diaries.

LIBRARY

Fi Basford has taken over the library from Dominic. This is a job that, ideally, should be spread around with no one having to take on the responsibility for more than a year. That said it gives the librarian the opportunity to have first choice of the library books and to recommend that the association obtain any new books that are of particular interest. To coin a phrase Fi is looking for feedback. Are there any gaps that need filling? Is there a book that you have seen reviewed that you would like the association to get hold of? Should we subscribe to "The Beekeepers Quarterly" or to "Beeecraft"? Please let Fi know.

MEAD BLOG

The story so far is that we had washed out the spinner and honey tub and put the honey water into the freezer and went on holiday. On our return we obtained some yeast and put together the starter, by mixing half a pint of warm water and a table spoon of honey and a couple of squeezes of lemon and put it into a plastic bottle, rather than the glass pint milk bottle as instructed. The top was sealed with a plastic bag and the bottle was put into the airing cupboard.

That done we got out our Tupperware box of cappings, which weighed a ton, and scooped handfuls of the wax and honey into a honey bucket containing a kettle full of warm water. We squidged the wax around in our fingers in the water to wash out the honey, pouring in more water as we increased the amount of cappings. Instead of being easily needed into an orange sized ball as we had been led to believe the wax dissolved through our fingers, forming a fine residue that had to be captured like wet sand before it could be compressed into the start of a ball. Ben mentioned that this would be messy but he failed to convey (deliberately I would suggest) just how messy it was. It seems a pretty harmless occupation guddling around up to your elbows in warm water. That is until you realise that the water has left the thinnest of layers of sticky honey on everything that it has touched. Your skin: naturally but you did not imagine it would go that far up your arms, And all those innocuous splashes: on your clothes, the kitchen units, the floor. It would have been better to undertake the operation naked in the bath. Eventually we managed to clean up and examine the bucket of water the contents of which looked like brown ale. (To be continued).

SECRETARIES' AND SBA COUNCIL MEETING

Committee members Fi Basford and Mike Thornley attended the meeting of the secretaries of the local beekeeping associations throughout Scotland, prior to the SBA Council meeting in Perth. One of the main talking points was the future of "The Scottish Beekeeper". The meeting favoured keeping it as a monthly publication with its present format. This was supported by the president Alan Teal who suggested that Nigel Southwood, who is taking over the post of editor, should be given the opportunity of running the magazine for a year before coming forward with any changes. The SBA online Forum appears to be popular but no conclusions were reached on the website or the greater use by the SBA of email as a method of communicating with members. Direct Debit is to be introduced for paying of SBA subscriptions. This will be put in place prior to the next rise in dues, which are needed to address the slow but steady depletion of reserves and the increasing costs of running the organisation, particularly in representing the members' interests to the Scottish Government.

Kate Atchley who keeps bees in Ardnamurchan described a proposed survey to identify Varroa free areas in Scotland with a view to ensuring their continuing Varroa free status. Although the intention is good how this is to be achieved is unclear given that the legislation allows the free movement of bees. The next SBA Autumn Convention is to be held on 10 September 2012 at the Dewars Centre in Perth and will revert to the 3 speakers format which has proved popular in the past. Speakers will be from the National Bee Unit and BIBBA as well as the famous bee farmer Willy Robson.

The SBA is to review its position on GM crops; watch this space. Charlie Urwin kept us abreast of the SBA's insurance scheme that may require our local association to give further consideration to First Aid practices. The SBA is hoping to run training for trainers days, in order to support associations dealing with the growing number of new beekeepers, but is looking for funding from the Scottish Government which currently is spending EC money on re-equipping and restocking bee farmers affected by AFB and EFB which, some would argue, they brought upon themselves. So it is not necessarily all sweetness in the bee world. The SBA AGM is to be held in the Dewars Centre in Perth on Saturday 26 March 2011. John Durkacz, who is coming to speak to us in February, rounded off the day with an interesting talk on the history of bee breeding in Scotland.

Mike Thornley

Secretary