

HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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SPARE A THOUGHT FOR THE PRESIDENT

First Alastair could not get anywhere near to his apiary due to the investigations into the bomb that went off at Ross Priory and then he had to fight his way through the snow to treat his bees.

BEE TREATMENT

On the question of treating bees thanks again to Jim McCulloch for making up the Oxalic acid and sugar syrup solution. Judging from the phone calls and emails last weekend a number of members were taking the opportunity provided by the slightly higher temperature to treat their bees. Well done. For those still to treat grab the chance whenever the temperature starts looking like pushing up to 5 Centigrade. Ideally treat before Christmas if conditions allow but probably not later than 2 weeks into the New Year. It is not a complete disaster if you miss it but you will want to carefully monitor in spring and carry out alternative treatments if necessary. Dispose of the solution.

It is always a bit worrying to have to crack open the brood chamber to carry out the treatment but at the same time marvellous to see the bees clustering together safely in the middle of winter. In a couple of cases mine were down between the combs where it was difficult to see how many they covered. I first thought of a torch and then, more intelligently, withdrew the moveable Varroa floor so that I could see the bees against the daylight below, before replacing the floor again.

MEAD BLOG

This is not a happy festive story. In the last instalment the starter had been put in the airing cupboard and we had a bucket of must that looked like brown ale. When making the starter we had tested the specific gravity and found it not to be far below the required strength. When we tested the "brown ale" the potential strength would have consigned us to the grave after one glass. So a lot of time was spent trying to work out volumes and strengths as a messy process of dilution went on. But all of this was to no avail as we could not get the starter to start, despite 3 goes by which time the must had turned green and was thrown down the drain. Our house is far too cold to be doing this in winter. In the past the bake house and ale house were beside each other for good reason.

Subsequently Ben kindly sent me much reading matter on mead making and in future we will be making it in mid summer using spare pots of honey left over from the previous year. This will cut out the messy cleaning and dilution and hopefully it will be hot enough to activate the starter. We also need a better arrangement to catch the surplus honey when we remove the cappings. Mead making, as we found out, is not a solution to that problem.

VERY BEST CHRISTMAS WISHES TO ALL HDBA MEMBERS AND THEIR BEES