

HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No. 156 JANUARY 2011

AGM, TALK AND SOCIAL NIGHT: THURSDAY 27 JANUARY AT 7.15 pm.

The **AGM** will take place in the **Hall at Rhu Church** and will be followed by a short **talk by Fran McCulloch on a bee product**: how it was taken from the first idea to being launched in the market place. A number of people coming into beekeeping might like their hobby to bring in some extra income. This talk sets out the steps that have to be followed, and the planning that is necessary, to avoid the pit falls. What is the product? Come and find out on the night. This is also a **social night, food and refreshments being provided**, so bring along your partner or a friend.

JOINT PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY'S AGM REPORT FOR 2010

Beekeeping

Not a good year for honey (with a few exceptions!) but the bees got enough to be able to build up, and those of us who lost bees over winter got back to their original numbers. In particular, it has been great to see so many young beekeepers doubling or trebling their hives. To our great satisfaction all the beginners who requested them were supplied with nucleus hives. Thanks to everyone who provided bees and a plea to everyone with more than two hives to provide a nucleus for sale next year. It is in everyone's best interest to meet the demand from new enthusiasts with local bees. Generally there has been the major outbreak of American Foul Brood in Scotland but not yet locally as far as we know. The good news is that we now have an efficient Bee Inspector service again in Scotland and the Beebase website is up and running and we all should register with this if we keep bees. It is free and full of helpful information

Membership & Club Apiary

New members keep coming and we are delighted to see the continued rise of interest in beekeeping. The club apiary is maturing with more bees on site and we hope to see this used for training and queen mating much more in the coming year. The Co-operative gave us a most generous grant of £495 which is being used to complete the equipping of the apiary for training purposes. Thanks to Neil Sandison who manages the site and to his helpers.

A successful introduction to beekeeping night was held followed by visits to an apiary through May. Several members attended a queen mating course and some use was made of the free training days available from Graeme Sharpe at the Scottish Agriculture College at Auchincruive near Ayr. The website continues to develop thanks to Dominic

Meetings and support for members

We have had a spectacular series of speakers and also, by popular request, very enjoyable in-house feedback sessions during the early summer. We held a small honey show as part of the Helensburgh and Gareloch Horticulture Society Show with the cup for most points being awarded to Neil Sandison. It was also good seeing new beekeepers getting into the points. Steve Sunderland the chief bee inspector opened hives on the Peninsula to check for disease; a very instructive outdoor event. Thanks to Becky and Ben for volunteering their hives and to everyone who provided home baking for our evening meetings. Also thanks again to Jim McCulloch for providing the oxalic acid for Varroa treatment. Individual mentoring seemed to go well and all who took part should be congratulated.

CABA & SBA

Some intrepid members made a very, very early start to get to the SBA convention in Aberdeen, but felt it well worthwhile. Thanks to those others who attended Clyde Area Beekeeping events, to those who manned the SBA beekeeping stand at the Royal Highland Show and to those unsung heroes who did talks locally and held a presence at local shows.

Conclusion

The Association seems in good health but we have to keep looking to the future and would encourage anyone with new ideas to get involved and bring a new vision and direction to the association. Our thanks to all the committee and to every member for their enthusiasm and support.

EVENING COURSE IN BEEKEEPING

The evening course in beekeeping commences on Thursday 3 February at 7.15 in the Hall at Rhu Church. Details have been sent out to those members who have signed up for the course giving details of the 6 sessions that will cover all the topics in the syllabus for the Basic Beemasters Certificate. The course aims to consolidate the knowledge of members who have been keeping bees from 1 to 3 years but will also provide a comprehensive introduction for anyone thinking of taking up beekeeping (and is an alternative to the beekeeping "taster" event which the Association is not running this year). The charge for the course is £12. If anyone else wishes to join the course please let me know.

WINTER FEEDING

Traditionally Christmas is the time to check that bees have sufficient stores. Up to now the consumption of stores should not have been exceptionally high although greater than usual because of the low temperatures we have experienced. As the days lengthen so the queen starts to lay. The colony now has larvae to feed, but only from the stores of honey and pollen laid in last summer and early autumn. By March with the colony rapidly expanding the level of stores can be even more critical and this is the most risky time of the year when most colonies are lost.

To assess the stores beekeepers heft their hives, by lifting them on one side and then on the other. If the hive feels light then take action. At this time of the year this will involve placing fondant (home made or a proprietary brand such as Ambrosia 'feed paste') directly on top of the frames, within an eek or super to contain it and with the crown board above so that the bees can go up and access the underside of the food from the bee spaces between the combs and not have to go out into a cold part of the hive.

Mike Thornley Sec.