

HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No.157 FEBRUARY 2011

THE NATIVE DARK BEE: THE NEXT MEETING ON THURSDAY 24 FEBRUARY AT 7.15

John Durkacz is talking about the 'Native Dark Bee' at our next meeting in the **Hall at Rhu Church**. I remember going to a talk given by John about 10 years ago when he described bee keeping on the east side of the country. He evoked a golden age of beekeeping in the 1950s: hot summers, the spicy smell of resin in the Scots pine woods, bees at the heather, and the vast 'Glen' hives, as big as meat safes.

At that talk John made reference to the native dark bee and has since spent many hours researching its physiology, history and current distribution. He has also promoted the native dark bee and was responsible for organising two events last year with BIBBA and the SBA on bee breeding with a particular emphasis on developing our own regional stocks that are best suited to local conditions. This is an important and continuing conservation story as the extinction of any wild creature is a disaster. But it is also part of a wider story about Scottish beekeeping, with its own distinctive traits and characteristics.

This lecture should be of interest to the new as well as the more experienced beekeeper and will provide a useful link to the bee breeding initiative that is being developed by Jim McCulloch and other members on the Peninsula.

AGM

The well attended AGM was a great success and special thanks should go to all of you who provided food and drink for the social event. Anne Ritchie and Gordon Smith join Fi Basford and Adrian Chalet on the Committee and we are pleased that Jim McCulloch has accepted the post of vice-president. The other office bearers remain as before. This will provide a good group to share out the tasks of running the association on behalf of the members.

ADVICE FOR BUDDING BEEKEEPING ENTREPRENEURS

The highlight of the AGM was Fran McCulloch's talk on the manufacturing of a bee product and taking it to the market place. This provided some fascinating insights and would have merited a full talk in its own right. The lessons were relevant to the beekeeper who is selling honey or getting involved in more complex processes such as making cosmetics. Fran, while showing that the physical production side is not as difficult as might be imagined, stressed the importance of research, sourcing high quality materials, design and marketing. Fran has kindly offered to share her experience with any local beekeepers who might be thinking of earning money from their hobby. This advice is on our doorstep in Clynder and anyone interested should contact Fran on 01436 831664.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

At the AGM it was agreed to maintain the annual subscription at £12. If you have not already paid your subscription please bring this amount to the next meeting or send a cheque to the treasurer Neil Sandison, 10 Muirend Road, Cardross, G82 5LG.

LOST 2 POTS OF HONEY?

Neil Sandison, when not collecting the subscriptions, is worried that he sold 2 pots of honey from the association apiary to a member who then went home without them. He is wondering whose senior moment this might be: his own or someone else's. If it is yours please see Neil.

BEEKEEPING COURSE

A gratifying number of 22 people have signed up for the beekeeping course. Some are travelling from as far away as Strachur in the west and from east Loch Lomond in the other direction. We are running the course on Thursday evenings until the end of March, at 7.15 p. in the hall at Rhu Church. The course covers the syllabus for the Basic Beemaster's Certificate and more besides. The second session is this Thursday 17 February when Charlie Urwin is talking on the 'Natural History of the Honeybee'. This is the last opportunity for members to sign up. Please come along if you are interested or give me a phone on 01436 820493.

Mike Thornley

Secretary