

HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER No.158 MARCH 2011

IAN CRAIG "THE YEAR IN THE APIARY" THURSDAY 24 MARCH 7.15 pm. in the Hall at Rhu Church.

Ian Craig of Kilmalcolm Beekeepers Association is the immediate past president of the Scottish Beekeepers Association (for the second time) and convenor of the education committee. He is probably the most experienced beekeeper in Scotland and speaks on the subject all over the country. He is giving his talk on "The year in the apiary" as the culmination of our beekeeping course that we have been running over the last 2 months. This will give the course members the opportunity to meet the examiner for the Basic Beemaster's Certificate and to ask any questions about this. But more than that Ian's talk will be of general interest to all our members, which is why it features as one of our regular monthly meetings held in the hall at Rhu Church. Everyone is welcome for what it is hoped will be a well attended meeting.

A NOTE FROM A CONVERTED DUNCAN REEVES

A number of our new beekeepers benefited by Duncan moving to Dorset by receiving bees that he left here in Scotland, having been advised of their unsuitability for his new area. Recently I received the following note on beekeeping in the sunny south. Anyone who knew the state of Duncan's equipment and the temperament of his bees (which were sometimes sorely tested by their owner) will realise the scale of this Damascene .

"I started up bee-keeping again last June, buying two new national hives in fab red cedar from National Beekeeping Supplies in Okehampton. A bit of a drive to Devon, but so well worth it. To have such beautifully made hives, NEW!! is a real joy. I also got a couple of nuclei of "Italian strain, via New Zealand". Oh boy! What a contrast from the British blacks. They are so gentle, don't even lift their heads to see what's going on, and they have no objection to grass around them being flymo-ed and the hedge they are against being mechanically cut! "Following" is just not in their vocabulary.

I plan to increase to 4 colonies this year, breeding my own on. I am toying with the idea of knocking on a few doors in a smart part of Dorchester to see whether someone will take in a hive for a while, to make use of the superb avenues of limes in the surrounding residential streets. One boring aspect is that my bees are located in an orchard beside a 50 acre field which, last year, was wheat, but which, in the autumn, was sown with canola - oil-seed rape.

I went off to Oz on 25 Nov and escaped by one day all the ice and snow. Very good timing. In consequence my bees were de-fluffed on 24 Nov instead of mid December. I hope all is well. I shall go and investigate today. I am with the very active beekeeping association of Sturminster Newton and Blandford: a bit like Helensburgh. I was put off Dorchester by reports that they were inactive and stolid!!”

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Neil Sandison has sent out reminders to those members who still have to pay their subscriptions. Please send £12 to Neil at 10 Muirend Road, Cardross, G82 5LG or, better still, bring it along to the meeting next Thursday. We value our members' support.

GETTING INTO YOUR HIVES

A member has asked if it is all right to open up hives at the moment. It is a good question as it suggests an element of caution. The answer is a firm NO. There is a tremendous urge to get into the hives early in spring; to assure ourselves that the bees have survived, that the queen is not a drone layer, and to enjoy the experience of handling bees again especially when, at this time of the year, they are so gentle. But resist the temptation until we get a really warm day in April; warm enough for you to be outside in a T shirt. I have said before (and so did TS Elliot) that “April is the cruelest month” so be careful not to put your queen to flight or chill your new brood.

SBA AGM

The SBA AGM takes place at the Dewers Conference Centre in Perth on Saturday 26 March at 1.00pm. I will be attending if anyone would like to share a car.

HONEYBEE RESEARCH: EFFECT OF PESTICIDES AND MITICIDES

This research project, supported by the SBA, is reported in the March edition of the Scottish Beekeeper and has been the cause of some controversy. John Durkacz, who gave an excellent talk on the native dark honeybee at our last meeting, has put out an invitation to a presentation by the research team leader on the objectives, methodology and the contribution, that is being hoped for, from individual beekeepers in Scotland. This will take place Scotlandwell, Fife on Thursday 7 April at 7.30 pm. I am hoping to go, driving there and back on the day, if anyone would like to join me.

Mike Thornley
Secretary