

## HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

### NEWSLETTER No.162 JULY 2011.

#### **HARD TIMES.**

This year has been unusually difficult in May and June with widespread reports of colonies where, after initial swarm control measures had been taken, old and new queens have wanted to swarm again. Both problems might be explained equally by poor mating: this year and last year when a strong spring build up was followed by poor weather conditions. However it is also possible that there are more fundamental, non-weather related issues at play such as a reduction in the number and heterogeneity of drones.

Also swarming has gone on late but hopefully by the time you read this newsletter things will have started to settle down. Certainly at the moment there is a reasonable flow here with the bees dodging in and out between the showers. But soon the issue for some beekeepers will be which colonies to amalgamate to amalgamate, to overcome the problem of proliferating hives as well as to ensure that strong stocks go into the winter. It will be necessary to evaluate the performance these new queens and dispense with some if necessary, which can be a hard decision to make.

#### **CABA SUMMER OUTING (AND SUPPLY OF AMBROSIA SYRUP)**

The CABA summer outing takes place on Sunday 14 August to Andrew Scarlett, Honey Farmer's apiary at Cupar Angus. The bus will depart from Partick Burgh Hall, Glasgow, at 10.00 am. The cost is about £12, depending on numbers. For details and to book a seat contact George Morrison on 0141 942 9419.

CABA has also arranged for another honey farmer, Murray MacGregor, to have one tank of Ambrosia syrup for winter feeding available from early September for purchase, at favourable rates, by its members, which includes HDBA. Again for details of costs and delivery arrangements contact George Morrison.

#### **SBA AUTUMN CONVENTION IN PERTH: SATURDAY 10 SEPTEMBER**

The SBA Autumn Convention takes place in the Dewar's Conference and Sports Centre in Perth when there will be presentations from 3 excellent speakers including Willie Robson of the Chain Bridge Honey Farm. The rare opportunity to hear the redoubtable Willie Robson alone makes the £25 ticket look like good value, which also includes the trade stand as well and provides the opportunity to meet other interesting beekeepers who tend to support this event.

Apply to Iain Steven, 4 Craigie View, Perth, PH2 0DP: cheques payable to the SBA with a stamped envelope addressed to yourself enclosed for return of the ticket and programme.

### **MAKING THE MOST OF WAX AND HONEY**

This was the title of a talk that Bron and David Wright gave last winter to the Oban Beekeepers on how to show honey and to present wax products (as well as making mead and baking with honey). They provided a brief history of honey shows before launching into details of how to prepare honey for exhibiting and on making wax candles and the like. Bron (who is the secretary and vice president of the SBA) and David are both qualified honey judges as well as keen exhibitors so we got the picture from both sides of the fence.

Honey shows, for many of us, are a big turn off, it all seeming to be in another realm. But what Bron and David demonstrated was that presenting honey well and using their surplus wax creatively was a natural extension of their beekeeping activities in the apiary. Indeed it gave a purpose and direction to their hobby. What also was evident that these were small-scale operations with the careful recycling of limited resources (they have 4 hives in their garden) that is not only good practice but also satisfying.

In addition I found out a whole lot of new information. For instance the best honey comes from new drawn comb, probably off the second super where the amount of pollen is less, and not from old, re-used combs (and that makes sense both from the beekeepers' and the bees' point of view). Don't take your lid off to clean it when you put the pot on the show bench as that releases the aroma and lets in airborne particles. (So we will have to change that rule about the clean inside of lids at our show in the future). Wax weighs by volume the same as water so you can calibrate glass moulds by using measures of water. Always use heather honey for baking as that way the honey taste gets through. This would be a good talk for the future.

*Since I wrote this note Bron and David have confirmed that they would be pleased to come to speak to our Association in the next winter session, the full programme for which will appear in the September Newsletter.*

## COMMITTEE MEETING: WEDNESDAY 27 JULY 7.30

A reminder to the Committee that this meeting will take place at the date and time above at Glenarn in Rhu.

**Mike Thornley**

**Secretary**