

# HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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JOHN TAYLOR "MY BEEKEEPING AND BEE PRODUCTS"

THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER 7.15 pm. RHU CHURCH HALL

John Taylor runs Beeware, a small, commercial beekeeping operation in Inver near Dunkeld. There are a number of interrelated strands to the business including his colonies of bees in apiaries producing honey, as well as bee products such as creams, soaps and healing balms. He is also an agent for Thornes and other equipment suppliers and, therefore overall, he has a broad base to his enterprise. John will be telling us about the various parts of his work and showing us some examples of his products. Many of us as beekeepers might harbour the idea of making a business out of a hobby and John's talk should give some pointers as to what this might involve as well as imparting a wealth of knowledge on his own beekeeping practices.

John will be happy to bring any orders for equipment, or other products, over to the meeting if he is contacted in advance on 01350 727587 or at [john.taylor.honey@btopenworld.com](mailto:john.taylor.honey@btopenworld.com)

## PRESENTATION OF BASIC BEEMASTERS CERTIFICATES

This is the very last mention of the Basic Beemasters Certificate but the hard earned certificates themselves are to be presented by the speaker John Taylor, on behalf of the SBA, to the 12 successful candidates at the next meeting.

H&DBKA HONEY  
RESULTS  
CAMERON

ALASTAIR

Here is some information that was gathered from the last meeting.

After a summer that seemed nothing special to say the least, a honey crop came in that appears to have been the best for many years. Eight members

had between 100 and 200lbs of honey to extract! A total of least 1,879 lbs was harvested making an average of 65lbs per member and 21lbs per colony. Congratulations to those lucky ones, and for those of us who got little or none there was, in almost all cases, the satisfaction of seeing our stocks increase. Total hives/colonies have gone from 59 to 90! So hopefully this should help produce lots of honey and bees for next season. Don't forget to keep a jar or two back for next year's honey show. Competition should be hot.

## SBA TOURING SPEAKERS AT CABA

The high heid yins (president, treasurer and secretary) went off to Glasgow to hear Ian and Ruth Homer talk about "What causes colonies to collapse". In fact the talk focused almost exclusively on pests and diseases with the now well rehearsed litany of Foul Broods, Varroa and the like. In that sense there was not much new to learn. However there was a telling illustration of the exponential growth of Varroa in a colony. Let us say that you have 2000 mites in a hive and your treatment has a success rate of 90% (and most do not achieve this). This will bring down the figure to 200 mites. However within 3 months the mite level will have risen again to 1600 mites, well above the recommended levels for further treatment. If you have 1000 mites in your colony and reduce to 100 you have one more month's leeway, which is an incentive to keep mite levels low.

The implication is that there has to be constant vigilance. Most beekeepers do not monitor sufficiently for Varroa on a regular basis. Without monitoring for natural mite fall it is not possible to estimate the mite levels within colonies and assess the need or otherwise for treatment. Without monitoring at the time of treatment and on completion there is no way of understanding the actual total levels of mites in colonies or whether treatments have been effective. The FERA document "Managing Varroa" recommends at least 4 monitoring tests per year but this would seem to be the absolute minimum and based on a "tough" treatment regime that will tide the colony over, particularly in winter. A more sensitive approach, based on treating to the appropriate level as and when is necessary, will require monitoring much more often.

The Homers, from their English experience warned of the approaching time when long used "tough" treatments such as pyrethroid strips (Apistan and Bayverol) will no longer be effective. Most alternatives are less effective and will require beekeepers to spend more time monitoring and taking

action. More effective treatments such as formic acids require great care in application and careful timing. In addition to the "softer" chemical treatments such as Apiguard the Homers keep all their bees permanently on open mesh floors and have instigated 3 different biotechnical regimes, which they rotate over a 3 year cycle, applying each to a third of their colonies every year. These are:

- 1) Drone brood culling using drone foundation or a shallow placed in the brood chamber, taking great care to remove the drone brood before the bees emerged
- 2) Queen caging, whereby the queen is limited to laying in one brood frame with the brood again discarded prior to the bees emerging. This is repeated 3 times over a 27 day period.
- 3) Artificial swarms where bees are put onto new foundation and a frame of unsealed brood is introduced as a seed to attract all the bees, which again is discarded when capped.

As can be seen these types of treatment suggest a completely different beekeeping regime to that which we currently follow. If stocks are going to be weakened by the removal of frames of brood they need to be strong in the first place. Also beekeeping will require to be carried out in all weathers in order to keep to the strict timetables. Failure to do so will result in an explosion of Varroa on the emerging bees. I was disappointed that the Homers did not look at other causes of colonies collapsing, such as starvation and poor sites, but that might have distracted from the unpalatable message they brought from Dorset.

#### LIBRARY BOOK OF THE MONTH: BEEKEEPING IN A NUTSHELL

We have purchased 10 of these incredibly succinct and useful beekeeping advice sheets on subjects as wide ranging as using nucs to basic honey processing. No need to read a whole book to find the information and more specific and focussed than the web. That is about it in a nutshell!

Mike Thornley

Secretary