

HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No. 167 JANUARY 2012

AGM: THURSDAY 26 JANUARY 7.15 pm RHU CHURCH HALL

UNA ROBERTSON "100 YEARS OF THE SBA"

We start the SBA Centenary Year with our AGM. The president intends to conduct the formal business with his usual facility and speed. Thereafter Una Robertson, a past president of the SBA and currently convenor of the Moir Library, will give short talk on the history of the SBA. This will be followed by a social night with drinks, and food with a faintly Scottish theme. Come and have your say, pay your subs, and spend a pleasant evening with your beekeeping companions.

MARCH MEETING ON APIARIES

We are re-running the successful in-house night on apiaries, their siting and layout. The format is for each member to take 2 images of their apiaries, one that shows the apiary in its surroundings and the other more of a close up showing the arrangement of the hives. Please email these to Alastair Cameron who will make up a simple Powerpoint presentation. On the night members who have sent in images will talk briefly about their apiaries illustrated on the Powerpoint: the good and bad points and any improvements that they might like to make. These will be recorded and brought together in a summary at the end when, hopefully, we will have the specification for the perfect apiary. Please get the images rolling in.

EXPERIENCE OF TREATING FOR VARROA: TOTAL MITE DROPS

Over August and September I treated with the following results, which were obtained by changing the white sticky paper on the floors every 4 days and counting the mites found:

Colony 1 Apistan 506 total mites

Colony 3 Apivar 613

Colony 5 Apivar 1118

On 11 December I treated with the 3.0% oxalic acid in sugar syrup as supplied to the HDBA members. In this case the stickies were examined at 24 hours and then every 2 days thereafter until no mites were recorded. The results were as follows:

Colony 1: 2 mites total

Colony 3:180

Colony 5: 3

The mite fall in colony 3 was 46 after 24 hours, with a further 88 over the next 2 days tapering down to 2 after 13 days total.

My main conclusions are that there are more mites in the hives than we think, the strongest hives have the greatest number of mites and that it is impossible to generalise on the basis of the results from one hive. Each colony is different and the mite population alters depending on the changing circumstances within each colony. This can only be determined by regular monitoring of all colonies, and this should be the aim of all responsible beekeepers with relatively few colonies.

GEORGE JEFFRIES

Christmas cards do not always bring good news. This year we had a card from Jenny Jeffries saying that George had died in the summer. George

was one of the founder members of HDBA. When he retired and moved to Suffolk it was decided by the committee that I should get his 3 colonies, in immaculate WBC hives plus a lethal veil and one or two other bits and pieces: for the sum of £140 and a bottle of whisky. And Bob Saxton came as my mentor too. There after, every year at Christmas, I sent a report to George on the bees while he would tell me about the droughts he was experiencing. But no longer I am afraid. When I had read the card I went out to my bees and placed my hand on the roof of the middle hive and told the bees about George's death, as beekeepers should do. In that moment, as I listened to the sounds of the garden, I had a great sense of the bees having an almost animal like presence: living beings to be nurtured and cared for with their own distinct identities.

Mike Thornley

Secretary