

HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER No. 173 JULY 2012

HONEY CLASSES AT THE HELENSBURGH AND GARELOCH
HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY SHOW, SATURDAY 25 AUGUST

At the instigation of HDBA there are three honey classes at the above show (as well as a cup for combined points). These are:

A jar of clear honey

A jar of set honey

A frame ready for extraction.

Remember that honey from previous years can be entered. All that is required is that the honey should be in a traditional, squat 1lb pot with a clean screw on lid and no identification marking. Despite the weather give it a go. More details will follow in the next Newsletter

THE SEASON TOO FAR?

Two Newsletters ago I noted that R.O.B. Manley (who incidentally was a regular contributor to the Scottish Beekeeper in the 1940s) said that the seasons repeated themselves in cycles. That was a kind of long term view. What he also said was that good weather early in spring often heralded poor weather later and, importantly, that no season ever repeated the previous one exactly. So at first it looked as if we were in for a repeat of last season but instead of a late, great honey flow in the middle two weeks of July we have been faced Glasgow Fair rain. I attended an apiary visit last week elsewhere in the country and of the 5 hives that were opened 4 required immediate feeding and the last had already been fed (and the bees were a lot happier for it).

If this was not enough I was away for a couple of days in the last week of this month and returned to find 4 messages on my answerphone about swarms. Late swarms leave colonies very exposed: with few bees, sometimes not much brood, and a virgin queen who might not get mated and, if she does, will not start laying until the end of August at the earliest. Do not assume this year that your bees are ticking over nicely at the backend and that you can relax. You may have some weak colonies that will not get through the winter and need amalgamating.

Those of us who have early swarming bees may have got our new queens mated just in time but others could be struggling. Last night I looked out in the rain and darkening sky and realised that the season was already coming to an end. My thoughts are now turning to how I can get the colonies in best order for the winter by treating them as early as possible, assessing the stores and feeding them, and taking sometimes difficult decisions on possible amalgamations.

NEWS FROM THE APIARY: CLUB HIVE No.3.

NEIL SANDISON

Background

This was the very bad tempered hive last year, which had signs of chalkbrood in

June 2011. This year it has been very easy to work with and Alastair & Eddie, with new beekeepers, marked the Queen in April. On the 10th June a stray cow got into the Apiary and while the hive was not knocked over the shallow boxes were moved and replaced by Nikki & Eddie. The bees were far from being docile and Nikki had plenty stings to prove it.

On the 10 June Queen cells were removed after seeing the Queen and hive was left with both deep boxes, queen excluder and two shallow boxes on the basis that with plenty of room they would be less likely to swarm. I was away for a few days and between that and bad weather the hive was not inspected until 10 July and this is what I found;

Queen cells on the bottom of the frames in the top brood box, some complete and opened some part destroyed and new ones being constructed. Since there was one large one opened I assumed there was a new Queen somewhere around and promptly removed anything that looked like a queen cell. There were no eggs in the first four frames inspected and the hive was fairly strong and I began to doubt if it had swarmed, then I saw the marked Queen on the 5th frame. I was now thinking all the brood must be in the bottom box. Wrong: there was neither eggs nor larva in the bottom box. It's kind of difficult scratching your head with a veil on. By the way the bees were still very calm but I cannot say the same for myself so I decided to close the hive, go home and think about it.

What are the likely causes?

Could it be the cow's fault or poor weather preventing a swarm? Could there be a virgin Queen in the bottom brood box with the old one in the top?

What are the options? Kill the old marked Queen to prevent a swarm and hope there is a young Queen there somewhere. Put in a brood frame with eggs. Unite the hive with one with a young Queen. Leave them to do their own thing. Discussing this with Ian Craig he confirmed that he has a lot of hives where new Queens are not laying. He had others hives where they would appear to have changed their minds about swarming and taken down the Queen cells. There were also some other colonies where there were no Queen cells but the Queen had stopped laying. Weather permitting I will have another look at the hive in the next few days.

ASSOCIATION EXTRACTOR

Looking on the bright side anyone looking to extract their honey from supers and needing an extractor should contact Neil Sandison who has the association's extractor to lend to members (01389 841408).

PHOTOS FOR SBA CENTENARY DISPLAY

Last call for photos - a digital picture from you all please, emailed to the secretary (gordon@windsmiths.co.uk) - portrait orientation suitable for printing at approx. A5.