

HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER No.181 MARCH 2013

IAN CRAIG MBE ON "PRODUCING HONEY FOR SALE"
THURSDAY 28 MARCH 7.15 pm. RHU CHURCH HALL

Whenever I go into a delicatessen or wherever in Helensburgh, I check out the honey: what type, who has produced it, the label, and the cost. On one occasion there was a beautifully packaged jar but the honey was granulating. I have been given the most wonderful tasting honey but the labelling was woeful. At our display at the SBA centenary conference we had some fresh honey on display with a label that showed a pre-printed use by date 2 years previously. It was the label not the honey that had reached the end of its life. There is a demand for honey locally but unless it is properly presented we are going to get the sort of headline in the local paper that we don't want. Whether selling or just giving pots away as presents the processing, product, and packaging have to be right.

So we are fortunate to have Ian Craig MBE coming to speak to us at our March meeting. Ian is the most experienced semi-professional beekeeper in the West of Scotland. He runs about 60 hives and sells his honey at numerous outlets. He will be telling us something about his beekeeping for honey production but the main thrust will be on harvesting, processing, labelling, selling and, importantly, after sales service. This talk will be a useful reminder for the old hands and highly informative for any beekeeper aspiring to make some hard earned income from his or her hobby. It will also cover the relevant sections of syllabus for the Basic Beemaster certificate for anyone taking this examination in the summer.

WAX DAY AT THORNES SATURDAY 23 FEBRUARY Fi Bashford

How about a S.B.A workshop hosted by Brian at Thornes (Newburgh) and run by the education convener Alan Riach and supported by S.B.A president Phil McAnespie; vice-president Bron Wright and her husband David, member of standing committee for education, Ian Craig MBE for "Services to Beekeeping" and lastly Enid Brown who is convener for Advertising and Publicity and organizer of S.B.A. shows? Also add Enid's mother, Frances Brown, who took a class on the art of sculpting wax flowers.

I was eager to learn how to make my own wax foundation. I had heard that Ian Craig was to demonstrate using the same type of press that I procured via Jason from a retired beekeeper. Fantastic: there was the press and Ian was most informative. Only 20 pupils and seven tutors so there was plenty of time to discuss and observe each subject without feeling pressurized. Learning to make candles was a bonus and all present seemed to enjoy the day. The four strong HDBA contingent from Arrochar had found a special deal and stayed in an hotel the previous night. In retrospect that was not a bad move as I was a little late after heading in the wrong direction on the M 90. I would recommend the workshop to any beekeeper. Knowing what equipment to get and how to manipulate beeswax should be intrinsic to beekeeping.

PS. I can tell anyone looking for nappy liners (as recommended by Enid to sieve wax) that there are now none to be found in Dunoon.

BEES, BUMBLE BEES & IMPACTS ON POPULATIONS Gordon Smith

This was the title of a fascinating talk by Dr David Goulson, Professor of Biological Sciences at Stirling University and founder of the Bumble Bee Conservation Society, hosted by Glasgow Beekeepers Association. The speaker covered three main topics; the loss of habitat, the spread of diseases through transportation of bees and the effects pesticides. Both space and my memory are too short to give a full account of all of these but some of the information presented that struck me was that

- There are many diseases that pass between bumble bees and honey bees
- Bumble bee colonies are exported commercially on a global scale for pollination, having been fed on pollen collected from honey bees (hence a link for disease transfer)
- Although applied to seeds systemically, over 90% of the neonicotinoids end up in the soil and they typically have a half life of around 2 years.
- The “ban” in France of neonicotinoids was for only one type and so unlikely to have had much significance.

There was certainly lots of food for thought and the well presented talk warrants a plug for Dr Goulson’s new book “A Sting in the Tail”.

HDBA COMMITTEE MEETING Gordon Smith

The new committee met on 27 Feb. Key points from the meeting:

- HDBA now has a forum on SBAi – see our website for a link to this. Members are encouraged to use this and other fora on the SBAi website
- We agreed to continue our CABA membership
- Contrary to the impression given at the AGM, Dominic is available and continues to be our webmaster.
- We agreed that the association would not in general take a stance on political issues – this arose specifically in the context of the neonicotinoid debate.
- HDBA will send someone on the Nuc Course in June
- We are intending to send out a questionnaire shortly to gather comments from you on what you want from the association
- We will maintain a waiting list for those wanting bees – details to follow shortly.
- We are planning to run a Basic Beemasters course over 2013/14 winter
- We are currently planning speakers for 2013/14, let me know if you have suggestions for speakers or topics.

Our next meeting is on 17 April, let us know if there are any specific items you would like the committee to address.

SBA AGM 17 MARCH

In this case a three strong contingent from HDBA attended a well ordered AGM at the Dewars Centre in Perth, along with 67 other members of the SBA, two of whom participated by via Skype. The secretary, Bron Wright, reported that the highlight of the year had been undoubtedly the Centenary Conference. It is intended to repeat the same formula of a weekend event, probably about once every 5 years. The treasurer has stood down after only a year although it was not clear if this had anything to do with the accounts not being available for the meeting. They will be posted on the website in due course. Another treasurer has been found.

Alan Riach, the education convener, announced the introduction of the new practical examination for intermediate beekeepers and also said that his committee was turning its attention to a junior beemasters certificate. He noted that Scotland had a lot of catching up to do on the training of young beekeepers when compared to some other European countries. He also undertook to look at tests for poisoning of bees by neonicotinoids. It was all quite topical as John Durkacz, who is standing down as markets convener, spoke about the Scottish Governments consultation on a new stand alone foods standards agency for Scotland.

Phil Moss, bee health convener, warned about impending winter losses and possible queen failures and noted the serious and growing problems associated with Varroa. On this theme Gavin Ramsay and Kate Atchley won the Harry Brown award for their work on mapping Varroa and Varroa-free areas in Scotland, published in the magazine. Honorary membership of the SBA was given also to the owner of the Rannoch Press in recognition for all his work on the magazine over many years.

The committee was re-elected but the big event was the motion calling for a moratorium on the use of neonicotinoids proposed by Eric McArthur. It was a well behaved debate and when the president called time the motion was defeated by 34 votes to 31, with 5 abstentions which, in my view, was a disappointing result. After tea I participated in a presentation on the proposed new constitution for the SBA the details of which I will summarize in the next Newsletter.

KEEP HEFTING

What did I say last month about it being a false spring? Keeping checking your colonies to make sure they have enough stores.