

## HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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JIM McCULLOCH ON "CONSERVATION OF OUR NATIVE HONEY BEES": THURSDAY 25 APRIL 7.15 pm AT RHU CHURCH HALL

Jim has championed the native honeybee both locally and nationally. Almost as soon as he started beekeeping he saw the potential of the Rosneath Peninsula as an area for breeding bees. Inspired by a trip to Denmark he and Ben Bellamy looked at the possibility of establishing a local bee breeding group. He has also been involved in nature conservation, notably on Peaton Hill. He is an active member of BIBBA (the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association) and has been actively involved with the current Scottish Acarine study running the morphometry tests on the samples. He has drawn all these strands together in his ongoing efforts to promote and conserve the native honeybee. Jim's talk should help all beekeepers in our area to understand more about their own bees and the qualities that can be gained from local bee breeding, even on a small scale. As we have often found, local bees and local speakers are usually best, so come along to this meeting to support your new president.

CHRIS CONNOLLY'S TALK TO CABA

JANET MACCALUM

On Wednesday 27 March 2013, four members of the Helensburgh and District Bee Keepers Association, attended a CABA lecture held at Partick Burgh Halls, where Dr Chris Connelly from Dundee University gave a presentation on the link between the use of pesticides and bee losses, to an audience of over 50 people. A past field study to investigate the effect of pesticides in Britain had yielded problems with the results. It was found that, with over 300 different pesticides currently in use, it was impossible to separate areas of bee exposure to certain pesticides using field research. Laboratory research was the answer to obtain credible results.

Research of this type on honeybees has been sparse. Lab based research, carried out by Raine and Gill using 6000 bumble bees, whose movements were tracked using Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), proved that

bees exposed to 2 pesticides, neonicotinoid and pyrethroid showed impaired foraging behaviour, increased worker mortality leading to decreased brood development and ultimately colony failure. Two out of the 10 colonies used collapsed in the experiment.

Studies carried out by Chris showed that recent research results have proved that the micro sporadic parasite *Nosema ceranae* and *Nosema apis* are now found in most colonies either in an active or dormant form across Scotland.

Looking at the larger picture, Chris suggested there may be links between the use of pesticides and the idiopathic neuropathic diseases found in humans, e.g., Parkinson's disease and dementias. Research also showed that Imidacloprid, a common systemic insecticide acting on the neurotransmitters in the nervous system, affects queen production dramatically.

Chris stated that we need to involve ecologists and epidemiologists in research. He also highlighted the importance of collecting data from independent colonies to establish credible data and the average beekeeper should become involved.

With 300 pesticides routinely used (from flea control on pets, treated plants and seeds from garden centres to prophylactic use on golf courses and food production) Chris felt "*there cannot be no harm*". FOOD FOR THOUGHT.

Chris finished his presentation by pointing out;

*"Pesticides are used to increase crop yields,*

*then we throw 50% of food away!"*

## SBA CONSITUTION CHANGES

The SBA has taken the opportunity, of having to make changes to meet the latest requirements in charity law, to bring what is an out dated constitution in to line with modern requirements. Suggested changes include widening the membership catagories, formalising the arrangements between the SBA and affiliated local associations,

safeguarding the SBA committee members against legal claims served on them individually when acting on behalf of the association, and modernising voting arrangements and how business is conducted. If you would like to know more please go the SBA website. Details of the initial consultation, to be concluded by 13 May, can be found on page 90 of the "Scottish Beekeeper".

## TOO LONG IN THIS CONDITION

This title, of a famous pibroch piping tune, could be applied to the weather conditions we and our bees have had to endure for the last few months. Just when things will improve is still unclear and this has major implications for the management of our colonies. In a "normal" year I will have had my queens marked by now and I will know the state of all my colonies inside their hives: but not this year. All I know is that they appear to have got through till now, thank goodness. If I look at the garden, which provides their forage, I can see that we are 3 to 4 weeks behind. Pollen from the usual sources is finished and many flowers have been frosted in bud or blown away in the recent wind and rain. This will explain why on the few suitable days the bees have poured out of their hives to forage, principally for pollen, and why I have found them working unlikely sources such as the huge trusses of big leaf rhododendrons, something I have never seen before.

How will this effect colonies build up and swarming? Will some colonies never achieve this and die? What can the beekeeper do? The first thing is not to steam on as if everything is normal. Second make sure that that bees have plenty of food in the form of home made or proprietary fondant. (There is a case for a bulk purchase organised by the association or groups of beekeepers). Do not provide a liquid feed as this could stimulate laying during a dearth of pollen and when colonies are too small to cover the brood. I am not of a fan of artificial pollen preferring instead for the ever resourceful bees to work it out for themselves in due course. Follow their lead but make sure they don't starve in the meantime and expect the unexpected as the hoped for spring and summer develops. It could be a year for the conservation, amalgamation and general sustaining of our honeybees if we are to have colonies ready to go into the next winter.

Main points from last week's committee meeting:

- Donnie Macdonald will represent the association at the SBA Nuc course in June
- Members are encouraged to look at the SBAi forum site – Jim is going to start a thread around his talk next week – we'll forward details by email
- The members questionnaire will be circulated shortly – just waiting for final approval from committee. Members who are not online will get a copy with the newsletter.
- Online calendar. There is now an online calendar for HDBA – see <https://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=helensburghqu%40gmail.com&mode=AGENDA&ctz=Europe/London> (this will shortly be linked to on the HDBA website).
- Next committee meeting 12th June 2013

## AUCTION OF EQUIPMENT

We will be auctioning the following at next week's meeting:

- two frame tangential honey extractor (donated by David Brown)
- Dell Inspiron 12650 Laptop (1.2 Ghz Pentium 4, 18GB hard disk, 256 MB RAM, Windows XP with Microsoft office). This is the old club laptop.