

HELENSBURGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER No.183 MAY 2013

MEMBERS' MEETING THURSDAY 30 MAY 7.15 pm RHU CHURCH HALL

This is our last evening meeting until September and will include frame making and comparing notes on the season so far. Someone suggested a frame making demonstration and it is a good idea. We all think we know how to make frames until Neil shows us how it is really done. Bring your favourite tools and any frames and wax you want made up at the meeting. Frame making has always been a popular participatory night. The last time we did it we couldn't get the groups to stop for tea.

Unsure about how the season is going or what to do next? Part of the meeting will be given over to sharing experiences, worries and asking for any advice. Also there will be bottom of the range equipment for spinning off honey to demonstrate to members that you don't need to buy the nice but expensive kit that Ian Craig showed us.

THE ASSOCIATION APIARY

Apart from its members, the association's apiary is its biggest asset. I was up there last week watching Neil and David hard at work constructing the base for the new hut. It struck me how far the apiary has come. The set up looks really good with four busy hives, a secure fence on all sides, stands for anyone bringing hives onto the site, and now a hut on the way. It seems as if it has settled in but 4 years ago it was only a rough corner of the field and the fact that we now have such a good set up is the result of Neil's hard work.

It takes many seasons to get an apiary up and running. There have been set backs on the way but now we are at the point when we have enough colonies for teaching purposes and the next step will be to start to supply bees. A further objective, when establishing the new apiary, was to provide somewhere for members to bring bees on a temporary basis or for people keeping bees in relatively isolated areas to widen their gene pool by using the apiary for mating of their new queens. Most other associations would give a lot to have an apiary like ours. The question is how, collectively and individually, we can make best use of the apiary and contribute as individuals to its further development.

Wanted: Someone with joinery skills to help construct the frames for the hut
: A flat loader, or large van or truck, to move the frames to the site
Contact Neil Sandison on 01389 841408

Next events at the apiary:

6 July (provisional)	Nuc Workshop (postponed from 16 June due to delay in SBA course)
18 Aug	Varroa Treatment

THIS MONTHS TIP: BEE PREPARED

Ben has explained how scouting and HDBA are closely linked. Ben knew Gerry Flatman through the scouts. Gerry kept bees and got Ben interested. The rest is history. As every scout knows BP stands for Baden Powell, the founder, and for Bee Prepared, in particular for swarming. "What's the fuss?" you might ask in this late Spring. Well, we have had to do our first swarm control already.

If you have one colony you will need another hive, or a swarm board, and another deep, if you are going to put the brood and queen cells on top of the old queen. Have you got enough kit and have you got enough frames and fresh wax? It is hell making up frames with the sweat pouring off you knowing that, at any minute, your bees are about to swarm and disappear off to God knows where. Also it is difficult to thumb through Hooper while you are frantically making up those frames to remind yourself what goes where. So read it up first, talk it through, even do some diagrams and, if necessary, write out the various moves onto a sheet of paper for reference later. And by the way has the queen been marked? Bee Prepared because you can bet that the bees will be.

RED MASON BEES

Jim McCulloch

I received an interesting phone call this month from a concerned local resident about a swarm of bees.

As the weather had been so poor I thought this is too early for a swarm so I asked all the usual questions. Are the bees big fat and hairy? Do they have thin waists and yellow stripes or are they brown/black and about the size of flies? I asked where the swarm was located, to be told it was in the window frames and that you can see the combs. I thought it might be a colony of bees that have overwintered in a window frames cavity so off I went to have a look. What I found was indeed some bees and comb located in the lower part of two window frames but the house was a new build and the frames were new double glazed units.

The bees turned out to be solitary red mason bees although they were not being very solitary.



Red mason bees, *Osmia rufa*, are one of many species of bee that are known as solitary bees because they live alone and make individual nests.

However, females search for mud to build their nests in areas of disturbed soil, and so many can be attracted to the same spot, creating a swarm-like appearance.

This gathering of solitary bees is called aggregating. Red mason bees also aggregate when they nest, often sharing an entrance to a good site, but having their own individual brood cells inside where they lay their eggs.

Favourite nesting spots for red mason bees are up high in small gaps and holes in bricks and buildings, which is where the 'mason' in their name comes from.

The colony in question was carefully removed to the garden and relocated into one of the commercial hive boxes that are sold for solitary bees which are still doing well.

ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW

Just to draw your attention to the request in this month's SBA magazine for stewards at the Royal Highland Show (20th-23rd June). Volunteers will get free entry and parking to the show. You can volunteer for one or all days and whilst you'll be expected to be there all day there will be an opportunity to look round the show. HDBA members who have volunteered in previous years have had a great time. If you can help, email your name, address and telephone number to Enid Brown (enidbrown6@gmail.com)

CABA SUMMER OUTING

The Summer outing will be to Enid Brown's queen rearing apiary at Kinross on Sunday 21st July. Bus leaves Partick Burgh Halls at 11.00am prompt. Bring protective gear, mug and pack lunch. High tea will be at Kinross about 4.00pm. We should be home between 6 and 7pm. MEMBERS PLANNING TO ATTEND MUST INFORM ME (secretary@helensburghbees.com) BY 1ST JULY AT THE LATEST, so that the CABA secretary can plan the size of the coach and book high tea.

VARIOUS SURVEYS

Just a wee request/reminder to fill in the HDBA questionnaire if you haven't already done so. We are keen to get as many responses as possible so will wait until 1 June until closing. If you are really not interested, please click on the decline link in the original email.

There are also 2 surveys in the SBA magazine this month, one on neonicotinoids and one on overwintering (end of May deadline).