

Newsletter
February 2015



Aberdeen and District Beekeepers' Association (SCIO)

- promoting the study and development of apiculture, and advancing the heritage, culture and science of beekeeping amongst its membership and throughout the wider community

Established 1910

Scottish Charity Number SC031754

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*Due to family illness,
Barbara Cruden is
unable to continue
in her role as
membership
convener this year.
Membership
enquiries should be
directed to the
Treasurer.*

Ask the Experts

Forget Wikipedia. Come along to our members' event on Saturday 14 February and take the opportunity to hear directly from some of the most knowledgeable and experienced beekeepers in the north east. Our *Beekeepers' Question Time* panel comprises Jock McGregor of Blackburn, Willow Lohr of Corgarff, John Cooper of Aberdeen, Graham Stables of Potterton and Hugh Donohoe of Banchory.

See page 2 for details

Get Hands On at ADBKA's Crathes Apiary

Would you like to get involved in running our apiary at Crathes Castle this year? We're looking for volunteers who are prepared to give up a couple of hours from 10am to midday on Sunday mornings to manage our stocks. As with 2014, management priorities will be (in order of importance):

- swarm control
- production of nucleus colonies
- honey production

Don't worry if you're just starting out, we'll ensure that there's always a mix of experienced beekeepers and beginners.

If you're interested, email me at adbkanewsletter@btinternet.com, or call me on 013398 82038.

Graham

TEMPUS FUGIT!

You should have sent off your **2015 membership** subscription form by now. If you haven't, get it done right away. You're running out of time. Remember, we are now a new incorporated charity, so the old ADBKA that you were a member of last year no longer exists!



Fatal attraction - see page 2

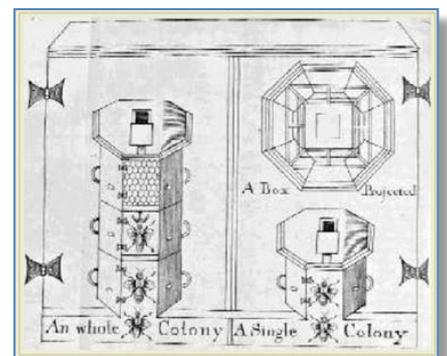


*There's nothing new
under the sun*

Left - Robert Ker's 'innovative' 1819 Stewarton hive, featured in last month's newsletter

Right - John Gedde's Hungarian octagonal hive from around 1675; look familiar?

For more on this, see page 3



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We have to announce the sad news of the death, suddenly at ARI on 2 January, of ADBKA member Bill Cartney of New Deer. Bill was a well-known beekeeper in the area and was particularly renowned for his skills at removing feral colonies from buildings - a film of him in action was used by the association as a valuable training aid. The condolences of all members of the association have been passed to Bill's family.

BEEKEEPERS' QUESTION TIME - quiz the local experts

Saturday 14 February at 2.00pm

The Kinellar Community Hall,
Fintray Road, Blackburn AB21 0SS

TALK: BEE HEALTH AND PESTICIDES - Gavin Ramsey, SBA Bee Health Convener

Saturday 28 March at 2.00pm

The Kinellar Community Hall, Fintray Road,
Blackburn AB21 0SS

PREPARING HONEY AND WAX FOR SHOWING

Saturday 11 April at 2.00pm

The Kinellar Community Hall,
Fintray Road, Blackburn AB21 0SS

The only certainty in beekeeping is that things rarely work out the way you planned. And so it proved with our first members' event of the year, when our guest speaker, bee inspector Graeme Sharp, was trapped by heavy snow down in the south west of Scotland. At very short notice our Secretary, Rosie, pulled together the necessary arrangements to show the film originally programmed for February.

Whilst the excellent turnout of members were no doubt disappointed not to hear the expected presentation, the film, *More than Honey*, provided more than ample compensation. This beautifully shot documentary set out in stark terms the unfolding tragedy that is the human-honeybee relationship. From the industrial manipulation of bees in the super-scale production of almonds in California to the hand-pollination of fruit trees in areas of China where bees and other pollinating insects have been wiped out by over-use of chemical insecticides, much of this made uncomfortable viewing. And then we moved on to the spread of pests and diseases.....

Let's all treat our bees with care and consideration. In the circumstances, it's the least we can do.

A team from the University of Exeter has published a study raising concern over the potential for the spread of diseases and parasites from commercial bee operations to wild pollinators. The research was published in the *Journal of Applied Ecology* and reported by the BBC at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-30831257>

The BBC website also has a fantastic educational tool on its iWonder pages. It's entitled *Would we Starve without Bees?* and can be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zg4dwmn>

Thanks for Jim Moynagh for these items



If there's a lot of **snow on the ground** on a bright sunny day, your bees might look out the door of their warm hive and think they've been relocated to the Costa del Sol. They're attracted to the brightness outside, but no sooner are they out than they succumb to the freezing temperatures. Unlike the few corpses you might see on the ground just beneath the door to the hive having been cleared out in the course of housekeeping, you'll find dead bees scattered on top of the snow around two or three metres away, which is as far as they were able to fly before falling, torpid, to the ground.

Try propping a board up against the front of the hive so that it casts a shadow on the entrance. It seems to discourage these arctic expeditions.

This April, why not take a trip down to the British Beekeepers' Association's Spring Convention - Europe's biggest national beekeeping event?

Harper Adams University

Newport, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Friday 17 April - Members' Day and Trade Show

Saturday 18 April - Public Day and Trade Show

Sunday 19 April - Education Day



Spring 2015
Convention

With more than 30 lectures from international and leading UK speakers and nearly 40 workshops and courses during the 3 day event, there is something for everyone, expert, improver, beginner and non-beekeeper.

Find out more at http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention.php

Be it known that I, Lorenzo L. Langstroth.....have invented a new and Improved Mode of Constructing Beehives.....

In an article about Robert Ker's Stewarton hive in last month's newsletter, reference was made to the "explosion of invention and development" in the second half of the nineteenth century that followed the introduction of Langstroth's hive design; here's what happened next.....

In 1857, five years on from the granting of Langstroth's patent, German carpenter Johannes Mehring produced a beeswax foundation that could be placed, and replaced, in the new movable frames. His method involved dipping a mould into melted wax, then peeling off and trimming the cooled, wax sheet. (Subsequent evolution of foundation pressed from a rolled wax sheet and the embedding of support wires are credited, respectively, to Americans Edward Weed and Captain J.E. Hetherington, who at the time was reportedly managing the largest number of honeybee colonies in the world.)

Eight years later, in 1865, Frenchman Abbé Collin had perfected an excluder to keep the queen out of honey supers, and Austrian Major Franz Edler von Hruschka produced a basic centrifugal extractor*. Next up, Prussian-born Julius Hoffman emigrated to America and around 1873 found himself running 700 colonies in New York State. Seeing that Langstroth's frames were being spaced by eye only, he came up with his eponymous self-spacing frame.

Amongst many attempts to devise a method of producing cool smoke to pacify bees, T.F. Bingham of Michigan USA usually gets the credit for his 1877 model of single-hand-operated bellows smoker. At about the same time, Dr Charles Miller (who was the first person to describe the newspaper method of uniting colonies) designed a feeder that could sit on top of a hive and dispense up to four gallons of syrup. And in 1891, E.C. Porter introduced the 'bee escape' - invented by his father - that would clear bees from honey supers prior to their removal.

So that was it, then. Triggered by the arrival of Langstroth's moveable frame hive a group of bright and inventive beekeepers around the world quickly came up with all the accessories necessary to provide a practical and productive beekeeping methodology that is largely still with us today. Well, not quite.

Like the case of the Stewarton hive on the front page, the development of beekeeping methods and equipment has generally been evolutionary, not revolutionary.

For example, in 1814, Ukrainian beekeeper Petro Propokovych was using a wooden board with slots cut in it that were large enough for workers to pass into honey supers but too small to admit the queen. This was more than 50 years in advance of Abbé Collin's 'invention' of the queen excluder. And similar stories can be told about many of the other pieces of equipment discussed above. What's going on here?

The answer has to do with the coincidental arrival on the scene of publications such as the *American Bee Journal* in 1861, *Gleanings in Bee Culture* in 1872 and the *British Bee Journal* in 1873, along with a significant increase in the number of beekeeping books being published. It seems that if you were the first to write about it, or to be associated with it in a journal or book, you took the glory.

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

LORENZO L. LANGSTROTH, OF PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA.

BEEHIVE.

Specification forming part of Letters Patent No. 9,200, dated October 5, 1852; Renewed May 20, 1863, No. 1,484.

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, LORENZO L. LANGSTROTH, of Philadelphia, in the county of Philadelphia, State of Pennsylvania, have invented a new and Improved Mode of Constructing Beehives; and I do hereby declare that the following is a full and exact description thereof, reference being had to the accompanying drawings, and to the letters of reference marked thereon.

The nature of my invention consists: 1st, in affording the bees a more thorough protection against the bee-moth. 2d, in affording them a more effectual protection against extremes of heat and cold, sudden changes of temperature, and dampness in their hives. 3rd, in enabling the apiarian when desirable rapidly to multiply his colonies. 4th, in enabling him to obtain his surplus honey in the most convenient, beautiful and salable forms. 5th, in enabling him to perform all necessary operations without injuring a single bee. 6th, in enabling the most timid to remove the surplus honey without danger to themselves.

Movable frames.—To be able to remove the combs from the hive without mutilating them or materially diminishing the honey

is indispensable to the scientific and most profitable management of bees.

Apiarians have aimed to effect these ends by placing movable bars or slats in the top of the hive, to which the combs may be attached. There are two difficulties in the practical working of these bars which have hitherto prevented their general use:

(1st.) The bees often attach the same comb partly on one bar and partly on another thus preventing its easy removal. (2nd.) They are compelled to attach the combs to the fastenings which can be removed by the bees. The apiarian must labor ever his disadvantageous frame or Figure 4. one-quarter and 1/4 are thick and should be spaced between the bars and the



*One day Major von Hruschka was in his apiary, and his son chanced to be there too. The boy carried a tin pail which had a string tied to it. The major gave the boy a piece of honey, putting it into the tin pail. Then the youth, boy-like, begun to swing the pail with the honey in around and around in a circle, holding it by the string. A moment after he had ceased this amusement, the major happened to look again at the piece of honey. What was his surprise to find that the honey was all drained out neatly and perfectly from that side of the comb which had been on the outside of the circle, as the boy swung the pail around by the string. The major thoughtfully turned the comb over, and bade the boy swing again. This time the other side of the comb was all drained out, and that night Major von Hruschka went to bed thinking.

As reported in the *Pacific Rural Press*, Volume 30, Number 2, 11 July 1885

Visit the ADBKA Honey Jar Store for:

Ragus Candy
Apistan (10 strips, sufficient for 5 hives)
Ambrosia Syrup
Honey Jars and Lids
Mesh Floors – National size (wire only)
Hessian Squares for smoker fuel



Free loan of:
Honey extractors
Mini-melters
Heather honey press
Wax extractor
Wax foundation press

Approximately half a mile along Laurel Drive, turn into Laurel Place on your right - it's a semi-circle so take the second entrance into this street. Now turn left into Laurel Avenue. Danestone Market Garden is signposted, on the left, about 100 yards along.

**Danestone
Market
Garden
AB22 8AJ**

You may be asked to show your ADBKA membership card when you visit the store, so remember to take it along

For the loan items, a returnable £10 deposit is required, with the maximum length of loan being two weeks. As other members may be waiting to borrow extractors, etc. these must be returned on time and in a clean condition.

The store is open between 6.30pm and 8pm on Wednesday evenings and at other times by arrangement with Sandy Gordon (Tel: 01224 484540)

Notice Board



Aberdeen Bee Supplies

Jock McGregor is the local agent for Thorne Beekeeping Equipment. Contact him on 01224 790468 or e-mail: AberdeenBeeSupplies@hotmail.com

9-frame radial extractor (electric) – FOR HIRE £10 per hire period

Steam wax melter – available ON LOAN £10 deposit
Both items available from: Jock McGregor, 11 Marcus Road, Blackburn. Tel. 01224 790468

John Fiddes is hanging up his bee suit and has for sale a wide range of **hives and equipment**. To find out what's available, call John on 01467 632 077.

Why not tune in to BeeCraft's next Hangout 'Webinar'?

Beekeeping Q&A -
your worries, concerns, questions and queries
Wednesday 18th February at 8.00pm
Join us live, or watch the recording afterwards, via this direct link through our website:
<http://www.bee-craft.com/beekeeping/hangouts>

Bees' hygienic behaviour in the form of clearing out the dead or diseased from the hive has been found to be a highly beneficial heritable trait. Researchers at the University of Sussex have been studying the benefits of this intuitive tidiness and how these can be passed from one generation of bees to the next. Lead researcher, Francis Ratnieks, says, "You can breed for this behaviour by screening colonies for hygiene levels and then breeding the most hygienic".

Read more in New Scientist at
<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn26774-uberty-bees-defend-their-hives-from-disease.html#.VNjXecKzW01>



From: Fergus Eakin
<ferguseakin@talktalk.net>

Hi

I am student at the University of Edinburgh studying Ecological and Environmental Sciences. This semester I am doing a project called 'Threats to our honey bees' which is going to investigate the causes of honey bee population decline in Scotland and what we are doing about it. As part of completing this my team are hoping to send questionnaires to individual bee keepers. Would you be able to give me contact details for any beekeepers within your association who are willing to participate in our project? We will be very grateful for anyone who helps us as the questionnaire will give us primary research towards our project.

Kind Regards
Fergus Eakin

If you are able to help Fergus out with his project, please get in touch with him directly.

According to.....

.....correspondence in the March 1904 edition of the journal *Gleanings in Bee Culture*: "I wish to call attention to a phenomenon I observed one evening last fall in connection with my bees - one that I have never seen mentioned concerning them. One dark evening I had occasion to disturb a colony. The night being warm, quite a number poured out on the board, and ran about excitedly in great rage, and I distinctly noticed several sparks of some form of electricity or phosphorescence. Whether this was due to heat, friction, or excitement, or some spontaneous action, I cannot say; but I am satisfied I observed the flashes or glow of light. You may smile at this; but if anyone has ever noticed this phenomenon before I should like to hear of it. - W.S.H.

"[The light that you saw *may* have been something of the nature of phosphorescence; but if there has been anything of this kind that has ever before been observed in a hive I have seen no reports of it. I shall be glad to get reports from others.

"You will remember that there was an old joke that went the rounds of the press, and every now and then bobs up as something new under the sun, to the effect that a certain scientist had made the wonderful discovery that bees and lightning bugs could be crossed so that the bees could work at night as well as by day. I do not suppose your bees were this kind of hybrids. If your letter did not bear the marks of evident sincerity, I should think you were trying to get off another lightning-bug joke. - Ed.]"