

Newsletter  
May 2014



# Aberdeen and District Beekeepers' Association

Established 1910

Scottish Charity Number SCO31754

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Some of our apiary volunteers carry out a weekly inspection on one of our hives.

Don't forget that this coming Saturday (17 May) ADBKA members are invited to gather for **the official opening of our new facility at Crathes Castle.**

(Remember to bring a veil, just in case the bees aren't as pleased about everything as we are!)

Read more about what we're up to at Crathes on page 3.

## BEE ALERT!

Someone has been stealing beehives in Angus and Perthshire.

Sound advice from our own Secretary, Rosie Crighton, was quoted in the Herald: "Within the association we always make beekeepers aware that nowadays there is a risk. Because acquiring bees can be quite expensive, some people will help themselves. We say to keep them out of sight and to avoid publicity.

"It's a shame it's going on, but it has been for quite a few years."

## This year's Turriff Show

will be held on Sunday 3rd and Monday 4th August. As well as offering honey tasting and the opportunity for the public to purchase a variety of honey, this year, for the first time, there will be an opportunity for children to make rolled wax candles, as well as a bee health information area. Hopefully there will be a demonstration hive for both days.

Rosie Crighton is looking for more volunteers to help staff the sales table, assist with the candle making, and meet and greet the public. No major beekeeping knowledge is required as there will be experienced beekeepers present, only enthusiasm for promoting beekeeping, and a love of bees is necessary.

Please contact Rosie on 01224 791181 with availability. It is intended that there will be a rota system in place for volunteers to help with all the things on offer so please help out if you can even if only for a couple of hours.

Thank you very much.

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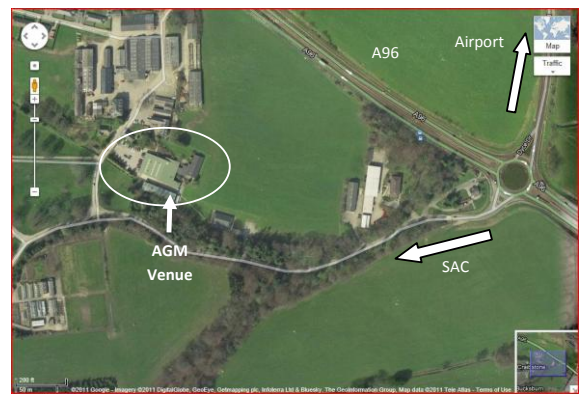
## 2014 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our 2014 AGM will be held at 7.15pm on Wednesday 21 May at the SAC, Craibstone. The agenda and other important papers were circulated with last month's newsletter. If you are planning on coming along to the meeting, please bring copies of the papers with you.

Following the business part of the AGM we will have light refreshments and a fund-raising raffle. The association would be very grateful indeed to members who can donate prizes for the raffle on the evening.



How to get there.....



## Members' Events

**OFFICIAL OPENING OF  
ADBKA's CRATHES APIARY**

Saturday 17 May at 2.00pm  
*(Crathes Castle is 15 miles West of  
 Aberdeen and 3 miles East of Banchory,  
 with the entrance to the castle well  
 signposted on the A93)*

**ABERDEEN AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS'  
ASSOCIATION****2014 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Wednesday 21 May at 7.15pm  
 Engineering Lecture Theatre, SAC, Craibstone,  
 AB21 9YA

**Please note the change of venue from that  
 advertised in the 2014 Events Programme**

**APIARY DEMONSTRATION:  
Dealing with Oil Seed Rape**

Sunday 1 June at 2.00pm  
 Fintry Schoolhouse, Fintry,  
 Turriff, AB53 5RN  
*(OSR HGR: NJ75293 – 54613)*

**APIARY DEMONSTRATION:  
Making nucs and their uses**

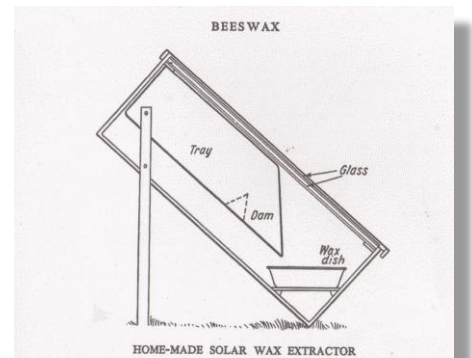
Saturday 14 June at 2.00pm  
 ADBKA Apiary  
 Crathes Castle, Banchory, AB31 5QJ

**APIARY DEMONSTRATION:  
Disease inspection and demonstration of shook swarm methods, with Kirsty Sutherland**

Saturday 28 June at 2.00pm  
 ADBKA Apiary  
 Crathes Castle, Banchory, AB31 5QJ

Thumbing through an old beekeeping book, ADBKA committee member Ian Douglas spotted this plan for a **simple solar wax extractor**. It's a wooden box, lined with insulation, with a metal tray inside, which is shaped to form an opening at one end. A piece of old zinc queen excluder is fashioned to form a dam to stop solids from sliding down, and a dish beneath the open end of the tray collects the melted wax. A couple of posts nailed to the sides hold the box at an angle of 45 degrees to the ground.

The "secret" of the extractor is the lid of two sheets of glass, held 25mm apart by a wooden baton. The double glazing concentrates the heat generated by the sun and holds the internal temperature up if the sun is obscured by passing clouds.

**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**

*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)

I was given this small book – a mere 67 pages long – in 1985. It is one of the few books on bees and beekeeping that I have consulted every year since. Packed into this slender volume is much common sense, applied apicultural science and practice. There are few beekeeping books that can truly claim to be unique, but this book certainly deserves that accolade.

The book has two central principles: firstly it aims to teach beekeepers 'how to know what happens inside the hive by observation on the outside'; secondly that we greatly disturb the bees by constantly opening the hive – 'A healthy colony must have peace if it is to perform its productive rôle.' The author makes a strong case for beekeepers taking sufficient time to carefully observe the activity at the hive entrance before even considering whether to open the hive or not

'All year round it is through this little opening that the life of the colony pulses. Here it breathes and rejects all that it will not tolerate in its domain. Here it transmits its meaningful message for the person who can understand it. Here the colony's behaviour informs the beekeeper of its problems and state of health, and lets him know whether it needs his help.'

The book has a deceptively simple format: the chapters work through the beekeeping year, commencing with the winter period. The observations are tabulated on the left hand side of the page and the accompanying explanation is on the right hand side of the page. This book is translated from German and occasionally the English is a little stilted, but the short and direct explanations that comment on individual observations can only be described as nuggets of pure gold. There are a few black and white photographs to illustrate some of the major points that the book seeks to make

Observation at the hive entrance doesn't mean simply what is seen; the author also encourages the use of smell and hearing. For example if the beekeeper observes during the winter a badly soiled entrance which gives off heat and spreads an odour resembling that of fresh bread, the colony may well have dysentery. During cleansing flights if bees are seen with the so-called 'K-Wing' there are strong grounds for presuming that acarine is present, or if the hive entrance and the area in front of the hive is spread with liquid light yellow faeces there is the probability of the bees having an acute case of Nosema disease and the colony is slowly dying out.

In the Spring if a large amount of condensation is seen at the entrance and the flying bees are bring into the hive pollen, then the bees are nursing large areas of brood and the queen is laying. 'This can serve as a barometer for egg-laying and yield of the colony'. If two hives within the apiary show great activity but there is no fighting, robbing may be at a high level – often one

## BOOK REVIEW

### At the Hive Entrance

by H Storch



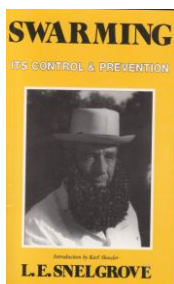
colony is the robber and the other robbed.

Month by month, as the season progresses, there are many small and detailed observations made by the author; each of which is given a simple and helpful explanation. I particularly like two comments made in the July chapter: 'All the colonies fly as if in the main nectar flow, but yet the bees that return do not seem to be laden ... the lime is flowering. It excites the bees, even when it gives no honey – which is the norm.' Or: 'A July storm is about to burst ... tens of thousands of bees return to the big colonies so as not to be caught in the storm. However, this return lasts much longer than if the storm had burst at the same hour one month earlier. Why? The sources of nectar begin to dry up and so as not to return with their crops empty, many of the bees fly further afield ... such long distance flights do not supply much nectar for a large part of consumed as fuel during the return flight.' There are many such comments such as these which are far too numerous to reproduce for this review – but they all reward careful consideration and they encourage the beekeeper to look for similar activity at the entrance of their own hives.

The author also points out that during the winter the colony writes its own history on the bottom board of its hive. He encourages the use of a bottom board cover that can be removed in the early Spring; this cover board complements the observations made at the hive entrance. Beekeepers that use ventilated floors as part of their varroa control programme can use the removable white board to great effect to monitor the general activity level and health of the colony.

If you haven't read this book – then make a resolution to do so. 'The observations discussed in this book will help the beekeeper enormously in learning to recognise, understand and interpret the different situations presented by the apiary. The beekeeper will only be worthy of the title the day a look at the hive entrance ... or beneath the frames tells him with certainty the internal situation of the colony.' This book is a plea for patience in beekeeping; just stop, look and listen, before you lift the roof of the colony. You will learn much and harm the bees less.

*Dr Stephen Palmer FRGS FLS  
Master Beekeeper, Aberdeenshire*



Given the very public position of **our new apiary at Crathes Castle**, we're particularly keen to avoid swarming, at least as far as possible. So, we've reached for Leonard Snelgrove's 1934 book, *Swarming – its control and prevention*. Reassuringly, he tells us in the first chapter that "The reader should realise that although the method needs a detailed and somewhat elaborate description it is extremely simple to apply".

If all goes well, we should reach the end of the season with no swarms, new queens for each of our colonies, two or three nucs to increase our stocks and a reasonable surplus of honey.

What chance do you think we have of seeing all of this come to pass? Don't answer that.

## Notice Board



### Abelo Beekeeping Equipment

Wide range of products & competitive prices

Please check our offers at [www.abelo.co.uk](http://www.abelo.co.uk)

Contact Sebastian Bacz on 07508944101 or e-mail [sales@abelo.co.uk](mailto:sales@abelo.co.uk)

**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

### Smith super, with frames

Free to a good home.

Contact David Lunney on 01467 643 593

For sale:

**1 packet of 1.5 kg bees + mated queen**

Available probably 15-20th of May

Please contact Sebastian Bacz on 07543270350

### Aberdeen Bee Supplies

Jock McGregor is the local agent for Thorne Beekeeping Equipment.

Contact him on 01224 790468 or e-mail:

[AberdeenBeeSupplies@hotmail.com](mailto:AberdeenBeeSupplies@hotmail.com)

Roger Bullock will be raising a few, mostly **six frame nucs**, over the next couple of months they will be for sale at £20/frame (£100 for a five and £120 for a six). If you are interested, please contact Roger on 07900 263519.

(If you have difficulty getting through please send a text).

### Wanted: Head for Cap

Jock McGregor is still taking care of a tweed cap, left in the Kinellar Hall after our members' event back on the 15th March.

Call Jock on 01224 790468

### Nuc Wanted

Contact Yvonne Beresford on 07739909812 or e-mail [vovoinc@gmail.com](mailto:vovoinc@gmail.com)

*From the Scottish Beekeepers' Association:*

ADBKA members who have been assisting the SBA with their Nosema research and who sent Autumn crush/microscope checked +ve samples to SASA are being urged to repeat the exercise this spring.

If anyone has not got a way of microscope testing then send the 30 bee sample to SASA. Please label clearly with name, hive number and e-mail address.

Enquiries to: [alan.riach@which.net](mailto:alan.riach@which.net)

As if our bees didn't have enough to worry about, a new problem is emerging in the USA. It's a parasitic fly called *Apocephalus borealis*, which was previously associated with bumblebees and paper wasps, but which has apparently jumped species to prey on honeybees.

The fly lays its eggs inside the body of the bee, then the maggots hatch and eat their way out. If the thought of that is enough to make you want to boak, you might want to avoid the video report from USA Today at:

<http://www.usatoday.com/videos/news/nation/2014/05/05/8732645/>

Thanks to Ken Gow for this item.



## According to.....

..... an Aberdeen daily paper quoted by DM MacDonald of Banff in the October 1913 British Bee Journal: "The honey harvest has this year been one of the most lucrative experienced for many years. Several beekeepers have secured from 170 lbs to 190 lbs from individual hives. In less favoured districts, where 30 lbs to 40 lbs is the average yield, this year from 50 lbs to 60 lbs are common takes. The season and environment may account for this discrepancy partly, but management bulks largely. In illustration of this the extraordinary success of one of the most expert apiarists in the North is worthy of record. In this apiary 170 lbs to 190 lbs per hive were obtained within the space of six weeks from clover alone, while in one instance 260 lbs were taken off a frame hive during the season. When bees were strong, high yields were got from the heather, seventy to eighty sections being fairly common. The honey from both sources is of superior quality and of very fine flavour."