

Newsletter

October 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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JUST ADD BEESWAX



A prize-winning candle from this year's honey show, made from a mould in our new candle making kit.

Wondering what to do with the surplus wax that you've gathered this season? Why not try your hand at candle making? Members can now borrow, free of charge, everything needed to produce beautiful moulded or dipped candles.

You could start with one of our Kochstar II wax melters, which can be borrowed from Sandy Gordon at Danestone, Joan Gilbert-Stevens at Muir of Fowlis or Erling Watt at Longside. Once your wax is reasonably clean, get hold of our new candle-making kit and really get started.

The kit includes a 2.5kg Bain Marie for further melting and filtering, after which you can choose between moulded or dipped candles. We have four moulds: two polycarbonate ones for 'church' candles and two silicone moulds for producing the sort of finished product pictured here.

For dipped candles, you can make them one at a time in conjunction with a range of dipping tubes, or you can use the dipping jig to make up to eight in one go.

The only consumable item you'll need will be wick of the appropriate size for the candles you're making. A range of wick sizes are provided with the kit and will cost you only 50p per metre used. (This is to cover the cost of replacing the wick as required.)

The candle making kit is kept at the association apiary at Crathes Castle and can be borrowed free of charge (with a £10 deposit) by calling Graham Torrie. See the Members' Benefits panels in this newsletter for all the necessary contact details.

Gather your nitre, rushes and sea water and then let the moon do the rest.
See page 6.

If you haven't done it already, get mouseguards fitted to the entrances to your hives. Mice can cause havoc if they get the chance to move in as the weather gets colder. Think about providing some additional insulation for your hives, but make sure you do it in a way that doesn't then create a build up of dampness inside.

As the weather turns during the next few weeks, the bees won't break away from their cluster to get to feeders, so the chance to provide extra stores gone. Anticipate the need to put candy or fondant on top of the frames, come the turn of the year.

A great turnout last Saturday made our 2015 Honey Show one of the best ever.

Look out for a full list of prize-winners and trophy awards in next month's newsletter.



MEMBERS' BENEFITS

Free loan of:

heated uncapping tray;
electric uncapping knife;
heather honey press;
wax melter;
Unimel stainless steel, 3 frame tangential extractor - will take all size frames apart from 14"x12", Dadant Deep, Langstroth Jumbo and Commercial Deep (16"x10")

Contact: Erling Watt
074294 54572

watterlingg@aol.com
LONGSIDE AB42 4XQ

ABERDEEN AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION SOCIAL EVENING

plus the presentation of Honey Show trophies

Saturday 14 November at 7.15pm

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

This is the last members' event of 2015. As with previous years, this evening will be organised along the lines of an "American Supper". Members are invited to bring along some food and drink which will be laid out for all to share.

Come along and join us for a blether, a bite to eat, and (don't get too excited, now!) a fun quiz to gently tax your brain.

Part 1 of ADBKA member Philip Barlow's encounter with beekeeping Caribbean style!

DANCES WITH BEES

– WAGGLE TO A REGGAE BEE CALYPSO!



As holiday's go ours started much the same as any other, airport queues, the mandatory security etc, but with that well behind us, my wife and I arrived at our chosen destination, Bequia (pronounced 'beckwi' or "beckway"), in the Caribbean Grenadines (means "island of the clouds" in ancient 'Arawak' language). At 7 square miles (18 km²), Bequia lies 15 kilometres (9.3 mi) from the nation's capital, Kingstown on the main island, Saint Vincent (aka SVG).

Next morning, we ventured out from the 'French House' resort, and I spied off roadside, hidden amongst trees, the unmistakable outlines of several beehives.

On my return to the hotel I enquired about the hives and could I chat with the apiary manager. "Ah" said the reception staff "the hives are managed by "Irish John", "we don't have much to do with them, but we will speak to "Emmett", the hotel owner.

They explained further that the hotel owner, Emmett Pace, had a great many interests, mixing enterprise & conservation aspects and some time ago he had welcomed an approach from a local resident, John Whitney, to site hives on the estate; and for John to manage as an out-apiary.

John's bee conservation & honey enterprise, 'Bequia Honey', is based at Ambois, the main apiary on the island. Emmett made contact for me and I quickly arranged to meet John at Ambois. It was immediate from the start that John's enthusiasm, considerable knowledge, and being a perfect host, would



Emmett Pace

produce many answers to my questions about the challenges of beekeeping in the Caribbean and particularly on Bequia.

John has been on the island since 1978 and is a commercial beekeeper of many years, working initially in Canada and now Bequia. In our discussion he ran through many of the issues beekeepers have faced in the

Caribbean and Bequia, and these issues would seem also very familiar with European Beekeepers; but some were distinct & quite extra ordinary. As often the case, first discussions were centred on the hives themselves: what types were used? The Bees and their origins etc.

John explained, they use hives based on the Langstroth design, (common in the USA & Canada), the raw materials for which are imported, as locally sourced material is scarce and would need processing. Everything is imported from the US & Canada, with Supers & Brood boxes, frames, & hive stands flat



*Hives at the French House,
Sugar Reef Plantation*

MEMBERS' BENEFITS

Free loan of:

heated uncapping tray;
electric uncapping knife;
heather honey press;
wax melter

Universal lightweight radial
extractor - will take nine B.S. or
Langstroth shallow, six
Commercial (16" x 6") or M.D.
shallow, or six Manley frames
of any size

Contact: Joan Gilbert-Stevens

019755 81369

craigmill@btinternet.com

MUIR OF FOWLIS AB33 8NX



Preparing to Clean & sterilise the foundation

packed and assembled on site. Roofs are pre-assembled in the US. Typical Hive dimensions (using imperial measures as the norm in the Caribbean, US & Canada) are 16"X20" Broods, with depth 10" Brood & Supers 7".

The foundation for the frames (Brood & Supers) are plastic with an impressed honeycomb relief, this ensures that there is no need for wired brood or wired super foundation as it very robust in holding the weight of comb, brood, nectar or honey etc

It also ensured that it could be sterilised and re-used again and again, and excess wax is also extracted and re-used. I enquired whether the bees showed any adverse reaction to the plastic foundation and John considered that he hadn't seen any (having used both plastic and wax). The plastic foundation also made the extraction of the honey easier as this withstood greater

centrifugal forces from the extractor than wax, in his view.

With the lush tropical environment, humidity varies throughout the year, Bequia having two seasons: wet and dry, the tropical conditions and relative humidity make ventilation of the hive an absolute priority.

Good roof level vents a must and attention to open mesh floors to ensure they are regular cleaned out and free from propolis and debris to restrict ventilation.

As with matters concerning humidity, John also reinforced the need for the hives to access to fresh water at all times to help the bees' efforts on cooling the hive in the season.

Sometimes he has seen bees regularly using resort pools and private villa pools. The bees 'fanning out' the hive in the wet season and will wet themselves and fan in during the dry season.

Like us in the UK, they have to deal throughout the season with signs of swarming and they get the most swarms at the start of the wet season (June - September) and also, he remarked, around the full moon.

The rearing of Queen's is an ongoing matter as they really have no wintering period to stop honey or flows, so they constantly produce Queens for new hives & replacement of failing Queens. The only limitation is on the availability of brood frames or their production.

As with any part of the Caribbean, they are affected with tropical storms & hurricanes, and some attention becomes necessary to protection measures.

Making light of such 'protection' as an 'occupational hazard' and given the sheer number of hives, (even with warning of approaching hurricanes), this meant that moving the hives elsewhere was not practicable.

Usually, they get 3-4 days warning of approaching tropical storms & hurricanes, so the stands are made secure in the ground and all the hives are tied down; so far, this has sufficed without much mishap.

Very heavy rains and potential storm floods, are quite frequent in July, which means attention to detail in the first instance for apiary siting and land relief characteristics is paramount; but usually the bees just stay at home in heavy tropical downpours and suffer no ill effects.



French House Bees responding to a 'Flow'

Look out for Part 2 of Philip's account of Bequia beekeeping in next month's newsletter.

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

MEMBERS' BENEFITS

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)



Aberdeen Bee Supplies

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

BeeCraft is offering a discount to local beekeeping associations wishing to take out a bulk subscription to their monthly magazine on behalf of members.

The price of an annual subscription to BeeCraft in 2016 is £28.00. With a 10% discount that you would get by going through the association, the price would be £25.20 per subscriber for 12 hard copies of the magazine delivered to your home, plus a free digital copy. To take advantage of this we need a minimum of 10 subscribers.

If any members are interested in taking up this offer, please contact our Treasurer, Louise Forbes (see front page for contact details), who will make the necessary arrangements.

A preview of BeeCraft magazine can be seen at www.bee-craft.com

The deadline for getting this order in is fast approaching. If you want to benefit from the group discount, contact Louise right away.

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

TOP TIP

If, like us, you can never remember the colour of your queens, try sticking a coloured map pin into your brood box.

These are available from most stationers, or even Tesco, and come in the same colours as the marker pens from Thornes (red, blue, yellow, green and white).

A simple, visual, indicator that has been very useful for us.

Innes and Sarah Simpson

According to.....

.....Thomas Cowan in his 1908 book, *Wax Craft - All About Beeswax, its history, production, adulteration, and commercial value*, "The Greeks, Phoenicians, and Romans, were acquainted with beeswax, and even understood how to bleach it. Pliny calls white wax *cera punica* (Punic wax), and refers to its preparation and bleaching in the following words: 'The best wax is known as Punic, or Carthaginian wax, the next best being a wax remarkably yellow in colour and permeated with the smell of honey. This last comes from Pontus, and it is surprising to find it in no way affected by the poisonous honey it has contained.* The next in quality is Cretan wax, which contains the largest proportion of propolis, a substance of which we have previously made mention when treating bees. Next to these varieties comes Corsican wax, which, being the produce of the box tree, is generally thought to be possessed of certain medical properties.

'The Punic wax is prepared in the following manner - Yellow wax is first blanched in the open air, after which it is boiled in water from the open seas, with the addition of some nitre. The flower of the wax - or, in other words, the whitest part of it - is skimmed off with spoons, and poured into a vessel containing a little cold water. It is then again boiled in sea-water by itself; this done, the vessel is left to cool. This operation is three times repeated, and the wax is then left in the open air, exposed upon a mat of rushes, to dry in the light of the sun and moon respectively, for while the latter adds to its whiteness, the sun helps it dry. In order, however, that the wax does not melt, it is covered with a linen cloth; thus refined, if it is boiled once more, the result is a wax of the purest whiteness.'

*Pontus is the name used by the ancient Greeks for the southern coastal region of the Black Sea. Do you think that this comment is a reference to the poisonous honey from *Rhododendron ponticum* - 'Pontus'/ponticum'? The pollen of this plant contains grayanotoxins, known to be harmful to humans and linked to 'mad honey disease'.

MEMBERS' BENEFITS

Free loan of:

Combimel stainless steel radial 9 frame extractor - will take frames of all shallow sizes, including Manley, as well as BS Deep, OSB, Langstroth Deep, or 16"x10";

heated uncapping tray; electric uncapping knife; refractometer; candle-making kit

Contact: Graham Torrie 013398 82038

adbkanewsletter@btinternet.com

CRATHES AB31 5QJ