

**JULY
2018**

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

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**FUTURE
ARTICLES**

MEET THE MEMBERS
(Lindsey Macaulay)

ADBKA HONEY SHOW 2018 – MEAD, THE NECTAR OF THE GODS

You may be relatively new to beekeeping and perhaps you have not obtained your first honey bee colony so the thought of you participating in the annual Aberdeen and District Beekeepers Association (ADBKA) honey show which is scheduled for the 20th of October may seem impossible. In fact nothing could be further from the truth.

Each year the ADBKA hosts one of the biggest and best attended honey shows in Scotland with dozens of different category to suit beekeepers of all abilities. In preparation for harvesting a honey crop from your bees what you can do is learn and experiment with the ancient art of Mead production. If you experiment with cheap shop bought honey then you will be well prepared for your own honey harvest and the production of mead from your own top quality honey. In addition to the ADBKA honey show there are numerous local shows where you can enter your mead for competition and your support of the local shows will be well received.

It is thought that the production of mead dates back to several thousand years B.C. and was the first alcoholic Beveridge ever manufactured by mankind. Today mead has been largely forgotten about and our pallet has become accustomed to wine produced from grapes, fruit, vegetables, flowers and grain. Mead however remains an excellent drink that can remind you of your honey harvest in the cold winter evenings and is an excellent after dinner drink.

In 2016 Olya and I entered a couple of bottles of mead into the ADBKA honey show; one bottle was sweet mead and the other dry. The show was judged by beekeeping legend Willie Robson of Chain Bridge Honey Farm and a professional bee farmer since 1962. Unusually for a honey show judge Willie conducted the judging in front of the assembled audience. The entries were whittled down to a bottle of our mead and a bottle from another beekeeper.

Willie sampled each entry with the scrutiny of a professional wine connoisseur from one of the great wine houses of France. The meads bouquet was tested with a sharp intake of breath followed by a liquid sample from each of the two entries; unlike a wine connoisseur he swallowed a sample from each bottle. Just when it looked like Willie had made his decision he went back to each bottle to take another taste and each time the tension within the watching audience was raised. You could almost hear the gasps of anticipation.

Willie played the audience like a champion matador and after several more samples from each bottle Willie made his final decision and brought the proceedings to a climax which brought a round of applause from the audience. Unfortunately the much coveted ADBKA first place award for the production of the finest mead in the north east of Scotland was not coming to the Macaulay household.

This year we plan to refine our recipe and intend to make mead with a higher final alcohol content. Our thoughts are with an alcoholic strength of about 15.5% it will make a more flavoursome drink and if the wine should fail to fully ferment we shall be left with sweet mead that is more favoured by the judges. Normally recipes that are entered for competition are a closely guarded secret but this year we'll share ours. For the first time we have enough heather honey to be able to spare a few kilograms for the manufacture of the amber nectar and the honey has a particularly robust flavour.

OUR RECIPE IS AS FOLLOWS:

- Five kilogrammes of honey
- Juice from three oranges
- Juice from three lemons
- Water, about two and a half gallons.
- All-purpose wine yeast and nutrient
- Pectic Enzyme

Boil about two litres of water in a large pan and then remove the pan from the heat and whilst still hot add about two kilogrammes of honey. I add further boiling water to the mixture until I achieve a specific gravity of about 1115 which I measure with a wine making hydrometer. I then allow the mixture to cool before pouring it into a clean and sterile one gallon glass demi-john. I then add the juice from one orange and one lemon and finally the yeast and nutrient. I add the Pectic Enzyme a day or two after fermentation is under way.

Mead can be difficult to ferment because honey is deficient in essential minerals so the juice from the orange and lemon and the yeast nutrient help the fermentation get under way and continue until a successful conclusion. To help the yeast get started I activate it two days in advance of when I think it will be required by adding it to a small bottle of sterilised fruit juice. I find using a hydrometer to measure the specific gravity of the mixture far more accurate than relying on the quantity of honey and water from a recipe and in any case I don't have a big enough pan to mix two and a half gallons in a single batch.

Once the first vigorous fermentation has finished and a deposit of yeast and solids is formed in the bottom of the demi-john I siphon the wine into a clean sterilized demi-john leaving the sediment behind. I may do this twice before the mead is finished fermenting. Like beekeeping the cleanliness and sterilization of all equipment is essential to your success.

We use five kilogrammes of honey and start the fermentation with about two and a half gallons of must which after we siphon it off the sediment we end up with two full gallons of fermenting mead and enough left over to start the next batch. If you are buying shop bought honey then five jars is enough to make a gallon which costs just over six pounds from Lidl. For the honey show you need to bottle your mead in clear glass punted bottles which should be fitted with a flanged cork, Lidl sell rose' wine in these bottles for a few pounds a bottle. Once you've emptied the contents you have the bottles to keep for your mead. There is a home brew shop in Aberdeen that can supply the equipment and ingredients you require and there are many suppliers available online.

This year the much coveted ADBKA first prize for mead production may be making its way to the Macaulay household. If it doesn't we'll enjoy the process of making and sampling our mead.

Entering the competition is far more interesting than simply going along to watch. Dust down your demi-john, get started and enjoy the result.

Lindsey and Olya Macaulay

NORTH EAST BEEKEEPERS AT THE ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW 2018



Martin skep making



Tarland Bee Group members

VISIT TO DENROSA APIARIES

After last month's report on the Queen Rearing course, I seem to be at risk of becoming ADBKA's special correspondent on queen rearing. Of course, like many journalists, I can write about a subject but am so far much less adept at actually doing it!



Well over 20 ADBKA members enjoyed glorious weather as we visited one of Murray McGregor's queen rearing apiaries at his home near Coupar Angus. Murray owns and runs Scotland's largest commercial beekeeping operation – Denrosa - and has an extensive queen rearing programme to support his 3,000 production hives.

After a picnic on the lawn surrounded by hundreds of colourful nucs, we split into groups to be shown round the operation by Murray and his staff, Jolanta and Sabine. Many of us commented on the exceptional docility of the bees, which Murray was handling without veil or gloves in most cases. Murray pointed out that he is extremely selective from his many hives to choose only a handful of the very best queens from which to breed. Apart from the queen rearing site, with I would guess about 500 mating nucs, there are also two local apiaries, again with selected

stock, in an attempt to control the local drone population too. Stock is sometimes brought in from further afield to add to the gene pool, and conversely, as Murray mentioned with evident satisfaction, some of his Scottish stock is being exported to Italy where they are doing well.

The process is not dissimilar to that taught on the queen rearing course, but the scale is impressive. Eggs are grafted from the selected breeder lines, which live in nucs in order to restrict the queen's laying and thus promote longevity. Queen cells are developed in a couple of starter and finisher colonies. Cells once sealed are transferred to an incubator, where the queens emerge. The use of an incubator was explained as an efficiency measure, saving the need to enter colonies to retrieve virgin queens. The virgin queens, or sometimes queen cells, are put into polystyrene mating-nucs from where they eventually make their mating flights.



One device used which caught the eye of a few members was a 'queen introduction frame cage.' Rather than the common Butler-style introduction cage, the frame cage is placed over sealed brood and the queen placed inside. The queen is less stressed as she has much more space to move, whilst being both in contact with, but protected from, the workers, and emerging brood accepts her as the only queen they have known. (Having whetted your appetite - Paynes sell them, and Thornes do a metal, and more expensive, version).

The visit was a rare opportunity to see something unique in Scottish beekeeping (and uncommon in general). Whilst we hobbyists love to debate and try different things, and buy different kit for the same purposes, it was clear that commercial beekeeping can only succeed with simple, reliable and cost/time-effective methods and equipment, as well as highly skilled staff. I am sure I express the feelings of all the visitors in thanking Murray, Jolanta, Sabina and Kasia for taking the time to give us a very enjoyable and educational visit.

Ian Mackley

Members' Events

AUGUST, 5th TO 6th, TURRIFF SHOW

The Turriff Show is one of the key events that showcase organisations in the Northeast of Scotland.

Beekeepers of all abilities will have something to contribute to the public's understanding of the importance of beekeeping.

Locally produced honey is always very much in demand and this is an opportunity for new or established beekeepers to sell their own produce.

Anyone interested in helping on our new outdoor stand or selling produce should **contact David Morland: 07768244420.**

AUGUST, 11th, ADBKA summer BBQ.

Craigmill, Leochel Cushnie, Muir of Fowlis, Alford, Aberdeenshire. AB338NX. 2 – 5 p.m.

Pre-book and send payment in advance (cheques payable to Joan Gilbert-Stevens) confirming numbers prior to 4th August. See attached poster for full details.

AUGUST, 18th,
ECHT HORTICULTURAL SHOW, Cowdray Hall, Echt,
2:30 p.m.

SEPTEMBER, 22ND 23RD,
SBA AUTUMN CONVENTION, Glasgow

OCTOBER, 5TH,
SBA TOURING LECTURER,

Kinellar Hall, Blackburn. 7:30 p.m.

An additional event not included in this year's programme card:

The SBA 2018 touring lecturer Marin Anastassov will visit Aberdeen as part of his autumn tour around the country. Marin is a master beekeeper and currently, amongst other accolades, a Trustee of Gloucestershire Beekeeping Association. The subject will be "Nutritional requirements of honey bees and supplemental feeding".

Malcolm Watson – ADBKA Secretary

OCTOBER, 20TH,
ADBKA HONEY SHOW,

Kinellar hall, Blackburn. Details to follow.

ADVERTS

Good quality wooden pallets are available free for collection.

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on 07860708571.

mike.raeburn@robertswells.co.uk

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