



MARCH
2020

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

BEGINNERS - LATE WINTER FEEDING

It has been a mild winter and the bees will have been relatively active in the hive and consuming stores at a high rate. The bees may have been flying a bit on warmer days recently, but there is little or nothing producing nectar for them to gather.

The period from now until the first inspections in mid-late April is critical; the queen is laying whilst the stock of workers is still at winter time lows and the amount of brood may exceed the workers' capacity to feed it. This period is therefore one where colonies are at high risk of starvation.

Fondant is still the safe option to feed at this time of year. Cut a slit about one centimetre wide across most of the width of the bag and place the pack directly on top of the frames, with the slit at right angles to the frames. This all reduces the risk of 'isolation starvation' where the hive has stores/feed, but the bees can't get to it. If you already have fondant on, check how much is left and replenish if necessary.

If in doubt, FEED!

Ian Mackley

TALK-POLY VS WOOD HIVES

by Joan Gilbert-Stevens



One more successful and well organised event presented by Joan and followed by a generous tea with bakery took place on the 11th of February in Kinnellar Hall.

It was planned for beginners to give an idea what to expect from different types of beekeeping equipment and proved to be very informative for all ADBKA community, regardless of beekeeping career and experience.

Joan brought plenty of equipment and shared her own experience of trying different variants of hives.

Graham Torrie kindly brought numerous books from the ADBKA Library, so everyone could have a chance to borrow any book and indulge themselves in this amazing world of beecraft.

Thank you to everyone who helped to organize this evening meeting!



BEES IN MY SCHOOL

I have had an interest in beekeeping for several years but never took the plunge until about 5 year ago after a conversation with a colleague at work. I am a teacher of Technology at Mearns Academy in Laurencekirk. (That is a woodwork / metal work and techy drawing teacher in old money !)

Before I knew it, we had both signed up for the Association beginners' course. One thing led to another and before long we had purchased a couple of hives and bees. All appeared to be well in the first few months and the bees built up slowly. In hindsight, I think both of our hives swarmed in that first few months as there was a lack of bees going into the winter. Come the following spring, we were greeted with lots of dead bees and discovered that both our hives had starved in the winter months. After this steep learning curve, we decided to return to the winter night classes for a second time. This proved invaluable as there were lots of eureka moments when we realised what we should / should not have been doing. More bees purchased and we started again.

Fast forward a couple of years and we were with ADBKA visiting Murray McGregor's Queen rearing (a very worthwhile visit). It was during this visit that I met Yvonne from Tarland beekeepers. She told me of a new beekeeping course that was being taught in a couple of schools and later sent me a contact. This conversation was to change my teaching career.

After some investigation and speaking to the teachers at Annan Academy in the borders who were starting to teach the course, I spoke to my own Head teacher and expressed an interest in bringing this to my own school. The school leadership team were very supportive and after my initial sales pitch and proposal, I was given the go ahead to get the course up and running. There was lots of talk about me being a pioneer. The problem with being a pioneer is that you usually end up face down with arrows sticking out your back!



In the April of 2019 I received funding to buy 2 hives and bees, as well as a selection of suits and everything I needed to get going with a small group of pupils.

We identified a suitable area at the back of the school that was out of the way from stray children and footballs and then fenced it off. We were donated several tonne of bark that we have used as a ground covering which has improved this area as it had previously been a bit of an eye sore.

By the end of the summer we had made splits and now have 4 hives which are doing well and have been well fed over the winter !!!

Initially, I was only given a small group of 6 pupils who were not in full time main stream education This includes school refusers who only attend a short amount of time each day as well as a deaf pupil who attends with her signer and several other pupils who receive additional support. They have all loved dealing with the bees and are always keen to attend this class.

I have also built a viewing hive that I was able to take into the biology class and talk to the class about bee behaviour. This also raised a few eyebrows as the kids thought I was "just the woodwork teacher".

We had a small crop of honey which we have jarred and sold within the school. We are hoping to expend our honey production in 2020 as I promised the head teacher that we would become self-sufficient within 3 years.

During this last few months I have also spent a lot of time developing a course that meets the Scottish Qualification Authority certificate and I have now had approval to offer the National Progression Award in beekeeping at the school. This course consists of three modules – Introduction to beekeeping, Practical unit and a theory unit. It goes without saying that I have had to spend a lot of time improving my own knowledge on this subject and as a relative beginner myself this has been enjoyable but a steep learning curve.

All my current pupils will now leave school with at least one module in Beekeeping, which they can add to their CV and no doubt this will be a question at an interview in the future.



Looking forward, my beekeeping course has now been added to the school course choices for senior pupils and I am expecting to have a class of 10 pupils starting after Easter. I do hope that this will create an interest with some of them so that there are Beekeepers to take over our colonies in the future.

I also hope to increase our colonies further so that we eventually have 10 hives. This will allow more hands-on experience for the pupils.



My ambition is that in 8 to 10 years' time when I retire from teaching, I am known as Mr Sim the bee man not Mr Sim the Techy teacher.

In the meantime, if any members have any unwanted reference books, I am currently trying to build up a collection for the pupils to use and all donations would be gratefully received.

Paul (The school beekeeper)

According to Thomas Affleck in his 1841 book *Bee-Breeding in the West*:

“Some years ago, a friend of the author, in Scotland, made somewhat of an approach to the principles of the subtended hive, but did not live to carry it out. There, they use almost exclusively the *Straw Skep*, which is only endurable on account of its economy. The gentleman spoken of, finding that his bees had filled their skeps with comb, while the season for making honey was yet at its height, afforded them more space below, by adding under the lower edge of each skep, a hoop, about three inches in width, and half an inch thick. As they filled up this additional space, he added more hoops. This gave them room enough to store away all the honey they made during the season, and prevented any relaxation in their labours. It was however a clumsy and imperfect plan - the only method by which they could be eased of their surplus stock, was either by removing the additions and cutting away the comb; or by the barbarous practice of smothering the little laborers themselves.”

“Some assert that a sexual union takes place between the Queen and the Drone, within the hive, though they could only state the result of their observation to be an indistinct and transient junction - others could see nothing of this, but insist that the Queen is a hermaphrodite, having within herself the powers of both sexes; and proving, moreover, that on her being confined alone with two drones, she turned on them, on their approaching her, and killed them on the spot. Swammerdam - and many believe with him - contends that the impregnation takes place from a certain *aura*, proceeding from the bodies of the males, which must needs be numerous, that it may have sufficient power. Many other such doctrines are advanced; the most plausible of all, is that of the eggs being first deposited in the cells by the Queen, and there impregnated by the drones ejecting the seminal fluid over it, as is commonly supposed to be the case in the spawn of frogs and of fishes.”

Graham Torrie

MEMBERS EVENTS

2020

MARCH

Sunday 15th
at 2.00p.m.
at Kinellar Hall.
AGM plus talk –
Going to the Oilseed Rape
by Graeme Sharpe

Saturday 21st
at 10.00a.m.
at Westhill Library
SBA EXAMS

APRIL

Tuesday 14th
at 7.00p.m. venue tba.
Talk – The Scottish Native
Honeybee Society
by Euan Campbell

Sunday 19th
at 2.00p.m. at Crathes
Demonstration–Spring Inspection
by Hugh Donohoe

Karen Stevenson from A2 B at Prime Four, Kingswells has offered a small field to anyone for the siting of beehives. The site is a nice spot. Remains to be seen whether there is enough forage available around it.

The address and contact details are :-

KAREN STEVENSON
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David Morland at adbkavicechair@gmail.com

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Similarly if you are available to help other members or want some help yourself then why not use this section to advertise what you want or what you can offer. Many members struggle to move bees to the honey crops on their own and it may be interesting for you to offer assistance and meet another member and learn how they manage their bees at the same time for example.

The adverts together with your contact details appear on the internet as part of the newsletter.