



APRIL
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

ADVICE FROM ALAN RIACH

The swarm season is not far away and inevitably there will be swarms, maybe more than usual if folks are not getting out to do swarm control and honey harvesting.

With this in mind, I suggest we consider recommending a mass increase in bait hives.

Bee scouts are very thorough and investigate all new home possibilities and an attractive bait hive will be preferred to part of a public building.

What makes an attractive bait hive?

Tom Seeley says something the size of a brood box (about 35 to 40litre), but the bees have to be able to measure it, which they do by travelling around the interior walls and performing diagonal flutter flights inside the space.

A hive full of old drawn comb is no good because the bees can't do heir diagonal flutter flight inside the hive to complete their volume measurement.

A hive full of empty frames doesn't work as they usually start drawing comb diagonally across the top bars no doubt conforming to some inner magnetic field feeling or some such.

What I've found works well is a brood box with an old drawn comb frame at one side (to give a bee smell) and the remaining 10 frames with 20mm strips of foundation fixed to the top bar (trapped with the wedge strip, even with a few spots of glue). That will allow the scouts to carry out their diagonal flutter flight distance/volume measurements and give a bit of bee scent from the old comb.

A video clip showing the preparation of such a hive could be made and posted up on the site.

David Evan's additional advice is to add two vertical bamboo skewers to the frames, 1/3 and 2/3 along the frame between top bar and bottom bars, so that when the bees have drawn comb and before it has had a few brood cycles to stiffen up, it has some support. Not essential but worth considering, one skewer would be ok. Some lemongrass oil could also perhaps be smeared on one of the frames, as that does seem to be attractive to bees, but again perhaps not essential (& maybe difficult to get at present)

If a substantial number of members (especially members in or near urban areas), set up a bait hive it should have an effect on the number of "loose" swarms looking for a home and settling in places where it is difficult to effect a rescue..

ADBKA - THE PAST TEN YEARS

2010 saw the centenary of the Association and then Chairman John Cooper wrote an interesting history of the Association which was published as a booklet for members and later added to the Association website. It can be found at...

<https://aberdeenbeekeepers.net/a-brief-history-2010-to-2010/>

2020 felt an appropriate time for a short update, so some of the past chairmen have collaborated to summarise the Association's past ten years...

In 2011 The Scottish Agricultural College informed the Association that because of a planned new housing development the ADBKA apiary site at Craibstone would no longer be available to rent. Chairman John Cooper ably led a 'New Apiary' project. Several sites were identified and inspected and the Committee chose a site offered by National Trust Scotland (NTS) at Crathes Castle.

Approximately 70% of the cost of a large log cabin to be erected on the Crathes site was obtained primarily from the Aberdeenshire Council LEADER programme, followed by a grant from Scottish Natural Heritage. The balance came from the Association's reserves.

Two busy years for the Committee culminated in a lease being signed with NTS in 2013. Planning permission was obtained and the cabin was purchased from and erected by a local firm.

Throughout its history ADBKA has always managed to put together small teams of volunteers to carry out necessary work. Just such a team moved hives and equipment from Craibstone to Crathes and completed work on the cabin and site.

A new chapter in the ADBKA story started not only with the opening of the Crathes apiary on 17th May 2014, but at the AGM in the same month Members approved a resolution to convert ADBKA from an unincorporated charity to an Incorporated Charity and to adopt the legal form of a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, or 'SCIO'. A Special General Meeting held on the 18th October gave the final go-ahead and on the 1st of January 2015, for the first time since its establishment in 1910, ADBKA became a corporate body. Committee members, now free from the risk of personal liability, became Trustees of the newly formed charity.

New technology increasingly had an impact on the day to day running of the Association. At the start of the decade, 174 members were receiving their monthly newsletter by email, compared to 128 by post; by 2019, the corresponding figures were 226 and 38. By 2015, ADBKA had its own Facebook page, providing members with an instantaneous, two-way line of communication, and by 2019 around 40% of the membership were in a Facebook discussion Group. A new website launched in May 2016, ensured that the Association's online presence kept pace with developments in the digital world. The Association logo, which had fallen into disuse, was modernised and more widely used from 2018.

ADBKA continued to promote beekeeping at local shows, events and in primary schools. Following the Scottish Qualification Authority's initiative in 2017 to offer a National Progression Award in beekeeping, the Association also started to work with secondary schools.

The spring classes continued with 80-100 participants each year. The sustained demand was probably related to an increase in mass media coverage of bees and honey bees, and especially threats to their survival, and a general growth in beekeeping in the UK.

There were 264 Members at the end of 2019. A membership survey revealed that perhaps 40% of the membership could be considered beginners with less than two years beekeeping experience, but that at least 12% of members (and probably up to perhaps 25%) had kept bees for decades.

John Cooper, Graham Torrie, David Morland & Malcolm Watson, compiled and edited by Ian Mackley

DRONE BROOD REMOVAL

If you haven't done it already, now would be a good time to reduce the *Varroa* mite population in your colonies using the drone brood removal method. Take a shallow frame of empty drawn comb (one you extracted honey from last year would do the job) and place this in the middle of the brood nest. The queen will immediately make use of the empty worker cells to lay her eggs, whilst the young bees will instinctively build drone comb beneath the frame. As soon as these cells are available to the queen, she will lay unfertilised eggs in them, which will hatch into drone brood. Adult female *Varroa* mites have a preference to enter drone brood cells to lay their eggs. As soon as these cells are capped (on the 9th or 10th day after the eggs were laid), take out the frame and cut away the drone comb with a sharp knife. Be careful. Destroy the comb, along with the mites, ideally in a garden incinerator or on a bonfire.



This photograph was taken on 5 May. It's a shallow frame that went into one of the ADBKA hives at our Crathes apiary on 14 April. The majority of the cells remain uncapped, so it can stay in the hive for another week before cutting it out.

To find out more, download the excellent information leaflet, *Managing Varroa*. It's free and can be found at:

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>

Graham Torrie

THE BUMBLE BEES ARE OUT

As our hives start coming to life again you will probably have noticed that the bumble bees are also out. At this time of year queens emerge from their solitary hibernation and forage for stores before laying eggs to begin a new nest. Most of the bumble bees in my area are the buff tailed *Bombus terrestris*. I found one dead queen in the mouse guard of a hive – she appeared to have got stuck in the process of breaking in to rob some stores.



Bombus terrestris



Unlucky queen stuck in a mouse guard

Malcolm Watson

BB WEAR DISCOUNT

Is your suit getting a bit tatty ? BB Wear are based in Cornwall and make quality beekeeping suits. All the products can be seen in their online shop at www.bbwear.co.uk - many members have purchased these suits in the past and there is a colour to suit every taste. For some time they have offered a discount to beekeeping association members, but this year the means of claiming the discount has been simplified. In order to avoid checking on membership for each order, the company has now issued associations with a code which can be redeemed online.

TERMS :

Our discount code is **ABERDEEN10** and can be used with online orders once by each member. The "apply discount" box is visible in your shopping basket before checkout.

It provides a £10 discount off each garment.

The code is valid from 6th May till 5th July 2020.

HAPPY SHOPPING !

TURRIFF SHOW

As you will have realised all public gatherings have been banned while we are in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, and the Turriff Show is no exception. A show of this magnitude requires a whole year of planning for exhibitors organisers, so the decision was taken to cancel a few weeks ago.

ADBKA have supported the show for many years, with a stand inside the Industrial Tent, and in 2018 we took an outside pitch and put up a double gazebo. We had many helpers and sold plenty of honey on both days, however the local bees found out and raided our stand and the Industrial Tent where the Honey Show was an unexpected attraction. Luckily for all concerned there were stings apart from within our trusty group - and the least said about that.....

Our efforts earned us a Second Prize in the Small Stands category.

David Moland

Here are a few pictures of the event to remind us, so we look forward to returning to Turriff in 2021.



FOR SALE

6 frame nucleus hives of locally reared (Aberdeenshire) bees from our best productive hives. 2020 Queens, with at least 3 frames of brood at all stages.

Will only sell to an experienced beekeeper or someone who has a genuine mentor and has completed a beginners course or similar training.

Price: £150.00. £60.00 refundable if the Polynuc and Miller feeder are returned.

Please contact **01467 643062** or mobile **07890 631813**
Norman and Mauren Stewart

WANTED

Electric honey extractor, any type considered.

Call Tom Gullan on 07736 732882

JUST THE SMALL ADVICE

If you have chilled brood combs or sacrificial drone brood; uncap and hang up for the birds to clean out (tit species). This works really well with no damage to combs.

David Lunney