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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

CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

I hope all members and their families are managing to look after themselves in the difficult circumstances we have found ourselves since March. If you have been unwell, I hope you have made a full recovery.

Of course the bees don't know about the lockdown, and have been busy gathering honey (and trying to swarm!) since May. I didn't move my bees to the oilseed rape this year but there seemed to be some lovely weather when the sycamore was in flower and the bees did well with that. As we are now in the "June Gap" some colonies will need feeding until the summer plants come into flower. It might have been too dry for a good heather crop - time will tell.

The Government has now announced a gradual easing of the lockdown restrictions and your committee is considering when and how we can safely restart association activities. At the date of writing I'm afraid all events remain cancelled, but we are hoping to be able to restart at least some of our activities before too long. Any news will be communicated via the website and the newsletter.

In the meantime, do keep looking after your bees.

Malcolm Watson

Beekeeping during the lockdown



This photo I found on the Russian site online and thought it may cheer up you.

Olga Macaulay

THE ABERDEEN BESTIARY

I'd never heard of a bestiary until a friend of my daughter's drew my attention to this fabulous illustration in a text book. It was captioned as being from the 'Aberdeen Bestiary'.



Bestiaries turn out to be ancient books made popular in the Middle Ages as illustrated volumes that describe various animals. The natural history as understood at the time, and illustration of each animal, was usually accompanied by a moral lesson based on the perceived character or behaviour of the animal in question. In his 'History of Beekeeping in Britain' Malcolm Fraser suggests Bestiaries originated in Alexandria in the fifth century AD with an understanding of honey bees subsequent to that time first being included in the twelfth century.

Aberdeen University holds the 'Aberdeen Bestiary', a manuscript written in Latin in England around 1200 and which is considered to be one of the best examples of its type due to its lavish and costly illuminations. It was given to Marischal College in the seventeenth century. Folio 63 of the Aberdeen Bestiary concerns honey bees and the translation makes interesting reading. Space precludes reproducing this

here but you can see it online at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/> (it's a beautiful thing, well worth a look) or in my article in the May edition of The Scottish Beekeeper.

But let's examine a few statements about honey bees in the Bestiary. Remember this is an understanding of honey bees from perhaps a thousand years ago!

'...they construct their dwelling-places with indescribable skill, and store away honey from a variety of flowers.' Yes, we'd all agree with that and also with 'They flee from smoke; they are irritated by noise'.

'...many are found to have been born from the corpses of oxen [a theory/practice called 'bugonia']. To produce them, you beat the flesh of dead calves, so that worms come forth from the putrefying blood; these later become bees. Err, no! You can see an illustration of a biblical twist on bugonia on the front of Tate & Lyle golden syrup tins.

'Procreation is achieved without intercourse or lust.' Hardly! Virgin queens are pursued by drones and mated in flight, with the 'lucky' lusty drone dying in the process.

'Among bees, the king has outstanding natural characteristics, standing forth by virtue of the size and appearance of his body.' Another accurate observation by eye, but it wasn't for a few hundred years that it was established that the 'king' was in fact a queen.

'...what is essential in a king - a merciful nature. For even if he has a sting, he does not use it for revenge...' Maybe it isn't technically 'revenge' but the first emerged queen goes round stinging queens yet to emerge and fights any that have emerged to the death.

There is much made in the text of the 'king' and the workers' loyalty and obedience to him, with the implication that the king was taken to be a consciously 'controlling mind' in the colony, much as would have been the case in human society in those times. A modern view sees the queen as the reproductive component of a complex system, self-regulating through pheromones, other sensory input and communication via trophylaxis (food sharing) and dancing.

'What master of construction taught the bees to construct six-sided compartments, each side of the same, unvarying length; to hang between the walls of each living area fine beds of wax; to compress the honey-dew; and to fill their storehouses, woven from flowers, with a kind of nectar?' Even with modern science to provide some explanations, this seems as amazing now as it was a thousand years ago.

"You can see how the bees all compete with each other in carrying out their duties: some keeping watch over those who are seeking food; some keeping a careful guard on the fort, that is, the hive; ... some making wax from the flowers; some collecting in their mouth the dew poured from the flowers." Indeed we can see, and nowadays have a more complete understanding of the age-related roles of workers in the colony.

'Honey is not only a source of pleasure but of health; it soothes the throat and heals wounds; and it acts as a remedy for internal ulcers.' Don't know about the ulcers but the rest is spot on.

'Although other birds barely produce a single brood in any one year, bees produce two, and being thus twice as fertile, they outnumber the rest.' It is interesting they class bees along with birds. Carl Linnaeus, the 'father of modern' taxonomy didn't come along until the early 1700's.

Of course, the moral message is hardly surprising. *'... follow the example of that little bee and imitate its way of working. See how industrious it is, how much it is loved; everyone longs for and seeks out its fruit of its labour.'*

(Translations and image reproduced by kind permission of the Museums and Special Collections Department, University of Aberdeen.)

Ian Mackley

ROTTEN WOOD AS SMOKER FUEL

Initially I used hessian for smoker fuel, then eggbox material. However I now use rotten wood – “tinder” - which is also referred to in America as “punk wood” and which is easily found under trees, particularly after stormy weather.



After the process of decay, the wood is very light, almost like polystyrene in substance. It is very important that it is completely dry. If I am out running or walking through woods I will take the opportunity to pick up likely bits, and when I get home I leave it in my log store which is well ventilated and open to the sunshine.

Igniting the material is easily done with the application for a second or two of a gas torch flame, or if it is sunny it is easily done with a lens. Once lit it stays lit, it doesn't suffer the disadvantage that I have found with hessian or eggbox material in sometimes going out. In fact a disadvantage is that it is very persistent and difficult to extinguish. Care has to be taken when knocking out the smoker that this is done with no dry grass or brush in the vicinity. If there is any wind the tinder will bust into flame. I carefully

tread it out under my boot and keep the remains under observation until I am certain that no ignition hazard remains.

While I find hessian and in particular eggbox material has an acrid smoke, the wood tinder has, I feel, a less aggressive smoke which lends itself better for the purpose.



Ken Gow

STORES AND JARS UPDATE

We can confirm that there is still stock of syrup, candy pollen and fondant available for uplift as required at Joans facility at Muir of Fowlis - uplift can be arranged by contacting :

Joan Gilbert-Stevens on 019755 81369 or email at craigmill@btinternet.com.

Unfortunately with regards the provision of jars and due to space constraints it is members should contact suppliers directly where they can place their own orders and have jars and lids delivered directly to themselves. The following details are available for the original supplier although it is understood that they may no longer be providing 1lb jars :

Pont Packaging ltd - tel No 0141-423-3066 - email info@pontuk.com

The reference code number for the standard 1lb jars normally purchased is 500435 and the necessary lids (ordered separately) 500277

It is hoped that by providing the above info members can make their arrangements as necessary to ensure that they have the supply of jars required to meet their honey stock needs. Should there be an issue with supply from PONT there are a number of other honey jar suppliers that can be sourced via the internet.

Erling Watt can also be contacted and may still have syrup and a small stock of association jars, candy and old candy pollen gold. Contact him on **074294 54572** or e-mail at watterlingg@aol.com



Viking Maid

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We are always interested in new articles for the newsletter, If you have an item for the newsletter, please contact **Olga Macaulay** by email at adbkanewsletter@gmail.com or

David Morland at adbkavicechair@gmail.com

If you have an article for sale or loan or if you want an article then make use of the adverts section, there is no cost to advertise.

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.