



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

INTRODUCTION TO BEEKEEPING COURSES - 2020 and 2021

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2020 Review

The 2020 Introduction to Beekeeping course started out as popular as ever and when lectures commenced at the end of February, 111 people were signed-up with about another twenty on the waiting list. For the second successive year, we were using a large and well-equipped lecture theatre at Aberdeen University.

By early March it was rapidly becoming clear that we could not continue such large indoor meetings and so the course was suspended with three lectures completed and three yet to be delivered.

We had some hope of resuming in the autumn, but once it was apparent that unconstrained indoor and outdoor meetings were still some way off in an indeterminate future, it was decided to complete the course online. We discussed various possible formats and decided on narrated presentations that participants could watch at their leisure, released weekly, each followed by a live Zoom Q&A session. Although all experienced, the presenters found it surprisingly challenging to talk to a screen with the same buzz (if you'll excuse the pun) that they'd have with a live audience but all six presentations were eventually narrated and re-run.

The 30'ish video viewings each week seemed surprisingly low given the initial enthusiasm for the course. The live Q&A Zoom calls with only a handful of participants turned out to be enjoyable and wide ranging discussions, and direct proof of the 'ask three beekeepers, get four different answers' aphorism. The apiary visits that are an important part of the course were simply not possible.

So although not what was originally planned, we did complete the 2020 course and it was gratifying that a number of the participants started beekeeping during the year, despite the additional obstacles created by the pandemic.

2021 Course

The 2021 course is being offered in the same online format as 2020 - video presentations released weekly on Fridays which can be watched at leisure, followed by a live Zoom Q&A session the following Tuesday. The course will commence on Friday 12th February 2021.

Existing Members of the Association may take the course at a reduced rate of £5 per household. If you wish to do so, please sign up as soon as possible as numbers may be limited, using the following Eventbrite link...

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/135844698149>

...and further information will be emailed to you.

Ian Mackley



Circulated along with this newsletter is the 2021 subscription renewal form. You can help us manage the association for the benefit of our members by renewing your subscription without delay.

Please note that 2021 membership renewal fees have been reduced in the light of the restricted nature of ADBKA activities last year. Renewals for this year are £10 for individual membership and £15 for household membership.

For new members joining in 2021 the rates will be the same as 2020; namely, individual £20, household £25.

Membership renewals should be sent to Erling Watt - see details on the renewal form.

FILM: ODE TO BEEKEEPERS

Documenting the activities of some well-known members of beekeeping groups in the north east of Scotland. Following the film, there will be a question-and-answer session with the producer of the documentary, Maxim Nekliudov.

Thursday 21 January 2021 at 7pm - [Online](#)

Numbers limited. Register for the event using Eventbrite. Connection details for the Zoom meeting will be sent to registered attendees two days before the event. <https://adbka-21jan2021.eventbrite.co.uk>

TALK: PREPARING FOR THE SEASON AHEAD

Presented by **David Evans***

Thursday 18 February 2021 at 7pm

To book your place for this [online](#) talk please register at:

<https://adbka18feb2021.eventbrite.co.uk>



David Evans is a Professor of Virology at St Andrew's University's School of Biology. He runs a team of researchers studying the biology of viruses in the Biomedical Sciences Research Complex (BSRC). Some of these researchers work on **the biology and control of honey bee viruses.*

His website at www.theapiarist.org is one of the UK's most valuable online sources of beekeeping information and advice.

Diary of a New-bee

2018 - I got into beekeeping thanks to two Bumblebees nests I discovered back in 2018, we had one in our cellar and one in the back garden.

It was fun just watching them go about their business and once they vacated their nest's I inspected these and was fascinated on their architecture skills. This then had me reading up about them online, that lead to Honeybees, that lead to deciding to learn more.

I first began checking out YouTube and watched countless videos from Beekeepers from all over the globe, I found a few I considered to be the most beneficial and followed them to see how they did things as everyone has their own take on certain aspects and procedures.

The ones I found most useful from the UK are Black Mountain Honey, Norfolk Honey Company and Gwenyn Gruffydd who all cover various tips, techniques and reviews. Richard Noel based in Brittany who shares his journey into commercial beekeeping with assistance from people like Michael Palmer as well as others.

The one I enjoyed most is Vino Farm based in Massachusetts as each of his 5 seasons are in separate playlists so you see him going from his first hive/s and his 2020 season.

His overwintering set-up is more than we should ever need but the fact that he documented every decision on set up, equipment, his failures and success meant you saw how things can change season to season and hive to hive.

I only wish I had gone through all these videos before I got my first bees in 2019, but that's a lesson I learned.

I started looking at equipment and found a good deal on some 2nd hand Smith hives parts that would be enough for one large hive or two smaller ones. All parts were thoroughly cleaned with a mixture of Soda crystal baths as well as steam cleaning with an eke I made out of scrap timber and a paint steamer.

I then bought the remaining basics, smoker, jacket, hive tool, foundation etc and had everything ready with plans to start in 2019.

In next month's newsletter, find out how John got on with his first beekeeping season, and what part an inattentive tractor driver played in his fortunes.

John Beagrie

OUR BEEKEEPING YEARS - 2020, PART 4

Thank you to everyone who provided stories of their beekeeping year. Here is the last compilation in the series.

Newmachar, with a heather spot near Strathdon, eight hives, four years' experience

I was keen to extract a good *OSR crop*, *manage swarms* without doubling my hive count (split/artificial swarm) and without removing queens and impacting colony strength (nuc method) so planned to make use of the Demaree method and vertical splits this year (possibly more hassle than regular splits but..). Having always been in reactive mode with swarm control while learning over the last three seasons I wanted this year to try to be marginally ahead of the bees and intervene prior to the presence of swarm cells.

I also wanted to finally crack *queen rearing* through grafting to bring on nucs quickly from my preferred queens and the same for any vertical splits.

Finally I wanted to *take more hives to the heather*, and for them to do well and also generally reduce the amount of *faff* in my beekeeping.

So how did I get on...?

The OSR crop was excellent; an average of about 30 kg per hive was extracted. However, some of it crystallised and I lost a few supers to this which the bees are now enjoying as autumn feed. From Murray McGregor's Tweets I have since learned this might be due to adding empty supers between the brood and filling supers, apparently on cold spring nights the bees will move right down into the brood nest in that situation, allowing the honey up top to cool. If done the other way around there is a good chance they will stay on the honey frames and keep it warm.

Swarm control – I don't think I lost any, and my proactive Demaree'ing was mostly successful, although my drones would disagree. Demaree'ing also worked nicely with my other objective of queen rearing, the top ("queenless") boxes I found readily drew out queen cells. I introduced these ripe cells into nucs and the queenless parts of vertical splits and got quite a few mated successfully – it's very satisfying marking a laying queen which you grafted as a larva! However I have now failed for three seasons to get a mated queen from an Apidea, I'm not really sure why!

Heather – I took four hives up rather than last year's two, and they did very well, which is nice as my summer crop would be pretty abysmal otherwise. It's a lot of work but fantastic to get out into the hills and see bees do what they do best when the colony sizes are at their peak.

Faff – perhaps the faff per hive has reduced, but number of hives has increased so total faff has remained constant!

I learned not to put all your eggs in one basket with respect to the Scottish weather. Having a large number of grafted queens is all well and good, but if it's raining for the three weeks when they all need to mate then you have a problem. Plan subsequent rounds of grafts just in case. By the same token, for a summer harvest splitting hives between heather and lowlands seems to be a good strategy.

I also learned that uniting two strong colonies too early in the season can have consequences – a colony can go into swarm mode with a queen of the current year in the hands of a reckless beekeeper!

Westhill, six hives, sixteen years' experience

The average temperament of my bees seems to have deteriorated over the past few years, so my strategic goal was stock improvement. I therefore planned to work on my queen rearing and I successfully produced several mated queens from my preferred colonies by grafting and using mini-nucs. This was a considerable improvement on my previous efforts, probably helped by the good weather in late May and June; a couple of mini-nucs only took 11 days from emergence to lay, with most nucs in the 16-19 day range at that time. I learned not to rush grafting and to really pay attention to handling the larvae delicately. I also introduced some Colonsay 'black bee' lineage to further refresh the gene pool.

I had a number of 'surprises' (mistakes?), including finding a marked queen ON TOP of the queen excluder (possibly she had squeezed through but I think more likely was due to careless stacking of hive parts in the previous inspection), a mated queen flying off never to be seen again as I rather clumsily tried to get her into an introduction cage, and catching a swarm in a nuc only for it to leave again after a couple of hours (and be re-caught down the road later).

I have enjoyed several webinars put on by various associations across the UK and Ireland, and have effectively 'been' to many more talks than in a normal year. As usual, they have offered both enlightenment and contradiction!



Aberdeen Bee Supplies

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

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

Distribution of Treatment Free and Treating Beekeepers in the UK

As part of my final year project for my zoology degree at the University of Salford, supervised by Prof Stephen Martin, I am investigating the distribution of treatment free beekeepers and beekeepers who are actively treating for varroa resistance in the UK. In the case of this project, we are defining treatment as any form of external/additional control administered to bees by their keepers with the aim of reducing Varroa destructor mite numbers. This survey is completely anonymous apart from asking which association you are linked to, to ensure no data protection laws are broken. Any responses would be extremely helpful! The deadline for responses is the middle of February.

This is the link to the survey, all responses are greatly appreciated -

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdfM7K7xMOyqCYr-eYOFT9MrTd65PjOMn3GO8SusOd4ja9Q2Q/viewform?usp=sf_link

Alexandra Valentine

After a four-year stint as the editor of the ADBKA newsletter, Olga Macaulay is taking a well-deserved break. Members regularly praise the way in which they are able to keep up to date with association news and information. Pulling this together every month can be an onerous task, but one that we are all grateful for.

Thank you, Olga!

THANK YOU!

Colin and Fiona at the Bee Cabin have kindly donated stocks of fondant, Candipolline and syrup to feed the association bees at the Crathes apiary over the winter.

We are extremely grateful for their generosity and wish the Colin and Fiona a happy and prosperous 2021!

BEE CABIN BEEKEEPING SUPPLIES AND SERVICES

Tel 07809229375

Online shop - www.beecabin.ecwid.com

WE'RE HERE FOR ALL YOUR BEEKEEPING NEEDS

DESS, ABOYNE AB34 5BB

A Beekeeping Alphabet

A is for Apiary

A place where bees are kept. An ideal apiary site is sheltered, south-ish-facing, sufficiently spacious, easily accessible, secure from unwanted intrusion from other animals or humans, within foraging range of a wide range of nectar and pollen sources, and where flying bees will not disturb the public. We are lucky if our apiary meets all of those criteria!

An 'out-apiary' is an apiary away from the beekeeper's home base.

