



DECEMBER
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

PRESIDENT:

SANDY GORDON
Tel.01224-484540

CHAIR:

MALCOLM WATSON
e-mail:
adbkachair@gmail.com
Tel.07901-515212

VICE CHAIR:

DAVID MORLAND
Tel. 07768244420
e-mail:
adbkavicechair@gmail.com

HON. SECRETARY:

ALISON GOSS
e-mail:
aberdeenbeekeepers@
gmail.com

HON. TREASURER:

JOHN ADAMS
Tel. 01224868402
e-mail:
treasureradbka@gmail.com

**MEMBERSHIP
SECRETARY:**

ERLING WATT
Tel.074294 54572
e-mail:
adbkamembership@
gmail.com

ADBKA NEWSLETTER

OLGA MACAULAY
Tel. 01224315276
e-mail:
adbkanewsletter@
gmail.com

FUTURE ARTICLES

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

As we come to the end of 2020 we can all look back on probably the strangest year anyone can remember. In January there were already a few news articles about a new disease in China, but no one anticipated how fast and far the Covid19 situation would develop. The disease has killed thousands, and Government restrictions intended to control it have also had devastating consequences. I offer my sympathy to those members who have been affected.

Of course the Association's plans for the year had to be curtailed, and since our AGM in March we have only managed one face to face meeting which was the Winter Preparations demonstration at Crathes in August. This went ahead with reduced numbers and social distancing measures. Our *Introduction to Beekeeping* Course had to be suspended half way through, and the remaining lectures have recently been completed online. Committee business has also been handled online, and as I write we are preparing for our first online Association meeting – this is scheduled for 11th December and features a talk from Gavin Ramsay about SNHBS. I know many members value the social aspect of meetings as well as their technical content, and can only apologise for all the programme disruption.

The committee anticipates that normality will not return for some time. When you receive your 2021 programme card you will see that a series of online meetings is planned from January until April. We are hoping that Government restrictions will be lifted in time for regular meetings to resume from May, but time will tell. I hope that many of you will attend these online meetings and will find them useful and enjoyable.

Fortunately, the bees seem to be doing well. If oxalic acid treatment is part of your varroa control regime then late December is a good time for that. From now until spring we should be occasionally hefting to check for food stores, also checking the hives' integrity. Additional fondant or candy may be required, especially in late winter/early spring. And this is a good time to fumigate spare comb and catch up on any outstanding maintenance jobs.

Season's greetings to you all.

Malcolm Watson



OUR BEEKEEPING YEARS - 2020, PART 3

Thank you to everyone who provided stories of their beekeeping year. Here is the third article...

BANCHORY-DEVENICK, TWO HIVES, SECOND YEAR

My goals for 2020 were to use the Nucleus Method for swarm control and to establish a second colony. I also hoped to get some honey.

Whilst the spring was sunny it was generally pretty cold and the colony took a while to get going – I'd fed 1:1 in mid-April for a couple of weeks to try to get things moving. During May the colony was expanding quickly but there was little or no activity in the super that I'd (optimistically?) put on at the start of the month.

At the start of June, with open queen cells seen, I took the queen out and moved her to a poly-nuc together with two frames of brood and one of stores. A week later I removed several queen cells from the original hive, leaving just one.

There was then a period of very poor weather. The original queen in the poly-nuc was doing fine, building up her colony and I moved this colony into a new hive in early July. But there was no sign of eggs for ages in the original hive and I was considering recombining the colonies again. However, test frames were indicating the presence of a queen and eggs / larvae were finally seen in mid-July confirming that I now had two laying queens.

Both colonies expanded through July / August but I didn't put supers on either hive as the main objective was to get both colonies as strong as possible by the end of the summer – so no honey!

One lesson from the year was the importance of understanding how the weather will affect the colony – both in terms of progress and also the mood and behaviour of the bees. Having been pretty well convinced that the new queen had failed I learned that things can take much longer than expected.

Finally, thanks to my bee-mentor. It would have been a great deal more difficult and the outcome uncertain without his guidance and help!

MUIR OF FOWLIS, 6 YEARS' EXPERIENCE

This year has been a challenge in a couple of areas. I was disappointed that the SBA microscopy exam was cancelled as I had spent ages trying to put together the slides needed. But on the positive side I have collected some more pollen types that I had missed out on last year and also collect a few more drones which I require for dissection. That is going to give me something to do over the winter months in preparation for the exam next year (hopefully).

The spring honey crop was good with some nice runny honey being extracted and another second extraction of some early summer forage produced some honey which is now nicely self-granulating. I had a challenge with three supers of later summer honey which I had left in the shed planning to extract. However, when I managed to find the time to do that discovered that quite a lot of them had granulated in the frames - on reflection I feel that the local rasps contributed to this so I had to consider how best to benefit from the granulated frames. I have a unit which is a little like an Apimelter but with just one heater (an Apimelter has two electric heaters). Anyway, as the unit had not been used in earnest previously I decided to cut out all the solid granulated frames and see whether warming them up would separate the honey and the wax. I'm pleased to confirm that this worked well and recovered approximately 35lbs honey with all of the wax sitting on the separator grid for easy removal. (Wonder if it would work as well on solid OSR frames?) Having never prepared soft set honey previously I followed the Dyce Method as demonstrated by the Norfolk Honey Co - that was a success and pleased to say that this honey spreads very well on the toast. I also used an old Velux window and made a solar wax extractor which worked well in the warm weather. But it is no use now that the temperature is dropping.

I put two colonies to the heather but due to family reasons I waited too late to collect with the result that the heather crop was very small as the bees decided to eat most of it. But colonies have built up and I have a few small jars of very expensive honey to show for my efforts in that area!

GLASSEL, BANCHORY

I have been a beekeeper, on and off, for a number of years, then my wife and I enrolled in the Tarland Bee Group's "Introduction to Beekeeping Course", and attended two lectures and two Zoom lectures from February to April. We have a double-walled hive which attracted a swarm two years ago. The hive was in a poor position in our garden, so I moved it with the help of my son-in-law to a more favourable south facing position. Unfortunately the hive did not have a brood box; we prepared new brood foundation and with assistance identified and marked the queen. We have extracted approximately 16lbs of honey.

Ian Mackley

MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Membership fees fall due on the first of January each year and should be paid by 31st of March to continue to enjoy membership benefits. Early payment of fees is much appreciated and saves a lot of time on administration, particularly as the beekeeping season gets going.

Due to the severe curtailment of association events this year the committee has decided to reduce the renewal fee for 2021 by £10.00 for 2020 members. The membership form has been amended accordingly to accommodate this.

There are a number of payment options including setting up a direct debit. Anyone wishing to pay by this method should contact the treasurer directly to set this up as soon as possible. Members who have already set up a direct debit will automatically have the appropriate reduced fee debited from their account around the 16th of January. I will send out your membership cards soon after this date, no need to submit a renewal form unless your circumstances have changed.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding your renewal.

May I take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe and happy festive season when it comes and the best of wishes for a hopefully more certain 2021.

Erling Watt

ABERDEEN & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION ONLINE MEETING **WITH A SHOWING OF THE NEW FILM "ODE TO BEEKEEPERS"** **FOLLOWED BY A Q&A WITH THE DIRECTOR MAXIM NEKLIUDOV**

In 2020 local film maker Maxim Nekliudov filmed the activities of some well known members of beekeeping groups in the north east of Scotland. The new film "Ode to Beekeepers" was the result. It will be shown for the first time at this online ADBKA association meeting **on 21st January 2021**. Members will recognise some of the contributors and can participate in a Q&A session following the showing.

Please register for the event using Eventbrite as we have a limit on the numbers that can attend the online session. Connection details for the Zoom meeting will be sent to registered attendees two days before the event.

<https://adbka-21jan2021.eventbrite.co.uk>

Also, here is a link to the recording of the Native Honey Bee session.

<https://youtu.be/44nrhH5cjgA>

Malcolm Watson

You may have noticed there was a piece in Sunday's paper recently about honey containing sugar syrup. The P&J contacted the ADBKA Chair Malcolm Watson to follow up on this and here is their resulting article.

WHAT'S IN YOUR HONEY? BEEKEEPERS QUESTION LOW PRICING AMID CLAIMS SOME PRODUCTS ARE BEING BULKED OUT WITH SYRUP

Food standards officials are assessing the extent of potential honey adulteration in Scotland and the rest of the UK after reports of sugar syrup being added to own-brand products sold in some supermarkets.

Tests conducted on own-brand honey from four major supermarkets suggested they had, unbeknown to the retailers, been adulterated with the addition of syrups made from rice and corn.

Although such added ingredients would not make products unsafe for consumption, it would mean they fall short of industry standards.

Supermarkets say they believe their honey is pure and can be directly traced back to beekeepers, adding that regular tests are carried out to ensure the honey sold in stores fully complies with legal standards.

CLAIMS INVESTIGATED



[Food Standards Scotland](#) says it is working with the [Food Standards Agency](#) – responsible for public health in relation to food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – to assess just how widespread the problem is in this country.

A spokesperson said: “Food Standards Scotland officials are working closely with colleagues from the Food Standards Agency to fully understand the extent of the concerns around honey authenticity raised over the weekend.

“Honey is a natural, but complex product and there are a number of different testing processes which are used to determine authenticity. Wherever possible these methods should be internationally recognised and validated, and at this early stage in the investigation, we and our colleagues at the FSA, are seeking to fully understand the implications around the issues raised with the products involved.

“At this moment in time we have received no complaints about product in Scotland.”

In July, we reported on the global problem of adulterated honey and a Kitemark initiative which aims to give consumers confidence in the products they’re buying.

The BSI (British Standards Institution) Kitemark was created to help food companies verify food label claims, deliver consumer trust and support transparency in the food chain.

Richard Werran, EMEA Director for Food at BSI (British Standards Institution), explained that with volumes of honey produced increasing far beyond the number of hives, questions should be asked.

He said: “There’s in excess of half a million tonnes of honey produced in China a year, for example, and production in honey has increased by 88% since 2000. Yet the number of hives has only increased by 21%. Their hives have been affected, like everyone else, by falling bee populations and pesticides affecting bee health. So there are definitely indications that something is wrong.

“There are big drivers in honey as it’s a high-value product and it’s in high demand, particularly in the Middle East, the UK and the US. So there’s a great incentive for adulteration to take place.

“We call it ‘honey-laundering’, which is where sugar syrups that may contain fructose, or rice, or corn syrups, have been purposely blended into a genuine honey product in Asia, shipped to central Europe where they are given a new identity and then enter the food chain that way.”

BEEKEEPERS COUNT THE COST OF CHEAP IMPORTS

Malcolm Watson is chair of the [Aberdeen and District Beekeepers' Association](#) and has been keeping bees for 12 years. But reports of adulterated imports come as little surprise, as he and his fellow beekeepers have long questioned how honey could be sold so cheaply in supermarkets.

He said: "The vast majority of honey in the shops comes from commercial beekeepers; hobby keepers like ourselves are a drop in the ocean. I've read in the past that 90% of the honey in this country is imported so the British beekeepers are nowhere near able to meet the demand. Most do it as a hobby but a few do it as a business. In this country we are regulated and there are rules around the composition of honey and we're all very aware that you can't sell a jar of stuff called honey unless it really is honey.



"But it is a mystery to us how the supermarkets manage to sell honey so cheaply. Most people would say even if you put no value on the beekeepers' labour and just account for the cost of looking after the bees, the price of the honey in the supermarket would not cover it. So, like a number of agricultural products, the people who are trying to sell honey commercially in this country are up against it due to cheap imports.

"It's been suggested in the past that some honey is being adulterated with sugar syrup, and I know several organisations have looked at that. All I would say is it would be easier and quicker to produce honey if you were adulterating it with sugar syrup."

But while locally-produced Scottish honey may be more expensive than imported offerings, Malcolm believes there is a market out there for local varieties.

"What I believe and what I often say to people when I'm talking about the price of honey is quite a lot of people are willing to pay a bit more to get locally-produced honey because they know where it's come from and they know what it is. There is a demand there for Scottish honey."



Viking Maid

EMBROIDERY

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on your bee suit or clothing of your
choice?*

Names can also be added.

Embroidered Logo - £7.50

Embroidered Name - £6.00

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07837400896**

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JOCK MCGREGOR
IS THE LOCAL AGENT FOR
THORNE BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT
CONTACT HIM ON **01224 790468**
or e-mail:
aberdeenbeesupplies@hotmail.com

