



**The Presidents Tips And Tricks for the month of October**



There are many ways to keep your bees. Each month I intend to give some tips and tricks to help you keep your bees thriving.

You should by now have finished treatment for varroa

If you feed syrup then you should have completed that as well; feeding syrup late does not give the bee's time to ripen and cap it and this can lead to fermentation later. Fondant can be fed at any time of course.

The mouse will be looking for a cosy home for the winter. Make sure that he does not find it in one of your hives! Fit mouseguards now or ensure that entrances are no more than 7mm high.

Make sure that roofs are either weighted down with the traditional brick or two, or tied down with string passed under the hive. It is also worth looking around the apiary to see whether any trees would pose a threat if they blew over; it does happen regularly - and a hive is no match for a tree, or even a large branch.

While you are looking around the apiary, consider whether your hives will get sunlight during the winter months; those that do will stand a much better chance of survival than those in deep shade; a little pruning can make a big difference.



**Apiary**

Shed:- This is the last word on the shed which I *think* is now wasp proof. They were getting in through the roof apex at the front and back and after these were closed they were getting in above the door. Final two thank you's to Mike Thornley for an afternoon inside the shed and I think Alastair Cameron, got the short straw, as he had a very sticky four hours on the roof with me. Thanks to everyone who helped. Neil Sandison

## **SCOTTISH BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION CONVENTION INVERNESS 2013** Sue Thornley

The SBA Convention was this year hosted by the Inverness Beekeepers' Association on Saturday 21 September. Over 100 people met from all over Scotland and shared a day of good lectures, discussion and trade exhibits.

The 2 lecturers were Mike Brown, Head of the FERA National Bee Unit from York and Dr Mario Pahl, a researcher from the Julians-Maximilian University at Wurzburg, Germany.

We started with Mike Brown explaining the work of the NBU where one third approximately of the staff work on bee health issues, including 60 bee inspectors of whom 10 are full time. The importance of Bee Base was stressed as anticipating and coping with bee diseases requires a risk based inspection programme, targeting apiaries in areas identified as risk points. With heavy bee losses in the UK, replacement bees are sought from all over the world and the NBU is always on guard against new exotic pests. Despite EFB, there are no restrictions on import of bees from the EU.

Mario Pahl works with Prof Jurgen Tautz at Wurzburg and focused on the life of bees, particularly new thinking about thermoregulation and sensory systems. Honey is the heating fuel and certain bees can act as 'heaters' to warm and regulate the temperature of brood. Infrared film showed this graphically. Bee vision with their compound eyes was explained. Bees have low resolution and poor depth perception but compensate for this by using a moving view, approximately 10x better than man. Bees may not be able to see the red end of the colour spectrum but their UV vision helps to identify flowers. The 3 ocelli on the top of their heads give them flight stabilisation.

After lunch we learnt about the NBU's queen rearing system from Mike Brown which runs from April through to September on a large scale. From selected colonies double brood boxes are set up with a queen-right colony below a top box of grafted cells, young brood, food and pollen. This works on a 10 day cycle with the queen cells then moved to 5 frame nucs, apideas or other nucs. Mike also showed film of instrumental insemination of queens which is being tested as a way of raising tougher, longer lasting queens.

Mario returned to take us through honeybee learning, memory and navigation, covering some of the work he carried out for his doctorate. Although bees only have a brain weight one thousandth of man, their performance is similar to vertebrates in comparable experiments. They can learn to follow colour paths through mazes, count to 3 or 4 and discriminate between human faces. For navigation they use the celestial compass, using the dorsal ring over their eyes and measure distance by optical flow. They use landmarks and the skyline to aid positioning.

It was an educational day with inspirational speakers to encourage Scottish Beekeepers to improve their understanding and cooperation with their bees.

### **ANNUAL HONEY COMPETITION**

Mike Thornley

On Friday afternoon it looked as if we would have a record breaking number of entries to the honey classes of the Helensburgh and Gareloch Horticultural Society's 163<sup>rd</sup> Annual Flower and Vegetable Show but it was not to be. However with 6 entries for the clear honey and 4 frames ready for extraction on the benches there was a reasonable display that attracted a considerable amount of interest.

The keenest competition was in the clear honey class with 5 light coloured pitched against one darker entry (the latter clearly aimed at the judge's known predilection for darker honey). In fact

the decision came down to clarity and viscosity. Some entries were marked down for being slightly cloudy, either due to air bubbles caused by recent bottling or the early stages of crystallising. Others, beautifully clear, were unripe and too thin, again a sign of recent bottling.

There was clear winner in the frame ready for extraction; an immaculate Manley frame, which had been primed with a starter strip of wax for the bees to draw out and fill and seal with wonderful white cappings, every cell perfectly sealed. This entry is destined to go on to higher competitions as well it should.

#### Results

Clear honey

First Mike and Sue Thornley

Second Neil Sandison

Third Mike Appleton

Frame ready for extraction

First Neil Sandison

Second Mike and Sue Thornley

Third Reg Johnson

Mike and Sue won the Buchanan Challenge Cup for most points by virtue of having the only entry in the set honey class (entered if only to prove to the judge that they could put a properly set entry on to the benches after being knocked back in the two previous years for too runny honey).

Well done to first time entrants, Cameron and Reg and to David Brown for judging and to Jackie Theaker his scribe. More entries next year please.

#### Diary Dates

**24<sup>th</sup> October** - Members meeting with Honey tasting – bring along a jar of honey and any other hive products you'd like to show off. Rhu Church hall, 7:15pm

**14<sup>th</sup> November** - For those new to beekeeping, or indeed those who think they might like to be new to beekeeping, we are running an Introduction to Beekeeping evening. Rhu Church hall, 7:15pm