



The Presidents Tips And Tricks for the month of May



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

The early promise of a normal spring seems to have disappeared, with April proving to be particularly disappointing. As a result we are well behind with inspections. The forecast is not good either for the next few weeks

Setting up my mating apiary has also had to go on hold, so there will be much work to do when it does warm up a bit!

Most colonies are very strong this year due to the mild winter, so try to keep on top of the seven - nine day inspections for swarming if the weather allows, but be careful to ensure sufficient bees and food in each part if splitting colonies. In particular, small nucs would be at great risk, with chilled queen cells unlikely to hatch.

Do remember to check for disease when you can inspect properly - ask for help if you are unsure about anything.

If you are unable to inspect then the next best thing is to set up a few bait boxes to catch any swarms that emerge. Drawn comb, ideally brood, is essential as swarms are not attracted to foundation; a couple of empty drawn supers set up on a floor and covered with a roof (or anything waterproof) may save you losing a swarm.

Stronger colonies are taking advantage of breaks in the weather to bring in some nectar so make sure that they have enough supers - but not too many or the honey will be scattered up through them; try to keep one super ahead of the bees.

It has been said that there is nothing that cannot be made cheaper and worse. That certainly applies to the crown of thorns queen cage (also known as a Baldock cage) which is widely used to restrain queens when clipping and marking them. It has always had metal pins with cotton threads strung across them to form the cage. Plastic versions have appeared recently, the worst example being a rather sickly green colour; these are useless as the plastic 'mesh' is so thick that it is impossible to mark or clip a queen through the very small holes

Next Meeting

Thursday the 22nd May at Rhu Church Hall 7.15pm. Frame making, Advice on how to find the queen and much more.

SALE

A retiring member has offered a Bee Brush and a smoker for auction at the next club meetings. This is quite a good model with the metal surround guard. Proceeds to go to the club funds.
Alastair

Club Apiary Visits

We have started the month with our weekly club apiary visits. The aim of the visits is for checking the colonies for swarming and dealing with any other issues that may arise or need doing.

This is an ideal opportunity for inexperienced beekeepers to get some hands on experience and to work with an experienced beekeeper that will run the session.

The first of these events took place on the 11th May where 8 members turned up.



The weather started nice warm and sunny only for it to go downhill from there.

The first hive was nice and strong and was done as a group session where the usual checks for queen cells were made. The queen was not seen although there was evidence she was still there. The queen was not marked but we are getting too late in the season for this due the strength of the colonies. If the queen was to be spotted then Donnie was prepared with his new queen cage of thorns and marker pen



The weather went quickly downhill with a torrential downpour. We sheltered in the really nice club shed and in a car. A future project may be to construct a porch onto the side of the shed for shelter.

The worst of the rain passed but as it was still quite wet we split into groups to check the remaining hives.



The job was done quickly and efficiently with still no signs of any swarm preparation and still no sign of any queens for Donnie to use his pen and cage.

Maybe next week's session, if the weather is a bit better, we may still find those elusive queens!

Other Dates

The Association will be at Townhead Open Farm day on 8 June. Come along anyway and if you'd like to help on our stall, let us know at Thursdays meeting.

Reminder that CABA outing is on the 17 August.

Although Thursdays meeting will be the last until we resume after the summer on 25 September.

Weekly apiary visits will continue and we will be holding a BBQ at Townhead farm later in the summer, date to be confirmed shortly. There will be a wax workshop in the summer also, date to be confirmed.

Looking further ahead we will be organizing an Annual Dinner in October.