

NEWSLETTER – August 2014



Association BBQ

This will be on Sunday the 31 August at Townhead Farm from 1200 until about 4pm. John is going to provide a BBQ and sausages and burgers from the range of Townhead products. This was a fantastic event last year so bring along all the family. Please email Gordon (secretary@helensburghbees.com) to let us know numbers. There will be a cost of a few pounds per head, payable on the day to cover meat and rolls (exact cost tba). Contributions of salads and sweets will be appreciated. There may be the opportunity to go through a few hives. Directions and map at the Townhead Farm website townheadfarm.net, see location

Helensburgh and Garelochhead Horticultural Society Annual Flower Show

This on Saturday the 30th August in the Victoria Halls. There will be categories for :-

1. Best Super Frame
2. One jar of set honey
3. One jar of liquid Honey

The honey should be in one pound standard honey jars. Full details later, but remember to put aside a jar or two of your best when extracting. No entry fee and the honey will be returned. Strutt your stuff! Alastair Cameron will take your entry along if you can't get to the Victoria Halls on the early Friday evening.

Scottish Beekeepers Association Autumn Convention (SBA)

The highlight of the bee year takes place on Saturday the 27th September 0845am - 5:10 pm the SRUC Barony campus near Dumfries. It is closer than you think and takes only about 1 and three quarters of an hour to get there. Excellent speakers and the £30 includes morning coffee/tea, lunch, afternoon tea break. There will be opportunities for bargains at the trade stands and additional 1 1/2 hour microscopy workshops are available at £5 extra with limited numbers on a first come first served basis (see SBA magazine) Mike Thornley is organising this event so we want to give it our best support. Cheques should be made out to SBA and sent to Mike at Glenarn, Glenarn Road, Rhu, Helensburgh, G84 8LL. Please indicate choice of lunch (Traditional Steak Pie, Fish, Chicken salad or Vegetable Lasagne) and include a SAE for programme and receipt if de-sired. We hope to organise a bit of car sharing. Alastair Cameron will try to organise that at our meeting on the 25th September but an e-mail to camay2390@gmail.com would be helpful.

CABA Outing Sunday 17th August 0930 Partick Burgh Halls. Don't forget if you have booked. If not, a quick e-mail to Mhairi Neill glasgowbeesec@hotmail.com with a phone number might get you a late place.



The Presidents Tips And Tricks for the month of August



We are now approaching the time when you will want to extract your honey - and, I hope, treat your bees for varroa. Extracting (and bottling) honey is a huge subject and I do not have the space here to cover everything, so here are just a few tips.

First the old chestnut - YES you can extract honey which is not capped! Bees only cap honey when the cells are full, so if the flow ends some cells will still be uncapped as the bees are waiting for more nectar to finish filling the cells.

The crucial thing is the water content: if you take off honey with uncapped cells when there is a flow on then you will have honey with a high water content and it will ferment and spoil.

So take off your honey in the morning when the bees have had all night to 'ripen' it. The classic test is to hold the frame horizontally and give it a sharp downward shake (but not so hard that the comb falls out of the frame!). If no drops of nectar fall out then the honey is generally ready for extraction. If you want to know the water content of your honey then either buy a refractometer or bring it to me and I will test it for you. Less than 19% (the old U.K. standard) is OK - the new EU standard of 20% is too high

Protect the floor! Extracting honey can be a very messy business. Some people put down newspaper to catch drips of honey and bits of propolis, but this just tends to stick to your shoes so that you end up walking around with great lumps of sticky newspaper on your feet. Large sheets of cardboard are much better - especially those used on pallets. Keep a separate pair of shoes, or boots, for the extracting area and step out of them when moving to a 'clean' area.

Uncapping. I do this with a stainless steel hive tool kept in the honey house for the purpose. No danger of cutting off thumbs, it uncaps low parts that a knife cannot reach, it can remove patches of granulation, and helps remove 'stuck' frames from supers. One tool does everything!

Straining. You can strain honey to bottling standard immediately if you wish - although you will probably need to warm it to go through the filter - or you can rough strain it and then store it in buckets until required, when it can be warmed and strained properly. Do not bottle straight from the extractor as you will probably end up with very coarse granulated frosted honey.

Cleaning up. COLD water is your friend here as it will not melt wax and propolis. Put a strainer under the outlet of the extractor and wash away all the bits. Having done that you can then use hot water for a final clean. Do not wash wax down the drain with hot water - it will cool quickly and then clog your drains or sewers; strain out wax and recover it to sell or trade in.

VARROA TREATMENT!!!

August is the time to start your varroa treatment and this year it is probably more important than ever because the mild winter, strong colonies in the spring and the decent June and July have been very favourable for the varroa mites. A recent report locally tells of 3-4 mites per drone larva - colonies will collapse quickly with that sort of level!

WASPS are now starting to be a problem. Reduce entrances where necessary, use wasp traps and kill nests, take special care of nucs. You may have to move colonies to another apiary if things are really bad.

ROBBING is easily started and very difficult to stop. Do not leave colonies open for any longer than is absolutely essential and be sure not to leave honey where bees can get to it. If clearing honey with Porter escapes make certain that there are no gaps in your supers where bees and wasps could get

in. If feeding syrup - probably not yet - do it in the evening and do not spill any (fondant is much easier to use!). Return wet supers in the late evening.

