



## **NEWSLETTER – May 2015**

**Next Meeting** Thursday the 28th May at 7:15pm at Rhu Parish Church.

“Selling honey and bee products. A & B Environmental Services

Honey went like hot cakes at our stall at the Helensburgh last year, but it needs to be properly presented and labelled. Find out how at this meeting. See also article below.

### **Beginners and Intermediate Courses**

Comprehensive courses for beginners and intermediates are available from Graeme Sharpe at the Agricultural College at Ayr Tel 01292 525375 [graeme.Sharpe@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:graeme.Sharpe@sruc.ac.uk) Highly recommended!

**Beginners Visits** The initial visit with 10 people went well in superb weather, since then winter seems to have returned but we are trying to get to everyone who wants to look inside a beehive. Contact us if you are still waiting please.

### **The committee**

The summer programme is to be built round the association's apiary and its management through the coming season, following best practice. Notice will be given of tasks to be carried out (queen marking, inspections, swarm control, etc) and all members will be welcomed for the help that they can provide and also, we hope, for the experience that they can gain.

### **Library**

Nikki will be bringing books for the new and not so new beekeepers to our next two meetings

### **Things to watch out for and do**

The high expectations of sunny April become the cold reality of May - and I am not talking about politics. However, as in social life, social insects like honeybees require to be fed, colonies supported, treated for diseases, and even after all this care some, maybe even most, will seek independence. Currently for the beekeeper there are two crucial implications. First with this cold weather continuing, curtailing foraging, colonies may well have to be fed to ward off starvation of both bees and brood. This will be particularly the case for those colonies that built up strongly in April or where stores have been removed by the beekeeper to provide more space for colony expansion. Second as soon as the temperature rises there will be a rush to swarm so that beekeepers will have to inspect their colonies immediately the weather changes for the better.

*Mike Thornley*

## Preparing honey for sale

At our next meeting representatives from the statutory authority will be advising on requirements for the sale of honey and other products of the hive. Your editor has asked for some practical advice for the on honey processing. So here are 10 points:

- 1) Take care with your personal hygiene: washing your hands and arms, wearing suitable clothes or protection like an apron, making sure cuts on hands are covered, avoiding your hair getting into your honey (so embarrassing) and banning your pets from where you are working.
- 2) Make sure that you have a suitable and clean workplace. If this is the kitchen, which is usually the case, clear and clean the work tops and sink and make yourself plenty of space.
- 3) Ensure that all your equipment is clean (usually after a long period in storage) and also that your honey jars are clean. Put them through the dishwasher and don't re-use old tops.
- 4) Only process fully capped frames of honey, thereby having the bees guaranteeing the correct water content.
- 5) Use strainers (course and fine) to remove all the bits and pieces, such as grass, bee parts and everything else that is on the frames, do not find their way in to the honey jar (so embarrassing).
- 6) It is best to leave honey in a tub for a few days to settle and ripen but make sure that it is covered as, if not, dust and hairs will quickly form on its surface.
- 7) Fill the jars to the correct level. Put on tops and wipe off the residue.
- 8) On completion clean equipment with copious amounts of cold water. Dry, using a clean cloth if necessary, and store in new sealed bags such as bin liners.
- 9) Keep a record of the hives from which that batch of honey has been taken and the date.
- 10) Label the jars following the statutory requirements exactly.

There is a good extended summary of this type of information in JD and BD Yates "Bee-keeping Study Notes for the Basic Beemaster's Certificate" in the association's library.

*Mike Thornley*