



NEWSLETTER – August 2015

Next Meeting BBQ Townhead Farm, Sunday the 30th August, 1200 onwards until 4pm or so. John Penniston will provide the meat, but if we could each bring a salad, a sweet or some baking to share then that would be great. We will ask people to make a donation to cover the cost of the sausages etc., about £5, on the day. There will be an opportunity to see some bees up there, so bring a beesuit etc. if you so wish.

Directions, see townheadfarm.net,

Images wanted for a virtual outing to members' apiaries - Thursday 24/9/2015

Unfortunately the association has not organised any visits this year to members' apiaries. However to make up for this we are arranging a virtual trip at our first indoor meeting in September when we hope to review the season and experiences of members in what has been a difficult year. We would like to hear not just how the season went for your bees but any interesting initiatives you took, strange events that took place and so on. How did your queen rearing get on? Are there any unexplained happenings on which you would like to get the views of members? Have you any useful tips that you can pass on?

To provide a bit of context, as they say these days, please email two images of your apiary as soon as possible to Alastair Cameron at camay2390@gmail.com, who has kindly agreed to put them together into a simple powerpoint to aid each presentation. In this way we should be able to visit a number of apiaries in one night. One image to give the setting of your apiary plus another of a close up of the hive(s) would be good or any other image of something that you are going to refer to in your short contribution. Alastair will be dealing with the powerpoint and acting as MC on the night. *Mike Thornley*

P.S. from Alastair Cameron. I am happy to come and take photos if that is a help. Also, that evening, we would like to know how much honey you took off and how many hives you are taking into the winter *Alastair (674707)*

Honey Show. Saturday 29th August Victoria Halls, Helensburgh. There is a huge nectar flow at present so there will be honey to show! 3 classes. a jar of set honey, a jar of liquid and a super frame of honey. Separate e-mail to follow with all details.

Bees for Sale. The association has two colonies of bees for sale at £75 each. Please contact Neil Sandison 01389 841408.

Association Dinner Wednesday 24th October, Commodore Hotel, Helensburgh. Details to follow from Ben Bellamy in a few weeks time but put the date in your diary.

Clyde Area Beekeeping Association (CABA) Wednesday 30/09/2015. The Tour Speaker is Graham Royale and he will be speaking at the Heart of Scotstoun Community Centre, 64 Balmoral Street, G14 0BL at 7pm on "Apis through the looking glass" Contact Alastair Cameron if you want a lift.

Scottish Beekeepers' Association Autumn Convention Saturday the 12th September, Oatbridge Campus SRUC, Ecclesmachan, Broxburn, EH52 6NH. All day, with fabulous speakers and lunch etc, £30, also trade stands with beekeeping equipment bargains. Contact John Coyle, Rose Cottage, Burton, By Kippen FK8 3JL 07774 266 540 info@beekeepinginScotland.co.uk. There are usually several people from Helensburgh going to this event so a bit of car sharing should be possible.

Strong enough colonies for the winter?

A few days ago I was asked by a member to inspect his bees. He could not see any signs of laying queens. His records were reasonably good and he knew that one hive had swarmed a month ago. In this colony we found a small patch of eggs. The other colony had swarmed about 3 weeks previously (and probably not for the first time, stressing the importance of effective swarm control) and in this case a very few few eggs indicated the first signs of a laying queen. It would take another 9 days or so to confirm that the eggs have developed into worker brood but and the new queens are properly mated. But on the face of it, this was good news: the bad news was that the individual colonies may not build up in sufficient time to have enough new bees to get themselves through the winter.

The queen can only lay within the warmth of the cluster. A weak colony (sometimes the result of repeated swarming) will only have enough remaining bees to form a small cluster. Hence, the new queen's ability to lay will be constrained, resulting in a slow build up.

As rule of thumb the colony requires not less than 6 frames of brood at the end of August to survive the following winter and in the case of the member's bees I inspected this will not be achieved.

So what is to be done at the beginning of September when weak stocks should be united? The weak stocks might be united together but two weak colonies rarely make one sufficiently strong colony. A better solution is to unite one weak colony with a stronger colony. For some beekeepers this might involve having to buy in a new stock of bees (of which there appears to be a surplus at the moment). It is a big decision to make this late in the season but might be the only way that bees survive.

Last month I was urging patience. This month is the time for action before it is too late.

Mike Thornley

Apivar

30 members participated in the bulk ordering of Apivar and the collective treatment of bees should benefit us all (thanks to Karen Murphy of Lomond Vets for her assistance). People have been saying that they have seen little signs of Varroa this year and are even putting it down to the treatment regimes being promoted by the association. However as usual I would urge caution. Last week we carried out a natural drop test on all our colonies, with the strong colonies giving a fall of approximately 10 mites a day. Although below the fall of 15 mites a day that requires immediate action this indicates a medium infestation that needs treatment which we propose to initiate in the next week. For those who have it Varroa is always with our bees.