

NEWSLETTER #218 – August 2016

Next meeting: 22nd September: a members' review of the season

Please send photos (and anecdotes) to andrew.shaw24@gmail.com so that we can have a good discussion about what the summer held. We'll have a few slides and, sadly for me, probably a film of the despair an unmated queen can cause.

Honey show

On Saturday 20th August I had the pleasure of supporting the Honey judging at the Helensburgh & Gareloch Horticultural Society show. There were three honey categories; a jar of set, a jar of clear, and a frame ready for extraction. Mike couldn't put any exhibits in as he was the judge so our presence was modest, but a big thanks to all those who entered (and to Mike for being our Judge). The judging process was really interesting in what it assessed, so here's some tips for those members who may fancy entering a competition:-

In the *set honey* category there were really nice looking entries in the jar but when opened it would have been possible to slowly pour them out, so they couldn't be classed as set honey and so didn't meet the terms of the category. Lovely honey, but out!

The *clear honey* also had some lovely entries, but it was the light test that was telling. We used a small LED light panel which put powerful illumination through the jar, and in one entry in particular this showed a fair amount of crystallisation at the bottom of the jar that was invisible in ordinary light. The tip is to use a torch to inspect your entry.

The *frames* looked well, but one was set aside because it had markings on the top – there can be no marks that might let the judge identify the entrant. The light test also gives a surprising amount of information about the content of the cells, so if you're exhibiting remember that it's an unmarked frame and check what the light test shows.

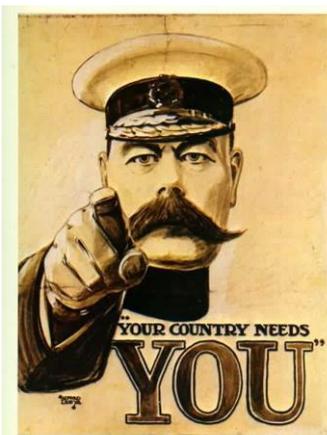
It's congratulations to these members:-

Set Honey :	Neil Sandison with a 3 rd prize
Clear Honey :	Eddie & Nikki Monaghan 1 st prize
	John Pennington 2 nd prize
	Neil Sandison 3 rd prize
Frame :	Neil 1 st prize
	Eddie & Nikki 2 nd prize
	John a 3 rd prize

The overall cup winners this year were Eddie & Nikki – well done!

Entering shows is a great way of growing your skills, so we plan to spend some time at one of our meetings discussing and trying out some exhibiting and judging. More about that in due course....

Tim



Club Apiary – an update

The club apiary is now an established, and important, part of the association that is run by a collection of HDBA members. For the last few seasons Neil Sandison, long term HDBA member and serial winner of honey shows, has managed and coordinated the overall running of the apiary. However, Neil feels that it is time to step down. Firstly, a big thankyou to Neil. Secondly, this means that a replacement manager is required. Over the winter please consider whether you'd like to take on this role. Ideally

we need somebody with experience, but equally somebody with the enthusiasm to see the continued success of the apiary. Once again, the importance of the apiary can't be overemphasized. As an example, Mike Thornley has written the following:

5 reasons for using the Association's apiary

Organised beekeepers have two (or more) apiaries. For most of us that is not practical and this is why the Association's apiary is so useful: it provides all of us with our second apiary.

This season Sue and I have needed to re-arrange our own apiary, moving hives at short notice, to amalgamate struggling colonies. On two occasions we took hives up to the Association's apiary for a week (7 flying days) and re-located them back in the desired locations, saving a lot of time and effort shuffling hives in to new positions.

How many beekeepers this year did not wish that they had made up a nuc (or 2), to provide back up for their failing or queenless colonies? To do so it is necessary to move the nuc with eggs or a queen cell to another apiary, ideally 3 miles away: a second reason for using the Association's apiary.

A bonus, and a third reason for moving nucs, or full colonies, to the Association apiary is to have new queens mated with a different set of drones, to avoid inbreeding, which is a major problem for beekeepers with only one or two colonies and few if any other neighbouring beekeepers. (This is a significant issue for beekeepers in our area, spread out thinly on the ground).

In June I was on the rota for weekly inspections at the Association apiary. I was able to see how a number of colonies were developing, and the different circumstances that prevailed, and comparing this with what was going on in our own apiary. (I do find it much easier to make decisions about other people's bees, rather than my own where I am too closely involved). It takes many years to acquire beekeeping knowledge, and many of us have started rather late, so all of this provides much needed experience.

Finally going out to the Association apiary is a real pleasure; getting away from our own enclosed garden for an hour, to be in the countryside under wide, open skies. It is a welcome change, relaxation with a purpose. Try it.

Link of the month: <http://www.arnia.co.uk/>

For those of you interested in measuring just what goes on inside your hive there are of course monitors available, including ones which will work with a remote apiary. For example, watch your honey build up in real time, (or watch your swarm leave). Alternatively, the more technically minded might want to think about dismantling a pair of bathroom scales...