

East Lothian Beekeepers' Association

(Founded 1887 – Scotland's Oldest Local Association)

www.eastlothianbeekeepers.org.uk

Newsletter 156

October 2010

Tucked up for winter

After a bit of a slow start many hives seemed to have had a successful summer this year. Consequently the Association had a good crop of honey for the Haddington Show and, with the much appreciated help of several members, could provide nuclei for a number of beginners.

My hives have been busy during autumn, with the bees bringing in plenty of nectar and pollen to bolster their stores. Although now the weather's turned colder things have quietened down. I was delighted to get my first honey harvest, but decided to leave enough on the hive to see the bees through the winter to save the hard work of feeding them.

This laziness is partly due to the fact that I'm expecting a baby at the beginning of November. Donald Smith has very kindly agreed to fill in for me until the new year, so please get in touch with him during this period if you need to contact the Association. This will probably mean that I'll miss the first of the winter meetings and the social dinner, but I hope to be back as soon as I can.

Winter Meetings – Haddington Town House, 7.30pm

We have a great line-up of speakers for our meetings over the winter, which I hope will appeal to beginners and experienced beekeepers alike. Please note that the first is on a Thursday in the Main Hall and the rest are on Wednesdays in the left-hand room on the first floor.

Thursday 11 November – Richard Buckland, Organiser of Butterfly Conservation's East Scotland Group, will speak about 'Butterfly Conservation in Scotland'. An opportunity to discover more about these

beautiful insects and whether their survival is linked to that of our bees. This meeting will be publicised in the hope of attracting interested members of the public, so please spread the word and put up the attached poster locally if you can.

Wednesday 19 January – Association AGM followed by ELBA members Colin and Deborah Mackay's 'Diary of a first year beekeeping'. A chance for members to compare notes and those with more experience to share some valuable wisdom and tips.

Wednesday 16 February – Graeme Sharpe, Scottish Beekeeping Advisor, SAC, presents 'A review of diseases threatening our bees', with time for questions and discussion.

Wednesday 9 March – Willie Robson, beekeeper for almost 50 years, from Chainbridge Honey Farm, Berwick-upon-Tweed brings his 'Notes on bees from a bee farmer'.

Wednesday 20 April – Beekeepers' Question Time. A panel of experienced beekeepers field any and every question you can think of about the beekeeping year ahead.

ELBA Social Dinner – Wednesday 8 December

After a break last year, the Association's honey-themed social dinner returns for 2010! The Avenue restaurant at the Victoria Inn, just opposite the Haddington Town House, has created a mouth-watering three-course menu to showcase our local honey for £20 per person. This evening of good food and fabulous company begins at 7pm, with dinner at 7.30pm. To book your place by the end of November contact Donald Smith at gardencottage.mail@gmail.com or 01620 822441.

Beekeeping Courses for Beginners

If you'd like to attend Mike Bain's beekeeping course in the new year please let him know by filling in the form at the bottom of our web page.

George Hood – In Appreciation

A chance rescue of a bumble bee from a path sixty years ago, while out walking with his Uncle, set George Hood on what was to become a lifetime interest in beekeeping. Shortly after this event George's Uncle acquired a beehive complete with a colony of bees and from that beginning an interest and a business grew to supply some of the most prestigious outlets in Scotland with high quality honey. It is George's bees who make the wax to seal the great affairs of state at the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood.

George was born and lived all his life in the village of Ormiston in East Lothian. His early career as a mechanic for the Eastern Scottish bus company stood him in good stead for developing his business as bee farmer and honey producer, making or adapting much of the equipment required. He was meticulous in all he did and attention to detail in beekeeping was his hallmark.

George's mentor in his early days of beekeeping was Willie Smith of Innerleithen who welcomed George's enquiring mind and gave him the foundations for the tremendous depth of knowledge which George drew upon throughout his beekeeping career. With an insatiable appetite for knowledge and anything to do with beekeeping, George would travel to as many meetings as he could in the South of Scotland. He also gave freely of his time to talk to any group who requested information on bees, beekeeping and honey production. He was a particularly loyal and supportive member of the East Lothian Beekeepers' Association and in April of this year gave his last formal talk to a capacity audience, such was his reputation and the respect that fellow beekeepers had for him. They were not disappointed, for he crafted his talk carefully so that there was something in it for beginners and experienced beekeepers alike.

George was passionate about bees and could be blunt at times, but he was always open-minded and expected others to be likewise. Over the years he developed his strain of honey bee which is particularly suited to

the conditions prevailing in East Lothian and firmly rejected any idea of introducing foreign queens which might dilute his own strain. Even in recent years of difficult conditions for bees, George has produced large crops of honey which is testament to his skill.

Sadly, George lost his battle with a long illness, which he fought privately and with great fortitude, and died on 5th September 2010. He leaves his widow Lilian, son Stuart and grand-daughter Eilidh. Scottish beekeeping has lost a great advocate and we have all lost a good friend.

George Barton

Haddington Show Success - 3rd July 2010

The Association stand at this year's show was popular with the public and judges. We were delighted to receive the prize for Best Small Trade Stand, talk to lots of people interested in bees and beekeeping, get kids making beeswax candles and sell all the honey from the Association apiary.

Many thanks to Donald Smith for organising the stand and to everyone who worked hard to set it up and came along to help on the day.

Jo Dodds – Secretary
01875 852916
joannawhittingham@googlemail.com

Donald Smith – Contact for November and December 2010
01620 822441
gardencottage.mail@gmail.com