

East Lothian Beekeepers' Association

(Founded 1887 – Scotland's Oldest Local Association)

www.eastlothianbeekeepers.org.uk

Newsletter 158

October 2011

Winter's on its way!

Despite this season's unpredictable weather my bees stored away enough honey for me to take a little for myself. I think this was largely due to the good weather while the oil seed rape was flowering, but that's good enough for me. However there has been a lot of chalk brood in the colony and a significant drop of varroa mites during autumn treatment. Maybe this is related to the miserable late summer conditions?

This drives home the fact that good varroa control is vital for a healthy hive. In addition to autumn treatment, a winter treatment with oxalic acid is a good way to mop up any remaining mites. This link gives further information:
<http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/wallyshaw.html>

I look forward to seeing you at the winter meetings and our social dinner.

Jo Dodds – ELBA Secretary

Winter Meetings – Haddington Town House, 7.30pm

Everyone welcome! Come along to hear talks on beekeeping topics, followed by time to chat to fellow beekeepers over tea and biscuits. Please note that all meetings are on THURSDAY this year.

Thursday 10 November – 'The Scottish Beekeepers' Association: 100 Not Out'. Una Robertson, the SBA's Library Convener, will speak about the SBA's work and centenary in 2012. This meeting will be open to interested members of the public, so please spread the word and put up the attached poster locally if you can.

Thursday 12 January – Association AGM and 'My Method of Beekeeping' by Graeme Sharpe, Apiculture Specialist from the Scottish Agriculture College at Auchincruive.

Meetings will also be held on Thursday 9 February, Thursday 8 March and Thursday 12 April. Speakers to be announced soon.

ELBA Social Dinner – Thursday 24 November, 7.30pm

We are determined that the Association's honey-themed social dinner will go ahead this year, following last year's cancellation due to the snow! 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 £21 per person. To book your place please send your name and a £5 deposit (put towards the cost of the meal) to Jo Dodds by Monday 31 October.

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.

Varroa Mite Resistance to Apistan and Bayvarol – Alan Riach

I've carried out a CSL-Beltsville test on the bees at the EMBA Apiary and have found Pyrethroid resistance. Resistance will likely be fairly widespread in the Lothians (contact Jo Dodds for testing method). This means that we can no longer depend on Apistan and Bayvarol as an effective treatment for varroa.

Remember the main task is to monitor and be aware of the mite levels in the colonies. Natural mite drop is the best monitoring method – use the population calculator on the Beebase site:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/public/BeeDiseases/varroaCalculator.cfm>

If you have fairly high levels in your hives it would be wise to treat in Dec (no brood period) with the Oxalic acid method –don't purchase too far ahead of treatment as it degrades with time.

A Tribute to Gordon Biggar by Donald Smith

Members will be sad to hear of the recent death of Gordon Biggar. When I first joined the Association as a novice with a hive of bees and little knowledge or skills, Gordon was quick to offer to go through my bees with me and show me how he did what then seemed impossibly complicated things like making an artificial swarm. He turned up in his red, open-top, two-seater Austin Healey Sprite, some spare beekeeping bits and pieces for me in the passenger seat, and as we went through the bees he explained what he was doing and how it fitted into his "system".

He was quite explicit that this was just his way of doing things, but it was not the only way, and that it was important to always be thinking about what you are doing. The best piece of advice he gave me, one which he had inherited from his beekeeping mentor, was to work your way through problems by asking what it is that the bees are trying to do, to ask what the bees are saying to you? Why is there no honey in the super? Why is that hive so tetchy? Why is there no young brood?

At first I was bewildered by the contradictory advice about all beekeeping matters that I received from different beekeepers, and it took me a little while to understand that what you did with the bees only made sense in relation to the whole year of apiary management. Gordon worked his bees to avoid oilseed rape and so moved his bees into Edinburgh in the summer, to the heather for the autumn, and wintered at his home at Fushiebridge. He also made sure that beekeeping didn't interfere with his summer holiday plans by confining them to a single Smith brood box in the Spring so as to force them to swarm early in the year. Then with all the artificial swarms set up he could relax - as least as far as the bees went.

Those who spoke at his funeral described his lifetime pursuits of geology, hillwalking and other outdoor activities, travelling around the world, and maintaining his vintage cars - he proudly showed me the original receipt for his boyhood racing bicycle (which he was still

using). But it was poignant for me that all the speakers also mentioned that he was a beekeeper, and that their memories of Gordon were flavoured with that of the honey he always brought along to sell. The Association has lost a great stalwart, and the bees have lost a good, patient and thoughtful beekeeper.

Beekeeping Demo at Edinburgh Botanic

I've been asked by Edinburgh Botanic Gardens if we could put on a beekeeping demonstration in their John Hope Gateway building for a day during the Edinburgh Science Festival (March 31-April 15 2012). They have in mind something similar to the Haddington Show stand. If anyone has any ideas or would be willing to help please get in touch!

Gifford Flower Show Prizewinners

George Hood Memorial Trophy for most points in Novice section – Michael Hill
Gifford Horticultural Society Trophy for most points in Open section – Jim Bell
George Turnbull Trophy for best exhibit – George Barton

OPEN SECTION

Jar Clear Medium to Dark Blossom Honey - 1st J Bell, 2nd G Barton
Jar Clear Light Blossom Honey - 1st M Hedderwick, 2nd J Bell
Jar Naturally Granulated Honey - 1st J Bell, 2nd Mark Hedderwick
Jar Soft Set Honey - 1st M Hedderwick, 2nd J Bell, 3rd G Barton
Jar Liquid Heather Honey - 1st G Barton, 2nd J Bell, 3rd M Hedderwick
Cut Comb Blossom Honey - 1st J Bell
Cut Comb Heather Honey - 1st J Bell, 2nd G Barton
Shallow Frame Blossom Honey - 1st J Bell, 2nd M Hedderwick
Shallow Frame Heather Honey - 1st J Bell, 2nd J De Pree
Wax Candles - 1st J Bell, 2nd M Hedderwick; Piece Beeswax - 1st J Bell, 2nd M Hedderwick
Honey Cake - 1st J Bell, 2nd M Hedderwick; Honey Tablet - 1st M Hedderwick, 2nd J Bell

NOVICE SECTION

Jar Clear Blossom Honey - 1st R Carthy, 2nd M Hill, 3rd D Mackay
Piece Beeswax - 1st Sandy Boggon, 2nd M Hill, 3rd R Carthy
Honey Cake - 1st D Mackay, 2nd M Hill, 3rd R Carthy

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