

Newsletter July 2024

Hi everybody, welcome to my newsletter for July '24. Well, what a June weather wise that was, I am starting to remember what my Scottish childhood summers of the fifties and sixties were like, I do remember frequently wet and often cold but never like this June just gone. Richard A dropped by my house nearly at the beginning of last month and new went through my hive. Found and marked the queen in no time at all. At the beginning of June, I was concerned about the colony as they were bringing in nectar and pollen but they were not filling all the brood frames and they refused all feeding including Richards super rocket fuel, but in the last week they were finally up into then honey super and going to work with a strong determination

Membership

No new members to welcome this month, all the recent joiners are throwing themselves into beekeeping.

June Events

Well, the last Saturday in June gave us an extremely pleasant, interesting and education visit to Richard P's apiary near Gatehouse. I intended to be there before the appointed time of midday but nothing goes to plan and by the time I got there Linda had everything sorted out. We visited Richards hives in two groups the first group comprised Linda and some newcomers to beekeeping and the second group was made up of experienced beekeepers and people like me whilst non expert, hardly beginners. The first group went off to a small colony to look at finding and marking the new queen and generally checking the hive and I understand this went off ok and all those in that group had a good time and a valued experience.

The second group went down to the hives and Richard told us that he wanted to basically split a colony and whilst desirable to see the queen in the colony it wasn't necessary but we'd look for her the same. .Easy! Ha!..... Off came the roof and crownboard and out came the most fractious bees I've ever seen – but they didn't faze the experienced beekeepers. There were some stings, shortly joined by me requiring to borrow Chris's penknife to remove a painful sting in my hand. Although some returned to base, I went back and kept my hands in my pockets. Having applied to smoke to the bees things had quietened down but they were still a lively bunch. Richard has Langstroth Hives which I have never seen before and found them interesting. Because they are longer you can get more honey to a frame but when you actually see them you can see exactly how much more, although there is more weight to take into consideration when lifting and manipulating. Anyway, when I rejoined the group, they were halfway through looking for the Queen and Richard A was doing the searching, having gone through all the frames the Queen had not been found and Richard A. went back through to no avail. There had been a lot of shaking down so it was thought the queen was on the floor of the hive. The presence of eggs told us that there had been very recent activity so the split was made queen unseen and the hives reassembled.

So, my thanks to Richard P for hosting a great apiary visit, and I look forward to visiting again, it was without a doubt informative educational and despite the angry bees, fun. What more can you ask for.

Chris's Bee Blog

Chris's Latest blog is now on line and I do thank Chris for his time in doing this. Not only is it worth reading just to hear about someone else's beekeeping experiences month by month there is always something I learn. Thanks Chris, and for the loan of your penknife on Saturday.

Apiary Visits

July + August visit to be confirmed.

Committee activity

The committee is busy organising the next 2 apiary visits, our stand at Wigtown Show on 7th August, the Honey Show in November and speakers for the winter meetings

Things to do in July

In July our colonies should be at maximum strength to take full advantage of the summer flowers. We beekeepers need to keep pace with them to ensure that they have enough room to store nectar and pollen and that the queens have room to lay. Before adding another super it's a good idea to check the ones already on and to maximise space by rearranging frames and even boxes, at the same time moving uncapped or partially capped frames to the middle of the super for the bees to complete: they work in a chimney fashion so will go straight up the centre of the hive, ignoring the outer frames unless they need them. This year my bees have been very quick to fill supers but quite slow to cap frames: curious, but according to Beecraft it seems I'm not the only one to find this. With the main honey harvest of the year in mind you may find you need to order extra equipment, foundation, jars or labels. There have been very few reports of possible Asian hornet incursion into the UK but we must remain alert to the possibility of overwintered queens attempting to set up colonies. Any such queens will be confined to the nest now but workers will be seen hawking outside hives so remain vigilant, set up bait stations and keep checking trees in your vicinity for possible secondary nests. We also need to maintain our vigilance where colony health is concerned and to be alert to signs of robbing by stronger colonies and by wasps. Yes, it's time to make some wasp traps... July Summary Continue to add supers ahead of the bees' requirements when the lower box is full of bees not honey. Carry out detailed inspections on colonies that have not been split and take action if you find queen cells. Remove and extract sealed frames of honey and put the empties back in the evening for the bees to clean out. Always return them to the hives they came from and try not to leave bits of sticky comb lying about in the apiary. Reduce entrances to avoid the risk of robbing by bees and wasps. Make wasp traps – see guidance online from BBKA, National Bee Unit, Dave Cushman, et al. Continue to monitor the daily varroa drop and take action if the count is above 10. Make sure you have equipment, jars and labels organised for your honey harvest. Leave your bait hive out a bit longer, there may still be swarms about. Look out for Asian hornet workers hawking outside your hives; baits should be protein based, e.g. cat food, tuna, prawns; observe bait stations and change bait often. Check trees for large secondary Asian hornet nests. Keep watching, learning, and asking questions.

Dougie

Chair