

Newsletter October 2024

Hi everybody, welcome to my newsletter for October '24. Well, here we are at the end of the honey season, all our honey to be safely gathered in. With luck I should take off one frame of unwired capped comb, I am sure that all of you will have done/will do better and I have set the bar very low.

Membership

No new members to welcome this month, all the recent joiners are still throwing themselves into beekeeping, but thanks to our presence at the Wigtown Show, quite a few enquiries were made and at least three have followed up.

September Events

Well September the 29th saw a full day work shop covering honey/wax + Honey Show preparation and was attended by some twenty people three of whom were visitors for the day following meeting us at the Wigtown show. I did chat to them during the day and they seemed to be very keen to take up the hobby, or is it a lifestyle? The day went very well and very quickly, organised, and led by Linda. We started off looking at the screen on a presentation but soon broke into groups for a series of workshops which included making wax candles. It was another successful member meeting and as always at these sorts of meetings great fun. Which I am sure everyone got a lot out of. Again, my thanks and I am sure everyone is thanks to Linda for All the hard work she put into it.

Members meetings.

The next members meeting will be on Sunday 27th October, which is the AGM and the agenda will be sent out in advance. As part of the AGM there will be an election for Committee members, Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Everyone in post has indicated a willingness to continue, however we will go through the process and formally elect the new committee, so if you would like to nominate someone (or yourself) please let me know. The AGM will be followed by our popular round table discussion.

Honey Show – 24th November

Schedules and entry forms are out along with the workshop presentation and help with candle rolling, so no excuses. The honey show group will be working hard to organise this highlight of our calendar.

Chris's Bee Blog

Chris is still blogging away and the next blog is out very soon, I do look forward to reading it personally as it reminds me, I am not alone in the trials and tribulations that will come with beekeeping.

Things to do in October

October is a month of transition: as the days grow shorter and cooler there is less forage for our bees and activity within the hives begins to slow. The foragers will still be working the ivy and late garden flowers to add to vital winter stores – any pollen going in now will be for storing rather than feeding to brood as the queens have greatly reduced their laying rate. The colony is still large but as there are more bees to do less work, each individual bee can live longer. The house bees will still consume large quantities of pollen but, instead of metabolising this to brood food, will store it in their fat bodies as a food reserve that will ensure that they live through to the spring and will be ready to feed the new larvae and forage for fresh pollen and nectar. The survival of the winter bees depends as much on the

beekeeper as on the natural order: our colonies need to be strong, well-provisioned and free from disease. If we have carried out our September tasks efficiently and have fed, medicated, and possibly united colonies then we can begin to relax a little and look forward to a quiet spell before next spring. After the security of the colony comes the security of the hive: we need to protect against physical dangers. In windy areas or where there are livestock it may be necessary to rope down hives or put a hefty brick on top of the roof. A hive full of tasty bees and honey can attract badgers and woodpeckers and mice will find the well-provisioned and warm environment an ideal place to hibernate if they can get in. Green woodpeckers can wreak havoc with your hives, drilling through wood and polystyrene to get at the tasty larvae and honey inside: a framework of chicken wire or curtain of plastic strips fastened to the hive will prevent the birds finding a firm foothold. If your hive entrances are deeper than 8mm you will need to fit mouse guards: perforated metal or plastic strips that allow bees in but keep out small rodents looking for a cosy and well-provisioned place to hibernate. Fitted too soon they can dislodge the painstakingly collected pollen loads from the corbiculae of returning foragers, so use your judgement. Sugar syrup feeding and varroa treatments should be completed by the end of the month and any poor woodwork or leaking roofs remedied. Although winter is approaching there must be no let-up in our vigilance for the Asian hornet: workers could still be hawking around our hives and new queens may emerge to feed on carbohydrate-rich foods prior to hibernation and will be attracted to fallen fruit, ivy, and other late sources of nectar. Baits now should be sugar rich (but not honey), changed frequently and monitored daily. As the leaves fall look up into trees for signs of nests revealed and report any sightings. October Summary Continue feeding if necessary if the colony has not started to form its winter cluster, use fondant if the weather is cold. Fit mouse guards or entrance blocks with a low opening – no more than 8mm – and check regularly that entrances are clear. Fit wire netting or plastic strips around the hive to deter woodpeckers. Ensure that woodwork is sound and that hives are clear of the ground to avoid dampness; clear away encroaching vegetation. Store extracted comb securely, treated against wax moth (use Certan, if available, or put in the freezer for a while). Clean & sterilise hive parts, frames & equipment, and store securely – use soda crystals in hot water (wear gloves) and scorch boxes, floors, crown boards with a blowtorch. Maintain vigilance for Asian hornets, particularly new queens, and scan trees and bushes regularly for signs of nest

Dougie

Chair