

Newsletter April 2025

Welcome to my April newsletter and this is the month the beekeeping year starts, hope everybody is ready for it and as usual I am not. The item of garden furniture that took my hive out during the storms in January damaged the colony so badly it did not survive, So anyone taking anti swarming measures by splitting a colony but not wanting to increase their hive numbers, I'll be pleased to help with a nuc box and some replacement new brood foundation.

Membership - no new members during March

Members meetings and dates for your diary

March meeting

The final of our winter meetings was held at the end of March. Kevin gave a timely talk on the great of the yellow legged (aka Asian) hornet. Kevin had experience of the hornet while he lived in France and shared his experience, with input from John and Richard. This hornet poses a threat to insects in general and consequently birds. They haven't reached Galloway – yet!! but beekeepers and non-beekeepers alike need to be ready for them.

The meeting for March included a celebration of our association's 90th birthday. An enjoyable time for present members was had and again my thanks to Linda for all her behind the scenes work including contacting members from the past. A press report will be prepared and sent to members in due course.

April meeting

The next all members meeting will be an out apiary visit on Sunday 27th April with the host being John, I for one am greatly looking forward to it.

The two-day course for beginners last month was a great success thanks to Lindas drive and love of beekeeping. All the participants got a great deal from it with some having been last year and refreshing themselves on the mysteries of beekeeping.

The Scottish BA are holding this year's AGM at Parkgate near Dumfries this year and it will be on the 26th April '25. Members who would like to attend should register before 12th April. Non SBA members are welcome for the afternoon sessions.

Royal Highland Show (19th – 22nd June at Ingliston near Edinburgh) honey tent is looking for volunteers as well as entries for the honey show. I encourage you to think about getting involved as it is a great way to learn.

We hope to run a bee health day – with the emphasis on Varroa - at some stage during the summer

Wigtown Show – 6th August

Sugar for bees

Tony handed in a further supply of sugar. Richard has the supply – contact us via the wgba email if you would like sugar for your bees. Let's hope the weather continues to be in our favour and that we don't need to feed our bees as much this year!

Kevins Bee Blog

Linda has put this out and as expected highly informative

Land for bees

A lady from Portpatrick has been in touch to offer a potential apiary site. If anyone is interested, please get in touch with Linda

Things to do in April

April generally marks the beginning of the active season with warmer days and the appearance of early blossom. After a winter of unceasing rain and endlessly unsettled weather we finally have some forage for our bees: the early snowdrops, hazel and alder have given way to wild plum and blackthorn, spring flowers and shrubs and my bees are taking full advantage.

Oil Seed rape may be available locally providing early forage depending if the local farmer has planted it this year.

Spring can be a dangerous time for our bees: the queens increase their laying rate as the days lengthen and, as stores in the hive dwindle, our bees need to go out foraging at every opportunity. No forage, no food and if poor weather prevents foraging there is the risk that our winter bees will perish before the colony has new foragers to take on the task. Bees can starve in an astonishingly short time – we beekeepers need to maintain our vigilance where stores are concerned and feed where necessary with syrup in a contact feeder once bees are flying freely.

The arrival of spring means it is time for regular inspections and the completion of any winter tasks we did not quite get round to because soon we will have to turn our full attention to swarm prevention and control. Do not panic, there is plenty of help and information out there – just ask.

April Summary

Continue to check stores by hefting, checking floor inserts or a quick look in.

Carry out your first detailed inspection if you have not already done so. Be clear what you are looking for:

Queen present & laying?

Brood at all stages?

Good brood pattern with biscuit-coloured capping's?

Bees looking normal & healthy?

Acting normally?

Any sign of disease or varroa mites (be sure to check floor inserts)? Are there enough stores to last the bees to your next inspection? Has the colony got enough room?

Check the queen's mark and renew if indistinct.

Add a queen excluder and super when the brood box is full of bees, not stores.

Replace any dirty, mouldy, or damaged comb with frames of sterilised comb or new foundation or move these frames to the outside of the brood nest to replace later.

Read up on your chosen method of swarm control and assemble equipment.

Assemble the equipment you will need for swarm collection and read up on how to do it.

Set up Asian hornet traps and monitor closely: put a piece of foam or kitchen roll into the liquid reservoir to prevent non-target insects from drowning.

Cheers Dougie.