

Newsletter June 2025

Hi everybody, welcome to my newsletter for June. One of the topics chatted about at Katherines apiary visit was the Channel 5 TV program The secret life of bees. I've only seen one of these so far but its available on the streaming service. I found it interesting although a bit superficially show bizzy at times. The episode I saw did devote a short warning about the Asian Hornet and did show us how their nests were tracked down, in one case by catching the Hornet and sticking a couple of inches of tinsel to it and watch its direction of travel. Well worth a watch.

Events

Mays apiary visit took place on the 1st June and what a visit it was! We arrived in several cars at Katherines near Barhill and found Katherine worrying about a dozen or so beekeepers coming just to look at two hives. Once we were all suited and booted Katherine got into the swing of it and introduced us to her apiary and what had been going on to date. Inspection of hive one found a hive in good shape and an unmarked queen which was soon remedied by Richard and Kevin. The next hive was a different case completely, thriving to the point about to swarm and the consensus of the most experienced beekeepers was that it would have been the next day. So, another brood box cover and crown board were brought out and brood frames and nursing bees were place in it one brood frame having a queen cell. Back to the second hive this was left with the queen and the flying bees to build up again.

The visit concluded with coffee or tea and some wonderful baked cakes. A great day out for those of us there, a third colony for Katherine and the benefit of 100 years of beekeeping

Kevins Bee Log

At the time of writing, it has not yet been published, but I do look forward to reading it.

Apiary Visits

As per Lindas email: - **Sunday 29th June** - apiary visit - details to be sent nearer the time

Saturday 26th July - visit to SSBKA training apiary (BeeSpace) near Dumfries. 15 members have already expressed an interest in this visit. Phil Collett, the apiary manager, is a busy man and he will be giving up a day to show WGBA members the SSBKA training apiary. Lorraine Johnston, SRUC Bee Adviser, will also be there and she will demonstrate "how to do a disease inspection". This is a great opportunity so please come along if you can. I will be in touch with more details nearer the time

Wednesday 6th August - Wigtown Show. We need a few volunteers for this so if you are interested in helping on our stand, please let me know. You do not need to be an experienced beekeeper to help!

Sunday 31st August - apiary visit - provisional date at this stage

Royal Highland Show

Don't forget to visit the Bee Tent if you are having a day at the show – it's near the West Gate and worth a visit

Good Luck to those entering the Honey Show

Things to do in June

June should be a beautiful, sunny month with plentiful forage to help our colonies build up well and fill supers – time to book the extractor and order extra jars and labels! Well yes, but the hot, dry, and windy weather in May brought everything forward and the bees have been busy and have built up fast, meaning honey aplenty and swarming to match. June can bring abundance and anxiety in equal measure... we have all heard of the 'June gap.' In some areas there may still be a gap in flowering between the spring flowers such as sycamore, blackthorn, hawthorn and oilseed rape, and the start of the summer flowers such as lime, clover, blackberry, and sweet chestnut. There is a strong chance that we will see a proper June gap this year and beekeepers need to be vigilant, as always, that there is sufficient food in the hive to carry the colony through, especially if we have a spell of bad weather. This is a particularly important consideration when deciding to take off honey: last year colonies were left starving when poor weather prevented them from replenishing stores after the oilseed rape honey harvest was taken off. Please be mindful of forage and weather conditions and leave some honey for the bees. Expanding colonies mean more brood to host varroa so be sure to monitor any fall. Despite our best efforts to prevent or control swarming our colonies may still swarm if we have not at least kept up with the need for more space for the bees to store nectar during a strong flow. If there has been any appreciable acreage of oilseed rape in the vicinity of your hives you will need to extract the honey before it sets in the comb. Those of us on the swarm collectors list will have our skeps and swarm collecting kit permanently in our vehicles. June's a busy month! June Summary Continue weekly inspections and undertake swarm control if required. If inspections reveal that food stores are low, feed 1:1 syrup in a contact feeder, if there are no supers on, or fondant. Remember to only feed in the evening and to reduce the hive entrance to avoid robbing. Add another super when the current one is almost full of bees, not honey. Extract oilseed rape honey as soon as the bees start capping it and if no droplets fly out of uncapped cells when you quickly shake the frame. Mark any new queens with the years designated Colour Monitor for varroa: an average daily might fall of 10 or more means the colony is in trouble and needs treating. MAQS can be used with honey supers on. Continue monitoring for Asian hornets in your apiary: baits should now be protein-based and offered in an open dish to avoid bycatch; weight the dish with a pebble.

And finally... Enjoy your beekeeping and be ready to learn from the bees... Remember the Green Cross Code?

Stop, look, and listen! It's a good one to apply each time you visit your apiary... Stop and ask yourself what your intention is today: have you got the right equipment with you, enough time, and the right conditions to carry it out?

Look at your hives, your bees, and the surroundings – does everything look normal, are the bees flying, taking in pollen, forming a blanket on the front of the hive?

Listen to the sounds – contented humming or angry buzzing? Time spent observing your bees is even more valuable than reading about them – as any experienced beekeeper will tell you, the bees don't read the books...

Dougie

Chair