

Newsletter April 2026

Welcome to my April newsletter, firstly I am so pleased to announce that the Scottish Beekeeping Association having considered award nominations have made the award of 'Bar to the Local/Affiliated Association Award' to our Secretary Linda Robertson. The bar is awarded to a beekeeper who has continued to serve their Local Association and be a member of the SBA for at least five more years after receiving the Affiliated Beekeepers Association Award.

Well this is the month the beekeeping year starts, hope everybody is ready for it and just for once I am. The swarm of bees that so kindly set up home in a bait hive last year has got through the winter and is looking strong and healthy from what I can see, they are flying and bringing back plenty of pollen and at present I've still got a packet of fond-a-bee on top of the crown board, which hopefully will be taken away next week when I hope to give a full inspection, local weather permitting.

Membership

Welcome to Leo, Tracy, Helen, and Bryan who have recently joined the association and were all at the recent beginner's course

Members meetings.

Following the round the table discussion at the last winter meeting last Sunday March 29th the committee met to discuss this years activities and as soon as venues etc are sorted you will all be sent an email informing you of the visits etc. As well as our apiary visits, we are hoping to hold a swarming work shop and a presentation for getting prepared for the Honey Show which of course you all know is the last Sunday in November. As the Honey Show Secretary, I will be sending out details in the summer of the classes for show so you will all have plenty of time to prepare.

Beginners Course

A course was held at the hall on the 21st and 22nd March led by Linda with assistance from Heather Jayne, Richard, and myself. As always, a very intense course due to all the things to be covered but as always highly enjoyable and very well attended.

Dates for your diary

Apiary visits – weather dependent

26 April

Either 24/5 or 31/5

28th June

26th July

30th August

Swarming workshop

3rd May

Yellow Legged Hornet meeting

20th May

Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh

18th - 21st June – contact Linda if you'd like to volunteer during that time

Honey Show entries close 11th May – delivery/collection can be arranged by Linda

Wigtown Show

5th August

Preparing honey and wax for show and for sale workshop

27th September (members meeting)

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.