

Bee Matters - Bees Matter!

FBA and DWFBA Newsletter April 2010



Is Spring finally Here?

Photograph by Peter Mackintosh

What a terribly long winter this has been! Most of us have had losses – I am very sad to report that I have now lost six of my twelve colonies, the sixth dying out only last week. All were alive at the start of January, proving that it is not the winter but the spring that can be hard to get bees through. These were the hives in my wood apiary - I suspect the wood had become too shady and damp as trees grew back round the clearing, and there was next to nothing for them to forage on, everything being so late. It's very disheartening.

A great new speaker

The FBA's April talk by Margaret Thomas on Queen Rearing was one none of you should have missed. How lucky we are to have Margaret and her husband Dick join as FBA members. She is a most experienced and knowledgeable beekeeper and an outstanding speaker, keeping us all on our toes with her questions. We will certainly be asking her to speak again – and again! One of the interesting pieces of equipment she brought along was a double nuc box that had once belonged to her mentor, the great Ted Hooper.

DWFBA Apiary Changes

There has been a lot of work going on at Muirside, as plans for a much improved apiary site are realised. A team of volunteers are carrying out the work: a large area has been cleared and levelled, 40 tons of hardcore have been spread with shovels and mechanical means on the new vehicular access and portable building site. The building site can now be used to erect tents for the Queen Rearing Course at the end of May.

The next job is to erect a new boundary post and wire fence to the south-west part of the site, erect the gate and remove all scrub and tree growths at southern part of the Apiary.

The job then will be to keep the grass and weeds at bay over the summer months and prepare for planting of trees and shrubs in the 2010/2011 planting season. A list of desired species required for the planting scheme is available and if anybody wishes to donate trees and shrubs for this historic event please liaise with the secretary of your association.

We are now looking to purchase a steel, anti-vandal, portable building approx 24ft x 10ft with windows/shutters, and if anybody knows of a used building as specified and available for sale, please let us know. The building will be utilised by members during training courses and continuing the development of Queen rearing and the black bee in Fife.

Here are a couple of photographs of 'men at work' and one of what it looks like now:



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And now:



DWFBA President honoured

John Durkacz received the Local Association Award from SBA President Alan Teale at SBA's AGM on 13 March 2010.



John was given the award in recognition of his long and ongoing work on behalf both of the association and beekeeping in general. He has been an active member of DWFBA since 1979 and president since 1985. He has overseen the introduction to beekeeping of many new beekeepers, and has ensured that members have been kept abreast of all the latest developments. He has now also taken up the post of SBA Markets Convener – if you want something done, ask a busy man!

Beginners' Classes

Saturday 10 April saw the first beginners' outdoor class – making up frames and cleaning equipment at Milton House. One group of about fifteen worked away in the morning, another in the afternoon. Note the concentration!



Stoneleigh, 16-18 April

At least five Fife FBA members and one DWFBA member travelled down to Stoneleigh, two of them for the first, but definitely not the last time. It was an amazing experience – educational (two days of lectures and workshops), entertaining (great company and an excellent B+B in nearby

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Kenilworth which Enid had booked us all into) and profitable if you managed to get some of the amazing bargains on the sales day. The queues before the sales opened on the Saturday had to be seen to be believed – when I saw how long I'd have to wait I decided to go to the first lecture and come back later, but that did mean I missed some of the best bargains. The lecturers were first-rate. I do recommend it – let's have an even bigger group next year!

Queen marking at Dairsie House



Saturday 23 April saw the first of FBA's apiary visits, and a good crowd watched Enid spot and mark most of Colin's queens. He has difficulty seeing green, hence the white spot. Mary provided a delicious tea as always, and the sun shone – one of the few good days we've had. His colonies varied in strength, but all were working hard and bringing in a lot of yellow pollen – willow?

The previous Saturday had seen the first DWF apiary visit, and the beginners' demonstrations have now started too. All beginners were asked to sign up for two visits initially, so if you are a beginner and have not done so, do ask for the list of available dates. Any spare places will then be offered on a first come, first served basis.

Dates of Meetings – normally 2pm

1 May Lethangie – 3 places left

1 May Turnhouse – 8 places left

2 May Muirside – 5 places left

2 May Pillars of Hercules – fully booked

8 May 1.45pm Meet at Fluthers car park for Ian Rollo's apiary – fully booked

8 May Otterstone – 4 places left

9 May Pillars of Hercules – fully booked

9 May Grange Farm + Easter Gellat – 2 places left

15 May DWF/FBA – venue tba

16 May Muirside – 5 places left

22 May 12 noon Dairsie House – 1 place left

23 May Pillars of Hercules – fully booked

23 May Turnhouse – 8 places left

29-30 May BIBBA Queen Rearing Course – contact Enid to book a place

12 June 12 noon onwards, FBA/DWF Annual Barbecue. Milton House, Scotlandwell.

24-27 June Royal Highland Show

3-13 July DWF display in Dunfermline Central Library

4 July DWF Topic TBA

7 Aug DWF Topic TBA

13-15 Aug: heather weekend – contact Enid to book a place

3-5 Sep Scottish National Honey Show, Camperdown Park, Dundee.

10-11 Sep SBA Autumn Convention, Aberdeen

18-19 Sep Fife Flower Show, Dobbies, Dunfermline, with DWF/FBA Open Honey Show

30 Oct Balmullo – Flower Show with Honey section.