Celebratory barbecue

On Sunday 4 August, starting at 2pm, DWFBA are holding a barbecue to celebrate their 75th year. All are invited, both DWFBA and FBA members. It will be held at The Gables, Old Perth Road, Cowdenbeath, KY4 9PS. There will be drinks, cake and rolls to go round, guests are asked to bring a salad, or a sweet and something to go on the barbecue.

R.S.V.P. to dwf@fifebeekeepers.co.uk

From Edinburgh: Travel north over the Forth Road Bridge, continue on the M90 and exit at Junction 3. At the roundabout, take the 4th exit onto the A92. At the next roundabout take the 2nd exit onto the B925 to Crossgates. At the traffic lights turn left (B961) and follow the road out of Crossgates. Turn next left onto the B917 through Hill of Beath, follow the road to Cowdenbeath. Pass CR Smith on Left hand side, go straight over the mini roundabout, out of the 30 mile limit, past cemetery, up wee twisty double bends, past church on Right hand side and The Gables is on the RHS on top of the hill after the church.

From Perth: Travel south on the M90, exit Junction 4. At the top of the slip road turn left, down hill on the A909. At the mini roundabout turn right along Oakfield St. This road takes you out of Kelty. At the mini roundabout turn left up hill. The Gables is on the LHS on top of the hill.

From Kirkcaldy: Travel west on the A92, take the Cowdenbeath exit and turn right at the top of the slip road. At the roundabout turn left onto Broad Street and then 4th right onto Moss Side Road. Follow Moss Side Road to the T junction with Old Perth Road, turn right. Pass CR Smith on Left hand side, go straight over the mini roundabout, out of the 30 mile limit, past cemetery, up wee twisty double bends, past church on Right hand side and The Gables is on the RHS on top of the hill after the church.

From Stirling: Follow the A907 (Alloa Road) all the way to Junction 3 of the M90. At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit onto the A92. At the next roundabout take the 2nd exit onto the B925 to Crossgates. At the traffic lights turn left (B961) and follow the road out of Crossgates. Turn next left onto the B917 through Hill of Beath, follow the road to Cowdenbeath. Pass CR Smith on Left hand side, go straight over the mini roundabout, out of the 30 mile limit, past cemetery, up wee twisty double bends, past church on Right hand side and The Gables is on the RHS on top of the hill after the church.
Fife Honey Show, Sat-Sun 21-22 September, part of the Fife Flower Show, at Dobbies Garden World, Whimbrel Place, Fife Leisure Park, Dunfermline.

Schedules can be downloaded from www.fifeflowershow.org.uk. This is the first year in many that most of us actually have something to show for our efforts, thanks to the better weather, so please enter! If you are among those who will be at the SBA Autumn Convention in Inverness that weekend, contact John Tout 01383 415 534, jtout@middlebank.demon.co.uk to arrange to deliver your entries to him. Any display material should be accompanied by a diagram showing how you’d like the items laid out.

John would also be most grateful for any offers of help on the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, to get everything set up for the show. Again, please let him know if you can help on any of those days.

Dunfermline and West Fife Beekeepers; the last 25 years.
By John Durkacz

An article on the ‘First Fifty Years’ of our association appeared in the February 2013 issue of the Combined Fife Beekeepers’ Newsletter. The last 25 years has seen an accelerating pace of change with many new beekeepers joining the craft. Our aims remain as before, ‘the encouragement and advancement of beekeeping by lectures, talks, practical demonstrations and mutual assistance to members including use of the association equipment’. There has been a steady increase in membership the past few years with many potential beekeepers attracted by the media coverage on the decline of insect pollinators. When I first took over as president of the association in 1985 beekeeping had been in a long period of decline with few new beginners coming forward and each AGM very like the next. That did not mean that boredom had set in, far from it! We were more heavily involved in liaison work with spray contractors to ensure that beekeepers had adequate warning and that guidelines were adhered to. Our meetings rotated through the apiaries of members as there was no association apiary and there were no dedicated beginners’ classes or demonstrations. On the positive side there was no Varroa to contend with, spring was an identifiable season and oilseed rape was only just making its appearance. Most beekeepers of reasonable skill were able to harvest honey and consequently the honey shows had more exhibits. In the post-war days there was a regular migration to the heather which was so popular that the association hired a lorry which made the rounds of members collecting hives for delivery to
the association heather site. Our old association heather site was resurrected near Muthil in the early 1980s and was the site of many enjoyable ‘heather picnics’ traditionally held on the third Sunday in August. This continued until a few years ago when a serious outbreak of European Foul Brood disease on Tayside caused such concern that we gave up the annual migration. There were other problems with heather beetle laying waste to large tracts of moorland and the rising cost of fuel. However we do still have a site and if there is any enthusiasm may well return.

Our initial beginners’ classes were an informal affair held in Enid Brown’s living room but with increasing numbers we moved to Portmoak Village Hall where we have excellent facilities and now run a full series of indoor theory classes from January to April with practical demonstrations from May onwards. This is a cooperative effort between the two Fife Associations with 30 or more in the class. There is much to cover in the classes as we feel it is important that prospective beekeepers are aware of their responsibilities to the public and the bees in their charge.

The practical demonstrations are held in the association apiary at Muirside in West Fife, Pillars of Hercules in mid-Fife and at the Botanic Gardens East Fife Association apiary. Muirside Apiary had been an association site for many years but remained in an undeveloped condition until a group of enthusiastic beekeepers, led by Graeme Dickson, saw the potential. The site was cleared, foundations laid for a ‘cabin’, fences and gate erected and a programme of planting begun. This sounds simple but was the result of careful planning and a lot of hard work. At the same time we were fortunate in winning a lottery grant award which was managed by Gordon Henderson and was spent on new equipment for the apiary with the
intention of developing it for teaching purposes. Along the way we acquired the help of a retired stonemason, Billy, who set about the gradual rebuilding of the old walls of the original Muirside Farm which were in a perilous state.

Container arrives at Muirside and is lowered gently onto Foundations.

Muirside Apiary before deployment of the new polystyrene hives.

Our team working on apiary development consists of the following members:- Graeme Dickson, John Tout, Tom Scott, Ian Lindsay, John Durkacz. Graeme has been a driving force with planning; John Morris has joined as a stonemason and Lyle Laird has recently given enthusiastic support.

The new polystyrene hives are now being used but have taken some getting used to. The winter of 2012-13 and particularly the terrible spring caused setbacks in colony development and significant losses but colonies have more than made up this past few weeks.
Association polystyrene hives; we hope these will help overwinter survival rates in future.

In late May 2010 the association hosted an SBA / BIBBA queen Rearing and Bee Breeding weekend event attended by some 40 beekeepers. Terry Clare was the course tutor and with the help of a full back up team of association members success was assured. Since then we have opted for quieter local events while the apiary development proceeds but we have managed to host visits from the Stirling & Dunblane and the Edinburgh and Midlothian Beekeeping Associations.

We still have a lot of work to do and a willing team. We could not have reached our present situation without the support of our local farmer (John Keddie) who has helped to maintain access and even prepared a new car parking area. We showed our appreciation for the generosity of John Muir who donated the cabin and deputed one of his experienced drivers to deliver the cabin, with a plaque and an opening ceremony last year.

The stonemason continues his expert work and we plans for a bee-bole with skeps filled with bees for sometime in the future. All we can hope is for an easier winter and a warm and early spring in 2014. Though this is the 75th anniversary year of the Dunfermline & West Fife Beekeepers we remain a young (in mind) and vibrant association.

John E Durkacz
OTHER DATES (as on website):

Sat 10 August  Kinross Show at RSPB Vane Farm - SBA will be represented.
Sun 11 August  FBA apiary meeting, 2pm, Botanics, St Andrews.
Sat 17 August  DWF apiary meeting, 2pm Muirside apiary.
Sat 24 August  Thorne’s, Newburgh – SBA Extraction Class

Fri 6 – Sun 8 September – Scottish National Honey Show, Camperdown Park, Dundee. Schedules from www.dundeeflowerandfoodfestival.com

Sun 15 September  FBA, 2pm, Botanics, St Andrews
Sat 26 October  Leuchars and District Gardening and Crafts Show (includes a honey section), Burnside Hall, Balmullo.

Sat 16 November  Dewars Centre, Perth,
10.30am – LA Secretaries and Representatives meeting.
The LA Secretaries meeting has been very stimulating these last few years – please let Janice or Tom know if you’d like to go with them.

2.00pm – SBA Annual Council Meeting, open to all SBA members

SBA TOUR SPEAKER, 7.30pm Thurs 10 October, Dairsie Memorial Hall.

FBA and DWFBA applied jointly for the tour speaker to visit us and were lucky enough to be chosen. David Aston NDB, Chairman of BBKA (British Beekeeping Association) is possibly the biggest beekeeping name south of the border. He will be speaking on *Chemicals – their use in today’s beekeeping in the UK*. With the recent EU two year ban on certain neonicotinoid pesticides, to start in December this year, this should be a very interesting lecture.

ANNUAL JOINT DINNER, 7 for 7.30pm, Thursday 14 November, Grouse and Claret, Kinross (by exit 6 of M90). This will replace FBA’s normal lecture evening, and all are encouraged to attend what is always a most enjoyable, very friendly, gourmet evening.
PHOTO OPPORTUNITY – The invitation below was emailed to both secretaries for circulation among the membership. Do get back to Nadia if you’re interested.

NAME = Nadia
SURNAME = Gabriel
EMAIL = hello@nadiagabriel.co.uk
COMMENT = Hello,
I am writing as to you I am undertaking a photo project documenting some of the many beekeepers in Scotland. I would love if some of your members were willing to take part in series. If possible, could you get me in contact with anyone who might be interested. I am willing to travel out to wherever they might be (I am currently in Perth).
The aim of the project is to show the variety of beekeepers within Scotland, by taking portraits of them within their own environment (this can be near the hives or within a place the sitter feels most comfortable i.e. their homes). The photographs will be taken on film and hand printed. I would respect the wishes of the beekeepers (i.e. I am not going to demand anyone be photographed that does not want to be, and I will not upset the bees) This is part of my final year project at the Edinburgh college of art.
The images may be used in the degree show, and I would make a print for anyone involved. I can provide more information if needed.
Thank you, Nadia Gabriel