

AUGUST 2019 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our August newsletter.

How are we all this month? From blistering heat and sunshine, to torrential rain and flooding, its been quite a summer. Next time I write in a newsletter it will be October. Quite hard to believe. We shall be (or in some cases already done) putting our apiaries to bed for the winter. However, we still have some weeks left of the beekeeping year, so onwards and upwards, and lets not worry about the weather. Enjoy what we have left of the year, it goes far too fast.

We have a vacancy among our Trustees for an Events Coordinator. Please consider joining us, information below.

Again I am reminding all that we have set up a facebook page for members only who wish to join /discuss breeding groups.. Please use this facility, do not be afraid to ask questions and join in with discussions, it is a closed page, and only SNHBS members can see it. You must however have a facebook account to use this.

[click here to join group](#)

keep your girls happy and healthy

Dawn.

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SNHBS Events Coordinator¶¶

If you've been looking for ways to get more involved with SNHBS, we might have just the opportunity for you: we're looking for a volunteer Events Coordinator to help us organise member events and exhibit space at events such as the Royal Highland Show.

The role is, ideally, a Trustee position. Besides Trustees' support, the Coordinator could "recruit" other members for additional volunteer help. In this role, you'd be:

- Managing all SNHBS events
- Liaising with event organisers
- Managing logistics (booking venues & catering)
- Using booking software (e.g. Eventbrite) for sign up
- Organising marketing materials (banners, leaflets etc)
- Coordinating volunteers
- Communicating with attendees
- Liaising with the Trustees
- Liaising with the Treasurer to manage budget and expenses
- Coordinating events announcements and write-ups for the SNHBS website and newsletter
- Seeking out new events that could fit with SNHBS objectives and aims
- Presenting proposals to the Trustees¶¶

We currently have two main member events - the Annual Meeting and workshops to Identify those Native Bees – and have been given space within the SBA tent at 3 large public events.

Event Coordination/Project Management experience would be a plus, but great organisation, planning and communication skills are the most important attributes for the position.

If you think this might be a role for you or if you'd like to learn more, please reach out to secretary@snhbs.scot by 6th September 2019.

Thank you to everybody who visited us at the Royal Highland Show. It was a great success and very enjoyable. A special thank you to [Scottish Beekeepers Association](#) for allowing us to gate crash their tent !

Beauty and the Beast - Was it a pantomime at the RHS or just a Midsummer Nights Dream.



With the agreement of the SBA events committee a small portion of the Honey Tent at this years Royal Highland Show was made available to the Scottish Native Honey Bee Society for a promotional stand. In the 3 to 4 weeks before the show the trustees put together a presentation sufficient to fill the allocated space. Sandy Scott arrived early on the Thursday morning to set up our stand which was not a mammoth task given the space that we had to cover. Our stand however proved to be good enough to attract Countryfile presenter, Ellie Harrison, for this promotional photo opportunity.

Article supplied by Sandy Scott

Queen Rearing – A Novice View

Arriving at Cloverlea Apiaries, Ochils Breeding Group, we received a warm welcome, despite the showers. Following registration and tea or coffee, we began with talks on the basics and principles. This was appreciated, as even to a beekeeper of several years, queen rearing still seems like a magical technique, reserved for the elite apiarist.

We covered the standard lifecycle and development of the 3 castes of honeybees and covered the importance of selecting material to graft: preferably larvae under 12 hours old. We also discussed the importance of selecting for characteristics, population sizes and very importantly, suitable Drone stock.

Grafting methods, timing and establishment of the suitable mating nuclei (including methods of establishing them) were discussed in some depth, as well as the types of nuclei (all of which were demonstrated later). Helpfully, Tips and Pitfalls were identified, which would have helped me no end 4 years ago when I bought an Irish Black Bee from a reputable supplier in a last attempt to recover my biggest and assumed queenless colony (basically I did everything that should be avoided).

Next we went in groups to the different demonstration / discussion stations. As part of the green group, I headed out to the hives to learn how to handle queens, by practising on young workers. This was enlightening as previously the encouragement was usually to use Drones, but as Gavin

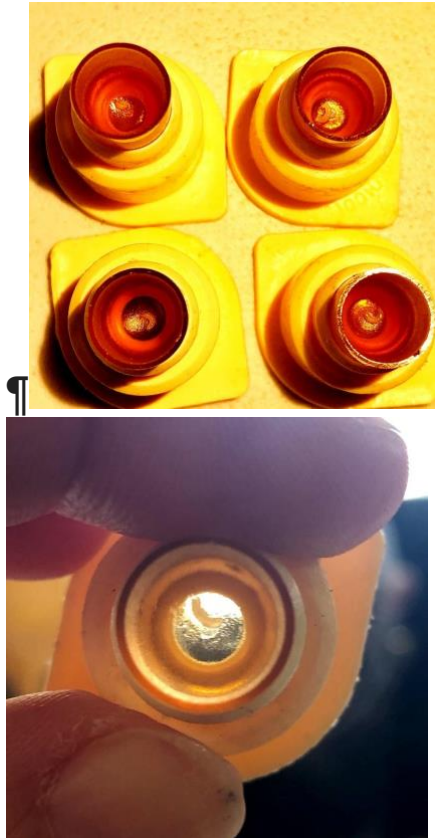
quite rightly pointed out, a drone is more substantial and of a different anatomy, so the nearest to queens are obviously the worker . Everyone in the group was given the opportunity to pick up a young worker by the wings or thorax and then transfer from one hand to the other to secure the legs to allow marking and possible clipping of wings. This is a skill that I would really encourage everyone - new and experienced beekeepers alike – to learn. From there we went to a nucleus with a newly hatched queen and Gavin showed us how to repeat the process of handling, but with a queen.

The next change of stations took our group to Grafting, where Jeff took us through the different types of grafting tools: from some things that looked more in place in an orthodontist to a simple sable brush. Also, magnification and lighting were reviewed and as my subsequent practical attempts to move the very young larvae revealed, that lighting is key to the process. This session was really the key part of the workshop for me, giving the instruction, material and confidence to have a go. Surprisingly, I was reasonable at identifying the suitable larvae to choose and lifting and placing them into the grafting cup. Personally, my success was limited to using the sable paint brush: I very quickly gave up on the Chinese grafting tool, which I found too harsh and liable to dig into the wax cell or slice the poor larvae in half.

After a delicious and well provisioned lunch, the final group session was on the types of Queen Raising boxes - Apideas and mini-nucs - and how to prepare them. In this session with John, we learned all kinds of wonderful tips on adaptations and lessons learned from many years of experience.

I really enjoyed the day, learned loads and most importantly gained confidence in giving Queen Rearing a go, with lots of options of how to do this, depending on the size and scale of our process. We also got a boost of confidence to attempt to rear AMM stocks, even when some of us are surrounded by cross breeds and Buckfast.

Many Thanks go to the [Ochils Breeding Group](#) - Gavin, Jeff, John, Tracey and Karen - for an educative and enjoyable day. ¶



Helena Jackson

Colonsay's Honeybee Reserve given International acclaim.

<https://www.snhbs.scot/colonsays-honeybee-reserve-given-international-acclaim/>

World leading honeybee researcher Professor Tom Seeley from Cornell University, Mass. U.S.A. recently honoured Colonsay's Black Bee Reserve with a two day visit to study at first hand the behaviour of our native honeybee – *Apis mellifera mellifera*. Also to learn about the conservation work, breeding and management systems being carried out by the island bee-keeper Andrew Abrahams.

Prof. Seeley is no stranger to small, remote islands as for many years he used the island of Appledore distant from the Maine coast to carry out his ground breaking research work. This research has helped tell us many more of the secrets of the honeybee community and how their scouts seek out and choose suitable new nesting sites in the wild. Importantly, there is clear debate and democratic decision making amongst the bees as to the final choice and suitability of possible nest sites. The scouts then have the onerous task of directing and leading the swarm (many who have never left the confines of their nest) exactly to their new home.

Prof. Seeley has followed in the footsteps of the Nobel prizewinner von Frisch, who decoded the wonderful honeybee dance language that allows nectar gatherers to exactly communicate good forage sources.

Years of researching honeybees in the wild has convinced Prof. Seeley that honeybees become highly adapted to their local environment and are perfectly able to control the pests and diseases, that are presently so damaging to worldwide managed populations. They have after all been around for nearly 50 million years! He is a great advocate of using and conserving local honeybees.¶

In a letter of appreciation of his visit to Colonsay he wrote

“ The Isle of Colonsay is certainly important for its human history and culture, but to biologists, it is even more important as a unique reserve in western Europe of a pure population of honeybees that are native to Scotland. I applaud you in establishing and maintaining the Colonsay and Oransay Black Bee Reserve”

Article supplied by Andrew Abrahams.

Prof. Tom Seeleys latest book, [The Lives Of Bees, is now available from Northern Bee Books and other booksellers](#)¶

Native colony rescue; the sequel.

In the June newsletter I wrote about a colony rescued from a BT junction box in September 2018 then moved to my garden to overwinter and assess. A more accurate description would be ‘near native’ as about 10% of bees showed some hybrid characteristics, a more yellow band on the first abdominal segment.

What a mixed bag the weather has been this year! There were some early sunny days but temperatures remained low and the oilseed rape was held back until suddenly things warmed up, there was a more intense yellow in the fields and then the unmistakable scent of nectar secretion. The colony built up steadily, the shallow box was placed below the brood box and a new deep box placed on top to get new brood combs drawn out. By late May rapid progress had been made considering they had been overwintered on cut out brood comb from the original nest somewhat misshapen by retaining elastic bands. That was when I made a first graft

and moved a few mature cells to a remote mating apiary. For me the first attempts at grafting each season are not the best.

By early June there were 8 frames of brood and the queen continued to lay well. This is where I made too many assumptions and did not do the proper thing. There were 3 lovely queen cells which I assumed were supersedure cells which they would have been by rights but not in the swarming season. I was busy, in a rush, you name it but not really an excuse. Just a few days later I checked the colony and there was one cell hatched, the queen still there and eggs as well. I clipped her and assumed there was a virgin in there somewhere. Was this to be a pure supersedure and that I would later find mother and daughter in the hive together? The weather was then changeable and that made planned examinations difficult as we all know but this summer saw some remarkably warm days in between torrential rain with bees flying excitedly mixed with young bees on orientation flights and of course, sudden swarm urges.

Before I could get myself organised this all changed to a swarming situation with the hive in the garden but it ended well. The old queen was found under the hive with a cluster, a swarm with a virgin retrieved from a shrub next door and the parent hive went on to be headed by a new queen mated locally. The old queen was removed and heads her own nucleus in another apiary and has been used for grafting and rearing new queens mated with drones from proven native colonies. The daughter was moved was also allowed to head her own small colony. They all look like being suitable for overwintering so there will be a chance next season to assess the mother queen against a daughter mated locally and at least 3 daughters from mininucs mated with native colonies.

Another colony of dark native looking bees this time from a late 2018 swarm which entered an empty hive to set up home itself. This colony was about 3 miles from the 'junction box' colony.

Photos: N Kenny

But that is not all as I was asked to help a beginner who had a late swarm come into an empty hive in August 2018. Frames had not been arranged correctly so come spring 2019 there was considerable tidying up to be done. The queen was old and had a faded yellow mark and during all the manipulations the colony behaved in a docile and manageable way. Shortly after they produced what looked like supersedure cells so the queen was removed to a nuc and has been used for grafting young larvae. I am not sure that she will survive the coming winter.

What is pleasing about the two colonies was how manageable they have been. Certainly the 'junction box' bees have been well tested in a small

garden with plenty of activity around them and caused no concern. The other dark bees look promising but the daughters have yet to be overwintered and their colonies assessed through the 2020 season. Remember it is not just dark looking bees that I am seeking but those that might have good characteristics for ordinary beekeepers and are productive, predictable and easily managed. If they come from colonies able to look after themselves then so much the better.

This has been a small project of my own and is not linked in any way to the SNHBS Conservation Project.

John Durkacz

22 August 2019

SAMMBA funds reminder

SNHBS now has a fund to provide financial support for members' breeding groups and some other activities.

The money came from the winding-up last year of Arnamurchan's *Amm* project and the Sunart, Ardnamurchan, Moidart & Morvern Beekeepers Association. Hence we call it The SAMMBA Fund. ¶

SAMMBA donated its money and equipment-proceeds to SNHBS (about £3600), requesting that SNHBS members be invited to apply for specific types of funding and the Fund be administered by three SNHBS trustees or former trustees.

SNHBS' members may apply for funds for the following purposes:

match funding for the breeding of Scottish Amm stock up to maximum of £400

paying relevant course fees for those involved in Amm breeding groups in Scotland up to maximum of £50 per course and once per annum

match funding for DNA analysis of bees from SNHBS Conservation Project or members' breeding groups

funding video teaching materials (initially on the history and characteristics of Scottish Amm).

When assessing applications for purpose (1) above, priority will be given to Scottish breeding groups rather than individuals. The £400 funding maximum applies to each applicant (member or group) within each calendar year, even if funds are sought for more than one of the purposes above.

Funding will be restricted to members who are currently not-for-profit beekeepers and unlikely to make a profit from breeding Scottish *Amm* within two years.

Consideration will be given to other relevant applications.

Application process

Members are invited to complete the application form available from the Application Custodian, Kate Atchley – email bees@kateatchley.co.uk. The three Custodians will each consider the application and share their conclusions. The decision will be by majority of the three custodians. The Application Custodian will write to the applicant notifying acceptance or explaining refusal.

Those receiving funding will be encouraged to submit periodic reports on the progress of their group's activities or their own beekeeping, as applicable.

Kate Atchley ¶

Update on our LOGO.

The honey bee logo in between articles, (also in June's newsletter), was very kindly designed for us by Hannah Sharp, daughter of Alastair Sharp (Trustee). It has since had a few tweaks, and we have now settled on this design for the SNHBS logo. The date on the bottom may be changed to 'founded 2017', but at this present time I do not have a final picture of that.

We welcome any comments/ideas on the design.

If anybody would like to contribute a story, article or picture to the newsletter, please get in touch.

[CONTACT Dawn Rigby](#) ¶