



**FEDERATION OF
BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS**

President: Miss Margery Cooper

**APRIL 2004
Number 574**

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The Federation, its Council and its Officers cannot be held responsible for
the views expressed in the Newsletter or possible errors.

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Future Events

26 th April 2004	Spring convention & Trade Fair Stoneleigh	
17 th -18 th July 2004	Devon Weekend Exeter	
30 th September 2004	Federation Lecture & Honey Show. Charvil (Claire Waring)	

FROM THE FEDERATION SECRETARY: -

Life is full of strange coincidences.

On the February 16th Claire Waring was appointed General Secretary of the British Beekeepers Association, a job previously held by her husband. On the following day, at the Federation A.G.M., I was elected as your new General Secretary, a job previously held by my wife Sandra.

Strange but true!

I intend to continue along the same lines as Sandra, so it won't necessarily be a case of "a new broom", in fact you might not notice any difference!

You also have a new Federation Chairman.

Jon Davey of Reading Association has taken over from Derek Porter. Derek was required to stand down from the position as he had completed his two-year term of office.

At the meeting following the A.G.M. the subject of the Federation Autumn Event came up for discussion. Last year's Event made a loss of £137.91, due mainly to poor attendance caused by lack of advertising and venue. In an effort to remedy the situation this year it is intended to return to our old stamping ground at Charvil for an evening event, on September 30th.

Please pencil the date on your calendars and in your diaries

William Napper

MESSAGE FROM THE FEDERATION CHAIRMAN: -.

I would like to greet you as your newly elected Federation Chairperson ex the AGM on 17th February 2004. I am sure you will join me in expressing thanks to the retiring Chairman Mr. Derek Porter for his service, and to the retiring general secretary Sandra Napper for her very considerable energies expended on all our behalves over past seasons. William Napper is stepping-in as Sandra's replacement so we may hope for redoubtable input from that direction.

Looking forward to the Berkshire Beekeeping Federation Honey Show, the committee has relocated this event to Charvil Memorial Hall and this will now be an evening event on Thursday 30th September. Claire Waring, (the new BBKA secretary) will be our speaker.

Charvil is very accessible from central Berkshire, off the A4 and we would be grateful if members and friends could think of ways of involving more people to enter the various classes of exhibits for judging and to hear the speakers, we need your support to keep the events that are organised for you viable. Don't forget that we have our new 'Beekeeping in Berkshire' pamphlet available for you. If you are attending a W.I. function, 'Tabling' or 'Rotarian' event' please use these to find new persons who may be interested in beekeeping and would like to attend our meetings and honey shows throughout the season.

Best wishes to you with hopes for a successful and fulfilling beekeeping season.

Jon. Davey

THE APIARY IN APRIL (1998)

In the 1980's the scientists directed farmers into growing a new crop, which took beekeepers by surprise - Oil Seed Rape.

At the beginning of the decade, Frank Napper, (our Federation Secretary's father in law) had two hives in the fields at the old Sutton's Seed Farm near Twyford where oil seed rape was being grown experimentally. One day he and Bert Spragg wanted to take off a super. They brushed off the bees and brought it home in the usual way. They then found to their surprise that the honey, straight from the hive, was too thick to extract. These two expert and experienced apiarists had never seen anything quite like it, didn't know what had hit them and for some time after were completely baffled. They must have been among the first beekeepers to be caught out by rape honey.

The big disadvantage of this abundant early crop is that it solidifies almost as soon as it comes off the hive. And yet, we continue to have a love/hate relationship with the stuff because our bees thrive on it. It comes in early and provides the bees with good food when they need it. They love it, and you can see them tearing off to the nearest field as early in the morning as they can, often ignoring other flowers much closer to home.

It has to be said, also, that the honey has its uses if you want to get fine granulated honey and a lovely pale colour. If you are within two miles of a rape field, the trick is to keep an eye on honey production and be ready to take it off as soon as it is capped. Extract it at once before the honey has time to cool. If it still won't come out, bad luck - you'll have to scrape it off with a spoon and soften it in a Pratley tray or a very slow oven before you can strain it. This is a pity because it means destroying the drawn comb which will have to be rebuilt by the bees.

- A word about doubtful old combs and frames: **replace them.** There is growing evidence from sources on the Continent (where they have been watching Varroa for much longer than we have), that the rate of increase in the Varroa population is actually slowed down if you keep your combs fresh. Keep your equipment clean and fresh is the advice given by the National Bee Unit. Keep a record and make sure that your brood comb is systematically replaced every three or four years.

Early spring is a good time to mark your queens because there are fewer workers about and so the queen is easier to find. She can be trapped in a little press-in cage and marked on the thorax with a dab of modellers' enamel paint or Tippex. This method protects her vulnerable abdomen.

Experienced beekeepers simply pick up their queens, holding them between finger and thumb by the thorax, and mark them. This requires confidence and expertise. It is suggested that it is a good idea to practise on drones first as they are expendable. (Remember to discard the marked drones!) The consequences of rough handling damaging the queen are serious, especially at the start of the season. If worn, the gloves of the handler would have to be very thin, preferably no gloves worn at all.

OK - I'd be too scared. I'll stick to the press-in cage.

Hebe

Aspiring Scribe (STILL) Wanted:

So far we do not have a replacement for Garulus. The column is aimed primarily with beginners in mind but even those with many years of experience are still learning. Have you four or five years experience? Have you a common sense approach to beekeeping, possibly by cribbing from others? Twist the arm of one of your friends that may be too shy to come forward. The Editor would like suggestions; confidentiality will be honoured

FROM THE EDITOR

Bee sting Therapy: -

Attention has been drawn to a recent Richard and Judy show on Channel 4 where a therapist used a bee to demonstrate bee sting therapy on a patient. It is understood that a doctor was present. We are told that this is a dangerous practice. Our information is that any therapy including desensitisation should only be performed in a specialist environment where full resuscitation equipment is available in case of adverse reactions such as anaphylactic shock.

Anyone with professional or first hand knowledge is invited to comment.

Varroa: -

A new product "Exomite Apis" is shortly to be launched. Exomite Apis is formulated from Entostat (™) powder and thymol, trials were carried out on 33 hives in co-operation with Meridian Beekeepers, rather a small sample. I cannot find any independent research with which to compare the effectiveness of the product with other treatments.

Know your judge

Back in November I acquired a sample of honey that had been rejected at a honey show because the judge considered that the entry was "contaminated". I have since submitted the sample to three different National judges. The first recognized it for what it was – SWEET CHESTNUT – saying that it was a good honey with no evidence of contamination but would choose a more preferable flavour. The second judge thought that it was not a typical English honey, did not like it, did not think it was contaminated and that no judge should say it was contaminated unless they were sure and certainly not put such a statement in writing. The sample had time to mellow when tasted by the third judge who liked it, did not recognize it until told what it was, and in common with the other two judges said that no-one should state that any exhibit was contaminated unless they were certain.

The lesson here seems to be; honey with an unusual flavour, particularly chestnut (which yields best in hot weather) is best left to mellow before showing. A large concentration of sweet chestnut trees exists in the park where this honey was harvested. That said, not all sweet chestnut honey has a bitter sweet taste, different soil and weather conditions affect the yield.

R. Crocker

NEW LABELLING REGULATIONS

Your Federation's best advice for the time being is do not order any new labels for jars etc until such time as the new regulations are clear. The BBKA in its February newsletter indicated that it is still seeking clarification, while our Regional Bee Inspector in his February newsletter, attached last month, suggests several websites from which you can obtain copies of the regulations and guidance.

You may eventually find that you can still use up your existing stocks of labels by adding a small sticker with the additional information that needs to be disclosed.

The Federation will update members as soon as any significant and reliable information is available.

Michael Sheasby

Local Honey Producers UK Database: -

From time to time we are asked how to sell surplus honey. There is now a National database of local honey suppliers. You can put your name and details on by going to: - <http://www.beedata.com/localhoney> or submit your details to your Secretary or the Editor – there is no charge for the service

BEE LOSSES CAUSED BY ROTARY MOWERS – Is this another cause of colony depletion?

Meadows in agricultural areas often contain large numbers of flowering plants, often mowed with fast rotary mowers. In this study the bee losses, resulting after mowing have been examined. About 9'000 to 24'000 bees per hectare were lost in white clover fields and 90'000 bees were lost in phacelia fields. Recommendations for farmers, mowing flowering fields are given in order to keep bee losses as low as possible. It is recommended that mowing be not carried out during active bee foraging. Bee activity is least early in the morning or late in the evening or under cool or windy weather conditions. Using of a suitable mowers, e.g. of rotary mower without processor or mower with cutter bar will keep bee losses low

Swiss Bee Research Centre

Your Regional Bee Inspectors are: -

Southern Region: - Mr. Ian Homer. Fax/Telephone number: 01308 482 161

South Eastern Region: - Mr. Alan Byham Fax/Telephone number: 020 8571 6450

If you want some bees, stick to swarms!

Have you ever wondered about the rather strange logo on a Tate & Lyle's Golden Syrup tin, which portrays a dead lion with what appears to be a swarm of bees emerging from the carcass. The accompanying motto is also intriguing -- "Out of the strong came forth sweetness".

The origin of this curious trademark can be traced back to the Bible. In the Book of Judges, Sampson kills a lion with his bare hands. A swarm of bees supposedly took up residence inside the defunct animal and proceeded to produce honey. Perhaps the text was really incorporating one of the concepts of that time that bees were spontaneously generated from putrefying animals. Apparently, the distinction between flies and bees was a little blurred in those far-off days! One classical writer, Virgil, actually told his readers how to acquire their own bees by venturing down this route. An ancient translation of his text reads as follows:

"First there is found a place, small and narrowed for the very use, shut in by a leetle tiled roof and closed walles, through which the light comes in askant by four windowes, faceing the four pointes of the compass. Next is found a two-year-old bull calf, whose crooked hornes bee just beginning to bud; the beast his nose-holes and breathing are stopped, in spite of his much kicking; and after he hath been thumped to deathe, his entrailles, bruised as they bee, melt inside his entire skinne.

This done, he is left in the place afore-prepared, and under his sides are put bits of boughes, and thyme and fresh-plucked rosemarie. And all this doethe take place at the season when the zephyres are first curleing the waters, before the meades bee ruddy with their spring-tide colours, and before the swallow, that leetle chatterer, doethe hang her nest above the beam. In time, the warm humour beginneth to ferment inside the soft bones of the carcasse; and wonderful to tell, there appear creatures, footless at first, but which soon getting unto themselves winges, mingle together and buzz about, joying more and more in their airy life. At last, burst they forth, thick as rain-droppes from a summer cloude, thick as arrowes, the which leave the clanging stringes when the nimble Parthians make their first battel onset".

You now have the "bees", but the question is; will the calf rot down on the compost heap without causing annoyance to the neighbours? However, the honey is bound to be organic!

T. Bewick

Newsletter Archive: -

Three years back issues of the Newsletter can be viewed in PDF format on <http://www.beedata.com/news/fbba newsletters.htm>

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Following the discussion at the last AGM on how the Society could increase the range and quality of members' entries into the annual Honey Show, our February meeting was devoted to demonstrations and advice on making beeswax candles and cakes. Most regrettably, I was unable to be there, so my thanks go to Michael for providing the following report for us:

Harry Peace demonstrated not only how to make drawn wax candles, but also showed how three (empty) baked beans tins could be assembled into a very practical hot wax container, into which the wick is dipped progressively to produce a candle. Harry was followed by Denis Way, who described the process by which a wax cake can be moulded in a Pyrex dish and the techniques required to avoid distortion of the surface of the cake.

Finally, Bernhard Schumann demonstrated the process of production of a candle from a glass mould and showed some of the tricks of this trade. Like Harry's, this demonstration was 'for real', so the table on which they worked came to look much like a laboratory bench in the chemistry lab of our schooldays. Bernhard also provided some useful tips on how to induce a colony to produce virgin comb, which should be harvested before it is filled to obtain high-quality wax.

PLEASE NOTE...because this month's scheduled meeting falls next to the Easter weekend, it has not been possible to book a speaker for the evening. Therefore, your committee has reluctantly decided to **cancel** the evening and replace it with an event later in the summer to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Slough and District Beekeepers Society. We will let you know either by attached note or via the newsletter, what form the celebration will take. If you have a suggestion, let me know ASAP, as we will be discussing all options at the next committee meeting on the 20th April.

The summer schedule of visits to the Society's apiary in Fulmer is now under way at the usual fortnightly intervals throughout the summer. The April dates for your diary are Sundays the 4th and 18th; May's dates are the 2nd, 16th and 30th, all starting at 3pm. Our apiary supervisor will be pleased to give you directions if you have not been there before. Please call him on 01628 783228. New and old members are always welcome, as we have a lively exchange of ideas at these meetings.

Please remember, though, the most important date for your diary is Sunday, 13th June.

This is when our new regional Bee Disease Inspector, Ian Homer, will be presenting his apiary workshop for us at Fulmer. You will have read about this in his recent newsletter, which was enclosed with our March edition and realise that the topic of resistant Varroa mites should be of increasing concern to us all. We do hope that you will be able to come along to meet Ian and learn more about testing for these mites. Bees permitting, light refreshments will be served afterwards.

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Report on February meeting

We were treated to the second part of Peter Beale's 'Light amongst the Trees' where he illustrated the conservation work he undertook whilst working for the Forestry Commission. Peter worked almost alone in developing habitats for wild creatures in what were otherwise quite sterile environments. His real passion is butterflies and he demonstrated how they benefit from sympathetic changes to the woodland. Unfortunately Peter is moving away from the area and we will not get to see Parts III, IV or V of his talk.

Next Year's Programme of talks

The Committee will meet this month to consider talks for next winter's meetings. Any special requests for speakers or topics should be forwarded to the Secretary.

Rosemary's Book of the month

Adventures Among Bees by Herbert Mace

It was the title that caught my eye at first - all beekeeping is an adventure, so what was new? Then I noticed the date - 1924. I looked at it, expecting to find one of those rambling books full of anecdotes romanticising beekeeping. Well, it was, but I couldn't put it down and I read it through in practically one sitting.

For a start, Mace loved bees and from what he writes you can tell he was a very good beekeeper. He made an interesting study of the relationship between the weather, the time of year and flowering plants and the amount of honey his bees produced. During his early beekeeping days before the Great War he combated the devastating Isle of Wight disease, without antibiotics.

Not least, his story reflects a little of the lifestyle of those days: he goes rushing after a swarm without putting on his hat and coat; he is posted to Macedonia during the war where he is obliged to wear a solar toupee; all his hives are WBC, skeps were still in use in the country.....

The work is full of amusing stories, which he uses to make a point in a very readable way. Sometimes his style is a bit pompous, but that was the way people were writing then so don't let this put you off this delightful book.

Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On 12th February Reading Association held our Flood lecture. We had a good attendance and were happy to see beekeepers from neighbouring associations present to hear Doctor Brenda Ball from Rothamstead Research give a lecture on the problems created by Varroa infestation of beehives giving us information we could scarcely obtain otherwise. E.g. the Varroa mite is one of the largest parasites in nature in relation to its host: e.g. it would be the equivalent of something approaching the size of a dinner plate if there was a human equivalent, sucking body fluids. In addition, that Varroa do not lay hundreds of eggs but reproduce at about one and a quarter times per adult mite each session.

It is the highly specialised adaptations of the mite's body and feeding parts that allows it to be carried by adult bees from colony to colony with serious consequences. The bee viruses, which would be expected in many colonies during the season, are apparently spread to a far higher proportion of the bees when there is Varroa infestation. For example the 'deformed-wing virus' that is the most easily spotted by the average beekeeper, can be present in excess of 70 % of bees in an infested colony if the bees are attacked by Varroa during development, creating weak colonies with poor nectar gathering performance and higher chances of death during the winter. Obviously effective methods of mite control are essential for our futures as hopefully successful beekeepers.

Our April meeting is on Sunday the 18th at 11.30 sharp at Peter Kimber's apiary at 25 Conisborough Avenue, Caversham Heights. Reading. Tel 0118 9471319. We will be opening up Peter's hives and monitoring the results of feeding the bees some of Peter's plentiful ivy honey crop. Don't miss it!

Secretary: Mr. R. Kiff, 114 Silverdale Road, Earley, Reading RG6 7LU Tel. 0118 966 5358

Newsletter "Deadline": - - Contributions, this includes **E-mails**, to arrive with the Editor by the **FIRST POST** (Around 10.00am) on the First of the Month for the Following Month

To enable the Advertisement Manager to place adverts with the Editor for the 1st of the month deadline; adverts should be sent well before this time.

ADVERTISEMENT ENTRIES: - 2 Lines for £1.00. Commercial, £1.00 per line, together with your cheque made payable to FBBKA. To be sent to the Advertisement Manager:-
Mr. Michael Blackburn, M.B. Photography, 41 Prospect Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8JV. Telephone:- (0118) 947 9450/5451

FOR SALE: One stock of bees in National hive. 2003 queen. Call Harry on 01628 624543

SECOND HAND BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT FOR SALE: Holyport 01628 632054

Commercials - 6 Brood boxes, 7 supers, 3 Roofs, 2 floors, 1 feeder, 2 clearing boards., 3 Queen excluders. Expect approximately 1/4 of new price for main items. Some other items such as Snelgrove Boards and Landing Stages, Nucleus Box, Smoker, Hat, Veil and Suit (need cleaning). Willing to reduce prices for larger purchases

5 Frame National Nuclei **FOR SALE**, April onwards Telephone: 01344 776359

Honey for sale, surplus to requirement in 30lb containers at £1.25 / lb Telephone. 0118 9479450

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