



**FEDERATION OF
BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS**
President: Miss Margery Cooper

**MAY 2004
Number 575**

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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: -

The reason for the Federation General Secretary's regular piece in this newsletter is not to pass on practical "hands-on" beekeeping tips, opinion or advice. This is apparently best left to the "experts". My task is to keep you, the members, in touch with any information issuing from BBKA Headquarters, update you with Federation items of interest, and to pass on any relevant content of correspondence received.

So, here goes - The BBKA Honey Show, will take place at Stoneleigh during the Royal Agricultural Society of England Royal Show on 4th - 7th July. Note - Entries close 6th May. Further information and/or entry forms available from BBKA HQ. Tel: 02476696679.

The next Federation Council Meeting will take place on May 18th, so if there is anything you feel should go on the agenda for discussion please let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you.

As a point of interest, I am also your BBKA Membership Secretary. So if you have had any problems concerning membership cards, please let me know. Any changes of address should be passed on via your Association Membership Secretary.

William Napper

THE APIARY IN MAY

A big swarm is an awesome sight, and if you don't know anything about bees, it can seem as alien and scary as anything from outer space.

As East Berkshire becomes more "developed", our neighbours are increasingly likely to be townfolk who know little about bees. They could be very worried if a great wad of them landed in their garden. We beekeepers know what the bees are up to, we know how to handle them and we have protective clothes and smokers. Most people don't. It is easy to understand their feelings. Some people could become very hostile and anti-beekeeping if their fears were not straightened out. If we want to keep out of trouble with the neighbours, we must have them on our side. This is why we must all be ready to respond to calls where swarms are concerned and to be prepared to take time to explain what is going on.

There's no need to go mad and risk your neck at the top of a tree or in the eaves of a tall house. If it's not safe, don't try. Resign yourself and get on to the pest control people.

If you are worried about taking a swarm on your own, contact another beekeeper for help.

But, whatever you do - do something!

In these peculiar seasons we are having where bees are scarce, a nice swarm can be a useful bonus. It does happen, however that the swarm is not wanted by anyone. Take it anyway. It is better to destroy it than to let it become feral because wild bees are carrying and spreading Varroa and other diseases.

Supposing you do have a swarm and you are not absolutely sure where it's come from, give it the full anti-Varroa treatment.

There is also foul brood to consider, this is something you really do not want in your apiary. A simple precaution you can take is to hive the bees on to new foundation and don't feed for 24 hours. This means that the honey they bring with them from their old, and possibly infected, nest will not be stored, but it will be used up immediately as they secrete wax to build new comb and so infective organisms will be excreted away from the hive at once. After 48 hours it will be safe to feed them with sugar syrup if necessary.

A nice swarm does not always stay in one place. Quite often you turn you back for a minute and you find they have all tiptoed away. You can prevent this from happening if you are sure you have a mated queen in your swarm by putting a queen excluder under the brood box for a week or so until the queen is laying.

Don't do this with a cast with a virgin queen for obvious reasons!

Hebe

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: -

I refer to the Reading report of the Flood Memorial Lecture.

Far be it for me to be at variance with Brenda Ball, but I know from personal experience that cloudy wing virus was found in the Home Counties in bee colonies (confirmed at the time by Rothamsted) before ever we had Varroa. It can certainly be carried on migrating Varroa mites, but cloudy wing virus may not be the only cause of wing deformities because Varroa young feeding on the bee larvae or pupae in the cells also causes them. These deformities were attributed to Varroa in Holland some years ago.

Name and address supplied

BEE VENOM - Bee sting Therapy: -

Further to the recent Richard and Judy show on Channel 4 where a "therapist" used a bee to demonstrate bee sting therapy on a patient.

Answer from Doctors: -

Desensitisation (or specific immunotherapy) to wasp and bee venom is a method of teaching the immune system of people with allergy to wasp and bee stings to not over react in the future. The treatment involves giving weekly injections of gradually increasing concentrations of venom for eight weeks until the patients are receiving a dose equivalent to two stings. The course then continues with monthly injections for the next two to three years. There is a small risk of anaphylaxis or severe allergic reactions, with the injections and so they must only be given in specially approved clinics where full resuscitation facilities are available. Our local centres are: Oxford, Guildford and Southampton.

It is clearly a substantial time commitment for the patient involved but it might just be worthwhile for those who live their life in terror of having a severe allergic reaction.

Happily, fatal reactions to wasp and bee venom are relatively rare. One estimate puts the numbers in England at about 4 per year. Interestingly, only about two of the four have ever suffered any allergic reaction to wasp or bee venom before. Older people are more prone to fatal anaphylactic reactions because their hearts are more susceptible to the effects of the venom.

In summary, desensitisation is available, but it is a big time commitment. The risks of fatal allergic reactions are happily quite low.

Kind Regards

Yours sincerely



Dr Andrew Burnett

(Sonning Common Health Centre)

CAN IT BE EXPLAINED: -

I keep three colonies plus swarms collected in my front garden in 14" x 12" National hives. My main swarm control is to use the artificial swarm method when I come across a colony with queen cells occupied. I generally remove all queen cells apart from one good one in the original hive. This day I left two cells as an insurance that one would give me a good queen and the other one the bees would sort out themselves. I was not worried about the colony giving rise to a cast, as the number of bees did not seem too great.

Some twelve days later, looking out of the window watching the bees flying in and out of the hives, to my astonishment bees started pouring out of the hive with the two queen cells in. I watched with amusement to see which tree or shrub they would cluster on. I had no need to panic as all the equipment I required was in my van, not 20metres from the hives, which makes a nice change. The bees started to cluster on the side of a hive I housed a swarm that was collected two days ago from Waterloo Close, Wokingham. It was time to get my equipment from the van and walk over to the hive where the cast was clustered. I was amazed to see them just walking into the hive without any fighting. I watched the hive entrance for two or so hours but the colony carried on actively as if nothing had happened. The hive was checked the next day for dead bees outside the hive and there were none. Three weeks later I manipulated the hive and found all ten frames of foundation drawn out and with a very good brood pattern. The colony produced a small surplus of honey.

I still do not know what actually happened that day.

Why did the bees not fight?

Did I lose the queen from the swarm that I collected two days before this happening?

Can anyone please explain, or is this one of the mysteries that bees throw at the beekeeper now and again?

Nigel Perkins

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

Newsletter Archive: -

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

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Our final winter meeting in March was a very entertaining and thought provoking evening hosted by Dr Jill Eyers, on the subject of the geology of the Thames Valley. It was quite fascinating to hear how the various layers of rock and sediment can give such a comprehensive picture of what was happening in the area up to 60 million years ago. We heard how the deeper layers of rock here actually surface far away, in places such as the fells in Cumbria and how subsequent localised layers show the various periods when water or ice covered the area. There were various samples of rock, fossils and prehistoric bone and a slide show to illustrate her talk. We all enjoyed the evening, I am sure and our thanks go to Dr Eyers for coming along.

The summer schedule of visits to our apiary is now well under way. At the first visit in March, it was too cold to disturb the bees. However, we were able to deal with the tree roots which had made the stands unstable and install the new Dartington hive in it's position, ready for occupation later in the season. Our thanks go to everyone who had a hand in producing this hive; it does look very smart. We shall be there again in May on the 2nd, 16th and 30th, 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 apiary date for your diary is Sunday, 13th June, again at 3pm. 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 the March edition. The topic of resistant Varroa mites should be of increasing concern to us all and 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 March meeting

Beulah came and gave us a refresher course on bee diseases and pests. She covered all the common complaints and reminded us on how to recognise the symptoms and touched on the various treatments. The latest potential threat, the small hive beetle, could be our next battle-front. These little beetles have emanated from Africa but in recent years have infiltrated North America and Australia with serious consequences to the beekeeping industry. We must all be aware of the signs should they find their way to Europe. Resistant Varroa is also spreading up from the West Country and we will all have to modify our management techniques. It will be worth having Ian Homer along to our autumn meetings to give a talk on Integrated Pest Management.

Rosemary's Book of the month

A Bee Book for Beginners

A little while ago I looked at a book in our library called 'The Bee Master of Warrilow'. I was intrigued because it was written before WWI by a man called Tickner-Edwards - an unusual name. It was a rather nice book, describing the work of a Sussex beekeeper in a quaint old-fashioned way. I noticed that we have another book of Tickner's called 'Bee Keeping Do's and Don'ts' and I wondered how he would give practical advice in a similar quaint way.

This book was published in 1925 and his style had changed. Either his publisher had told him to drop the quaint stuff or he was led by the way life had changed with 'the war to end all wars' or the fact that you can't really be whimsical in a brief practical manual.

I found it amusing to look through it to see what changes in beekeeping practice there have been over the past century. There aren't many. He firmly advocates the use of WBC double-walled hives and asserts that bees can't survive in this country with single walls. However, he advises beginners to go in for nothing but comb honey. His attitude to swarming is to actually encourage the bees to swarm, catch the swarm and put it in a hive with drawn comb on the site they came from, having moved the old hive to another site. He says this system does not interfere with the bees' natural instincts and makes for increased honey production at the height of the season.

Otherwise I think it is a very good book for a beginner to read. He covers the subject clearly which is more than can be said for some of the publications that are available today.

Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On Friday 12th March Reading Beekeepers Association were welcomed by Newbury Beekeepers Association to join them at their "Leaver Memorial Lecture" at Upper Bucklebury for Ged Marshall's lecture 'Beekeeping my way'. Ged spoke at the Berkshire Association Honey event two years ago and is a highly proactive commercial beekeeper and has relatively few (about 200) colonies for commerce; maximising his opportunities by cost and labour saving measures, his marketing of honey in ceramic giftware, "squeezey bears" etc. is part of his success.

Ged rears large numbers of mated queens both for sale and also a key part of his programme, he aims to re-queen his colonies every two seasons. Interestingly since Reading members last heard from Ged, a substantial portion of his honey sales now are to fellow beekeepers who need increased quantities these days for their sales through 'farmers markets'! It's nice to know there are some vendors of genuine 'direct from the producers' foodstuffs at these markets as well as what this writer considers to be some rather dubious traders! A Very good lecture, it's advisable to keep abreast of Ged and his innovation. A good turnout by Reading members who also had some luck at the raffle kindly contributed by Newbury Association members! Many thanks to them and their hospitality.

Our May meeting is on Sunday 23rd at 11.30 sharp: We will be visiting an out-apiary run by our Secretary Robert Kiff and fellow committee member Steve Blinstrub, the venue will be at Firgrove Manor, near Eversley, where we hope that we can arrange for the gardens also be viewed. It's a straight run down the A327 to Eversley, through Arborfield Cross. Lifts will be available, please contact Michael Blackburn tel: 0118 947 5451 and Jon. Davey 0118 975 0734.

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

FOR SALE: National hive parts – Floors x 28; Roofs x 20; Supers x 25; Deeps x 20; Crown boards x 20. Double nukes x 12 (Each side of double nuke holds 5 National frames).
Feeders x 6 (2 galls); 30lb honey buckets x 20; Settling tanks x 2 (approx 200 litres)
10 frame Dadant centrifuge extractor. Cecilia Hall 0118 9842913 (1/2)

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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