



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

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Number 576

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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

17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> July 2004	Devon Weekend Exeter	
30 <sup>th</sup> September 2004	Federation Lecture & Honey Show. Charvil (Claire Waring)	

## THE APIARY IN MAY

**Varroa control** - Provide food for the tits! From the shallow frame that you inserted in the brood-box, (you forgot that didn't you? Do it now,) cut off the drone brood, put it into a bag and freeze it for a couple of hours in order to kill any Varroa, the comb can then be hung out for the birds taking care to remove any stores that could be robbed.

Why freeze it? Bees are likely to come to inspect the comb and apart from disease, any loose Varroa that might be around will migrate to the bees. This also applies to any comb dropped on the ground.

The prolonged autumn of 2003 coupled with the warm but inclement spring has resulted in many mis-mated or unmated supersedure queens. I have had two out of eleven. Watch for queens turning drone layer, even into July: colonies do not always try to replace them until there is no unsealed worker brood, even if they do, the chances are that any worker brood available is too advanced to make good queens. If you are in this situation and have doubts as to how to proceed, ask someone for advice.

Still check for swarming, we are approaching what would normally be mid season but April showers proved to be heavy rain continuing into May. This usually results in lots of small swarms – the bees' way of ensuring the perpetuating of the species. In poor conditions the swarm stands a 50/50 chance of survival and the reduction in numbers in the original colony will conserve the stores, if this happens to you don't forget to check if your queen has been mated.

I suspect that this year June will be a gap month; in these days of summer rape, a complete gap is less likely. I have known years when feeding has been necessary in late May and June, use candy or fondant, this way sugar is less likely to get into the supers! However, whatever the conditions may be, the beekeeper should observe what is going on, the state of the weather and forecasts, and especially the shade temperature and the flowering of the principal sources of nectar.

Congestion in a hive whether with stores or overcrowding with bees will most likely result in swarms as will breaks in the honey flow, see, therefore, that sufficient supers are available and are ready before they are likely to be wanted; the fresh super should be put on as soon as bees are in the last one provided.

Always keep an eye out for disease or anything else untoward, do not be hesitant in calling for advice, this can often be given over the telephone, also, there is a wealth of information out there on the world wide web.

Swarms should be hived on new foundation and swarms of unknown origin should not be fed for 48 hours so that they can consume any stores that they are carrying and so reduce the risk of any disease that might be carried, after this time a feed could be advantageous.

As there will be no brood with these swarms this is the best opportunity to reduce the Varroa population. Treatment is most effective with open mesh floors (I have not yet got round to fitting all floors with open mesh; bad example!) but remember that cessation of treatment is advised when honey is being stored in the supers

Courtesy of South Chilterns

### **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.

#### **Sensitivity to bee stings and desensitisation.**

Most people are stung by a bee at some time; in the great majority of cases, the local pain and swelling only lasts for a few hours and there is no further damage. If however a person is repeatedly stung from time to time – a situation which is common with beekeepers, then a change occurs in the subject’s immune system.

The body tissues support a population of floating cells (lymphocytes), which are of many different types, each type has a particular grouping of atoms on its surface, which gives it a distinctive pattern called a receptor. When foreign toxic substances are injected into the body, the toxin floats around bumping against these cells until it finds one carrying a receptor which fits with the toxin. The toxin is latched on to the cell and two things result: firstly, this cell is stimulated to divide so that it becomes more numerous and thus better able to cope with any future injection of the toxin and secondly, the cell produces a soluble protein which dissolves in the tissue fluid and carries the same receptor – this protein immobilizes and neutralizes any toxin molecules which it encounters.

So the common sequence with beekeepers is that they gradually become resistant to the effects of bee stings and an experienced beekeeper may well be able to tolerate multiple stings without ill effects. However, this desirable outcome does not always occur. There is another part of the immune system which is centred around fixed body cells carrying receptors and located in the lungs, blood vessels and skin. When these cells are activated the substances that they produce cause the symptoms of shock and include breathlessness, fainting, skin rashes etc. The severity varies, it may be anything from trivial to life threatening, the latter is fortunately rare!

A small proportion of people seem to have an immune system, which is very sensitive and easily triggered, and for reasons which are not completely understood, their numbers seem to be increasing. These allergic individuals need to be careful to avoid being stung and some who have had severe reactions find it necessary to carry a device which enables them to self-administer adrenalin in an emergency.

In a very few instances, experienced and previously immune beekeepers suffer unexpected reactions to stings. This is rare but well documented so that even beekeepers are well advised to avoid stings whenever possible.

Until recently, courses of injections of controlled doses of bee venom to desensitise people were widely available. However, the remote chance of a severe reaction to a dose has led to a rule that these courses are only given in clinics where full facilities for resuscitation are available and skilled staff are on hand.

There is also the question of bee venom used as a therapeutic agent to treat arthritis and other conditions. This is promoted from time to time, both by the occasional doctor and by complementary practitioners, often using bees to administer the venom rather than controlled dose by syringe. Since the dose from a bee is very variable, this is very much more likely to result in bad reactions and cannot be recommended. And as far as being a reliable treatment for arthritis is concerned, I am a living proof that it does not work.

Ian Wootton.

### CAN IT BE EXPLAINED: -

From your description it seems that the cast was from the same hive as the swarm, then, provided there was no great time lapse, the cast will be accepted without problem. It is most probable that the queen from the swarm had been a virgin and was on a mating flight, this would mean that the swarm was temporarily queen-less. When the mated queen returned, the queens would fight and the one with the cast, being a virgin would win. It was a mistake to leave two cells.

Young Drone

## How to start a Dart –the prequal!

Dateline 20 April 2004.

“Bernhard! You work 14 x 12s don’t you?” (wheedling)

“Yerse” (suspicious)

“Well the Association is starting up a Dartington hive and we need a nucleus on 14 x 12 and we wondered if you.....”

“I’ll see what I can do” (certain).

“We were hoping to start the Dart at our next meeting (in ten days time).

“I’ll see what I can do” (BLAST!!!! (or words that Hon Ed won’t print))

One of the few reliable facts about beekeeping is that when you want your bees to do something, -they won’t. But when the Association wants, -that’s a different matter. And so on the following day there was my strongest hive with three queen cups containing royal jelly and four-day old grubs –just right for artificial swarming.

Four combs, with the queen, stayed where they were and the flying bees carried on filling the second super. The rest were moved one space left and started setting up a new colony in sure and certain hope that nothing would happen until they had a new queen. Three days later I swapped the positions, leaving the honey, the flying bees, the queen cells and the emerging brood on the original site. This left me with a four-comb nucleus with a marked queen in full lay – just the thing to start the Dart.

The weather was glorious, the rape was flowing and I got on with the other hives. **Three days later the artificial swarm swarmed.** I just hadn’t given a very vigorous queen enough room. They settled on a corner fence post with angled support props under which they hid. They just wouldn’t be driven up into my swarm box and, after an hour of smoke puffing, during which I saw the (marked) queen twice, finally took to the air again. This time they settled in an elderberry bush and I was able to cut them off six twigs and get them into a box and hive them. Two days before the Association meeting I removed the queen cells from the original nucleus and united them with the swarm. The day before, I checked the queen and found her laying with gusto and on the day itself we stocked the Dart with a grand seven-comb nucleus and left them happily settling in. We even saw the first pollen load come in an hour after we hived them.

I guess the moral of this story is that, in times of glut, even a four-comb nucleus will swarm.

Bernhard Schumann.

## **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

## **SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY**

### **Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.**

Our apiary supervisor, Jim Cooper, reports that the Dartington hive is in place and hopefully will have been stocked on the weekend of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May. We would encourage all members to attend at least a couple of Society apiary meetings this year to see this novel hive design in action. **Please make one of these visits the next meeting, on Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> June, at 3pm.** As you will all know by now, this is when Ian Homer, our Regional Bee Inspector will be giving a demonstration on Apiary Hygiene and Integrated Pest Management at our Fulmer apiary. This will include testing for resistant Varroa mites, which is of increasing concern to all beekeepers. It really is essential that as many members as possible attend this meeting. Ian is not only extremely knowledgeable but also an excellent presenter and the meeting should be memorable. Tea and light refreshments will be served afterwards. If you have not been there before, Jim will be pleased to give you directions, just call him on 01628 783228.

Two of the colonies, which came out of winter in a weak state, with possibly drone laying queens, will be re-queened as soon as possible. All the hive stands have now been levelled and the hives re-numbered. Even the rain of the last April visit did not deter the usual faithful few attendees for this vital routine maintenance. It would be good to see some of the members who rarely attend these meetings coming along to give their support for the rest of the season. The arrangement for refreshments could be extended to these meetings as well. The remaining dates are: 27<sup>th</sup> June, 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of July and the 8<sup>th</sup> of August.

July also sees the 100th Annual Show of the Royal Windsor Rose & Horticultural Society, which this year is being held at St George's School, Windsor Castle on 17 July. This includes a Honey Class with sections for light, medium, dark and granulated or creamed honeys and for a honey cake to a specified recipe. This is your chance to put into practice the tips learnt at our Honey Show. Further details can be obtained from Don Church on 01753 831939. I understand that Royalty may be present!

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

### **Rosemary's Book of the month**

#### *A Bee Classic*

The publication in 1954 of Karl von Frisch's 'The Dancing Bees' was a revelation not only to beekeepers but to the public as well. The idea of a little bee being clever and cute enough to do a kind of polka to tell others where the honey was seemed rather appealing.

The book is rather more serious. It is a story of painstaking, detailed research that has deepened our understanding about what makes a colony tick. Von Frisch and his team wanted to establish exactly how and why bees know where to go and what to do. They had to begin by devising a numbering system that went up to 599 that could be painted onto newly hatched bees. Then they were able to examine how the scouts are attracted to forage plants and how they convey their discoveries to the other workers. By means of a series of well-planned experiments they established that the nectar collectors' round dance is a way of passing on the scent of the honey and that the waggle dance indicates the direction to go and also how far away the forage is.

The book is written in a very easy conversational style but at the same time it is precise and clear and it is a remarkable description of a scientific project.

### **Apiary visit**

Members are invited to inspect the Secretary's hives on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June from 3:00pm. Please call 0118 934 0238 to confirm attendance and for directions.

### **Programme for 2004 – 2005**

The programme for next winter's talks will be included with this newsletter. We have what promises to be an interesting series of talks arranged covering bee-related topics and general wildlife subjects.

Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

### **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

Sunday 18th April was the date of the first visit of Reading beekeepers Association's summer programme and was to Peter Kimber's apiary. Despite a fair start to the morning cold wet fronts were passing as we sat in Peter's gazebo waiting for the rain to stop and having refreshments 'before kick-off' rather than at 'full time'. We did consider a 'match abandoned' pending a replay however about 45 minutes late we did decide to make a start.

The temperature reading on the thermometer in Peter's open sided bee house was reading 11 Celsius as we opened hive number 1: this being the most populous from what we had observed externally: "not ideal conditions for this exercise " you might say: well the bees thought-so too! On removing a super a bottom bar from a frame became detached including a chunk of uncapped honey comb to be unfortunately trodden upon amongst a cloud of bees, who obviously believed that attack is the best form of defence'. This writer was behind the hive and was fairly well out of it, just mild peppering of the veil, however our demonstrator Michael Blackburn looked like he was going for a 'bee beard' not the full rustic as in the well known infamous photo, more a type of natty 'half Francis' around where his mouth would be if not for his veil! Other beekeepers were receiving considerable attention so we decided to close-up this hive to give them time to calm-down a bit.

Hive number 2 presented itself as a reasonable sized colony of well behaved bees, plenty of brood, few if any drones and obviously have done well under Peter's ivy honey feeding. The ivy combs are scoured with the hive tool when applying, this helps stimulate the bees to use the honey. Hive number 3 was more populous, looking very good, no aggression, beautiful even brood over at least 6 of the frames. More drones were present here and plenty of drone cells, 5 queen cups were on one frame though no eggs inside, eggs were seen on other frames in worker cells.

By this time the rain had increased again and having started late the meeting was having to break-up, looking back at hive number 1 not a bee was stirring, obviously the colony was 'at home' but visitors were not welcome! As we retreated back to Peter's gazebo for some more refreshments we decided to give it best until more favourable conditions. Many thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Kimber and to all who attended what was in many ways a stimulating meeting!

Our June meeting is courtesy of Cyril Mc Combe on Sunday June 27th at 11.30 sharp at Cyril's out-apiary at Cross Lanes Apple Farm, Mapledurham. Very easy to find this venue, please contact the secretary if you need directions or a lift, a very beautiful location, heartily recommended.

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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


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 (2/2)

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

	<b>BERKSHIRE MOBILE WELDING</b> <i>Carry Services</i>	<b>Mobile: 07951 138512</b>	
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