



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

September 2004  
Number 579

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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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**Please note that the General Secretary's address has changed**

## Future Events

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2004 | Federation Lecture & Honey Show. Charvil (Claire Waring) |
|---------------------------------|--|

21st, 22nd and 23rd October 2004 - The National Honey Show,  
RAF Museum, Hendon, North London. More details soon from

<http://www.honeyshow.co.uk>

# Berkshire Federation Lecture And Honey Show

**Speaker: Claire Waring**

**The Judge will appear on the Show Schedule**

CHARVIL VILLAGE HALL,  
CHARVIL

September 30<sup>th</sup> 2004 at 7.30pm

**Admission** £4.00 per person £6.00 per family (max four)

**Put it in your diary now!** Show schedules and entry forms,  
which include special classes for children under 14, From Hazel Blackburn  
Tel: 0118 9475451

Members who receive their Newsletter by e-mail should apply to Hazel Blackburn for schedules and  
entry forms or apply to <mailto:berksbees@btinternet.com>

A map diagram is at the end of this Newsletter.

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## From the Federation General Secretary: -

### George Ranshall Hawthorne

It was with great sadness that I learnt of the passing of our former President George Hawthorne. I started my beekeeping following a course from George, back in 1986, at the Berkshire College of Agriculture. My father, Frank Napper, had died and the family were unexpectedly left with fourteen active colonies to be looked after. George with his friendly instruction and guiding hand gave me the confidence to take on what, looking back, was for a complete novice, quite a daunting task.

I thank you for that George.

You will be sadly missed by beekeeping nationally, but especially here in Berkshire.



You should have received a schedule for the Federation Honey Show with your last Newsletter.

Please make an effort to enter and/or attend on the evening.

A lot of work goes into the organisation of these events, but their success or failure depends on you, the members.

William Napper

**If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs (Kipling)**  
-perhaps you just don't realise how serious things are (some anonymous wag).

Or, perhaps, you didn't read the article in the June BBKA newsletter on the potential loss of the Public Liability Insurance, which protects us all as result of our membership. £5 million to save us from bankruptcy in case we do something stupid, or just get unlucky. **But not for much longer at the present rate of claims.**

The article warned us to keep our bees away from the great litigious (and unwashed) public but was very short on specifics. For example, how near is "near a public footpath"? This sort of advice is as long as a piece of string. It depends on the circumstances.

For example, the hives in this picture are in my orchard. It has the young lady standing on the "garden path" just twelve feet into the bees flight path with the bees passing her at shoulder height. During the last year none of my family have been stung, followed, buzzed or even bothered by the bees.



Of course what the picture doesn't show is the amount of effort which I have put in to maintain an amiable strain of bee. It depends on the circumstances! It also illustrates the risks involved in basing advice on a single experience. So before we all demand detailed advice in circumstances where a little thought shows that they are impossible let's think about what they might usefully do. Here are five suggestions:-

1. **Do nothing.** The easiest and certainly the most attractive option. After all, it might never happen! But see the final paragraph of this article.

2. **Produce a "Code of Practice".** Looks good in its smart glossy cover but is written in such general terms that a beginner still can't be sure that his nice new site is safe. And will it satisfy the Insurance Company that they will have fewer claims and make a scrap of profit this year? Where are its teeth and who is going to administer it?

3. **Get some "Local Advisors"** Find and train some experienced beekeepers (volunteers?) to act as Devil's Advocates, second opinions or whatever. "Your honour whilst we are sorry to hear that little Ernie was stung whilst poking in the hive entrance with a stick, the site was approved under the BBKA site approval scheme and it seems reasonable to question whether the child was under adequate supervision at the time of the incident". I certainly don't feel like being called as an Expert Witness in a court where I am the only person who knows the first damned thing about beekeeping. Once again will this encourage the Insurance Company?

4. **Get ours in early.** When it comes to trial the case will all depend on whether the beekeeper exercised "reasonable care and attention" when choosing the site and working his bees –another set of non-specifics. Perhaps the BBKA might build up an illustrated dossier of suitable (and unsuitable) sites and previous experiences, which could be available to the Court to help them make up their minds.

5. **Get the Insurance Company involved.** Let them make available details of claims from which they have had to fork out in a big way. These can be "anonimised" and written up in the various journals so that we all know what sites and practises to avoid. Beekeepers are not noted for learning from other people's mistakes –in this case we don't get the chance. None of us **want** to end up in court!

It's easy to assume that our problems are the fault of over-enthusiastic beginners, members who don't show up at meetings (and probably don't read the newsletters) and that perennial chestnut the non-member (who blunders around without the benefit of the support of an association). On a recent disease training/inspection tour in which I assisted, the worst offenders were the old stagers who appeared to think that the sites and practises they espoused thirty years ago are perfectly acceptable today. In other words nobodies nose is quite clean and I've probably upset everybody. Tough! If this article stirs up some **constructive** correspondence or questions (Hon ED will be delighted) on the way forward, who cares about a few ruffled feathers? Next month I'll describe my experiences on a single site this year, they are very relevant.

Bernhard Schumann.

## In the Apiary -

**Contributor wanted:** If you have four or more years beekeeping experience you have reached the stage where many voice their opinions, however, you should be able to write something sensible. Why not have a go; it could enhance your reputation as a beekeeper.

### September:

Recent years have seen wetter and warmer autumns and heavy late honey flows from the ivy resulting in clogged brood chambers. This can result in reduced breeding space and poor spring build up and sometimes loss of colonies.

Reduce the problem by putting on supers at the end of August – I have heard of as many as two supers being filled up to as late as November.

It is not too late to apply varroa treatment indeed experiments are in progress to treat late into winter with Apiguard, after all the Frakno method although fiddly is successful, I know of beekeepers that have never used anything else.

At low temperatures thymol does not kill varroa but seems to disorient them and they fall off the bees without entering brood cells, they will still die if they fall through open mesh floors!

Onlooker (Kent)

## **From the Editor**

George Hawthorne:

I met George in his first week as County Beekeeping Advisor in 1953 having been advised to try the “new boy” with a problem with bees that I had been given. George did not know the answer (good start) but he knew someone that did. He sent a sample to Rothamsted, they did not know either, they had never seen this before. It was only when Dr Bailey came on the scene was it recognized as sac brood – said to be a first for George.

When ADAS wanted a Bees Officer for Berkshire George put my name forward then when the post was offered, he persuaded me to take it up saying that it would be to our mutual advantage – in many ways it certainly was. It was George together with Harry Wickens of Manleys that introduced me to the Bee Farmers Association

Although ill for some time he was still willing to give advice and was available almost to the end, he will be missed, certainly by Berkshire and Oxfordshire beekeepers.

Ron Crocker

## **Letters to the Editor**

When I came into Berkshire, many years ago, the first important beekeeper I met was George Hawthorne who was in charge of the Beekeeping Department at the Agricultural College at Burchetts Green. He gave me lots of advice on the methods of keeping bees which I was perfectly green about at that time. He was an expert at teaching people the art of skep making, and he also did much towards restoration of the Victorian bee-house in the grounds of Burchetts Green.

Being a Yorkshire man, he was a bit blunt in his ways, but I found him exceptionally kind and instructive, He was a good friend.

Albert Spragg

## **George (Ran) Hawthorne**

George's first apiary visit as a County Bee Instructor was to Ron Crocker's apiary at Wokingham. He was puzzled by the appearance of the brood and as to why brood cells were not being sealed – it was later found to be sac brood – the first case identified in the country.

I first got to know George as the CBI after I started beekeeping about 25 years ago. I attended some of his courses at the Berkshire College of Agriculture. He first visited my apiary after I had sent him a sample; as it was not what he expected he came to look, not being satisfied, we sent a sample to Rothamsted and it was proved to be cloudy wing virus!

I got to know him as a Honey Judge and learnt much when stewarding for him – he was always ready to share his knowledge, and it was he who encouraged me to take the Judges Exam. I owe him a lot.

After retiring he took up wood turning and I continued my friendship with him in that sphere. I shall greatly miss George.

Margery Cooper.

## High quality retail honey from new EEC members.

Following the discovery of very competitively priced Hungarian acacia honey in Asda Reading, readers may be interested to know that Safeway's in Whitley (Now part of the Morrison empire) is offering a more reasonable deal on Hungarian Acacia: as judged by let us say 'our viewpoint'.

Safeway 'The best' cut comb in Hungarian Acacia blossom honey at £2.85 for a 340 gramme jar; nicely faceted to 'enlarge' contents. From this description the actual comb doesn't have to be acacia, all the Morrison or Safeway brands of 'single flower' honey were this light weight including Australian Eucalyptus at £1.95 per small jar. It's nice to see that Sir Ken Morrison is a 'proper' grocer!

Jon Davey

## BBKA Basic Monthly Quiz.....

Do you know the answers?

*Manipulation of a Honeybee Colony*

The candidate will be aware of:

1. the care needed when handling a colony of honeybees
2. the reactions of honeybees to smoke
3. the personal equipment needed to open a colony of honeybees
4. the reasons for opening a colony
5. the need for stores

## 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.

Following the advice given on the apiary visit by Ian Homer, we shall be reviewing the use of the varroa treatment strips at the society's apiary. This will be done at the last meeting of the year after removing this year's honey crop. Much new advice is available for ongoing control following the spread of resistant mites; maybe we shall use them for one last time. Come along to our first winter meeting on Tuesday, September the 14<sup>th</sup> for an update. This meeting is the annual Review of the Year, when we share our experiences of the past season with each other and hear from the Apiary Supervisor on the state of affairs at the Society's apiary at the conclusion of the season. As usual, it will be held at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor and will commence at 8 o'clock.

The committee would like to thank all those members who have supported our summer program of apiary visits this year. It has made them much less of a chore by sharing the work to be done and we look forward to seeing everyone again on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

The October meeting, on Tuesday the 12<sup>th</sup>, will be the annual Honey Show, when our bee's produce is judged before us in what is usually a lively and entertaining evening. The Show Schedule has been sent out already, so we hope that you are now busy preparing your entries. Following the demonstrations earlier this year on the beeswax categories, we also hope that there will be more competition in these areas.

Even if you are a novice at showing, there is a cup to be won for 'Most points by a Novice', so do have a go. We all need to learn by our mistakes, and what better way than by advice from the Honey Judge.

If you have entries for our Show, then an excellent forerunner to try them out will be the Federation Lecture and Honey Show, which is to be held on 30<sup>th</sup> September

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091  
Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

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

*The Complete Guide to Beekeeping by Roger A Morse.*

The title of this book caught my eye: who is there who really can give a complete guide in just over 200 pages? Well, the author has pretty good credentials. In 1973, when the book was published he was Professor of Apiculture at Cornell University, one of the leading US universities. He kept bees since he was ten, he had thirty odd hives and he wrote for all sorts of bee-journals.

Unfortunately, as I guessed, he skates across the surface, leaving the beginner totally baffled and the more experienced disappointed. He whisks through Demareeing in less than half a page; he gives a few lines to EFB; he assumes you know all about Porter escapes and says they are an excellent way of removing honey from colonies of bees.

In other words it is not by any means a complete guide. Professor Morse may be a very successful apiculturist, but I would not like to be one of his students.

### **Patron saint of beekeepers**

My Schott's Calendar reveals a daily list of trivia as you turn the pages. Today it revealed that our patron saint is St Ambrose. St. Ambrose is also known as the "Honey-Tongued Doctor," a pun on the saint's name (the word for honey in Latin is ambrosia); his preaching was said to be mellifluous, as sweet as flowing honey. Also according to legend, when Ambrose was a baby, a swarm of bees settled on his mouth, an omen that he would be a great orator. St. Ambrose is the patron of beekeepers, bees, candle makers, domestic animals, learning, Milan Italy, and students. He is often depicted with a beehive or bees in his iconography, symbols which also indicate wisdom.

### **A message from your President. Albert Spragg**

It would be useful if a skep making demonstration could be arranged. I maintain that every beekeeper should have knowledge of skep making because they are so remarkably useful. You can put fruit or potatoes or garden vegetables in them or anything else that needs a bit of air, as well as using them for holding a swarm of bees. The tools needed are not hard to get hold of. You can get wheat straw from a local farmer. You need to cut some lengths of bramble of current years growth which you must keep green or damp till it is used (you can remove the thorns by passing them through the eye of a bicycle spanner), a sharp kitchen knife and a "former" made from a bit of cows horn or from a piece of copper tubing. The demonstrator would tell you how to use it.

So, when you are planning your next events, get a skep maker to come along.

Good luck with the extracting and the bottling and don't forget to show your produce!

Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

## READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On 11th July Reading Beekeepers and family members and guests met at Tim and Hilary Whittaker's home apiary at Mapledurham. We had perfect weather again as last year and the Whitaker's beautiful gardens, hospitality and barbecue were a pleasure indeed. Tim's has WBC hives, and some honey had already been taken-off this season. From the largest colony we were able to take-off three full supers however and 6 frames from another which I believe was a swarm collected earlier in the season. This was about the first warm day after a period of wind and low pressure, and we saw again cells ready for use in two hives but no eggs, plenty of larvae at all stages of development, no doubt the queens will, be back in action shortly. There were bees seen showing symptoms of what we believed was deformed wing virus, it's worthwhile recalling our Flood Memorial lecture in February where Doctor Brenda Ball recommended taking anti-varroa measures in time for the last major brood population to carry the colony into the winter period, i.e. preferably not later than mid August as varroa parasitization of the bees spreads these viruses to a very high proportion on the colony by late summer and parasitization of the developing imago by varroa results in the tell-tale signs of bees with deformed wings. A good inspection and we had some fun with the bees who were in lively form.

It was a pleasure and interest for us to have at the meeting M/S Christine Nakimbugwe and Mr. Epimarck Lutello who are engaged in beekeeping Uganda, a short paragraph will appear.

We had a splendid day, though there was room for more attendees! Many thanks to Tim and Hilary and to all who attended, grilled on the barbecue and provided comestibles.

Our September functions are the Reading Honey Show in the produce tent at the Reading and Wokingham Show at Spencers Wood on Sunday 5th September and the Berkshire Honey Show at Charvil Village Hall on Thursday 30th September, please support these with your entries and as a visitor, schedules for the various classes will follow.

**MUT Group of beekeepers in Uganda.** We recently had the pleasure to have with us at the last meeting or Reading BKS M/S Christine Nakimbugwe and Mr. Epimarck Lutello who are with the MUT Group in the Watiso District in Uganda which is 12 miles from the capital.

There are 50 members in MUT group who have beehives and wish to develop the potential for beekeeping in their country. Christine is in Reading until February for a course and will be receiving slides from Uganda and will wish to give some talks about their activities and their need to obtain funding to replace the local hives with commercial equipment. If anyone would like some more details please contact Reading Secretary.

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

I wish to sell off all my equipment as follows: 3 WBC Hives-2 smokers- 1 Skep, Many lifts supers and brood boxes Feeders and other miscellaneous items £120 no offers.

Marek Lokuciewski, 174 Reading Road, Wokingham, Berks RG41 1LH  
Tel 01189 619 760 Home 01276 411 339 Work

