



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

October 2004  
Number 580

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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

16 <sup>th</sup> April 2005	Spring Convention Stoneleigh	<a href="http://www.bbka.org.uk/convention.php">http://www.bbka.org.uk/convention.php</a>
21 <sup>st</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August 2005	Apimondia Dublin	

**21st, 22nd and 23rd October 2004 - The National Honey Show,** RAF Museum, Hendon, North London. More details soon from <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk>

## From the Federation General Secretary: -

### SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION

Now that we are heading into the "quieter" winter months, please support your Associations by attending the talks and lectures that they have arranged for you. Also, dare I say it, attend your Association AGM and look your committee in the eye when they are looking for new blood (you could even volunteer for a job).

Too many people spend too much time looking at the floor until they think it's safe. Give something back; get involved.

I am writing this before the Federation Show takes place, so I am hoping that it will be a success. I know from my own involvement over the last few years, how much hard work goes into the preparation and running of an event (and what a thankless task it can be!) Because of that I would like to thank the organisers and hope that all their hard work was appreciated on the day.

William Napper

## In the Apiary, October

This year the June gap extended through most of July, followed by the wettest August for many years. The result of this is that in many cases bees were starving, particularly the lighter Italian types of bee, if in doubt, feed, feeding can usually continue until mid October after which candy or fondant may be used.

Wasps are a nuisance at the moment. To give your bees a chance to defend their hive, reduce the entrances as much as possible.

My usual practice in the past has been to take my honey late (September) so that the bees have been able to take down what they need and pack it around the reduced brood nest. I then normally (beekeepers do nothing invariably) wintered the bees on a double brood chamber, one chamber being replaced with new foundation each spring. Losses are unusual but not unknown. I have enough colonies that I can afford to take the occasional loss as part of a selection process to reduce genetically poor winterers. As I am now downsizing and have difficulty managing large colonies I will have to re-assess my methods. Beekeepers with only a few hives may not wish to do this.

I was recently asked if left over Apiguard could be mixed with syrup. If it will mix, I see no objection; after all it used to be a common practice to mix thymol with late winter feed to avoid fermentation.

Only if the weather is ideal make last inspections and decide which colonies require re-queening with a docile strain in the spring, A beekeeper should be able to work his bees four times out of five without gloves. Ideally the queens concerned should be marked to make them easier to find.

Check that hives are sound and weatherproof.

If Bayvarol or Apistan has been used, strips should be removed after six weeks, certainly not left in all winter. Apiguard left in should cause no problems after all the Frakno method is successful and is still used by some beekeepers; research is still ongoing.

Before winter sets in, entrances should be reduced and mouse-guards put in place, also measures to deter woodpeckers using either wire netting or plastic sheet tied round the hives.

R.Crocker

### **BBKA Basic Monthly Quiz.....**

I expect you knew the answers to the last lot of questions.

What about these?

Manipulation of a Honeybee Colony - continued:

*The Candidate will be able to:*

6. open a colony of honeybees and keep the colony under control,
7. demonstrate lighting and the use of the smoker,
8. demonstrate the use of the hive tool,
9. remove combs from the hive and identify worker, drone and queen cells or cups if present and to comment on the state of the combs.
10. identify the female castes and the drone.

### **Site for a Sore Brain.**

We must now, more than ever, do everything we can to make sure that our bees don't upset the general public. This is the story of my attempts to do so, on one site, and the main reason why I wrote the article last month on the BBKA's recent advice on Public Liability Insurance and related matters.

Thorney Leys is a small estate on the outskirts of a medium size Berkshire town. It has a small manor house, an attached farm and a collection of cottages, which are let out and managed by an estate agent. The whole is run by a small conservation trust and the manor house is leased as the headquarters of a much larger nature conservation trust: the farm is leased to a local farmer. A friend of mine had bees there for many years and I had helped him on occasions so knew the site quite well. He decided to cut down his beekeeping and offered me the site. I accepted joyfully, knowing that one of the Articles of Incorporation of the trust required five hives of bees to be kept on the site. The site has proved to be wonderful with honey crops averaging 50% better than any of my other sites.

I put six hives on the site, which my friend had occupied for thirty years and very quickly established excellent relationships with the landowner, the two Trusts, the farmer and the cottage tenants. The site was in the wooded edge of the manor garden, behind a 5ft hedge and overlooking a paddock, with the bees flying straight out over the paddock. The approach to the hives was through the wood and during the first summer I had no cause to go into the paddock.

While I was shutting the bees down for the winter I heard voices just the other side of the hedge and found that a Public Footpath ran along just the other side of the hedge.



The photograph above shows the path and the hives were where the arrow points. Enquiries produced claims that nobody had ever been stung walking on the path but, frankly, I didn't believe them. A footpath ten feet into the flight path of six working colonies seemed to me to be impossibly risky! I explained my concern to the landowner and asked if we could find another site. That was when I found that another of the Articles of Incorporation encouraged public access to the estate and that it was a maze of unofficial footpaths. We finally found the site behind the bushes (a in the photograph below) and out of site of dog walkers on the concrete track.

It was fifty yards from the nearest cottage (b) and about the same distance from the original site (c). For the next three years I kept bees on the site with excellent results. One or two



tenants were stung while out walking, a swarm set up house in the roof space above a cottage dormer window and the scouts from a swarm came down the chimney of another cottage. None of this caused great consternation and the gift of a pound of honey left everybody happy on each occasion.

While working the bees I sometimes saw walkers on the concrete track waving their arms about but there were no screams so I assumed there were no stings.

Then the Estate Agent found a new tenant for one of the nearest cottages. I met her soon after she moved in, introduced myself and told her a thing or two about the bees. She said she'd once had a horse badly stung by bees and that she'd have to talk to the Estate Agent. Then she asked about what turned out to be masonry bees, then bumbles -all buzzing round the house: next bees round the top of the chimney (scouts -I caught and hived the swarm) and finally, through the Estate Agent and the landowner, bees coming down the chimney into her bedroom. I went along with a jar of honey but she didn't answer the door: I left the jar of honey but received no message. This occurred all in a space of four weeks during the rape flow. Finally I took the impression that I would have to move the bees and set about bringing home six hives each with two full supers on top. This, I wouldn't recommend to anyone!

It's getting very difficult to find sites for out-apiaries, particularly when you have felt obliged to leave a perfectly good site for, to you, inadequate reasons.



Very soon after I left, the landowner asked me to return again and this has been supported by the Trusts and the farmer (these really are very pleasant people). I said I would, if I could find a site which is somewhat further away from Joe Public. We've tramped all over the estate and found nowhere that is more than 100yds away from a public road (beware of vandalism) or some sort of footpath. At last we've agreed on the spot in the left hand photo. It is up on a ten-foot bank, 70yds from the path and behind a gate which I can lock. It is also 250yds from the nearest cottage (right hand photo). I have put up some fence panels so that the hives will not be visible from the path, but I will be visible whilst working the bees. I intend to put up a "Beware Bees" sign, but only on the fence panels: it will not be readable from the path. The point is not to tell people that there are bees there, but to prevent them trespassing beyond the point where they are in actual danger.

In this case, in my opinion, too much information encourages vandalism and theft.



By the time you read this, the bees will be on site but, of course, I don't expect any problems until next spring. In the meantime I'd be grateful for any advice on how to manage the site safely and practically. I'd particularly appreciate some opinion on what specific circumstances would cause you to immediately remove your hives from such a site.

All of this might concentrate your minds on the article I wrote last month and bring forth some constructive comment. Next year, I'll let you know how I get on with the new site.

Bernhard Schuman

#### **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.

I have been asked to reiterate the information recently sent with your subscription renewal, i.e. that payment should be made by the 30<sup>th</sup> September in order to provide continuity of Public and Product Liability Insurance. This has become much more important than it was previously, therefore, we remind members to send their subscriptions by return if they have not already done so.

Our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Supper in August was a huge success and much enjoyed by everyone who attended. It was a beautiful evening and the Rowing Club was an ideal setting by the river. Our thanks go to Michael and Judy for all the work they did to make the evening so enjoyable.

As those of you who attended the Review of the Year meeting at the beginning of September will now know, the treatment strips were inserted on removal of the honey at the apiary. However, this will be the last time that they are used as a routine measure, since next year we shall be moving over to one or other of the recommended alternative methods for control. These are described in detail on the handouts we received at the apiary demonstration by our BDI Ian Homer and copies are available at all meetings.

This month will be our Annual Honey Show - on Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> October. Your schedules have been sent out and we all hope that there will be a good turnout with plenty of entries for the Honey Judge to examine. This year, it is Vivienne Brown of Wycombe BKA who will be doing the honours for us. It is always an entertaining evening with much advice being given during the course of the judging, so we hope that everyone is busy putting the finishing touches to their entries just now. **PLEASE NOTE that staging will commence at 7pm and that judging will start at 7.30pm prompt**, not the usual 8pm. Should this timing be a problem for anyone who wishes to enter one of the classes, please let Bernhard or I know, as I am sure something could be arranged to help out. Don't forget to let Bernard know beforehand if you have entries to more than 5 classes, so that he can have your labels done in advance, otherwise just enter your items as you arrive on the night. The venue is the same as usual, the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor.

New members are also encouraged to attend the **National Honey Show at Hendon** at the end of October. Our Secretary, Michael Sheasby has arranged free admission for them.

The November meeting will be the AGM and Supper, which falls on the 9<sup>th</sup> this year. If you wish to propose anyone for election to the committee, please let Michael know as soon as possible, having first established that the person is willing to stand and that another person will second them. After the formalities have been completed, we usually enjoy socialising and would ask members to please bring something along for the table.

Our library is available for members' use at all meetings and any surplus books will be for sale as well.

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

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

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

If you want a prime example of "anthropomorphic" (giving human attributes to that which is not human, especially animals, as Chambers' Dictionary explains), read Frank S. Stuart's "City of the Bees". It bears about as much relation to real bees as the ballet "Swan Lake" bears to the life of real swans.

The most surprising thing about it is that it was published by the well-known firm, Allen and Unwin in their "Scientific Book Club" series alongside respected authors like Bertrand Russell and J Bronowski.

I suppose if you prune away the fairy, imaginative wrapping about the kind nurses looking after the baby bees and the bare-chested warrior guards who give the glad eye to the queen-bee's attendants and the sheer joy with which the colony carries on all the time, Stuart's facts are correct enough, although our knowledge and understanding has developed since 1947 when the book was published.

I can't see who this book was written for. It certainly wasn't for beekeepers.

## November meeting

Our AGM and a wildlife talk will take place at the usual meeting room in St Paul's Parish Rooms in Wokingham on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> November. The speaker is Philip Merrin, a local reptile and amphibian specialist who will talk about ponds and wildlife gardening.

Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

## READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Loose bees at the chairman's apiary.

On Sunday the 8th August Reading BKS Members and friends met at Jon Davey's apiary at Northcourt Avenue Reading. That morning a small swarm, the second in the week appeared and obligingly settled in an apple tree in the garden though as the first beekeepers arrived took of again and by enquiry was found loosely clustered in a neighbour's garden where we planned to collect it after our hive inspections. The earlier swarm mentioned had been scarcely bigger than a decent size pear and hung temptingly a few feet from a hive in a thin branch for three days before the chairman collected it, hived it into a five frame nucleus with a chunk of cut comb above the crown board to provide some nutrient. By the time of the meeting however only wasps were installed.

The hive inspection went well with no evidence that a queen had left any of the hives or production of queen cells plenty of brood, eggs seen and a good population of bees with all their wings intact and even tempered, even in the colony that 5 days before had been excitable during removal of full supers. During our inspections the swarm returned and flew around amongst the hives but then returned to 'next door but one' now no bigger than a coconut. Despite warnings from members now seated and enjoying cold drinks that we would cause 'a panic' if we went into the street in veils etc three beekeepers gained access but the swarm was then far too loose to successfully collect so we returned for our refreshment having been driven into the conservatory to gain some defensible space against the wasps which are in good supply this season. The wasp colony is in the roof of 'next door' but we refrain from mentioning it in case they mention our insect colonies! Actually the Chairman is on good terms with his neighbours and follows the advice of Hooper in providing a jar of honey at the start of the spring season to 'keep the neighbours sweet'. In the early evening the swarm was successfully collected in a skep, which was set-up on a shelf in a disused aviary cage in a sheltered spot but at the time of writing is now empty of insects.

We had a good attendance including our oldest member and a 'seldom seen' member also our Ugandan apiarist friend, which was very encouraging. Thanks to all who attended and to Jill for the food and drink.

Our October meeting is the first of our winter programme at Caversham Methodist Hall at 7.30 on Thursday October 14th. The speaker is Norman Hughes from Basingstoke, on the topic of "Things that Come to Mind" (a mind blowing beekeeping talk not to be missed). Please **give Norman your support by attending**.

You are also requested to make a note in your diary that the A.G.M. is on November 11th which will be supported by an "Audio and Visual show" - All visitors welcome at 8.15 pm

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