



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

November 2004
Number 581

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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 th April 2005	Spring Convention Stoneleigh	http://www.bbka.org.uk/convention.php
21 st – 26 th August 2005	Apimondia Dublin	

From the Federation General Secretary: -

First an apology.

For the last few months I have been banging on about attending the Federation Show, and when the day came I failed to attend myself. What a hypocrite!

As a sort of penance, accompanied by our delegate Mr. Bernhard Schumann, I attended the BBKA Annual Forum at Stoneleigh on October 2nd. I was pleasantly surprised. It was not the boring, rather stuffy meeting that I had imagined but was a day of lively and frank discussion between Association Representatives and the majority of the BBKA Executive.

It was not intended as a decision making platform, but as a chance for us all to air our views on a variety of subjects affecting us as beekeepers.

Although as I say, no decisions were made, views were taken on board for discussion at the formal, decision making Annual Delegates Meeting in January.

Suddenly for me the BBKA came out of the shadows and had a face. A friendly face with our beekeeping interests at the top of their agenda.

William Napper

In the Apiary, November

By now the feeding should be long finished and the bees safely tucked up in watertight hives protected against the attentions of mice and woodpeckers. There is not much to do in the apiary now except to check from time to time for that worst nuisance of all, the vandal.

For some reason that escapes me, some people get a kick out of overturning an occupied hive. At this time of year this does not carry much risk of retaliation by the occupants. The beekeeper with a couple of hives in the back garden can be envied by the commercial man with hives scattered about in all sorts of unfrequented places.

Of course, even if you discover an overturned hive, it may not be a complete disaster. The bees have a remarkable ability to adapt to adverse circumstances although you can't expect them to survive if the combs are all scattered about in a freezing wet winter's night. But with luck they may come through.

In September, I was called out to advise when a gale caused the top of a hollow tree to snap off and fall to the ground. The tree stood on private ground and the hollow was home to a healthy colony of bees. The trouble was that the top, complete with bees and combs, fell just outside the boundary of the estate, in public view on a part of the Thames towpath. When I saw the situation, 24 hours after the tree fell, the end of the combs were visible in the hollow, covered with bees. Everything was peaceful by then with foragers coming and going through a knothole which had made a convenient entrance. There was no reason to doubt that they would have settled down permanently if they had been left alone.

About the same time, I heard about a commercial apiary that suffered from vandal attack. A hive was completely overturned so that the combs were all the wrong way up, with the cells slanted down instead of up. It was some time before the hive was discovered and when it was restored to order, the beekeeper found that the bees had already torn down some of the combs and reconstructed them with the cells the other way up. Wasted work because the hive was put back on its feet and they had to do it all over again!

Matrix. 1993

BBKA Basic Monthly Quiz.....

BBKA Basic Assessment

Do you really know the answers to these last few questions in the first part of the Assessment?

1. 11 identify brood at all stages;
1. 12 demonstrate the difference between drone, worker and honey cappings;
1. 13 identify stored nectar, honey and pollen;
1. 14 take a sample of worker bees in a matchbox or similar container;
1. 15 state the number of bees required for an adult disease diagnosis sample;
1. 16 demonstrate how to shake bees from a comb and how to look for signs of brood disease.

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 first winter meeting, the Review of the Year, was quite well attended and the story was much the same for everyone this year, with some bumper crops from the spring flow but disappointing results later on after the blossoms were destroyed by the rainstorms. We heard of the alternative methods for varroa control that will be used at the apiary next year and copies of the handouts we received at the apiary demonstration by our BDI Ian Homer were available to those who couldn't attend in June.

The AGM and Supper will be on Tuesday, November the 9th and should you wish to propose anyone for election to the committee, please let Michael know as soon as possible now, firstly checking that the person is willing to stand and that someone will second them. Afterwards, we will be enjoying the fare brought along and would ask you to please remember to bring something for the table. The evening commences at 8pm and will be at the usual venue of the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor.

It has now been confirmed that the December meeting on the 14th will be a talk by Ged Marshall, the well known Beekeeper and breeder of queens, who will be telling us about Rearing and Introducing his strain of the Buckfast queen. The scheduled video evening has had to be postponed for now.

Don't forget that our library is available for members' use at all meetings and a few surplus books will be for sale as well.

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

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Reading Beekeepers Society has the pleasure in reporting on two events where we participated in displaying honey and hive products during September.

The Wokingham and Reading Show on 5th where we hold our honey and hive products event in the produce tent along with the wide range of country produce from the area. Our judges were Bill and Mary Dartnall and we had over 60 entries with hard fought competition in the honey and baked goods classes with Robert Kiff having the highest score, second Hazel Blackburn with Jon. Davey third. Julia Crosthwaite made two extremely good entries, both placed, winning the novice class for honey and 5th place overall. A full results list is inserted separately.

Apparently the numbers of people attending the Wokingham and Reading Show was down overall, as with the nearby Swallowfield Show compared to last year, which is a great pity, country shows like these are part of our great British tradition at the end of summer in celebration of harvest, the schedule provided for entries in the honey class also allow interested beekeepers with the chance to enter other produce classes, this can be great fun! at a cost of 20 pence per entry! for example our top scorer Robert Kiff won the 'cherry tomato class' with a produce that this writer sampled and pronounced as "delicious" having not quite succeeded in the 'longest runner bean class' himself. Lots of interested members of the public, children and adults visited our section of the produce tent and sales of honey were brisk.

Now forward to the Federation of Berkshire Beekeepers Honey event held at Charvil Village Hall in the evening of Thursday 30th September. The committee had changed from a weekend event this year to reduce costs because attendances are needed to justify costs!

Our guest speaker was Claire Waring who is general secretary of The British Beekeepers Association and motored from Northants to speak to us. Claire's lecture illustrated by slides was on Bees and Beekeeping in Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia and the Yucatan in Mexico, which was a really terrific talk with the slides illustrating giant bees which nest in the open and amazing 'stingless bees' which build strange three dimensional nests the structures of which far exceed the imaginations of science fiction! Claire's obvious concern for the futures of these wild bees which are all too vulnerable to the attention of human 'bee hunters' (the larvae are a highly prized protein rich food as well as the honey) was very clear to us and the last slide was of a sculpture of the ancient Aztec Honey God and we found ourselves wishing along with Claire that such a God could rise again to protect these fragile and beautiful creatures from human depredation.

The entries at the honey event were in satisfying quantity, almost 100 in all, the attendance again regrettably was not. Reg Hook from South Chiltern Association won the Federation Cup and best in show for his light honey. Reading members did well also winning several classes including the mysterious 'black jar class' where unfiltered honey was judged based on taste alone, this new class attracted the most entries. A separate list of the results is inserted in the newsletter. A less well supported class (there was only one entry) was mead, the entry scandalized our Judge for this class : Bill Dartnall, who has been many times a winner in this class himself in his region because the presentation of the dry and sweet mead was not unlike 'crusted port' requiring the skilled attention of a 'butler' with his candle and filters!

Our most senior member Geoff Fowler pointed-out afterwards that this mead had been laid down 20 years before in his attic! but the flavour, the aroma! has any reader tasted Imperial Tokay wine? This writer intends to make mead this year and will wait impatiently for 20 years!

Many thanks for the attendees, everyone we spoke to gave a positive response to the event, to the helpers and caterers, to Bernard Schumann for providing the staging, and once again particularly to Claire Waring.

Reading BKS November meeting is on Thursday 11th at Caversham Methodist Hall at 7.30 pm and is the Annual General Meeting. Afterwards our speaker will be Karl Feltham, this is a much anticipated audio/visual talk 'Birds of Berkshire' please attend.

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Rosemary's Book of the month

This time it's a winner *The Beekeeper's Handbook* by Owen Meyer.

I would guess that the author had in mind the sort of beekeeper who has passed the very early stages (and there is plenty of literature around for them anyway) and who is in his second or third year and is ready to get to grips with something more adventurous with his bees.

I think the chapters on management, handling bees and swarming are among the most useful I have seen anywhere.

This is mainly due to his easy style and simple, clear explanations of the different methods of doing things and the reasons for them. He pins down exactly the points that may not be understood by someone who is trying a procedure for the first or second time. And throughout the book his great love and understanding of bees shows, passing on the idea that if you're nice to bees they will be nice to you.

You'd expect Meyer to know something about bees as an ex-General Secretary of the BBKA. It is good to find that he knows how to communicate his wide experience.

December meeting

Ian Homer, our Regional Bee Inspector, will give a talk on Integrated Pest Management on Wednesday 8th December at our usual venue of St Paul's Parish Rooms starting at 8:00pm. The talk will be followed by some seasonal tippie and nibbles.
Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

Of interest to all beekeepers, go to:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/beeinspector.shtml>

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



Around and about the region

October 2004

As I write this, on the last Saturday in September, I realise all too well that the active beekeeping season is rapidly drawing to a close. It is wet, grey, cold and the leaves on the trees are rapidly changing colour. It has been a season of very mixed weather and very mixed fortunes. In many parts of the region we have had record temperatures this year and yet the summer season, in terms of beekeeping, was rather subdued for many beekeepers.

Unlike fishing, in beekeeping there is no shame in admitting that the crop was not brilliant and many are in just that situation this year. My own crop was about one third of last year's crop and I know that there are beekeepers who have not taken any crop at all this year. All of the bee inspectors in the Southern Region team have, at some time or other during the season, reported finding colonies on the point of starvation and have recommended the beekeeper to feed their colonies on an urgent basis.

Other beekeepers are reporting reasonable crops, though not the magnificent outcome that the spring flow had suggested. The strange thing is that, often, there has only been a matter of 6 or 10 miles between sites where the bees are near starving and those where crops of a hundredweight or more per colony have been obtained.

As one of my colleagues often remarks, "the more I learn about beekeeping, the less I seem to know"!

Ian Homer

Coming and Going.

Or more correctly going and coming as we are saying goodbye to Brian Roberts as a member of the Southern Region team. Brian has been inspecting bees for over 40 years and he and his wife Sylvia have become familiar sights in and around apiaries in Dorset and Hampshire.



Over 70 guests gathered to say farewell to Brian on September 14th when he was presented with

the customary engraved hive tool, a cheque and a gas torch to allow him to continue sterilising his own hives! Sylvia, who has helped Brian throughout his career, often acting as map reader and navigator when visiting unfamiliar sites, was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

Brian told us that when he was first approached to be a bee inspector, he had agreed to do the job for just one year! Somehow, that one year extended to over 40 and Brian briefly talked about some of the highlights of those years.

Hopefully by next season there will be some comings as well. With the retirement of Brian and the existing vacancy for an inspector in the South Bucks/Oxfordshire area, I am looking for suitably qualified people to join the team next year. If you live in Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire or South Bucks and could spend 2 to 4 days per week making appointments and visiting beekeepers to carry out inspections, then do please contact me for an informal discussion. If you cannot take the job on but know someone who could, then please encourage him or her to contact me.

Brian Roberts writes; 42 years – where has it gone? It was so nice to see so many beekeeping friends at my retirement party and I should like to thank everyone who made such an enjoyable evening possible. Also, my thanks for the hospitality shown to Sylvia and I over the years.
Brian and Sylvia Roberts

Winter Losses?

Those of you who are subscribers to “Bees for Development” magazine may have noticed some recent correspondence regarding winter losses. Apparently these have been quite significant in some parts of Europe over the last couple of winters and the question was posed as to why.

In the most recent issue, Jeff Rounce has written that he too has suffered heavy winter losses on several occasions during his near 60 years of beekeeping. He notes that, without exception, these losses have followed an unusually cool, wet summer and autumn. He also notes that the colonies have perished surrounded by plenty of stores. He concludes that this may be due to colonies going into winter with only old bees that reach the end of their lives before they can be replaced by young bees reared after the turn of the year.

Whilst the weather conditions have not been exactly as described in Jeff Rounce’s letter, there are some similarities evident this year. In many parts of the region, queens went off lay in late July and August and the amount of brood declined significantly over the

next few weeks. From my own observations, it would appear that lack of pollen was the problem for many colonies. Only since the ivy has been in blossom in the last couple of weeks has this situation been redressed and, with pollen now being copiously available, queens are trying to re-build a brood nest.

However, I do wonder whether, in those places where there has been a significant break in brood rearing (and I include two of my own sites in that category), the age profile of the bees remaining in our colonies will allow the colonies to over winter satisfactorily.

This situation is by no means universal around the region. Only last week I attended an association apiary meeting in Oxfordshire where each of the colonies had 6 – 8 frames with brood on, bees had flown almost continuously since February, crops had been heavy and the nectar and pollen being gathered from Himalayan Balsam was remarkable. It appears that the northern parts of the region (Northants, Bucks and Oxfordshire) have fared better than the southern parts but there are reports of queens going off-lay early from many other parts of the country.

Pyrethroid Resistant Varroa

Strangely, despite numerous tests for resistance during this season, we have still to identify any sites within the region where high proportions of pyrethroid resistant varroa mites are present. This is all the more strange as cases have been confirmed in a number of locations around the country during the season. During 2004, resistance has been confirmed in Avon, Hereford & Worcestershire, Leicestershire/Lincolnshire border, Powys and Surrey (on border with Greater London). Further apiaries with resistance have also been confirmed near to established areas in Cornwall, Devon, Durham, Kent, Shropshire, Somerset and South West Wales.

This does not of course mean that resistance is not present in Southern Region - all beekeepers should, in addition to routinely monitoring to assess mite populations, aim to sample at least a proportion of their colonies to detect resistance. Only by doing this will you be able to ascertain what varroa treatment will be appropriate – continued use of pyrethroids after resistance has developed will be a waste of both your time and your money. Most association secretaries have monitoring kits available but if your association does not have any, please contact me and I will make one available. The NBU website (www.nationalbeeunit.com) contains more information about pyrethroid resistance, including distribution maps showing the location of all confirmed cases.

In the main, the new cases identified this year appear to be spontaneous eruptions of resistance rather than a result of colony movements – this makes it all the more essential to continue to monitor your own bees.

Foul Brood Statistics 2004

The foul brood figures for the Southern Region are shown below and compare favourably with the last two seasons. Both Hampshire and Dorset have seen significant reductions this season. For reasons of efficiency, the data is presented in tabular form rather than the usual map form; any association which particular needs the data in map form should contact me.

County	OS 10km Square	Principal Habitation	AFB Apiaries	AFB Colonies	EFB Apiaries	EFB Colonies
Berks Total			0	0	0	0
Bucks	SP84	Newport Pagnell			1	1
Bucks Total			0	0	1	1
Dorset	ST50	Evershot			1	2
Dorset	ST71	Sturminster Newton			1	1
Dorset	SY88	Wool	1	1	2	8
Dorset	SY89	Bere Regis			1	1
Dorset	SY98	Wareham			2	4
Dorset	SY99	Lytchett Matravers			4	9
Dorset	SZ09	West Bournemouth			2	10
Dorset	SZ19	Christchurch			3	3
Dorset Total			1	1	16	38
Hants	SU10	Ringwood			4	14
Hants	SU11	Fordingbridge			1	5
Hants	SU23	Winterslow			1	1
Hants	SU31	Totton			1	2
Hants	SU40	Hythe			1	5
Hants	SU41	Southampton			1	1
Hants	SU54	North Waltham			2	3
Hants	SU60	Portsmouth			4	8
Hants	SU72	Petersfield			1	1
Hants	SU83	W.Haslemere			2	2
Hants Total			0	0	18	42
IOW Total			0	0	0	0
Northants	TF00	Stamford	1	2	0	0
Northants Total			1	2	0	0
Oxfordshire	SP32	Enstone			1	1
Oxfordshire	SU38	Letcombe Regis			1	3
Oxfordshire	SU48	East Wantage			2	3
Oxfordshire	SU69	Benson	1	2	1	3
Oxfordshire Total			1	2	5	10
Wiltshire	ST92	Swallowcliffe			2	3
Wiltshire Total			0	0	2	3
Regional Total			3	5	42	94

(as at September 24th 2004)

Despite the reduction, we should not assume that we are any less prone to these diseases than in previous years and continued vigilance is necessary. Regular inspection of colonies is the most effective way to monitor, with the bees being shaken off of combs at least twice each year. This allows the brood to be thoroughly inspected for any irregularities. If you are uncertain of what to look for, the CSL brochure "Foul Brood disease of honey bees: recognition and control" carries some excellent photographs to use as a guide. At the very least, try to be able to recognise the appearance of healthy brood in all stages; anything that looks different should be investigated by an experienced beekeeper or referred to a member of the bee health inspection team.

As always, we are happy to arrange disease recognition courses for any association that wants one. These are particularly valuable to people in their early years of beekeeping though beekeepers who have previously attended one of these courses often benefit from them. If you are an experienced beekeeper but have not seen either EFB or AFB in the last few years, would you still recognise it??

Southern Region Associations Day 2005

Plans are in hand for the Southern Region Associations Day for 2005 which, provisionally, is to be held on Sunday March 20th. Rather than restrict the number of delegates to two per association as we did this year, we hope to have an open invitation for anyone to come though, in order to know what numbers to expect, this will have to be by prior registration. This will essentially need to be done on a first come, first served basis. The programme for the day is still in the early stages but more details will be published in the next edition of "Around and about the region", due out in February 2005.

NATIONAL BEE UNIT - SOUTHERN REGION

Survey of Honey Prices and Yields 2004

Please indicate the current price **per pound** which each category is achieving in your area.

If there is a significant variation in the price of any item, please indicate a price range.

	Wholesale	Direct Sales	Bulk
Run, Set or Creamed Flower Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Cut Comb Flower Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Heather Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Heather Comb Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	lbs		
Average yield per colony (excluding heather)	<input type="text"/>	{ Please indicate the yield <u>in pounds</u>	
Average heather yield per colony	<input type="text"/>	{ which has been experienced in	
Highest recorded yield per colony	<input type="text"/>	{ your area.	
Name, Association, Location			