



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

March 2005
Number 585

Hon. Secretary:
William Napper
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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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Hon. Editor
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Peppard Common,
Oxon RG9 5HH
(0118 972 2315)

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: -

I hope all of our member associations have come through the winter with a healthy stock of members, raring to go for the new season, with all plans and preparations in place.

This year, let's try to make it a year of increase by increasing our membership numbers. If every one of us could introduce just one person into the craft, think what a difference it would make.

Finally, don't forget to make a note on your calendar, a date in your diary and a knot in your hankie to remind you that the Spring Convention at Stoneleigh is on April 16th.

Thank you.

William Napper

BBKA Basic Monthly Quiz...

BBKA Basic Exam:

BBKA Basic Exam

The last two instalments which were about the Natural History of the Honeybee, held, I think, the key to the whole craft of beekeeping. If you understand what the bees are doing and why, you will care for them intelligently and therefore get better results.

The next section, Beekeeping, covers the active business of putting your knowledge into practice.

The Candidate will be:

1. able to give an elementary description of how to set up and apiary.
2. able to describe what precautions should be taken to avoid the honeybees being a nuisance to neighbours and livestock,
3. able to describe the possible effects of honeybee stings on humans and able to recommend suitable first aid treatment.

4. Able to give an elementary description of the annual cycle of work in the apiary.
5. able to describe the preparation of sugar syrup and how and when to feed bees.

Fax your MP – cuts to NBU funding (See January Newsletter)

<http://faxyourmp.com/index.php3>

In the apiary: If you know of anyone that you think could write a reasonable article for “In the Apiary” or you would like to have a go, please contact the Editor. A vast knowledge or experience is not necessary; In the Apiary is aimed mainly at beginners or near beginners so if you have been keeping bees for four or five years think about helping those with less experience.

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

Seasonal Bee Inspectors

Seasonal Bee Inspectors are required to work within Wilts, Berks, Oxon and the southern part of Bucks. Hours can be fairly flexible and contracts are offered for 2 to 3 days per week during the period April to September. If any members are interested or know of others, would they please get in touch with Ian Homer by tel/fax at 01308 482 161 or email at i.homer@csl.gov.uk

Taking the sting out of beekeeping

Chris O’Toole

**Friday 4 March 2005 at 7.30 pm
Upper Bucklebury Memorial Hall, near Thatcham, Berkshire**

Newbury Beekeepers’ Association warmly invites you to the 23rd annual Leaver Memorial Lecture, to be given by Chris O’Toole on research into the lifestyle of red mason bees and development of conservation and pollination systems. Chris is with the Oxford Bee Company whose field includes several subspecies of bees as well as bats and ladybirds.

The lecture is free and all beekeepers in the region are most welcome. We should therefore be very grateful if you would publicise the lecture amongst local beekeepers and colleagues – and through your magazine or newsletter if appropriate.

The lecture will be held at the Memorial Hall in Upper Bucklebury. The postcode is RG7 6QH.

Directions:-

- Take the A4 to the eastern outskirts of Thatcham
- Follow the signposting to Upper Bucklebury and Cold Ash (turning right at a roundabout if coming from Reading or left at traffic lights if coming from Newbury)
- Follow signs for Upper Bucklebury and after 1½ miles, at the top of Harts Hill Road, the road bends to the right and becomes Broad Lane. Continue through Upper Bucklebury past Peach’s garage and a pub.
- The Memorial Hall is the last building on the right within the 30mph zone, before you reach Bucklebury Common.

There is ample space for car parking beside the Hall.

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

March Meeting:

Please note: The date of **Our March Meeting is changed to Wednesday 9th** second Wednesday, not the usual 3rd as shown in the programme.

If anyone is interested in a disease recognition-training day please contact the Secretary or a member of the committee. Alternatively <mailto:southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com>

January Meeting

These are the notes from Ian Homer's talk. They are such a comprehensive reminder of things we all know to be good sense that it seemed worthwhile reproducing them in full. The self-evident importance of understanding our colonies and taking efficient care of them is reinforced by the fact that we thereby lessen the risks of infections and infestations. Unfortunately, there is not enough space to include Ian's full and interesting commentary on this outline, but one thing which I really hope does work is the use of washing soda to clean propolis from everything, including bee suits.

Apiary and hive hygiene. Assessing and minimising risks. What are the risks?

Brood diseases

- AFB
- EFB
- Chalk brood
- Stone brood
- Chilled brood
- Sac brood

Adult bee diseases

- Nosema
- Acarine
- Viruses

Varroa

Pests

- Wax moth
- Birds
- Mammals

Assessing risk

- Know what is normal in order to identify the abnormal
- Know what normal healthy brood looks like
- know how healthy bees behave

Minimising risk

- Avoid introducing disease
- Avoid spreading disease
- Create an environment in which disease cannot flourish

Practical Measures

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Cleanliness! | Apiary |
| Equipment | -clear up wax put in sealed container |
| -Sterilize Hive tools | -Don't leave frames lying around |
| -Bee suits and gloves | -Avoid drifting |
| -Smokers | - general tidiness -disinfectant |

Manipulation

- don't swap frames -don't squash bees -Vaseline runners -prevent robbing
- replace frames with new foundation **-thorough inspection;** shake off bees once or twice a year
- hive swarms from unknown origin on new foundation

Treatments

- Careful handling, storage and disposal of chemicals
- Only use approved products and at approved usage rates

Anne Arlidge

Secretary: Annette Cleaver (01491) 642021
southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

The Annual Dinner in January was very enjoyable once again. Twenty-two of us sat down to the lovely food, served up at the Aurora Garden Hotel in Windsor and we would like to thank Don for organizing the evening so well for us. We now look forward to the Summer Supper evening, which has been set for Saturday, the 13th August, at the Maidenhead Rowing Club.

We have a very important meeting this month, so we do hope that you have all made a space in your busy schedules to attend. Our Regional Bee Disease Inspector Ian Homer will be with us on Tuesday the 8th March. His subject title is **“No Bees – No Honey; No Honey – No Money”**. In view of the ever-spreading resistant varroa mites and the probable withdrawal of treatment strips, we need to adjust our approach to varroa control quite drastically, so Ian will be telling us about alternative ways to manage our bees. We had some hand outs at the apiary visit last June but new ones may well be on offer now and your committee would strongly recommend that you attend this meeting if at all possible. It will commence at 8pm as normal, at the All Saints Parish Hall on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor. We look forward to welcoming members old and new, along with any surrounding association members who would like to come along.

Following on from this will be our first apiary visit of the year, **please note now on the 20th March**, starting at 3pm, when we hope to start preparing to put into practice some of the new measures. This year in the apiary will be a chance for you to see the practicality of the various ideas; please do make the effort to attend. Often those who come along have something to offer the others from their experiences, so the learning curve may well be easier as a result. If you have not been to our apiary yet, Jim Cooper - our apiary supervisor - will be able to give directions. His number is 01628 783228; or call one of the numbers below; The April dates are still the 10th and 24th, as published.

The April meeting will be a little different – the long-awaited talk on bats will finally be given by Julian Mason of the South Bucks and Berks Bat Group. These fascinating creatures may be in decline, as I certainly have not seen as many around at dusk in recent years. Maybe we can do something to encourage them to our vicinity. Come along and find out what Julian has to say. The date is Tuesday, 12th April at 8pm.

Don't forget that our library is available for members' use at all meetings and there are still a few surplus books for sale as well. There is also a labelling machine available for members' use, which stamps "Best Before End" dates and "Lot Numbers" onto a separate label for your honey jars, as now required by law when selling to the general public. Please contact me on the number below should you wish to borrow it.

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

January meeting report:

Roger Kemp gave an interesting, illustrated talk on Butterflies of Berkshire.

March meeting:

Our final winter meeting will be on 9th March and will be a return visit and talk by Dr Charles Hill who this time will tell us about his experiences of living with badgers.

Bee Books

Rosemary has reviewed a number of the best books in the Association's library over the past few years. This unfortunately has not had the desired effect of inspiring members to make more use of this facility and consequently Rosemary's contribution will cease. She writes:

Over the last couple of years I've been taking a look at the books in our Association Library. It really is quite a collection. Thanks to a contribution of a facsimile from Mr Hosking, it goes back to Charles Butler's classic, "The Feminine Monarchy" of 1609.

Thanks to the generosity of various members it holds most of the many works on the subject which were written in the last century when bee keeping really took off as a viable hobby.

And thanks to our policy of keeping up with the latest publications, we have access to the important contemporary writers.

I feel that this service is undervalued by our members. It is so easy to borrow any book - Bob Loades, our Librarian's number is on the membership card. Give him a ring and enjoy one of our books before the spring rush in the apiary starts.

Rosemary

Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On 13th January Reading and District Beekeepers Association met to hear a talk illustrated by photographs of the MUT project in Uganda from Christine Nakimbugwe and Epimark Lutello. In essence the project is to supply retail honeys to the nearby capital Kampala, developing new apiarists to provide much needed income to rural families.

There are 50 apiarists established and the pictures provided some surprising scenes of hives based on the Kenya Top Bar model being constructed from sun dried bricks. The new candidates are given demonstrations as to mixing the brick-earth and constructing the bricks and hives which are thatched and would be sited under sun shelters near to the apiarists homes where they can be protected from robbing by animal and human agencies and from predation by ants with the traditional method of applying wood ash from domestic fires around the hives. Applicants of the scheme then have to construct sufficient hives to show commitment and MUT will begin to supply colonies and market the honey. Unfortunately it seems to be necessary to transport honey for filtering and packing to one central plant some distance north of Kampala. There are also more familiar wood constructed hives used by MUT centrally.

There seems to be forage for the bees through most of the year and there is a class 2 'dark honey' harvested earlier in the year with a class 1 'light honey' later. From what we can gather from Christine and Mark who have worked with us on our apiary visits during our summer programme, their local bees seem comparatively healthy and pest-free and able to defend against local vespid robbers (there were ready comparisons possible during our wasp-infested summer!) industrious in hot climates without being unduly difficult for the beekeeper to handle. We presume these were the qualities sought by the ill-fated Central American hybridizers that resulted in the now notorious 'Africanised bees'.

A very interesting talk. MUT understandably want to upgrade their methods and maximise the profits possible from their merchandise. They obviously have a number of challenges ahead and we extend our good wishes for the future. If any Berkshire or local member has some ideas how to help MUT, please contact the Reading Association and we will pass contact details.

Our March meeting has a slightly different date from the norm i.e. Friday 4th March when once again we will be joining the Newberry Beekeepers Association for their annual 'Leaver Lecture' at 7-30pm at Upper Bucklebury Memorial Hall. The speaker is Chris O' Toole, subject "Taking the Sting out of Beekeeping" This was a very satisfactory venue for Reading Association when we did this last year and we look forward to your full support. Lifts will be available departing Reading about 6-45 pm please phone Michael Blackburn on 0118 9947 9450 or Jon. Davey on 0118 975 0734. to arrange.

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

Honey for sale - Berkshire / Oxfordshire honey in 34 lb containers at £1-40 lb - 0118 9479 450

1-----3

BEEKEEPING EQUIPMENT SALE.

Brood boxes, Supers, Floors, Queen excluders, commercial, national & smith. Stainless steel electric extractors. Easy melting tray (thermostat controlled) Stainless steel honey tanks (various sizes) One strain away. Lots of clean frames & foundation wax. One sterilising tank. All boxes and floors have been sterilised and ready for use. Prices 25% list prices (Thornes catalogue) Ring Leavey. 0118 9663735 1-----2

Beekeeping equipment and supplies from your Thornes agent in Berkshire

Large stock of most requirements available ex. stock. All other in range available only a phone call away. Deliveries in season at regular intervals. Please phone John Belcher on 01189 842321 for a quotation. Beeswax exchanged.

1-----8



NATIONAL BEE UNIT - SOUTHERN REGION

Around and about the region

February 2005

Have we turned the corner of winter or is there more to come? This pertinent question will be on the minds of many beekeepers at this moment as we seem to alternate between sunny, spring-like days and days with icy blasts coming from the north or the east. Today (February 1st) I saw a field with a few volunteers of oil seed rape in full flower!. The weather certainly confuses me and, I suspect, it will be confusing the bees as well. Already I have heard of reports of bees succumbing to starvation so it would be as well to check stores on your colonies and feed if necessary.

As for beekeepers, well many of them have been very active this winter with association activities in full swing. By the time you read this, I myself will have met with beekeepers at 18 different association events since the end of last season and spoken to nearly 500 beekeepers during these talks. The heartening feature has been the number of new (or nearly new) beekeepers we are seeing in associa-

tions these days – beekeeping certainly seems to be “on the up”. It has also been encouraging to see so many long time beekeepers attending the series of Integrated Varroa Management workshops this winter. This certainly tells me that there are a good number of beekeepers who are not going to let resistant mites beat them.

It will be June before the next issue, when the season will be in full swing, so may I wish you Happy and Healthy Beekeeping and a bumper crop this year.

Ian Homer

Winter losses?

Last October I wrote about the possibility of high winter losses and commented on many colonies going into the winter with reduced numbers because the queens had gone off lay during the late summer. Typically, just as I was circulating that issue of *Around and About the Region*, we had what was probably the best period of sustained good weather we had had all season with the autumn nectar sources, particularly ivy, yielding well into November in some places. Pollen sources also appear to have yielded well throughout most of the winter so what condition are our bees in now?

My initial impression, gained from listening to a good number of beekeepers in the last month, is that colonies are still at risk. Some managed to rebuild a reasonable brood nest before the winter set in whilst others are still quite small colonies. However, the general opinion is that, whatever else, colonies are short on stores.

Whilst there will be a variety of pollen sources in flower during the next couple of months, there will be little nectar available to our bees

for several months yet. This will vary from location to location and according to the weather but, in general, there will be little available at least until the end of March. Yet February and March is just the period when queens will need to be actively developing an ever increasing brood nest to meet the need for spring foragers. It is also the time of the year when most colonies are lost due to starvation. It won't take long to check the situation in your colonies – a quick peek under the crown board will show you whether the bees are at the top edge of the brood frames or not. If they are then the additions of some stores in the form of fondant or candy will not go amiss.

In the SouthWest, there are many who feel that there could be high winter losses due to varroa, just as we experienced back in the mid 90's. This time it will be because some beekeepers have not realised that the varroa mites in their colonies are resistant and they are continuing to treat with pyrethroids. I hope that by monitoring and testing we can avoid this problem.

Integrated varroa management workshops

During last winter I worked with my colleague Richard Ball, South West Regional Bee Inspector on a number of these throughout Devon and Somerset. This winter we have presented a series of workshops throughout Dorset and Hampshire with one still to come in Buckinghamshire. In general, attendances have been astonishing with a high level of commitment to try out bio technical methods of control evident amongst those attending. The feedback from these events shows that attendees enjoy both the format of the day and the informal and social nature of them.

I am sure that there are many beekeepers who feel that they are already able to deal with the

challenge of resistant varroa mites but others will feel uncertain about trying new methods. The opportunity to see some of the techniques first hand can sometimes give just the confidence, which is needed to embark on a new approach.

The contribution which Richard Ball has made to examining and presenting these novel methods is well known through his articles in *BBKA News* and elsewhere but I would like to take this opportunity to thank Richard and all of the other people who have helped make these workshops the success they have been.

I hope that associations in the other counties in the region might wish to host one of these workshops next winter (Isle of Wight is already booked), as the threat of resistant mites becomes ever more a reality. Now is the time to

be planning these events so that beekeepers are well prepared and practised with the techniques before they become a necessity. Please contact me if your association would like to arrange one.

Monitoring for varroa mites

It is important to monitor your colonies to assess the level of mite infestation. That way you will be able to decide when to test for resistance and also which varroa control methods will be most suitable. Monitoring can be done in one of two ways: the use of an open mesh floor with a floor tray inserted below it to catch dead mites as they fall from the hive or by uncapping sealed drone brood and assessing what proportion of the pupa have mites on them. The CSL brochure "Managing Varroa", which is due to be replaced by a new brochure in the near future, provides a useful guide to these methods. If you want to know more, either look on the NBU web site (www.nationalbeeunit.com) or contact me directly.

Pyrethroid resistant varroa

First the good news. Last year we found no colonies in Southern Region which could be classed as resistant.

Now the bad news – resistance is all around us and is very likely to seriously affect colonies in this region this year.

If you have a high level of resistant mites in your colonies and are not testing for resistance, then the first you will probably know about it will be about October time when, suddenly, your hives will be empty! Typically, where resistance has developed without the beekeeper knowing about it, they have treated their, apparently, healthy colonies with pyrethroid strips in late summer, removed the strips 6 weeks later only to find, within a few weeks, that their colonies have absconded. When this happens, not only do you lose your bees but the departing bees carry resistant mites into other colonies in the area, thus spreading the problem.

Testing for resistance is very easy, most associations have at least a couple of test kits (try either your secretary or apiary manager) or you can make up your own test kit - I can provide details if you want to do this. I know that some associations are offering a resistance testing service for their members so that everybody knows exactly what the current situation is. It might be worthwhile other associations considering this approach; I or any of the Seasonal Bee Inspectors in the region will willingly help you set this up. Call me if your association does not yet have any test kits.

Disease recognition training days

Over the last few months, whilst we have been conducting Integrated Varroa Management Workshops, a number of people have asked how they can attend a Disease Training day. I have been working with my colleagues this winter to review the content and programme for these and am now happy to be able to offer training during the coming season.

The course is a day long event covering:

- **Observing the colony**

Covering what to consider when examining a hive of bees, including bees seen at the entrance, parasitic mite syndrome, the appearance of European Foul Brood (EFB) and American Foul Brood (AFB), the cycle of infection within the colony and other disease signs.

- **Practical comb examination**

Examination of diseased combs, remove larvae to examine the gut for EFB signs, string out rotting remains for AFB diagnosis, find scale, use of lateral flow devices (LFD) for diagnosis.

Discussion about students' diagnoses and correct answers given.

- **Assessment**

Pictures of diseased brood will be projected for students to make a diagnosis.

- **Practical apiary session**

An Appointed Bee Inspector (either the Regional Bee Inspector or a Seasonal Bee Inspector will demonstrate how to examine a colony for signs of disease.

Emphasis will be placed on hygiene procedures, shaking bees off the comb and actually looking at brood.

Students break into groups, preferably three or less supervised by an ABI. Each student can then shake bees off combs, examine brood and then describe what he or she observes and give a diagnosis if relevant.

- **Summary and assessment**

An opportunity to discuss points which have arisen during the day

A minimum of 6 students is required for each course (maximum 12) so, in some areas, it might be necessary for several associations to work together. Additional requirements are a conveniently located apiary site that we can use for the practical sessions and a suitable location for the lectures and discussions, preferably well away from the apiary as we will be looking at disease samples.

The course will be of benefit to most beekeepers with more than a year or two of beekeeping under their belt and, in the light of the revisions to the content of the course, it will also be applicable to those who have previously attended earlier training days.

Southern Region Associations Day 2005

Stockcross Village Hall - Sunday March 20th 2005

The first Southern Region Associations Day, held last year, proved to be an enjoyable and social event which, in addition to providing some interesting lectures (and a horrific video on small hive beetle!), gave a good opportunity for exchange of ideas between associations. We hope that will continue this year when, in addition to having an opportunity to talk with NBU staff about the coming season, we have an acknowledged expert coming along to talk about avoiding back pain and an interesting insight into some of the testing of products which industry carries out to minimise the risk to bees.

Stockcross Village Hall is located in Church Road, Stockcross, and 1½km west of the A34 Newbury bypass. Church Road runs between the A4 and the B4000.

All are welcome to attend this year's event but owing to space limitations, I need to know names and numbers in advance. Please advise me of all delegate names by 'phone or fax on 01308 482 161, by post or by e-mail on i.homer@csl.gov.uk by Monday March 14th 2005. The programme is:

- 1030 Coffee
- 1100 Welcome and Introductions
- 1105 A talk from Syngenta
 - Testing the safety of pesticides to honeybees
- 1200 Mike Brown, Head of the National Bee Unit.
 - lution and testing of new procedures for dealing with notifiable diseases
- 1245 Lunch (bring your own - tea and coffee provided)
- 1345 Sarah Weaver, Beekeeper and Chartered Physiotherapist
 - Bee Kind to Your Back
- 1445 Ian Homer, Regional Bee Inspector Southern Region
 - 2005 - What will it bring?
- 1530 Open Forum

The evo-

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I would like to attend the 2005 associations day on Sunday March 20th 2005

Name

Address

.....

.....Post Code

.....

Telephone no. e-mail address

.....

Which beekeeping association are you a member of?

.....

Please return this form by March 14th to:-

**Ian R. Homer, CSL Regional Bee Inspector – Southern Region,
 5, Malters Cottages, Litton Cheney, DORCHESTER, Dorset, DT2 9AE
 Tel/Fax: 01308 482 161 Mobile 07778 846 335 e-mail: i.homer@csl.gov.uk
www.nationalbeeunit.com**