



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

July 2005  
Number 589

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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

21 <sup>st</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August 2005	Apimondia Dublin	
29 <sup>th</sup> September	Federation Autumn Show & Talk	Dr Keith Lucas-Pollination & alpine flora

# The Federation Autumn Event and Open Honey Show

Will be held on 20<sup>th</sup> September at:-

**CHARVIL VILLAGE HALL,  
CHARVIL**

**Speaker: -**

**Dr, Keith Lucas** (pollination and alpine flora)

**Honey Judge: -**

**Mr. Nick Grey** from Buckinghamshire

**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

## In the Apiary - July

Now the June gap is over, the bees are taking in pollen from the brambles, gorse, groundsel and the many other compositae, which keep going all through the summer. And they will be enjoying the nectar from the summer plants like clover, lime, thistle, willow herb, blackberry, vetch, meadowsweet, wild parsnip, sunflowers, and of course the dreaded outlawed ragwort which they seem to like but which produces an unpleasant tasting honey.

It is interesting to notice that this poisonous plant is avoided in the fields by grazing sheep and hungry rabbits. Presumably they recognize that it is bad for them. For horses it is potentially lethal as it can be unwittingly included in a hay crop and fed to them.

No one would know what had happened until the horse suddenly died a few days later. As a result farmers and councils and others who have ragwort on their land are obliged to kill it. Last year, on many pieces of disused wayside wasteland there were some dense patches of spectacular ragwort. As time went on, the fluffy seeds were blown everywhere. Our local councils did not appear to notice it.

We keep on being told that this is going to be a long hot summer. Remember to keep a source of water within easy reach of the apiary because in the heat even the sheltered ditches tend to dry up. An open tray or old shallow baking tin will do. Put it in a shady corner out of the wind where the bees will find it. Place some stones or bits of wood in it so that the bees can land and sip the water easily. It is quite a good idea to add a little salt (1 flat teaspoon per gallon), as this will check the growth of mould in the tray.

It is important to make regular inspections of the colonies because you can still get swarming (maybe it's true that "a swarm in July is not worth a fly", but any bees you lose now will make the colony that much weaker for the coming winter). Also, keep an eye on any weak colony. Beef it up with a few frames of brood from another hive. And watch out for marauders. Wasps are getting going now and the guard bees in a weak hive will find it easier to keep them out if they only have to protect an entrance that has been reduced to a few inches wide.

Another reason for making regular inspections is to look out for any signs of disease. There seems to be quite a lot of chalk-brood about. This is caused by a fungus and is easily seen in the cells because the larvae turn white and chalky. It is cleared up by the bees themselves.

More serious are European and American Foul Brood. Look closely at your brood frames and if you see anything you don't like the look of, get advice because those diseases can lead to the loss of a colony and can even infect a whole apiary. Your Association Secretary will tell you who to go to for help.

If you take a swarm, it is advisable to look closely at it before you unite it with a colony of healthy bees. Wild bees, if there are any left in this country, could be carrying Varroa mites. If you see any misshapen bees, they have possibly got Varroa. Put them into a nucleus and treat them before you unite them with your bees.

And, of course there are the pests. Now is the time to look for wax moths and their grubs. You certainly don't want them! Given a chance they can quickly destroy your combs. The bees in a strong colony can keep them under control, but a weaker colony might not be able to. They lay their tiny eggs in little crannies in boxes and frames, it is wise to make sure you store your foundation and your prepared and extracted supers and frames carefully. Just newspaper between each box in a stack and a flat cover on the top is enough to keep them out.

Triad

### **Swarm control?**

I have clipped my queens, one hive has swarmed and the swarm lost, however, when examining the hive a week later, the old queen was still there. What do you think has happened?

My second hive has started queen cells and I do not want the same thing to happen. I would be grateful for any suggestions.

Investigation showed that both wings of both queens had been clipped so that they could not fly so in the first hive a swarm or casts emerged with virgin queens. It is surprising that these queens had not been superseded. Clipping queen's wings does not prevent swarms but gives a little more time to do something. Wings should not be clipped completely off, better to clip one wing half way so that she can still fly but a short way only.

The method suggested was one of Manley's: -

As increase was not wanted, so, put the brood chamber to one side and replace it with an empty one. Remove the frame with the queen and put it to one side. Next select a frame with an open queen cell with a young larva, make sure that there are no other queen cells on the comb and place it in the centre of the empty brood chamber. Cover the chamber, Shake the bees from each frame in turn in front of the new brood chamber, carefully remove all traces of queen cells and place them in the new brood chamber. Once the bees have started to run into the new hive the old queen can be destroyed and the frame treated the same way as the others. The supers can then be replaced.

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The one occasion that I saw this performed at one of Manley's apiaries, the apiary manager (Harry Wickens) destroyed all cells and ran a virgin queen in through the entrance, and he had several in cages as well as mated queens. He stated that a colony with queen cells nearing completion would always accept a virgin.

**Editor's comment:**

Why not use the occasion for disease and varroa control? Instead of re-using the brood, use frames of new foundation destroying the old combs, the one frame of brood can be replaced with foundation as soon as the new queen is established.

RFC

**Clipping queens: -** From BEE-KEEPING NEW AND OLD. Page 351

The practice of cutting the queen's wings to prevent the loss of swarms is generally supposed to be of recent origin. This is far from the case for the plan was known in Virgil's time.

In those days the Queen was styled " King." In his IV Georgics he writes as follows:

" But when the swarms are eager of their play,  
And loathe their empty hives, and idly stray,  
Restrain the wanton fugitives, and take  
A timely care to bring the truants back.  
The task is easy--but to clip the wings  
Of their high-flying arbitrary kings.  
At their command, the people, swarm away:  
Confine the tyrant, and the slaves will stay."

The correct method of clipping is to hold the queen by her head and thorax between the thumb and forefinger, then sever the wings on one side only, about two thirds of their length up towards the body with a pair of very sharp scissors, as seen on the right in Fig. 317. Care must be taken not to amputate the frantically waving legs.

Should the bee-keeper be nervous of holding the queen between his finger and thumb in order to clip her wings, then the operation may, with great care and patience, be carried out while she is on the comb amongst her subjects.

Clipping is not a practice we recommend, because our experience is that a queen mutilated in any way is soon superseded by the bees. Moreover, it gives a false sense of security against swarms being lost, for supersedure frequently takes place without the knowledge of the bee-keeper, and so, because he is not expecting a swarm his vigilance is relaxed, and one fine morning away goes a swarm with one of the young queens reared to take the place of the mutilated mother, who has in the meantime been destroyed.

Again, the clipped queen may, and does sometimes come out with the swarm and fall to the ground when the bee-keeper is not present to pick her up and restore her to the colony. The bees cluster for a while and then return, the queen perishes, and in the course of a few days the swarm issues with a virgin queen and absconds. Our advice re clipping the queen's wings, except under unusual circumstances, is an emphatic "DON'T."

The above is as true today as it was then. The Editor used to do it but abandoned the practice as uneconomic. At best two to four days are gained in which to do some sort of swarm control. There were occasions when the bees could not be examined at due intervals due to work commitments.

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

### **BBKA Basic Exam:**

BBKA Basic – Final Instalment.

More on Disease, Poisoning and Pests:

The Candidate will be:

- 5.6 aware of the current legislation regarding notifiable diseases of honeybees,
- 5.7 aware of the national and local facilities which exist to verify disease and advise on treatment,
- 5.8 aware where to obtain assistance if any poisoning by toxic chemicals is suspected,
- 5.9 able to describe how comb can be stored to prevent wax moth damage,
- 5.10 able to describe how mice and other pests can be excluded from the hives in the winter.

And that's it. Now all you have to do is glance back at your newsletters just to revise those few bits you weren't sure of and you can do the easy Basic. If you like, I can send you a copy of the whole syllabus.

Exams aren't fun, but the buzz you get out of passing one is nice and even if you're looking after only a single colony of bees you owe it to that colony to be sure that you know what you're doing.

Whenever you feel ready, call me on 01344 421747 and I'll arrange a day for you to show off your skills as an apiarist! You even get a certificate!

Rosemary Bayliss

## **Swarm collection!**

Again it has come to notice that some beekeepers are advising that swarms are removed as a public service without charge, it is said to have also happened in our own Federation area. One person (not one of ours) after giving this advice refused to remove a swarm because he did not need it. It was left to a pest control officer who called in a beekeeper who did make a charge. This seems to be an annual problem. In our area, there have been fewer reports of swarms this year

I guarantee that once these people have filled their hives and collected easy swarms, they will leave it to the genuine beekeepers to do the dirty work, particularly at the end of the season. Some of these do not really want the swarms, but collect them to avoid them "going feral", it is only fair for them to at least recover the cost of their transport. If swarm collectors do not wish to be paid, they could at least obtain a donation toward some deserving fund. (Bees for development or the Thames Valley Air Ambulance?)

RFC

## **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

## **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

On Sunday 15th May members of Reading and District Beekeepers Association met at Cross Lanes Apple Farm Mapledurham in fine weather with temperatures 5-6 degrees higher than previous days to view Cyril Mc Combe's apiary in this beautiful location and inspect the colonies which have become reduced in number from last summer: Cyril has had severe problems with wasps robbing bee colonies, and although most of us experienced this it seems to have been very severe in the Mapledurham area. Although it may be distasteful to kill queen wasps (all too numerous again) as they emerge from hibernation to begin their quest to found new colonies I suspect many beekeepers are taking these steps this spring.

We inspected two colonies all making steady progress with eggs and larvae, stores rather below the average for May, unsurprisingly with the cold weather. A rape field was visible in early flower about 2-3 miles away and bees were arriving with the bright yellow pollen loads attractively mixed with bees carrying red pollen from horse chestnut, all hopeful signs of an improving situation. Cyril had a nice empty hive prepared and half jokingly said it was to attract "swarms from up the hill" and there were indeed bees loaded with rape pollen entering, this had only been seen that morning; so that situation will be monitored in hope there's a colony in there! Cyril ever the innovator has fitted his hives with entry blocks drilled at intervals with bee sized holes these can be available after they are removed for use in the summer to help the bees with 'intruders'.

We then had a very pleasant walk across the orchards where the owners have wonderful selection of young apple trees of several varieties all expertly cultivated to where Cyril has a further colony, this had made slightly better progress with building-up and we moved the hive forwards from the hedge a little where rabbits had been using it as a disguise for an entrance to their warren. The whole time we were working bees were arriving with attractively coloured pollen loads. A most pleasant morning at Cross Lanes. With Thanks to Cyril and all who attended.

July Meeting: on Sunday 10th July It will be our great pleasure at the invitation of Hilary and Tim Whitaker commencing at 12.00 o'clock to visit their apiary at Vicarage Cottage Mapledurham, if you've not attended here before the Whitakers have a large and beautiful garden and Tim keeps bees in WBC hives overlooking meadows down to the Thames. Afterwards we have a barbecue, please bring something for the feast, members families, interested friends are always welcome.

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

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

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

The apiary continues much the same as before, with swarm control measures being taken on another colony and hopefully the Dartington hive with the new queen laying well by now. We anticipate the arrival of the Buckfast queens from Ged Marshall, which it is hoped will rectify the bad temper other traits including "following." experienced lately.

Swarm collections, always a way of replenishing stocks lost over winter, appear to be down somewhat this year. Jim Cooper and Michael Sheasby, who are the first contacts for our area, both report very few calls so far. Maybe the weather has had something to do with it or are we getting better at controlling them?

We would encourage you all to attend the apiary meetings as often as possible. If you have not been to our apiary yet, Jim Cooper will be able to give directions. His number is 01628 783228; or call one of the numbers below. The dates for July are the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> and in August the final scheduled visit for the year is on the 14<sup>th</sup>, all commencing at 3pm.

On Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup> August we have our Summer Supper at Maidenhead Rowing Club. The booking forms were sent out last month – have you returned yours yet? A reminder is enclosed, so please return as soon as possible to ensure your place is reserved. Last year’s 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary event was a great success and it is sure to be a popular event again this year.

We are also coming up to the Summer shows, so a reminder that your honey can be entered in the five honey classes of the Royal Windsor Rose and Horticultural Society’s 101st. annual show on Saturday 16th July 2005, from 11.00am---5pm at St George’s School, Windsor Castle. (Entrance in Datchet Road, Windsor.) Schedules from Mrs Colleen Garrett on 01753 852352.

Also in the nine honey classes of the Windsor Allotments & Home Gardens Association. Show and Fete at Gardeners Hall, 213 St Leonards Road, Windsor on Saturday 20th August 2005 from 2.15pm--5.15pm. Schedules from Mrs Trish Weller on 01753 854766

Our own show will be on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> October this year.

If any member wishes to borrow our labelling machine for stamping the "Best Before End" dates and "Lot Numbers" on a separate label for your honey jars, please call me on the first number below,

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

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

### **Club apiary and apiary visits**

Six members, including our President, inspected the site of our new Club apiary at Diana Brimblecombe’s Animal Rescue Centre. All seemed well but one of the hives swarmed the following day. Our apiarist has been busy with swarms; the hot day on 27<sup>th</sup> May brought a flood of phone calls from the public.

A series of visits to members’ apiaries is arranged for the summer months. All meetings start at 3:00pm and those interested members and friends should phone the number given to obtain directions and to confirm attendance. The next meetings are as follows:

<b>Apiary</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Phone</b>
John Edwards	26 <sup>th</sup> June	Hurst	0118 934 0238
Nigel Perkins	10 <sup>th</sup> July	Ashridgewood Farm	07775 771079
Bob Loades	24 July	Norbury, Binfield	0118 961 9631

## Requeening

My new queens duly arrived from Greece via Bickerstaffes in Liverpool on 18th May. The weather was unusually cold and showery but I managed to find a gap in which I introduced my two queens. One I introduced into a nuc using Ted Buckingham's queen cage and the other I offered directly into a hive, having removed the queen, using the Bickerstaffes delivery cage. So far I have peeked into the nuc but could see no signs of her laying yet.

Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

## SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

**Our June meeting** will be at Annette Cleaver's apiary, come to 5, Coates Lane, Cookley Green (OS Ref: 694 904) where you will be directed to the apiary

### May Meeting

The President's day was held as usual at the apiary of Marcella Skinner. Our President, Ian Wootton arrived armed with an empty observation hive that he had just constructed. He started by showing the essential elements of a successful hive: - the critical dimensions needed to leave a correct bee space around the chosen frame size, the double glazed sides and the arrangements for feeding the small colony. He went on to describe the usual methods of stocking such a hive, by taking a frame of brood plus bees plus queen from a stock or nucleus or by obtaining a package of bees plus queen. However on this occasion he intended to try to find a brood frame with mature sealed queen cells so that a new queen would emerge into the observation hive and mate from there.

With this in mind, all Marcella's hives were opened and examined. The stocks were in good shape and none was about to swarm, in fact only a couple of very early queen cells were found, so that apart from clipping and marking a couple of queens, nothing was needed. The main purpose of the meeting seemed to be frustrated but Ron Crocker came to the rescue by going off to one of his apiaries and coming back with the ideal frame, covered with bees and holding two sealed cells.

This was loaded into the hive and it was left open until flying finished that day so that all the flying bees returned to it. It was then closed and moved the next day.



At the time of writing (10 days later) the news is that the colony has settled in, collecting pollen vigorously and the queen cells are open. A queen has been seen on the frame and we await the first eggs. All the queens except one from the same batch have mated successfully and are laying

The hive is available on loan to any beekeeper that would like it for example, a school demonstration or a show. Contact Ian Wootton (01491) 873050.

## Apiary Tour

The apiary tour is again on and is scheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> July; any member wishing to have his/her bees inspected during the tour or wishes to attend, please contact Guy Simpson (01491 824320) or Ron Crocker. There may be some vacancies so if any member of another association would like to attend, please contact Guy or the South Chilterns Secretary.

The Regional Bees Officer, Ian Homer will conduct the tour and will demonstrate "examining for colony health." Although this educational tour is aimed at relative newcomers to the craft will serve as a refresher even for experienced beekeepers

Secretary: Annette Cleaver (01491) 642021

## Did you know that old combs harbour disease?

**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.

### **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.

5—————8

**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

For sale: quantity of Langstroth hives and supers, some with bees. A number of new Langstroth roofs and supers in the flat. Crocker: 01189722315.