



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

August 2005
Number 590

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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 st – 26 th August 2005	Apimondia Dublin	
29 th September	Federation Autumn Show & Talk	Dr Keith Lucas-Pollination & alpine flora
21 st – 23 rd October	National Honey Show	

The Federation Autumn Event and Open Honey Show

Will be held on Thursday 29th September at: -

**CHARVIL VILLAGE HALL,
CHARVIL**

Dr. Keith Lucas of Reading University

Will be speaking on 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 - August

Experiences of the June gap seem to be mixed this year. One beekeeper from Cumbria says that so far, this season is the worst that he has experienced; queen-raising over the country appears to have been erratic. In our own area some varieties of oil seed rape have yielded heavily whilst where there is no rape, honey yields have been poor or non-existent, most of June was dry and latterly hot, this did not help, hopefully rain at the end of the month will have helped.

For most beekeepers in our area, at the end of July nectar secretion will have all but ceased and colonies will have been contracting. It is natural that creatures with a short gestation period will slow down breeding or even cease breeding in times of food shortage, so it is for bees.

Normally drone rearing will have ceased at this time and drones will be ejected. The exception, when a queen is failing or even missing, the colony will retain its drones; examine the colony, if a supercedure cell is seen it can be safely left for nature to take its course. A recently empty queen cell indicates that there may be a virgin queen running around, in this case the colony will not dispose of its drones until the new queen is laying satisfactorily. "Polished" cells also indicates that there may be a virgin queen waiting to be mated. If you do try to re-queen at this stage you could be courting disaster so, make absolutely certain that there are no more virgin queens running around.

Cessation of egg laying usually gives rise to panic shouts of queenlessness followed by "they would not accept a new queen" not realizing that queens often have a break from egg laying at some time, particularly the darker strains of bee. Many a good queen has been lost this way. Moral: before introducing a new queen, make absolutely certain that the colony is indeed queenless.

Apart from those beekeepers that migrate to the heather, there is normally little nectar secretion from the end of July onward until the ivy yields, however, this can be unreliable. Sometimes a late sowing of mustard will be grown, if it is for game bird cover, it will be allowed to flower, giving a welcome extra crop, also it is not unknown for a late crop from clover.

Early this month, assess your stocks for strength; colonies of less than five (national) frames do not always winter successfully. A healthy colony may be united with another after destroying the least desirable queen. Alternatively, it is possible to over-winter nuclei above a strong colony using a double screen provided that both have adequate stores, some queen breeders over-winter mini nucs in this manner.

It is claimed that August is the time to carry out varroa treatment, my view is to treat as late as conditions allow in order to minimize the possibility of re-infestation, however, having said that, optimum efficiency will be attained when treating during a cessation of brood raising. Remember that it is recommended to carry out any treatment against varroa over six weeks whatever medication is used.

Triad

Bees and beekeeping

To my complete surprise, I became a beekeeper when, on my 60th birthday, my wife presented me with a hive of bees, a bee suit and a sign saying 'Honey for Sale'. She knew that I enjoy doing things that create an 'end product', but the honey for sale had to come later. There was a lot to learn and so I joined the Slough & District Beekeepers' Society, whose members taught me most of what I now know.

When you become a beekeeper, one of your responsibilities to the community in which you live is to respond as helpfully as possible to calls from people concerned about a bees' nest or a swarm. The first thing I need to establish is whether the bees are honeybees, bumble bees or wasps. There are many other species of bees in this country but, apart from hornets that are rarely seen, none of them can sting and they are smaller in size.

Wasps are the most recognisable, because they have distinctive, evenly spaced, bright yellow and black stripes around their bodies. Honeybees are about the same size as wasps, but their stripes are far less distinctive and are in dull gold, russet and dark brown shades. Bumblebees are larger and rounder and look as if they are wearing fur coats in russet, gold and grey shades of colour.

Honeybees and bumblebees feed only on the nectar and pollen of flowers, bushes and trees and consequently have no interest in people whatsoever. They will not sting, unless provoked either intentionally or accidentally, and if they do they die in the process. This is because they leave their sting behind causing themselves a fatal injury. You have to believe that no bee sacrifices its life unless it really has to.

By contrast, wasps are carnivorous and are robbers and scavengers. They eat other insects and they try to rob the bees of their honey. As everyone knows when picnicking in July and August, wasps will try to eat your food and drink and may sting if you swat them or accidentally trap them. Wasps do not leave their stings behind and can therefore sting more than once.

The bees you see first in the early spring are large queen bumblebees that have hibernated over the winter and are flying around looking for a dry hole in which to establish a small nest and lay eggs. When those eggs develop into young bumblebees, they are smaller than the queen and you see them gathering pollen and nectar from the flowers.

Next you see the honeybees also gathering pollen and nectar. If you look closely you can see that they attach the bright yellow and orange pollen to their back legs to transport it back to their hive. Honeybees do not have fur coats to keep them warm, so they start flying a few weeks later than the bumblebees.

Finally, mainly in July and August, the wasps become very active as their numbers increase and they have to compete for food. This is why wasps are inquisitive, rather pushy and fly in through open windows to look for food. Wasps, unlike honeybees and bumblebees, are pests and your local Council will destroy their nests, if asked and if you pay their charge for doing so. Your local Council will not kill honeybees and bumblebees because they rightly consider them to be good for the environment and therefore to be protected.

Why are they "good for the environment"? By spreading pollen from one flower to another, known as pollination, bees improve the production of fruit by those plants and trees. This applies in particular to all fruit trees and to vegetables such as beans, peas, tomatoes and courgettes, so this helps gardeners and farmers. Honeybees can fly up to three miles from their hives, so they can pollinate trees and plants over a very wide area.

I am sometimes asked if I can get rid of the bees in a garden. When you realise how far they can fly, you understand that this is impossible and the best thing to do is to learn to live with them, by understanding and respecting them. Another thing to remember is that there are no "killer bees" in this country. That is a name given to a species of African bee, but they cannot live in the colder climate of our country.

Bumblebees and wasps all die out in the autumn, apart from their queens, which hibernate over the winter. Honeybees are different, as they do not die out in the winter, providing they have sufficient food stored by the end of the summer to get them through the cold months. During that period, honeybees huddle together in their hive, rather like penguins do, and the queen stops laying eggs until the weather gets warmer in the spring.

As the weather gets warmer, the hive becomes increasingly active, the queen lays from one to two thousand eggs per day, and the hive population expands to around 50,000 bees by June. In this process, half the bees in the hive may decide to leave and make a new nest elsewhere. This is done instinctively to expand and spread the population of honeybees, as some colonies may not survive a winter or may die out from other causes. This is known as swarming and this one of the reasons why people sometimes contact me because a swarm has clustered into an oblong ball on a branch in their garden or some public place and this worries them. I will try to collect the swarm if my ladder can safely reach it.

Actually, honeybees that swarm are far less prone to sting, because before they leave they eat as much honey as they can to last for their journey. This swells their tummies and they find it very difficult to bend their tails down enough to sting someone. You try touching your toes after a big meal and you will see what I mean.

Why do the bees cluster when they swarm? They do this to protect the queen, who is in the middle of the cluster, while scout bees are sent out to find a nice dry hole or space for their new nest. When this has been located, the bees take off again to their new home. It is not unusual for this to be in a disused chimney or under the eaves of a house, which is the next occasion when I might be called.

A hive (also known as a colony) of honeybees is made up of one queen, a small number of male bees, called drones, and a great number of worker bees, which are all infertile females. The queen is the mother of the entire hive and influences the collective behaviour of the colony by emitting scents, called pheromones. If the queen is healthy and laying well, the bees are happy and concentrate on the housework and collection of food, but if she starts to fail, the behaviour of the bees will change. The bees may swarm or they may produce another queen to replace the old queen. During such periods the collection of nectar and its conversion to honey will also slow down, which is not what the beekeeper wants. 'No bees, no honey, no honey, no money' is an old saying, so the beekeeper uses various techniques to try to discourage the bees from swarming and may introduce a younger queen into a hive which is failing. However, the bees do not read the same books as the beekeeper, so the beekeeper cannot exercise the control that he or she might wish to apply. That is the fascination of beekeeping.

When it works well, the beekeepers reward is the pleasure that his or her family, friends and customers derive from the delicious honey produced by those extremely busy bees.

PS: If a wasp or bee does sting you, most people get over the swelling and pain around the site of the sting in about three days. A very small minority can have an allergic reaction and go into shock. In those cases, you are advised to go immediately to the Accident and Emergency department at your local hospital (e.g. Wexham) where they will treat that condition, or telephone your doctor.

If you would like to know more about bees, beekeeping or honey, telephone the writer, Michael Sheasby at 01753 642656.

The author reserves the right to offer this article to other newspapers and magazines, following initial publication by the Observer.

Letter to the Editor

Until recently, I had never heard of the Pagden Method. The article that you uncovered describes a way of dealing with a colony which has already swarmed, but the result is essentially the same as if one were to make an artificial swarm. Last winter a speaker at one of the Slough Society meetings described the Pagden method as a system of swarm control/prevention which is briefly as follows: -

(i) Make artificial swarm on original site.

(ii) Place original brood-box with brood and queen cells, if any, adjacent to swarm. The flying bees will join the swarm.

(iii) A few days later- before a queen emerges - move the brood-box to the other side of the swarm that will be further strengthened.

(iv) When new queen is laying, unite to swarm after removing old queen.

I was most surprised to find that I had been using the Pagden method, very successfully, for around forty years. I originally experimented with the Snelgrove Method. The theory is impeccable but the practice cumbersome so employing what was recently described as my "trial and error" approach to beekeeping I decided that I would achieve the same result by placing the brood-containing box immediately to one side of the artificial swarm with its entrance at right-angles to it. Instead of opening hatches in the Snelgrove board I moved the brood-box to the other side of the swarm. A few years later I read a description of this method in an article or a book but it was not described as the Pagden Method - or the Peace Method for that matter. In a lifetime of experimenting and inventing in a small way I have found that someone has usually already done it so beware of making claims!

The method does work. In the past fifteen years, working between ten and my present two colonies, I have had just two swarms - one whilst I was on an extended holiday and the other when the queen left with half the bees leaving eggs, brood of all ages and the other half of the bees but no queen cells. They resisted all my efforts to induce them to raise a queen and were eventually united to another colony.

All I have to do now is adapt the "Pagden" method to the Dartington hives which I have adopted to prolong my beekeeping life!

Changing the subject. Preferring to raise my own, I have only ever bought in queens on three occasions; twice with disastrous results, but last year, like one of your contributors, I purchased two cecropia/buckfast queens from Bickerstaffes. They have proved to be very pleasant to work with, quiet, industrious and producing very strong colonies. My only concern is that still having nine 14x12s full of brood in one hive and seven in the other during the last week in October did not seem to be a good way to go into the winter. When it all hatches out there is a big gap between the stores at each end. You can of course do as I did and remove some of the empty combs during December.

Finally on the subject of Ragwort. As a horse owner I do know the dangers associated with this plant but I do not believe the honey from it to be toxic. I notice that judges seem to have a "thing" about Ragwort. One once came to Maidenhead's honey show and complained that this plant tainted many of the entries and even a pot of my spring honey came in for this criticism. I sometimes wonder if they have gone out and smelt the flowers or did one of them come across a disagreeable scent and say "Ragwort" and do they now, when they come up against an aroma they dislike all say the same? At the other end of the scale, if you say "Manuka" or "Heather honey" it has to be good - or is it?

Some years ago, a few days after I had removed my summer crop of honey, my bees started working again with a vengeance. They all headed for a derelict farm with eight acres of Ragwort (60%) and St Johns Wort (40%). The honey was a bright orange, tasted delicious and had no objectionable smell. My neighbours agreed. Only one died but she was ninety-six and it took four years to kill her.

Harry Peace

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.

On the evening of Saturday the 13th August, we have our Summer Supper at Maidenhead Rowing Club. Reminder forms were sent out last month, but if you find that you are now able to come along, please ensure that you post it to Michael by August the 7th at the latest, or call him on the number below.

The apiary has seen some new developments, as Jim Cooper reports below:

The meetings in June have been well attended and it has been particularly pleasing to see new faces. We have been taking it in turns for the more experienced beekeepers to demonstrate different subject areas and then letting the beginners get some hands-on experience. It is after all a teaching apiary! The Dartington hive now has a successfully mated new queen heading the colony and it is beginning to build in strength. Unfortunately, it is unlikely to give a honey surplus this year due to the artificial swarm colony absconding in May. We are learning the hard way with this new hive type and design!

We have three strong colonies in the Nationals that are likely to give us some honey. We were able to demonstrate the Pagden method of swarm control at the last meeting and will probably not re-unite the two halves later on, choosing instead to increase our stock.

Our 2 new Buckfast Queens will arrive in one week's time. We will do the nucleus method of introduction; so a bit of preparatory work will be done to ensure that the necessary equipment is available and that all goes well. At the time of writing the brambles are out, the lime trees are about to bloom and the weather is hot. Let's hope the bees work hard.

If you have not been to our apiary yet, Jim will be happy to give directions. Call him on 01628 783228; or call one of the numbers below. The next meeting on the 14th of August is the final scheduled visit, so will be the last opportunity for you to attend this year. It will commence at 3pm. Do come along to see how the apiary has fared this year.

The Windsor Allotments & Home Gardens Association Show and Fete has nine honey classes, and schedules can be obtained from Mrs Trish Weller on 01753 854766. It is to be held at Gardeners Hall, 213 St Leonards Road, Windsor on Saturday 20th August 2005 from 2.15pm--5.15pm and is an ideal forerunner to our own show, which is on Tuesday, 11th October.

September will see the start of the Winter Programme, with the Review of the Year on Tuesday the 13th, commencing at 8pm at the All Saints Parish Hall on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor.

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

Four members joined Peter Seagrave on Sunday 5th June to inspect his four hives at Yateley. They turned out to be in an interesting collection with two hives containing Greek queens from last year and two containing locally bred queens. The Greek hives were a joy to manipulate and were as docile as I remembered from last year. One was very strong but the other weaker colony surprising revealed two queens in residence. The other two hives were also in a mixed state with one containing a strong colony and having honey to come off while the other had recently swarmed with one new queen left in residence. The meeting concluded with tea and a slice of Mrs Seagrave's most excellent sponge cake.

	
Bert supervising the manipulation of one of the Greek queened hives	Two queens in residence!

Six members joined the Secretary on Sunday 26th June to inspect his newly requeened hives. The hives with Greek queens were as easy to handle as had been hoped. Both queens were found and remarked and a third colony containing nasty bees was given a reprieve since they were now quite placid. An expensive new open floor was fitted ahead of a varroa count.

	
Checking on the first Greek queen	Fitted with a new open floor

Beware - thieves

I received a distressing call from Terry Hicks who reported on the theft of a hive from his apiary at Easthampstead Park. The thieves knew what they were doing, and sadly must have been beekeepers, since they took only the brood box with floor and crown board. Needless to say Terry has removed his other hives from this site.

Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Reading and District Beekeepers Association has the pleasure of reporting on three June outings in what has been a busy and fulfilling month.

Woodlands Day Our first outing was of our participation with a section in the craft tent at The Woodlands Day on Saturday 4th at Clayfield Copse Caversham Park. This was a Sponsored event and entry to the public was free, attendance was very good with many visitors including the Mayor of Reading and his lady to our stand where Cyril Mc Combe exhibited his beekeeping artefacts and Tim Whitaker 'sold-out' his jars of honey! A happy event with families with children having run the gauntlet with 'The Green Man' visited us and as usual, showing great interest in our craft.

Out Apiary Visit On Sunday 12th we visited our members' Joint out apiary run by Steve Blinstrub and Robert Kiff at Firgrove Manor near Eversley in the old orchard. Steve had recently added a swarm from Reading into a hive and there was some evidence that there had been some fighting. It's advisable to make just one or two small nicks in a sheet of newspaper between the occupants and the newcomers so they have a chance to get accustomed to each other when uniting.

Incoming stores on the first three colonies were at a low level. Apple blossom needs a lot of sun to produce any worthwhile nectar (which at that time the blossom had certainly not received) also the field that the hives overlooked, though very attractive, seemed to be principally tall grasses and species of dock and vinegar plant, if this is set-aside hopefully the flora will improve, in view in the distance, was a field turning yellow, maybe this is winter rape.

Our demonstrator Michael Blackburn posed the question to us as to the scarcity of bees entering and exiting two of the hives, which were, swarms from last season. Obviously the build-up hadn't been good. Although there were larvae in all stages of development, in one of these there was an issue with the larvae's appearance and Steve is sampling and sending-off for testing. The adjacent hive was opened but not extensively investigated until after results are known. After changing gloves and sterilising hive tools to avoid cross contamination The third hive in this group was quite different with healthy looking brood in abundance, a big lively population and bees putting stores into several supers, our demonstrator re-arranged the frames so that the bottom super will be ready for removal in the next week if the foraging keeps up.

We cut several queen cells from this colony and Cliff Marriott who has a lack of queen activity in his colony took these. A very interesting meeting with several beekeeping issues to address, we will keep you informed!

John Hamer's Blackhorse Apiaries Our third outing was a visit on Sunday 26th to John Hamer's Blackhorse Apiaries near Woking, It's actually half an hour by car in a straight line from Reading near Brookwood Necropolis. We were kindly greeted by John and the secretary of Guildford Association (they have 90 members!) plus the beekeeping Mayor of Ewell and Sutton who posed with us for photographs holding frames covered with bees, protected only by a smart lounge suit and his chain of office. These were Carniolan bees that John works entirely bare-headed and bare-armed, he rears Carniolan hybrid stock starting with F1 Queens that he brings in from Belgium and rears and re-queens all his colonies that are used for beekeeping courses, and to supply new beekeepers with calm and docile bees.

Most of us spent the afternoon with our veils thrown-back. John has bee houses, one produced from a B&Q flat pack shed, long hives designed for a family to pop into the garden and get a frame of honey for tea. John is working on providing the solution to beekeeping in the modern small garden residence, about a hundred colonies including mini-nukes, Carefully designed conifer screens so students can work on colonies isolated from those nearby. Oh yes and we collected a swarm with a purpose built vacuuming device from Canada. You really must go there to fully appreciate; John welcomes visitors.

For details contact Michael and Hazel Blackburn or Jon. Davey.

Next Meeting

Sunday 14th August. Jon Davey invites you at 11-30 to the Chairman's meeting at 107 Northcourt Avenue. Reading. Tel 0118 975 0734. The Chairman at the time of writing has 6 colonies one recently united from two casts from the same hive and apparently doing well. Please come you will be very welcome

DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES

Sunday 4th September at the Wokingham and Reading Show at Spencers Wood. Reading and District Beekeeping Association will be holding their Annual Honey Show in the produce tent. It's only 20 pence per exhibit in all classes, honey produce etc and there are cash prizes from the Wokingham and Reading Horticultural Association as well as the Reading DBKA Awards. All monies raised will be given to Charity. Reading members will receive a schedule in good time. Anyone that would like a schedule, please contact Jon. Davey.

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

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

The Apiary Tour 23rd July: Participants may join or leave at any time. Any interested beekeeper wishing to attend, please contact Guy Simpson on (01491 824320 for arrangements.

Our next meeting is the end of season meeting at Guy Simpson's apiary on the banks of the river Thames near North Stoke on Saturday 17th September. OS ref 608 866

June Meeting

Our June meeting was held at Annette Cleaver's home. Reg Hook gave a "Bee Free" demonstration on artificially swarming bees and raising queens from preferred stock. He set up a brood box with framed foundation and then a queen excluder, on top of this was a super then a double gauze board with ventilation and an entrance at the back of the hive and the old brood box on the top. The bees will fly round and draw out foundation from the bottom brood. After 7 days he would take out any queen cells from the top box and would replace with grafted queen cells of a British Native Bee. 10/11 days later he would remove the cells and put them into mating nuke's from which the queens would then be mated and replaced. Once established the gauze board would be removed and the bees would mingle together happily having the same scent throughout.

Reg explained other methods of raising queen cells, including the Jenter and Alley methods. We were then put to the test of grafting larvae into queen cups. Each of us took turns which I found fascinating – especially without the 'ducking and diving' from my angry bees if we had been down at the apiary.

After the meeting our summer barbeque was held on the cricket pitch, there was good food, plenty of wine and time to really sit and chat to our fellow members well into a lovely evening.

Secretary: Annette Cleaver (01491) 642021

THE PORTAL TO THE BEEKEEPING WORLD
[HTTP://WWW.BEEDATA.COM/](http://www.beedata.com/)

Federation Home Page: <http://www.beedata.com/fbbka>

From which the archive of two years of past newsletters can be accessed

From Beekeeping New and Old

Apiculture is very diverse; we foster several insect species to pollinate our crops and produce honey, wax, and propolis. The diversity in beekeeping is truly amazing. It is said: "There are as many ways to keep bees as there are beekeepers".

Logically there is no "proper" way to keep bees, the best we can do as good beekeepers and as good neighbours is to share our techniques, knowledge and experiences.

To assume that this foundation is stable would be naive. Every year, new research, and new facts about the fascinating lives our friends the Honey Bees lead, help us to be more successful beekeepers.

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.

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.

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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.