



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

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November 2005

Number 593

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## Future Events

Saturday April 21st 2006	Spring Convention	Stoneleigh
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## In the Apiary – November

I haven't met a single beekeeper who does not agree that this has been a peculiar year. But we always say that don't we? However, we did have a very slow start and then there was a prolonged June gap because of the drought. Also there seems to have been a lot of swarming and this time the autumn feeding has been more important than ever for those hives which have only just picked up in time for the winter.

It was good to see how useful the new extractable floor insert has been. No more guess-work: checking the result of the Apiguard was easy and very interesting. I have at last actually seen a mite – lying prone with its legs in the air like a dead crab. They were easy to spot once you knew what they look like – and, happily, there were not many of them.

So we seem to be getting ahead of that pest. Only to have it followed by a new threat, which seems to be even more of a threat for our bees - the Small Hive Beetle. A lot of research is going on abroad and I suppose they will come up with something as they did for Varroa. Meanwhile, it seems that the best thing we can do is maintain a high standard of hygiene which is what we should do anyway

The argument continues about the cutback at the NBU. It does not seem to have registered that our bees are a national asset. There have always been plenty of wild bees in the past, it has not mattered very much for our agriculture, and food production whether there have been any beekeepers at all. The craft was a hobby and a source for a little extra income for country people. Now, with the possible extinction of our wild bees, farming is depending much more heavily on the input from managed bees. So what do "they" do? Reduce their support! Only in Britain...

This is a good time of the year to take a look at our equipment. The autumn sale is over and the far-sighted among us have got their share of bargains. However, we can spend a bit of time and money considering a few changes that could make life easier. Here we are planning to switch from Hoffmann to Manley frames simply because the sides are so much easier to scrape down. We are also casting round for Miller feeders. We have had to do a lot of feeding and hungry bees empty the smaller round ones so quickly. This year we will have floor ventilation because of the open mesh floors we have put in.. It should be more hygienic when you think of the accumulation of infection a stuffy hive must induce. Besides which, in the wild the combs are naturally exposed to the air. Nevertheless, it does feel like a bit of a gamble – but as Mrs Wedmore said in her beekeepers' Bible, "A Manual of Beekeeping," "Stocks cannot be killed by cold air alone so long as it is only in slow motion in the hive."

We are also looking at the apiary itself. It is in a little copse and one or two branches have grown a bit too long over the past couple of years and are giving a bit too much shade. It is surprising how much growth there has been this summer which needs to be uprooted or cut back. On our visits to the apiary during the summer there has been enough to do with the bees and hives and besides which you don't want to go hacking away just by your bees when they are busy bringing in the pollen and nectar. Now that they are quiescent they won't be so disturbed provided you don't make too much noise.

Triad

### **From the Editor. Indigenous or imported bees and ivy?**

From time to time this subject arises particularly where there have been winter losses with ivy stores remaining in the hive. Is this the result of using exotic strains of bee? However, it must not be forgotten that losses can occur through inadequate varroa control or through pyrethroid resistant varroa.

It seems that most losses with ivy stores are with exotic types of bee, mainly those of Mediterranean origin, these tend to be mainly light coloured bees. Over the years I have been guilty of using many different strains and hybrid bees, experience has taught me that this was a grave mistake. The darker bees seem to fare better on ivy and heather stores; in time imported strains will mongrelize and partially revert to the local dark, indigenous or near native bee. I, and many others have come to the conclusion that the best bee for the British Isles is *Apis Mellifera Mellifera*. They are hardy, winter on less stores than some other strains and in some cases, showing signs of varroa tolerance (Dr Kilty of South Cornwall has found that in his colonies, up to sixty five percent of natural varroa fall counted are damaged).

We await the outcome of Wokingham Associations venture with their BuckfastxCecropia bees, these are a Greek strain crossed with what is already a hybrid and bred in a Mediterranean country.

There is an interesting thread on the Irish Beekeeping discussion list, extracts of which are reproduced (with permission) below. ( <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/irishbeekeeping> )

From: "Keith Pierce" <[keithpierce@eircom.net](mailto:keithpierce@eircom.net)>

The ivy was in full flow today for the first time, well in Dublin anyway. Two days ago I had a good walk around the area and all the buds were still closed but were waiting on a bit of sunshine to burst open. With the open mesh floors and at this time of year to prevent robbing I have the entrance shut down to about 2 inches and they were queuing up to get in and out .As the heather finished and as I have not gone near my hives since I brought them to the heather, I am thinking of bringing them home tomorrow night so they can finish off on the ivy and build them selves up for the winter and 2006 season.

From: [thebeeman@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:thebeeman@ukonline.co.uk)

Hi Keith, watch out for your bees, IVY honey will kill your bees in the winter! it will set up like a hard pea in the gut and the bees can't cope with it and die!! RIP Bees. The beeman

I wonder if this is yet another case of something being true for one apiary but false in another. Although I have not kept bees as long as "The beeman" I have so far experienced about 20 colony winters and have yet to lose one. They invariably fill up to the gunwales with ivy before the winter and often provide me with a surplus. The worst thing that has happened so far is that the bees seemed to be desperate for water in the spring of 2004, and stung a gardener who was tying in his raspberries near a garden pond they had claimed as there own. Fortunately this particular gardener is also a bee lover and accepted the blame when I told him he should have tied in his canes during the autumn. He also accepted his jar of honey.

Steve Rose

Given that most of the UK was once forest, and presumably had plenty of ivy, bees that couldn't cope with it would surely not have survived. Regards, Robert Brenchley Birmingham UK

The above statement seems to be true for bees in England and beyond. However for many bees in Ireland, were it not for Ivy stores they would die of hunger. Our year in year out experience is that a good ivy flow leads on to strong stocks of bees the following spring. We can also read that heather honey makes bad winter stores, again not our experience. There is a rational argument that natural forage suits the endemic bee i.e. *A.mellifera mellifera*, it is those odd looking yella ones that are not atuned to this environment.

Ben Harden

Indigenous bees can cope with ivy honey, in fact they will thrive and prosper on it, but hybrid bees, (particularly those with Italian blood) can die, but in any case the hybrid bees will need winter feed, which will help to dilute the effect of the ivy honey.

I have never considered this before... But I would not be surprised if ivy honey had not contributed to the low degree of hybridisation in Irish bees.

Regards & Best 73s, Dave Cushman, G8MZY (his website is worth visiting. Ed)  
<http://website.lineone.net/~dave.cushman> or <http://www.dave-cushman.net>

The worst I have ever had with ivy, is the bees leaving crystals in the cells, having removed the softer bits, until they need the space, then dropping them on the floor. Ivy honey can be soft, and I have often wondered (and asked on the List about it) if they can partially or fully transform it ready for the spring, like their own fondant. They also do make water out of the process of eating it and I also wonder how much water they recycle in the hive (as distinct from a hollow tree, which would absorb moisture). Our near native bees seem to thrive on it.

-- James Kilty

### **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.

The first winter meeting in September, the Review of the Year, was well attended and there were quite a variety of experiences reported. This year was hardly typical of recent ones and consequently a few were caught out, but on the whole it had ended up a reasonable year for the majority. The apiary was looking quite good, a couple of colonies were on the weak side and being fed, but the crop had been better than expected earlier in the year. The woodpecker cages will have been added by now at the working party organized for early October.

This month sees our AGM and Supper being held on Tuesday the 8<sup>th</sup> November. It commences at the usual time of 8pm and is held at the All Saints Parish Hall on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor. We would still like to have nominations for any of the officers positions and there are a few vacancies for other committee members. Some fresh input is always welcome. Please make sure the person being nominated is willing to stand and advise Michael on the number below before the meeting if possible. The usual Supper will follow, we would ask everyone to please bring along a contribution for the table and to stay and enjoy the company of your fellow beekeepers.

In December, we will be welcoming Hazel Blackburn, the well known local Honey Judge, who will be talking to us about the preparation of Honey and other products for showing. This will be on Tuesday, the 13<sup>th</sup> December. The following month we have booked our Annual Dinner, at the Aurora Garden Hotel in Windsor, for Friday the 27<sup>th</sup> January, so please put both of these dates in your diary now. Menus and booking forms will be sent out later.

As usual, our library will be available at all winter meetings, there may also be some surplus books still for sale, and don't forget, any member who wishes to borrow our labelling machine for stamping the "Best Before End" dates and "Lot Numbers" onto a separate label for honey jars, please call me on the first number below,

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

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

### **Our meeting on November 16<sup>th</sup> starts at 7.0 pm**

The deferred A.G.M. will be followed by the advertised programme – a talk on the subject of conservation and advantages of native and near native strains of honeybees, by Philip Denwood, Editor of Bee Improvement, and Conservation (BIBBA)

### **Chairman's Apiary in North Stoke – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2005**

Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup> of September was a very warm day. The sun was shining and the out apiary of Guy's was well attended by 21 of the SCBKA members for the September Inspection. Reg pulled on his yellow rubber gloves and expertly went through two hives.

Interestingly both of Guy's hives are on open mesh floors, which have been seen to help with varroa reduction by 15-20%. The first colony was very docile and very strong, it was suggested that maybe next season this hive be put to a brood and a half. A good brood pattern was seen after Reg had brushed away the workers with his feather. There were good stores but maybe not enough for the whole winter. There were no significant problems apart from seeing some chalk brood. We saw a couple of new workers emerge from their cells before the hive was put back together.

The second hive was a split from the first hive about 6 months ago. Again they were very friendly. Guy said they had been lively recently but Don thought this could be down to the fact that they may have got hot in this position. The apiary could do with a little more shade in the summer so Guy and Reg are thinking about moving them a little further into the scrub away from the path. A public footpath runs quite close to the site but the only users of the path are locals and they know of the bees and have been no trouble.

George used the opportunity in the second hive to check for Varroa. His comb was pushed into some drone brood and when pulled out you could quite clearly see the dark oval varroa mites moving over the white brood. The mites will be found at the bottom of the cells so when you pull out the brood you will see them running over the bottom of the brood. George did this in a few other areas and we all got to see mature varroa mites close up. The recommendation was to put the Apistan strips in "yesterday," but failing that Guy is going to do it tomorrow. Don reminded us of the importance of this, lest we go down the Cornish route and end up with resistant varroa strains problems!

Back at Guy's house, we were treated to a large afternoon tea of sandwiches and cake, washed down with copious amounts of tea. Louise had done us proud, thank you very much for a lovely spread.

Alan Clark

### **Demonstrator's Comment**

Although both colonies were about equal a few weeks earlier it was noted that the second hive examined was twice as strong as the first. The bees in the second colony were of two distinct colours and heavily infested with varroa, brought about possibly by robbing a badly infected colony and bringing bees and varroa back with them or had been joined by an absconding, infected colony from somewhere else.

The drone brood was heavily infected and there were visual signs of infection including bald brood, a sure sign of varroa (not to be confused with bald brood through wax moth) whereas the first colony, although it had varroa, appeared to be quite normal. Apistan was administered to both colonies early next morning.

Reg.  
Secretary: Annette Cleaver (01491) 642021

## READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Reading and District Bee Keepers Association has the pleasure to report on three events in what has been a satisfyingly busy month.

Sunday September 4th at the Wokingham and Reading Show we held our honey show: we also make a contribution to the charities supported by this traditional country show from honey sales in the produce tent and as usual sales were brisk and our display created plenty of interest. We were fortunate in our choice of judge, Mrs Margaret Johnson from Bishops Waltham Hants, who did an impressive job, accompanied by husband Michael who provided a number of 'bon mots' that were as instructive as they were humorous: I believe they often travel together an alternate as judges. Of the 50 entries the results for our association were as follows:

Class	1st	2nd	3rd	Highly commended
Light Honey	Julia Crosthwaite	Hazel Blackburn	Jon Davey	Steve Blinstrub
Dark/Medium Honey	Jon Davey	Hazel Blackburn		
Novice	Steve Blinstrub (Best in Show)			
Honey for sale	Jon Davey	Julia Crosthwaite	Hazel Blackburn	
Set Honey			Jon Davey	
Comb Honey	Hazel Blackburn	Julia Crosthwaite		
Chunk Honey	Jon Davey	Hazel Blackburn		
Beeswax blocks	Hazel Blackburn			
Beeswax Candles		Jon Davey		Steve Blinstrub
Honey Biscuits	Jon Davey			
Spiced Honey Cake		Hazel Blackburn	Jon Davey	
Honey marmalade		Hazel Blackburn	Jon Davey	
Bee fodder	Julia Crosthwaite	Jon Davey		

This is an open event and the cake & marmalade classes were won by non-beekeepers plus a third in bee fodder. There were entries from non-RDBKA members in various honey classes who won third places on medium/dark and comb honey. There were no 'firsts' awarded on candles and set honey. Steve Blinstrub's 'best in show' for a novice winner was a remarkable jar of honey! We want more entrants from Reading members next year.

Sunday 10th September at the Caversham Festival: a sponsored event and free entry to the public in a central location and a great success in the opinion of this writer, picture the Reading and District Beekeepers marquee looking pristine amongst the produce, craft and commercial tents (it's OK you don't have to imagine-it here's a picture!)



There were interested visitors in abundance and any member who was thinking of responding to the request for honey's for-sale in the last newsletter and didn't follow it up missed a big opportunity! We were sold-out with an hour to go with disappointed enquirers!

Cyril Mc Comb who is on the show committee introduced the Mayor of Reading who is an impressive individual and friendly towards local beekeepers and knows where to come to buy a good jar of honey. What a good day we had in the fresh air and sunshine, making sales and talking bees and beekeeping to avid listeners. We were even kept abreast of the "ashes" score by the show announcer

Thursday evening 29th September: The Federation of Berkshire Beekeepers Autumn Event and Honey Show at Charvil Village Hall. Organised by Hazel Blackburn, this years event showed an upturn in interest and entries, over 100 in the classes for judging by Mr Nick Grey from Bucks. The participation by South Chilterns have undoubtedly strengthened the Federation and it was gratifying to see more entries from Maidenhead and Windsor, Michael Sheasby of that association won the blue riband 'best in show' with a frame for extraction which was truly impeccable! Jon. Davey and Julia Crosthwaite from Reading were also awarded trophies There is a separate list of results with the newsletter.

Dr. Keith Lucas of Reading University gave us a talk illustrated by some beautiful slides on the subject of pollination of alpine flora. Honey bees apparently can fly 6-7 miles upwards also to obtain forage and found at the summit of the Europe's highest mountains where the flora have fascinating strategies to attract insects to obtain pollination in that harsh environment. Everyone who attended including some new friends responding to our poster advertising etc had an enjoyable and informative evening. With many thanks to all for organisation, catering and to Bernard Schumann for the staging.

Reading and District BKA's November meeting at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall is at 7.30 PM sharp on Thursday 10th November, this is our Annual General Meeting followed by a discussion lead by Mr Peter Bruce and a tasting session on 'International honeys'.

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

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

Our AGM meeting is on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November at the usual venue of St Paul's Parish Rooms. Ian Homer will be there to give his very interesting talk *No Bees, No honey – No honey, No Money*. Your present Secretary is stepping down at this meeting and nominations are sort for a replacement.

The following meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December will see the return of Harry Peace with a selection of his wildlife videos. The meeting will conclude with some mince pies and a tippie or two.

### **Greek Queens**

You may remember I introduced two BuckfastxCecropia queens earlier this year. I can report that they have prospered well and are indeed as gentle as promised. Honey production has been good but very late; we fortunately missed the rape this year but recovered 110lbs from the two hives in August. Not sure what they were foraging on but the honey is still runny some six weeks later.

Secretary John Edwards 0118 934 0238

**Newsletter "Deadline": - - Contributions**, this includes **E-mails**, to arrive with the Editor by the **FIRST POST** (Around 10.00am) on the First of the Month for the Following Month

To enable the Advertisement Manager to place adverts with the Editor for the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month deadline; adverts should be sent well before this time.

**ADVERTISEMENT ENTRIES:** - 2 Lines for £1.00. Commercial, £1.00 per line together with your cheque made payable to FBBKA. To be sent to the Advertisement Manager: - Mr. Michael Blackburn, M.B. Photography, 41 Prospect Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8JV. Telephone: - (0118) 947 9450/5451



## NATIONAL BEE UNIT - SOUTHERN REGION

Around and about the region October 2005

What a difference a year makes! At this time last year many colonies were struggling to survive with queens having just started laying again, after being, in some cases, off lay since mid July. There was little or no autumn crop to be seen. In the last week I have been looking at colonies with up to 6 frames of brood and a very healthy autumn flow from crops such as Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), late flowering ling (*Calluna vulgaris*) and ivy (*Hedera helix*) all yielding well in many parts of the region. Unfortunately, I have also seen colonies where the beekeeper has settled them for the winter at the “normal” time, unaware of the heavy autumn flow. In most cases, every available cell has been filled with nectar, at the expense of brood, and the bees have started to build wild comb in the roof. The first inspections in the spring could well be interesting. Unusually, drones are still a common sight (in dark bees as well as the lighter ones) and just yesterday (September 27<sup>th</sup>) colonies still had sufficient drone brood to uncap – unfortunately they had an average of three mites per larva!

It has become the vogue in recent years to note eventful dates by a shorthand version of the date. I have two of my own this season – 7/13 was the day I went into complete anaphylaxis shock after a sting or bite from insect unknown and 9/15 was the date that I was cleared by the consultant to handle bees once again. Since 9/15, I have been handling bees and receiving the usual number of stings for this time of year with no change in reaction (possibly a little less swearing!). My thanks to the many beekeepers who wished me well in the intervening period. I now have a far clearer understanding of just exactly what anaphylaxis can mean but, equally importantly, I also have a very real understanding of just how much I would miss handling bees if that were ever forced upon me.

Ian Homer

## Current Topics

Since I have been back to inspecting, I can confirm what my colleagues have been telling me for the last month or so – that there are a good number of colonies where the varroa mite counts have reached very high levels and the damage to bees is significant. Many beekeepers appear to be unaware of these high levels and have left treating their colonies until the middle of September. This allows very little time to both reduce the mite population and build up healthy brood before the queen reduces her laying rate. The levels are such that many colonies are on the point of collapse and will be hard pressed to make it through the winter.

Resistance continues to be noted in new locations month by month but it is not yet widespread in Southern Region. Next year we would like to see many more beekeepers monitoring for resistance so that we can build up a fuller picture. It appears that some beekeepers don't wish to monitor and will wait to be told that it has reached their area. The danger in that approach is that you might be the person to dis-

cover it, but only when your colonies start to collapse.

In the UK there are three products licensed for the treatment of varroa – Apistan, Bayvarol and Apiguard although other methods are discussed in the revised version of the CSL/Defra publication *Managing Varroa* which has recently been published. It contains much of the information which those who have attended Integrated Varroa Management workshops have found useful over the last couple of years. Copies have already been distributed to many associations, others will receive copies over the winter months.

There is, at yet, no conclusion to the issue of who will be allowed to dispense veterinary medicines such as varroacides. As reported in the June issue, we can continue with the present arrangements pending further agreement on any derogation.

## Wasps

Another interesting comparison between this season and last is the activity of the wasp population. In 2004 wasps were becoming a problem as early as the middle of June and yet, in 2005, many of us seem not to have been bothered by them at all. So why the apparent absence of wasps this year?

Firstly, many honeybee colonies failed to make it through the winter because of the advanced age of their members. We can suppose that many queen wasps failed to get through the winter for similar reasons. Further pointers come from looking at the bees themselves but it is also useful to identify just why wasps are a problem to bees, but only in the latter part of the season.

Both bees and wasps need a balanced diet of protein and carbohydrate in order to be healthy but the demand for protein is at its greatest when brood is being reared (some beekeepers assess how well the queen is laying by observing just how much pollen is being collected).

Whereas bees are “vegetarians”, obtaining both their protein requirements (pollen) and carbohydrate requirements (nectar) from plant sources, wasps are omnivorous. In the spring

and early summer when they are rearing brood, much of their protein is obtained from insect sources (aphids and the like). As wasps do not over winter as a colony in the way that bees do, their brood rearing will often cease sometime before honeybee queens start to reduce their rate of lay. At this time the demand for protein is considerably reduced and they begin to look for easy sources of carbohydrate (such as jam sandwiches at picnics and honeybee colonies).

Now, think back to last season. Many honeybee colonies experienced a very hard time finding nectar after the spring flow and the queens reduced or stopped the production of eggs altogether. It is probable that the same was true for wasps and their interests turned to carbohydrate much earlier in the season than is usual.

This season has been altogether different with the weather and nectar flow improving from late June onwards allowing honeybee queens to carry on laying eggs without interruption. The same conditions exist for wasps as well and they have been far too busy rearing brood and next years queens to be worried about our colonies (or our picnics).

## Thinking about the differences

Several beekeepers told me at a recent agricultural show that they were “off home to get their honey off, get the varroa treatments on and then put three gallons of syrup onto each colony”. As there was still a significant nectar flow, I asked them why they were putting feed on and why three gallons. Each replied that this was what they had been taught (they had all attended the same classes) so I asked them to think about why they were feeding and whether they felt it was necessary.

It was clear that their tutor had not helped them to develop any real understanding about bees or beekeeping and that they were doing things by rote. As we have seen, this year is very different from last. There is an obvious danger in doing things by rote and not recognising the circumstances which prevail but more particularly it is a sad fact that these beekeepers will never get the full enjoyment from their bees if they are unable to understand what is going on in the colony.

There are those beekeepers who never do very much with their colonies and sometimes get a large crop, but by far the most successful beekeepers are those who are aware of the weather conditions, their locality and their bees and can put these things together into a cohesive programme of management for their bees. It is these beekeepers also who, because they are aware of what is normal in their colonies, will be most likely to notice the abnormal and recognise disease when it is present.

So think about the differences and enjoy your beekeeping a little more.



# Disease Report

Within Southern Region, cases of EFB and AFB found to date (September 30<sup>th</sup> 2005) are as follows:

	Grid Ref	EFB apiaries	EFB colonies	AFB apiaries	AFB colonies
<b>Berkshire</b>					
Yattendon	SU57	2	2		
Shinfield	SU76	2	4		
Windsor	SU97	1	1		
<b>Berkshire Totals</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>					
Newport Pagnell	SP84	1	1		
Woburn Sands	SP93	1	1		
<b>Buckinghamshire Totals</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Dorset</b>					
Evershot	ST50	2	4		
Fordingbridge	SU11	1	3		
Wareham	SY98			1	2
Lytchett Matravers	SY99	4	8		
West Bournemouth	SZ09	3	10		
<b>Dorset Totals</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Hampshire</b>					
Ringwood	SU10	4	7		
Fordingbridge	SU11	1	5		
Brockenhurst	SU20	2	5		
Totton	SU31	1	1		
Stockbridge	SU33	1	1		
Southampton	SU41	2	2		
North Winchester	SU43	1	2		
North Waltham	SU54	1	1		
Portsmouth	SU60	2	5		
Petersfield	SU72	2	2		
<b>Hampshire Totals</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Isle of Wight</b>					
Bembridge	SZ68			1	1
<b>Isle of Wight Totals</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Oxfordshire</b>					
Burford	SP21	3	4	1	1
North Witney	SP31	2	2	2	2
Woodstock	SP41	1	1		
Buscot	SU29	1	1		
East Wallingford	SU68	1	3		
<b>Oxfordshire Totals</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Wiltshire</b>					
Ogbourne St Andrew	SU17			2	2
Swindon	SU18			1	2
Great Bedwyn	SU26			1	2
<b>Wiltshire Totals</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Southern Region Total</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>

## Extension Work

I am fortunate to receive many of the newsletters produced by associations around the region and the range of talks and events that have been arranged is impressive. Members of the National Bee Unit make a significant contribution to these programmes of activities. Our experience of inspecting thousands of colonies on hundreds of apiary sites, together with the frequent disease detection which is a key part of our role, can often be turned to benefit for all beekeepers.

Extension work, helping beekeepers improve bee husbandry is an integral part of our role; all of the members of the Southern Region team are committed to providing the maximum support in helping beekeepers avoid disease as well as recognise and deal with it. Whilst this collected experience continues to be available, it makes sense to take maximum advantage of it and attend one of the many Integrated Varroa Management Workshops or Disease Recognition Workshops. If there are no suitable events arranged within your area then encourage your association to arrange one.

## Winter contact

As most of you will realise, the seasonal bee inspectors are not under contract during the winter and will be taking a well deserved rest from National Bee Unit duties from the end of September until April next year. Of course they are, in general, members of their own local beekeeping associations and are as keen as other beekeepers to talk bees at any time of the year. Some will be giving talks to associations during the winter (and may still be able to take on other bookings) but enquiries relating to bee health or other "business" matters should be directed to me (contact details below) or the National Bee Unit. The 2006 inspection season will get underway during week commencing April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## Late supersedure

Whilst my wife and I were inspecting our own bees last Sunday (September 25<sup>th</sup>) we were intrigued to see a virgin queen in one colony. There was no brood remaining in this colony whilst all of the others had 4+ frames of brood but it is interesting that the colony had obviously started a supersedure well into September. Bees don't usually get things wrong so I have to assume that there are sufficient drones still around to get her adequately mated.

It is quite clear that, after a very slow start to the 2006 season, nature and our bees have

tried hard to catch up a little with many crops and bee activities running considerably latter than usual. But I cannot recall ever seeing a virgin queen in one of our colonies quite this late.

I would be interested to hear from readers of any similar experiences of their own. In particular, if your bees have carried out such a late supersedure, it would be interesting to note the colonies involved so that their survival and future performance can be assessed. I would be very interested to hear of your results.

## Associations Day 2006

Unfortunately, due to fixture congestion in the February/March period next year it is, at the moment, looking unlikely that we will be able to hold our annual associations day in 2006. Those who have attended in the past two years have found it a very worthwhile event and it is regrettable to have to postpone the 2006 event.

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