



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

February 2006  
Number 595

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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

Saturday April 21st 2006	Spring Convention	Stoneleigh
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### THE APIARY IN FEBRUARY

You will of course, have checked your hives to make sure that everything is in order and that each colony has sufficient stores.

Before things get going in the spring, it will pay you to think about the adequacy of your equipment, does anything need repairing or replacing? Have you sufficient. Are you satisfied with what you've got? Are you still making do with the hotchpotch of old hives and bits and pieces you got cheaply when you started because someone else simply wanted to get rid of it?

Ask yourself what you want to get out of your beekeeping and make an effort to bring your equipment into line. If you just want to watch the bees and you have plenty of time and energy to spend on each inspection, then the rustic WBC although not efficient and of small capacity, is quite suitable, in the past it was very popular. These days, the most common hive in England is the National; many beekeepers prefer a hive with a larger brood chamber, Langstroth, Commercial or Modified Dadant. However, the bigger the hive, the heavier, especially when full of brood and honey. I found that for migratory beekeeping the Langstroth is the best hive to use for an operator on his own.

Go to the suppliers or to a show and have a look at the different hives to get a clear idea of what the differences are before you commit yourself. It is wise to keep to one type of hive so that all the parts in your apiary will be interchangeable. Get red cedar, which will last well for years with little maintenance.

Look for evidence of varroa, easy if you have open mesh floors otherwise evidence can sometimes be found outside of the hive on paving slabs or a sheet of waterproof material. Look for larvae being thrown out, if so the reason should be investigated at the first opportunity, it could be due to a sudden contraction of the brood nest leaving exposed larvae chilled, early stages of chalk brood and possibly foul brood. Foul brood has been found in this way in the Federation area at least three times to my knowledge, if in doubt ask for assistance or send a sample to the Bee Unit.

It is probably worth reminding you that the Spring Convention at Stoneleigh is coming up April 21st. Details will be announced in the BBKA News as usual. Bear it in mind; pencil it in, or whatever, because, like the National, it is not aimed at a non-existent beekeeping aristocracy, but at you and me. It will be a good day out, full of interest and entertainment with congenial company in pleasant surroundings.

Triad

## **The Leaver Memorial Lecture**

The Newbury association will hold their Leaver Memorial Lecture on Friday 17th March. This year our guest is Ian Homer who has chosen the title "Eureka moments in beekeeping." Ian has tremendous experience of beekeeping, both looking after the welfare of bees and the interests of beekeepers. Many of us have met him and appreciate his knowledge and humour. His subtitle is "Joyful discoveries in bees and beekeeping."

This is the 24th annual lecture in the series. The scheduled starting time is 7.30pm.

Location is the Memorial Hall in Upper Bucklebury. The postcode is RG7 6QH.

### Directions:

- From Thatcham, follow signposts for Upper Bucklebury up the hill and turn right past Peach's garage. The Hall is the last building on the right within the 30mph zone.

- From Theale, follow signposts for Bradfield (South End), then Chapel Row, and Upper Bucklebury. The building is the first building on the left as you leave Bucklebury Common, inside the 30mph zone.

- There is ample space for car parking beside the Hall.

## **From the Editor**

There are a number of groups selecting for varroa tolerance/resistance, some groups report a degree of success particularly with mellifera mellifera. I heard of an effort in an area surrounded on three sides by water where progress is being made but have had the misfortune of a beekeeper introducing imported queens into the area thus causing a set back. Perhaps there is someone able to comment on this.

## **Failing Queens:**

Had an enquiry recently, have you heard of melanosis and do you think it has something to do with queen losses? Yes I read about it in Bailey's book: now to whom did I lend it and have not had it back? Look it up on the Internet! Wish I hadn't, it appears that it can affect humans as well as insects and birds, and can modify ovaries as well as other things.

Melanosis is infectious and has been observed to have increased in the last few years in breeding enterprises and mating stations.

R.F.C.

## **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 Thursday 10th November after our A.G.M. our much travelled Reading Association member Mr. Peter Bruce gave us a highly erudite illustrated talk on retail honeys he has been observing and collecting over the years. He included illustrations and description of a retail establishment in Vermont USA specialising in honeys and syrups (in maple syrup heartland), which has an observation hive built into the wall with the bee exit near the shop front entrance.

The USA consumes over twice as much honey per head as the UK, Children in particular are given honey, and the 'squeezie bottle' is big business. Peter illustrated the current range of these bottles used and confirmed to us that 'squeezie bear' was still the firm favourite. As an illustration of the better appreciation of honey in USA, Peter had some plastic straws of honey and typically the "nine to five" set, let's picture them in skyscraper offices in Manhattan: will snip the tip and add to tea or coffee or directly consume for that high energy fix!

There was a highly enjoyable honey tasting session with Peter's collection including some of the ultra-expensive Omani honey (with added nuts), spiced 'Christmas Honey', and the increasingly trendy 'raw' honey. Though a favourite of the tasters the Maine USA raw honey was a smooth and entirely luxurious taste experience, another raw honey did leave this taster chewing on some fragments however! I'm glad to report that Scottish heather honey (Grand Duchy brand from the Royal Estates at Balmoral; £3.85 for 227 g) did have its devotees. There is a table of results of this tasting session. Peter was extremely generous with his honeys as well as distributing the 'honey straws' he allowed delegates to choose a honey to take away. Example: this attendee has a colour lithographed 350 gram metal tin of Tasmanian Leatherwood Honey, obtained in Germany: it just shows the nice things that can happen to you when you attend a Reading Beekeepers meeting!

On Thursday 8th December we welcomed Sylvia Chamberlain from High Wycombe. Sylvia has been a very successful exhibitor of her own mead and brought-in a fermentation in progress for us to see. Sylvia reserves all wash solutions from her honey extractions, using potable water and showed us how to use the hydrometer to obtain the right honey dilutions for seeding with yeasts, described the careful sterilisation of equipment, temperature control, filtration and secondary fermentation needed to obtain mead that could become a 'prize winner'. The hydrometer was demonstrated again to monitor and allow adjustment of the alcohol content in the product. Sylvia allowed us to taste some meads (not too much, you're driving remember!) that were very pleasant, made my ears warm! The mince pies were then broken-out and a very instructive and enjoyable meeting was concluded. With very many thanks to Sylvia for taking such pains to illustrate her craft to us and improve our chances of becoming mead makers ourselves.

**Next meeting:** This will be at the usual venue at 7.30pm sharp on Thursday 9th February; our speaker will be Will Messenger from Moreton-in-Marsh who will speak about the "History of Bees in Hives" together with the "Stewarton Hive" which is built like a lantern with many windows and openings. Look forward to seeing you there.

A date for your diary is Saint Patrick's day Friday 17th March on the occasion of our annual Flood Memorial Lecture we will be again joining Newbury Beekeepers Association for their Leaver Lecture which begins at 7.30 PM at Bucklebury Memorial Hall. Our friends at Newbury Association always make us welcome. The speaker will be our regional bee inspector Mr. Ian Homer, who we understand has recently returned to duty after a nasty sounding histamine reaction incident, so no doubt he'll have plenty to impart. The trips to Bucklebury have been popular with Reading members in the last two years. Lifts are available please contact Jon. Davey on 0118 975 0734 or Michael Blackburn on 0118 947 9450. We will need to depart Reading by 6.45 PM. Please give this session your support.

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

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

Because Wokingham has no secretary there is no contribution,

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

The last meeting of 2005 was a very informative evening, when Hazel Blackburn came along to talk about the preparation of show entries. With the honey classes, this consists of being more attentive to details, like making sure the jars match exactly, the lids are undamaged, and the contents carefully prepared to ensure that they fit the criteria for the class being entered. Hazel discussed lots of tips to make this easier and then moved on to the wax classes and finally the cake and other baking classes. We would like to thank her very much for all the advice given and hope that future years will see many more entries in the local honey shows as a result.

This month, Ian Homer, our Regional Bee Inspector, will be coming to talk to us. His subject this time will be: Eureka Moments in Beekeeping - a collection of good ideas that suddenly dawn on you and, once discovered, make beekeeping more enjoyable and profitable.

The second Tuesday this month happens to be Valentines Night, but we do hope that this will not deter anyone from welcoming Ian for what promises to be an evening of many helpful ideas. It will start at the usual time of 8pm at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor.

In March, the meeting will again be on the 14<sup>th</sup>, the subject and speaker are yet to be finally confirmed, so will be announced in the newsletter next month.

Our library will be available at all meetings and there are also some surplus books still for sale. 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**

### **November meeting:**

In November we were entertained with an illustrated talk on the desirability of using strains of bee best suited to the regional environment. Philip Denwood gave us an outline of the history and aims of BIBBA (Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association)

From the small group of beekeepers (Village Bee Breeders Group) dedicated to preserving the indigenous bee, *Apis mellifera mellifera*, it has grown to an association with members in many countries. Sub species of *mellifera* are found right across Northern Europe as far as Russia (Primorsky) and has a capability to adapt to different environmental conditions and, before the middle of the nineteenth century, was the only native honeybee of Britain and Ireland.

It was interesting to note that the best bee for any region is the indigenous bee; much damage has been done through hybridization. Left alone without any imports during WW2, bees in many areas gradually improved whilst reverting to near native strains. This was a very informative and interesting talk that resulted in some members ordering queens for 2006 from Michael McGiolla Coda.

### **December:**

Our usual non-beekeeping subject for this month was a return of Russell Cherry to entertain us with his camera shots and observations on the 'Ridgeway Path', followed by traditional Christmas fayre and refreshments, the evening was enjoyed by all.

Our February meeting (Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup>) will give us an insight into honey packing and marketing from a commercial standpoint and is by Stuart Bailey, Managing Director of Rowse Honey Ltd.

Secretary: Annette Cleaver (01491) 642021

**Newsletter "Deadline": - - Contributions**, this includes **E-mails**, to arrive with the Editor by the **FIRSTPOST** (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

**Available:** Redundant manual extractor and a number of settling tanks. (Henley). Apply to the Editor