



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

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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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The Apiary in June

This is just about the height of the beekeeper's year - when the happy bees are merrily buzzing away bringing in bumper crops of honey into hives that are so well-managed that there is no thought of swarming, superseding and not a trace of any disease... We should be so lucky.

So far it has been a peculiar year (so what's new!) and after a late start following a long miserable winter, every plant suddenly rushed into bloom all at the same time. The time-scale from willow to rape was barely more than a month. This makes me wonder whether it will all be over earlier than usual, especially if we get the drought we have been promised. We might be faced with an extended June gap. There are two things we can do: first, be a little less ready to take off all the honey as soon as it's capped. Leave a bit in case there is a shortage of nectar. Also make sure there is a good supply of water. I think this is going to be important: the ditch we have to cross to get to our bees, which has always had water in it, was bone dry a few days ago.

There have already been quite a few swarms about which had been a useful way of making up for winter and spring failures.

It happens sometimes that you take a swarm and hive it only to find that you've got a bad-tempered lot. This can be a bit scary (!) but it is essential if you run into trouble to keep calm and put the hive together carefully and quietly before making a dash for it.

There is often a reason for a colony to be a bit touchy. They don't like windy or thundery weather. An excessively prolonged inspection can lead to a row and so can a clumsy handler. After all, you wouldn't like it if someone removed your roof and began banging the furniture about. It is, of course easy to forget this in the excitement of hunting for a queen, for instance, or simply in the effort of remembering to get the procedure right.

It is always good practice to plan in advance exactly what you are going to do so that you keep the hive open for the shortest length of time. Put all the necessary equipment tidily within easy reach. Make sure the smoker is working properly before you start and see that it has enough fuel and won't run out in the middle of your inspection. Smoke gently and wait for it to have an effect before you even touch the hive. Open up carefully and smoothly and avoid knocking anything. Move the frames carefully and slide them back calmly where you want them to go.... All this is common-sense textbook stuff.

It is all very well until you run into the unexpected - for example a frame deeply embedded in propolis. You shove away with your hive tool, you shake the hive, and then only the most laid-back bees will ignore you. A bit of smoke and a few moments rest might give you a chance to finish off what you came to do. If that doesn't work, the best thing to do then is to close the hive, go away, and wait for another day.

If the colony is really unpleasant to work with, it is tempting to destroy the lot. There is no need for this. All you have to do is to take out their queen and put in a docile queen in a queen cage. She will eventually mate and will lay brood with her own genetic docility. The old lot of bad-tempered bees will simply die out in a few weeks and the new strain will take over. Alternatively, you can replace her by putting in a frame from another hive, which has new eggs less than three days old in it, and the bees will create a new queen from one of the eggs

Triad

Berkshire Beekeepers at B.C.A. open days.

The Berkshire College of Agriculture (the B.C.A.) Burchett's Green held open days and a 'Lambing Weekend' on Saturday and Sunday, 22nd/23rd April. Berks federation thru the good influence of Reading member Steve Blinstrub, who's son is a student at the Countryside Management Department obtained an invitation for Berkshire beekeepers to have a presence at the Countryside Management pavilion. This was in a good location beside the main show-ring and we had plenty of visitors to pick-up a 'Beekeeping in Berkshire' pamphlet and have a look at the beehive we displayed. We intend to continue this next year and expand the display side.

This is a very good show with a range of exhibits and shopping possibilities, e.g. wolves, alpaca, and excellent young plants on sale at the BCA nursery at value prices. Weather on the Saturday at least was excellent. The event is sponsored with proceeds for charity and at £2.00 per person or £10.00 per car with up to 5 occupants is also good value. With thanks to the Countryside Management department, to Steve Blinstrub for obtaining the opportunity and to Michael Sheasby for providing the impetus with Slough and Windsor Association and to the members from there and Reading who manned our table.

Jon Davey

BEE SIZE AND MATING SUCCESS

We were recently asked whether the sizes of drone and queen bees had any effect on the quality of the mating. This interesting German research published in 2003 shows that for drones at least, size is important.

Sperm numbers in drone honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) depend on body size *Apidologie*: 34 (2003) 577-584

Helge Schlüns*, Ellen A. Schlüns*, Job van Praagh** and F.A. Moritz*

* Institut für Zoologie, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Kröllwitzer Str. 44, 06099 Halle (Saale), Germany

** Niedersächsisches Landesinstitut für Bienenkunde Celle, Herzogin-Eleonore-Allee 5, 29221 Celle, Germany

In this study, the effect of drone honeybee's body size on semen production was evaluated. In the same colonies, drones were either reared in drone cells (large drones) or in worker cells (small drones). Wing lengths (size indicator) and sperm numbers of small and large drones were compared. Small drones (~13% reduced wing size) produce significantly fewer spermatozoa (million) than normally sized drones (million spermatozoa). There is a significant positive correlation between sperm number and wing size within the small drones and in both groups combined. In the large group alone no correlation was found. The rearing investment per spermatozoon is lower for small than for normally sized drones because small drones produce more spermatozoa in relation to their body weight. Since colonies usually produce large drones, the enhanced investment must be outweighed by a mating advantage of large drones.

Courtesy of Apis-UK The Electronic Beekeeping Newsletter
<http://www.beedata.com/apis-uk>

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

The Seasonal Bee Inspectors are:

Berkshire

Charles Fryett

01793702860

Oxfordshire & South Bucks

Margaret Holland

01327 857328

Hampshire

David Purchase

01256 781288

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Dealing with floors and stores at Caversham Heights.

Sunday 9th April, the first in of our summer programme found us at our regular first hives opening at Peter Kimber's fortunately sheltered garden apiary at Caversham Heights. The comparison with last year when Peter's splendid prunus were in full blossom and being actively foraged was most striking, this year still in small bud! The thermometer inside the beekeeping gazebo was just above 10 Celsius as we proceeded with pleasantly encouraging results. Plenty of stores from last year being used by the colonies, good brood pattern, and docile bees (including hive no 4, we left it till last: they gave us a hot reception on the last cold day we opened them!) flying-in with pollen loads. Our demonstrator Michael Blackburn scored the surface of some full frames with stores to encourage the bees onto them.

Above the crown-board on two of the hives was an attractive pattern of wild comb; obviously the autumn forage on the heights had been very good! Some was of ivy honey but most was clear if viscous, our demonstrator, who dislikes wasting honey had us break this into pieces and placed above the cleaned-up crown board with an empty super as an eke to allow the bees the benefit. (See picture).

We had an enthusiastic team who made short work of brace and wild comb, fitting cleaned-up excluders and to check Ian Homer's proposal that the shallow side of a hive floor is better than the deep in respect of bees space to avoid brace comb, we scraped the floors and undersides, and reversed them. Cleaning the undersides was mainly to evict spiders, some massive individuals no-doubt shortly to return and find the roofs of their lairs a bit higher! A very pleasant meeting indeed, with thanks to the Kimbers and all who attended.



June meeting. At 11.30 A.M. on Sunday 18th June. This is at Cyril Mc Combe's out apiary at Cross Lanes Apple Farm and is one of the most attractive locations that we visit, come and see beehives in a commercial fruit orchard situation. Cross Lanes is easy to find off the A4074 (to Whitchurch) if anyone needs directions please call Jon. on 0118 975 0734 or Michael on 0118 947 9450.

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Some of us went to hear our Regional Bee Inspector, Ian Homer give the Leaver Memorial Lecture at Bucklebury on his "Eureka moments" in beekeeping. We found this talk so entertaining, interesting and useful that we have asked him to come and give it again in Wokingham next January.

We are now into our summer visits to each other's apiaries. On Sunday, June 4th at 2.15 we are visiting John Edwards' apiary at Thatched Cottage in Poplar Lane in Hurst. To get there you turn off the A321 at Hurst into Hogmoor Lane and keep going till you see Poplar Lane and John's house is a bit further on the left

Then on Sunday June 25th we are going to see Nigel Perkins' bees which are at Ashridgewood Farm in Wokingham. If you come from Wokingham on the A321 towards Hurst, you cross the A329 (M) and then at the crossroads at the top of the hill you turn right into Forest Road. Go past Fletcher's Farm Shop and it is further along on your right. If you come from Binfield along Forest Road, go straight across the roundabout at the Warren pub and it is about 250 yards up on your left.

.Our President, Albert Spragg, celebrated his 98th birthday on April 1st. with a few close friends. He was in good form and enjoyed the occasion, especially his cake which was in the shape of a WBC hive

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Our speaker for the last winter meeting in April was Dr Andrew Halstead, one of two resident entomologists at RHS Wisley, who gave a fascinating talk on bees and wasps in our gardens, illustrated by excellent photographs and drawings.

Out of deference to the beekeepers present he decided not to talk about honey bees, but instead described the main species of solitary bees of the 250 different species found in this country, most of which nest in either vertical holes that they excavate in the ground or horizontal holes in natural or man-made walls. He went on to discuss bumblebees, some 20 different species, that nest either in holes made by small mammals or in heaps of compost or other dry material into which they can burrow easily.

Both solitary bees and bumble bees often build their nests fairly close to each other, probably because they are attracted to the good nest building features of that location. Solitary queen bees, having laid their eggs and provided a source of food, do not see their progeny again, whereas bumblebee queens continue to lay and produce worker bees that take over the foraging role. A bumblebee may produce a colony of around 200 bees. Both solitary bees and bumblebees include species known as cuckoo bees that have the same behaviour as the birds of that name.

Finally, Dr Halstead covered wasps and hornets, of which there are a total of 8 species. These are carnivorous, unlike bees that collect pollen and nectar, and are mainly social, like honeybees. The main difference is that apart from the hibernating queens, they all die out as the weather gets colder, as do bumble bees. Wasps mainly build nests from wood scrapings that they convert into a form of papier-mâché. A nest can contain several thousand wasps in high summer. There are a few species of solitary wasps and of parasitic flies that resemble wasps. Dr Halstead was warmly applauded at the end of this most informative and well-presented talk. I must thank Michael for providing this excellent report, since I was away and unable to be there.

Our apiary supervisor, Jim Cooper, and his wife Sarah have recently celebrated the birth of their second daughter, Helen Charlotte, so on your behalf, the committee would like to extend many congratulations to them and wish them well.

Jim has not been able to attend the apiary on the normal visits, but nevertheless has kept an eye on things. He tells me that some of the hives showed evidence of chilled brood after the earlier inspections, which highlights that however tempting otherwise, caution is needed in early spring, this year more so than recent years. One or two had required feeding earlier on, so candy was given and they all seem to be picking up now.

The meetings in June at the society's apiary in Fulmer, will be on Sundays, the 4th and 18th of June, at **2.30pm** and in July on Sundays, the 2nd, 16th and 30th. We hope to see as many members as possible, both new and not so new, to help keep this valuable asset to our Society going during this season. It is also an invaluable teaching aid to those newer to beekeeping and the input from more experienced beekeepers is most welcome. If you need directions, please call Jim on 01628 783228.

There are also copies available of the new booklets produced by CSL and DEFRA called "Managing Varroa" and "Tropilaelaps: parasitic mites of honeybees". These are a 'must have' for all beekeepers, containing the latest information available. Also, if any member wishes to borrow our labelling machine for stamping "Best Before End" dates and "Lot Numbers" onto a separate label for honey jars, please call me on the first number below.

Finally, if any member has surplus Ivy honey that they have had to cut out and melt down, Bernhard Schumann has found a contact that is willing to take it in bulk for blending. A consignment will be going at the end of June, so please call him before then on 0118 934 3501 for further details.

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

Obituary

It is with deep regret that Slough Beekeepers announce the death of Julia Girling on 1st May 2006. Julia was a committee member for Slough and District Beekeepers for many years and was their secretary from 1993 to 1998.

Julia was in her quiet way, an efficient person to work with and helped to make the hobby even more fun. She had a great interest in all animal welfare, working tirelessly for various organizations and continued to support Slough Beekeepers along with her husband Brough, even when they were no longer active beekeepers. Julia will be much missed by all who knew her.

Our sincere sympathy goes to Brough and family.

Her friends, Slough & District Beekeepers.

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Many thanks to Mick Brown for allowing members to witness the follow up treatment for his outbreak of European foul brood. The meeting was well attended and members saw the "shook swarm" method of dealing with three confirmed instances of European foulbrood using sterile frames and new foundation, demonstrated by Ian Homer. Unless colonies are non-viable, beekeepers are given the option of treatment or destruction, Bee Diseases Insurance can insure against the destruction option.

The remaining three colonies were examined for the presence of foul brood by the seasonal inspector, Charles Fryett – no evidence of disease was found consequently the stand still order was lifted

. Whilst dealing with these colonies both inspectors kept a sharp look out for the small hive beetle accompanied by comments. It is interesting to note that the current issue of Swiss Bee Journal carries a four page article on seventeen different beetles that could be encountered around the apiary, written by Frank Baum, CVU Freiburg, maybe they feel that rumours of illegal imports of queen bees should be taken seriously.

Our next meeting is by courtesy of Janie Hedgcock at Boundary Farm, Whitchurch Hill for apiary assessment and plant sale (bring along your surplus plants to sell for the Association funds). Saturday June 17th at 2.30 pm, map ref: 63356 79391. A committee meeting will follow.

It is hoped to arrange an instructional apiary tour on June 24th with Ian Homer or a seasonal bee inspector. Please put your name forward to have your apiary included in the tour, anyone can join in. Last years tour was judged to be a success, let us try to do better or at least as well this year.

Secretary: Annette Cleaver (01491) 642021

Linda's Recipe

Salmon with lime and honey

4 salmon steaks grated rind and juice of 1 lime 5 Tbsp sunflower oil
2 Tbsp orange juice 2 tsp honey green cardamom, crushed to extract seeds

Whisk together 3 tablespoons of oil, lime rind and juice, orange juice, honey and crushed cardamom seeds. Marinade the salmon in this mixture overnight. Take salmon out of marinade and brush with remaining oil. Grill, turning the steaks for about 8 minutes. Pour marinade into a saucepan and bring to boil. Serve salmon steaks with the warm sauce.

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

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

ADVERTISEMENT ENTRIES: - 2 Lines for £1.00. Commercial, £1.00 per line together with your cheque made payable to FBBKA. To be sent to the Advertisement Manager: -

Mr. Michael Blackburn, M.B. Photography, 41 Prospect Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8JV.
Telephone: - (0118) 947 9450/5451

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