



## FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

July 2006  
Number 600

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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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19th-21st October 2006

National Honey Show

RAF Museum Hendon

### BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS NEED YOUR SUPPORT.

#### **Your Berkshire Beekeepers Federation is in need of a volunteer to act as General Secretary.**

Members of the Federation meet four times a year, split between Windsor and Reading where friendly and often lively discussions of the committee decide matters that affect our relationship with the BBKA. As you know part of your annual subscriptions are paid to BBKA.

- Duties of General Secretary are to be a point of contact (post-box) for the BBKA. and Berkshire Beekeeping Associations. Good word skills and the ability to receive and send e-mails would be necessary.
- To prepare the agendas and attend the meetings.
- To takedown and publish minutes of the meetings in time for the next.
- To report on correspondence received etc. since the previous meeting. There will also be reports from the Treasurer, News Editor, Delegate to the Annual meeting of the BBKA and others including reports from delegates from the member associations.
- The General Secretary also submits to the news editor for publication in the newsletter each month an article, not about beekeeping but "Federation related" news for the membership.

Please read below a more detailed communiqué about the 'Federation' and if you are interested in become part of the 'powerhouse' of Berkshire beekeeping please contact Jon. Davey, Federation Chairman, the News Editor, or your Federation Delegate in your own Association. William Napper having recently retired we would like to express our appreciation for his service

### **THE APIARY IN JULY**

Here we find ourselves with some of the heat and passion of spring and early summer behind us and forage being available a steady nectar flow in prospect, so we expect to be extracting, filling jars and replacing extracted supers onto hive looking for a re-fill! There are likely to be swarms though and the ancient rhyme gives them a low value. In my personal experience this is not just a matter of relative lateness, a well hived swarm even in July, with suburban forage, in my region and lime trees in blossom should be in good shape after anti-varroa measures say at the end of August to have built-up and to over-winter satisfactorily.

Much of the problem in my opinion is due to the bloody-minded and ephemeral nature of later-summer swarms. I have had clusters of bees hanging from a whippy branch between hives, the size of a coconut in the morning; shaking it into a nucleus box in the evening it was by then a few hundred bees strong, it was given a piece of cut comb (a mistake perhaps) only wasps were in the nuke next day. I have seen small swarms fly around the apiary and apparently return from whence they came. During one of our association's visits to the apiary on a hot August Sunday, a small swarm flew around us, settled for half an hour in an apple tree and just as we were getting-out the step ladder departed for a neighbour's garden was collected later in the day and left in the skep in shade; next day empty! Clearing out the greenhouse in the autumn thirty or so bees including the unmistakeable shape of a queen were found clustered together in a disused propagator, having apparently entered thru a vent or the door ajar and expired from the heat! Ah the much-quoted words of A.A. Milne "you never can tell with bees"!

I expect that I am fortunate that the back bedroom that serves as my office overlooks and allows me to observe my apiary throughout most days. I know for example about the cock great tit, in resplendent breeding plumage that flies to the entrance of my WBC hive and picks bees off the alighting board to feed his brood. The blackbirds are quick to collect any white half developed bees that the hives expel from time to time or drone larvae dislodged by my activities and fly with them to their nest in the front-hedge.

## **So how to deal with these late summer swarms?**

Ian Homer's suggestion to try a queen excluder as a 'queen includer' i.e. placed between the floor and the box for a few days when a swarm is hived is one of the best beekeeping tips for some years! I had two modest swarms on 5 frames in deeps; mid-box with dummy boards each side.

Successfully established using the 'includer' method they were side by side as I intended to unite them vertically then they were on 11 frames via a sheet of newspaper. Brood boxes and frames are at a premium in my apiary and I didn't think a few thousand bees still with little queen activity in evidence should be housed in a double brood and I was conscious that Hooper writes of an exotic sounding method of uniting colonies using a perfumed spray.

I didn't use the spray used for greenfly, I invested 99p in a new minimal hand unit that can be adjusted to a fine mist; No need to raid auntie's ancient bottle of 'Attar of Roses' I have a bottle of culinary rosewater under the TRS brand, obtainable from most Asian grocers. It has uses in several recipes including 'mango rice' which I like very much. If you have any Polish grocers near you, there are three in Reading; you may find under the Polska Rosza brand, rose petal syrup, which diluted 50/50 should be ideal for this purpose

The five frames were moved to the side in colony number 1, removing the first dummy board and relocating the second in the middle, misting with rosewater at all stages and particularly on both sides of the dummy board. The frames with bees from colony number 2 were gently lifted out, misted fairly thoroughly on both sides, and introduced into box number one after the interior had also been misted. Misted crown-board on top, then misting through the entrance, there were relatively few bees there and they stood their ground as they became coated with rosewater droplets. They certainly didn't hate it and apart from a few bees from colony number two, fearing the worst perhaps until they became conscious of the rosewater the bees were very good about it all!

So now I have 10 frames in one box, no angry noises from within; I moved the dummy board to the side adding a frame of foundation a few days later, all peace and harmony, no corpses. Presumably the queens met and duelled to the death at some stage, but I saw no signs, perhaps the garden birds beat me to it!

Triad



# THE BLACK HONEY BEE (*APIS MELLIFERA MELLIFERA*)

The honey bee *Apis mellifera* is native to Europe, western Asia and Africa. But within this vast area there are many subspecies, or local races. In much of Africa lives the well-known African bee. It looks the same as European subspecies, but is somewhat smaller and very defensive, stinging in large numbers when its hive is threatened. In Europe there are several native subspecies; the one native to Britain, Ireland, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Germany, and Scandinavia is called the black bee, and its scientific name is *Apis mellifera mellifera*. As the name suggests, it is dark in colour.



Comb of black bees from a queen-rearing "nucleus" colony. The queen is marked with a blue paint dot. The bees are from Laesø, Denmark, an island with a population of c. 400 black bee colonies. This population was threatened by the importation of yellow Italian bees.

Beekeepers belonging to **BIBBA** (Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association) who are working with the University of Sheffield to conserve and improve the native British black bee by stock selection and controlled mating in isolated valleys in the Derbyshire Peak District.

Over the years – in search of a better bee – beekeepers in Britain and many other countries have imported queen bees from other places. In Germany, the native bees were deliberately replaced by *Apis mellifera carnica* bees from Yugoslavia. In Britain, bees from many places have been imported, especially from Italy – *Apis mellifera ligustica*. However, native British black bees have their own good points. They are "thrifty" and can survive even our rainy weather without much help from the beekeeper.

British honey bees, like all wild animals, are highly variable. Some colonies are highly defensive, while others contain bees that are reluctant to sting. Some colonies are also "hygienic" – meaning that the workers remove infected and dead larvae from their cells. This is an important defense against diseases and one that is surprisingly rare in the hives managed by British beekeepers. Research at **LASI** has shown that only c. 10% of British hives are hygienic. Because hygienic behaviour is "heritable", a breeding program involving selection and queen-rearing can increase the numbers of hygienic colonies.



Heather moor in the Peak District. Nectar source for black bees.

Beekeepers in **BIBBA** (Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association) are keen to conserve our native honey bee and to improve it, by breeding from the colonies that have the most desirable characteristics for beekeepers: easy to manage, reluctant to sting, and hygienic or disease-resistant. These beekeepers are teaming up with researchers from the University of Sheffield for projects on the genetics, breeding and improvement of native bees.



Queen-rearing apiary 10 miles from **LASI** in the Derbyshire Peak District.

## Did You Know?

- The most obvious difference among honey bee subspecies is their colour. British bees are black and Italian bees yellow.
- Different subspecies of *Apis mellifera* can interbreed, but in Asia there are c. eight additional species of honey bees – which cannot.
- The black bee is the most northern honey bee. Its native range was originally to Scotland and to southern Norway and Sweden, but has extended to central Sweden, Alaska and Greenland.
- British black bees were introduced to Tasmania, Australia in 1831. A hive brought via a British ship swarmed and rapidly colonised the whole island.

## How Amazing!

- Britain has about 30,000 beekeepers. Most just keep one or a few hives, but there are about ten beekeepers who keep 1,000 hives.
- Honey bees are important to the British economy. Their pollination of crops is valued at c. £200 million per year.

This leaflet was written by Francis Ratnieks, Professor of Apiculture & Director of **LASI**. Funding for **LASI** black bee research is provided by **BIBBA** and the Environment Program of the European Community, through a grant to **LASI** and five other bee labs in Europe for the research network **BABE: Beekeeping and Apis Biodiversity in Europe** [www.biologie.uni-halle.de/zool/mol\\_ecol/babe/index.html](http://www.biologie.uni-halle.de/zool/mol_ecol/babe/index.html).

## The Laboratory of Apiculture & Social Insects

carries out basic and applied research on honey bees.  
For further information please contact Prof. Francis Ratnieks.  
Many **LASI** research publications can be downloaded from the website.

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## **The Federation of Berkshire Beekeepers Associations and the BBKA**

The Berkshire Federation currently comprises the local beekeeping associations in Reading, Slough (also covering Maidenhead and Windsor), South Chilterns, and Wokingham. These four associations have a total membership of some 130 beekeepers.

The principle role of the Federation is to provide access to and membership of the British Beekeepers' Association, known as the BBKA. For an association to qualify as a BBKA member association it must, in effect, have at least 100 beekeeping members, which is why most local associations join together in County associations or federations to achieve that membership level.

The BBKA represents the interests of almost 10,000 beekeepers at national level, for example making representations to DEFRA opposing its proposed reduction in the number of bee inspectors. The BBKA produces and distributes BBKA News and provides insurance cover, as a service to all beekeepers registered as BBKA members. **Note:** This insurance includes public liability insurance for individual members, some associations' insurance do not cover this. Other activities include beekeeping examinations, the Spring Convention at Stoneleigh, the provision of honey show judges and other activities that are most effectively conducted at a national level.

### **From The Editor**

An apology – June "In The Apiary," to some people, the last paragraph was a little confusing, neither the proofreader nor myself noticed this (time to replace the Editor?). Of course in this case, a queen that is already mated should replace the existing queen otherwise you could be back to square one with an unsatisfactory mating.

There have been many reports of heavy colony losses from unknown causes, this problem is not confined to our own country, losses in Germany and Switzerland have also been heavy, and I do not know the situation in France. Even the Daily Telegraph carried articles on May 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, apart from reporting the redundancy of Dr Ball and her department through withdrawal of funding, they say that DEFRA has been accused of not doing enough to solve the problem, they miss the point that DEFRA themselves are victims of funding cuts. I feel that this problem is due to the incompetence of government ministers and is not restricted to agriculture.

From the Daily Telegraph 22<sup>nd</sup> May:

Fred Willis, of Lowestoft, Suffolk, said: "I used to have 55 bee colonies. Now it's down to 35 and I'm losing more ' every day. All across East Anglia populations are down ' by as much as 50 per cent. Unless the bees can catch up in the summer you can expect to see a shortage of British fruit in six months time."

DEFRA, which said it is monitoring the situation, has been accused of not doing enough to solve the problem

R.F.C.

### **Apiguard**

The following is the response by Dr Max Watkins to the question raised in the May Newsletter regarding problems with Apiguard.

Hi Ron, Joy,

I'm sorry to hear that using Apiguard is presenting some of your members with some difficulties.



1. “Apiguard has created more problems than it has solved”? We are the first to admit openly - that Apiguard is not the perfect solution but controlling varroa and keeping the bees alive is of paramount importance.

2. Thymol residues in wax can build up during a treatment. There is no way around it – if you put a treatment [of any sort] into the hive, some of it will go either into the honey or into the wax, depending on how hydrophilic or how lipophilic the active substance(s) is. Thymol is more lipophilic so some will migrate to wax, not to honey.

3. We know from many tests that you can get thymol into honey in supers only if you really force it there (e.g. by putting Apiguard on when supers are present during a treatment over a long period) but it should not normally taint honey in supers when the product is used according to the label directions. If you can, use fresh super frames and put the supers after the 4-6 week Apiguard treatment has ended.

4. If you are moving brood frames which have received Apiguard treatment up to use into supers then yes, it could be that any new honey will be exposed to trace residue of thymol. However, a strong thymol taint in such super frames one season does not usually result from treating the season before because the odour generally dissipates within a couple of months. It may happen – but it’s not a complaint we have had before. You may try airing frames, (if you have some spare), exposed to sun and wind. Cleaning with soda solution may help.

I hope this is of some help.

Best regards,

Max Watkins

### **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	Mr. Charles Fryett	01793702860
Oxfordshire & South Bucks	Mrs. Margaret Holland	01327 857328
Hampshire	Mr. David Purchase	01256 781288

## **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

On Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May members from Reading were at the kind invitation of Wokingham association given the opportunity of attending their out apiary at The Diana Brimblecombe Animal Rescue Centre at Hurst. David Geen was demonstrating and we were able to see a number of brood frames with queen cells that David had removed from other hives. A Wokingham member who is increasing his colonies loaded 5 of these into a nucleus box to take to his apiary. Another hive did appear to have some cases of chalk brood and we were able to see and discuss. We understand that new wax will be selectively tried in this case if the problem persists. The colonies didn’t seem to have brought-in much nectar yet and David said that he had not removed any frames thus far.

The hives are located on the edge of a large paddock and across near to the buildings a bank covered with a yellow brassica was visible, this is rape apparently, around us were hawthorn bushes in abundance but all still in bud. Possibly the rural location of the apiary means that the bees have had a slow start at foraging in this year of late blossoms. It will be very interesting to check on the progress of the apiary when there is a full nectar flow. With many thanks to Wokingham for their invitation.

## July meeting.

Please reserve Sunday July 9<sup>th</sup> for our best meeting of the year! This is at Tim and Hilary Whitaker's apiary in their gardens at Mapledurham; starting at 11.30. After inspecting Tim's bees we will have a barbeque. Association friends and family members are invited, don't forget to bring something for the feast! If anyone wants directions or needs a lift please contact 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

### First Apiary meeting

Our first meeting of the season was at our apiary at Hurst and our Hon. Apiarist, David Geen showed us round the hives. We were pleased to be joined by members from the Reading Association giving a total of 15 at the gathering.

One hive was housing a few frames with queen cells on them that were taken from another hive. Bob Loades was able to remove three of them to take to show the children at a local school where he was going to do a demonstration. A queen cell was left in the hive with brood and stores in the hopes of starting a new colony.

There was one weaker hive that had only five frames in it. Quite a lot of chalk brood was found there. There was some discussion about the source of the fungus and it was thought that it might have been dormant in the frames themselves. New frames will perhaps rid the bees of the disease and help the colony to pick up.

The bees in the next hive needed space so a super was added. The bees were a bit touchy to begin with and the disturbance of being inspected made them really angry – which upset some people who retired to find the anti-histamine...



### July Apiary meeting

On the 9<sup>th</sup> July, Bob Loades is going to talk about his bees and we'll have a chance to inspect the mysteries of his Dartington hive. That will be at Norbury, London Road Binfield on the B3408 at the top of the hill above the Coppid Beech Hotel.

Currently no secretary

## SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

**May meeting:** Regrettably, due to the illness of the scheduled hostess, Marcella Skinner, the Presidents Day meeting was re-scheduled to Darkwood Farm, Nettlebed. We wish Marcella a speedy recovery.

The day was very cold and not conducive to beekeeping however, two near native nuclei were opened, one of which was set up with “mistakes”, our President Don Thomson did the commentary. Owing to its bad temper the full sized colony was not opened, both Ron And Reg considered that somewhere down the line queens had mated with drones from “Satan’s bees” which were within range. A lively discussion followed over cups of tea in the shelter of one of the barns.

**Our July meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> will** be by courtesy of Simon and Francesca Wetton at Round Shaw, Ipsden Heath, grid ref. SU 665 849, Reg Hook demonstrating.

**Do not forget our barbecue on July 22<sup>nd</sup>.** Contact Lynn Penfold (01628 825718) by July 19<sup>th</sup> to book.

Secretary: Annette Cleaver (01491) 642021

## **SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS’ SOCIETY**

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

The now annual Summer Supper will be on Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> July at 7.30 for 8.00pm, again at Maidenhead Rowing Club, River Road, Taplow. This is a lovely venue for a summer’s evening and the catering will be by the same excellent cook as in previous years. Details have already been sent to everyone, so please make sure you return your form to Michael in good time, or contact him on the number below.

Our apiary supervisor, Jim Cooper tells me that the apiary is being adversely affected by the weather, as no doubt all of ours are too. With the hot spell at the end of April / beginning of May, the colonies built up rapidly. This was then followed by unseasonably cold temperatures combined with heavy rain and the result has been that the new queens in the artificially swarmed colonies are struggling to get mated, plus a close eye has had to be kept on the stores that these colonies have. When we did then get a dry spell there was a bout of swarming with prime swarms emerging followed immediately by casts.

The Dartington colony continues to bemuse the Society! We have had a repeat of last year’s scenario where preparations were being made for swarming so the divider board put in and the colony split. Upon checking a week later the bees had torn down the queen cell left in the new colony and had nearly all absconded (just a handful of bees left). The parent colony still had the old queen laying and appeared to have given up attempts at swarming. What are we doing wrong?

The apiary meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> May was unfortunately cancelled due to the torrential rain. Should any member be in doubt as to whether a meeting will be on or not, please call Jim on his mobile (07720 446639) to check. The meetings in July are scheduled for Sundays, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> and the final one of the year will be on 13<sup>th</sup> August – all weather permitting, of course. Attendance has been excellent this year to date and has enabled the work to be shared out much more. We hope this will continue as both new and not so new members continue to support us. The input from more experienced beekeepers is always welcome and if you have experience of the Dartington hive, comparing notes would be good. If you need directions, please call Jim on the number above.

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.

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

## MARY DARTNALL'S RECIPE

### CUSTARD CREAM AND PEACH FLAN.

Prepare shortcrust from 6 oz of the flour, butter and 1 oz of the almonds.  
Bake blind

#### Ingredients:

7 oz plain flour  
3 oz butter  
2 oz ground almonds  
1 large egg  
1½ oz honey  
1 level teaspoon cornflour  
½ pint milk  
½ teaspoon. almond essence  
¾ pint double cream  
4 ripe peaches, skinned and stoned  
flaked almonds and icing sugar to decorate.

#### Method:

in a 7½" flan ring. Beat the egg, honey, cornflour and the remaining flour together, pour on the heated milk, bring to the boil stirring all the time. Cook gently for 5 minutes. Add the remaining ground almonds and the essence. Cool in a covered bowl. Whip the cream to the same consistency as the custard, and fold through the cool custard. Layer up the custard and sliced peaches in the flan case, starting with the custard. Cover the peaches to prevent discoloration. Chill well and decorate with a scattering of toasted almonds and sifted icing sugar.

**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

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