



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

September 2006  
Number 602

Hon. Secretary:

Vacant.

Volunteer wanted

E-mail:- [berksbees@btinternet.com](mailto:berksbees@btinternet.com)

The Federation, its Council, and its Officers cannot be held responsible for the views expressed in the Newsletter or possible errors.

Editor

R.F.Crocker

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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.**

### THE APIARY IN AUGUST

There can't be many of us who are saying, "I've had a wonderful season this year - no swarms, tons of honey, busy, reliable laying queens who produce masses of docile industrious bees..." No - it's all been very odd and our peculiar weather must take a lot of the blame. Dreary, late spring, sudden warm weather to make everything blossom all at once, and then a scorching heat wave. Hardly ideal conditions! There have been stories of queens which have been laying well and suddenly stopped...and of queens who have barely laid anything suddenly rushing into action for no apparent reason. We have also heard of instances where colonies have been bursting with honey one day, all of which has been taken down a day or two later. And, of course, swarms, although that seems to have calmed down as we get on with planning ahead for winter.

It is easy to decide what to do if you have a nice strong colony ready to go into the cold weather. If you have an obviously weak one, then there is no problem either - simply unite it with another one. This is one of the advantages of running more than one colony or of having a nucleus or two available.

It is the in-betweens that are difficult. At least you can make sure that you have a good queen in the hive and you can get on with feeding especially if there is not much forage about after the dry weather.

Beware of robbers, especially wasps who are always on the look out for the easy pickings in a weak colony. Reduce the width of the entrance to give the guard bees more of a chance of dealing with any invaders that are on the prowl.

We hear that there is European Foulbrood in our area and also some American Foulbrood. Both are notifiable and are controlled in Great Britain by the Bee Disease Control Order of 1982. It would be wise to get familiar with the symptoms of these diseases and to keep an eye on the appearance of your brood. EFB = unsealed larvae which look twisted and melted down - and it smells putrid. AFB = after sealing, larvae die in their cells; they become rotten and rubbery and the cells become sunken and perforated - and it smells like glue. Both are bad news.

So is Varroa if it gets a hold. Don't forget you must wait till after you've finished taking off the honey before you start the treatment.

It was sad to hear that George Butler had died. He ran some excellent courses at Burchett's Green Agricultural College. They were light hearted and friendly, interesting and well planned and informative. It is hoped that "they" will find a worthy successor.

Triad

## OBITUARY

### George Butler – a good-humoured friend and supportive teacher

Arthur Askey singing his famous *Busy Bee Song* brought a smile to everyone's faces at the end of George Butler's funeral on July 24. Pat, his widow, knew that this was as he would have liked to remember his family and friends.

Never one to let a little thing like cancer slow him down, as his son Andrew said during his funeral tribute, George taught seven classes of his eight-week practical beekeeping course at Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) until mid-June. Then, just as he helped fledgling beekeepers, one of his many hundreds of successful pupils, Kate Malenczuk, stepped in to finish the course for him.

During the time George taught at BCA, having taken over from George Hawthorne, he saw the interest in beekeeping grow and classes increase to bursting point.

A beekeeper since 1955, George moved from Yorkshire in the 60s and worked for trading standards with Berkshire County Council until retirement in 1987.

Apart from his own bees, George looked after apiaries for a number of others as well as helping many pupils as they took their early steps and even after that. He was a member of Newbury, Reading and South Chilterns associations and was chairman of the latter from 2002 to 2004.

Not as well-known as George's love of beekeeping was his love of windsurfing, plus skiing, dining out and yoga. The last kept his long, lean frame fit for all that bending over hives. He windsurfed well into his 60s, as Andrew recounted at his funeral. Holidaying in the South of France with the family early in the season, he was renowned among the French as 'the mad Englishman', resplendent in his Speedo briefs and white skin liberally covered in goose bumps!

Andrew summed up his father as 'patient, giving, loving, good-humoured, supportive and a good friend'. The French were wrong, he said. George wasn't mad, but he was a true Englishman – and in particular a Yorkshireman – 'strong and dignified'.

George, who died on July 10, was 77. Our thoughts are with Pat, his son Andrew, daughter-in-law Sarah and grandchildren Antonia and Matthew.



Lynn Penfold

## Letter to the Editor

In the August issue I was particularly interested to read the report from the Reading and District Beekeepers in which we are told how bees arrived and set up home in an empty hive in Cyril McCombe's apiary.

A few weeks back, as my daughter and I were finishing work in the apiary, we realised there was a swarm in the air.

This was a puzzle, where had they come from? We duly collected and hived them, but I am pretty sure they, like Cyril's bees, were newcomers.



The bees walking the plank into their new home.

Marion Malcher (Twickenham)

## Your Regional Bee Inspectors are: -

Southern Region: - Mr. Ian Homer.  
South Eastern Region: - Mr. Alan Byham

Fax/Telephone number: 01308 482 161  
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 9<sup>th</sup> July. Reading members with family and friends at the kind invitation of Tim and Hilary Whitaker met at their garden apiary in Mapledurham where Tim keeps bees in WBC hives. The Whitaker's have had some losses this spring, there is farming on the banks of the Thames there, and possibly spraying could be a factor. Now with two colonies from South Reading, Tim has had just received a visit from our seasonal bee inspector who gave the bees a clean bill of health and there was no particular problem with handling though earlier indications with the transplanted colonies seemed to indicate a bit of aggression. There was certainly aggression from Wokingham's bees at Hurst in May; maybe it's the strange season!

Reading members examined the colonies and the bees were no problem, the second colony which was from a swarm had improved since the 'Inspection' just the previous week and the queen seemed to have 'got-on' rather well since then. A vigorous young looking queen was seen in the first colony and frames of honey were removed for extraction. There was a certain amount of 'following-up' from the colonies as we departed. The Whitakers have a splendid bee-proof building with a quarry-tile floor. A good bee-proof place to store frames and extract is all too necessary in high summer, if they follow-up they'll soon try to rob the honey back if they can get-in, not to mention their hereditary enemies the wasps! A high quality washable floor like Tim's is a part of an ideal store and processing room.

After the apiary we then enjoyed the barbeque, which Tim and Hilary organised for us, this is undoubtedly the highlight of our beekeeping summer. With thanks to them and to all attendees.

Reading Association's September activity is our annual honey show to be staged and judged in the produce tent at the Wokingham and Reading Show at Spencers's Wood on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September. All other Berks. Federation Associations are invited to participate. If anyone needs a schedule or further information please contact Jon. Davey on 0118 975 0734 or e-mail [jondavey@agriprod-sales.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:jondavey@agriprod-sales.fsnet.co.uk)

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

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

On June 25th we visited Nigel Perkins' apiary at Ashridge Farm. Secluded behind a high hedge at the corner of a huge field of beans, his neat and tidy bees were enjoying the fine weather. Nigel warned us that one colony was a bit irritable. He needn't have worried - all was calm under his quiet, relaxed handling and the honey and pollen kept rolling in. We noticed the pleasant smell of his smoke. He told us he never uses anything other than hay. In his hands it seemed very easy to keep a supply of smoke going. The trick is to have plenty of dry hay and to stuff it liberally into the smoker.

On Sunday, July 9th it was Bob Loades' turn. He had put a swarm of bees into one of his Dartingtons three weeks before while he thought about what he was going to do with them and to everyone's amazement, the bees had not only decided to make themselves at home, they had completely filled five brood frames with a text-book arrangement of brood, honey and pollen.

Our President, Mr Albert Spragg attended the meeting and he made this comment: "What a pleasure it was to go to Coppid Beech with Mr Smallbone. It was interesting to see a huge crop of apples growing there which shows the presence of good colonies of bees. Unfortunately there will be a heavy "July drop" in the drought and the ever-present squirrels will cause a lot of damage. But even so, there will still be quite a good harvest."

Currently no secretary

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

### **A Visit to Simon Wetton's Apiary, 8th July, 2006**

Those of you who put watching the Ladies' Final before watching bees missed a most pleasant afternoon on Simon's farm, just to the west of Stoke Row. Simon and his wife, Francesca, have an impressive area of land where they breed horses for polo and Simon keeps two colonies of bees. Eight of us joined them to see his apiary.

There have been bees on this land for a long time - Ron had an apiary here for many years - and the local woodpecker population have learned how to exploit an easy food source, winter and summer. To foil *Picus viridis* and his cousins, Simon keeps his bees in a chicken wire cage big enough for his two standard British National hives and two people. It also annoys the bees somewhat, but is the only solution at this location. The bees he is keeping are black bees of Irish descent, and are obviously smaller and darker than those most of us have. They were originally very quiet and produce beautiful comb with perfect white cappings, a characteristic of this bee.



With Simon opening his hives, Ron inside the cage to explain and the rest of us gathered round the outside, we looked at the first hive. This was a single story brood chamber, with a single super over a queen excluder. The colony started off this year as a three-frame nucleus made up from the other hive, and expanded rapidly, but then killed its young queen, and started to raise another.

Ron has been helping Simon with these hives, and thought that there may still be a virgin queen in the hive as there was no sign of brood yet. These bees were more agitated than normal, due to the absence of brood, but Ron explained that they should calm down when the new queen starts laying. They hadn't yet produced a significant amount of honey in the super above. There were just two varroa mites on the tray below the mesh floor since last week, which is a very good, low rate of drop for this time of year, so the tray was not replaced, to increase ventilation. Simon keeps his entrances small, and Don pointed out that smaller entrances were definitely a good idea from about August to help the bees defend their honey against wasps.

The second hive also superseded its queen this summer, and the new one seems to have had a poor mating, as some of the colony are now 'followers', a genetically inherited trait they never displayed under the old queen. The meaning of this was clear when some bees followed us 75 yards round the corner of a wood when we left. This is not desirable, and this hive will need to be requeened. Queens will mate with a dozen or more drones, which often come from miles away, so one can never be sure of the paternity of a colony unless the queen is artificially inseminated or mates in a very remote location. This hive also had a single story brood box, with two supers over the excluder, and a solid floor. Simon has already harvested a frame of perfect comb for a visit from his mother-in-law a couple of weeks earlier, and Ron estimated that this was of competition standard. The bees were drawing out the remaining frames, but none were ready for taking yet. On looking into the brood box, Ron pointed out a very nice laying pattern, with eggs, larvae and sealed cells in a tight cluster on four frames to one side of the box. There was also a lot of honey stored below the excluder, and we discussed the technique of scratching the sealed tops off the cells with the hive tool as a way to encourage the bees to move the honey upstairs.

When we finished with the bees we returned across the field to where Francesca had prepared a wonderful spread, with bales of wood chippings to sit on and a gazebo to keep the sun off, their children joined us to help us manage all the food.

Despite the small number of people present, the conversation was far ranging, covering everything from horses to motorbikes, medicine to languages (the children could speak four languages each!) and, of course, the wonder of bees and the natural world in general. Ron had brought along a mini-nucleus, destined to requeen the vicious colony we saw at Park Corner a few weeks ago, and explained to us how it was formed. Simon had to leave us part way through, so after we had eaten Francesca took us round the stables to introduce us to their beautiful horses, all of them looking in fine condition.

Those of us attending had a lovely afternoon, with good food and company, and the unexpected bonus of meeting the horses, so many thanks to Simon, Francesca, and their family for their hospitality.



## From the Secretary

The months roll by and it is now August, I have just spent a weeks Fly Fishing on the Findhorn in Scotland. I have not done this before so it was a new experience. Although I only had a few bites, I did not land a Salmon but the weather was the best I have ever experienced in Scotland, wall-to-wall sunshine and a really good midge repellent made it an enjoyable break away.

I eventually attended our Summer Social Barbeque on the cricket pitch opposite my house. This was in between catering for a garden party of 150 in the evening and packing to leave in the dead of night for Scotland. I'm sure those who attended would thank, with me, Lynn's efforts on a delicious arrangement of food and also for Reg and Linda for their ever present help in setting up the barbeque and arranging the seating etc. The only thing they couldn't organize was the weather, we ended up in the pavilion listening to the thunder and rain outside, but it did make for a very intimate party!

**The next meeting** will be at Viola Crowe's apiary at The Old Barn, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell (Ref: 585 908) at 2.30pm. Saturday September 16<sup>th</sup>

The visit to Rowse's packing plant is still in abeyance, the Programme Organizer will notify everyone when the situation is clear.

Nominations and volunteers are invited for the posts of officers and committee for the Association for the year 2006/7 elections will take place at the AGM on 18<sup>th</sup> October, (details to follow).

Nominations to be sent to the Secretary.

Winter programmes should accompany this newsletter but anyone wanting a copy or extra copy can obtain one by e-mail from [southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com](mailto:southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com)

Secretary: Annette Cleaver (01491) 642021

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

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

The apiary continues to thrive and a bumper honey crop is anticipated this year, this will be taken off for extraction during the first week of August. A test for resistant mites was done at the preceding apiary meeting to determine which Varroa treatment to use. With a result of 96% efficiency and bearing in mind that Apiguard was used last year to break the cycle of dependence on one chemical, Apistan strips will be used. The exception will be the Dartington hive which is to have the Apiguard treatment this year.

I have been asked to remind members that we have several testing kits available at the apiary for their use; none have yet been requested this year. This procedure is a vital aid in tracking the spread of these resistant mites, which have now been found in our area – so do please contact Jim on his mobile - 07720 446639 – without delay, to borrow one to check your hives with.

The result of the honey crop will be given at the first of the winter schedule of meetings, The Review of the Year, which will be held on Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor, SL4 1HZ at 8pm. All members are welcome, so do come along to join us and compare notes with your fellow beekeepers. This is a great opportunity to learn how the season has treated everyone and it will be of particular interest to those participating in the research into Queen Mating Problems to hear whether anyone else has experienced the symptoms with their queens this year. It is of great concern to those who have noticed these behaviour patterns emerging and now realise that it may be more widespread.

Refreshments will be served afterwards as usual and our library and copies of the latest leaflets on varroa management and the Tropilaelaps mite are available too, along with any surplus library books left for sale.

In October we shall be holding our Annual Honey Show on the meeting night, Tuesday the 10th October, when the produce from our bees is judged in front of us. There is ample opportunity to learn what is acceptable, along with advice on how to fine-tune our skills to achieve this and some friendly banter with the Judge.

We have several new members this year that we would like to encourage to participate in the new Novice category; this class is also open to any beekeeper who has not won a prize before. There are several other Cups to be awarded and there is usually strong competition for them. Only one jar of honey is required in each class, so just bring them along on the night for entry into the Show. If you can enter several classes, it would be helpful to know ahead of time, so that labels can be prepared.

A schedule will be e-mailed or attached with this newsletter, according to how you receive it normally. Please refer to this for updated criteria. Also, please note that the hall will be open for staging from **7.00pm** and that judging starts at **7.30pm**. We look forward to welcoming you all then, for what is usually an evening that is entertaining and informative at the same time.

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

**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

Beekeeper required to manage approx five hives at Iver Heath, near Slough, due to owner working abroad for six months. Excess honey available plus reasonable fee for time involved. All new parts required will be reimbursed. - Apply Editor / Advert. Manager 2-----4

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