



**FEDERATION OF
BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS**
President: Miss Margery Cooper

**March 2007
Number 607**

Hon. Secretary:
Vacant

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 21st April 2007	BBKA Spring Lecture & Exhibition	Stoneleigh Park
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THE APIARY in MARCH

It is not always necessary to open a hive to know that progress is being made within. Observation at the entrance on a sunny spring day will usually tell us a lot. Pollen going into the hive normally indicates brood rearing. Faeces on the outside of the hive merits investigation, prolonged confinement to the hive often gives rise to pale specks of excrement, on the other hand dark spots or streaks are a sign of dysentery which can also be caused by prolonged confinement but more worryingly, by Nosema Apis, the treatment for this is Fumidil B in sugar solution. After your observations, heft the hive in order to ascertain the state of stores and take any remedial action required.

Many beginners are tempted to open their hives at this stage, O.K. if conditions are right, as a general rule this will be "when it is warm enough to do so, if it feels too cold for you it is too cold to open the hive", because bees are flying it does not necessarily follow that the brood chamber can be inspected. When the hive is opened for the first spring inspection all that is needed is to ascertain the sufficiency of stores and that the bees can access it, look for signs of brood rearing and the state of the brood – worker or drone, look for signs of disease.

Do not be afraid to ask for advice but in any case strive to keep any disturbance to a minimum to avoid chilling of brood, the presence of brood indicates that the colony is queen right so there is no need to look for her at this stage.

It often happens that a colony is so well stocked with food leaving little or no room for expansion, this can lead to swarming, in this case an outside frame of stores can be removed and an empty comb or frame of foundation can be inserted next to the cluster

If you have not prepared for the coming season, do it now, decarbonise your smoker, prepare supers in advance, ideally have a spare hive ready for a swarm or for swarm control, preferably fitted with foundation rather than old combs that can carry disease, thus you will be in a position to replace your old combs if necessary.

Triad

COLONY MORTALITY

For some time now there have been reports of colony losses from "unknown" causes not only in our own area but also throughout the country. The "Marie Celeste" syndrome is often encountered together with small patches of dead brood and no other visible symptoms.

Other reports over the summer have been of a gradual decline in the population of some colonies and no dead bees to examine, assumed to be caused by varroa, this is too easy and possibly not the right answer.

Spanish researchers have discovered *Nosema ceranae* formerly only found in *Apis ceranae*, the Asian honeybee. *Nosema ceranae* is a virulent variant of *Nosema Apis* and is said to be difficult to detect. There are no visible symptoms such as diarrhoea as is sometimes associated with *Nosema Apis*. This variant has also been detected in France, in Germany, and in Greece, it is thought to be widespread throughout Europe the spores appear to have an extreme resistance to temperature and dehydration. Apparently Fumidil B will only suppress it. NBU are currently looking into the problem, see February 2006 BBKA News, keep an eye on <http://beebase.csl.gov.uk>

References: Higes et al, Fries et al Ritter et al

From Issue No 4 News from Vita (Europe) Ltd April 2006
Rapid response to mystery bee disease in southern Europe

Vita has been quick to set up tests of a new prototype near-natural product, provisionally named Vita-Q, to combat this disease that struck suddenly and unexpectedly in southern Europe last year. — <http://www.vita-europe.co.uk>

RFC

Beekeeping Classes:

Burchetts Green Agricultural College. Hurry and apply to get on this very valuable course. **Anyone interested should contact Yvonne Arnold on 01628 827482.**

Pollen in forensic science - Michael Keith-Lucas
Friday 16th March 2007 at 7.30 pm
The Sutton Hall, Stockcross, near Newbury, Berkshire
See February Newsletter

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

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

The Importance of British Native Bees

Our speaker at the January meeting was Tom Robinson of the York and District Bee Keepers' Association and Treasurer of the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders' Association. Tom runs 160 National hives the management of which he now shares with his son. Their disagreement on the subject of native versus imported bee stocks was an issue, which came up several times in the evening, but he seemed to accept it with a resigned tolerance!

Tom was converted to black bees by accident in 1989, when he was struck by the excellent over wintering, and low consumption of some new colonies which he had forgotten to re-queen. He eventually converted all his stock to this strain. All his colonies are over wintered in a single brood box without feeding, but due to the frugal nature of his bees he expects to suffer only a 12% loss, which he sees as a form of natural selection to strengthen his stock.

In the spring he gives them a new floor and crown board (on which he writes the queen's details) and clips and marks any queens missed the previous year. He also puts in a lot of new frames - about 1000 per year.

Tom believes that the three important factors in successful beekeeping are the crop, the weather and the bees, and he was very keen to encourage us to get together as a group to improve our bee stock - preferably with black bees, of course! He described his breeding programme using the Jenter system in some detail, and kindly provided us with handouts describing how to adapt it to small scale bee breeding of eight to nine queens a year.

In June his colonies are moved 18 miles to borage, which is common in Yorkshire, and this is where his new queens mate. He can stock with about 1½ colonies per acre there. The next move is another 30 miles to the heather. Due to the wet weather they only managed 10 lbs/colony in 2006, down from 40 lbs in 2005.

He is sceptical about recent concerns regarding the poor survival and mating of queens. Using his method he expects to see an 80% success rate from one day old larvae to capping over, 72% of the original number emerging and 50% ending up as mated queens, and he hasn't seen this change in recent years.

The interest Tom stirred was indicated by the long and detailed question session after his talk, and a number of members are obviously interested in getting together to experiment with native bees, or are already doing so. We would be interested to hear from anyone else in the area keen to join us in this at southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com.

March Meeting:

Programme alteration: Due to unforeseen circumstances the March meeting will be on Wednesday March 21st (the third Wednesday in the month) instead of the 14th as shown in the programme. Our speaker will be New Zealander Charles Fryett "Looking forward to the new beekeeping season".

Do not forget to book your places for our Annual Dinner on March 27th. To book contact Lynn Penfold on 01628 825718

The Memorial Service for Marcella Skinner will be at St. Mary's Church, Henley-on-Thames on March 9th at 1 pm, followed by a reception. In order to give the caterers an idea of numbers wishing to attend the reception please contact Phil Westwood or Ron Crocker.

Secretary: Phil Westwood – Tel: 07771 874284

E-mail: [>southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com<](mailto:southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com)

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On Friday 19th January Reading and District beekeepers held their 'Christmas' Association Annual Dinner at the White Hart at Binfield Heath. Reading members (usually Hazel and Michael Blackburn) undertake 'strenuous reconnaissance' of a number of licensed victuallers to find the right venue each year, and by general consensus The White Hart was a bit of a winner! Good food and prompt friendly service. Another pleasant duty was in having available for senior beekeepers in our association the BBKA Certificate in recognition of 50 years service to beekeeping. Cyril Mc Combe was able to receive his personally. Geoff Fowler was unfortunately unable to make it to the dinner. However Reading member Julia Crosthwaite kindly delivered Geoff's certificate in person to his home and took a snapshot. I think we'll agree that Geoff at 96 years and recently returned from a fortunately brief sojourn in the RBH. is looking good!

March meetings.

For Our meeting on March 8th our speaker will be Geoff Burroughs who will talk about his commercial beekeeping enterprise.

On the occasion of our Flood lecture Reading Association members are once again invited to travel to join Newbury and District beekeepers for their Annual Leaver Lecture on 7.30 pm Friday 16th March. Venue: - The Sutton Hall. Stockcross. Nr. Newbury.

The speaker will be Dr. Michael Keith-Lucas from the plant sciences department at Reading University. Subject "Pollen in Forensic Science" Anyone who attended Dr. Keith - Lucas's talk on bees and mountain flora at the last Federation Honey Show at Charvil will know that this talk is not to be missed!

Directions were given in the February Newsletter. Anyone needing a lift (departing at about 6-45) or further directions please contact Jon. Davey on 0118 975 0734 or Michael Blackburn on 0118 947 9450.

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

For our meeting on 10th January, we welcomed Ian Homer who is the Regional Bee Inspector. He came to give us a talk entitled 'Eureka Moments in Beekeeping'. With the aid of some interesting pieces of equipment, he gave a most entertaining talk, which included a small test for the attendees to make sure we were paying attention. I think we all learnt something as a result of his considerable amount of knowledge and experience.

Secretary: Derek Porter Tel: 0118 979 0326

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

In January we held our Annual Dinner at the Aurora Garden Hotel in Windsor. The excellent food and good company were much enjoyed by everyone who attended and our sincere thanks go to our Chairman, Don Church, for arranging yet another successful evening. After the meal, Don had the very pleasant task of presenting two of our members, Jon Read and Harry Peace, with BBKA Commemorative Certificates for each achieving over 50 years in beekeeping. Don read the following citations to us; we copy them here, as we are sure that they will also be of interest to the many other beekeepers that know them.

BBKA 50-YEAR CERTIFICATES – CITATIONS

JON R READ

Jon Read started beekeeping in 1949 following a childhood interest in keeping livestock, including poultry. His parents were not keen on the livestock, so he persuaded them that beekeeping in the back garden would be less troublesome. He joined Fleet BKA in Hampshire and was mentored by one of its members. In 1951 the family moved to Berkshire and John recalls that his hives travelled on the tailboard of the removals van. Health and Safety was a very different matter in those days! He then joined the Slough & District BKA and, as time went on, he expanded to 25 colonies in two out-apiaries, selling his honey to local customers. Jon was an active member of the Slough association, serving as a committee member and as Treasurer and Secretary. Also, in the 1970's he was a temporary Foul Brood Inspector for South Bucks. After 57 years of beekeeping, Jon has now reduced his activity to that of a 'hobbyist', but still enjoys observing his bees and giving excellent advice to the younger generation of beekeepers now developing in this area.

HARRY PEACE

Harry Peace first started beekeeping in 1944 in his early teens, following an inspirational talk given at his school by a local beekeeper. His first colony was sited on his parents' allotment and he joined Enfield BKA in the north of Greater London. After service in the RAF, he moved to Berkshire and joined the Maidenhead BKA, where he served on the committee and as Secretary, until it amalgamated with Slough & District BKS in 1998. Harry has given many talks on beekeeping to schools and other organisations, aided by the videos he has made of his own beekeeping experiences and he continues to be a source of thoughtful advice to new members. More recently, he nearly gave up beekeeping because of back trouble, but has been able to prolong his interest by switching to two Dartington hives and is now the acknowledged expert on that form of beekeeping in East Berks. It is now 62 years since Harry started beekeeping, with only one break of five years when he was serving in the RAF.

Our congratulations go to both of them on this marvellous achievement.

Our penultimate winter meeting this month is to be a talk on the 'Buzz' and 'Operation Bumblebee' projects by representatives from the Syngenta Research Centre at Jealotts Hill. This will be on Tuesday, 13th March, starting at 8pm, so we look forward with interest to hearing all about these projects. We hope that you will join us at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor, SL4 1HZ.

Just after that, Sunday the 18th March sees the start of our summer programme of meetings at our apiary in Fulmer. A new format that was introduced last year to accommodate all the interest shown by our up and coming beekeepers will be continued and we would encourage all of our more proficient members to attend to help with this. As Jim has had to stand down as our Apiary Supervisor due to work and family commitments this year, we will also be introducing a rota system for leading the apiary meetings. They will continue on April 1st, 15th and 29th.

In between these will be our last winter meeting on the 10th April, when our former RBI Beulah Cullen will be talking to us on 'Bee anatomy and its practical implications for beekeepers'. We always enjoy an entertaining and informative evening with Beulah, so would encourage everyone that can, to attend.

There will be hard copies of the full 2007 Programme available at these meetings, as will our library, along with any surplus library books left for sale.

Finally, as mentioned last month, there will be several cars going to Stoneleigh on the 27th April, should anyone require a lift please contact the numbers below for further information.

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 **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 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, The Studio, 1 Grove Hill, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8PM. Telephone: - (0118) 947 9450/5451

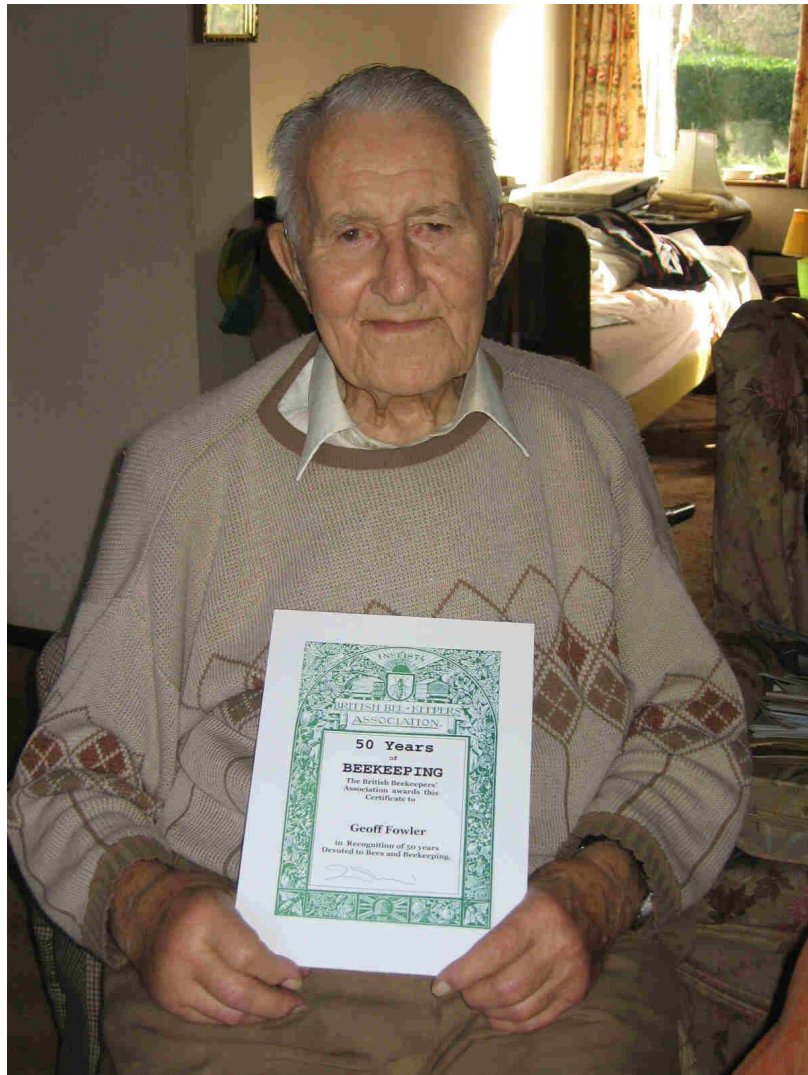
Beekeeping equipment and supplies

from your Thornes agent in Berkshire
Large stock of most requirements available ex. stock. All other in range available only a phone call away. Deliveries in season at regular intervals. Please phone **John Belcher** on 01189 842321 for a quotation. Beeswax exchanged.

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Photographs: Please send in any photographs that you feel would be of interest to fellow beekeepers!

Geoff Fowler 50 years Beekeeping



Geoff Fowler – Reading Association's nonagenarian, has solidly supported our Association despite being unable to keep his own bees in recent years at the grand old age of 89. Geoff became the secretary of Reading BKA in 1947 and held this post for approximately 16 years followed by being Chairman and then President.

He has given freely of his time, experience and equipment to new members, attends meetings regularly when in good health, we are all very proud of Geoff!