



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

June 2007  
Number 610

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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

18th-20th October 2007	The National Honey Show	<a href="http://www.honeyshow.co.uk">www.honeyshow.co.uk</a>
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## THE APIARY in JUNE

April has been particularly dry and warm which for most beekeepers in our region meant little nectar but plenty of pollen, consequently many colonies built up rapidly producing a lot of early swarms. Believe it or not, a swarm was reported on April fools day. The dry spell is forecast to last until the middle of May. For three years in succession the horse chestnut trees were in flower at the end of April, brick red pollen could be seen coming into the hives but not as much as one would normally expect. Curiously, possibly due to the dry conditions, bees were not in evidence working dandelion and at the time of writing, there was little evidence of a honey flow, this, hopefully will change.

Now for June, should your bees have been busy and there's lots of honey, then what's to be done? That depends on if there is oilseed rape honey in the hive, which because it is high glucose nectar, carries the risk of honey setting in the combs. If you're sure there's no rape, you can leave it on and give yourself the luxury of a single honey extracting session probably in July. But a decision like this carries penalties: you'll need to have plenty of supers to put on the hive; so your back is at significant risk when lifting supers to do your hive inspections. (See Dr. Westwood's contribution below)

If you do need to extract to make some empty super space or get rape honey off before it sets; put the full supers on the hive over a clearer board (with at least two Porter escapes, or one of the plastic grid tunnel bee escapes) and with an empty Super or an eke beneath to take the bees. Bring the full supers home as soon as possible, say no more than a couple of days and preferably less, then extract while the honey is still warm. Even a few degrees temperature difference makes a huge difference in honey viscosity, the colder the thicker – with more honey left in the combs after extracting. Put the empty supers back in the evening so as not to create excitement in the colonies.

Make sure the colony has sufficient stores after removing the honey crop: a dearth of nectar at this time can cause starvation, not uncommon in June, the "June gap", and can result in a sudden risk of starvation, even at the height of summer. In such circumstances, a small emergency feed of syrup will save the colony and be used by the bees as food, not stored

Extract capped honey: but a small proportion of viscous uncapped honey should cause little problem. Test uncapped honey by shaking the combs. Unripe honey has low viscosity and will fall easily from the comb. Ripe, viscous honey will stay put.) If the moisture content is high, then fermentation is likely; moisture content should not normally exceed 18%.

Put rape honey into buckets to granulate and to be re-melted later, if it is bottled straight away it will set very hard and will usually have bad frosting and will not look good on the shelf

Colony maintenance during June is much the same as May, regular 7 - 10 day inspections. In early June, the brood nest should still be expanding, but will soon tail off. Keep your eye out for the queen, eggs, brood of all stages, and huge areas of capped brood. Look for brood disease, and queen cells. Also watch for the level of Varroa mites. Use an uncapping fork to check drone brood. If you do take a swarm, to avoid absconding, treat for varroa as soon as eggs appear while the mites have no brood in which to hide.

Check your stock of Varroacide, as Pyrethroid resistance is now in the area, (Apiguard is recommended) you'll need it later in the year

Later in the month, make sure the bees have plenty of space (2 - 3 supers) to store the main summer nectar flow. In my experience it usually fits well with the month of July, but with our earlier summers it could well start at the end of June. This main flow tends to be from lime trees, brambles, and rosebay willow herb. Once it starts, a strong colony can fill a super in a few days then run out of cluster space and have to make hive space by hanging outside the hive, not good in wet weather, Such over-crowding tends to make colonies swarm

Triad

## **Mind Your Back!**

If you want to continue bee keeping into your retirement, don't take risks with your back. Back injuries can result not only in back and neck pain, but in impaired function and loss of sensation in the hands and legs, and even incontinence. Injuries to the discs in the back can accumulate over a period of time without your knowledge, and by the time symptoms appear it can be too late.

Using workplace accident reports, the Health and Safety Executive estimates that the maximum load that the average person can handle frequently without increased risk of injury is 55 lbs for men and 36 lbs for women. These are approximately the weights of a National brood box and super respectively when full of honey. This assumes that you are un-injured and holding the load at waist level.

### **How to Look After Your Back**

- Keep good shape - particularly your abdominal muscles
- Keep your hives on stands of a reasonable height
- Don't put boxes down on the floor - use a spare hive stand or WBC lifts
- Lift one super at a time
- Don't let the hive get too high
- Keep the feet about hip width apart with one foot slightly forward for stability
- Keep the knees bent, back fairly upright, head up and shoulders down
- Lift with the knees and the strong leg muscles, but don't squat
- Keep the load in front of your waist and close to your body
- Don't hold your breath
- Move smoothly and adjust things after putting them down
- Change direction by moving your feet, not by twisting your trunk
- Slide loads into the car – don't use your back like a crane

To protect the hands and wrists avoid fingertip holds or pressure grips. Long frame lugs and the hives that go with them (Nationals and WBCs) may be easier for those with finger problems.

## Which Hive is Best for Your Back?

No one hive type is ideal for your back, but ideally hives should...

- be as small as is practicable, and divided in two (e.g. WBC, not Dadant!)
- be rectangular, to keep the centre of gravity close (e.g. Langstroth or Smith)
- have good hand holds (e.g. WBC or National).

If I had to design such a hive I would cut down a British National to roughly the same external dimensions as a Smith (top bee space). Two boxes, each with nine standard frames, would give the same brood area as a brood and a half National. I think that I will christen it 'The Westwood Hive'; after all, we could do with another hive design, couldn't we?

For further information see 'Getting to Grips with Manual Handling – a short guide', from <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf>.

Phil Westwood

## Collapsing Colonies:

There is an interesting article in the Georgia Newsletter – too long for inclusion here but is available at <http://www.ent.uga.edu/bees/Newsletter/Newsletter.htm>

Also keep up to date at: <http://beebase.csl.gov.uk/> look under public pages 'news and vacancies'

## Report on Berkshire Federations Beekeepers at The Berkshire College of Agriculture Open Days and Lambing Weekend at Burchetts Green on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2007.

This report is to express thanks to members who manned our table in the Countryside Management Tent. We were located right on the show-ring with some beautiful weather and plenty of interested visitors. Reading Association manned on the Saturday and Slough and District BKS (Maidenhead, Slough and Windsor) plus South Chilterns on the Sunday. This is a very good day-out for families and only costs £5.00 per car to get-in. Animals of all types and displays, young-plant and craft sales etc. so don't miss it next year. We expect that Berks Federation beekeepers will co-operate as successfully in supporting the BCA with our presence in 2008 as we did this year.

## 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

## SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

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Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

In April, our last meeting of the winter schedule welcomed Dr Beulah Cullen to talk on 'Bee anatomy and its practical implications for beekeepers'. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend at the last moment, so don't have first-hand knowledge of this meeting, however, I understand that it was again an extremely interesting subject from Beulah, which was complimented with fascinating slides of electron microscope pictures of various bee parts, the high degree of magnification making them unrecognisable. Our sincere thanks go to Beulah for coming along to speak to us.

Michael Sheasby, Dennis & Bridget Way and Guy Simpson, Chairman of South Chilterns BKA attended the Beekeepers' stand at the BCA Open Day, Burchetts Green on 22nd April.

Plans are well in hand for a new promotional stand this year at the highly popular Sunningdale Area Carnival, Broomhall Lane on Bank Holiday Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> May, when Anne-Marie and 3 others will be manning the stand for us. Honey will be on sale along with other items and information leaflets.

The April apiary visits were well attended again, with a good mix of new and not-so-new beekeepers. We now have two spare bee suits available for newcomers, so can welcome anyone thinking of taking up the craft but not having equipped themselves just yet. Call my number below for directions if you have not been there before.

The first proper inspection was undertaken on 1<sup>st</sup> April, it having been too cold to open them up two weeks prior. This showed the Dartington and 3 others queen-right, with the two which had gone great guns in the last two years, not surprisingly were starting to fail and with not much brood. At the second visit, one queen was found to be very much the worse for wear and was dispatched so that the two could be united. At the next visit (last Sunday) it was found that the second queen had been disposed of by the bees and two or three supersedure cells were found. Jim had brought along a newly hatched queen, so this was run into the hive and we await the results at the next visit.

The other Nationals are doing well and bringing in honey, with no signs yet of intending to swarm, though the Dartington was found to have made preparations, so was split and most of the brood moved to the other end with one queen cell intact. This has been the point that has brought problems in previous years; so again, we await the next visit with interest.

Our new National varroa floors were also installed, replacing the open mesh floors already in place, so this will make it much easier to monitor the varroa population from now on. Dennis will be returning to make a count later this week.

The visits continue in June on the 10<sup>th</sup> led by myself, and 24<sup>th</sup>, now to be led by Matthew. In July they will be on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Our Summer Supper evening is fast approaching on 21<sup>st</sup> July, though the menu has not been finalised at the time of writing. Details will be forwarded as soon as available, so you may well have received them by now - please book your place well in advance, this is a popular evening in very pleasant surroundings at Maidenhead Rowing Club in River Road.

We hope to see new faces both there and at the apiary, we look forward to welcoming you along.

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

President's Day Meeting at Simon Wetton's Apiary  
Ipsden Heath, 28th April.

Due to a withdrawal of neighbourly good will, Viv and Steve Moll were unable to show us their apiary as planned, so Francesca and Simon Wetton kindly stepped in to offer us their hospitality. Excellent weather and a good turnout made this an enjoyable start to the season's calendar.

The day began with an address from our President, Don Thompson, on beeswax. He demonstrated his homemade solar wax extractor, cleverly constructed from two stainless steel catering trays, the inner one with drainage holes. These are covered with a double 'glazed' transparent acrylic top. The wax, wrapped in a filter of old stockings, is placed inside and melts down into the lower tray over a sunny day. He showed us the darker wax derived from brood comb (favoured by furniture restorers, apparently) and the lighter wax from new comb (ideal for candles). The latter he produces by cutting back further into the comb to encourage the bees to produce more of the new, pale wax. One advantage of using a solar melter is that the wax retains more of the smell of the honey than wax from steam melters. He also brought out several interesting candle moulds. Note: care must be taken when re-melting wax, as it catches fire easily.

Details of the apiary can be found in my account of our visit last July. The bees are of Derbyshire native British strain, and were docile and well behaved. This was helped by Simon's gentle handling. The apiary is quite high and shaded, and Simon estimates that the temperatures are about 2°C lower than surrounding areas. Probably for this reason, many people observed that the colonies were far less advanced than their own.



Simon's five-year-old son occasionally giving instructions on how to proceed amused onlookers.

Because he is not able to check his hives frequently, Simon had placed two supers on each hive, but only in the cramped hive had the bees begun move up over the excluder. Honey was still being stored below with the brood. Don was concerned that, since the nights are still below 10°C, the unused space might result in the brood getting chilled. One solution offered was to separate each super with a sheet of newspaper which would stop convection of warm air, but which the bees could chew through when they needed space.

Simon had not treated the hives for varroa last autumn, as the mite drop then was very low. However, a larger drop could now be seen on the tray below the mesh floor. Mites prefer drone brood, and Don showed how a fork could be used to remove drone brood to see them. They are more visible when the drones have reached the dark eye stage, when the mites have turned dark but the drones are still white. Fairly high levels were seen. Don prefers the more expensive 'cranked' forks for their ease of use. Several workers were seen to have deformed wing virus (DWV), causing stubby, useless wings. This is transmitted by parasites, and was noticeably less prevalent in the hive with a mesh floor, which is supposed to help to reduce mite levels. A greater wax moth larva was spotted by its obvious track through the comb. Don said that a healthy colony will be able to deal with most larvae, but not all, but may need some help from the beekeeper's hive tool.

Another interesting tip Don introduced was the use of water from an ordinary household plant spray. When it was directed onto the exposed top bars the bees drank some and disappeared between the combs, effectively clearing the tops of the frames. Only a few of us saw the pheasant approach to investigate at this point, and then disappear at full speed into the distance upon encountering a defensive bee.

As with our visit last year, we were offered a wonderful spread of food and an unlimited supply of tea. The early start to the season was, of course, a major topic of conversation. Several members have lost swarms already, and the more experienced beekeepers were kept busy answering questions. The day concluded with a display of polo from Simon and friends. Many thanks to Don and others for sharing their knowledge and experience with us. Also to Francesca and Simon and all those who helped to set up the day and gave us such an informative and pleasant start to the season.

**The next meeting** is at Guy Simpson's apiary, 2.30pm on Saturday June 16th on the bank Thames at North Stoke (map reference 609 865). This will include a Pyrethroid resistance test and a plant sale. Bring along your surplus plants to sell for the Association's funds.

Secretary: Phil Westwood – Tel: 07771 874284

E-mail: >southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com<

## **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

. On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April, Reading members assembled at Jon Davey's garden apiary for the annual Chairman's meeting, this, as a departure being the first meeting of the summer programme (usually it's held in August). However three colonies were very advanced for April, with good brood patterns and high populations.

We had some fun with 'the WBC colony' The old second-hand brood box, a good half-inch too short and after prizing-off and reconstructing in some cases the frames adhered to the floor, luckily the Chairman had an eke made-up out of some ex rose trellis batons to place below it. There were occupied queen cups removed from this colony and judging from the number of drones and drone brood in evidence this colony would seem to be 'swarmy'. An empty super was added above to give the bees an impression of space.

The bees were very good tempered about it all; though many were outside the hive by the time we had finished they mainly sat patiently on surfaces and on beekeepers heads waiting to be allowed back home. One hive presented a bit of a poser, a fairly reasonable looking queen was found but with a few drone brood only and a low population, our demonstrator Michael Blackburn suggested scarifying some of the plentiful frames of stores and the colony reduced in size by removing supers, an entrance block was fitted afterwards to try to reduce the risk of robbing. Perhaps the queen had not been effectively mated? Some evidence in the cell patterns indicated what maybe 'drone laying'. The colony will be monitored.

All in all a satisfactory meeting, with thanks to all who attended and to Jill Davey for the refreshments.

### **June Meetings:**

On Sunday 3rd June at 11.30 AM. Cyril Mc Combe's out apiary at Cross Lanes Apple Farm. Mapledurham. Anyone who has visited Cyril's apiary at Cross Lanes will know what a beautiful location it is and is an ideal chance to view bees in a pollination situation. Cross Lanes Apple Farm has sign giving directions at Mapledurham on the Caversham to Wallingford Road, (A4074), but anyone requiring directions please ring Jon. on 018 975 0734.

A further visit is planned for Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> of June. In conjunction with members from Wokingham Beekeepers Association we will travel to Brookwood to John Hamer's Blackhorse Apiaries. There will be a presentation for us on varroa control without using Apistan or Bayvarol (pyrethroids) and we will be able to see the latest developments in John's highly advanced beekeeping centre. Sharing cars is proposed. We will keep you posted about departure times etc. Anyone needing information please ring Michael on 0118 947 9450 or Jon. on 0118 975 0734. The drive from Reading is only about 30 minutes and we found a very good pub for lunch last time!

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

### **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

On 14<sup>th</sup> March, June Hughes made a return visit to give us a talk on Encaustic Art. June produces some really stunning works of art with nothing more than a hot iron (one specially made for the job) and an assortment of coloured waxes, which are applied to special card to prevent the hot wax soaking in. Although I was not able to be present, I am told everyone enjoyed the talk and the chance to try it out for themselves.

If you ever want to invest in the equipment, there is at least one specialist supplier of the materials and tools required. Details can be provided by Bob Loades.

The committee have arranged the new programme and your membership cards will be sent out in due course. A rota for apiary visits has also been organised and this is on a separate sheet. Do try to support the meetings, which give members a chance to visit each other's apiaries.

Secretary: Derek Porter Tel: 0118 979 0326

According to a report in the Henley Standard of April 27<sup>th</sup> a Japanese Giant Hornet was discovered in Shiplake. The picture shown in the newspaper (depicted opposite) appears to be a native queen wasp (*Vespa vulgaris*). Compare its size to that of the hand.



One of the many different Asian giant hornets (*Vespa velutina* shown opposite) was accidentally imported into the Aquitaine region of France from China; it is thought that this one is unlikely to survive our winters.

Should it be found, DEFRA should be advised



Many thanks to those that have shown interest in this and also those that sent newspaper cuttings

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

**For Sale** - National Hive together with six national supers, also other items of bee-keeping equipment. Tel - Harry Robinson - 0118 9341497

<p><b>Beekeeping equipment and supplies</b>  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 <b>John Belcher</b> on 01189 842321 for a quotation. Beeswax exchanged.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4 ————— 6</p>
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