



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

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Number 611

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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	www.honeyshow.co.uk
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THE APIARY in JULY

There is still a lot of speculation about the causes of the Marie Celeste empty hives. In California they are taking it very seriously indeed because the loss of pollinators for their orchards is a disaster. The phenomenon is not confined to the U.S.A. and there have been similar mysterious occurrences here - including two unexplained completely empty hives in the Wokingham apiary this spring. The affair does bring home the fact that our so-called hobby is absolutely vital to the farming of the food that we grow in this country.

Researchers in Europe and the United States are working hard to find an explanation. Let us hope that the desertion isn't caused by the waves from mobile phones leading the bees' minds astray, as has been suggested. If it is, and mobile phones are given the chop a lot of us will be very unhappy. But not as unhappy as we would be without food!

But for beekeepers there is always gloom and doom - this time it's the length of the June gap. We have had an amazing early spring and summer with exceptionally prolific flowering on all the trees and bushes. It was a spectacular show. Now that it's all over the question is, will there be enough forage to keep our colonies going. We can rely on dandelions, camomile and daisies and that pest, ragwort and possibly some clover. The raspberries and blackberries will be over early and so will the willow herb. Perhaps the trees will be less influenced by the changes and will help to keep things going till the ivy. That is looking a long way ahead.

It seems to me that it would be wise to keep a careful eye on the food supplies and hold back a bit on taking off our honey. We might even have to be ready to give a little syrup to boost the bees' diet. No harm done if we give them a little syrup - if they don't need it they will simply leave it.

I don't know anyone who is enchanted by wasps even if they are useful and keep the cabbage white caterpillars under control. Every time you try to have a meal outside at this time of the year you're sure to get one buzzing about, eager to get at the jam in your sandwich.

If you are bothered by them, spend a little time outside in the late afternoon, If you're lucky you'll get a lead to the nest from a late one making a bee-line (sorry) for home. Once you know where it is it's not difficult to deal with thanks to the powder you can get from the hardware store. It comes in a flexible tube with a nozzle. At dusk, when all the wasps have returned to base, you squirt the powder into the entrance hole. Play safe and muffle yourself up in case one or two come out. Don't make the mistake I made of going up a ladder in my bee-suit thinking I had a bright idea; I got the wasps above my head all right. I also got the powder, which is deadly to bees, all over my suit.

Triad

From Joy Dodson (Slough)

A man was driving down the road and ran out of gas. Just at that moment, a bee flew in his window.

The bee said, "What seems to be the problem"?

"I'm out of gas."

The bee told the man to wait right there and flew away. Minutes later, the man watched as an entire swarm of bees flew to his car and into his gas tank. After a few minutes, the bees flew out.

"Try it now," said one bee.

The man turned the ignition key and the car started right up.

"Wow!" the man exclaimed. "What did you put in my gas tank"?

The bee answered, "BP."

Manual handling

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf>.

Collapsing Colonies:

http://www.accidentahedonist.com/index.php/2007/06/01/bees_colonies_are_not_collapsing_if_the_b

<http://bushfarms.com/bees.htm>

Georgia Newsletter <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'

If you subscribe to organic beekeeping you are liable to get a large number of e-mails from beekeepers from America and Europe.

From the Editor

Queen failures so far this year have been excessive, some of this could be down to mating with sterile drones, and this is probably not the only cause. A visit to <http://www.clipmarks.com/search/+bees/> will give several ideas or maybe a combination of ideas. Further search pointed to men having difficulty getting their wives pregnant, controlling insects etc. From Britannica: - Perhaps the most dramatic, wholesale destruction of insects can be accomplished by making them infertile. Treating them with the radioactive rays induces sexual sterility in male insects. If a large number of a particular species undergo this process in the laboratory, the treated males—though sterile—will still mate with fertile females

Albino drones have been observed this year, I saw this many years ago after the importation of Buckfast queens from the middle east, mainly Israel, around that time Brother Adam was experimenting with cordovan bees. When I was working as a Bees Officer I also saw drones with pink eyes and Cyclops drones, these had one compound eye but no simple eyes, John Walker was the National Bee Adviser at the time and he had had several samples but could not give an explanation.

Attributed to Einstein: Mankind would perish absent the honeybee. It is certain that our world would change.

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

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Our first attendance at the Sunningdale Carnival on the last Bank Holiday Monday of May had been set up and organized by Anne-Marie. She had done a fantastic job that went sadly awry because of the terrible weather conditions, which actually got worse as the day went on. In the morning it wasn't too bad and could have cleared later, possibly with some showers and we were prepared for that with a gazebo. However, what we got was persistent rain with strong winds thrown in for good measure! In the afternoon we were holding on to the gazebo at various times to prevent it from flying off into the woods and we decided to call it a day when it rained down inside the gazebo and it was no longer possible to have anything made of paper left out.. The honey tasting and children's' colouring competitions did not even get off to a start! Nevertheless we made a presence - sold some honey (and broke a jar) and Don made about 5 hive demonstrations to some very interested people. We may now have at least one new member as a result. Special mention must be made to Don, who braved the whole day, 'Friend' Judy who came armed with hot coffee and home made cake, which was a real treat! along with Rachel who came along in the nick of time to reach the gazebo top which had come apart in a gust. We will all remember the day for some time to come.....

The next big event will be our Summer Supper evening on 21st July, in the very pleasant surroundings at Maidenhead Rowing Club in River Road, Taplow. The set menu choices will be available on the night with something to suit everyone and at £19 a head for four courses, is great value. We have the same excellent caterer as in previous years, so please get your booking form back as soon as possible to reserve your place.

'March' winds and 'April' showers came in abundance during May, what a month this has been! Beekeeping activities ground to a halt at the apiary for the two scheduled visits, a few brave souls attended on the 13th, but it was decided that it was just too cold, quite apart from the rain, to open any of the hives. Don and Dennis made an interim inspection the next Sunday, finding that the Dartington was in trouble again, having no queen in sight. It was hoped that a virgin might be out so the following week's scheduled visit on the Bank Holiday weekend should have confirmed this. However, this also had to be cancelled at the last minute and another interim inspection is to be done to check all the hives and take off the spring honey for extracting. The Nationals have performed quite well so there should be quite a bit.

Eggs had to be added to the united hive where a virgin queen had been run into it previously, as no sign of her or eggs were seen, but this is the only one giving cause for concern to date.

The July visits are scheduled for the 8th and 22nd and in August on the 5th and 19th, as always – weather permitting! If in any doubt, please call either our Chairman, Don Church, or Vice Chairman, Dennis Way, for information on the apiary meetings or directions to it if you have not been there before. Their numbers are on the annual Programme, or call either number below for any other query. We look forward to welcoming you along.

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

The first of our apiary visits took place at Bob Loades apiary in May. Six people attended including Bob. I am told that it was a useful meeting but it was pity that more members did not turn up. Let's hope that the other meetings will attract a better attendance.

I recently spent a few days in Riga, the capital of Latvia. The weather was very hot while the UK was having a cold spell. However, the Baltic Sea was still extremely cold and a swim was not taken. One day we visited an open air museum where old buildings have been dismantled from farms all over the country, brought to the site and reconstructed in groups to show the way agricultural workers lived from 300 years ago right up to the 1920's. It was a fascinating museum. There were some log hives and a large wooden hive with a removable panel in one side for access to the combs.

In the market in Riga, I bought a large tub of comb honey for the equivalent of £4.25, which in this country would probably have cost at least £15. The flavour is delicious. Despite wrapping the plastic container in thick brown paper and a polythene bag, the sniffer dog at Stanstead airport took a particular interest in our suitcase but the handler obviously knew that the dog had not found anything sinister as we were not required to open it up for inspection!

Secretary: Derek Porter Tel: 0118 979 0326

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

This month's apiary assessment was at Henley in the garden of a new member who is only in her first full year as a beekeeper. It proved to be very informative for all the less experienced beekeepers present. Jemima started off with one National hive last year, and when it swarmed she used the swarm to start a second. However, when this second hive swarmed again she had no spare equipment. Thinking on her feet, she removed the sealed queen cells from the hive from which the swarm had issued and re-introduced the swarm, when the hive was opened it appeared to be queenless. Unfortunately she did not realise that the queen had died in the swarm box where it was found after the conclusion of this inspection. The main indications of queenlessness, other than the absence of the queen, are the lack of eggs or young brood and the behaviour of the bees. A queenless colony emits a distinctive roaring hum, and can be quite irritable.

The original hive that Jemima started with last year also had no eggs or young brood when it was opened, leading to the suspicion that it, too, was queenless. There was some doubt about this, however, as the bees were very quiet on the combs and needed almost no smoke. They had also polished cells ready to receive eggs, so it is possible that a new queen was present but not laying.

We also had a very useful short talk from Reg on swarm control. He stressed the importance of being aware of the timings of brood development. Eggs take three days to hatch and there are then another six days until the larvae are sealed in their cells. Workers will emerge after a further twelve days, but the queens spend seven days in the sealed cell. Knowing this is critical to understanding what your bees are doing. He also emphasized that all the sealed queen cells present should not be destroyed unless you are sure that there is still a queen in the hive. As a way of preventing swarms he thought that breaking down queen cells was only useful once. If the bees built more cells another method should be tried. He also clips and marks all his queens.

Reg described several ideas for swarm control, including the one he uses to avoid making increase at the same time. He uses a modified crown board with a double layer of mesh covering a large window in the middle. The upper side is also provided with an entrance with a swiveling entrance block. This board is placed, entrance at the back, over any supers. Most of the brood frames, including all those with queen cells, are then placed in a new brood box above it, and only one good, knobbly queen cell is allowed to remain. The old queen is placed below in the original brood box on one frame of drawn comb, and the rest of the box is filled with foundation. The new queen, when she has mated, can then be used to re-queen the original colony, which should not swarm again that year. Because of the window, both boxes share the same colony smell, so the surplus top brood box can be placed above the queen excluder for any further brood to emerge.

Thank you to Jemima and her family for their hospitality, to Reg for sharing his experience and to all those who brought food. The next meeting will be at Lynn Penfold's apiary at The Thatch, Littlewick Green, Maidenhead, SL6 3QU (map reference 840 801) at 2.30 pm on Saturday 21st July.

Secretary: Phil Westwood – Tel: 07771 874284

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

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On Sunday 20th May, we, the Reading and District Beekeepers Association held the second meeting of our summer programme.

The meeting at Julia Crosthwaite's out-apiary at Hare Hatch was in fine weather following the dry period and just before the cold-wet spell started in earnest. Julia has 7 full colonies there facing a field of promising looking oil-seed rape that appeared to be well pollinated; no doubt the farmer should be well satisfied. Julia following good practice for rape honey has been extracting the frames as soon as ready and has a good number of full honey buckets from this early harvest.

There was a spread of results from the colonies, some were well supplied with brood and eggs, and three others had a lack of visible queen activity. Previous inspection at the start of the May had shown brood a-plenty in all colonies. Queen cells had been removed from most colonies then while leaving one per hive, perhaps there were new queens not yet starting to lay. Certainly one broodless colony had a large drone population which looked as though a mating flight was imminent. We removed sealed queen cells on this inspection, in two queens promptly emerged. We introduced one queen into a nucleus Julia had set-up previously, which, despite having a queen-cell, so far showed no signs of a laying queen, the other was taken away for use in a member's apiary. Two other 'queen inactive' hives had a sealed queen cell introduced: that should start something!

There was some discussion about the situation, certainly the rape-flower was well-over, a long mixed hedge had hawthorn but still in bud, perhaps with the dry conditions there was a shortage of nectar for foraging bees: a 'June gap' in May? With mating flights in prospect and more forage (there is a 90 acre soft fruit farm; not all under plastic, across the road) and the large well planted gardens and garden centres around on next inspection things will be 'as expected' in Julia's colonies.

We had an excellent attendance including a high proportion of new members. Thanks to all. A particular thank you to Julia Crosthwaite who as usual is energetically setting a high standard of committed beekeeping, also at this site she is providing a 'first colony' for a new Reading member and allowing not-so-new members some access to bees into nuclei to make increase.

July Meeting:

Please enter in your diaries: Sunday 15th July at 11.30 AM. Tim and Hilary Whitaker's garden apiary in Mapledurham Village. Tim has bees in WBC hives in the large and beautiful garden and this is Reading and District Beekeepers favourite meeting to which family and children are invited. Hilary and Tim set up a splendid barbeque for us, which members look forward to each year. Don't forget to bring-along something for the feast. Please contact Jon on 0118 975 0734 or Michael on 0118 947 5451 for full directions or further information.

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

LOW FAT COMB HONEY MUFFINS – With Apple and Cinnamon

From <http://www.airborne.co.nz/>

This is a little known trick for the use of comb honey. The butter or other fats normally used in making muffins in this recipe is replaced with beeswax. The beeswax provides the flavour carrying characteristics of the fats but as we do not have the appropriate enzymes to digest beeswax, it does not provide any calorific input!

This recipe will also work for other muffin mixtures.

200 gm comb honey 160 gm flour 2 eggs 1 apple finely chopped 2 tsp baking powder 1 tsp cinnamon

Method: Place the comb honey and eggs in a food processor, blend together until smooth. Transfer to a mixing bowl. Sieve the flour, cinnamon and baking powder and add to the mixture. Combine lightly with a wooden spoon (Important!! Do not beat or mix vigorously!!). Add the chopped apple and mix lightly to combine. Place mixture into well greased muffin tins (½ full). Bake for 20 minutes at 185°Celsius (365°F).

Notes: Makes 12 muffins. If using a convection/fan oven drop the temperature back to 170°Celsius (340°F)

If using mini muffin tins they will take approximately 12 minutes.

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.

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Mr. Michael Blackburn, M.B. Photography, The Studio, 1 Grove Hill, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8PM. Telephone: - (0118) 947 9450/5451

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