



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

August 2007
Number 612

Hon. Secretary:
Jon. Davey
107 Northcourt Avenue,
Reading RG2 7HG
Tel. 0118 975 0734.

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

E-mail:- >berksbees@btinternet.com<

Hon. Editor
R.F.Crocker
25 Shiplake Bottom
Peppard Common,
Oxon RG9 5HH
(0118 972 2315)

Future Events

18th-20th October 2007	The National Honey Show	http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/
------------------------	-------------------------	---

THE APIARY in AUGUST

It's rather easy at the time of writing to sound gloomy with wind gusting and rain falling while the drenched blossom receive scant attention from seeming low populations of bees that just seem to want to sit on the comb waiting for one of the rare sunny spells to fly-out and bring back a little nectar and pollen.

Many of us will have concluded that despite the hot April things have gone downhill since then for our bees and our expectation of a good season. Hopefully when this is published there'll have been a good 5 weeks and gloom will have been dissipated!

With signs of early flowering, certainly the lime-trees in our avenue are at point of flower now, 2 weeks earlier than last year. So unless we are Berkshire beekeepers fortunate enough to be within flying distance of the crown forest around Bracknell, the heaths around Crowthorne, Finchampstead etc, i.e. heather country; August will find us falling back on our old standby, wild blackberry, blooming now but fortunately with a long blossoming season particularly if the brambles have been cut-back, willow herb, prolifically blooming into August and that now widespread introduced ditch-welling Indian balsam. From my own observations if you check patches of these blooms in late summer-early autumn, even when quite sparse, you will find even in quite remote parts of the county, honey bees working, about 1 per square meter of blossoms, I saw a magnificent all black specimen last September quite alone on a few dew-berry blossoms that had bloomed in recently cut farm hedge, which led me to dream that there may be a few wild colonies hanging-on out-there somewhere despite mites and disease and all the things we are worried about at the moment.

We have to come to terms with it now I think that our colonies are suffering with population loss, we've all read the reports from overseas and in the UK. One factor is common to all: - varroa.

Recently gleaned information from an expert teaching apiary we recently visited indicates we ought to try the following programme. Treat with Apistan or Bayvarol applying the strips in mid August for the recommended period. Yes we know there are reports of varroa resistance to these pyrethroid-based products, but we have got to start with something. Apiguard is only reckoned now to be 70% effective and relies on relatively high temperatures to attain any effectiveness. Use it if you like if a hot August. Also Exomite_Apis™, which contains, like Apiguard, thymol as an active ingredient, but finely divided in a powder carrier which also has the effect of stimulating mutual grooming in the colony, again low humidity and warm conditions are needed for best effect from this product.

We now have to look ahead to the application of oxalic acid di-hydrate as a 0.75% solution in light syrup. This we have to do on a mild-day in late December: first week January when the first new brood cells for next season are produced. Check your Thornes catalogue, all that you need is available. A range of syringes for application and the chemical in 500 g units. Wait for December's issue for a reminder and methods of application.

Triad

From the Editor

In the brief breaks in the recent atrocious weather it has been noted that no bees have been working dandelion, clover or lime, usually at any time that weather permits, cotoneaster is swarming with insects of all kinds, not so, so far this season, there even seems to be a shortage of flies.

There has been difficulty getting queens mated this year, many reports of supercedure and drone layers, on the other hand beekeepers are reporting unusual numbers of drones, does this mean that better success with queen mating will ensue?

In many cases full or partly full supers at the end of May have been emptied and colonies have had to be fed, it is said that nature pays her debts. I remember such a year in the 1950s when Manley among others recorded a bumper crop in August; we can be philosophical and hope that the better weather for the middle-end of July will be more fruitful.

I have had an extraordinary number of calls from the environs of Oxford and two from Abingdon, why do they come to us? Few swarms from our own area, my own bees with the exception of two colonies of unknown origin that have swarmed, have marked time but are now going ahead and after emptying their supers have re-started drawing comb in preparation for honey; nuclei are looking better than full colonies.

RFC

ROWSE HONEY UPDATE

On Wednesday 13th June I met with Stuart Bailey, (Managing director), Brian Butcher, (Director) David Bond, (Operations director) and Nick Whiston (Processing manager). We spent an hour talking through current procedures for disposal of drums, broken jars and other items that may have a honey residue.

They explained changes that had been made in recent months with further improvements being looked into in order to implement even more.

A tour round the outside of the building revealed that the 'poor practice' of last autumn which had alarmed South Chilterns beekeepers was no longer the case. At that time bees were actively taking honey from the drums and discarded 'cut out' frames, easily accessible to the bees. Now, towards the end of the 'June gap' there were very few honeybees around.

One skip was now covered whilst only items with no honey residue could be disposed of in the other.

The management said that they could not be 100% certain that our bees could be totally safe but that they were reducing the opportunities for them. They were advising that bees within flying distance be moved further away as an additional precaution. This is something I feel reluctant to advise, as it should be possible to keep them within walking distance of beekeepers' homes!

I referred to other sites associated with Rowse Honey causing beekeepers concern. They said that they would look into these.

If you have concerns about your bees and the activities of Rowse Honey that you would like looking into, contact Stuart Bailey or if you would like me to take it up on your behalf please let me know.

Kate Malenczuk, South Chilterns

Collapsing Colonies: Research into the effects of electromagnetism on bees is ongoing at the University of Koblenz-Landau: Also keep up to date at:

<http://beebase.csl.gov.uk> look under public pages 'news and vacancies'

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

**Wokingham & Reading Agricultural Association.
Annual Show.**

HONEY CLASSES.

(In conjunction with Reading and District Beekeepers Association)

Judge Mrs Margaret Johnson.
(13 honey classes)

Sunday 19th August 2007.

Loddon Court Farm, Beech Hill Road,
SPENCERS WOOD, NR. READING.

Schedules will be available from your association secretary or from Jon. Davey. Tel 0118 975 0734. Berkshire beekeepers who have previously entered classes in the show will know it's an excellent opportunity to display our craft to the general public for a minimal outlay of 20p per entry, is great fun as part of a 'Great British Country Show' and with cash prizes.

This year the date has been put forward by 2 weeks to avoid clashing with 'Swallowfield' and being too close in date to 'Newbury.' The venue moves one extra left-turn along the A33 towards Basingstoke from previous years.

**THE SHOW DESERVES SUPPORT
FROM BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS!**

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Our second apiary visit took place at the Club's site in Hurst on 3rd June. David Geen is our apiarist and he is getting a good crop of honey that eventually will be sold to aid our funds. All the colonies seemed to be doing well and an interesting afternoon was spent going through each hive. We were pleased to have a new member, Deke Learoyd, attend and he is hopefully set up with some bees now.

The next meeting was at Peter Seagraves's home apiary and he has written up a report on the afternoon's work. The next apiary meeting will be at John Edwards's house on 12th August. Please let him know if you wish to attend and for directions if you do not know where he lives. His number is 0118 934 0238.

The Regional Bee Inspector, Pete Kennedy, inspected my one and only full colony on 1st July. Despite a shower when the hive was open, the bees were very docile and hardly any smoke was needed. The colony was given the all clear. I took the opportunity to transfer the colony into a clean brood box and replace two old frames with new foundation. A large ants' nest was found under the varroa mesh floor and so a new clean floor was also provided. The wet weather has not helped the bees get out much so the supers were not particularly full. The day before the inspection, I had placed a swarm in my apiary. Although this obviously had no brood, it was opened up and we found that the bees had already pulled out the best part of five frames of new foundation in just two days!

I keep my unused equipment in two stacks at the side of my garage and although there is no comb in the frames and they are clean and dry, they still smell of wax. A few bees investigate the stacks from time to time but imagine my surprise when a swarm started collecting around one of the stacks and eventually took up residence. Once they had settled down, I merely had to put a swarm collection box with a few frames of new foundation on the other stack and shake the bees in. That must be the easiest swarm I have ever had to deal with!

June's apiary visit was to Peter Seagraves's at Yateley. Peter is very fortunate to have his garden back on to Yateley Country Park and he has permission from his neighbour, the park ranger, to keep his bees on common land adjacent to his house behind a large hedge.

The visit was very well attended with 10 or so beekeepers of varying experience which helped to make a lively discussion of ideas and plans for this apiary. There were WBC's and Nationals and 3 Nucs plus a swarm to be hived. There was also one Queenless hive that needed attention.

The combination of options this gave was extraordinary and we obviously needed a plan. Plan A foundered at stage 2, hence Plan B. Plan B foundered at stage 1, so we continued to be adaptable up to Plan G (or was it H?). So after much discussion, we managed to get everything shipshape and everyone had a thoroughly entertaining and informative apiary visit.

We finished with bee chatter on the lawn with tea and homemade cakes kindly baked by Peter's wife, Diane, and Sylvia Smallbone.

What a pleasant way to spend a couple of hours on a Sunday afternoon. "We are looking forward to going to see John Edwards' bees on Sunday, August 12th at 2 pm" Call 01189 619631 for directions.

Secretary: Derek Porter Tel: 0118 979 0326

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Reading and District beekeepers have pleasure in reporting on two outings in June Viz:

Sunday 3rd June for our annual visit to Cyril Mc Combe's out-apiary at Cross Lanes Apple Farm Mapledurham which as a part of Cyril's 50 plus years as a beekeeper he has been beekeeper in residence for 30 years, supporting pollination of this the largest consumer-led apple farm in South Oxon, appreciated by people in our area for it's wide range of apples from the farm shop plus Cyril's honey also on sale there.

Cyril had a recent innovation which he showed us, a 'quarter-size' plastic dustbin about 50 litres capacity which he obtained locally for a very modest sum, it has a tight-fitting lid that Cyril had comprehensively drilled with appropriate size ventilation holes and had amazed a family who were troubled by a swarm by collecting same in a few moments, two days before, apparently all Cyril had to do was remove the bit of tape he had added to keep the lid from jarring loose, incline the bin against a hive entrance and they all marched sedately -in! The depth and smooth sides will have prevented the swarm from rocketing-up before the lid could be added and again the height made an ideal angle of incline for the bees to walk-up. This is a piece of kit we would all do well to copy!

As this collected swarm was a couple of days in situ only we didn't disturb them. Two National hives were opened, a recent inspection by our regional bee inspector had left the arrangement on one with one deep and two shallows below the excluder, Cyril was considering re-arranging this however, there were signs, with eggs and tiny brood, that the queen had been active in all three boxes so the arrangement was left for the time being. We then walked through this beautifully maintained orchard of young tree to the WBC hive. Again we found a nice looking colony, little chalk brood was seen but brood and eggs and all looking well with supers filling-up nicely.

We had a very pleasant and instructive visit and we welcomed several new friends who are considering taking-up the craft of beekeeping. In this writer's opinion they had an ideal morning to meet the bees and the beekeeper. With thanks to Cyril and to all who attended.

Our second meeting was on Sunday June 24th of June in conjunction with Wokingham and district beekeepers and members from South Chilterns association at Black Horse Apiaries, Woking. Reading Members have been maintaining close links with this excellent teaching apiary run by John Hamer which uniquely in our experience emphasizes bee-keeping in the urban environment on modest plots. The site is laid-out in glades with separated by high coniferous planting so new beekeepers can work intimately with a new colony before they take it home. Breeding nucs are here with John's Carniolian strain of bees, walking around with veil-up is the norm here.

John provided a splendid tea and gave a very important talk on method's he recommends in using oxalic acid to combat varroa and how this is the common factor on reported colony failures from many quarters.

With very many thanks to John Hamer and his team members and for receiving us on a Sunday. We had good weather during the out-doors part and were tucked-up cosily for tea when the rain began. Many of us met for a convivial pub lunch before we started and most people we spoke too had an excellent and instructive visit.

August Meeting.

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Blackburn cordially invite us to meet at 11-30AM on Sunday 12th August at their property at 28 Chazey Road Caversham. There are facilities for extraction and candle making which we hope to demonstrate plus a colony to examine. Chazey Road is easily reached via left turn off the A4074 (Wallingford Road) in Caversham; the turn is close to the Highmore Road (a right turn) where we hold our winter programme meetings. This will be of particular interest to our burgeoning number of new members and attendees. Look forward to seeing you there.

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

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Pyrethroid Resistance Test and Plant Sale
Saturday June 16th 2007

This month we gathered under an unsettled sky at our Chairman, Guy Simpson's apiary on the banks of the Thames, but the weather held out and we managed to accomplish the purpose of our visit. Unfortunately Guy himself was out of the country again, but proved to doubting newer members that he does actually exist by providing for us nobly, as we were to discover.

Guy has four multi-coloured hives in a lovely secluded location near the river. Reg and Linda had arrived over four hours earlier to open one hive and prepare the resistance test demonstration, but first we examined the remaining hives. Two were in good shape, but the remaining hive, normally gentle, was noticeably grumpy, as some of us discovered to our cost! The reason became clear when Reg started lifting frames. Only



sealed brood, one vacated queen cell and a number of sealed queen cells were present, indicating no laying queen. The best of these queen cells was left, just in case, and the hive was closed up again. Destroying all the cells would have risked leaving the hive hopelessly queenless in the event that the queen from the open cell had also flown or died, or had failed to mate.

The final part of the Pyrethroid resistance test was surprisingly quick and easy. Reg and Linda had already

trapped about 200 workers in a container designed for the purpose, together with a special Apistan strip. First we examined the sticky tape at the bottom to find the initial mite drop due to the pyrethroid on the strip. There were seven mites. The next step is to rinse the bees thoroughly in a washing up liquid solution, and the mites not affected by the pyrethroid are washed off, filtered out and counted.



This time the count was an easy job, as there were no more mites. Although this was not the result wanted for educational purposes, it was good news for Guy, as it means that the resistant mites already found in nearby areas have not yet reached his hives.

Finally we retired to a nearby village hall, where Guy had organised a very civilised meal for us out of the rain, which had mostly held off until this point. Over £60 was raised for club funds by the sale and auction of plants brought along by members.



Many thanks to Reg and Linda for spending most of their Saturday preparing for the demonstration, Guy for providing for us in his absence, Steve for standing in for him and all those who brought plants and helped with the sale and the food.

The next meeting will be the Summer Social Barbeque for members and guests, at Cookley Green Cricket Pavilion (map reference 694 904). Contact Lynn Penfold (01628 825 718) by August 11th to book.

Secretary: Phil Westwood – Tel: 07771 874284

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

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Our apiary visits are continuing to perplex, as most of us must be finding this year. The spring honey was removed and extracted, not so much as expected after all and luckily leaving enough to tide them over during the ensuing wet weather. The Dartington still has two colonies, one of which is building up quite nicely, but the other end not so much. Queen cells have been found in there, so maybe they are not happy with the queen, as there is plenty of room for her. The last apiary visit was again on a cool and overcast day and by the time we got to our strongest hive, normally quite placid, the bees left us in no doubt that they did not like being disturbed. Discretion being the better part of valour, another super was added and they were left in peace. With an activities session taking place nearby, it was decided to just give a cursory inspection to add supers if needed to the remaining hives. Hopefully the next visit will be a bit more informative on those.

In August we shall be meeting there on the 5th and 19th and then in September, on the 2nd, 16th and 30th. The season has been extended this year to share the load of the additional visits needed to prepare them for winter and to assist our newer beekeepers in this vital aspect of bee management. We hope that our more experienced beekeepers will continue with their support as they have so far this year, our newer members do find the help and advice invaluable. If you have not been there before, either our Chairman, Don Church, or Vice Chairman, Dennis Way will give directions - their numbers are on the annual Programme and will also let you know if the meeting has been cancelled should the weather continue as it has. We look forward to welcoming you along.

Tuesday, September 11th sees the start of our winter schedule of meetings at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor, SL4 1HZ. We commence with the usual Review of the Year, which gives everyone a chance to hear how his or her fellow beekeepers have fared over the season. A lot of useful information is gleaned at this meeting on how the local conditions have been influencing us, so this is one meeting not to be missed. We start at the normal time of 8pm.

The following month's meeting will be our Honey Show, when our produce is inspected and judged in front of us. This is a very informal Show and will give much information about preparation and showing, in addition to the competition amongst our members more proficient at showing. We have a Novice Class for those of you who have never won a prize before, so really hope that you will save a jar of your honey to enter in this class. There are also classes for comb honey, beeswax, candles and things made with honey. The schedule will be sent with next month's newsletter but if you need any further information, please contact me on the number below. This meeting starts earlier as there is always a lot to be done by our judge. Staging will start at 7pm and judging commences at 7.30.

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 Thorne's 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.

5—————6