



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

November 2007  
Number 615

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.

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

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

Web: <http://www.berkshirebeekeepers.btik.com/>

## Future Events

For the results of	The National Honey Show Go to	<a href="http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/">http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/</a>
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## THE APIARY in NOVEMBER

These days November is getting back to a former good reputation weather-wise. The old adage 'Indian summer' comes to us of course from the Americas and has been around long enough to mean the earlier colonies. New England where 'fall' means September.

Here we have to wait until well into October for our autumn-tints, even in this topsy-turvy season where many of us have seen a honey flow from blackberry in late August-September which has been welcomed after the disasters of late spring and high summer.

A long fine autumn extending well into November will mean our bees continuing to forage, especially in my case where there has been a population increase in the colonies in-line with the late nectar flow. This will mean ivy honey and all that it entails.

Ivy honey; combs full of sugar bullets and erratic behaviour of the extractor as the balance is thrown-out by combs with areas of granulated honey, yielding little on spinning interspaced with liquid honey. Ivy honey granulates quickest of all, and like rape honey bees have difficulty in breaking it down for winter-feed. Granular material left in the cells can be plainly seen on opening the hives in early spring. It's advisable not to leave too much in the hives over-winter where the bees would be largely reliant on this hard difficult to solubilize honey as stores. Particularly if you are on 'brood and a half' a substantial amount of ivy honey frames should be removed. Of course you'll have removed your Apistan and Apiguard by now: yes? If no, best not use this honey for culinary purposes.

Imbalance of sugars in winter-feed can cause bee dysentery and this is associated with hard granulated honey. Bees can only make cleansing flights on mild winter days so if you want to avoid the blackened comb characteristic of bee dysentery, heft the hives and remove the ivy frames. In a mild November it's not too late to feed a gallon-or two of heavy syrup. Apply it tepid in a warmed feeder. Wrap the feeder with some sacking or warm cloth and check in 3-4 days to see how they're taking it. Now what to do with all this ivy honey you've removed? Honey need never be wasted and it can be stored in the frames and fed to the bees in small amounts in early spring. Beekeepers I know who feed ivy honey to bees in this way say the bees do quite well on it. Visiting commercial beekeepers who give us talks have said the high volumes of ivy honey available to feed back to bees in this 'changing environment' of ours has slashed their annual sugar bill!

The sugars structure of granulated ivy honey is probably little different to fondant. Now about ivy honey for culinary use. Our commercial friends tell us that honey packers readily accept it if the price is right where they want to bottle set-honey, no doubt it can be blended. The strange 'sweetened porridge' organoleptic note does undoubtedly fade on prolonged ripening. Of course you will have to melt it out: try this method: -

Cut the combs from the frames as cleanly as possible and place in a plastic bowl, heat your electric oven to 50C (most will hold 50C fairly well at just below minimum setting where the thermostat is just about in function) a thermometer is helpful. Check after about 1-1/2 hours and see if the honey will wring out of the comb. The wax should be hand-hot and the honey liquid, wring into a honey bucket through sieves. The by-product is some fairly clean dry balls of wax that can be tossed into another bucket for cleaning-up.

Before closing I would like to refer to an important and challenging procedure that is facing-us at the winter equinox i.e. treatment of our colonies with oxalic acid to kill as high a proportion of varroa mites present in the hive as possible before their population can expand with the colony as the queen starts to lay for the new season. Please contact your Association secretary if you require a small amount of Oxalic Acid dihydrate and advice on how to proceed. The Internet is full of advice as well. Bee Craft council caution and not to 'over-dose' as damage to the malpighian tissues in bees has been found (i.e. the bee's kidneys) essentially you are sprinkling a teaspoon of solution in syrup over each seam of bees, with an absolute maximum of 40ml per strong colony; 20 ml per small colony. Look out for December's newsletter on this point. Also Slough Maidenhead and Windsor Association are offering a service to their members with this treatment.

Triad

**Collapsing Colonies:** Keep up to date at: <http://beebase.csl.gov.uk/> look under public pages 'news and vacancies'

SCIENTISTS investigating Colony Collapse Disorder have pinpointed Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus (IAPV) as a common factor in 96 per cent of affected hives. However, they are keen to point out that the work continues in the hunt for the cause of CCD, which has hit colonies in several countries, notably the USA.

## **I SEEM TO BELONG TO THREE ASSOCIATIONS, WHY?**

### **British Beekeepers Association (BBKA)**

This is the umbrella organisation

Its aims are:

#### **To promote and further the craft of beekeeping**

To promote public awareness and understanding of the importance of bees in the environment.

The official headquarters of the BBKA is at the National Agricultural Centre at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire. It is administered through Area Associations, which have been traditionally County based. In Berkshire, this is the **Federation of Berkshire Beekeepers Associations**. Within each area association are from one to twenty five **Local Associations**.

The Wokingham BKA, the Slough and Maidenhead BKA, the Reading BKA and the South Chilterns BKA are linked together forming the Federation of Berkshire Beekeepers Associations. Whilst each retains its autonomy they support each other and act together to fulfill their common regional aims. In the past the county committee was the only vehicle for communication with the BBKA.

The County secretary received all the information by snail mail and then had the onerous task of passing on all the news and affairs of the BBKA to the local secretaries who then had to relay it to individual members. With the advent of email, BBKA HQ can now communicate directly with local secretaries on matters of administration. News and views come through our doors bimonthly with BBKA NEWS.

All Berks beekeeping Associations organise events and attend shows that fulfil the aims stated by the BBKA.

In the past the Federation Associations have put on or attended very successful events of this nature within the County. In recent years the local groups have preferred to work on their own in their own patch. The Federation meeting in February is the statutory AGM that now moves annually round the member associations in an attempt to raise awareness of the Federation and its function. At this meeting new officers are elected. The council itself now only meets twice per year to plan events and identify needs.

The meetings of the Federation Council are vital in preparing for the BBKA Annual Delegates Meetings. The CV's of candidates for BBKA Executive committee places and propositions put forward by Area Associations for future actions of the BBKA executive are discussed to provide our delegate with a mandate to vote. Michael Sheasby, secretary of Slough and District Association will be our delegate.

We appreciate that most of you will feel that all this politics and committee stuff is a far cry from beekeeping but as beekeepers we do understand the value of bees and need a voice to protect bees and beekeeping both at National and European level. It provides for us the democratic element that enables grass roots members to have an input in BBKA policy. I have been very fortunate in being able to see much of the inside working of the BBKA. When I started beekeeping I was in awe of these "beekeeping executives". I was wrong. All these committee members are ordinary thinking people giving up their own time without payment, working to the best of their powers to keep beekeeping on track. Some discover they have amazing abilities; all make friends and feel that they are contributing to beekeeping and the environment. There is a great need for new blood in committees at all levels.

Please think about volunteering at local or county level. Remember the county exec, only meets twice a year (plus 2 or 3 events). Make your mark and someone will propose you for the BBKA executive and before you know it you could be president of the BBKA! BEWARE

*Courtesy of Sylvia Chamberlin (High Wycombe)*

### **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 & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

My holiday came up on me very quickly this year and in the few days before we left I overlooked sending in a contribution for the Newsletter for which I apologise. By all accounts, the apiary visits this year were generally well attended. We shall no doubt continue these meetings next year. I have had great difficulty booking speakers for our winter programme but I have now been able to fit them in to suit their availability.

The membership cards will have the details in the usual way and the cards will be distributed to all members when they pay their subscription. Please make an effort to attend the AGM on November 14<sup>th</sup>.

Secretary: Derek Porter Tel: 0118 979 0326

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

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Our first meeting of the winter schedule in September, the Review of the Year, was attended by the faithful few. Generally, experiences were similar over the past season, with the bees taking advantage of the short spells of good weather to attempt to multiply whenever possible and to gather in what they could, which then tided them over in the wet spells. Apart from one or two exceptions, the honey crop was not anywhere near the norm, at least not until September, when a large honey flow caught some of us unawares and left a solid mass of white granulated honey in a very short space of time. Could it really have been Ivy that early though? Hopefully, they can make use of this during the winter!

The AGM and Supper will take place this month, on Tuesday, the 13<sup>th</sup> of November and as usual we shall start at 8pm at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor, SL4 1HZ. Your current committee will be standing for re-election but we do welcome newcomers to our ranks and look forward to the vacancies that we have being filled this year. All nominations for both Committee and Officer positions need to have been sent to Michael by the 6<sup>th</sup> November. Do join us for the formalities and the Supper afterwards, when we have an opportunity to have a chat and to sample the delicacies on offer. Your contributions to this Supper table would be most welcome.

In December, a quiz and film evening is being planned, which will be on Tuesday, the 11<sup>th</sup> December. More details will follow in next month's newsletter, meanwhile, make a note in your diaries to leave the date free to come along and help make this a successful evening.

Our library is normally available at the meetings and there are still a few surplus books for sale, plus various information leaflets. We look forward to seeing everyone there.

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

## **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

### **Caversham Festival.**

Once again a very pleasant festival day on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September with welcome visits to our stand by beekeepers Old and new as well as interested members of the public, families and kids etc. Luckily we had some honey to sell along with our exhibits and literature as we sold-out very quickly. So thanks-be for the late blackberry honey harvest!

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September. Reading and district members with new friends at the last of our summer meetings gathered at the home of Reading members Mr. and Mrs. Tim Sheldon who have a country cottage nearby the Mapledurham estates. We boarded Tim's trailer and were towed in high spirits to a veritable 'Yeatsian bee loud glade' off a woodland path. There was some discussion as why so many bees were circling and flying in this manner but we decided they were just enjoying the sunshine in the glade.

Tim has Modified Dadant hives and the heavy MD frames in the brood box with their short lugs had our demonstrator Michael Blackburn puffing and blowing a bit. Tim had



some frame tongs available; note the photograph with them in use and the large amounts of stores at the top of the MD shallow frames in the brood box, below this wild comb, which is for drone to attract any varroa present. This is all new equipment and the bees look well and although Tim has removed some full supers, our demonstrator shook partially capped frames in the super of hive no 2 to check viscosity and some more frames were removed for extraction. Being new kit, the drawing-out by the bees was neat and tidy but

we did find a small patch of brace-comb which was capped drone. Examination showed varroa infestation of these in one case 4 developing mites on one drone body! This may be visible in the attached photo.



Some advice was tendered to move hive no 2 to a south facing position over-winter as the bees will start earlier and do better with a warm face to the hive. Tim has a few other hives over the estate however we bounced in the trailer back to Tim's splendid cottage garden where Mrs. Sheldon with daughter, friendly Spaniel and puppies awaited us with the barbeque! While basking in the sunshine later with a glass and food this writer heard that the bees had followed the trailer-back about half a mile and were intent on getting their honey back! However I continued to bask and more energetic bee-keepers soon had the frames secured under cover.

What a glorious way to end the summer season with many thanks to the Sheldon's and to all who participated.

**November Meeting.** Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> at Caversham Heights Methodist hall starting at 7.30PM is our annual General meeting. Followed by a slide show. Please do your utmost to attend the AGM and meet some of the new members who are happily joining Reading Association nowadays!

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

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

SCBKA Apiary Visit – Annette Cleaver's Apiary, Cookley Green, September 2007

September brought the final apiary visit of a difficult season, and a change of venue to the former SCBKA Secretary's new site in Cookley Green. Annette had sold her bees and hives last year, but started again from scratch in June with a couple of swarms, which she has housed in Smith hives. One of these colonies was gentle, but the other was a little defensive, and collecting the initial swarm in front of an audience apparently demanded a degree of stoicism in order not to lose face!

Reg Hook opened the hives for an end of season check, with Linda Clarke smoking. The colonies had not yet built up to full size, but were doing well in a very pleasant location near the cricket ground, and had a good brood pattern. One hive had a top feeder with a rim around its base over the top bee space hive, giving a half-inch gap, which the bees had filled with brace-comb. A tasting determined that it was ivy nectar that the bees were bringing in at a fair rate.

Reg explained that it was important to make sure that the bees had enough stores to survive the winter. At least 50 lb are recommended for a full size colony, but for these new colonies, being smaller than this, a lesser amount would be sufficient. He demonstrated how to 'heft' the hive from each side to assess the weight, allowing for the weight of the hive and frame parts. The entrances of the hives were reduced to assist the bees in defending these stores against wasps and robber bees. This is also a good time to check that the hive is sound and weather-tight and that the bees are free of disease.

Because pyrethroid resistant mites have reached this area, Annette had decided to use Apiguard trays, rather than Apistan strips. These contain thymol instead of the artificial pyrethroids of the strips. This evaporates gradually and permeates the hive, but an empty super or shallow eke is needed over the frames to accommodate the tray. Both hives had previously been given top feeders for sugar syrup, and Reg decided to leave these in place and hold back the treatment for a while.

The weather was as good as it gets in September, the location was quiet and peaceful and the attendance was good, with an interesting mix of beekeepers of all ages and levels of experience. This made our relaxed and well-provisioned post-inspection tea at the Cricket Pavilion a real pleasure with which to end the season. Thanks to Annette for the use of her apiary and for making the arrangements, Linda for organising and smoking, Reg for his expertise, and all those who helped in preparing and setting up the food and tables.

The next meeting is a talk on 'Re-queening – Choice or Chance', by Ian Homer, Regional Bee Inspector, at 7.30 pm, November 21st at Langtree Community Centre, Langtree School, Woodcote.

Secretary: Phil Westwood – Tel: 07771 874284

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

**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 8PN. Telephone: - (0118) 947 9450/5451