



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

February 2008
Number 617

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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

Sunday February 10 th	Associations Day 2008, Stockcross	Apply to your own Secretary
Wednesday February 20 th	Norman Carreck at Woodcote	See below
April 18 th – 20 th	BBKA Spring Convention	Tel/Fax 023 08775445

THE APIARY in FEBRUARY.

If you look out of the window at this time of the year, nothing seems to be stirring. You would think everything was huddled up hibernating and waiting for the spring. Not so the queen bee. She has already started laying so that her work force will be up to scratch as soon as the weather warms up. There's not much we can do to help except make sure all our kit is clean, tidy and ready to go as well.

It is quite a good time to leaf through our bee books. It might help us to understand what we did wrong and (less likely) to tell us what we did right last summer with its peculiar weather. There are quite a few bee books about – Northern Books are good stockists of new and second hand and Amazon also sell books about beekeeping at very keen prices

One of my favourites is Clive do Bruyn's "Practical Guide to Beekeeping". It is well written and a pleasure to read apart from being an excellent guidebook. In the 'Teach Yourself' series there is a handbook of the craft: There is also Robert Couston's "Principles of Practical Beekeeping". Ron Brown's "Honey Bees: a Guide to Management" is very useful and his "Beekeeping: A Seasonal Guide" is a good handbook as its title suggests. C F Davis has also written a couple of books which are helpful: "Honeybees: Inside and Out" and its sequel, "Round and About". Ted Hooper's "Guide to Bees and Honey", Edwin Way Teale's "The Golden Throng" are worth reading and so is B Wilson's "The Hive: the Story of the Honeybee and Us" which gives an insight into the life in the hive.

Many beekeepers will agree that any book by Eva Crane is worth owning

She became interested in bees in 1942 when she was about 30 when she was given a hive as a wedding present. Keeping bees was regarded as a contribution to the war effort.

After the War she gave up teaching and devoted herself to encouraging the development of the craft in tropical countries. She established the Bee Research Association (Now the International Bee Research Association), which undertook the mission "to increase awareness of the vital role of bees in the environment and to encourage the use of bees as wealth creators". She travelled all over the world lecturing and advising on beekeeping.

She wrote many books, articles and scientific papers on bees, honey and beekeeping here and abroad. Among them are the fascinating "The Archaeology of Beekeeping", "Honey: a Comprehensive Survey", "A Book of Honey" and the monumental classic "The World History of Beekeeping and Honey Hunting" She also wrote a book about her travels - "Making a Bee Line" One of her most recent researches has been into bee boles in Cumbria,

Eva Crane died last summer at the age of 95

Triad

Collapsing Colonies:

Disappearing disease is mentioned in A I Root's ABCandXYZ of Bee Culture circa 1908 and also in Herod-Hempsall's Beekeeping New and Old (1934) so it is nothing new. However, the spread of Varroa seems to be accompanied by a rapid increase in the incidence of this disease, now known as CCD. Heavy losses have reported in the Federation area and in Bucks and Oxon. We are awaiting the results of twenty samples sent to CSL from South Chilterns.

All beekeepers are invited to hear

Norman Carreck, formerly of Rothamsted, who will be updating us about problems in the hive, particularly Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). In view of the problems in our area it is anticipated that the audience will be larger than usual therefore a hall with greater capacity (Woodcote Village Hall) has been booked. Entry will be free and there is a large car park available and is almost next door to the normal meeting place.

. Wednesday February 20th
Woodcote Village Hall, Reading Road, Woodcote RG8 0QY, directions at
<http://woodcote.org/villagehall/>

The DEFRA website is: - <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

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Winter Meeting, 21st November 2007 - Re-queening - Choice or Chance? By Ian Homer

Our first guest speaker of the winter gave us all a great deal to think about in the planning the management of our apiaries for the next season. Ian Homer is the Regional Bee Inspector for our area, and an advocate of native bees. He is always a welcome guest at our meetings, and on this occasion his wife, Ruth, who is also a very knowledgeable beekeeper, accompanied him.

Ian started off by determining that most of those present allowed their colonies to arrange their own re-queening. He believes that a young, vigorous queen is essential for a successful colony, and showed us evidence that a queen's laying rate will approximately halve for each year of her life.

Evidence of a failing queen may include a high proportion of drone cells as she runs out of stored sperm, patchy brood as the laying rate decreases (also sometimes caused by disease), irritable bees as the her production of the queen pheromone 9-ODA decreases and swarming.

We were also introduced to a most memorable quotation from bee researcher Mark Winston: 'Swarming is a multifactoral, threshold controlled concept'. So now you know!

Good planning and preparation well in advance best accomplish **Voluntary re-queening**, where the beekeeper, not the bees, make the decisions. An ability to read the signs in the colony is also a help. Ian presented us with a great deal of useful information on the best ways to achieve successful re-queening, discussing methods of introducing queens, the pros and cons of re-queening at different times of the year, what state the hive and bees should be in, what combinations of queen and worker races work best and many other factors. He also listed the desirable characteristics of an ideal queen and some of the implications of bee genetics.

In all Ian covered far more useful information than I can possibly detail here, and I, for one, took copious notes to inform my planning for the next season. Almost as an aside, he aired his opinion that the poor mating success reported by beekeepers recently is due to elimination of feral colonies by varroa, which reduces the number and genetic variation of drones in local drone congregations, and thereby both limits the number of matings of individual queens and increases the level of inbreeding occurring.

This was an excellent start to our winter programme of talks, and set a high standard for subsequent speakers to meet. Many thanks to Ian and Ruth for undertaking a long journey to be with us.

SCBKA Christmas Meeting

12th December 2008

Our Christmas meeting this year began with a talk from a local beekeeper, Bob Hunter of the High Wycombe Beekeepers Association. Bob has kept bees for nearly 50 years, and has been on the committee of the HWBKA for 46. He gave us a fascinating account of his life with bees, starting with his first sight of his father's friend's bees at the age of 9 in his home county of Sussex, helping a neighbour move hives in an old Austin 7 convertible and trailer at 13 (getting his first stings in the process) and starting himself in his early 20s with those same WBC hives. He now has 18 Nationals. Bob was also a seasonal bee inspector for 20 years and told us about some of his funny experiences visiting other people's apiaries.

Bob then took us through his method of keeping bees. He emphasised the great importance of 'bedding down' properly in the winter to ensure a good harvest the following year.

He winters his bees on a National brood and a half, with a queen excluder between them and, despite the received wisdom, has never lost a colony yet due to a queen being left below when the cluster moves up into the super.

He has even used up solid rapeseed honeycomb in the super without problems. He often uses the last, part filled super of the year as the one left on top, hefts the hives, and exchanges comb if necessary, to ensure they are all heavy enough. Bob always uses a mouse guard and, to discourage woodpeckers, he wraps the hive in the plastic film used to bale hay when the first frosts come. In the spring he knows the bees are fine when he sees pollen going in. He removes the mouse guard as soon as the bees are active to stop too much pollen being knocked off.

In the summer he uses just one brood box, for ease of lifting, and starts getting supers on as early as possible. He thinks this is the best method for the single-handed amateur. "The best size hive is one you can lift."

Bob explained that he doesn't believe that non-swarming bees exist, but discussed several ways of minimizing swarming. He raises all his queens from swarm cells by splitting a colony preparing to swarm into three, four or even five separate colonies. He has found that if just two cells are left the colony rarely swarms.

During an excellent Christmas spread following the talk we held the traditional raffle for the Association funds.

Many thanks to Bob Hunter for a very entertaining talk, and to Lynn Penfold and everyone who helped with the food and raffle.

The next talk will be Norman Carreck on 'Varroa, Disease and Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD)' on Wednesday February 20th, 2008.

Due to the anticipated attendance, the venue has been changed from the advertised Langtree Community Centre where we usually meet, to the larger Woodcote Village Hall, Reading Road, Woodcote, RG8 0QY. (Next door) This is on the same road as the Langtree School. More details of the hall can be found at <http://woodcote.org/villagehall/>.

Phil Westwood SCBKA Secretary

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

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Thursday 8th November was Reading and District Beekeepers Association's Annual General Meeting with a good turnout from members, which was much appreciated. The current officers and committee members were largely re-elected. Trophies for the Honey show were presented. The best effort this season was undoubtedly Julia Crosthwaite who with four entries in the honey show obtained four firsts! Winning the William Main Cup for lady beekeepers from the current holder Hazel Blackburn. Jon Davey won the Maurice Dixon cup for best male and retained The Reading Plattern for highest number of points overall. The Geoffrey Nicholson cup for best exhibit by a novice beekeeper was un-awarded but with the good number of new members Reading beekeepers have high hopes of awarding this next year.

With the AGM speedily concluded Hazel Blackburn gave a slide show with some slides hired from The BBKA plus some from the association's own collection. First selection illustrated preparation of fondant at home showing easy techniques to prepare this for winter-feeding. Also illustrations of woodpecker damage and netting used to try to protect hives, one of which showed an unlucky green woodpecker entangled. The third selection of slides showed the detailed structure brood and honey comb in section and blossoms favoured by honey bees giving characteristic honies. A very good session following-on from the AGM.

January Activities of Reading and District Beekeepers. We have pleasure to invite, members, partners, friends and fellow beekeepers to participate in our Annual Dinner. This will be at the Shoulder Of Mutton at Playhatch in the evening on Thursday 24th January. Their food has received favourable reviews in the 'Reading Evening Post' and has a reasonably priced alternatives table d'hote menu. Look out for your menu and 'choices' booking form, we would appreciate a prompt response so we can ensure booking etc for numbers required.

On Thursday 13th December we had an excellent attendance including neighbouring beekeepers for a talk and demonstration by west Berks beekeeper Rob Nicklass accompanied by wife Jo. Although an IT professional Rob and Jo are from a farming background and have acreage with livestock and over a couple of years only have built-up an inventory of twenty plus colonies, mainly Dadant hives. Such enterprise has led the energetic and highly motivated couple to construct their own beekeeping equipment and hive elements from wood, much of which Rob appears to have been able to salvage.

Rob had bought along a sturdy hive stand of his own manufacture, made from building wood leftovers, pressure treated and with materials costing less a few pounds only, his own designed five frame nucleus, double sided crown boards, a Horsley board, the mysteries of use of which Rob was well-able to explain and demonstrate. A demonstration of frame construction using a suitable electric nail-gun and other tools Rob uses were available for examination. Rob also had some slides, which showed the Nicklass's display of honies, beeswax candles and cosmetics made by Jo. Which are sold during the season. The Nicklass's are members of Newbury and Vale and Downland (Wantage) associations, as there are prospects of both of these re-joining the BBKA in 2008 there will be an undoubted enrichment there by having such people as the Nicklass's as affiliated members!

One of Rob's structures was an excellent looking 2-bucket honey warming cabinet using 2X60 watt bulbs as a heat source, switched-on during the demonstration we lost no time in warming the mince pies for this our Christmas meeting! A good well attended meeting with amazing people talking and demonstrating to us.

February meeting is at our usual venue at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall on Thursday 14th February, 7-30 PM sharp for a talk and demonstration by Martin Buckle on beeswax modelling and skep making. Look forward to seeing you there!

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

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Our December meeting was a 'Home Grown' evening, much enjoyed by those attending. The Bee Quiz questions had been compiled from various BeeCraft quizzes provided by Bernhard Schumann and were presented by our Secretary, Michael Sheasby. The members of the winning team were presented with boxes of chocolates and this was followed by a short session of videos made and presented by Harry Peace.

The delicious refreshments of freshly made waffles and mulled wine, which accompanied the videos, were prepared by Anne-Marie Chakravarty and lent a very festive air to the occasion. Our thanks go to everyone involved in making the evening such a success.

This month, we have the Southern Region Associations Day at Stockcross on Sunday the 10th February, which has been described as a 'most worthwhile day' and 'an event not to be missed', is free and open to all beekeepers. If you would like to attend, please contact Michael Sheasby for further details. There may well be several spaces available in shared transportation too.

This will be followed by our meeting on Tuesday, the 12th February, when we shall be having a talk and demonstration on candle making and wax products by Derek Porter, of Wokingham Beekeepers. Derek has much experience in the art of showing and stood in at short notice as judge at our Honey Show in October, so this will be mainly with an eye to show preparation, but there will no doubt be much good advice on the preparation of wax products for sale too. It will commence at the usual time of 8pm at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor, SL4 1HZ. We do hope you will all come along to support this meeting.

In March, on Tuesday the 11th, we will be welcoming Pete Kennedy, who was appointed the Seasonal Inspector for the Berkshire, South Bucks and North East Hampshire areas of our Region last year and will be talking to us on 'The Beekeeping Season through the eyes of a Seasonal Bee Inspector'. Pete will most likely be the person who will make contact with you should you have any concerns about your bees. Do make a note in your diaries now to come along and meet him.

The new programme for 2008 has now been distributed but those of you on e-mail who would like the traditional hard-copy can pick one up at these meetings. Our library is also normally available and there are still a few surplus books for sale, plus various information leaflets. We look forward to seeing you all there.

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

No contribution

Secretary: Derek Porter Tel: 0118 979 0326

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

For sale: One Edelstahl Rost Frei (Stainless Steel) ripening tank 53cm high x 32cm diameter plus 2 sieves. All in good condition £155. Tel. 0118 901 6898 (Twyford on A4)

One plastic Ripening Tank 53cm high x 39cm diameter, plus straining bag. In fair condition. £21. Tel: 0118 901 6898 (Twyford on A4)

BBKA NEWS – MATTERS OF INTEREST

BBKA News, which should be received every second month by every beekeeping member of the federated associations in Berkshire, may appear to some to be a dry and somewhat technical read. The small size of print may also put off some readers.

In fact, considerable strides have been made to improve the content of BBKA News and to make it more interesting and useful to beekeepers. It includes:

- News of the important steps being taken by the BBKA to lobby government, usually via DEFRA, to maintain central research into bee diseases and parasites and not to cut its bee inspection services
- Practical seasonal tips to beekeepers
- Technical articles on bee diseases/parasites, CCD, queen rearing and many other topical subjects over the course of the year
- News of BBKA events including the Annual Delegates Meeting, Annual Forum, Spring Convention, etc.
- Guidance on insurance, examinations and other topical matters.

On the front page of each edition of BBKA News there is an index of the contents, headed 'In this Issue', designed to help the reader find items of interest.

In future, I will endeavour, through the Berkshire Newsletter, to draw readers' attention to those BBKA News articles that should be of general interest to most members.

In the December 2007 edition (No: 168), the following caught my eye:

- Page 1 – an update from the BBKA's excellent Chairman, Tim Lovett, on the BBKA's lobbying activities. In this, he refers to the BBKA's very comprehensive Research Colloquium which was covered in the August edition of BBKA News. This is major new initiative that will increasingly engage associations and their members nationwide.
- On Page 2, the 'Chairman's Letter' provides further updates on BBKA activities in support of its members.
- Page 2 also includes a regular article headed 'Inside Your Hive' in which useful tips on bee husbandry are provided in each edition.
- Page 12 features the upcoming Spring Convention programme and a short article on All Risks Insurance.
- Pages 13 and 14 provide some very helpful information and guidance on the Basic Certificate exam. Any beekeeper with two year's experience should be able, with a bit of application, to gain this qualification. Associations are being urged to encourage their members to take the Basic and Berkshire, for the first time in many years, is able to claim one member who passed in 2007. Congratulations to Simon Tattersfield of the Slough & District BKS. How about one each from the other three Berkshire associations in 2008?

There is lots of other interesting content, so please get into the habit of reading BBKA News and I will endeavour to provide further tips on items of wider interest as further editions of BBKA News are published.

Michael Sheasby