



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

March 2008
Number 618

Hon. Secretary:
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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

April 18 th – 20 th	BBKA Spring Convention	Tel/Fax 023 08775445
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THE APIARY in MARCH

March the first spring month is a crucial one for our honey bee colonies, there may not be the so many obvious signs as mid and late spring but what happens in this month where we hope for good early build-up of our colonies depends on how we apiarists monitor and minister to our bee colonies and above-all that with which March may be most turbulent: the weather!

This writer has checked long-range forecasts for March at time of writing, Bracknell's finest seem to be saying "changeable" thanks, we could have predicted-that ourselves so perhaps we'd best take the oldest advise about March weather viz. March comes-in like a lion and goes out like a lamb'

We need to take an assessment of stores in our hives early in March. We may have fondant-fed in February; in milder conditions we can feed light syrup. i.e. 1lb of cane sugar (Tate & Lyle) to a pint of water. Hefting hives to assess the weight. Opening-up and checking where the bees-are a quick –look in early March on a mild day. If they are high up against the crown-board, perhaps excavating in the remnants of your fondant, then a modest feed of light-syrup. This beekeepers has gone-off Jiffy Feeders after some unexplained drownings in the Autumn, there must have been quite a crush to feed! Contact feeders for me this March. If you don't have contact feeders, 'coffee jar feeders' work-well. Just one small hole punched in the top enough to hold a meniscus of syrup. Then if there's poor weather in early March with little forage bees can at least take concentrated sugars into the hive. Metal-lidded coffee jars are a rarity these days. Continental pickle jars, often 1 litre with a screw metal-lid are worth saving for this purpose. Wash the jar and lid well, preferably on a full washing machine programme to remove the dill-weed and garlic taints commonly found in these products.

During these 'lion weeks' we can help the bees save energy by using a quilt over the crown board. This writer has seen beekeeping in Scotland and quilts are a must to build-up a colony further north in March; also the entry-block to reduce the airflow and heat loss. Talking or quilt's you can buy high-tech quilts with foil surfaces but the tradition and well-worth saving if you can still-find some is the wool-felt underlay that was so familiar decades ago. Cut to shape, you can cut an aperture flap to go over a crown-board port for your 'coffee jar feeder'! Of course beekeepers that as a part of 'integrated pest management' who are on mesh floors are reporting slower population build-ups in spring, which is hardly surprising

Talking of integrated pest management, we mean varroa mainly; many of us will have dosed our hives with oxalic acid during the winter for the first time. Information from teaching apiaries also available on the internet has advised 15 g in 1 litre of water and 1 kilo of sugar i.e. 1.5% in 50:50 sugar water solution with strict advice as to maximum 40 ml. for a strong colony and 20 ml. for a weak one. BBKA newsletter reported on malpighian damage attributed to oxalic acid and counselled caution. Now shock-horror Bee Craft is publishing statistics of a dilutions of 3.5-4.5% and to quote "Oxalic acid for trickling is available commercially in 6% solution" (perhaps just in water). Having dosed a number of hives during January and got well stuck-up with this acidic syrup inside my 'marigolds' I can confirm that scratches in the skin sting and the sensation persists for up to 24 hours despite washing. We know that bees have a tough exoskeleton but any bee punctured by varroa must feel-it and what it does to the soft body of a bee larva? Well! I'm glad I dosed to earlier advice. The results will become apparent in the spring. What we will be looking-for is a vigorous population build-up, no unexplained bee corpses around the flight-line or deformed -wings i.e. ideal spring characteristics not showing signs of bee-virus spreading rapidly throughout the colony vectored by varroa.

Now to the 'lamb months'.

Swarm-cells in March are by no-means unknown. So second half of March in mild weather, open-up the brood-box. If the population is modest it's an ideal time to find and assess your queen. If conditions are right, hive housekeeping such as floor scraping, mesh cleaning etc. Treat warm-weeks in March as though it were mid-spring, i.e. open and check for queen cells. Syrup feeding under these conditions should be curtailed. Too much, you can stimulate the bees to early swarm-cell production. Excess honey in the hive derived from sucrose may mean your honey will infringe the maximum 'sucrose levels permitted for table honey' i.e. 10%. Remember you feed bees only to augment their honey stores if it's needed. Think ahead and have boxes and frames ready, try to reserve some deep frames with clean drawn-out comb if possible as well as with foundation. Because next comes swarming and colony dividing time!

Triad

Collapsing Colonies:

Losses of colonies, particularly in South Oxfordshire continue and there are suggestions (un-confirmed) that Israeli paralysis virus has been found in this country. At the time of writing we have not heard the results of tests on samples sent from this area, so, what to do with the frames and honey that are left? It is certainly not wise to re-use anything that could possibly hold any residue of disease. In the absence of any direction from CSL wax and honey should be melted down and frames, if re-used, should be thoroughly sterilized, heat will kill most viruses so sterilized honey could be fed to other colonies. Remember that by statute, foul brood must be dealt with by CSL and American foul brood must be destroyed by fire.

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

**NEWBURY ASSOCIATION invites all beekeepers to their meeting
DNA and bees by Professor Stuart Reynolds**

**Friday 14th March 2008 at 7.30 pm
Hampstead Norreys village hall, near Newbury, Berkshire**

This is to confirm the invitation by Newbury Beekeepers' Association to the 26th annual Leaver Memorial Lecture, which will be given by Dr Stuart Reynolds who is Professor of Biology at the University of Bath.

We have had to change the location for this lecture. It will be given in Hampstead Norreys village hall instead of the initial booking at Stockcross. I regret any inconvenience that this change may cause. From experience of lost travellers I hope you'll pardon me emphasising that we shall not be in Hampstead Marshall but in **Hampstead Norreys**. The lecture will be held at the village hall, Newbury Hill, Hampstead Norreys, RG18 0TR.

Directions:-

- Coming from the A34 or M4, take the Chieveley exit and follow signs along the B4009 for Hermitage and then Hampstead Norreys.
- Coming from Newbury on the B4009, enter the village over a railway bridge and the entrance to the Hall is immediately on your right.
- Coming from Compton, pass the first entrance to the village and turn left at the second signpost. This takes you over a railway bridge and the entrance to the Hall is immediately on your right.
- Coming from Streatley on the B4009 or from Yattendon, come through the centre of the village, past the pub and the church, and bear left at the mini-roundabout. Go up the hill past the school and the entrance to the Hall is on your left.

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Reading and District Beekeepers and family members met at 'The Shoulder of Mutton' Playhatch on 24th January for our annual dinner. Where the food has received good reviews in the local press. We had the conservatory to ourselves and had prompt and polite service, which put us in a good mood to talk the evening-away on beekeeping and beekeepers. The food was very acceptable with the desserts being even better!

March Meeting. On the occasion of our 'Flood Memorial Lecture' Reading and District Beekeepers will be joining Newbury Beekeepers for their 'Lever Lecture'. This is given by Dr. Stuart Reynolds who is a professor in the biology and biochemistry department at The University of Bath. The subject is 'DNA and bees' this is at 7.30PM on FRIDAY 14th March at S Hampstead Norreys Village Hall Near Newbury and easily reached via M4 and A34. Anyone requiring directions please contact Jon. Davey or Michael Blackburn. Some lifts will be available if required. Do come we always have an excellent reception from Newbury Beekeepers.

Secretary: Mr. R. Kiff, Tel. 0118 966 5358

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Our annual dinner in January was well attended again; we all enjoyed the food and company, though the fact that it was the last visit to the Aurora Garden Hotel before its closure, presents us with a dilemma for next year's venue. If any of you have a suggestion for an alternative one, it would be much appreciated. Our thanks go to Don Church for organizing it again; please contact him on his number as shown below with any suggestions for next year.

The announcement was also made at the dinner that our Secretary, Michael Sheasby, was elected onto the Executive Committee of the BBKA at the Annual Delegates Meeting in January and I'm sure that we all wish him well in his new role.

This month also sees the start of the Apiary visits, on Sunday, the 30th March at 2.30pm at the Society's apiary in Fulmer. This will give the opportunity to see how the bees have over-wintered and what needs doing to get them under way for the new season as quickly as possible. Directions can be obtained from the numbers below or any other member of the committee shown on your programme.

This year, the meetings will again be led on a rota system in the absence of a permanent Apiary Supervisor. Our former Supervisor, Jim Cooper will be keeping a weather eye on things from a distance as his work and family commitments prevent closer involvement, but we do thank him for co-ordinating the rota. Volunteers, both for the permanent position or as leader or reserve would be very much welcomed. The visits in April will be on the 13th and 27th.

Our final meeting in Windsor for this winter, on Tuesday the 8th April, will be attended by John Hendrie of BIBBA, who will be talking on the subject of 'Queen Rearing for the Amateur Beekeeper'. At a time when successful raising and mating of queens ourselves has become something of a major problem in recent seasons, this should be a very popular evening, containing some very useful and timely advice. Please mark your calendars and come along if at all possible.

In future, only a small selection of our library books will be available at the meetings, mostly those of interest to the newer beekeepers amongst us. However, members have been circulated with the full list of books and they will still be available on request, please contact Don Church on 01753 831939 to make arrangements. There are also a few surplus books for sale, plus various information leaflets.

Finally, the website www.wherecanwego.com contains details of our regular meetings. Just put in SL4 and check the 'free of charge to all' box before searching.

Newsletter items: - Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

The meeting in January was a departure from the normal style of affair. Instead of a speaker at the front to make a presentation and answer questions, we arranged the seats in a circle and opened the floor to anyone who wanted to ask or answer a question, or just express an opinion. We weren't sure how this would work, or how long it would take to run out of opinions, but we should have had more faith. As I have heard it said, for any group of x beekeepers, there are x+1 opinions on how to do anything.

Questions were many and varied, and ranged from the expected varroa and CCD problems, how to move hives and which are the best varieties of bees to keep, through to which are the best three bee books, what smells and materials do bees most dislike (moist acrylic underwear apparently), are bees dangerous to puppies and what are the best hives for ease of handling? Other issues arose of which individual members present had personal experience, such as the use of glass quilts and Polyurethane hives, and strong opinions were aired on the ultimate purpose and philosophy of keeping bees.

A good number of people turned up, of all levels of experience, and it was an informative and good-humoured evening. Most people joined in with their opinions and experiences, and as well as enabling us to pick the brains of our more experienced members, it satisfied that irresistible urge well known to all beekeepers' long-suffering family and friends ... to talk bees.

Our next meeting will be a talk from Dr Max Watkins, who will be talking on Vita (Europe) products on Wednesday 19th March. This will be back at Langtree Community Centre again. Before that, however, we have the Annual Dinner at the Maltsters Arms, Rotherfield Greys. This is always a good evening, particularly for new members who want to get to know everyone. Contact the Social Secretary, Lynn Penfold, on 01628 825 718 for more details.

Phil Westwood SCBKA Secretary

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Firstly, my apologies for the absence of a contribution in the last issue but with the pre-Christmas rush and also being away over the New Year break, I overlooked the deadline. So to catch up on what has taken place since October, the AGM in November was very well attended and all the officers needed were elected or re-elected as the case may be. We had an interesting forum ably led by our apiarist, David Geen, in which members were able to put questions and obtain useful advice.

On December 12th, we were treated a most interesting illustrated talk by Marlies Fell from Bracknell District Council. She deals with the care of plants and trees within the District's boundaries particularly in relation to planning applications that may have an impact on them. She showed slides of the flora that needs to be protected from the developments. The Peacock Farm estate was a case in point where small areas of woodland are provided with a buffer zone around them.

On January 8th, we welcomed Rachele de Felice who is a student at Oxford University. Although she is not a beekeeper, she is involved with Oxfam in helping people in a small village in northern Albania to set up bee hives as a means of providing employment, mainly to the women, and obtaining an income from honey sales. Her presentation included pictures of the bottles in which honey is sold. These are usually bottles which have been used for other food products and hence are not really suitable for honey because some of them have narrow necks which makes it difficult to remove the honey once it has set other than by warming the honey. She is also involved in raising money to help rebuild a bridge which linked two parts of a village. The bridge was swept away by a flood and so the residents have to brave a narrow strip of metal to get across the river. Work has started to provide a new bridge which will also be suitable for vehicular traffic but more money is needed. If you would like more details, have a look at her website www.albaniabridge.co.uk If other associations would like to book her, she is happy to come along but as she does not have a car, she needs to be picked up from the nearest railway station to where you meet. She charges a modest fee. Her telephone number is 0785 528 5995.

We will be arranging the dates for the summer visits to members' apiaries in the near future. If you would like your apiary to be included, please let me know.

Secretary: Derek Porter Tel: 0118 979 0326

BBKA NEWS – HIGHLIGHTS

The February edition of BBKA News included the following articles which should be of interest to members:

Practical beekeeping:

- Inside your hive – seasonal tips (see page 2)
- Hive weighing – an easy alternative (page 4)

- Spring feeding – myth or reality (page 5)
- Using powdered sugar to monitor and reduce varroa population (page 9)
- Taking the Basic exam – the 2nd article in this useful series (page 19)
- Diary of a new beekeeper (page 14)
- New leaflets on beekeeping (page 21)

Ideas for Associations:

- Chesterfield Beekeepers in a spin (page 16)
- Bumble Bees increase the WOW factor (page 17)
- The Buzz is Back – National Insect Week 2008 (page 18)

Updates on BBKA actions at national level:

- DEFRA – aware, alerted but impotent! (page 1)
- Chairman's Letter – summarises major actions of the past two years (page 2)
- Aux armes! - the fight for research is at hand (page 13)
- Annual Bee Meeting at the Central Science Laboratory (page 15)
- 'Traffic light' labelling of honey for sale (page 210)
- Spring Convention – get your skates on (page 24)

Rather more technical articles:

- Africanised bees – a threat to the UK? (page 3)
- Climate change – some implications for beekeepers (page 7)
- Should BBKA endorse spray products from chemical companies? (page 10)
- Pollen – the super food (page 11)
- Some thoughts on microscopy (page 20)

There is something of interest for everyone in BBKA News!

Michael Sheasby – Slough BKS and BBKA Executive Committee

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)