



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

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April 2008
Number 619

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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 APRIL

Following a mild February, colonies coming into spring in good condition can be expected to be very advanced for the time of year. This will be an opportunity to recoup the over-winter losses that many beekeepers have sustained.

It is not unknown for some colonies to be short of stores at this time, especially after a good early nectar flow and too much honey has been removed (this does happen). It is said that "nature pays her debts" therefore, take swarm reduction measures, this may mean enlisting the help or advice of a more experienced beekeeper, swarms cannot always be prevented, after all it is nature's way of perpetuating the species, so be prepared for swarms, maybe your own or someone else's.

Doubtful old combs and frames? **Replace them.** The rate of increase in the Varroa population is actually slowed down if you keep your combs fresh; it also helps the bees to keep the incidence of disease to a minimum. 'Keep your equipment clean and fresh' is the advice given by the National Bee Unit. Keep a record and make sure that your brood comb is systematically replaced over at least every three or four years.

Early spring is a good time to mark your queens because there are fewer bees about so the queen is easier to find. She can be trapped in a little press-in cage and marked on the thorax with a dab of Tippex. This method protects her vulnerable abdomen.

Try to keep ahead of your bees and add supers in good time, i.e. when the previous super is half full. To allow the bees to complete a super before adding another, or not giving enough room to contain the bees, can cause overcrowding and consequently swarming. In these circumstances swarms sometimes emerge without leaving a queen cell in the hive, but do not panic, let nature take its course. Emergency queen cells will be raised, after six to eight days, check for queen cells, if only one, leave it, otherwise remove all but the least advanced cell. If a queen emerges at twelve days or less she is unlikely to be satisfactory so steps must be taken to replace her. The bees themselves usually supersede any resulting poor queens, be prepared to replace them if this does not happen.

Rape honey should be extracted as soon as it is sealed otherwise it will set in the comb but make sure that sufficient stores remain for the bees needs. Cut out and melt any honey that is set in the comb. When cutting out, leave a strip as a starter and put the super back to be re-filled. It is sometimes difficult to get the balance right.

Triad

The bees that dwelt in stately halls

Quite by accident, the writer, during a weekend in Gloucestershire, came across what could only be described as a stately home for bees. Although well known to many beekeepers, the bee shelter in Hartpury churchyard, North West of Gloucester, came as a complete surprise.

One could only marvel at this exuberant confection of carved Cotswold limestone, designed to accommodate 24 straw skeps within a double tier of niches. Obviously unique, the structure was the work of a Gloucestershire stonemason, Paul Tuffley, who built his masterpiece sometime between 1824 and 1852. His obvious aim was to demonstrate his skills in carving his native limestone, the edifice owing little to any known architectural style.



Paul, who came from a long line of local stonemasons and quarry-masters, built the shelter in his garden in the town of Nailsworth, where it came to lie neglected until it was rescued in the 1960s. The stonework was re-erected in the grounds of Hartpury Agricultural College, only to be moved once more to Hartpury churchyard in 2002. Its relocation provided to opportunity to restore the shelter to its original condition. If it ever held 24 skeps at any one time, Paul's neighbours must have been very forgiving!

C McCombe

Feral bees are extinct – true or false!

If one was to believe articles in national newspapers or even on occasion, in bee journals, it might be thought that varroa and other bee disorders had eliminated all possibility of bees surviving in the wild. The writer suspects that this is far from the truth.

During occasional visits to Englefield House, to the South West of Reading, over the last 20 years or more, it has been apparent that there is a very strong colony of bees in permanent residence in the roof of the adjacent church. High up on the Western end of the roof of one of the aisles, the air in the summer is invariably black with bees, coming and going from beneath the eaves.

Is this a permanent colony, or does it die out on frequent occasions, only to be replenished by absconding swarms? The strong suspicion is that this is a feral colony which has proved resilient enough to overcome all that nature has subjected it to, over many decades.

C McCombe

Site and Outlet

I have a contact near Wargrave who has two possible sites for bees. One sounds more suitable than the other. Does anyone know of someone in that direction who is looking for a site? He seems quite keen.

He also has a farm shop and garden centre and takes stalls at farmers' markets. He is interested in selling local honey at both (preferably from bees on his land). He also suggested a permanent display of some sort about beekeeping and its importance to agriculture and the environment (possibly, he suggested, with a permanent observation hive - although I don't know how feasible that would be). Does anyone have any thoughts on this matter?

Phil Westwood southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com

Update

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

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

At our February meeting we welcomed Derek Porter of Wokingham Beekeepers, who gave us a demonstration of how to melt and prepare beeswax for use in making cakes of beeswax and candles for showing, also for making foundation. He then went on to describe the various techniques for making different types of candles, reminding us of what is required for showing, namely that they need to be a matching pair, with the wicks central so that they burn evenly and the correct size of wick so that they do not smoke or burn too fast. There were several books on the subject that were recommended and lots of ideas for fun candles too. Our sincere thanks go to Derek for coming along to give such an interesting talk.

Our final talk in the Winter Schedule will be on the subject of 'Queen Rearing for the Amateur Beekeeper'. Recent years have seen an increase in problems with our own queens mating successfully, so this should be an evening containing some very useful and timely advice. Please come along to hear what our speaker, John Hendrie of BIBBA has to tell us. This will be on Tuesday, the 8th of April at the normal starting time of 8pm, at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor, SL4 1HZ.

A small selection of our library books will be available at this meeting, mainly those of interest to the newer beekeepers amongst us, the rest are available on request, please contact Don Church on 01753 831939 to make arrangements. There will also be the remaining surplus books for sale, plus various information leaflets and 'hard copies' of our 2008 Programme.

The Apiary meetings start on Sunday, the 30th March at 2.30pm and continue in April on the 13th and 27th and in May on the 11th and 25th at the Society's apiary in Fulmer. We hope the weather at the first few will give us the opportunity to see how the bees have over-wintered and enable us to monitor their progress during the start to the season. Directions to the apiary can be obtained from the numbers below or any other member of the committee shown on your programme.

A rota system for leading the apiary meetings is in place again this year in the absence of a permanent Apiary Supervisor. Our former Supervisor, Jim Cooper, who is kindly co-ordinating the rota for us, would welcome more volunteers for this, so would be pleased to hear from anyone who could be the designated leader or reserve for one or two of the meetings. All that is required is to be there a little earlier to open up and prepare the equipment and to ensure that all is left tidy and secure at the end of the meeting. Please call one of the numbers below to leave your contact number, or e-mail michaelsheasby@lineone.net.

Finally, the website www.wherecanwego.com now 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

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On 14th February Reading and District Beekeepers had an excellent turnout to see and hear from Martin Buckle who gave a talk and demonstration on beeswax modelling and also on straw skep making.

Martin made his precision models of farm carts, authentic in detail, fully articulated and floral bouquets, classic locomotives look within the reach of members of the audience who perhaps until now have only managed a little lumpy statuary to enter in shows, Martin is a multiple winner in these classes and no-wonder! Patiently Martin demonstrated producing the beeswax sheets, techniques for welding together, rolling wax wheel-hubs and tyres, passing his models around the audience who could only express admiration and amazement at such work.

Now onto straw skep making, no orange string sewn straw twists for Martin, he beats the hedgerows for long bramble, which he strips and quarters in the original style and using a mandrel, interestingly the cut-off neck and shoulders of a disposable soft drink bottle is ideal for this and selected wheat straw, sewing using a totally authentic hollow awl (he has some that he makes from swan's wing-bones, which are a marvel in themselves: on his perambulations he knows where to find the skeletal remains of swans below high tension electric pylons). Martin demonstrated and showed examples, including skeps used to house bees for a season: recommending spearing through the skep with several wood skewers to give some support for the combs. Martin showed some skeps with roof aperture, and described 'storieing' i.e. skep on top of skep, apparently this was done in times past and maximized chances of skeps from the top 'stories' full of honey without brood cells.

A thoroughly absorbing demonstration and talk, profuse thanks to Martin Buckle and thanks to members for a good attendance.

First meeting of summer programme is on Sunday April 20th. Starting at 11.30 AM. Julia Crosthwaite invites us to her out-apiary at Hare Hatch. Julia had a very good harvest last season from here, thanks to her prompt action removing and extracting the rapeseed honey in April. This is a productive site and Julia has allowed two other Reading members to place a hive there. Full directions from Julia or from Jon. prior to the meeting.

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

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Problems of the Hive - Varroa, Disease and Colony Collapse Disorder -

Norman Carreck Wednesday 20th February

This was a fascinating and concerning look at bee diseases and parasites through the eyes of a scientist, and gave all those attending plenty to think about. Over 50 beekeepers attended, many from other associations, and some from a considerable distance away, and Norman gave us a detailed, but very clear and comprehensible account of the current state of knowledge.

Norman began with a historical look at bee disease, offering a persuasive argument that the notorious 'Isle of Wight Disease' was not due to the Acarine mite, as always claimed, but a chronic paralysis virus. He went on to discuss the three closely related and possibly still evolving viruses of this sort: Acute Bee Paralysis Virus (ABPV), Kashmir Bee Virus (KBV) and Israeli Acute Bee Paralysis Virus (IABPV), and the current belief that the latter is responsible for Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Although bee viruses have been around for a long time – there are classical references to symptoms - he emphasised that bee disease research, in particular knowledge of bee viruses, is at a very early stage. His talk included discussion of the Slow Paralysis Virus, Deformed Wing Virus (DWV) and recent research into Cloudy Wing Virus (CWV), and others. Also described was the newly discovered *Nosema Ceranae* – closely related to *Nosema Apis*, but with, as yet, unknown effects.



A key theme in the cases described was the importance of the varroa mite as a vector for bee viruses. Many of these viruses were known and dismissed as insignificant in years past. Then varroa arrived and the new conditions for transmission caused the viruses to have an entirely different effect, although it is still not known exactly what combinations of transmission routes are involved – via parasite, queen to egg, worker to worker, etc. Norman suspected that the extreme form of migratory beekeeping practised in the USA was also an aggravating factor. Interestingly, the pattern of bee losses from CCD affected hives suggests that queens are more resistant to the results of infection.

The main advice offered was to keep varroa mite levels as low as possible; 2000 mites plus a viral infection may be enough to kill a colony. Ideally mite numbers should be kept below 1500 and a close eye should be kept on each colony, as mite numbers can build up very rapidly. Norman was obviously not convinced by recent claims of resistant bee strains, and pointed out that breeding from less infested colonies in an isolated and untreated apiary may just be selecting for weaker strains of mite, rather than more resistant strains of bee.

Ultimately, this talk was concerning because it highlighted the amount of work still needing to be done and the lack of understanding shown by the British government of the need to continue to fund skilled and experienced British scientists researching a topic vital to not only our rural economy, but the integrity of the entire ecosystem of this island.

Our winter programme is now over, and our next meeting is the first of the summer apiary visits. We will be meeting at Simon Wetton's apiary at Round Shaw Farm, Ipsden Heath, Ipsden, Wallingford, OX10 6QR (map ref 665 849) on Saturday April 26th to look inside Simon's two National hives. Reg Hook will also talk about, and give demonstrations of marking, clipping queens and swarm control – useful skills for the start of the year.

Bees for Beginners and Others

Our committee at their last meeting felt that, as an association we could do more to help each other, a practical way in which we could address the situation would be to match "bees available with bees wanted"

South Chilterns have a number of new members who are looking to acquire bees to get started, there are others who have unfortunately 'lost' theirs, in order to support the needs of these members would anyone wanting bees please get in touch with Kate Malenczuk and anyone with unwanted bees or bees for sale let her know along with a brief description of the bees and cost. It is the intention to match the bees with their new keeper so that a new beekeeper begins with a smaller good-tempered colony whilst a more experienced beekeeper may be willing to take on a larger colony of perhaps unknown temperament!

If you would like more information or have bees to spare or would like bees please get in touch with Kate Malenczuk 01491 837623

Secretary:- Phil Westwood

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

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:- Over-wintered 5 frame nuc's, 2007 Buckfast queens, All hives RBI inspected 2007 with a clean bill of health. Autumn and winter treated for varroa, inc travel box. £110. Call Ian Davison 07976 621 907

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