



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

June 2008
Number 621

Hon. Secretary:
Steve Moll
Magnolia House
Sotwell Street
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell
Wallingford
Oxon OX10 0RG
(01491 824679)

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

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

Future Events

Sunday July 13th	Disease recognition and varroa management day	01491 824679
-------------------------	---	--------------

THE APIARY in JUNE

In which we deal with swarms and 'swarm cells'

At the time of writing we seem to be making a slow start to the population increase season. Some queen cells have been seen in beehives but we have become used to seeing bigger build-ups and information about swarming by now; no doubt a number of our beekeepers have their minds on re-stocking of their apiary, following colony losses in February which seem to have occurred. We had awful weather in summer 2007 and up to the end of April the spring weather in 2008 has been disappointing to say the least! Hopefully by time of going to press things will be buzzing!

At a recent talk to a Berkshire beekeeping association a commercial bee farmer to the west of our region told us of his preference for queens developed in his hives from swarm cells, he's had better colonies from cells he's transferred to new hives from this source in terms of honey production overall colony development compared to pedigree Buckfast and imported stock, and he's tried plenty, has used mating nukes etc but has got best results with things done the simple-way. So look-out for these swarm cells, transfer with the frame of brood they're on when the larvae is good and fat, i.e. a day or two before the bees cap the cell: plus the bees that cling to the frame after a little light shaking. These are the nurse and housekeeping bees that will look after the developing larvae and clean-out cells for eggs from your new queen after her mating flight. You will need a good frame of stores, and add a third frame, look for stores, nurse-bees and brood on it. Then two frames of clean drawn-out wax or foundation. You now have the basis of a five-frame nucleus.

Replace the three frames you've taken from the donor colony with clean drawn comb or foundation, suitably arranged to retain the brood in the centre of the brood-box. You can also scoop up a couple of cups-full of flying bees and add to the new nuke. Some beekeepers transpose the new colony in place of the donor colony for an hour or so to get some flying bees inside, then locate to the chosen site. Some 'captured' flying bees will go-home but some will stay to form the vanguard of your foraging squadron until the nurse bees start to fly and join-in with these duties. If you don't have a five-frame nucleus box, use two dummy boards in a conventional brood and add frames of foundation in the succeeding weeks until the box is full. Get a super on when things build-up, you'll have some honey to harvest from these by August!

Of course when the urgent calls come "There's all these bees in my hedge and the children can't go into the garden and I'm allergic" etc etc. You'll have some more recruits for your apiary. If they are 'in the hedge' then, unless it's a leylandii (in which case they probably wouldn't be aware of the bee's presence) at least it'll, be at a decent height for collection. Beware of the weight factor of a swarm of bees. A nicely balanced skep with interior smeared with a spot of honey, balanced on top of a hedge with a smoker stood beneath the swarm cluster may seem like an elegant bit of collecting until the weight of the bees just nicely assembling inside the skep makes it topple-off and onto the pavement. No doubt if the gawpers behind the net curtains could see your face behind the bee veil they'd find it reddened somewhat!

A good vigorous swarm, the type you need for your apiary tend to fizz-up quite explosively when shaken into your skep or box, a weighty piece of cloth, of a the right-size to cover the top. This writer treasures an old potato sack for this: will keep them contained. Leave a small gap for the laggards to join the rest of the swarm. Don't be in too much of a hurry, give them half an hour and if the queen is in there, they'll all settle-down inside. Then use the old sheet you've brought along to wrap them-up for the journey home. Evening is the best time to collect; if they're all together at dusk they hunker-down quietly and will walk-up the ramp into their new home in an orderly fashion. If no box is prepared for them, unwrap the sheet and re-instate your small gap in the heavy cover and place the bees where they will be sited, try to place a temporary protective roof of some-kind without preventing their access and by next evening you should have somewhere for them to be housed. Judging by the number of bee-keepers looking for bees you'll not have them on your hands for long!

Triad

Report on Berkshire College of Agriculture's open days and lambing Weekend at Burchett's Green on 26th and 27th April.

Berks Federation beekeepers were once again invited to have a presence at the Countryside Management pavilion. There was a very good attendance by visitors to our table and positive responses and interest by families particularly with lots of children 'finding the queen' etc in the 'Virtual Hive' Reg Hook from South Chilterns association who also lectures on bee-keeping at the 'BCA' had an observation hive set-up on the Sunday. Plenty of signatures for the BBKA campaign to petition DEFRA on bee research funding were obtained. With thanks to members of all the associations who participated in and supported our presence at the B.C.A. open days and we noted a better footfall from the public compared to the previous two years.

Jon Davey

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

The DEFRA website is: - <http://beebase.csl.gov.uk/> look under public pages 'news and vacancies'

2008 Southern Region Disease Recognition Day

Sunday July 13th 2008 Benson Village Hall, Oxfordshire 10.00am to 4.30pm

An opportunity for everyone to polish up their disease recognition skills During the day we will cover: Guidance on maintenance of hygiene in the apiary and in the hive Identification guidance for European Foul Brood Identification Guidance for American Foul Brood Comparison of similar looking conditions e.g. EFB, Parasitic mite syndrome, Chalk brood, Adult bee disease, A fun quiz – with prizes, Varroa management, Exotic pests

I would like to attend Southern Region Disease Recognition Day on Sunday July 13th 2008

Name: -----

Address: -----

Phone No: -----

e-mail address (if applicable): -----

**Ian R. Homer, CSL Regional Bee Inspector – Southern Region,
5, Malter's Cottages, Litton Cheney, DORCHESTER, Dorset, DT2 9AE
Tel: 01308 482 161 Mobile 07778 846 335 e-mail: i.homer@csl.gov.uk
www.nationalbeeunit.com**

BBKA NEWS ----- HIGHLIGHTS

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

New BBKA Website – new web address and redesigned contents (see page 1)

Practical beekeeping:

- Inside your hive – seasonal tips (see page 2)
- Advantages of using Nucs (page 9)
- Diary of a new beekeeper (page 14)
- Taking the Basic exam – the 3rd article in this useful series (page 17)

Ideas for Associations:

- The Buzz is Back – National Insect Week 2008 (page 4)

Updates on BBKA actions at national level:

- Chairman's Letter – summarises major actions of the past two years (page 2)
- Report on 2008 Annual Delegates' Meeting (page 6)
- Bee health research funding Campaign begins (page 12)
- From the Boardroom (page 19)
- The Royal Show on 3-6 July (page 19)
- Your letters (pages 21/22)
- Saving bumblebees (page 22)
- The Business Corner (page 23)
- The Newsround (page 24)

Other interesting articles:

- How do honeybees navigate? (page 3)

- Honey pots (page 5)
- VMD studies in honey (page 8)
- The Robert Hammond and Wax Chandlers awards (page 13)
- Musings on the BBKA examinations from a Moderator (page 18)
- Diary of Events (page 24)

There is always something of interest for everyone in BBKA News!

Michael Sheasby – Slough BKS and BBKA Executive Committee

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Firstly, the report last month was of course, for the March meeting, which, though very well attended, was eclipsed by the attendance in April for the talk by John Hendrie of BIBBA. His subject was Queen Rearing for the Amateur Beekeeper. Obviously, both subjects were very topical and popular; so if you have any suggestions for future subjects in this vein, please let Michael know, as we are preparing the programme for next year at the moment.

To get back to the meeting, a lot of useful information was given on this subject, from the commercial aspect to the hobbyist beekeeper. Whilst many cannot raise queens which are purebred in the local environment, the aim should be to use a co-operative system to try to make it as near as possible a controlled programme. Moving a nucleus to another apiary in the programme would be a way to ensure no cross breeding with your own bees and to minimise the risk of disease transference. There are many strains of bee currently in the UK, and natural cross breeding can cause lots of problems. For instance, different strains of bee apparently have different “dialects” of the bee dance, so that information given by one could prove inaccurate to another. We were encouraged to try to pick hives that had the various traits we wanted and to encourage them to produce the queens needed, even if raising them in another hive. Several methods were discussed then finally we were shown how a wing could be used to determine the biological origins of any bee. The talk was obviously only scratching the surface and John had several books with him that went into the whole subject in much depth. We would like to thank him very much for coming along to give us such a fascinating insight into this and to everyone who attended for taking the time to do so.

Much of this can be put into practice this month, as June is the best time to make one or two nukes to increase your stock. Possibly also, consider buying in a new queen to re-queen one later, giving it a head start for next year.

We also helped to man the Federation's stall at the Burchetts Green Open Day at the end of April, attending on the Sunday afternoon. Our new ‘virtual hive’ created a lot of interest amongst young and old alike, being ably demonstrated by Michael and Derek and Wenda Fowles. We were also able to fill several pages of the BBKA petition with signatures willingly given.

The apiary meetings continued in April at the Fulmer apiary with good attendances again and we have been pleased to welcome several new faces this year. The hives are mostly all building up well, though one has had some additional brood and stores added to help it along. The Dartington is particularly strong this year and had supers added quite early on. We shall be meeting again on the 8th and 22nd June and on the 6th and 20th July at 2.30pm as usual. If you have not been there before, directions can be obtained from the numbers below or any other member of the committee shown on your programme.

Finally, the website www.wherewecanwego.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 Sunday 20th April Reading and District Beekeepers assembled for the first summer meeting of the year at Julia Crosthwaite's out apiary at Hare Hatch. There were 6 colonies to inspect and given the shortage of forage so far this season some good development was seen, in 4 hives, with satisfactory brood pattern looking good for the population to expand when things warm-up. No queen cells seen. Floors were scraped and tops of frames cleaned-off pending inspections to follow. The remaining 2 colonies were different in aspect and gave us the opportunity to participate in some classic beekeeping lead by our demonstrator Michael Blackburn.

Julia had collected a ferule colony from a garden composter, which seemed to have been in there for a couple of seasons. The comb had fallen sideways inside when the owner had dropped the lid; they were attached to it, in alarm. Julia had supported the combs one each side of frames of foundation using the thin gauge metal queen excluders, suitably bent and by smoking the bees down thru an excluder had found and re-served the queen. We found that the resultant re-housed colony had overwintered well, and we fitted them with proper frames. No brood seen or queen found but a good population compared to the others. The colony next door had a low population and we were feeling a bit negative but then found the queen, she looked reasonable, rather reddish in colour but with a small patch of eggs and brood with some attendant workers. This colony was united using a sheet of newspaper, with a few scarifications on top of the next-door hive. Our demonstrator jiggled the top box a little to allow the flying bees from this rather de-populated hive to go home without having to run the gauntlet of the more populous box below. Being only 2-3 feet apart the two colonies should benefit from this union. When they have chewed their way thru the newspaper the top-box can be re-aligned flat.

We went on our way feeling that we had done our best for two colonies that would otherwise have a doubtful future. With thanks to members for an excellent turnout and with thanks to Julia for the invitation. We would like to extend our appreciation for the membership of Mark Strange, who has moved to Cambridge and recently strapped-up his hive at Hare Hatch and is relocating Berkshire bees to fortify the Cantabrigian strains! We wish Mark and his partner good beekeeping in the future.

Reading and District Beekeeper's June meeting is the most popular in our calendar. On Sunday 15th June starting at 11.30 we are invited to Tim and Hilary Whitaker's garden apiary at Mapledurham. There are bees housed in WBC hives to inspect in some beautiful surroundings and afterwards we are invited to barbeque. Please bring something for the feast. Family members are welcomed.

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

SOUTH CHILTERNS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

For our first apiary meeting of the year, Francesca and Simon Wetton again welcomed us to Roundshaw Farm. As everyone gathered for the start, the talk was of the high winter losses this year. It seemed that overall about 60% of hives in the area may have been lost, and some members with only two hives have lost both.

I have described Simon's apiary and gentle black bees before. This year they were again not as far advanced as might be expected, probably due to the cool, shaded location for the hives by trees, but there was no sign of the deformed wing virus seen last year. The main difficulty observed was the presence of solidified honey blocking some frames. This was probably ivy honey from the autumn. As the swarming season was approaching, and lack of space is one factor prompting swarming, Reg recommended that Simon substituted some fresh frames to free up the space.

After we finished, Francesca and Simon had again prepared a wonderful spread of food for us and Reg gave a talk on swarm control based on several variations of an artificial swarming method.

Thank you again to Francesca and Simon for their hospitality, and to Reg for his demonstration and talk.

The next meeting is at 2.30 on Saturday 21st June at Susan Gabain's apiary, Emery's Down, Aldworth Road, Upper Basildon, RG8 8NH (map ref 592 765). Reg will be giving a talk on queen rearing, and there will be a plant sale to raise money for the Association's funds. Please bring along any plants you can spare to donate to the sale.

Secretary:- Phil Westwood

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

You should have received the rota for the apiary visits, which will take place during the summer, but if not, please let me know and I will send you the list. Do try to attend as many as you can particularly if you are a beginner as it is very instructive to watch more experienced beekeepers handling their bees. The weather so far this year has not helped the bees to get off to a good start so let's hope May proves to be a warmer month with plenty of nectar and pollen to feed the new brood.

We recently held a committee meeting and we are formulating the new programme. There have been favourable comments on the talks we had in the last programme so I hope we can keep up the standard. It was also gratifying to see such good attendance at all the meetings, some of which were attended by our friends from Reading.

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

Beekeeping equipment and supplies
from your Thorne 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.

2 _____ 5