



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

July 2008
Number 622

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
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THE APIARY in JULY

Normally July is considered to be the main nectar flow, not so in 2007 hopefully it will be better this year. The long-range weather forecast for July 2008 is also not very promising but with luck, this year, we may find it difficult to keep up with the supering. If congestive swarming is to be avoided, supers must be added as soon as the previous one is partly filled, even if supers are not partly filled, supers must be added if there is any danger of overcrowding. Supers can be extracted and replaced for re-filling.

Most beekeepers, due to poor wintering, have had very little if any spring crop but there have been reports of three or more supers of honey taken in May, indeed, one report of two brood chambers and four supers of honey

This last winter saw serious losses of colonies, expect nature to try to redress the situation, she usually does, so expect swarms and possibly many casts. If so wished, these casts can be united with other stocks at a later date. Do not despise these casts they will have a young queen, as Mr Manley said, this years cast is likely to be next years most productive colony

If the weather is fine, the virgin queen takes short excursions outside, learning the location of her home. Do not make any alterations to the surroundings of the hive (i.e. cutting down vegetation etc.) during this time, or she may not find her way back. The queen mates within her first 5 to 20 days, but if she is kept in by bad weather, after three weeks to a month she will be unable to mate properly.

At this time drones from many hives in the vicinity gather together in a favoured place awaiting a young virgin. When she is finally on her mating flight, she emits a pheromone, which the drones can detect from a great distance. The drones chase the queen en-mass resembling a comet's tail and up to eleven or twelve may be successful. Having completed their mission they fall to the ground dying. This is the only period in her life she will consort with drones.

Swarms are about, you may have a skep for this task, it is admirable for collecting swarms, if you do not have one, and an ordinary, large cardboard box will do the job. Seal the inside flaps in the base with sticky tape, but leave those at the top free. Supposing the swarm has clustered in a tree, have a large white sheet, and spread it on the ground beneath it. Offer your box up to the swarm and give the branch a good shake to dislodge them. Be prepared to accept the extra weight of the bees, they go about 3000 to the pound and will probably weigh about 3 or more lbs.

Carefully bring your box to the ground and upturn it on to your sheet, placing a stone under one of the flaps to allow those bees outside to enter. If you have captured the queen, the bees will quickly realise that she is in the box and will expose their Nassanov gland (situated near the tail), put their heads down and fan the scent from this gland to call their comrades in.

Triad

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

AFB in the Federation and High Wycombe Area

American Foul Brood has been found in stocks of bees imported from France mainly in South Oxfordshire: according to information on BeeBase, 62 stocks have been destroyed in Oxfordshire. It is also said to have been found in the Wokingham Unitary Authority area, The BeeBase map certainly indicates Remenham (Wokingham), and it is known that Bees Officers have been working in the area not far from Henley. Whether or not this has caused confusion, we should all be looking for anything abnormal in our colonies and call for assistance if unsure.

All beekeepers are urged to attend the Disease Recognition Day at Benson, (see below), book your place with Ian Homer or, if you wish, you may book via the Federation website (Contact us) and the message will be passed on

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 etc. Book your place with:

**Ian R. Homer, CSL Regional Bee Inspector – Southern Region,
5, Malters 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 June edition of BBKA News includes the following range of articles which should be of interest to members:

Practical beekeeping:

- Inside your hive – seasonal tips (see page 2)
- Hive stands (page 7)
- Scorn not the Drone (page 8)
- My EFB experience (page 9)

- Diary of a new beekeeper (page 12)
- Honey recipe website (page 14)
- Bumblebee 'swarm' advice (page 15)
- The gentle art of smoking (page 15)
- Wax moth bait (see Letters) (page 19)

Ideas/Info for Associations:

- Are you ready for 'The Buzz' - National Insect Week (page 3)
- The day cricket gave way to bees... (page 8)
- The Business Corner (page 17 & 18)
- Diary of Events (page 20)

Updates on BBKA actions at national level:

- Bee health research funding Campaign takes off (page 1)
- Chairman's Letter – summarises recent actions (page 2)
- Lord Rooker visits Ormskirk (page 3)
- BBKA Spring Convention lectures etc (page 13)
- The Business Corner (page 18)
- Your letters – Procrastination... (page 19)
- The Newsround (page 20)

Other interesting articles:

- How do honeybees navigate? (page 5)
- Bees – Do we need them? (page 10)
- Book review – 'Honey Farming' (page 14)

NB to beekeepers with bees on allotments or those who have tried to keep bees on allotments:

Enclosed with BBKA News is a separate survey form, which you are asked to complete. The BBKA is concerned by the growing restrictions on keeping bees on allotments and is gathering data with a view to making representations to national and local government (see also page 17 of BBKA News).

Michael Sheasby – Slough BKS, Berks Federation and BBKA Executive Committee

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.

Our apiary meetings have continued to be well attended during May. The hives are still all doing well and not giving too much cause for concern and the Dartington continues to be quite strong with the equivalent of four supers on at present. The hive split at the end of last month though, has not had any evidence of new queens in either brood box yet, so it will need to be decided at the June meetings what to do with them should that continue. The meetings continue through July on the 6th and 20th and then in August on the 3rd, 17th and 31st all starting at 2.30pm, 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.

Arrangements for the Summer Supper have now been finalized for Saturday the 26th July, at 7.00 for 7.30pm. This year's catering will be buffet style, with something for everyone and this will help to keep the cost down. We welcome all spouses, partners and friends to join us for a very pleasant evening at the Maidenhead Rowing Club in River Road, which is on the Slough side of Maidenhead Bridge. There is a large car park and drinks are at club prices. You will need to let Michael know as soon as possible if you are able to come. Final date for booking and payment details will be notified shortly.

Finally, the Sunningdale Carnival organisers decided to postpone the event when the weather forecast for the end of May Bank Holiday was so terrible, a fortuitous decision as it turned out. This will now be held on the 20th September. Volunteers to help man the stall would be very welcome; details will be available nearer the date.

Newsletter items: - Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

The first of the seasonal apiary visits took place at one of Nigel Perkins' apiaries on May 25th. It was well attended with about 12 people present including a prospective new member. Some good work was done. The weather at least was dry if somewhat overcast. The next visit is to the Club's apiary on June 15th under the direction of David Geen who no doubt is endeavouring to maximise the honey yield the sale of which helps the Club's finances.

My wife and I recently went to Belgrade to attend some festivities to mark the 50th birthday of the wife of a friend. She is Serbian and she had arranged for a party at her sister's smallholding about 50 miles south of Belgrade. This allowed us to see a typical Serbian country house. It was single storey and built of thick planks of wood with caulking between them, and with a low pitched tiled roof. It was surprisingly cosy inside and, with a wood-burning stove in the main room giving off lots of heat, probably warm and dry in the winter. I kept an eye out for hives in the countryside on the way to the house but did not see any. Like us, the beekeepers keep their hives out of sight. Honey is quite popular in Serbia but it was amusing to see the sachets of honey supplied at breakfast in the hotel where we stayed labelled as 'Bee Honey'. Is there any other sort?

Secretary: Derek Porter Tel: 0118 979 0326

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Reading and district beekeepers including some very welcome new members were assembled on the Mapledurham estates on Sunday 11th May. We had two member's hives to interface. Firstly Cyril McCombe at Cross Lanes Apple Farm. Following Mac's interview in the Reading Evening Post with photo's showing severe woodpecker damage the out apiary at Cross Lanes was short of bees at the time of the meeting. There were bees in one hive but seeming inactive and will be monitored, there is suspicion there of a drone laying queen. There seemed to be bees moving in front of a second hive but again rather insubstantial and likely to be signs of robbing or a small cast having taken residence at best. Again this will be monitored. Better news from Mac is that he's successfully collected two swarms at his Chazey Road apiary and will continue to seek to build-up. Mac and Reading member Tim Whitaker had visited 'The West Sussex Bee Auction' the previous week but found "plenty of equipment but only two colonies of bees for auction, both in Langstroth hives, which fetched over £300 per colony!"

On then about a mile to one of Michael Blackburn's sites on a substantial corner of land between fields on the estate that Michael through long occupation with his hives seems to have to himself! Flowering hawthorn in profusion and tall WBC's peeping above well-grown herbage, the whole thing was idyllic, a good sketch would have made a fine engraving on a flyleaf for a book on beekeeping. Here things were rather different; three hives opened have splendid populations, queen activity, brood etc and were building-fast and bringing-in nectar and pollen. Michael having applied oxalic acid in winter with the later higher strength recommendation from earlier i.e. about 3% instead of the earlier 1.6% (BeeCraft counselled against using it at all!) seems to have got it right here, several removals of clusters of developing drone showed virtually clean varroa free bodies, we did see one varroa jump from a bee's body onto a top bar however which we promptly dispatched. After adding supers and checking the colonies-over, there was little sign of swarming activity we left Michael to open two other hives in his rural idyll and departed after a thoroughly satisfying session. With thanks to all who participated.

July meeting.

Please reserve the third Sunday in July i.e. 20th for a meeting at a Reading member's apiary starting at 11.30. At time of writing we are reserving two possible options for a meeting site. i.e. Steve Blinstrub's out apiary at Scours Lane or Jon. Davey's garden apiary at Northcourt Avenue. The reason for the uncertainty at time of writing is owing to a shortage of bees! By third-week July we are sure things will be better. We will confirm closer to the date, contact Jon on 0118 975 0734 with any comments.

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

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

South Chilterns President's Day at John Hall's Apiary, Chalkhouse Green Farm, Kidmore End May 24th, 2008.

John's beautiful farm is worth a visit in itself, with its old buildings and rare breed animals. The weather held out for our President's Day, and about 30 people came along, including several first-timers; our best turnout for a long while.

There are two National hives and a WBC at Chalkhouse Green Farm, just in the edge of a wood, but only the two Nationals are presently occupied, as the WBC colony died out over the winter, as so many did. One contained a recently emerged queen, and Reg Hook, who was demonstrating as usual, asked people to stand clear in case she might be returning from a mating flight. Disturbing her, or preventing her from finding her way into the hive might be disastrous, and this hive was not opened.

The other hive was recently occupied by a large swarm, which was working hard on the old comb. One brood box was still heavily clogged with crystallized stores, and another box of comb had been given to them to provide the space the queen needs for laying. After looking through the hive, we then returned to the farm buildings by a different route, allowing us to see John's herd of English White cattle and his Berkshire pigs, both of which have young at the moment.

As it was President's day, our President, Don Thompson, gave us a short talk entitled 'This and that and all that matters'. He covered a lot of the things that he regards as important after 65 years of beekeeping, from his early beginnings as a boy with his mother in Scotland. As always he expressed his belief that the aim and measure of a good beekeeper should be "happy, healthy honeybees". To this end a beekeeper should become as knowledgeable as possible about bees, bee diseases and bee nutrition. Reading good books and attending lectures are both important, as is learning from knowledge of the experienced beekeepers in the club. Keeping a record enables you to learn more from your own experiences, and he showed us that he still has his first notes, taken down as a 12 year old beekeeper.

Don also talked about other events in his beekeeping life, including plotting American Foul Brood occurrences to identify a cluster around the Rowse Honey plant and becoming an early victim of the varroa mite. He also expressed his belief in the value of the gentle native black bee, and also the use of the water spray instead of smoke to pacify bees. He believes that giving them something that they want is less likely to agitate them.

Despite no longer having bees of his own, Don still attends meetings and lectures, and keeps his knowledge up to date. His years as a beekeeper have recently been recognized by the BBKA and he showed us his certificate and citation. It is sad, therefore, that he chose this meeting to announce his retirement from the post of president. We all owe him thanks everything he has put into the association over the years.

The day concluded in great style in John and Sarah's garden, where they had provided a wonderful cream tea, sandwiches and cake for the large group, most of whom were tempted to stay on for some time talking about many things, but mostly, of course, bees. Thank you to Reg and Don for sharing their knowledge, and to John and Sarah for their generous hospitality.

The July meeting will be at Viv and Steve Moll's apiary on Saturday July 19th at 2.30. Magnolia House, Sotwell Street, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, Wallingford, OX10 0RG (Map ref. 586 908).

Don't forget the Disease Recognition and Varroa Management Day on Sunday July 13th run by our Regional Bee Inspector Ian Homer. This will be an important event for all of us interested in the well being of our bees. It will be held at – see page 2.

There will be a Farm Open Day at Chalkhouse Green Farm in aid of charity on Sunday July 20th. It is well worth visiting.

Those of you were at Jemima Hume-Humphrey's apiary meeting last year would remember the colony and the swarm together with the unfortunate loss of its queen. They were subsequently re-queened and produced 135 lbs of honey.

The hive depicted has already had 75 lbs of honey extracted and up to June, has four supers and two brood boxes all full but not all capped. Not surprisingly, Jemima is a happy bunny



Secretary:- Phil Westwood

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 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

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