



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

November 2008

Number 626

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

--	--	--

## Smokers in Whitehall - Wednesday 5 November 2008

This event will mark the end of the petition stage of the campaign. It is essential that we get a substantial turnout from across the country. Permissions have been granted by the Metropolitan Police for us to assemble, demonstrate (i.e. show placards), deliver the petition and then go into the Houses of Parliament to lobby our MPs. Wednesday has been chosen because that's the day when all MPs are in Westminster for the fun and games of Prime Minister's Questions. It is vital that you contact your MP before the day to tell him/her that you will be there to lobby on the bee health research campaign. Don't worry if fellow beekeepers who share the same MP will be coming; the more the better. The timing of the demo and lobby should allow even our most distant Associations to be present and then do a little shopping/sightseeing before returning home. Overleaf you will find the key facts concerning this event. Once you have decided to take part please contact Stoneleigh by e-mail [register@britishbeekeepers.com](mailto:register@britishbeekeepers.com) or phone 02476 696679 giving your name, Association, e-mail or phone contact.

**Assembly Point:** Old Palace Yard, Westminster, London SW1P.

(100 yards West of Parliament Square on Abingdon Street, opposite the Houses of Parliament. Nearest tube Westminster (District/Circle/Jubilee lines) or walk down Whitehall from Charing Cross (Bakerloo/Northern lines).

**Timings:** 13.00 Meet for 13.30 Start  
14.00 Deliver Petition to Downing Street  
14.30 Enter Houses of Parliament via Visitors Entrance  
14.45 Lobby begins  
15.30 Disperse

**Kit:** Please bring your freshly washed bee-suit in a small shoulder bag or the like and be prepared to put it on at the assembly point. You need to look your best as you may well be on TV! An umbrella probably makes sense too.

**Smokers:** The police have been informed that we will be using some lighted smokers. Not everybody needs to bring one but if you choose to, bring some good fuel with you and a lighter. All smokers must be extinguished before entering the Commons and we have asked the council to provide a fire proof receptacle into which un-burnt material can be dumped. Smokers must be put in your shoulder bag when passing through security into the Houses of Parliament.

**Placards:** These will be provided by the BBKA on the day.

**Briefing:** There will be a short briefing at 13.30 and we may be joined by some MPs who wish to address us.

**Stewards:** We are asked to provide stewards who will be appointed before the event and given further briefing. It is possible that the police may limit the number of demonstrators who can march to Downing Street.

**N.B.** Contact your MPs to advise that you are coming to lobby them.

Confirm to BBKA Stoneleigh that you are coming

Book your cheap day ticket asap!

Contact Stoneleigh or Tim Lovett [tjl@dermapharm.co.uk](mailto:tjl@dermapharm.co.uk) with any queries

Look at the BBKA website for any updates or changes to the above details.

**See you in Westminster!**

**Tim Lovett - October 2008**

## **THE APIARY in NOVEMBER**

Beekeepers seem to spend a great deal of time throughout the year dealing with a constant variety of pests. In summer its Varroa, Nosema, EFB and AFB etc. etc. In autumn it's wasps and wax moths and it's badgers, mice, woodpeckers, deer and so on in winter.

A badger can be quite nose-y and if he is hungry he can push over a beehive on a rickety stand quite easily, so can a deer if he thinks there might be something to eat inside. The ensuing disturbance doesn't do a colony any good, especially as that sort of event is only likely to occur in the depths of a very cold winter.

Mice are always on the lookout for a nice pad for the winter months and what could be cosier than the top of a beehive? One spring, a few years ago, we were opening up a hive for inspection. When we took the roof off we found a little pile of leaves in the corner on top of the crown board. We moved it a bit with a hive tool and there was a little field mouse sitting up staring at us. For a second we all froze, then in a split second the mouse had jumped off and dashed into the bracken. Since then we have been rather particular about fitting our mouse guards! 6mm or 1/4 of an inch and no more! Incidentally, in National boxes, especially with Varroa floors, it is a useful idea to put the entrance block in upside down.... because dead bees can easily jam up the entrance. If it is upside down all they have to do is too climb up and walk over the block to get in and out.

One year a woodpecker had a go at the top of an ordinary WBC hive. The damage he did with his tough beak was quite impressive. There don't seem to be so many woodpeckers about now and few of us amateurs bother to make woodpecker-proof cages. One idea that is new to me is the use of some reflective material like thin plastic mirror or even shiny foil. You cut it up into 3 or 4 inch squares and stick the pieces all over the hive. The idea is that the woodpecker sees his reflection, thinks it is another woodpecker about to attack him, and is frightened off. Ingenious!

By now the bees should have been fed, although it has been tempting to cash in on the warm autumn weather and putting things off. The trouble is that if the bees don't get fed in time, they don't have time to process it and store the syrup away before they cluster for the winter. If you think you may have left feeding a bit late it is not a bad idea to put some candy on top of the brood box frames.

Have you ever thought about putting a super with a few frames of the left over bits you didn't extract below the brood box for the winter? Ian Homer gave us five good reasons for doing so:

Questions:

1. Do you have bits of useless honey?
- 2 Do you get mouse damage?
- 3 Do you get mould in your brood box over the winter`?
- 4 Do your bees abscond before the first spring inspection?
- 5 Are you bees reluctant to come up from the brood box into your fresh supers in the spring'?

You can avoid all of these if you put all your spare frames of honey into a super under the brood box after the season:

- 1 The bees will clear it up for you.
- 2 The warmth of the colony will not be felt near the entrance so mice will not be so likely to be attracted.
- 3 The air will circulate so mould is less likely to form.
4. The queen has a chance to expand her laying in the spring even if you happen to be late with your first inspection.
5. After the first inspection the super will be all ready for you to move it up on top of the brood and the bees will be more interested in it because it will be familiar to them and they will be encouraged to expand the nest upwards.

Triad.

## **BBKA NEWS – HIGHLIGHTS**

The October edition of BBKA News includes the following range of articles which should be of interest to members:

Practical beekeeping:

- Inside your hive – seasonal tips (page 2)
- Pesticides and Honey Bees (page 3)
- The Purity of British Honey (page 11)
- Queen Performance (page 14)
- A Personal Experience of Winter Losses (page 17)
- For Beginners (page 19)
- Disease Recognition Day (page 22)

Ideas/Info for Associations:

- Beekeeping Editors' Exchange Scheme (page 10)
- 2008 BBKA Forum (page 19)
- Diary of Events (page 24)

Updates on BBKA actions and issues at national level:

- The No 10 E-Petition (page1)
- Chairman's Letter – summarises recent actions and issues (page 2)
- The Bee Health Strategy Response (page 5)

- BBKA Trustees – a call for volunteers (page 5)
- Research Campaign News (page 7)
- BBKA Examination Successes 2008 (page 18)
- National Diploma in Beekeeping (page 19)
- National Honey Show – 30 October to 1 November (page 20)
- The Business Corner (pages 21 & 22):
  - 2008 Allotment Survey
  - Looking towards the 2009 ADM
  - Publicity and Promotions – volunteer wanted
  - Education & Husbandry – volunteers wanted
  - BBKA Forum On Line
- Your Letters (page 23)
- Newsround (page 24)

Other interesting articles:

- Pesticides and Honey Bees (page 3)
- Bee Research at Sheffield goes from Strength to Strength (page 6)
- Introductory Genetics for Beekeepers – Part 2 (page 8)
- Winter Bumblebees (page 11)
- Microscopists Corner – Nosema (page 12)
- The Buzz of the Chase (page 15)
- Vespa Mandarinina (page 16)

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

## **Bee problems:-**

In common with other countries there is growing concern about losses of bees and the shortage of insects in some areas of Great Britain. Those that have heard Prof. Dewey Caron's talk will note that he puts emphasis on neo-nicotinoid pesticides, Some of these have been banned in several countries, currently the Federation of Greek Beekeepers' Associations are pressing for a ban in Greece and also worldwide. According to a translation of an E. U. report by David Ashton, traces of these pesticides have been found in fruit, vegetables, greens, and corn products.

Perhaps history is repeating itself, many of us will remember the problems with diel-drin and aldrin in the 1970's and the reluctance of our authorities to take action.

## **Note:**

High Wycombe Association is in the process of preparing a C.D. of Professor Caron's talk and presentation and hope to make it available to the beekeeping world.

A copy of the presentation (without the audio) is available but it is a large file (12MB) from [berksbees@btinternet.com](mailto:berksbees@btinternet.com) you will need broadband.

Editor.

## **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'

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

Our winter programme got underway on 8<sup>th</sup> October with the friendly competition in which members who attended judging the taste of jars of honey brought along by those lucky enough to have some surplus honey to find out who would win The Albert Spragg Centenary Cup for the first time. The surprise judge was myself and, before the tasting by the members, I was asked to outline what a honey judge looks for when faced with the task of grading the entries on their relative merits. The golden rule is to check that each entry has followed the requirements of the Schedule. An entry that is not even in the correct type of jar or one, which is underweight, will not score well. Similarly, a jar that is sticky with honey or the lid is difficult to unscrew because there is honey in the thread shows that the entrant did not take care with the presentation. I then went through the other aspects which the judge will look for. Whilst the show bench is not for everyone, I do think that if a beekeeper prepares his or her honey in terms of 'is this good enough to show?', the honey that is put on sale will be a much better product. After everyone had tasted all thirteen of the entries, make their notes on a form and then cast their votes for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places for the best tasting honies, the winner of the Cup was Bob Loades.

The AGM takes place on 12<sup>th</sup> November and I hope that you will attend. We need a new Club Apiarist so if you feel you would like to look after the Club's bees, please put your name forward. We are also looking for a new site on the south side of the town. If you know of a suitable location, please let me know. We extend our grateful thanks to David Geen who has served as Club Apiarist with great distinction for the last few years. His efforts have resulted in a good surplus of honey for sale that has helped our finances.

As we have changed printer, there has been a delay in having the programme cards available for distribution. However, the cards will be ready in time for the AGM. We will also be taking renewals at the AGM and our new Hon. Treasurer will announce the subscription for the coming year.

The last meeting before Christmas will be on 10<sup>th</sup> December when we will welcome Norman Chapman from Mitcham who will give a talk entitled 'Pollen'. This promises to be most interesting as the world of microscopic pollen grains is in fact a very big one and very relevant to beekeepers. Don't forget to bring along some festive fare and a contribution for the raffle. This can be a piece of equipment or some foundation, for example, as well the usual wine, chocolates etc. Let's have a really good turn out for Norman who is well into his 80's but still bright as a button!

Secretary: Derek Porter Tel: 0118 979 0326

## **SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY**

**Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.**

On Tuesday the 14<sup>th</sup> October we held our Annual Honey Show, which this year was judged by Martin Buckle of North Bucks Beekeepers. He kept us entertained and imparted a lot of tips and advice along the way. Disappointingly, the entries were down from 63 last year to 47 this year and from 14 competitors as against 19 last year. Again we had no entries in the Candles class - do we need to have another meeting on this topic to encourage more members to try this out? However, the competition was keen nevertheless, and we congratulate Harry Peace on his triumph in winning the cups this year for Most Points in the Honey Classes; Firsts in the Beeswax and Photograph classes; Most Points overall and for Best In Show for his Beeswax.

Bridget Farren also won cups for her entries in Made with Honey and Honey Cake classes. Our relative newcomer, Edwina Brugge won the Maidenhead Goblet for her efforts in the Honey for Flavour and Novice classes. Our sincere thanks go to Martin for travelling such a distance to be our Judge and for making the evening so interesting, and to Joy Dodson for organising the Show.

This month it is our AGM, which will be held on Tuesday, the 11<sup>th</sup> November, starting at 8pm at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor, SL4 1HZ. Because of new parking restrictions around the hall, if the car park is full it is advisable to park in Bolton Avenue, just a short walk away, where they do not apply. This is the next but one exit from the nearby roundabout and just before the exit for the hospital.

Any nominations for the committee will need to be with Michael Sheasby a week before the meeting. There will be some changes to the committee proposed and a couple of vacancies need filling, so do please make it known if you would like to join us. Also, there will be some news on the finance front for discussion. We hope that you will attend if possible to make your views known and help to contribute to the success of our Society.

Advance notice for your diaries of our Annual Dinner. This will be held on Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January at the Adelaide Hotel in Windsor. This is a new venue for us and we hope you will all be able to join us there. The cost is to be £24 per head to include tips; all drinks are extra. Further information regarding menu, booking and how to find it, will follow separately.

All details of our meetings can be found on the website [www.wherecanwego.com](http://www.wherecanwego.com). Just enter SL4 and check the 'free of charge to all' box before searching.

Afterwards, we have our usual finger-food buffet; if you would make a contribution to the table it would be appreciated. It makes a very pleasant end to all the formalities, along with tea, coffee or a glass of wine to wash it all down.

In December, following the success of last year's quiz, we have invited our former BDI Dr Beulah Cullen to compile one for us on beekeeping topics. This will be on Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup> of December and we look forward to seeing everyone at both of these meetings.

Newsletter items: - Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

For this, our final Saturday apiary visit of the dreadful 2008 season, we visited Janie Hedgcock's hives at Whitchurch Hill. Janie has three National hives set among the apple trees on the edge of her beautiful garden. We were very lucky with the weather for this visit, and the sun shone throughout, but unfortunately the area around the hives is small, and we had one of the largest attendances of the year, so visibility was a little restricted. Janie has a serious woodpecker problem, and her hives are already wrapped in chicken wire.

Reg's topic this month was preparing the bees for winter. He went through all three hives for a final inspection, locating the queen in one to show the three new members who were there for their first look inside a hive. All three hives were healthy, with a fair amount of brood still developing, and a good quantity of stores for the winter. The Derbyshire strain of black bees were remarkably docile considering the crowds of people in their flight path.

We have to accept that pyrethroid resistance is widespread in our region these days, so the Apistan strips we have been using are no longer effective. As an alternative, Reg fitted each hive with a shallow eke over the brood box and an open tray of Apiguard was placed in it on the frame top bars. This volatile, thymol-based treatment is much harder for the mites to develop resistance to, if slightly less effective. Those close to the hives could smell that the bees were bringing in ivy nectar as the hives were opened, and several varieties of pollen were seen coming in. Unfortunately, no further honey can be extracted from the hives for sale this year after the Apiguard treatment has been introduced.

After the hives were closed up and re-wrapped in chicken wire, we returned to the main part of the garden for a very generous tea, and the usual discussion of the weather and the miserable honey crop this year.

Thanks to Janie for her hospitality, and again to Reg for taking us through the hives.

The next meeting will be a talk on candle making by Martin Buckle at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 19th November in the Langtree Community Centre, Langtree School, Woodcote.

### **Subscriptions:**

Subscriptions for 2009 are now due, you can download an application form from our website <http://www.southchilternsbeekeepers.org.uk/> or fill in a form at one of our meetings.

Secretary:- Phil Westwood

E-mail: [southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com](mailto:southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com)

## **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

On Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September Reading beekeepers and family members met at Tim Sheldon's house at Goring Heath and while 'family' set-up the barbecue, beekeepers boarded Tim's estate transportation (usually used to transport beaters for 'shoots' so highly esoteric to many of us Reading 'urbanites') to two of his sites on the estate.

Pond apiary. A massive oak with a rotted centre had recently fallen into the pond; Tim I believe is using the soft rotten heartwood in his smoker. Here Tim has three colonies and they are undergoing anti varroa treatment.

We had one hive to add the first application of Apiguard and a super, which had some honey to remove for extraction. Tim has had medium yields only this season, as have many of us.

Notable was the active movement from the bees, bright yellow pollen loads; on consideration this was probably ivy, though there's plenty of ragwort on the Woodcote by-pass! Some yellow staining in the cappings of the frames in the super, this is usually associated with Senecio. The bees in all three colonies looked in good health, no sign of deformed wings, plenty of brood, some drone was raked-out and though some varroa were seen on these it was on a few larvae only, some patches of drone showed no infestation visible. The demonstrator rather precipitately damaged a queen cell, which proved to have an occupant! A veteran beekeeper commented, "I hope that wasn't a supersedure queen you've just eliminated!" Which just goes to show how careful you've got to be! Anyway looking on the bright side there were eggs a plenty in the colony and larvae at all stages, so 'here's hoping!' The other two colonies received their second Apiguard packs.

Home wood apiary: There we inserted second Apiguard packs and took a quick look at the brood, which as with the 'pond bees' looked well and active, again rather more eggs, larva and brood than usual for this time of year! These two colonies have been brought-on by Tim from two swarms one of which Tim was able to collect from a caller who had kindly collected them and handed them over already in a bucket! Ideal swarm call really, the other was also collected low-down i.e. from a compost heap.

After a thoroughly enjoyable beekeeping session we bounced home and partook of an excellent barbeque and refreshments much appreciated by one and all. With great thanks to Tim and his family and to all who attended.

November meeting. This is our Annual General Meeting, please members do attend. Usual venue at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall. On Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November starting at 7-30PM sharp. The information at the AGM and the topics are all in our interest. Afterwards Mrs. Hazel Blackburn will talk and demonstrate beeswax candle making, this will be a motivation for us to get some traditional candles made for the coming Christmas and festive season.

### **The Caversham Festival on Sunday 13th September.**

Despite the date we we're lucky in having one of the few fine weekends we can remember recently. Reading and District Beekeepers had a deal of local media attention with write-ups and pictures in 'The Reading Chronicle' and 'The Evening Post'. It seems that the media is having one of it's periodic goes at generating 'frissons' in the public as to what could happen if there were no bees in the world! Anyway we had excellent honey sales and were able to provide anxious enquirers with what information we could and as to how they could consider keeping bees locally.



Jon Davey

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

**Contributions**, this includes **E-mails**, to arrive with the Editor by the **FIRSTPOST** (Around 10.00am) on the fifteenth of the Month for the Following Month, Contributions received after this will be held over for a later month.

It was suggested at the Federation Committee Meeting that the deadline should be the twentieth of the month, however, for at least for a couple of months, this will not fall in line with the Editor's commitments.

To enable the Advertisement Manager to place adverts with the Editor for the 15th 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