



**FEDERATION OF  
BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS**  
President: Miss Margery Cooper

December 2008  
Number 627

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**

<b>Friday March 20th</b>	Leaver Memorial Lecture	Stockcross
--------------------------	-------------------------	------------

**Smokers in Whitehall - Wednesday 5 November 2008**

The morning of Wednesday 5th November duly arrived .We packed our suits along with some bottles of water, some sandwiches and off we went up to the 'Big Smoke'. London of course, it was to join the Smokers in Whitehall Rally at Westminster, to protest against the lack of Government Funding for Research into finding conclusive answers for the declining Bee populations.

On arriving at the arranged location opposite the Houses of Parliament we joined a mass of approx 500 protesters all in bee suits, many with their smokers well lit, some carrying their Branch Banners. In the midst of this extraordinary sight were TV and Radio Broadcasting crews from around the world, interviewing various Beekeepers about their individual views, stories and experiences. The Chairman of the BBKA, Tim Lovett, who gave a briefing of events, then called everyone to order.



Then, with a police escort, we all walked along to Whitehall, where we gathered and waited opposite Downing Street shouting slogans such as 'Save our Honey Bees' and waving protest banners. One woman was well turned out in a very realistic Bee Suit. While Tim and a select few were allowed entry into Downing Street to deliver in excess of 100,000 signatures. 15 minutes later they returned 'Job Done' and we all marched back to The House of Commons Visitors Entrance. We were directed into a very long queue to gain entrance and to Lobby their respective MP's.

After about an hour, the doors opened allowing everyone to meet their respective MP's. On achieving what we set out to do and with only a short shower of rain early on, we returned home well pleased with ourselves.

We must mention, that as far as we could see. There was no one else from Reading and only two from Newbury. A reflection of the decline in Bee population perhaps?

Stella and Mike Lawson-Foster

## THE APIARY in DECEMBER

Most of us by now will have seen the adverts and recommendations for the application of oxalic acid to control varroa, by trickling in 'winter'. Thornes now market a 100 ml disposable oxalic acid solution 'Trickle2', as it is 100ml it, treats 2 full size colonies and to quote "A great way to treat your bees this winter" (advert in 'Bee Craft' November 2008) This at least, is fairly specific as to how to proceed with instructions on the pack to "trickle oxalic acid solution between each seam of bees".

The use of oxalic acid is referred to in the New Zealand Beekeeping 'Control of Varroa' manual as being "a more recent addition in the arsenal of organic acids used for varroa control". It comes in the manual after references to lactic and formic acids, which both seem to have harmful effects on the bees, residues in hives and drone larvae expelled after treatment. In other words it seems that oxalic acid is the coming treatment and latest thing in our battle with the mite.

Winter application. The colony should be brood-less when oxalic acid solution is applied. This is generally stated by all the available writings. Last season beekeepers in some of our associations were advised to apply as close as possible to the winter equinox, i.e. just before the queen began to lay. Varroa seeking to insert eggs into the newly occupied cells would be diminished by the oxalic and the damaging build-up of infestation during the vital early spring months will be controlled.

In general, last year colonies treated with oxalic acid had less varroa, and fewer deformed wingless bees were seen in the hives. Despite the awful weather, colonies that survived the January/ February period, when there were again a high proportion of colony losses, seemed to have built up well.

Solution strength. Michael Blackburn's oxalic acid solution is 'New Zealand Formula-tion' described as 4.5% in distilled water. "Each 100 ml contains 4.5g oxalic acid 60g sugar. This seems to be a relatively strong dose when compared to other recommendations readily available on beekeeping sites on the web. However the 100:60 ratio with sugar would represent a 3.2% molecular solution. This compares with the 7.5g in 100ml water with 100 mg sugar, i.e. 3.5 % solution from 'B Wrangler' in the USA, the 3.2% in Thorne's 'Trickle2' the Morayshire BKA 35g oxalic in 750ml warm water containing 200 g sugar made up to 1 litre after dissolving i.e., about 2.95% ml. All this is considerably stronger than the solution strengths many of us used last year. The New Zealand 'Control of Varroa' manual says "Research suggests that while there is little difference in effectiveness between 4.2% oxalic acid in the syrup and 3.2%, the lower concentration doesn't effect build-up so much next spring. Higher concentrations can affect over-wintering and spring build-up in cold climates".

So there we are then. Beekeepers or your association's 'oxalic acid treatment functionary' will be seen with syringe or applicator in hand going from hive to hive this December. If you want to copy the successful New Zealand formula, buy some demineralized water (battery top-up) at the garage. Oxalic acid dissolves readily and should be applied 'tepid' if possible to reduce risk of chilling the bees, mild days recommended. If you intend to store the solution the recommended temperature it is +5c i.e. at the top of the fridge, otherwise make just enough to treat the colonies. A word of warning, oxalic acid is corrosive. Use appropriate protection. To quote Michael Blackburn, " Poor little beggars, three months later the acid had burned a hole in a fabric gauntlet!"

Triad.

### **Bee problems: -**

It is heartening to note that beekeeping is on the agenda of the European parliament. The following links are worth looking at,

<http://www.vanishingbees.com>

<http://www.earthwatch.org/Europe>

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress\\_page/032-42550-322-11-47-904-20081119IPR42549-17-11-2008-2008-false/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/032-42550-322-11-47-904-20081119IPR42549-17-11-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm)

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**

The AGM took place on 12<sup>th</sup> November and we had a really good turnout with 26 people present including some newcomers who were made to feel very welcome. The meeting got underway with our Chairman, Peter Seagrave, giving an introduction and outlining the events of the past year. He made particular reference to our President, Bert Spragg, who is now well into his 100<sup>th</sup> year. He is as well as can be expected and still receives visitors from the Club. He also mentioned the Club's website which is now up and running. Do have a look at it. The address is [www.WDBKA.ik.com](http://www.WDBKA.ik.com) .

As regards the election of a Club Apiarist, the meeting decided to have a rota of assistants so that David Geen is not left to do all the work himself. At least 10 members volunteered to help. Dates for apiary meetings during 2009 will be put in the Newsletter. The Hon. Treasurer took several renewals at the AGM and it would be helpful if everyone renewed their membership promptly. To keep costs down, a large proportion of the members receive their Newsletter by email. If you change email address or have recently acquired one, please let me know so that we can update our records.

If you are reading this before our next meeting on December 10<sup>th</sup>, don't forget to bring something for the raffle, which can include items of equipment that you no longer need as well as the usual chocolates and bottles of wine. A few mince pies would also not go amiss. Happy Christmas to everyone.

Secretary: Derek Porter Tel: 0118 979 0326

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

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

On Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November, the AGM was a very pleasant and informative meeting for all members who attended.

Robert Briggs opened with the President's address in which he spoke about the increasing interest in bees and bee keeping, particularly now that there has been greater publicity in the media. However, each year tends to bring with it more problems facing the modern bee-keeper and he stressed the importance for us all to move forward with the latest research.

Work in the Apiary has progressed well and he expressed his gratitude to all those who have taken part in the work there and also to the members of the committee for their continued support, particularly Michael Sheasby for his work with bee-keeping on a wider level.

In the Secretary's report, Michael Sheasby reported that our membership has increased to 40 full members and 4 friends, with many younger people becoming involved. He also mentioned that our own teaching apiary provides newcomers with excellent support.

The treasurer was pleased to inform us that the finances are in a very healthy state, due particularly to the sale of honey. We have been able to purchase a virtual hive, for use within the community, and also subscriptions have been reduced to £24 a year for full members.

Michael Sheasby was also able to update us with the latest news from the Berkshire Federation and the BBKA. The BBKA in particular has had a very busy year, including the collection of names for the petition and the recent lobbying of Parliament, attended by 7 members of this Society.

On 5 November over three hundred beekeepers in bee suits, some carrying placards and others puffing smokers, assembled outside the Houses of Parliament to demonstrate their concern over cuts to government funding of bee research and to demand additional investment. The SW&MBKS members taking part were Edwina Brugge, Don Church, Joy Dodson, Ro Facer, Michael Sheasby and Dennis Way. The demonstration then moved to Whitehall opposite Downing Street and a delegation went to Number 10 to deliver the BBKA petition containing some 140,000 signatures collected during this year. Then the demonstration returned to the Houses of Parliament to lobby their MPs.

Unfortunately, there was a log-jam ahead of our members in the lobby, but after a rather long and chilly wait they were eventually able to meet with a representative of Adam Afriyie, MP for Windsor, as most MP's had returned to the House for PM's Question Time. With a degree in Agricultural Economics, a past member of the Science and Technology committee and currently Shadow Minister for Innovation, Universities and Skills, they were assured that Mr. Afriyie would be very interested in the issues raised, so it was a very useful meeting.

Later that day, Michael was interviewed on the Phil Kennedy show on Radio Berkshire. Members will have seen the considerable media coverage that this event attracted that has further heightened the public's awareness of the importance of bees and beekeeping.

The Association has also been developing a Bee Health Strategy document, in partnership with DEFRA, This involves the improvement of bee husbandry at grass roots level – which basically means the responsibility rests with us! Michael hopes that many more members of this Society will take the BBKA Basic Assessment Test in the near future.

There were several changes to the Officers and committee for next year – Dennis Way is the new President, Michael Sheasby is now the Chairman and Don Church the Vice-Chairman, Anne-Marie Chakravarty has agreed to continue as Treasurer and Maureen Williams has taken on the role of Secretary. Other committee members remain as before, with the addition of a new member, Mr Tony Wolstenholme.

The final decision to be taken by the meeting was the expansion of the Society's name – we are now Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society, reflecting the wide catchment area of our membership (as you may have noticed at the top of this newsletter!).

The evening concluded with a very pleasant buffet supper, as a reward for the hard work of the evening!

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 a Beekeeping topic. This will be on Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, 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.

Our Annual Dinner is to 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 will be £24 per head, including tips. All drinks are extra. The menu and details are being sent separately; please ensure that the booking form with your requirements is returned to Don as soon as possible, but at least a week beforehand.

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.

In case anyone is unable to attend the next meeting, I would like to take the opportunity to wish everyone Seasons Greetings and a very happy new year from all the committee.

Newsletter items: Liz Juby

Windsor (01753) 859382

[lizjuby@hotmail.com](mailto:lizjuby@hotmail.com)

Secretary: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

The 27th Annual General Meeting of the South Chilterns Beekeepers Association took place in October. There were some changes to the composition of the committee, and the election of a new President, but no other major decisions were made.

Both the Treasurer, Bill Sievewright, and the Secretary, Phil Westwood, stood down this year. As nobody was willing to step into either of these roles, Steve Moll generously offered to step down as Chairman, and take on the job of Treasurer. The old Vice Chairman Guy Simpson will resume his old role as Chairman, but will not be in the country for many meetings so the new Vice Chairman will have an important responsibility. Toby Price agreed to assume this position. The Secretary's post remained unfilled, and will have to be divided amongst the rest of the committee. Jemima Hume-Humphries joined the committee as an extra member, and Phil Westwood was asked to become Association Microscopist.



**We urgently require someone to take over the duty of secretary and join the committee; any offer will be gratefully received.**

The assembled members also agreed a vote of thanks for our departing President, Don Thompson, who spoke on the essential role of the committee, and the importance of developing a knowledge of disease recognition. Ron Crocker was unanimously elected to follow him in the role.

Due to the sad death of our accountant, Eric Morris, no accounts could be presented at this meeting.

Following tea and biscuits, Philip Westwood spoke on why and how beekeepers should look after their backs. This topic has been reported previously in Newsletters.

The next meeting is our Christmas meeting and will take place on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December (**note: second Wednesday**). Nigel Perkins will talk on his seven years of bee-keeping; this will be followed by seasonal food and a raffle.

### **Subscriptions:**

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

Retiring Secretary: - Phil Westwood

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

## **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

On 9<sup>th</sup> October Reading and District Beekeepers opened the winter programme with a talk from Southampton based beekeeper Mike Holloway. Mike takes hives onto the heather in the New Forest and being exemplary in his suppleness to several beekeepers at the meeting who blame their lack of activity to 'getting on a bit' scales roofs and chimneys in the South Coast area having taken-over the duties of feral colony collector from Bill Dartnall (See flueology in action).

Mike builds up to 20 plus hives throughout the season and has found that to maximize the potential yield of heather honey in the late summer there is nothing like a new vigorous queen to quickly build-up the population. Mike recommends 'the patch method'. This is a well-established way of introducing a queen from a strong successful colony to some frames of bees set-up as a nucleus. The patch method basically stimulates the bees' ability to produce an emergency or 'scrub' queen. Mike described and demonstrated in detail how postage stamp size section of brood comb selected from strong colony each 'postage stamp' being cut with care to have tiny brood and egg. These are then inserted in a same-size aperture cut into the comb of the new nuc. It's important that no brood or egg is present in the nuc. Mike sometimes has had to intervene but the results have been found to be very good, with the desirable characteristics of the donor hive being carried on in the new breeding colony destined for the heather. A strong donor colony will have no problem supplying 'patches' to several new nucs. This is good guidance for us given the rather numerous examples of queens disappearing and colonies having no brood or eggs for weeks that some Reading members have experienced over the last two seasons. Mike kindly handed round some schematics and instructions for the method and can send more by e-mail on request.

Mike then with great good humour showed us interesting slides of sites, high chimney's included where he has been dealing with feral colonies. Also the frequently astonishing way in which bees build comb to fit the inside radius of chimney cowls etc and in one case the interior of an externally fitted gas meter box which must have woken-up the meter-reader when he opened the front!

We had a very good meeting with the patch method being of great interest to all. With many thanks to Mike Holloway and to all who attended.

December Meeting. At 7-30 pm sharp at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December. We will have a little something in the Christmas goodies line to sample as usual so welcome one and all.

We have been fortunate that the Burchetts Green Bee lecturer and instructor, Reg Hook, member of South Chilterns Association, running 30 plus colonies, will be speaking to us on 'beekeeping through 'The Season.' We strongly suggest you'll not want to miss this meeting!

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

## BeeCraft: -

A digital version of BeeCraft will in future be available; the first three issues are free. To view the November issue click on the logo.



**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