



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

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February 2009
Number 628

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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

Saturday 18th April

BBKA Convention, Stoneleigh

Advance tickets [Click here](#)

Remember: If your subscription is not up to date, YOU ARE NOT INSURED

THE APIARY in FEBRUARY

Unless we have the mildest spring on record it is still too early to open the hive up for the first spring inspection. You should however be checking your hives to make sure they have come through the winter, and that they are not running on empty. Regular hefting of the hives will have told you how low the stores have got. In an emergency if you find the bees up under the crown board you can give them a large bag of sugar. Lay the bag on its side, cut a small cross in the side of the bag and peel back the 4 triangles. Pour a small cup of water into the hole, enough to dampen but not soak the sugar. Then fold the flaps back flat, and roll the bag over onto the hole in the crown board (removing the mesh or porter escape). The bees will reopen the bag and use the moisture to take down and use the sugar.

If you need to feed candy there is a good recipe in Ron Brown's book Beekeeping a seasonal Guide. 1 pint of water to 5 pounds of sugar heated to 234 °F.

(Fondant can also be used, available from bakers or from Ragus Sugars. Fondant comes in a 12½ kilo block and is best cut into smaller blocks with a wire. Placed directly on the top bars the fondant will flow so put it into a sealed bag, cut a cross (approx two inches) and place with the slit at right angles to the top bars, leave the rest to the bees.)

Even if you only have one hive don't make less than this amount. Bring 2 pints of water to the boil, and add 10 pounds of sugar, a pound at a time, until all is dissolved and the liquid gets to 234°F or just over (for the sweet makers out there you will recognise this as the soft-ball stage). Take the pan off the heat and place in a sink of cold water for 20 minutes, until the mixture drops to around 160°F, it will be starting to set, so stir it up vigorously and pour into two 2 litre ice-cream containers. When cold you will have two 5½ pound containers of candy for feeding, just invert the box over the feeding hole; the bees will remove it from the box.

Make sure the hive is still secure, mouse guard still in place, and a well ventilated roof in place. If you feed candy in February be sure to follow up with a gallon of syrup towards the end of March.

If you are planning to make increase, or rear Queens this year, it is a good idea to feed the colony you wish to breed from, and one of the better behaved colonies that you will want for drone generation, early in the year to help with the build up so you have a couple of good strong colonies.

If you decide not to rear Queens, you can always split the strong colonies to make increase and if you don't need them, pass them on to a new beekeeper.

Feeding early helps with the build up, but keep an extra eye on them because they will swarm earlier if you are too successful in increasing their numbers.

Triad.

Your Regional Bee Inspectors are: -

Southern Region: - Ian's post is to be advertised in the next BBKA News and other bee periodicals. I would not anticipate an appointment before April or May. I would therefore suggest the contact should be the NBU Office, details at the foot of this message. I would also ask that you include <http://beebase.csl.gov.uk> which includes the list of inspectors and will be updated as soon as the new RBI is in place.

PLEASE NOTE CSL IS MERGING AND CHANGING ITS NAME: CSL is merging with Defra's Plant Health Division (including Bee Health and the Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate) and the Plant Variety Rights Office and Seeds Division on 1 April 2009 to form a new Agency called: The Food and Environment Research Agency.

For more information visit <http://services.csl.gov.uk/fera>

National Bee Unit, Central Science Laboratory, Sand Hutton, York. YO41 1 LZ
00 44 (0)1 904 462 510 nbu@csl.gov.uk

South Eastern Region: - Mr. Alan Byham. Fax/Telephone number: 020 8571 6450

The 27th Leaver Memorial Lecture The Dark European Honeybee

By Tom Robinson (BIBBA)

**Friday 20th March 2008 at 7.30 pm
The Sutton Hall, Stockcross, near Newbury, Berkshire**

Newbury Beekeepers' Association warmly invites you to the 27th annual Leaver Memorial Lecture, to be given by Tom Robinson of the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders' Association. Tom has been keeping bees since about 1984 and during the last 20 of those years he has been raising queens and selectively breeding bees. He generally runs about 100 colonies in the York area which is at the centre of a fertile plain where oil-seed rape, borage and heather are all in reach. Tom has been demonstrating and training on techniques of bee breeding since finding that our native strain of dark bees has excellent over-wintering performance.

The lecture is free and all beekeepers in the region are most welcome. We should therefore be very grateful if you would publicise the lecture amongst local beekeepers and colleagues – and through your magazine or newsletter if appropriate.

The lecture will be held at the Sutton Hall, Church Road, Stockcross. The postcode is RG20 8LN.

Directions:-

- Stockcross is on the A4000 just off the A4 on the western edge of Newbury.
- If you are coming from the north or south, use the A34 and take the A4 exit towards Hungerford. However do not enter the A4 but, on the western roundabout, take the exit for the A4000 signposted to Wickham, Stockcross and RAF Welford.

- If you are coming from the east of Newbury, drive through Newbury on the A4 until you cross the A34 and then turn onto the A4000 signposted to Wickham, Stockcross and RAF Welford.
- When in the middle of Stockcross village, turn south onto Church Road. The Hall is on the right after about 100 yards. The Hall has some parking space but cars may be parked (considerately, please) along Church Road and Glebe Lane.



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WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On Wednesday 10th December we welcomed Norman Chapman who gave us a talk, amply illustrated with slides, on the subject of pollen. He showed how pollen could be distributed by the wind as well as by insects. Excellent photographs, taken by him, showed the many ways plants have evolved to ensure an insect landing on a flower to gather nectar will pick up some pollen, which will then be transferred to another flower thus ensuring pollination. He then went on to show us the many shapes sizes and colours of pollen plants of different species produce.

After a refreshment break during which the raffle was drawn and seasonal fare enjoyed, Norman showed how he extracts pollen from flowers and honey. Focussing more on beekeeping, he showed us his pollen trap and how to dry pollen collected that way. A close-up of various pellets showed that the bees collect only one type of pollen on each foray. After all, if we look at our bees their pollen sacs are always one colour and not a mixture of colours.

One of the most interesting aspects of pollen collected by bees is the way it varies not only by the day but also by the time of the day. This was shown by picking out the various colours of pellet and arraying them like the hands of a clock. The range of colours was quite surprising and quantities of each changed depending on the time of day. Maybe this is because some flowers open and close at different times of the day which forces the bees to visit only flowers that happen to be open when they are flying. Norman's final slides showed other insect pollinators such as hover flies, bumble bees and wasps. We all enjoyed the talk and rewarded Norman with loud applause. He also won a prize in the raffle, which pleased him greatly. Being a modest man, Norman only at the last moment mentioned that he had written a book entitled 'Constructive Beekeeping'. Our Librarian was given funds to purchase a copy for our library.

May I remind members to have a look at the Club's website which is now up and running. The address is www.WDBKA.ik.com

The Hon. Treasurer would like to remind anyone who has not renewed their membership yet to do so promptly. Please let me have your up-to-date email address so that we can update our records and ensure you receive the Newsletter.

Derek Porter Hon. Sec. 0118 979 0326

SLOUGH, WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

The focus of our December meeting was a quiz organised for us by Beulah Cullen on the BBKA Basic Assessment syllabus. We were pleased to be able to work in groups – with the more experienced beekeepers spread around – but even so, it was amazing how many things we should know and nearly knew! It was great fun, though, and quite reassuring for those of us who are hoping to take the assessment this year.

With all the interest in providing support for bees we feel we should all do our best to learn as much as we can about good bee husbandry and this is an excellent start!

We were then rewarded for our efforts with a pre-Christmas feast, which included delicious waffles and mulled wine very kindly provided by Anne-Marie Chakravarty!

One of our members, Harry Peace, has been successfully promoting bee keeping with a very interesting article in the Maidenhead Advertiser. I think we all appreciate the importance of raising the profile of the subject and increasing public awareness - particularly in the current times.

Also, you will be interested to hear that another of our members, Stan Green, was appointed the Berkshire Federation delegate to the BBKA for the Annual Delegates Meeting on January 10th. He attended with Michael Sheasby and I am sure either of them would be happy to talk to you about the very interesting discussions and decisions taken there.

In case anyone missed the last newsletter, there have been 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 AGM in November 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!).

As a further reminder, our winter meetings continue at All Saints Parish Hall on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor SL4 1HZ on the second Tuesday of February, March and April. 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.

We have also been discussing the resumption of our Apiary meetings at the Teikyo School in Wexham, and the first is likely to be on the 22nd March – although this depends very much on the season and I will confirm this at a later date.

I have also just been given the very sad news of the sudden death of Michael Sheasby's wife Judy. I am sure you all join us in expressing our deepest sympathy to Michael and his family.

All details of our meetings can also be found on the website www.wherewecanwego.com. - click SL4 + gardens + nature (boxes).

Newsletter items: Liz Juby Windsor (01753) 859382 [mail to](mailto:ljuby@bt.com)
Chairman: Michael Sheasby, Farnham Common (01753) 642656. [mail to](mailto:msh@bt.com)

READING & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION.

The December 2008 meeting was held at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall on 11th December. We had a good turnout for Reg Hook's talk on seasonal beekeeping. A veteran of nearly 50 years beekeeping Reg is also beekeeping lecturer at The B.C.A. at Burchett's Green.

Reg talked us through his recommendations for handling bees, from collecting swarms and feral colonies, he has had to split beech trunks in his time and successfully hived-off the bees. Reg has gone into winter, with 24 colonies using 16x10inch brood boxes. To preserve the fragile lugs, when lifting, Reg uses a little Vaseline beneath.

Also, Reg has a good tip for finding the queen, which I'm sure many of us will be trying in April! He suggests not being in a hurry to put in a queen excluder in the early spring, it is better to get the bees moving up from the brood box, to help assess their vigour,

The queen excluder can go on a bit later having located the queen by Reg's 'last-two frames' method. Some of the good tips for beekeepers from Reg were, use of a wedge to hold-up supers, modifying a mesh floor for a traveling screen, times for extracting and feeding etc.

Varroa control was discussed in depth. Reg has had success using formic acid on a pad and with 'BeeVital Hive Clean', which is sold by Bee Bay Ltd Bideford Devon. This product contains a number of ingredients including citric and oxalic acid plus propolis and aromatic oils. Reg is also a 'trickler' with oxalic acid/sucrose solution. Reg shared with most of us the disappointment of some colony losses at end of winter 2006/7.

He gathered up some dead bees from affected hives and sent them off for testing. The results were rather enigmatic; there were some bees with deformed wing virus but no sign of Nosema Ceranae, which Reg had suspected of being the cause.

It was a very good talk, much appreciated by all. We were able to share in some Christmas goodies for our 'break', which were also appreciated.

February 2009 meeting.

At the kind invitation of Wokingham beekeepers Association we will be joining them at Saint Paul's Church Hall on Wednesday 11th February. The speaker will be Rob Nicklass from Newbury area. Subject is 'DIY in Beekeeping'. Rob and his partner are examples of the young self-sufficient people that British beekeeping needs. Coming from agricultural backgrounds (they have acreages), working in I.T. and running numerous colonies; Rob is an expert at the construction of hive components, frames, hive stands etc. from scratch.

Be there! St Paul's Hall is easy to find, from Reading on the A329, just inside the Wokingham boundary, before the church, which has a prominent spire. Please be prompt for a 7-30 start. If anyone needs a lift please contact Jon or Michael Blackburn.

Reading & District Beekeepers annual seasonal dinner.

This was held on Friday 9th January at The Bull at Sonning. This is a fine big pub with plenty of features; we had a good attendance and a dining room to ourselves. Food was plentiful and most people declared themselves satisfied. As we were closer to the Christmas and New Years holiday than usual there were crackers and table packs with party poppers, long balloons etc and we had a hilarious time launching Zeppelins at each other!

One or two beekeepers had an issue with the soup, which seemed to be tomato pasta sauce with a bread-stick broken into it. We understand The Bull is now closed for a period for refurbishment so maybe the chef had dispensed with the stockpot in preparation for this!

Jon Davey

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

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

The Christmas meeting was a success. The interesting and entertaining talk by Nigel Perkins of Wokingham Association was enjoyed, particularly by new and relatively new beekeepers. A beekeeper of ten years, he spoke of his problems and mistakes, he stressed the mistake of importing queens, Buckfast and hybrids mainly from Greece.

During his ten years of beekeeping he had developed a system that suited his style of beekeeping, which he found to be successful and effective

The talk was followed by seasonal snacks and mulled wine; the raffle raised £72 – up on last year.

Extract from letter to the President



A friend of mine went to the Devon Agricultural Show and visited the bee and honey tent. One of the staff told our friend about the beekeeping group successfully set up by him at the Wembury School – in part with a couple of my hives which I was happy to give them when I had to give up beekeeping six years ago after 65 years.

Philip Sheppard. (Former member of SCBKA)

Our next meeting is Wednesday February 18th:

Honey hunting in Nepal, an illustrated talk by Claire Waring, Editor of BeeCraft.

The following from the Georgia Newsletter is well worth reading.

Effects of comb age on honey bee colony growth and brood survivorship. Berry, J.A. & K.S. Delaplane. 2001. *Journal of Apicultural Research* 40(1): 3-8 [PDF file](#)

SUMMARY This research examined the effects of comb age on honey bee colony growth and brood survivorship. Experimental old combs were of an unknown age, but were dark and heavy as typical of combs one or more years old. New combs were produced just prior to the beginning of the experiment and had never had brood previously reared in them. Either old or new combs were installed into each of 21-24 nucleus colonies each year over a three-year period. On average, colonies with new comb produced a greater area (cm²) of brood, a greater area (cm²) of sealed brood, and a higher weight of individual young bees (mg). Brood survivorship was the only variable significantly higher in old comb.

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

To enable the Advertisement Manager to place adverts with the Editor for the 20th of the month deadline; adverts should be sent well before this time.

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