



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

March 2009  
Number 629

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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 18 <sup>th</sup> April	BBKA Convention, Stoneleigh	Advance tickets <a href="#">Click here</a>
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**Remember: If your subscription is not up to date, YOU ARE NOT INSURED**

## THE APIARY in MARCH

We did have some traditional February snow for a short spell, followed by mild weather. This resulted in snowdrops and catkins appearing at a more normal time. The forecast is satisfactory, and hopefully this signals a more normal beekeeping season. With this in mind check your hives for stores, March and April is the period of most losses, if in doubt feed syrup or candy. Often at this time it is found that a colony has starved despite the hive containing adequate food. The bees may have gradually moved to one side of the brood box, consuming stores as it moves. It then finds itself out of food on that side, but with frames of honey on the opposite flank, however, on a mild day bees should be bringing in pollen, normally a sign that brood rearing is in progress but do check on the stores.

This is also a good time to assess if you have sufficient equipment for the coming season and that your smoker is clean, if not, it can be cleaned by heating the inside of the furnace with a blowlamp or torch taking care not to burn the bellows, then scraping out the burnt carbon.

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.

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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](mailto: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 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at 7.30 pm  
The Sutton Hall, Stockcross, near Newbury, Berkshire**

Newbury Beekeepers' Association warmly invites you to the 27<sup>th</sup> 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.

**Reading & District Beekeepers have the Pleasure to Announce.**

**A “TASTE OF BEEKEEPING” DAY  
(You can become a beekeeper)  
Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March starts at 10.30AM.  
At Mapledurham Memorial Hall Trench Green.**

We are all aware of the importance of pollinating insects for our future and that bees are under threat in Britain and worldwide. Honeybees are the most important pollinator and as they are managed, beekeepers are anxious to safeguard bees, our environment, our food supply and our future.

Reading Beekeepers wish to invite interested people along to this introduction to beekeeping day. There will be the Chairman of Reading & DBKA and other Reading beekeepers there to greet you with questions and answers sessions.

Displays, literature, guidance on becoming a beekeeper, an informational DVD will be shown. Entry is free; refreshments are available.

Interested people please contact Mike Lawson Foster.

E-mail [mikestellafoster@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mikestellafoster@yahoo.co.uk)

Leave Reading via Caversham Bridge- turn first left up St. Peters Hill-Continue until you reach The pack Saddle Inn-Turn left and continue for about 1 mile-turn left for Mapledurham village (House and Mill)-The memorial hall is on the right hand side shortly after the turn at Trench Green.

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**Linda Clarke in OZ**

On a recent visit to my family in Melbourne Australia, I met some friendly beekeepers. They were selling their honey and products at the local market in Portarlington where my son and family live. They said they were having a good season so far and had many of the different honies to taste (which I did) mostly from the beautiful gum trees which were fortunately out while I was there, such vivid colours and the bees were certainly busy on them. They say they still have no varroa, so beekeeping is still relatively easy compared to our constant battle. Anyway it's back to reality and hope our coming season is very healthy and prosperous.





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## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

On Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> 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 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 that 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. 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](http://www.WDBKA.ik.com)

The Christmas dinner was held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2008 at The Three Frogs in Wokingham. There was a good attendance and the consensus of opinion was that the food was very good and the evening a complete success. Peter even received a letter of thanks from Mr and Mrs Hadleigh. So many thanks are due to Peter Seagrave for organising the event. Let's hope this will be the start of a tradition, as our Club has not held a Christmas dinner for many years.

On Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January we welcomed Martin Buckle, who gave us a talk and demonstration on Beeswax Modelling. Sixteen members turned up and we were amply rewarded by seeing the amazing models, candles and flowers that Martin has made over the many years he has been using beeswax.

He showed us how to clean wax by filtering it to remove the impurities and how to make foundation from a sheet of wax, formed by pouring hot wax over wetted plywood. He then demonstrated the various techniques that go into making models, and he showed how to make candles from moulds and also from coloured foundation. He showed us many photographs of other models he had entered in the National Honey Show. Some models had won prizes but some had not because they did not comply fully with the schedule. One item aroused a lot of interest from the audience, namely the 8oz. block of wax. Whilst it takes a lot of care to produce a really good block, Martin quite rightly pointed out that such a block has absolutely no use in its finished state! I know from personal experience that once you have made a prize-winning block, it tends to be handled with the utmost care as it seems sacrilege to melt it down but, other than for putting in a show, that's all its good for. The level of interest shown by the members was very high and in no time at all it was 10 o'clock and we had not even stopped for refreshments!

Having thanked Martin for a most inspirational talk, I am sure there will be several of our members having a go at modelling with beeswax in the future.

Whilst membership renewals have been going well, the Hon. Treasurer would like to remind anyone who has not renewed their membership yet to do so promptly. Failure to renew could invalidate insurance and BDI cover and stop you receiving the Newsletter.

Derek Porter Hon. Sec. 0118 979 0326

## **SLOUGH, WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY**

Our February meeting was very well attended and was opened by Michael Sheasby, who updated us with some of the news from the BBKA.

Firstly, he recommended the BBKA Spring Convention to us all, as a fascinating gathering of beekeepers, trade shows and lectures. It will take place on the Agricultural Show Ground at Stoneleigh near Warwick on 17<sup>th</sup>-19th April. He particularly recommended the lectures but warned that places on these do need to be booked up early, as they are so popular. Full details are available from the BBKA website.

He also mentioned the fact that the National Science and Engineering Week this year has as one of its themes a 'Save our Bees' campaign and there will be encouragement in schools for the planting of bee-friendly plants in parks, gardens and even window boxes! It is fascinating to see the growing interest in the plight of our bees in so many sections of our community.

Michael was also kind enough to purchase on our behalf several BBKA publications to update our library resources. We now have available their DVD 'An Introduction to Beekeeping' and two copies of the Tutors' Notes for the Basic Assessment syllabus. These are available to borrow. If you are interested in these or any of our other books, please contact me (Liz Juby). I will also make sure that they are available at our monthly meetings or from the Apiary on Sunday afternoons.



The highlight of our meeting was a fascinating talk by Harry Peace, one of our members, on 'Sixty Years of Beekeeping'. He began with a warning not to trust everything the so-called experts say, and then followed with such words of wisdom that many of us less experienced members were scribbling notes so that we did not forget his words!

The talk began with a fascinating account about how he first became a beekeeper as a young lad, as part of his family's drive for self-sufficiency. By the age of 10 he was interested in the whole plant world, including the growing of vegetables on the allotment. He could also pluck and dress a chicken and skin and dress a rabbit. Bee keeping was a natural next step! His first hive was made with the help of his Dad and the colony of bees cost his parents the equivalent of one week's salary. No wonder Harry quickly became skilled in the collection of swarms!

He went on to relate his experiences throughout the war, which included the building of an emergency hive out of discarded teak draining boards! Apparently it was dauntingly heavy but lasted until just 5 years ago, when Harry re-designed it into queen mating boxes!

In fact, one of the many lessons from Harry's lecture was how successfully he has managed to 'make do, mend and adapt' in the most inspiring way! His skills were clearly evident in the amazing photographs and films of his activities through the years – inspiring to us all!

We were left with a feeling of respect, not only for his obvious skill in bee keeping but also in the various trials and experiments he has conducted through the years. It is rewarding and inspiring to hear someone who loves his hobby and is also so successful. Apparently his honey production has not only helped to pay for the hobby but has financed several holiday cruises as well!

Our next two 'winter' meetings will be held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March and Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April at All Saint's Parish Church Hall in Alexander Road, Windsor SL4 1HZ. Our fortnightly Apiary meetings at the site about 1 mile north of Wexham Park Hospital will begin again at 2.30 on March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

All details of our meetings can also be found on the website [www.wherecanwego.com](http://www.wherecanwego.com). - click SL4 + gardens + nature (boxes)

Newsletter items: Liz Juby Windsor (01753) 859382 [mail to](#)  
Chairman: Michael Sheasby, Farnham Common (01753) 642656. [mail to](#)

## **READING & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION.**

On February 17<sup>th</sup> Reading beekeepers at the kind invitation of Wokingham association joined them at Saint Paul's hall for a talk and demonstration by west Berks' beekeeper and agriculturalist Rob. Nickless, the topic being DIY in Beekeeping.

Rob and his partner Jo have advanced rapidly since Rob was taught beekeeping by the late Golly Sturt about 5 years ago. He entered winter 2008 with 32 colonies and is thinking in terms of 50 or so by the end of 2009! Fortunately, Rob is a fine DIY carpenter and makes his own floors and hive stands designed to rack frames conveniently during hive inspections, makes a crown board to his own design that has eke- space on one side sufficient for Apiguard trays. Ron demonstrated the tools he uses and described how using waste wood and off-cuts, he makes savings on the considerable number of these hive elements and apiary equipment he needs. Much of the wood Rob obtains has been weather proofed to 'pre-undercoat' level, so obviously, for beekeeping purposes he uses suitable creosote substitutes 'Cuprinol Clear' etc, to give additional protection.

Rob showed us nucleus hives he has started to make, the cost of the wood is minimal and they look highly serviceable.

Rob finds the 'Correx' plastic board\* has many functions in his work, he's used it as sliding sections in a central 'long-feeder' he's working on and in his warming cabinet design, double skinned with Styrofoam sandwich. Members of the audience had been invited to bring along their own DIY innovations for discussion and as well as convenient equipment carriers for use in the apiary, they included a former table-top fridge, where the insulation properties were now being used with low yield electric heating elements and a thermostat as a two shelf warming cabinet.

Jo. produces what Rob describes as the 'added value' products from their apiaries. A range of beeswax based hand creams and polishes, with moulded and rolled candles that are for sale and are 'legal', Jo, having taken the time and trouble; considerable no doubt, in getting retail regulations approval for her product range.

Most of us were seen frantically scribbling away while Rob talked and demonstrated. This writer tried a diagram of an entrance feeder Rob has designed, which you can actually shove into a hive entrance using a 1 lb jar with the metal lid lightly punctured. Just what I need, and looks easy to make!

Rob has turned his hand at skep making recently and what he showed us looked perfectly adequate for use: he ran it up in a spare hour he had!

An Excellent and instructive talk and demonstration, full of good ideas for us all.

\* Correx, that rigid plastic board that estate agents have their names on and frequently dump in people hedges.

March meeting. Reading beekeepers will travel to Stockcross for The Newbury Beekeeper's '27<sup>th</sup> Leaver Memorial Lecture' at the warm invitation (February Newsletter) of Newbury Association. This will be at The Sutton Hall Stockcross Near Newbury on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March, starting at 7-30PM. The speaker will be Tom Robinson BIBBA and the subject will be 'The Dark European Honeybee' We know that several Reading members have expressed interest in the old dark British strains and this will be a good opportunity to 'get it out of their systems!'

Some lifts will be available contact Jon or Michael Blackburn. Stockcross Village is easy to find, come off the M4 onto the A34 Newbury bypass and take the second exit, this takes you onto a large roundabout to the west of Newbury, three quarter way round you find the sign for Stockcross. The hall is visible just inside a left turn after the village pub.

**F.Y.I.** In this edition of the newsletter you will see an announcement of Reading beekeeper's Introduction to Beekeeping day at Mapledurham on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> march. If you have interested people on the cusp (as it were) of beekeeping, Please send them to us if they are in the Reading District!

Jon Davey

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

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

### **Honey Hunting in Nepal - Claire Waring: Editor of BeeCraft**

Chairman Guy Simpson opened the meeting by presenting Reg Hook our demonstrator and bee expert a certificate from the BBKA in recognition of 50 years devoted to bees and beekeeping.

Over forty people had managed to squeeze into our meeting room in anticipation of a highly interesting talk and we were not disappointed.



Claire works with the charity 'Bees Abroad' which aims to help beekeepers in several countries including Nepal, Malawi, Kenya and Nigeria, by teaching them a few basic ideas such as filtering their honey through a cloth to make it more saleable. They also set up co-operatives with a project manager.

In Nepal the standard of living is very low and beekeepers generally do not have money to buy wood to make equipment, so they have to improvise. Claire showed us some slides of a simple log hive hanging high up from the eaves of a house. The bees' entrance hole is in the centre along with the brood. The ends of the log have removable plates so the honey can be harvested without disturbing the nest. Even the houses themselves have built in hives. The hive is situated in a hole in the 60 cm thick wall. The bees have a small entrance at the front with a removable back plate inside the house for harvesting the honey. The bees are the docile *Apis Ceranae* which is smaller than *Apis mellifera*. The beekeepers are careful not to remove the entire comb, although they do harvest some brood, which they eat as a source of protein.

Claire then went on to show us some incredible slides of hives of the giant honeybee *Apis Laboriosa* who build their nests under cliff overhangs. The honey hunters practise the tradition of honey harvesting which has been handed down through generations. The honey is collected towards the end of the season, just before the bees migrate to lower altitudes. The honey hunters climb up on split bamboo ladder ropes that are secured top and bottom. The honey hunters have to be fit and agile as there are no safety ropes or harness. These large bees are quite aggressive so a fair amount of smoke is needed to drive them off the comb. The comb is then sliced off with huge poles with a cutter attached. It is then transferred to a basket which is slung over the honey harvester's back and eventually lowered to people waiting on the ground, where the honey is squeezed out of the comb into earthenware pots.

It is a major event for the village and many turn out to watch this amazing and dangerous sight. It is also a very spiritual occasion, with offerings being made to the spirits of the cliffs for permission to take honey.

If you too would like to witness this spectacle, Bees Abroad are organising a trip from 21<sup>st</sup> November to 5<sup>th</sup> December for an approximate cost of £1,500 excluding flights. Contact Claire for more details.

Viv Moll

**Our next meeting is Wednesday.** March 18<sup>th</sup> Quiz Night – the last scheduled indoor meeting of the season.

**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.

**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. Jon Davey, 107 Northcourt Avenue, Reading RG2 7HG  
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