



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

April 2009  
Number 630

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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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## THE APIARY in APRIL

Considering that many of our beekeeping membership have been meeting up to March, sheltered snugly in Halls of or halls pertaining to Parish churches be they C of E or nonconformist perhaps before we venture-out for the beginning of our spring and summer programmes, when we do more to our bee-hives than a 'quick-look, a pot of fondant on top, or a quick trickle of oxalic solution, we should pause momentarily and mumble a prayer under our breath for the help and antecedence of the blessed S/S Ambrose of Milan, Bernard of Clairveaux or Valentine himself, these being our patrons or more appropriately perhaps of the blessed S.Modomnoc: from his Celtic fastness to protect his patronage the honey bee. We'll need a good warm spring and summer this season. A third year with dire weather will surely push us further back into misery and mire of weak colonies, poor honey harvests with further colony losses in prospect.

However let's go to it now, our colonies will need to be checked thoroughly when we have shirt sleeve weather, I believe it's minimum 16 Celsius to be confident it's warm enough. Weaker colonies with a risk that they are struggling to break-down last years honey store, particularly granulated honey, ivy and the like should be given a single strength sugar syrup (a pound to a pint the old timers said). If you use quick feeders, a piece of 'bubble wrap' cut to shape and floated on top will virtually eliminate the distressful drowning of our precious insects that we seem to have experienced in the last few seasons. Hefting the hive will give a guide, but all should be revealed when you open-up and examine. A spring syrup feed will help to bring the queen into lay, so make sure in the more populous colonies that there are enough cleaned-out cells for this purpose. You can add a drawn out super in early April. Don't be too quick to put on a queen excluder. You'll want the queen to have the option to move-up. Don't worry if you get a bit of brood in your-first added super, you can recover this as a honey super quite easily later in April when you're hopefully adding supers above the excluder for a honey flow. Check now while the population is relatively low for your queen's condition, if she is sluggish, weak and thin, missing legs, laying few eggs you'll be looking to replace her; use the first swarm-cells from neighbouring hives, or maybe you'll have a queen donated by a fellow beekeeper later in the month. Use a queen cage to protect her for the first week.

Look down into your brood chamber, now is the time to clean up. Scrape the floor well, add some new frames replacing darkened ragged frames containing remnants of mouldy pollen, un-emerged morbid bees etc., aim to have the best possible frames either side of where your brood is, you'll want them to expand on to clean wax.

Keep a quilt in use if it's chilly during April, a hive entrance block will help conserve heat and help protect your weaker colonies from the unwanted attentions of their neighbours who will rob from the weak if they can. What we want is as many colonies as we need, building-up towards the peak activity month of May!

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://www.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>

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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

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The BeeKeepers Quarterly can now be seen on the web at

[www.bkq.org.uk](http://www.bkq.org.uk)

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There will be a small charge to subscribe after this time

  


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## WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February a good turn out of about 28 people, including 3 guests from Reading BKA and one from Windsor and Slough BKA, welcomed Rob Nickless, a member of Wantage and District BKA who gave us a talk entitled 'DIY Beekeeping'. Although Rob has been keeping bees for only 3 years, he has become deeply involved in making items of equipment rather than buying them wherever possible. He brought along several examples of his work and the tools he has acquired to make them. From a simple crown board to a large warming cabinet, there is almost nothing that he has not tackled. With the help of a computer projector, he also showed us pictures of the large electrical saw bench he uses for cutting wood.

An interesting piece of equipment was a hive floor that had a sliding section, made with an off-cut from one of those twin wall plastic signs favoured by estate agents. This use of alternative materials was a common theme in his talk. Rob had asked me to ask our members to bring along any equipment they have made so that they can be seen by other members. Sid Tailby brought along a box for carrying his equipment to his apiary. He had recently finished it, so it looked very nice. It was fitted with a drawer at the bottom for keeping small items in. I brought along a nucleus box, an entrance feeder and a mystery item. Unless you are into getting your bees to produce sections, you would not have known what it was. It was a jig for keeping the section frames square while the foundation is added. Simple but effective!

At the AGM last November, the request for volunteers to help David Geen run the Club's hives resulted in 8 members being willing to help and a further 4 who would stand in as reserves. This was most gratifying and will allow David to carry on as the Apiarist. At a recent committee meeting, the dates and rota of leaders for the visits to the Club's apiary were arranged. These are given below so please make a note of them in your diaries. If any of the leaders find that they cannot make any of their dates due to unforeseen circumstances that may arise, they should let Peter Seagrave know (01252 877049) so that another leader can be arranged in good time.

Lorna Rivett	10/5, 5/7, 30/8
David Geen	19/4, 14/6, 9/8
John Edwards	24/5, 12/7, 13/9
Neil Marshall	17/5, 19/7, 6/9
Nigel Perkins	26/4, 21/6, 16/8
Bob Loades	3/5, 28/6, 23/6
Derek Porter	12/4, 7/6, 2/8
Peter Seagrave	5/4, 31/5, 26/7

The meetings are at Brimblecombe's in Hurst and will start at 2.00pm. You should park in the public car park and await the leader before proceeding to the apiary.

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)

Derek Porter Hon. Sec. 0118 979 0326

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

Our April meeting was planned as a 'back to basics' evening because of the many new beekeepers who have joined us recently – although there was a very good attendance, with the total experience in the hall probably amounting to several hundred years altogether!

It was a fascinating evening. Our vice-chairman, Don Church, led the discussion, opening with an exploration of the virtual hive. He then encouraged very wide ranging conversations ranging from a summary of the beekeeper's year to the differences to be found between hives.

When someone raised the subject of the beekeepers seen on the recent Victorian Farm television programme and why they worked without any of the protective clothing that we use today, there were almost as many ideas as beekeepers present. One suggestion was that the British black bee, most commonly found then, was perhaps generally more docile than most found in British hives today.

As a female, I was growing fairly concerned when it was agreed how unpredictable bees were – mostly female, of course! I was slightly worried that the men might be suggesting that this might apply to more than just bees! However, they redeemed themselves by admitting that women often make the most successful handlers of bees because of their calm and gentle approach. It was generally agreed that most stings are actually caused by the beekeeper – either trying to work too quickly, perhaps being slightly careless or not bothering to get all dressed up for a minor job! The importance of working slowly, patiently and gently was one of the few things everyone agreed on!

The discussion then covered ways in which the club might be able to support the new members – both by offering practical support and advice for those who have bees and, perhaps even more importantly, helping to find bees for those without.



It was suggested that we might have a register of those waiting for bees and perhaps the apiary might be a source of a nucleus for newcomers, provided for a reasonable price

For the last few minutes, our Chairman, Michael Sheasby, gave an explanation of the structure of bee-keeping societies in the UK and the role of the BBKA. He is particularly proud of the way the BBKA has been successful recently in running very effective campaigns to keep bee keeping in the news and triggering substantial interest in the wider community.

I have had bees for about 2 years now, but still feel very much a novice and I found the evening both fascinating and very valuable – I do hope newcomers felt the same way. I feel indebted to Don for leading such an enjoyable evening.

Our next and final 'winter' meeting will be held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April at The Parish Hall, All Saint's Parish Church, Alexander Road, Windsor SL4 1HZ. and this will include a demonstration of skep making. Our Apiary meetings at the site about 1 mile north of Wexham Park Hospital begin again at 2.30 on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March and will continue fortnightly for the spring and summer months (i.e. April 5<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and May 3<sup>rd</sup>). All are welcome.

Look at: [www.telegraph.co.uk/scienceandtechnology/5039387/Might-of-the-bumblebee.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/scienceandtechnology/5039387/Might-of-the-bumblebee.html)

All details of our meetings can also be found on the website <http://www.wherecanwego.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.

Report from Reading & District beekeepers on a successful 'taste of Beekeeping' day (you can become a beekeeper)

This splendid event took place on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March at Trench Green Mapledurham with much hard work from Reading Committee members and beekeepers with Radio interviews by BBC Radio Berkshire outside broadcast, an early start for us, in time for the bird song from the 'car' of Radio 210. A display at a major food group's H.Q. at Theale, and two display sessions at Reading farmers market to name but a few!

Everyone worked hard but a special thanks to Stella and Mike Lawson Foster to



driving with Tim Whitaker to Stoneleigh to borrow BBKA display material, and for arranging, preparing and setting-up the screening of a 10minute DVD 'The Dance of The honey Bee' which was the focus throughout our day. Did we have a high number of visitors (footfall)? We did indeed! Did we have new people joining reading's beekeeping Association as new members? Yes we did, and this was our objective. We hope to help our new members strengthen as beekeepers, and become valuable members of the Berkshire Beekeepers Federation in the future.

**April Meeting.** The first of our summer programme is on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April at Peter Kimber's garden apiary at 25 Conisboro Avenue Caversham, starting at 11.30AM. Peter has three good-looking colonies in his bee gazebo and this will be a valuable and interesting session for members new and not-so-new.

Jon Davey

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

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

The March meeting was the last winter meeting of the programme and was opened by Vice-Chairman, Toby Price who presented Ron Crocker - our President - a certificate from the BBKA in recognition of over 50 years devoted to bees and beekeeping.

Members of the audience were invited to taste a number of honey samples and vote on which they preferred. It was interesting to note the varying preferences, all samples received votes, and the most popular was by Reg Hook who was awarded the Eric Morris Platter.



**Our next meeting** is the first of the summer programme (Marking, clipping queens and swarm control) to be held at Round Shaw Farm, Ipsden Heath OX10 6QR Map ref: - 665 849

**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.

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