



FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

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November 2009
Number 637

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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

Wednesday Nov. 18th	Bee problems update by Norman Carreck:	Woodcote Village Hall
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THE APIARY in NOVEMBER

Throughout the year you have been dealing with a variety of pests, Varroa being the main one weakening our hives. Hopefully, you have been keeping an eye out for any brood diseases, EFB and AFB.

As the seasons started to change you will have had the challenge of wasps (unless you were very lucky), and now we have to contend with mice and woodpeckers and possibly badgers and deer depending on where you keep your hives. If you suffer with deer or badgers, ensure your hives are securely tied down, so they are less likely to be knocked over (or blown over if we have a windy winter). If you use a 24" square concrete block or flagstone as a hive base it will keep the weeds down under the hive, and if when you first lay it in position you run a length of plastic washing line under the block you can tie the hive down when you finish your manipulations. Make sure you leave enough cable to go over the top of the hive when you have all those supers on next summer. For Woodpeckers, the only real fix is mesh cages around the hives, but even these need to be secured so they don't get dislodged during the winter storms.

Mouse guards should be fitted to keep the mice out; they can do a lot of damage to your bees if you let them in. To reduce the likelihood of a mouse even finding your hive interesting, you can put a super of drawn comb below the brood nest. Mice can detect warmth, and if they can't detect any from the hive entrance they will assume the hive is empty and move on, and not persist in attacking the entrance. This manoeuvre with an empty super will also give the queen somewhere to expand the nest in the spring if you are late with your spring inspection.

After seeing to the exterior of the hive you should consider the bees inside. Hefting the hive will give you an idea as to the stores situation. If the bees are light, fondant on the cover board is always an option.

During the winter months you should remove any insulation / quilts you had on above the crown board. Open the entrance as much as possible before installing the mouse guard. If you still have varroa floors on, remove the insert sheet (unless the site is very exposed). The idea is to cool the bees down so the nest shrinks, and the bees don't waste energy (honey) keeping the brood at blood temperature when the outside temperature is at or below zero. This will also help with the winter oxalic acid treatment if you are doing it (the brood should be minimal). It always seems counter intuitive to remove all the insulation when it's cold and put it on in the summer when it's hot! You want your bees to cluster and not waste honey. If they are too warm they will be too active and could run out of stores quickly.

The other thing you can do is review your hive records and make your plans / preparations for next season, as it will be on you before you know it.

A few beekeepers have noticed that some colonies have a low or nil varroa count and colonies are not as strong as expected. We have an instance, where two very strong colonies in Henley, two miles from any known arable land and riddled with varroa, yielded about 450 lbs of honey. This, compared with colonies bred from the same stock, but in an arable area that have no visible evidence of varroa, have given disappointing yields and are not as strong as they should be, resulting in heavy over-winter losses over the last few winters. (see page 3)

We would like to hear of other similar experiences, please send these to the editor.

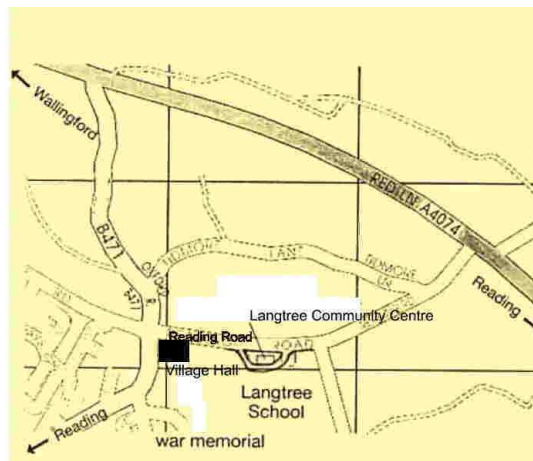
Triad.

South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

have pleasure in inviting all beekeepers to hear

Norman Carreck, of the University of Sussex, who will be updating us about problems in the hive, particularly Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). In view of the problems in our area it is anticipated that the audience will be larger than usual therefore a hall with greater capacity (**Woodcote Village Hall**) has been booked. Entry will be free, there is a large car park available and is almost next door to the normal meeting place.

Wednesday November 18th at 7.30pm
Woodcote Village Hall, Reading Road, Woodcote RG8
0QY, directions opposite or at



<http://woodcote.org/villagehall/>

Note: Woodcote Village Hall Not Langtree Community Centre

The Free Apis-UK newsletter is now available.

<http://www.beedata.com/apis-uk/newsletters09/apis-uk0909.pdf>

Your Regional Bee Inspectors are: -

Southern Region: Nigel Semmence nigel.semmence@fera.gsi.gov.uk Tel No: 01264 338694

The main website is: <https://secure.csl.gov.uk/beebase/public/Contacts/contacts.cfm>
National Bee Unit, Central Science Laboratory, Sand Hutton, York. YO41 1 LZ
01 904 462 510 <mailto:nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk>

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

A Job Vacancy with Thornes.

We are looking for a Manager for our Windsor branch at Oakley Green (just outside Windsor) Applicants should be customer focused, have a good knowledge of beekeeping, be computer literate and have excellent communication and interpersonal skills. Also the ability to work alone but as part of the team at Wragby, Stockbridge and Newburgh.

The hours correspond with the opening hours of the branch - Tuesday to Saturday; 10.00am to 5.00pm with late night Thursday until 8.00pm

Salary by arrangement. Apply in writing with CV to Paul Smith, E.H. Thorne (Beehives) Ltd, Beehive Works, Wragby, Market Rasen, LN8 5LA

South Chilterns Beekeepers Association have observed a series of anomalies with their bees this season.

These are: -

- Queenless colonies not making queen cells from a 'test comb' and eventually turning into laying workers.
- Grafted larvae into 'old' queen cells on comb have produced few results.
- Grafts ignored when queen rearing using cells on a bar following the same procedures as previous years.
- Increased swarm numbers indicating the bees are unhappy with their queen.
- Nucs and casts superseding in a matter of weeks.
- This years swarms swarming again this year.
- Reduced varroa mite numbers. (could this be a result of pesticides?)

We would like to draw your attention to these observations in the hope you may have some answers for us and that it will help you with your research.

We look forward to your response <mailto:Southchilterns.bees@btinternet.com>



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The Beekeepers Quarterly can now be seen on the web at

www.bkq.org.uk

this will be a free, try it and see service to beekeepers for the
March & June 2009 editions.

There will be a small charge to subscribe after this time

Northern Bee Books have developed a new site to view and purchase books for beekeepers

www.GroovyCart.co.uk/beebooks

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Michael Duckett, Burnham on Sea, Somerset

michael.duckett@virgin.net

01278 795147

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Ploughing Match

South Chilterns presence at this years ploughing match attracted much interest. Membership enquiries have been passed to the appropriate associations. From our share of eleven, two have already joined us!

Apiary Meeting

Over forty members turned up for the meeting in Toby Price's garden apiary the demonstration was by Reg Hook and the focus of the meeting was preparing the bees for winter.

The first hive was a swarm taken by Toby, found to be in very good condition. From their appearance and temperament Reg thought these were likely to be Native or near-native bees, they were later confirmed to be Apis Mellifera Mellifera by Dave Moss, using wing venation.

The bees were checked for disease and winter stores. There was a good brood pattern. This colony would look to be going into winter in good shape.

The second hive was a swarm from one of Toby's other hives, but having fewer bees, again there was no evidence of disease.

Reg went through preparations required to get the bees ready for winter. A checklist was handed out to remind members what to do with their own bees.

Viola Crowe was presented with 50year beekeeping certificate. This was followed by a delicious tea for which we thank our by hosts, Toby and Valerie



Acting Secretary: - Joanna Shanagher. 01189 721067

<http://www.southchilternsbeekeepers.org.uk/>

READING & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION.

On Thursday 8th October at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall, Reading & District beekeepers had the pleasure of welcoming Mr. Will Messenger as the first speaker of our winter programme. Will is a Bee Farmer from Somerset; to have 'Bee Farmer' membership a minimum of 40hives is a stipulation. Will is an expert craftsman in wood as demonstrated by his self-made 'Stewarton Hive', elements of which he demonstrated to us. An understanding of the actual life cycle of the honeybee became known in the late eighteenth century as laid out in the 'The Age Of Reason'.

The rest of us were then keeping bees in straw skeps, whilst the great house had the architectural and complex Stewarton Hive with exterior movable bars and glazed windows in each box, with the view of controlling the bees in much the same way as their servants and tenants.

Will kept bees in his Stewarton hive for a number of seasons and found benefits particularly as regards swarm control. This, Will attributes to being able to pre-empt congestion in the hive, and being a top-bar hive, the queens pheromone trace being easily discerned under the combs by the workers. Will had a number of illustrations for us including the well-known bee shelter in Somerset and that the entrance of the skeps in the boles was in-fact south facing through apertures in the wall. A 'Wells' side-by-side double hive was illustrated and it's features described. A post-WW2 concrete hive, an extra deep double walled 'WBC style' hive from the 1920's that took 15-16 frames all with interesting and beneficial features for bee keeping and bee management were discussed. Will was able to refer to the numerous pheromones detected by the worker bees in their interaction with the queen, this triggers the stages of their activities, queen cell production etc. It was a very informative talk and we are all very grateful to Will Messenger and most of us are sure, learned a lot of new facts.

November meeting. At Caversham Heights Methodist Hall. Starting at 7-30 on Thursday 12th November. First is our Annual, general meeting. Then we will have two talks. The first by Hazel Blackburn on beeswax and beeswax candles. Next, our Berks Federation Secretary Martin Moore will talk on The BBKA Beekeeping exams. See you there!

"Hot Work Beekeeping"

On a glorious autumn Sunday, an interesting morning started for Reading beekeepers looking at Tim Sheldon's colonies on the Hardwick estate close to Mapledurham. We, the beekeepers were first loaded onto the estate's flatbed truck (see picture) to be whisked across the fields ducking under the trees as we were carried through the woods to the first apiary. A high fence enclosed the bees to prevent wild life and retrieving dogs from getting near.



After inspection of the bees and varroa treatment with Apiguard, we all were loaded back on the truck for another hair-raising trip to the next apiary. There were two colonies on this site working flat out on a honey flow - you could smell and taste the aroma of ivy nectar in the air.

The hives were opened, inspected and again treated with Apiguard. No smoke was used for the bees were so happy in the autumn sun. Needless to say, the aroma of cooked food was also in the air, beekeepers as they are, were restless to get going on the truck, the next stop being a well-stocked barbeque in Tim and Diane's garden.



Many hands were required around the BBQ which included a very sun-tanned member, Peter Bruce on a surprise visit from his new home in Singapore (Peter is on outside right BBQ photo) We wish Peter well and expect to see him back with us in 2/3 years time.

Report from Hazel (assistant cook)

www.rbka.org.uk

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

SLOUGH, WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Our October meeting, as usual, celebrated the end of the honey season with our annual Honey Show. Joy Dodson did an amazing job in getting us all organized and by 8pm on the 13th, the tables were set out and laden with a stunning array of our produce. We were lucky to have as judge Mr. Chris Symes with his wife Janet as his very professional assistant. Chris has over 50 years' experience as a beekeeper and has been judging honey for a great many of those years, including judging at the prestigious National Honey Show.

As someone who has never entered a competition such as this, it was a real eye-opener to see what is required in a winning entry. Chris was kind enough to judge our entries 'aloud' so we were able to follow his thoughts as he judged, and sometimes eliminated, our offerings. For those of you who have not been warned of the very strict guidelines the judges work from, here's a brief outline of the requirements for jars of honey.

Firstly there are three categories, light, medium and dark honey and the colour is carefully compared with a grading glass against a white background. A torch is then used to check for clarity and brightness. Any imperfections are quickly spotted and these can range from bubbles (in our jars, often around the shoulder of the jar), pollen, and spots of wax, or other unwanted 'foreign bodies'. When the jar is carefully opened, the surface of the honey is closely scrutinised for further debris, bubbles or a surface that is not completely flat. Even labels must be positioned precisely, 1/2inch from the bottom and be level. At that point the judge carefully tests the aroma, viscosity and flavour. These strict guidelines could explain why so many of ours did not fare as well as we might have hoped. Apparently we would need to 'up our game' if we wanted to win prizes in the National Show!

However, other entries did well in further classes. The frames for extraction were of a high standard, as were the candles and beeswax. The photographs were a delight, with some inspired captions. The winner was a photograph of the Society's stand at the Sunninghill Carnival, but all the others were fascinating. The final two categories, the items made with honey and the honey cakes must have been good as Chris obviously enjoyed trying them, often going back for a second taste! He was also very thorough in this part of the show – even turning the cakes upside down, to the consternation of one of our members. It was his first attempt at cake making and, although the cake looked beautiful on top, the base was a definitely a shade closer to black than might have been expected!!

After a well-earned break for coffee and biscuits (particularly well earned by Chris and Janet) the prizes were presented. Joy was rewarded for all her hard work with a well-earned cup for Best in Show for her jar of honey. Don Church was the photographer who captured the atmosphere of the Carnival. However, the main winners of the show have to have been Dennis and Bridgett Way, with Dennis winning the cup for the most points in the honey classes and most points overall and Bridgett's skills bringing her the first prize for candles, chocolate and honey fudge and honey cake. Joy will be including the usual results sheet with this newsletter.

Those of us who were less successful in our entries never-the-less had a very enjoyable evening and certainly came away with a much better understanding of the judging process and, hopefully, the ability to achieve a high standard next year. Michael Sheasby also took the opportunity to remind us that the national Honey Show will be taking place on 29th – 31st October at St George's College, Weybridge KT15 2QS. If this newsletter reaches you in time, full details can be found on <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/>

Over the next few months, the Society will be arranging a programme, linked to the Basic Assessment syllabus, which will lead to volunteers being able to undertake the Assessment in May/June 2010. SWMBKS is funding all examination fees and is keen that as many members as possible 'have a go!' Further details will be provided in the next Newsletter. Our next meeting will be on November 10th, at the usual location, where we will be holding our AGM, followed by a supper. Nominations for the Committee and for a new Treasurer are requested and these should be sent to the Secretary at 01753 643604 or by email at swarm.bees@o2.co.uk to reach her no later than November 7th. Anne-Marie Chakravarty, who has been an outstanding Treasurer, is standing down at the AGM due to other commitments.

This is a 'pot luck' supper' and we would be grateful if members could bring a plate - savoury or sweet - which we will share when the business side of the evening has been completed!

All Saint's Parish Church Hall is in Alexander Road, Windsor SL4 1HZ. on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads and there is a small car park on site. However, 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.

All details of our meetings and the shows 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](#)
Chairman: Michael Sheasby, Farnham Common (01753) 642656. [mail to](#)

Wokingham & District Beekeepers Association

Our winter programme got off to a really good start on 14th October when we welcomed Dr. Keith-Lucas to talk to us once again. He has given us such interesting talks in the past but we were in for a treat as his talk was entitled 'Pollen and Forensic Science'. He began with the various methods of pollination and then went on to describe, with the aid of excellent slides, just a few of the types of pollen. As each plant has distinct pollen, it is easy to establish where someone has been just by removing pollen from their clothes and examining it under a microscope. So a criminal who tries to maintain that he was not under a particular tree can be proved to be lying by identifying the pollen which has fallen on him. It is a sobering thought that pollen is falling out of the atmosphere in relatively large amounts but we just can't see it.



Dr Keith-Lucas Presenting the Trophy to Bob Loades with Lorna adorned with her Rosette

Dr. Keith-Lucas described various cases he has been called in to give evidence based on the pollen analysis. The 31 members and guests present warmly applauded a most interesting and entertaining talk.



Jars of Honey competing for the Albert Spragg Centenary Trophy

After the talk, we had a mini-honey show as a competition for the Albert Spragg Centenary Trophy. Sixteen members brought along a jar of honey and these were judged purely for flavour. After due deliberation, the votes were counted and Bob Loades won the trophy for the second year running.

We also asked members to bring along an exhibit made of wax. They also judged a wide variety of products just according to what they liked the best. The results were close, but the little house made by Lorna Rivett recorded the most votes in first position for this she was awarded a rosette. Our speaker kindly agreed to present the trophy and the rosette to the respective winners. Everyone seemed to enjoy the evening and it was indeed rewarding to see so many people turn up for the first meeting and we hope the trend will continue.

The next meeting after the AGM will be on 9th December and it will consist of a talk by Dr. Max Watkins from Vita Europe who will give us an update on the products they produce for use with and on honeybees. Do come along and bring some seasonal fare to go with our coffee and tea. We hold a raffle at the December meeting so don't forget to bring a prize. The proceeds go into Club funds so the more prizes, and the more people to buy tickets, the better.

www.WDBKA.ik.com

Derek Porter Hon. Sec. 0118 979 0326

A Reminder:

Membership renewal is due and if not updated by the end of December, third party and foul brood insurance cover will cease. If lapsed, foul brood cover will not be effective until after 40 days from renewal.

See also: <http://beebase.csl.gov.uk/pdfs/fbleaflet.pdf>

Watch bees on-line at <http://www.sysonby.com/beecam>

Varroa jacobsoni (Varroa destructor). Early research, updated.

[A look under the cap: the reproductive behaviour of Varroa in the capped brood of the honey bee](#)

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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