



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

December 2009  
Number 638

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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

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## THE APIARY in DECEMBER

Beekeeping this weather? You must be mad! But bad weather or not, colonies need checking now and again and feeding if necessary. Remember that a dead colony does not produce honey.

Damp. That's what you've got to look out for this winter, after all the heavy rain we've had. It is obvious that you will let the damp get into a hive if the roof is not fitted properly. What is not so obvious is the risk of condensation forming inside the boxes because of bad ventilation. Moisture vapour is drawn in at the hive entrance by the heat of the bee cluster and it will also emanate from the cluster itself. You can actually see the droplets if you use a glass quilt.

There must be through ventilation to stop this moisture from collecting because a damp hive is very unhealthy for the bees – and, besides, it will lead to rotting wood surprisingly quickly.

Some beekeepers like to put old sacking, newspaper, cast off clothing etc in the top of their hives just to be on the safe side. If you do like to pack the top of your hive, don't cram in too much of it and make sure you use porous material (like sacking), which does not block the flow of air. I have not done this for many years because it makes a wonderful home for unwelcome residents (moths, earwigs and sometimes mice). Mice often get in because of faulty roofs. All that is needed is a ventilated crown board. Cover the holes if you wish, but leave enough gap for through ventilation.

If you notice that the bees tend to propolize the air holes in the perforated mesh in your crown-boards, you can perch the boards on matchsticks, which will give enough of a gap at the top to keep the circulation going.

It is not unheard of to leave Apiguard on all winter. This is O.K. if the colony is strong enough to maintain a sufficient temperature for the Apiguard to vaporize but useless on nuclei. There will be fewer problems if one sticks to the manufacturer's recommendation.

Condensation and its effects are the reason why only some hives are painted, but most are not. It's the outside of the "lifts" of the double walled traditional WBC hives that are painted so attractively. The boxes inside, as well as all the single walled hives (National, Smith, Dadant etc) are not painted, but they are treated with a wood preservative. Make sure that the preservative is free from all insecticides. The wood is then protected from rotting, the hives are kept waterproof to a certain extent and, what is most important, the wood can breathe and damp does not accumulate.

Triad.

## From the Editor

Beekeepers of the sixties and seventies may recall that although bees were dying, according to the authorities they were not affected by aldrin and dieldrin. That is, until the insecticides were found in food and then restricted in use. Subsequently bees recovered and there was a marked reduction in the incidence of foul brood, except in the proximity of jam and pickle factories and honey packing stations. Thankfully, the jam and pickle factories have long since gone and we now have less disease in the Reading area. Although we still have a honey packing unit, it is not responsible for losses due to insecticide poisons.

We do not learn. History is now repeating itself, but this time the consequences are much more severe. Not only are we losing bees but the rural insect ecology is taking a severe knock and there are fewer birds - possibly because they are ingesting insects that have taken sub-lethal doses of neonicotinoids, consequently themselves taking sub-lethal doses.

The official report is: "There is insufficient evidence to come to any absolute conclusion regarding the danger of the various products to bees". Now that responsibility for research has been handed to Syngenta can we expect them to be impartial towards their own products or those of Bayer? Particularly as BBKA endorse some of the less dangerous poisons.

### Requiem for the Honeybee

*Neonicotinoid insecticides used in seed dressing may be responsible for the collapse of honeybee colonies*

*Prof. Joe Cummins*

<http://www.beeman.ca/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/requimforthehoneybee.pdf>

Italy is the latest country to realize the cause of the problem and has banned the use of neonicotinoids. It is reported that since the ban, wildlife has started to recover.

<http://www.botanischergarten.ch/Bees/Watanabe-CCD-Many-Suspects-2008.pdf>

<http://www.soilassociation.org/Takeaction/Savethehoneybee/tabid/434/Default.aspx>

Twickenham Beekeepers' Association is tabling a motion at the BBKA AGM to withdraw their endorsement of those chemicals that are dangerous to the environment, particularly pyrethroids.. You can register your support by signing the petition at:-

<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/BeeDeath/ - detail>

### Your Regional Bee Inspectors are: -

**Southern Region:** Nigel Semmence [nigel.semmence@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto: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

### The Free Apis-UK newsletter is available at:

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

**The Bee Keepers' Quarterly** can now be seen on the web at  
[www.bkq.org.uk](http://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](http://www.GroovyCart.co.uk/beebooks)



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### **SOUTH CHILTERN'S BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION**

South Chilterns AGM was very successful, with all the posts filled and the chairman's report reflecting the busy and progressive year the association had experienced.

This was followed by Dave Moss, a member of South Chilterns, who gave a talk about honey wing morphometrics. Those present were spell bound and thoroughly fascinated as Dave showed us how he goes about using various software packages to interpret the bee wings in order to determine their origin.

Dave has provided a brief explanation below:

Honeybee Wing Morphometrics.

Measurement of parameters of the vein patterns of the honeybee forewing can be correlated to the 4 common sub-species of *Apis Mellifera* found in Europe.

3 measurements are used:

Discoidal Shift Angle (DS)

Cubital Index (CI)

Hantel Index (HI)

The right forewing of worker bees are mounted and imaged under a microscope at x10 magnification. Each image is measured using a program called "CooRecorder". The program stores coordinates of the intersections of the veins on the wing.

These coordinates are then processed in another program called "CBeeWing". The coordinates plotted in "CooRecorder" are compared to the known parameters of the 4 sub-species and a "best fit" graph is produced.

Measurement of bee wings from one of Steve Moll's hives, which have a Ged Marshall queen, showed a high percentage of *A.M.Ligustica* - the Italian bee. Ged Marshall queens are derived from Buckfast bees, which are known to be Italian crossed queens.

Measurement of bee wings from a swarm that Toby Price collected showed a high percentage of *A.M.Mellifera* - the European Dark bee. When we visited Toby's apiary in September, Reg Hook, Ron Crocker and Don Thomson suggested that these bees were *A.M.Mellifera* due to their good nature and the speed they had built up during the summer.

"CooRecorder" and "CBeeWing" are available free, with limited functionality, from [www.cybis.se](http://www.cybis.se).

The microscope used was DigiBlue available from [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk) for about £70.

Dave agreed at the end of the meeting to check out wings of bees belonging to several members. He has also said that he will be happy to repeat the talk to other associations if they feel their members would be interested.

The association would like to thank Dave for this stimulating talk.

Kate Malenczuk

Acting Secretary: - Joanna Shanagher. 01189 721067

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

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

Well, with winter making itself felt, we are now enjoying our Windsor evening meetings, with the bees – both our own and those at our apiary – hopefully tucked up with ample stores for the cold months ahead.

The November meeting was our AGM and we were delighted to see such a good turnout, with as many new members as established ones present. Our Chairman, Michael Sheasby, opened the meeting with the comment that when he joined the Society, the membership was below 30 whilst we currently have 65 members and friends.

The president, Dennis Way, was also in reminiscing mood when he began his speech with memories of his early bee-keeping days. His course tutor told him at that time that there were two possible forms of beekeeping, one recognised method being 'Leave well alone'. The beekeepers who followed this method put supers on the hive in the spring, took them off again at the end of the summer, harvested the honey and otherwise left the bees to 'get on with it.' The theory was that the bees had been surviving on their own for many thousands of years and would continue to do so.

As Dennis said, those days are long gone. This is largely due to the production of oil seed rape on our farms – necessitating removal of the honey at the end of flowering - and the on-slaughter of the varroa mite. We all now need at least a basic understanding of bee keeping, hence the new and exciting plans for our future Windsor meetings. However, more of that later!

The Secretary's report, from Maureen Williams, reiterated the increased interest shown to our Society, not only from people wanting to start bee-keeping themselves, but also from others who have large gardens and would like to support beekeeping by offering the site to others who would like to have an out-apiary. This is of particular value to those who want to start bee keeping but cannot keep their hives at home.

Anne-Marie Chakravarty then gave her final report as Treasurer, with again very positive news of our financial status. She is retiring from the post because of other commitments, but will be greatly missed on the committee. Can I also take the opportunity to express our gratitude to both Rachel Prior and Stan Green for all the work they have done as committee members. Stan has been a valued member for many years, holding the role of both Treasurer and our delegate to the Berkshire Federation. They have decided not to stand this year and we will miss their contributions to the committee.

Michael Sheasby, as a member of the governing body of the BBKA, as well as our Chairman, was able to give us all some detailed information of their activities. Their increased membership and therefore increased funds have enabled them to give greater support towards the education of new beekeepers and the further development of established members – finally leading to the coveted qualification of Master Beekeeper.

On this theme, our Society has agreed to encourage all of us to join those two illustrious members who have already successfully passed the BBKA Basic Assessment. It will be a mutual, co-operative effort, with three of the Tuesday evenings and one of the Sunday Apiary afternoons used to cover the syllabus. On December 8th we will cover the first two modules: the natural history of the colony and the equipment needed for beekeeping. The February meeting will cover colony management and swarm control. Both of these will be led by one of our members, Tony Wolstenholme, the Society's Education Officer. The final theoretical session, led by Nigel Semmence, a Bee Inspector, will guide us through disease recognition and treatment. It is hoped that we will all then be well prepared to impress our assessors later in the year!

Several new members of the Society reported last night that they were having difficulties in finding places on local beekeeping courses. Burchett's Green College offers courses in both the theory of beekeeping and a practical course. However, both courses are currently very over-subscribed. Many of us who are new to beekeeping have said how valuable we have found the practical sessions at our own Apiary, where there is the opportunity to handle the bees ourselves, as well as to watch 'experts' at work. These sessions, together with the evening meetings and some wider reading could well be a very effective alternative to a college course.

The Society Also hopes to match every new or 'would-be' beekeeper with a local mentor, who can give them advice and further practical support.

All this, I hope, will encourage everyone to support our Society in this endeavour – not least because the committee has agreed to pay all entry fees for us! At a show of hands at the AGM there was overwhelming support for the scheme, from both newcomers and the most experienced members. If nothing else, we can encourage each other when the nerves set in!

Even if we decide not to take the final assessment we will have the satisfaction of knowing that we have the knowledge to care for our bees in the best possible way

With all this in mind, I do hope we will see many of you at the next meeting on Tuesday 8th December at 8pm. at All Saint's Parish Church Hall in Alexander Road, Windsor SL4 1HZ. As I always mention, the Church is 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.

Can I also take this opportunity to advertise our annual dinner, which Don Church has kindly organised for us? It will take place on 29<sup>th</sup> January and full details can be obtained from Don. He can be contacted by email – [donchurch@talktalk.net](mailto:donchurch@talktalk.net) or on 01753 831939.

. 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](#)

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

On Thursday 12th November, despite torrential rain and threatened flooding on the 'IDR', Reading beekeepers assembled at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall for our 63rd AGM plus talks to be given by Reading beekeepers. Members had already been sent news of the sad loss of long-time beekeeper, Reading member and dear friend Jean Kinnon, who sadly passed away on 21<sup>st</sup> October.

At the AGM we welcomed Julia Crosthwaite to the post of Hon. Librarian, Peter Kimber stepping down after many years' service, and new committee members Martin Moore and John Gate. We had the pleasure to award trophies from The Reading Honey Show held at the end of August, notably to Stella Lawson Foster, winner of both the William Maine and Godfrey Nicholson cups. Also with great pleasure BBKA Basic Beekeeping Certificates were presented to Trudy Prynne and Martin Moore.

On then to a talk by Hazel Blackburn on the preparation of beeswax and its use in candle moulding. Beeswax candles were prepared by rolling from coloured foundation, with explanations about the correct selection of wick size, pre-waxing for better lighting and grip within the roll etc. Hazel has great expertise with beeswax and some attractive gift possibilities were suggested for the coming festive season.

Our final talk in this busy evening was by Reading member Martin More on the BBKA basic exam. This was very professionally presented, with projections from Martin's laptop PC, and the syllabus and the possible progressions through the various BBKA exams were shown and described. Martin and Trudy both enjoyed the challenge of their basic beekeeping exam, despite Martin being presented with a WBC to work for the first time! We hope that with their example and with this presentation, more Reading members will take BBKA exams in the future.

**The December Meeting** is at our usual venue as above at 7-30 pm on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December. We usually get into the festive spirit at our December meetings, with members bringing along some mince pies and perhaps a drop of spiced cordial. This year we will also have a talk and demonstration from one of the leaders in the field of beeswax modelling and skep making as we will be welcoming Martin Buckle. Anyone who has not seen the amazing complex beeswax structures Martin makes, starting with just ordinary cappings and brace comb pieces, will not want to miss this. See you there!

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

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

## Wokingham & District Beekeepers Association

No contribution

[www.WDBKA.ik.com](http://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.

**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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