



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

March 2010
Number 640

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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

Friday 12 th March	Leaver Memorial Lecture	See below
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THE APIARY in MARCH

 From a past newsletter.

More colonies die out due to starvation in March and April than at any other time of the year. Hives should be hefted once a week to check for rapid changes in weight. The books say that there should never be less than 10lbs reserve stores in the hive at any one time. If the colony is definitely on the light side, syrup can now be fed. Use a contact feeder so that the bees do not have to leave the confines of the brood box-- give them a gallon of thick syrup 2lbs sugar to one pint of water. Feed the syrup as hot as you can just bear to put your fingers in. If the stores in the hive are reasonable, a little stimulative feeding would not go amiss but with a weaker syrup, 1lb to a pint of water. Alternatively try the sugar bag method, which incidentally can be used any time during the winter. Take an unopened one-kilogram bag of sugar and totally immerse in water for two to three minutes and then allow it to drain. With a sharp knife cut a flap in the side, about two inches square to give the bees access and then place adjacent to the feedhole in the crown board and cover over with something to keep the warmth in. If the bees need the sugar they will take it down bit by bit.

At this time of the year, when brood rearing is definitely under way, I am a firm believer in helping the bees conserve the heat they have generated. Not all bee keepers think this is necessary but my way is to use squares cut from old carpet under felt (not to the rubber backed variety) and put up one or two on the top of the crown board. This does help minimize loss of heat from the cluster. I also reduce entrances now for the same reason.

It may be too early for an inspection of the brood box, but not too early for a floor spring clean. Lift the hive gently away from the floor (easier with two people) slip in a clean spare floor or clean the existing floor and put the whole thing back together with a minimum of a disturbance.

If you were a wise forward-looking beekeeper, you would have stashed away in the bee-shed, brood combs solid with honey that you removed from the brood-box last season, to relieve the congestion and also probably saved an early swarm by this, a simple manoeuvre. These can be placed over the existing brood-box, and the bees will empty them and take the honey down. No need to have a complete box full - three or four would do the trick.

Triad

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

The Free Apis-UK newsletter is available at:

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

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

www.GroovyCart.co.uk/beebooks

Switzerland is the latest country to ban the use of neonicotinoids.

Reports from Italy indicate that since their neonicotinoid ban, numbers of colonies have recovered and the incidence of foul brood has reduced, the exception being a region in southern Italy where farmers have used old stocks of treated seed. We do not have the official reports.



National Honey Show – St Georges College, Weybridge, Surrey
28th to 30th October 2010

It's a bit early to be thinking about the National Honey Show isn't it? Well, not really, especially if you are new to beekeeping and joined your local association after 1st August 2009. Is that you? If so, you can get in free! To get your free ticket you need to ask your association secretary to apply on your behalf to the NHS General Secretary. Your secretary will need to supply your name, address and your email address if you have one. The NHS is run entirely by volunteers. Using email helps simplify the administration. The cut off date for applications is 31st July and time rushes by when the season starts so get that application in now.

This year the show will be bigger than ever. The trade stands will all be together in a brighter hall and there will be a proper lecture theatre with tiered seating. A full programme of workshops and lectures with world class speakers will run during the show and there will be a wide selection of equipment and books to buy.

Whilst you wait for the active season to start, why not have a look at the NHS website? You will find lots of information about the show and notes on a wide range of beekeeping subjects; all written by experts in their fields. www.honeyshow.co.uk

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Newbury Beekeepers' Association warmly invites you to the 28th annual Leaver Memorial Lecture, given by Dr Max Watkins who is research and development director at Vita (Europe) Ltd.

What future for honeybees?

Max Watkins

Friday 12th March 2010 at 7.30 pm
The Sutton Hall, Stockcross, near Newbury, Berkshire

Reading & District Beekeepers Association are pleased to announce:

An Introduction to Beekeeping and Membership Day. Intended for Reading Association, beekeepers new and not so new, and for interested people in our locality.

Saturday 20th March 2010. Trench Green Community Hall, Nr Mapledurham.10AM to 4.30PM

Speakers and Demonstrators planned for the day are:

Dr. John Gate: Step by step history of beekeeping and biology of the honeybee.

Rob Nickless: From R&J Nickless, beekeepers, beeswax formulations and hive component producers.

John Hamer: From Blackhorse Apiaries Woking:- Beekeeping at home in the garden.

Many other demonstrations and displays, beekeeping video show.

Refreshments available, families welcome, If you are interested in the honeybee, come and find out how to get involved and be a **BEEKEEPER**

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SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Bumble Bee Ecology & Conservation

A talk by Dr. Matt Heard to South Chiltern beekeepers

The promise of a bumblebee talk attracted many of our beekeepers to brave the weather and listen to an exceptionally informative talk by Matt Heard of CEH.

Did you know that bumble bees are born completely white? We do now. There are around 25,000 known bee species in the world, some 2,300 species in Europe and almost 250 species in Britain (including bumblebees; ca. 23 British species and solitary bees; ca. 225 species). Most bees are solitary, the remainder are eusocial (queen & other individuals cooperate in caring for the brood) – our own honey bee is amongst them.

All bees have a wide range of life histories. They nest and forage in a wide range of habitats and on a wide range of plants. They are key pollinators with around 80% of crop species in the EU being pollinated by insects, as are ~90% UK wildflowers. Economically, this is vitally important for our agriculture production and our biodiversity.

Wild bees are actually more frequent than the honey bee in visitation number and often pollination effectiveness. Bumblebees, which have annual lifecycles, are amongst the most important pollinators in the UK because they forage in lower temperatures and for longer periods than other pollinators. Thinking about this, we all could picture days when bumble bees seemed abundant but honey bees were scarce – now we know why!

Not unlike the honey bee, there have been large declines in pollinators (especially bumblebees) in the UK over the last few decades. This is thought mainly to be the result of intensified agriculture that has led to habitat loss and fragmentation and a reduction in forage resources (nectar and pollen). Matt's work at CEH has observed higher rates of decline in bumblebee forage plant species in particular.

What can be done?

Pay farmers to be better ecologists!

How?

The English agro-environment schemes (Environmental Stewardship) pay farmers to manage their land for the benefit of particular habitats and species. The scheme is voluntary and has a target 70% of agricultural land to be under this scheme by March 2011.

Good news? It could be but there are problems. The points system devised covers a wide range of schemes but there is no financial weighting given to any system. Take-up of the tailor made insect friendly schemes are only about 1%; i.e. farmers are choosing other, simpler options, which are less effective for conservation of rare taxa, including bees.

These create different types of field margins. Some of these are targeted at the conservation of specific species based on sound data. (evidence-based), others have more general conservation aims e.g. set-aside buffer strips. The schemes based on pollen and nectar and wildflower plots increase bumblebee visits more than other management types and monitoring of pilot experiments across the UK showed that bumblebee species number and abundance increased dramatically.

Where there is extensive monoculture and little diversity of habitat types, the promotion and inclusion of these schemes into the arable landscape showed larger increases in pollinator numbers than before.

For eusocial bees (honeybees and bumblebees) it is not just the number of worker bees that needs to increase, but also the number of colonies (effective population size= number of colonies).

How do we improve this state of affairs?

Agricultural Policy? Knowledge and training is another key factor and CEH has been trying to quantify the impact of training on farmer attitude and monitor the effects on scheme delivery and ecological success. This was probably the most important message that Matt gave us. The knowledge and understanding of how bees can benefit agriculture and the countryside needs to be carefully considered and promoted. It is a powerful message and one that we now have a greater appreciation of.

Thank you Matt!

Heidi Sheriden

Acting Secretary: - Joanna Shanagher. 01189 721067

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

SLOUGH, WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

. This month's meeting was again very well attended and it is very encouraging to see how many people, both established beekeepers and new-comers, are interested in the 'Bee Basics' course which has formed the basis of this winter's meetings.

However, Michael Sheasby began with a reminder of two databases currently being set up by the Society, which may be of interest to anyone unable to attend the meeting. The first concerned a Society mentoring scheme – those who are willing to be mentors (who should have at least 3 years' experience) and those who would like to have the support of a mentor in their first steps of beekeeping. Anyone interested in either role is asked to contact Maureen Williams (email: swarm.bees@o2.co.uk) , who will attempt to pair members who live relatively close to each other.

The second database concerns swarms. We are hoping to collect any we are notified about and allocate them to new members who do not yet have their own bees. These members must have everything ready to accommodate a swarm so that if we are informed about one it can be collected by one of our experienced members and delivered to its new hive. This will be done on a first come first served basis and although we cannot expect swarms until April or May, it is a good idea to put your name down. Please email Glynis Morse (email: glynis.morse@btinternet.com) with your name and full contact details.

The main part of the meeting was a second very successful summary of the BBKA syllabus for the Basic Assessment – Colony Management. Tony Wolstenholme had prepared a very comprehensive power point presentation to cover the information needed for the assessment.

Interestingly, according to the BBKA, the beekeeping year starts in August, extracting the honey and preparing for winter. We followed the year's work, from treating for Varroa and wax moth and feeding for winter, through to adding supers and collecting the honey at the end of the season.

There were very interesting discussions, particularly about things we should be doing now, including checking on stores' levels. If your bees do seem light on stores, we were reminded that Bookers Store in Weston Road, Slough, SL1 4HR is offering a discount on sugar for members of beekeeping societies – just show your membership card. Also, Ragus Sugar Importers in Bedford Avenue, Slough SL1 4RT are a good source of fondant, which could be bulk bought for feeding.

One of Tony's comments struck a strong chord with many of us – that this was the time of year when beekeepers should 'bee prepared', checking all our equipment in preparation for the season ahead. If anyone would like a copy of Tony's notes or the power point presentation, please contact him (email: tonywolstenholme@aol.com).

Can I take this opportunity to let you know that we now have our own web-site – at least in very embryo form! It cannot yet be reached through a web search but can be found at www.britishbees.org.uk/local/slough-windsor-maidenhead . We would very much like this to be dynamic and to reflect all members, so would love to receive contributions from any of you – photos or written accounts of beekeeping experiences. In fact, there is an empty section already waiting for these! These could be one-off accounts of an exciting, interesting or amusing encounter with bees or a regular diary entry – perhaps from someone who is just beginning? If you have any ideas or feedback on the website or a completed article we could use, please email me (Liz Juby).

We have also been informed that, with the new beekeeping season fast approaching, the West Sussex Beekeepers' Association is again organising a Bee Market and Auction for the benefit of members and non-members. The event will take place at Chichester College's Brinsbury Campus in Pulborough on Saturday 24th April 2010. A copy of the Auction flyer and entry form is attached. For further details visit the new West Sussex BKA website www.britishbee.org.uk/local/westsussex or contact grahammt@tiscali.co.uk by email or phone 01403 752493.

Paynes Southdown Bee Farms will also be in attendance. Any orders placed with them online before 24 April may be collected from their stand at Brinsbury (www.paynesbeefarm.co.uk). Please ensure you indicate collection will be from Brinsbury when placing your order.

Apparently, these auctions can be very good value for money, but Michael suggests you should take a Thornes' catalogue with you to compare prices. Also, you need to ensure plenty of room in your car to carry any purchases home!

Our own next regular evening meeting will be held on March 9th, when Beulah Cullen will be leading the discussion, this time on swarms and swarm control, the third part of our 'Bee Basics' course. I do hope we will see many of you there. In case there is anyone who has not joined us before, the meeting begins at 8pm. at All Saint's Parish Church Hall in Alexander Road, Windsor SL4 1HZ... 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.

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](#)

READING & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION.

Festive beekeeper's dinner: This was at The New Inn Kidmore End on 29th January. We had a good attendance and the draw with prizes kindly donated by members netted a useful £45 for the association's coffers. The founders of our feast, Stella and Mike Lawson Foster had worked very hard to with the arrangements to make our evening a pleasant one and our thanks go out to them and all members who gave this annual event their support. The service was very acceptable and members seemed satisfied with the quality, certainly the roast sirloin enjoyed by this beekeeper was passing good!

The February 11th meeting at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall gave us the opportunity to receive an illustrated talk by Dr. Michael Keith Lucas. Subject: Pollen, Honey, Fraud and Crime.

Having retired as Biology Professor at Reading University Michel now is very active with various police forces in the providing vital evidence by use of the pollen record found at the scene of the crime. His specialist knowledge of the unique structure of pollen grains, their sources in the environment gave a fascinating insight on just how successful this type of forensic evidence now can be.

Nothing stops the pollen fall and grains present in nostrils from 'last breaths' or within the weave of garments etc., can provide vital evidence. Just about every grain of pollen ever shed by plants even back in prehistoric time is still in evidence microscopically as the pollen grain's very resistant outer casing, composed of a substance 'sporopollanin' is just about the most resistant material ever found and prehistoric grains can be found in rocks, oil, coal etc. Michael showed and described the characteristic grains used by wind pollinating plants' insect pollinating, where the spines on pollen grains have evolved to successfully 'stick; to the feathery hairs on a bees body and legs etc. The amazing way in which bees learn to tune the pitch of their 'buzz' when entering a flower that is a pollen source, to stimulate a shower of pollen for them to collect, a different pitch for different species of flowering plants, and how, when gathering the smooth grains of wind pollination pollen that don't easily adhere to the honey bee, can return to the hive and collect a small amount of honey to stick these non-spiky grains together to allow harvesting of early pollen of this type, e.g. from hazel catkins; are all amazing facts that without Dir. Keith Lucas's teaching we, as ordinary beekeepers would hardly suspect.

A large amount of information was imparted including microscopic characteristics of plant seeds wood & soils which can also be a source of evidence in legal proceedings. Pollen content of honeys and their identification as to source, important in view of the high prices charged for product being described as 'single flower' honey. Toxicity of some pollen to some bees and of some honeys to people! We'd like to thank Dir. Keith Lucas for a fascinating insight into the importance of pollen in our lives, the life of the honey bee and within our environment.

March. What's happening at Reading Association? Please see the separate announcement of our Introduction to Beekeeping and Membership Day at Trench Green Hall on Saturday 20th March. This is the second annual event of this series following the very successful 'Taste of beekeeping Day' in March of last year. Keep an eye on the website www.rbka.org.uk and contact Mike and Stella Lawson Foster, Michael Blackburn or Jon for information. If you're a Reading beekeeper, particularly if a new recruit waiting for your first bees of spring or have any family or friends in the Reading g area interested in keeping bees; this day is for you!

www.rbka.org.uk

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

Wokingham & District Beekeepers Association

OBITUARY

The President of Wokingham Beekeepers' Association, Albert Spragg died on January 9th at the age of 101 after a fall fractured his hip. We have lost a remarkable friend.

He was born in Worcestershire in 1908, the eldest of his family. He went to the village school, helped in the local church, played with his friends and enjoyed a happy childhood. Times were hard, especially during the Great War when his father was called up, sent abroad to the Front Line where he was injured in a gas attack and was unable to work again. As soon as young Albert was fourteen he had to go out to work. In that part of the country the only employment he could get was in gardening - and that became his career.

His introduction to beekeeping came when he was about forty when he was interviewed for the head gardener's post at Filkins in Gloucestershire. Lady Goodenough interviewed him, offered him the job and then added as a casual afterthought, "Oh, and by the way, you'll have to look after the bees." Mr Spragg accepted the challenge and put himself down for a beekeeping course at the Further Education College in Burford. He became so attracted to the craft that he decided to have some bees of his own and he bought the necessary wood and made his first hive, He never bought any ready-made wooden piece of equipment in his whole career.

Sadly his wife died, and he was left with his little daughter, Doreen. It was not long before he married again only to lose his second wife. At the same time his job at Filkins came to an end with the death of his employer in a hunting accident. Doreen went to live with his brother in Bristol and Albert looked for another job in the Somerset area.

He kept in touch with an old friend of his wife who lived in Windsor. A few years later Albert and Freda decided to marry - and that is how this man from the West Country moved east and came to live in Wokingham.

By now he was a wise and experienced beekeeper who was able to advise and help so many of us. He visited our apiaries, advised newcomers on equipment and hive management, he took swarms and passed them on to those who were short of bees. He became a honey Judge, he went to all the local shows, he contributed to the Federation Newsletter - he was fully involved in beekeeping.

He never had a car: the bicycle was his form of transport. He thought nothing of loading up a couple of full supers, or a deep full of bees, and all the tools he would need on the carrier. He was impervious to stings and he never wore gloves. His approach to bees was always calm and steady and the bees trusted him

He became President of the Wokingham Beekeepers Association. He was worthy of the honour

Several of our members attended the funeral of Bert Spragg on 28th January at St James' Church Centre in Finchampstead. Although it was a cold day, it was bright and sunny which made it more bearable to pay our last respects to this fine old gentleman and beekeeper of immense knowledge and experience. For those who knew him, his death is a great loss and we will miss his cheerful countenance and words of wisdom.

Our first meeting in the new venue was held on 10th February. This is at Wokingham Bowls Club, Reading Road, RG41 1EG. It is a most pleasant venue with plenty of parking space, a large room and a bar. It was most civilised to have time to relax and enjoy the meeting with a drink to hand. Before the main part of the evening got underway, our Chairman, Peter Seagrave, welcomed everyone including some new comers. We had a few words from people who had known Bert Spragg for a long time and then had a minute's silence in memory of Bert. This was very moving and appreciated by everyone, I am sure. Peter then introduced the speaker, Beulah Cullen, who gave an illustrated talk on 'Products of the Hive'. As usual, Beulah set us a question at the beginning to test our knowledge and only revealed the answers at the end of her talk. This was most interesting and informative as she showed how to prepare honey and wax for sale and showing and the preparation of mead. It is always a pleasure to welcome Beulah who has given us a number of entertaining talks over the years. After her talk, we were able to sample some of her mead which proved very popular.

Don't forget that we will be having an extra meeting on 14th April for the talk on the trip to Tuscany. This talk had to be postponed due to the adverse weather conditions in January. The main speaker will be John Edwards with contributions by others who went on the trip. There will be lots of photographs to show us how the Italians keep their bees. This promises to be a very interesting meeting so make sure you attend.

The new season will soon be underway and the rota for the apiary meetings has been prepared. If you are on the rota but if find that you cannot attend on the day or days allocated, please let Peter know so he can make the necessary changes.

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Derek Porter Hon. Sec. 0118 979 0326

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Reminder: If your membership renewal has not been updated, third party and foul brood insurance cover has ceased. If lapsed, foul brood cover will not be effective until after 40 days from renewal.

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

Well worth looking at, <http://www.co-operative.coop/planbee>

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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