



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

April 2010  
Number 641

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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 APRIL

There is a considerable increase in the use of rape varieties that do not provide nectar for bees, however, statistically we can expect a better crop this season from established strains than we have had in recent years

The big disadvantage of this early crop is that it solidifies almost as soon as it comes off the hive. Yet, we continue to have a love/hate relationship with the stuff because our bees thrive on it. It comes in early and provides the bees with good food when they need it. They love it, and you can see them tearing off to the nearest field early in the morning, often ignoring other flowers much closer to home.

It has to be said, also, that the honey has its uses if you want to get fine granulated honey and a lovely pale colour. If you are within two miles of a rape field, the trick is to keep an eye on honey production and be ready to take it off as soon as it is capped. Extract it at once, before the honey has time to cool. If it still won't come out, bad luck - you'll have to scrape it off with a spoon and soften it in a Pratley tray or a very slow oven before you can strain it. This is a pity because it means destroying the drawn comb which will have to be rebuilt by the bees.

On a decent day examine the brood, if it looks other than normal call for assistance from an experienced beekeeper. Examine over the brood chamber and if you are unfortunate enough to drop a queen the chances are that she will not be lost

A word about doubtful old combs and frames: **replace them**. There is growing evidence that the rate of increase in the Varroa population is actually slowed down if you keep your combs fresh. Changing the complete brood chamber will reduce or keep in check many other problems. Instructional leaflets can be downloaded from the National Bee Unit web site.



The correct way to hold a frame when both sides have to be examined

Still keep an eye on stores, feed if necessary, bees can still starve, do not be caught out by a sudden drought which could cause a lack of nectar.

Early spring is a good time to mark your queens because there are fewer workers about and so the queen is easier to find. She can be trapped in a little press-in cage and marked on the thorax with a queen marking pen, dab of modellers' enamel paint or Tippex. This method protects her vulnerable abdomen.

Experienced beekeepers simply pick up their queens, holding them between finger and thumb by the thorax, and mark them. This requires confidence and expertise. It is suggested that it is a good idea to practise on drones first as they are expendable. (Remember to discard the marked drones!) The consequences of rough handling damaging the queen are serious, especially at the start of the season. If worn, the gloves of the handler would have to be very thin, preferably no gloves worn at all.

OK – I am clumsy - I'll stick to the press-in cage!.

Triad

## **The Berkshire College of Agriculture Open Weekend & Lambing Fortnight.**

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April.

Berkshire Beekeepers will be manning a beekeeping table in the countryside management section

Saturday Reading & Wokingham Associations, Sunday Slough Maidenhead & Windsor and South Chilterns \*

It is usually free entry with a minimal car parking charge, details can be found on the BCA website. It is a busy, informative and excellent day out with displays and lots to see and buy. Come and visit our section while you are there. This year we are near the horticultural section close to the glass house where they sell attractively priced items, such as interesting varieties in young tomato plants etc.

### **Letter to the Editor**

Dear Ron.

I ordered some bee open mesh floors from a company in Yorkshire recently. They are essentially carpenters who also do hives as a side line. They have some limited models they produce - especially nationals but they will also make anything you want to the spec you require.

My 2 open mesh floors came in softwood, treated with Cuprinol and ready assembled. The workmanship was excellent and the service above reproach. I wanted an alighting board as well as the basic floor. He suggested a design and I agreed.

They were £25 each including postage.

I wanted to recommend them as I wanted to find something a bit cheaper than the usual stockists and these came up trumps. Although not cedar, the quality will last me many years.

Anyway, their web link is <http://www.rich-field.co.uk/index.html>.

If others wanted a recommendation, then I would suggest these people.

Heidi

### **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>

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 BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION**

Terry Clare President of BIBBA

"Which bee or the best bee?"

Terry asked the audience what they considered to be the ideal properties of their bees. The list consisted of

- Docility
- Non-swarming
- Hardiness
- Disease resistance
- Economical
- Good productivity

Terry reckons that the nature of a bee colony is 60% environmental and 40% genetic. Management has more influence than breeding.

He described the origin of the honeybee in East Africa and how it spread north into Europe, South to South Africa and West to West Africa. Subspecies became isolated due to desertification and the movement of glaciers during the various ice ages. Morphometric measurements are used to identify the subspecies alongside DNA analysis. He showed a graph of Discoidal shift versus Cubital Index and showed that each subspecies occupies a specific area on the graph.

Terry then described the properties of the four common subspecies of *Apis mellifera* found in Europe:-

*Mellifera*, *Caucasica*, *Carniolan* and *Ligustica*.

The properties included:-

- Winter hardiness,
- Swarming tendency,
- Use of propolis,
- Docility,
- Resistance to disease,
- Speed of spring build-up,
- Tendency to rob or drift,
- Hive size,
- Use of winter stores.

It was apparent that each subspecies had elements of the ideal list shown above. No single subspecies had all the properties so it was clear that there was no perfect bee. The beekeeper needs to choose the subspecies of bee which meets the majority of his requirements.

Dave Moss

Acting Secretary: - Joanna Shanagher. 01189 721067

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

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

Again, we were delighted to see that the March meeting was very well attended. Michael Sheasby welcomed everyone, particularly new beekeepers, but he did have a word of warning to them: although the Society has promised to do everything possible to support those new to the hobby, he did say that we are struggling with the unprecedented rise in popularity that we are currently experiencing. Apparently most member associations of the BBKA are slightly overwhelmed with the rise in numbers and I know that even Thornes is struggling to keep up with the demand for hives and accessories. We therefore ask for patience if we are somewhat slow to respond to requests for mentors and other support. However, the Bee Basics course we have run throughout the winter will hopefully have been very useful.

The main part of the meeting was a talk by Beulah Cullen on swarms and swarm control, as part of this 'Bee Basics' course. I know this will have proved valuable to everyone present, newcomers and old-timers alike!

Beulah gave an extremely fascinating and informative presentation on this subject, covering the problem of bees swarming, particularly in an urban or suburban area, the causes of swarming and how to prevent it happening. I have to say that I have struggled to understand making artificial swarms. I have attended bee-keeping courses which covered this and also read about it in various books. I have seen boxes moved around to demonstrate what the beekeeper should do and studied diagrams with drawings of hives and many arrows. However, after watching Beulah demonstrate this, I now cannot understand why I found it so muddling before. I have yet to put it in to practice of course, but at the moment feel confident and in command of the manipulation. On behalf of all of us, thank you Beulah!

The evening covered too many details about the subject for me to describe here, but there were also valuable tips, which come from her years of practical experience. For example, she suggested putting a queen excluder under the brood box for a few days after you have hived a swarm, to prevent the swarm absconding. If only I'd known that last summer!

There was also a warning about just how heavy a swarm of bees is, which can catch an inexperienced swarm collector unawares, and the suggestion that a large net curtain can be valuable when moving bees around in the back of cars!

Finally there was the opportunity to ask various questions, not only about swarm control but also about the BBKA basic assessment for which Beulah is an official examiner. Not only did she reassure us about the format of the assessment, but also about the nature of the assessors – if Beulah is typical, we can expect a constructive and informative session.

Our last 'winter' meeting will be held on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> April, when Nigel Semmence (Regional Bee Inspector) will be concluding our Bee Basics course with a talk on diseases in the hive. It will be held, as usual, 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 began in March and will continue throughout the summer. For details on how to find the Apiary, please contact our secretary, Maureen Williams on 01753 643604 or [swarm.bees@o2.co.uk](mailto:swarm.bees@o2.co.uk).

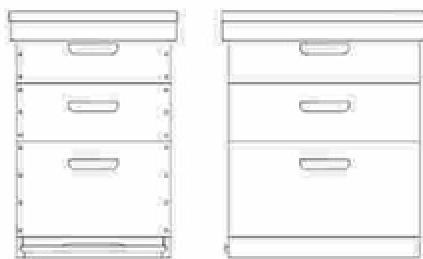
All details of our meetings can also be found on our web-site, [www.britishbee.org.uk/local/slough-windsor-maidenhead](http://www.britishbee.org.uk/local/slough-windsor-maidenhead) and on the website <http://www.wherewecanwego.com>. - click sl4 + gardens + nature (boxes)/

Newsletter items: Liz Juby Windsor (01753) 859382 [mail to](mailto:)

Chairman: Michael Sheasby, Farnham Common (01753) 642656. [mail to](mailto:)

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## READING & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION.

Reading and District Beekeepers March meeting is our 'Introduction to Beekeeping day' at Trench Green near Mapledurham on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>. We have been working hard to publicise the event, particularly the stalwart efforts of Stella and Mike Lawson Foster, who arranged with BBC Radio Berkshire to have a four person broadcast interview session with us on 'The Andrew Peach Show' on Monday 15th March, and threw open their house and garden apiary for the purpose. With a continuous supply of hot cross buns and freshly made coffee, listeners-in may have heard Mike vending the cappuccinos in the background!



We had a good session, talking on air about the importance of the honey bee, urban beekeeping. 'Our day' report is to follow. Above is a picture of Maggie Philbin from BBC Radio Berkshire in full cry, and just about to interview Reading beekeepers, Hazel and Michael Blackburn and John Gate.

**April Meeting.** Sunday 25th April is the first of our summer programme. Ronald Blower at Shurlock Row is our host, who has overwintered 5 colonies in Smith's hives at 'The Old House'. Each time we go there we are shown good beekeeping. If you need directions contact Ronald on 934 1364, Mike Blackburn or Jon. Meeting starts at 11.30 AM.

Extra Event for Berks Beekeepers. We are invited to man a beekeeping table in the Countryside Management Area at The Berkshire Agricultural College, Burchett's Green for their Open Weekend on their Lambing Fortnight on Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th April. See separate announcement. Entry is free (usually) minimal parking fee, it is a great day-out with lots to see and buy. Come and have a look at us!

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

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

## Wokingham & District Beekeepers Association

On 10<sup>th</sup> March we welcomed Dr Max Watkins to give us a talk on 'Updates on Varroa Control'. This proved very interesting, he showed that research is still taking place into producing effective Varroa treatments, now that the mite is largely resistant to the constituent in Bayvarol.

We had a very good attendance with at least 30 members present. The new venue is certainly proving a hit with the members.

The new season will soon be upon us and we have arranged a rota at the Club's apiary to provide hands-on experience for novices. We start meetings on April 4<sup>th</sup> and we look forward to seeing you during the year.

Just in case this issue appears in time, I will just remind everyone of the extra meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> April for the talk on the trip to Tuscany to be given by John Edwards with, no doubt, inputs from others who went on the trip.

Derek Porter Hon. Sec. 0118 979 0326

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

We would welcome further volunteers to write "In The Apiary" occasionally. Also required, a Deputy Editor, we are amateurs you do not have to be professional. Apply to the General Secretary



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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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