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# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

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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May 2010  
Number 642

Hon. Editor  
R.F.Crocker  
25 Shiplake Bottom  
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## Future Events

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## THE APIARY in MAY

We read of the passing of Ted Hooper in March at a grand age. Ted's book, 'A Guide to Bees and Honey', published in 1976 has become the most widely read and influential beekeeping guide, with over 100,000 copies sold world-wide. The following is paraphrased from chapter 5, 'The Year's Work'.

The majority of honey bee colonies in spring are small to average size, to boost the rate at which the queen is laying, building up the colony more quickly may be achieved by 'spreading the brood'. Frames with smaller patches of brood, usually further from the center of the box, can be moved towards the middle, alternating with fuller brood frames. Well filled brood frames can be moved closer to the side, allowing expansion in 'one direction' also, with plenty of cells available the queen can lay up to 1000 eggs per day, with the nectar flow from mid-spring blossom.

If you look at your bees once a week, the examination of two brood combs will quickly answer the question about the queen and the colony's build-up. The quantity of stores can be judged, and the 'examination' can be concluded by spreading the brood, and shutting down within 3 minutes of the first opening. The bees will hardly realize you have been, foraging will continue unabated or very little reduced. Very poor colonies can be assisted, if this is just a question of too small a population, by taking worker bees from a larger colony that is doing well and can afford to lose a bit of brood and a few bees, be careful that you are not just moving disease around, but a large colony is usually healthy. Working swiftly, obtain from your large colony, a frame of brood from which worker bees are emerging and well attended by workers, give this frame a light to moderate shake, you will learn from experience that as you shake with increasing power so progressively younger bees will fall from the comb. Carry the frame across to the 'small' hive and shake all the bees off onto the floor; having removed frames with stores or 'unused', to make space, the bees will submit and become members of the colony within a few hours, a well shaken frame with brood and eggs could also be introduced in this way. Replace removed frames, and add one with foundation if necessary. Subsequent examinations will allow you to complete the arrangement of frames etc.

In this season you must question, 'are there any queen cells present in the colony?' A queen cell is sealed 8 days after the egg is laid. The virgin queen emerges 8 days later and may fly next day. The colony's original queen, if she is not clipped, will often fly, leading a swarm when the first queen cell is sealed. Queens with clipped wings rarely swarm until the first virgin is about to emerge and be lost in the grass. The swarm may then hang up nearby for about 20 minutes and then return home. You have lost your queen but not your bees.



Clipped queens therefore, can be an enormous help to the beekeeper, giving him extra time to play with, when colonies are making queen cells and thinking of swarming. Swarming can be held back by giving the colony plenty of room ahead of requirements by adding supers, but there comes a time when colonies in the apiary will be found with queen cells. Not all colonies will swarm when they produce queen cells, unfortunately it's proved impossible to predict which will or won't, so, for practical purposes we have to treat all these colonies as though they are going to swarm. (Swarm control methods are detailed in chapter 7).

Right from the middle of April onwards the colony will make small queen cell cups. They can occur anywhere but are usually on the bottom or sides of the brood frames. Look to see if they have eggs or young larvae in them. I would not treat them as queen cells until a larva is actually there, as often eggs in queen cells are not allowed to develop by the workers. If you have decided to use an artificial swarm control method, the colony must be immediately split, also, this is an ideal time to make increase by using this frame with some worker brood and stores to start a nucleus. If you intend to maintain the colony without dividing, to continue build-up the queen cells must be destroyed by the beekeeper. Inspect again in 7 days and proceed with instructions and advice from Ted Hooper to be found in the excellent 'A Guide to Bees and Honey'.

Triad

### **Extract from email to Editor.**

I no longer live in Berkshire but I still read your newsletter, incidentally, there are one or two gaps in your archive.

What happened to "Through the Tunnel" ? I found these contributions instructive, particularly as, at the time, there was little or no guidance from the Bee Unit. Are the articles still available? I used to enjoy the contributions by the General Secretary, George Knights.

I have read that some insecticides do not kill honey bees, surely bees are insects. There is no comment on the subject in the newsletters of late

Name withheld.

"Through the Tunnel" was maintained by frequent contacts and visits to Germany and the Swiss Federal Research Station. In those days translation facilities were almost non-existent, the rapid advance of the Web and the internet rendered "Through the Tunnel" redundant. Some of the contributions have been updated, go to: <http://www.agroscope.admin.ch/imkerei/> Original documents that are still current can be obtained from Northern Bee Books, Beekeeping in a Nutshell series. [www.GroovyCart.co.uk/beebooks](http://www.GroovyCart.co.uk/beebooks)

The subject of insecticides is very controversial. True, some of the systemic pesticides do not kill bees; they do not kill (other) insects either. They render insects infertile so that they do not reproduce, (IBF treatment is not available for bees). Remember, drones can be a hundred miles away in a few days. A search on the web should answer your questions.

R.F.C

### **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>



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### **Wokingham & District Beekeepers Association**

The meeting which we had to postpone from January proved very popular, at least 35 members new and old came along on 14<sup>th</sup> April to hear John Edwards give his illustrated talk on the 'Trip to Tuscany'. He showed us many photographs of the beekeepers house, where the members of the party stayed, and the owner's apiary together with the huge processing plant where the honey is extracted and bottled. The plant is run as a cooperative with several local beekeepers bringing their honey to be processed. They make their own hives, frames, and foundation. Italian hives are much simpler constructions compared to our National hives, for instance. The design allows a pollen trap to be fixed at the front and several kilos of pollen can be gathered in a day, especially if you have a hundred or more hives. With contributions by Bob Loades and Neil Marshall, the talk proved to be very informative. A good show of hands resulted when Neil asked if anyone would be interested in another trip next year. A well-deserved round of applause was given to John for his talk and the quality of his photographs.

The new season at the Club's apiary has got off to a good start, with all three colonies surviving the winter. The weakest one was united to a stronger colony on 11<sup>th</sup> April and at the meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April, it was found to have been successful. Honey is being stored in the super which has been placed on each colony. We will try to increase the number of hives to provide more to do at the meetings and to improve the honey crop. It is good to see a number of new beekeepers attending after completing their courses at Burchett's Green Agricultural College. We will try to find bees for any newcomers who need them, but of course, they must ensure they have acquired a hive to put them in!

The rota for the leaders and assistants appears to be working well. If you are unable to attend when it is your turn to lead or be the assistant, do let Peter Seagrave know in good time so that alternatives can be arranged.

Derek Porter Hon. Sec. 0118 979 0326

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



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## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION**

### **Talk on Macro Photography**

By Mike Blackburn 17 March 2010

Mike began by talking about the hard winter and the damage done to his hives by woodpeckers.

Mike started photography at the age of 16, and he showed us a selection of the cameras he has used over the years, including a plate camera, a Hasselblad, a Nikon D70 digital camera, a compact digital camera and finally a camera phone.

He made his living from photography and supplemented his income by doing wedding photography. He took a specialist van to the weddings to process the film and produce prints ready for the wedding reception.

Macro is x10 life-size, close-up is x1 to x9 life-size, and micro is above x10 life-size.

When attempting macro photography it is essential to use a tripod as the smallest camera movement will blur the image. The camera should also be operated by cable release if possible. A white reflector made from polystyrene or a specialist reflector will brighten up the image. Direct flash is not recommended as it will "flatten" the image and detail will be lost. However, an auxiliary flash on low power can be employed as "fill-in". Use 2 stops below the correct exposure. Do not shoot in windy weather as the background will probably move and become blurred. Wear light clothing and move slowly so the insect is not spooked.

If using 35mm camera, set it to shutter priority and make sure that 1/60th is the slowest speed used to eliminate camera shake. Use 105mm to 205mm focal length lenses for macro work. Always use spot metering with 35mm.

When using digital cameras, it is not necessary to have more than about 6meg pixels unless you want to print above A4 size. The extra pixels simply make the file bigger in the camera, and on the computer. Larger file sizes take longer to load and manipulate. If possible, always underexpose because you can raise the contrast on the computer. In addition, if you want black & white shots, take them in colour and use software to create the black & white image.

When framing the subject, do not place it in the centre of the frame. Putting the subject to one side of the frame makes it more interesting.

If using a compact digital camera it is worth practising holding the camera in front of a mirror to be sure, you do not cover the lens with your fingers. Always use 2 hands.

The talk was followed by a slide show of some outstanding macro shots.

. Attendees were asked to bring a macro photo to be judged. There were about 25 photos.



The winner was Linda Clarke with Viv Moll second and Linda again was placed third. The winning photo was of a queen with her retinue on a frame. Linda received a copy of "The Buzz about bees" by Jürgen Tautz

Dave Moss

Acting Secretary: - Joanna Shanagher. 01189 721067

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

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

Our April meeting was the last of this season's Autumn and Winter meetings in Windsor and also the last of our 'Bee Basics' sessions. We were really privileged to have not only our Regional Bee Inspector, Nigel Semmence, who is responsible for the southern region of England, but also Bob Loades, our Seasonal Bee Inspector for this area, to lead the discussions.

Nigel began the session with an explanation of the role of the National Bee Unit in York. It was fascinating to hear how sophisticated the unit is and about the work they do. They have a very comprehensive web site, so I will not try to explain it here. They work closely with BeeBase, who keep the data base of all apiaries and beekeepers in England and Wales and for the first time I was convinced of the importance of registering with them – knowing where all hives are in an area is an incredibly important aspect of controlling disease.

Bob talked us through the notifiable diseases of American Foul Brood and European Foul Brood and the role of the Bee Inspector if these are found in a colony. He also talked us through chalk brood, sac brood, the threat of the small hive beetle and *tropilaelaps clarea* – all with the benefit of superb photographs. I will not even attempt to explain them here because there are excellent pdf leaflets, which can be downloaded free from BeeBase and these will give you a complete picture.

One of the advantages of the meeting, I think, was to actually meet the inspectors, something of which Bob was obviously aware. His PowerPoint presentation began with an image of a bee inspector as a harbinger of death, complete with scythe, and finished with a beaming little angelic inspector with wings and a halo! I am not sure I would see either Bob or Nigel in quite that light, charming as they are, but I definitely would not hesitate to call them if I suspected problems in my hive. They hope to respond to any beekeeper within 24 hours and both stressed that they would far rather be safe than sorry, if someone had suspicions of disease. Bob can be contacted through his mobile (07775119467) or by his email: [bob.loades@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:bob.loades@fera.gsi.gov.uk). I will add these to the Contacts page of our web site. I hope that no-one will need them but they will be there if we do!

Another huge advantage of the meeting was, I think, to make us all far more aware of the level of hygiene all beekeepers should be maintaining. Because much of this was new to me, I will pass it on to you here. If you already are aware of this, please forgive me and skip the next two paragraphs!

An essential part of a beekeeper's kit should be a bucket of strong washing soda solution – 1 kilo of soda to 1 gallon of water. It is safe for the average beekeeper, without any symptoms of disease in their hives, to change this about once a month. All instruments should be kept in this and washed between each hive visit – as should the rubber gloves we should be wearing. I am afraid my leather gauntlets will have to become gardening gloves! Apparently the use of the soda solution on the gloves and tools does not affect the bees in any way and it was suggested that clean, cool gloves actually discourage the bees from stinging. Bob recommended Marigold gauntlets, which are thin enough to enable easier manipulation in the hive and have gauntlet-type, longer sleeves.

Another essential habit to establish, is to wash all protective clothing very regularly. To protect theirs from these frequent washes they do up all zips, with the veil tucked inside the suit. They then use a 40 degree, wash with their usual washing powder and a cupful of washing soda.



As you can see from the above, it was a valuable session and everyone present, both newcomers and experienced members learned some extremely practical lessons! We did finish with a conversation about Asian Hornets making their way up through France towards England at a very alarming rate, but as they are not here yet, I have decided to worry about them at a later date!

There were some other notices of interest to members, with which Michael Sheasby began the meeting. Firstly, he expressed our gratitude to Anne-Marie Chakravarty for all the work she has done for the Society – latterly as our Treasurer. She has decided to leave that position, but will remain a member of the committee. He also welcomed Catherine Larke, who will take over the responsibility of Treasurer, for which we are all very grateful.

Michael also took the opportunity to remind us about the Spring Convention, details of which are on the web-site, and announced that the Society has decided to sell our Dartington hive, and again, full details will be on the web-site. In addition, he reminded us of the on-going data-bases for those members who wish to be considered for swarms, those who are happy to collect them and also experienced members who are willing to mentor newcomers.

We are now linked directly from the BBKA web site and in fact can now even be reached through Google!

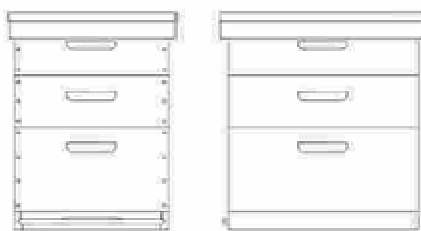
Can I remind you that there will be no more evening meetings in Windsor until September, but our fortnightly visits to the apiary continue on Sunday afternoons at 2.30pm. For details on how to find the Apiary, please contact our secretary, Maureen Williams on 01753 643604 or [swarm.bees@o2.co.uk](mailto:swarm.bees@o2.co.uk). I am adding an update of the Apiary activities on the web-site each fortnight, after the meeting, for anyone who is unable to attend but interested in what is happening there.

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 [www.wherecanwego.com](http://www.wherecanwego.com). - click SL4 + gardens + nature ( boxes )

Newsletter items: Liz Juby Windsor (01753) 859382 [mail to](mailto:)  
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## READING & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION.

Reading & District beekeepers Association have the pleasure to report a very successful 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Event "An Introduction to Beekeeping Day" held at Trench Green Hall Mapledurham on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March. We had 100 people through the door and 33 newly interested people who are interested in taking up the craft of beekeeping.



As well as displays and experienced Reading beekeepers to meet and discuss, we had excellent illustrated talks and demonstrations by John Gates, Rob Nickless and John Hamer. With the very reasonable terms arranged for us for the use of Trench Green Hall by our Reading member and Mapledurham resident Tim Whitaker, with receipts of over £80.00 from refreshments and over £40 from a raffle, we were not 'out of pocket' on the day! Notable was the local press coverage and a visit from the mayor of Reading Fred Pugh and Mayoress Jean Pugh. Reading members worked very hard for and during the day but as well as Tim, we must thank the indefatigable Stella and Mike Lawson Foster for bringing the second of our 'days' about, we are now planning the third for 2011!

Picture attached ex the local press, shows the mayor and mayoress plus John Hamer and Rob Nickless with Reading beekeepers and others.

### Thrive Plant Swap Day at Beech Hill on 10th April.

At the earnest request of the organizers of this event. Stella Lawson Foster with Mike's able support kindly agreed to step-in to arrange a Reading beekeeping presence at the event. Stella reported a good attendance: Plenty of questions on pollination and the situation of the honey bee, sales of some honey from last crop were brisk. Please see Stella's picture supporting local beekeeping at Beech Hill on the day!



**May meeting.** Our hosts are Michael and Hazel Blackburn at Cross Lanes Apple Farm, Mapledurham on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May starting at 11.30 AM... This a privately owned local fruit growing concern and well appreciated locally for their sales of fruit at the farm and s Mike and Hazel's excellent honey foraged by their pollinating bees. Contact Mike or Jon. if you need directions.

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

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

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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**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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