



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

March 2011
Number 651

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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

Saturday 2nd and Sun 3rd APRIL Burchetts Green Open Day

THE APIARY in MARCH

March weather can be fickle, the danger time for shortage of stores, feed if necessary. Before you go to your bees have clean protective clothing, stale venom will attract stinging even with docile bees. Take spare frames to replace any that were worked to the outside last season. This will help to reduce the incidence of disease. Also, have a super of either drawn comb or foundation for each hive.

Now observe the hive entrance. Are they flying? Is the weather calm? Is pollen being brought in, indicating that brood rearing is in progress? Yes? Good, is it now warm enough to open up in shirt sleeves. Remove the mouse guard first if you haven't already, remove the brood chamber and place it on the roof. Replace the floorboard with a spare one, or clean the existing one; then refit the brood box. Gently remove the crown board. If you placed matchsticks beneath the board last year it should lift fairly easily but if you didn't it may be stuck with propolis. If it has stuck, gently insert the hive tool all around it to fracture the propolis, so that the board can be removed with the least possible disturbance to the bees.

Remove an outside frame to give you room to work, and examine the brood frames. Is the Queen laying? Is the brood healthy and pearly white? If not, call for assistance and advice. Maybe you will come across all drone brood instead of worker brood. Either the Queen is faulty or the hive is Queen-less. Don't try to give a Queen as the bees may think they already have one and will kill a stranger. Again call for advice; hopefully you have another colony to provide eggs. If anything is not normal, call for advice.

If there is evidence of varroa, apply Apiguard, following the instructions on the packet.

Re-assemble the colony, placing your new frames on either side of the brood nest, especially this season, as some colonies are still heavy with stores, leaving little room for the queen to lay. Fit the queen excluder, then the super if necessary, add the crown board, and finish with the roof. Don't forget to make an entry in your record book or card. Treat all hives similarly and look forward to a successful and happy season.

Learn how to get the best from your bees by attending the demonstrations organised by your association, to observe how more experienced beekeepers work. Do volunteer your own colonies for such demonstrations. You will get help and advice.

Triad

Letter to the Editor

I am in receipt of my FBBKA newsletter today and I would like to thank all the regular contributors who so valiantly put in the effort to produce each issue and make it what it most enjoyably is.

In particular, the contribution by Triad is always topical and imparts good advice especially to those yet less familiar with our noble pastime than some.

However, may I suggest that a great many of our members have one or a few hives and the recipes could prove a little difficult to execute and perhaps a little more in quantity than may be needed for so few hives.

In the case of oxalic acid mixture, the solution has a short shelf life and its effectiveness deteriorates with time. It is monstrously aggressive to any metallic or indeed most materials it comes into contact with. It carries a hazard warning.

Most equipment manufacturers supply oxalic acid treatments in safe to handle packs and fondant/candy in containers convenient for most hive numbers.

Similarly, it may mislead new members to imply that pollen supplements are of much benefit in our local circumstances, except in unusual cases, and as already stated plenty of pollen is generally available.

Perhaps I could suggest that many members will find benefit if this additional information was also made available through Triads' column.

Best regards
John Belcher

Where are the insects and birds!

Rhine and Neckar cruise, Captain's instruction: Late afternoon, close all windows to keep insects out! What insects? There were none. This instruction was repeated daily, there were very few insects. Apart from vineyards, all open fields were cropped with maize, sunflower or rape.

Until banned in 2008, most seed used in Germany was treated with systemic insecticide with devastating effects on wild life; there were only a few water birds on the two rivers and small birds seemed to be absent.

Turning into the Mosel at Koblenz, as we approached our overnight berth at Cochem, the situation gradually changed, birds of all sorts, and fish jumping for insects. The German part of the river is in a deep gorge so the only crops are grapes. What of the French reaches? The ban on dangerous insecticides has been in place in France has been in place since March 2004.

Here in Great Britain, the authorities say that there is no evidence that these insecticides are harmful. History is repeating itself, there was a time that Dieldrin, Thalidomide and Aldrin was harmless.

RFC

By Joining Beebase you can access beekeeping information and can ask for advice or help from the Bee Unit <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase>

Read The Georgia Bee Letter, particularly December from page nine
<http://www.ent.uga.edu/bees/documents/GBLDec2010.pdf>

GLOBAL BEE EMERGENCY -- ACT NOW!

Sign the petition http://www.avaaz.org/en/save_the_bees/96.php

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

LEAVER MEMORIAL LECTURE ---- Newbury

Research into viruses which affect bees - Guido Cordoni

Friday 11th March 2011 at 7.30 pm
The Sutton Hall, Stockcross, near Newbury, Berkshire

Newbury Beekeepers' Association warmly invites you to the 29th annual Leaver Memorial Lecture, to be given by Guido Cordoni who is in the PhD programme at the University of Surrey. His work has included field studies on the spread of AFB in Italy and current research into the genetic characteristics of slow bee paralysis viruses.

The Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences is the second largest in the University of Surrey. Within this Faculty, the aims of the Microbial Sciences Division are to investigate host/pathogen interactions and bacterial antibiotic production and to utilise 21st century biology to help improve understanding of infectious diseases and, in doing so, develop new antimicrobial agents and vaccines to target them.

The lecture is free and all people in the region who are interested in bees are most welcome. We should therefore be very grateful if you would publicise the lecture amongst local beekeepers.

The lecture will be held at the Sutton Hall, Church Road, Stockcross. The postcode is RG20 8LN.

Directions:-

- Stockcross is on the A4000 just off the A4 on the western edge of Newbury.
- If you are coming from the north or south, use the A34 and take the A4 exit towards Hungerford. However do not enter the A4 but, on the western roundabout, take the exit for the A4000 signposted to Wickham, Stockcross and RAF Welford.
- If you are coming from the east of Newbury, drive through Newbury on the A4 until you cross the A34 and then turn onto the A4000 signposted to Wickham, Stockcross and RAF Welford.
- When in the middle of Stockcross village, turn south onto Church Road. The Hall is on the right after about 100 yards. The Hall has some parking space but cars may be parked (considerately, please) along Church Road and Glebe Lane.

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Wokingham & District Beekeepers Association

Another huge turnout of members for the meeting on 9th February was very heartening to see. Some prospective new members also attended and were promptly signed up by the Hon. Treasurer. Peter Kennedy, who was at one time one of our members, who is on a research contract at Rothamsted gave a most interesting talk on Bee Research being undertaken there. He commenced with a history of the building and the research into crops and fertilisers, which was the main area of work in the early days of the research station. He then moved on to talk about the current research into varroa and the viruses which they can carry and which adversely affect honeybees. In view of the level of immunity that varroa has developed to certain chemicals, other ways of combating the pest are being investigated. The talk was well received and it was greeted with much applause.

The final talk on March 9th completes the winter programme, and we will soon move onto the apiary meetings on Sunday afternoons. Peter Seagrave has prepared a rota for the meetings at the Club's apiary. The rota is on the website. If you find you cannot do your stint, please let him know in good time so that the rota can be adjusted.

Derek Porter Hon. Sec. 0118 979 0326

<http://wokinghambeekeepers.moonfruit.com>

SLOUGH, WINDSOR, AND MAIDENHEAD BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

January has been busier than usual for the Society. We had the traditional Annual Dinner, again organised so efficiently by Don, for which we would all like to thank him. We also held our first Beginners' Course over two Saturdays in the month. It seems to have been very well received by all the new beekeepers who attended, and we would like to thank everyone who gave up their time to offer their expertise in this way. Thanks to the course, we now have a very large number of new friends, who are really looking forward to the new season, to 'hands on' experience at the Apiary and to having their own bees.

The number of new members was reflected in the very large audience for the February meeting, when Beulah Cullen spoke to us about swarm control. This was a repeat of last March's meeting, but I know that everyone, including those who attended last year, very experienced beekeepers and newcomers alike, all learnt a great deal.

I will not go through all the details (my April 2010 newsletter is still available on the web-site) and it would be impossible to do her justice. However, I will mention some of her hints and tips which may be helpful.

Beulah began with the importance of swarm control – avoiding causing distress to local people and of course, keeping the number of bees and honey production at its maximum for the beekeeper! Much of the talk was on the manipulation of the colony to avoid swarming, and the importance of weekly inspections during the swarm season.

However there were also some useful hints on collecting a swarm, should yours (or someone else's) not behave as expected! Beulah suggested adding an umbrella to the swarm collecting kit – if you are using a cardboard box it will protect it from possible rain while waiting for flying bees to join the colony, and can also be used as a sun-shade on a sunny day. I had not realised how quickly bees can suffocate if they are shut up for too long, without a good source of fresh air and protection from heat.

Another hint was puffing smoke on the original branch, post or wherever the swarm had collected. Those who have tried to hive a swarm will know how frustrating it is when flying bees insist on returning there instead of joining the queen, apparently smoking the area will help to remove the pheromones which are attracting them.

The success of Beulah's talk can be measured by the number of questions (not only on swarm control but also seeking Beulah's wisdom on many other subjects) which followed. It was only when Michael tactfully brought the evening to a close that she was able to have her very well earned cup of tea – otherwise we might have happily sought her advice until late in the night!

Can I also take the opportunity of this newsletter to remind members about the 'woodworking' session which the Society is offering in March. Members can arrange to bring along their flat pack hive equipment for assistance with assembly. We have booked the Parish Hall in Windsor for the afternoon of Saturday the 12th March, from 2pm till 4.30pm.

Spaces are limited due to the availability of workmate type benches, but if you have one you can bring along with you, let us know. Timings are fairly flexible, particularly if you can bring your own bench, but please allow enough time to complete what you want to do before we have to vacate the hall.

You will need to bring along everything needed, a few spare tools may be available but please don't rely on it. Hives and boxes should already have nails included and a list of things required; frames will need frame nails and if you have some foundation, just to put a couple in, but it will be easier to transport them home without.

If you don't have equipment to put together but you feel it would be helpful to just pop in at some point to observe, you will be most welcome. Please let us know that too. This is being offered as another benefit of your membership. Further details are on the Events page of our web-site. *Please contact Clive at clive.winslow@btconnect.com or 01494 812344 to see if there is still space.*

Our next 'winter' meeting will be held on Tuesday 8th March, when we will learn more about queen rearing. 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 begin on March 27th at 2.30pm and will continue fortnightly throughout the summer. For details about meetings, please see the web site. For information on how to find the Apiary, please contact our secretary, Maureen Williams on 01753 643604 or 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 and on the website www.wherecanwego.com. - click SL4 + gardens + nature (boxes)

Newsletter items: Liz Juby Windsor (01753) 859382 lizjuby@hotmail.com
Chairman: Michael Sheasby Farnham Common (01753) 642656
michaelsheasby@lineone.net

Reading & District Beekeepers' Association.

BREAKING NEWS-----

Reading association has just got the green light to order 3 x hives and full beekeeping starter kits for Cisco Systems the global internet provider at Green Park, **Reading**. Which will also bring more members (currently x5 with likelihood of more to come). The hives are to be sited on top of their corporate offices and has been thoroughly checked out by RBKA members. The location offers great foraging and is well protected from the elements and the public. There seems to be a bit of competition between divisions as their Paris HQ has installed x3 rooftop hives with great success. So Reading are looking to compete. They have the blessing of the Green Park management, because that's the reason why the location reflects its ambition.

They are also keen for others on the site to follow Cisco's example. But of course, will wait to see the results at the end of the season. We are encouraged to see a large corporate voluntarily getting involved with us, in assisting our efforts to increase both bee stocks and members. Which are currently standing at x65 active members and counting, from only a handful 3 years ago.

Being an innovative company, ideas have been raised for things like-Installing micro cameras with Wifi Real-time Broadcasts. **Of which they already have at their disposal, to various locations throughout their offices, via computer of course and to their other divisions. Also** Temperature Controlled Internal Hive Environments. **Looks like they will be nations most pampered bees.** Their members are attending our own fully attended *RBKA Introduction To Beekeeping Course*. - End.

Annual Festive Beekeepers Dinner. This was enjoyed at Caversham Heath Golf Club on the evening of 27th January. We had a large table to ourselves and excellent bar and table service. The food was well received by most of the diners, three good courses plus a cheese platter and coffee all at a very reasonable price. Of particular pleasure for us was to welcome as our guests long-time member, Reg Harper and his wife Janet. Reg served for many years as Reading Association chairman, and many readers will know Reg and Janet well. Octogenarian Reg has retired from the 'physical' side of beekeeping but still has a keen interest in the craft and the doings of Reading beekeepers. It was great to find Reg and Janet in good form.

Hazel Blackburn. Senior Honey Judge. The Hazel Blackburn Honey Trophy.

A star of Reading Beekeepers and 25 years a honey judge Hazel and Mike Blackburn are very active during the 'honey show' season visiting various shows and events for Hazel's judging. Hazel's knowledge of honey, beeswax, wax modelling and hive products of all types are one of our greatest assets. Our chairman Mike Lawson Foster has instigated 'The Hazel Blackburn Honey Trophy' a splendid brass representation of flying bees with hives and herbage which we had the greatest pleasure in presenting to Hazel at our February Meeting on the evening of Thursday 10th. The photo shows Mike Lawson Foster, Hazel Blackburn, our guest speaker on the 10th David Charles from Somerset beekeepers and Reading members in attendance. The Hazel Blackburn Honey Trophy will be awarded annually to novice members of Reading Association for the best jar of honey submitted by them at the end of the season to be judged by Hazel.



David Charles. Talk on Beekeeping in Trinidad and Tobago.

A lavishly illustrated account of David's visit in 2009 to these Caribbean Islands with a number of other beekeepers on a tour arranged by 'Bees For Development'. David described this 'bee-keeping safari' as "one of the best experiences I have had". Traditionally in the islands women had looked after bees both the honeybee and a number of stingless bees, honey from which 'Malepona Honey' is still available and a great local favourite sold at a premium in retail packs alongside 'Apis Honey'. The culture and marketing of bee products are now more advanced in Both Trinidad capital Port of Spain and Tobago, 20 minutes away by light aircraft. Capital Scarborough.

David's party was met by Gladstone Solomon MSC. President of Caribbean Beekeeping Associations who had planned, organized and was their principal guide for the trip. Their first place of call was 'The Pax Guest House' former Benedictine Monastery' and an excellent base while in Trinidad, David slept in a bed also occupied by David Attenborough when he's in the islands and the party from Britain was charmed by the flora and fauna and the easy pace of life on a tropical island. Africanized bees have been a feature of beekeeping on Trinidad and Tobago for some years and David noted that strangely, they don't seem to be spreading to Apis Mellifera colonies to a great extent.

Beekeepers there tend to say they are the best for honey production and seem to know how to work with them. The party proceeded to an apiary at Navarra Beach, noted for its pleasantly 'salty' honey, and inspected Africanized bee colonies, although flighty there was no undue aggressiveness and no one got stung or 'smothered' with bees. Also on this site, Mellifera breeding nuclei and queen rearing was to be seen, apparently there is a production of 'special drones' this may be a factor in 'breeding-out' the undesirable characteristics of the Africanized bees. Another day in Trinidad gave the party an insight into managing and harvesting with Stingless Bees; they bite apparently! These small bees build structures from mud outside the boxes at the entrance, inside with a strange leathery dark wax long tunnels, elaborate arrangements with brood layered in this case rather like wasp's and larger honey storage cells, the honey is harvested by syringe.

On then to Tobago which is Gladstone Solomon's home island. At The Francis Forbes Apiary, Mount Pleasant. Top-bar hives were in use. The hives were equipped with legs each standing in a tin of old engine oil, anti-termite measure. A honey harvest twice a year is possible in the islands, one before and one after the hot season. Also the covered apiary near Scarborough was visited, the bees here are Africanized and as a measure of the knowledge Tobago beekeepers have of these bees, they were not allowed to approach too close or inspect. A picture David took shows little or no flying. Their hosts explained if they opened these hives while like this, local residents might well suffer! Just like our bees on a chilly day, if the door's shut. Don't come knocking!

David has re-visited Trinidad and Tobago on a personal trip recently; he likes the islands and the life very much. Gladstone took a day off his schedule to be with him. For about £2000 per person Bees For Development will arrange a similar tours for quite small parties e.g. half a dozen people. Sound very tempting! This was an excellent illustrated talk from David, with many thanks to him.

March Meeting. This is our annual Bee Day at Trench Green, Near Mapledurham and is on Saturday 19th March, open from 10-30 to about 4-30PM. This 2011 Reading Bee Day is for Reading Beekeepers and new-interested persons from our district. Will Messenger will be our guest speaker and there will be diverse beekeeping exhibits and activities on display and major opportunities for some of our newer members to meet and talk at length with the 'old hands' prior to our outdoor beekeeping programme which starts in April. Details on our web-site www.rbka.org.uk .

Secretary: Martin Moore, Tel. 0118 9677386

www.rbka.org.uk

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

The first 2011 meeting of the South Chilterns Beekeepers Association was held on 19th January. Serena Watts spoke about the Healthy Bee Plan & Good Husbandry.

Serena introduced herself as a primary school teacher and novice beekeeper, having learned from Gollie Sturt, a well-known beekeeper from Newbury, and said she has kept her own bees since 2002. Serena also teaches the bee keeping courses at Newbury College, which are very popular.

Serena's aim was (and is) to promote good husbandry. She outlined progress made by FERA and BBKA (apparently they are now speaking to each other!) which includes plans for colour coded bee information kits from novice to expert, and a booklet called "The Healthy Hive" which illustrates healthy and non healthy frames for comparison with your own. The "virtual hive" is available, and is a very useful teaching aid, especially good for children, which is safe and can be used all year round.

Fera's National Bee unit has a web-based database called "[Beebase](#)" on which you can register as a beekeeper. There is a lot of useful information and an opportunity to get your bees checked by the local bee inspector, free. Rather than thinking of the bee inspector as someone who comes to condemn our hives, we should use this as an opportunity to learn from an expert.

Whilst acknowledging that there are as many ways of doing things, as there are beekeepers, there are some basic rules we can all apply to achieve and maintain high standards. These are outlined in the five points of the healthy bee plan:

- 1 - Keep pests and diseases and other hazards at the lowest possible levels.
- 2 - Promote good standards of husbandry.
- 3 - Encourage effective bio-security.
- 4 - Ensure science underpins policy and implementation.
- 5 - Get everyone to work together on bee health.

As responsible beekeepers we can:

- 1 - Recognise pests and diseases.
- 2 - Maintain good husbandry and healthy practices.
- 3 - Maintain up to date skill levels.
- 4 - Sign up to bee base.
- 5 - Comply with legislation.

6 - Use and store medication appropriately.

7 - Maintain good records.

8 - Seek specialist advice when necessary.

Serena recommended the BBKA basic practical exam, which we should be able to pass after one year of bee keeping, this would ensure we have the basic knowledge to continue and develop our skills.

We were also given a few practical tips to keep us going:

Serena is not in favour of using leather gloves for hygiene reasons as well as it's easy to accidentally squash bees when wearing them, this upsets the colony!

Wash your hive tool between colonies to prevent spreading disease.

Change frames regularly.

When feeding fondant, use Ambrosia because they add enzymes to the fondant, which the bees would otherwise have to produce themselves from fat stored in their heads.

Serena has had more success with over wintering during the last 3-4 years, since she's fed syrup in September.

We finished with a warning that the Asian Hornet is on its way, and Serena's opinion of Ivy honey: "Yeugh- nasty!"

There is a wealth of information on Beebase, so take a look!

Steve Radford

Our next meeting is **Wednesday March 16 QUEEN PERFORMANCE By Roger Patterson**

Secretary: - Joanne Shanagher. 01189 721067

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

See:

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

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

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.

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