THE FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

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The Apiary in November

Beekeepers seem to spend a great deal of time throughout the year dealing with a constant variety of pests. In summer it's Varroa, Nosema, EFB AFB etc. In autumn it's wasps and wax moths. A badger can be quite nosey and if he is hungry, he can push over a beehive on a rickety stand quite easily, so can a deer if he thinks there might be something to eat inside. The ensuing disturbance doesn't do a colony any good, especially, as that sort of event is only likely to occur in very cold weather when the bees are clustering, (breaking the cluster for any reason is detrimental to the colony). Very cold weather is forecast for November and possibly snow. The amount of berries available to birds is said to be an indication of winter weather, this year the crop of berries is exceptionable!

Reports of large colonies going into winter have been received. This type of colony has a habit of collapsing in spring. Harry Wickens of Manleys said that when this happens, queens often fail in the spring, - watch to see if drones over-winter this indicates a missing or failing queen. Many of these colonies starve, the bees should be settling down now for the winter. There may possibly be some welcome pollen about from the ivy, but The Queen should be in her rest period and may not be laying. Food supplies will have to be watched.

If you have left feeding late (or stores are light), supplement with candy or fondant placed over the middle of the cluster. This could also be an insurance against “local starvation”; this is where the cluster moves to one side away from their stores and consequently starves. Unfortunately, due to weather conditions, the current season’s late swarms and some nuclei have been unable to gather enough forage for the coming winter.

Maybe you have been prudent enough to have left a part filled super for your bees, be sure to remove any queen excluder. Finding brood chambers bereft of food, bees in the super, and a very dead queen with her head stuck in the excluder is frustrating, particularly if it is your only colony.

One thing that I forget to do is to reverse the entrance block. Doing this will enable the bees to go in and out when there is a pile of debris and dead bees behind the block.

Now you can raise the crown board a little by placing matchsticks crossways at each corner, cover the Porter Bee escape apertures and open the entrance. The theory behind this action is that the cold air coming in the hive will circulate around the outside of the brood and not up through the middle. It is surprising how much moisture the bees create, so a good flow of fresh air is required to keep the inside of the hive dry. Alternatively, part cover the bee escape holes, approximately one square inch opening is sufficient for a good air circulation.

If you haven't already done so, fit your mouse guards now and suspend a plastic sheet from the outside edge of the roof if you are likely to be troubled by woodpeckers. A bin liner opened up will do the job nicely, better still, cage the hives with one inch wire or plastic mesh leaving a wide enough gap between the mesh and the hive to prevent woody from reaching to peck holes.

Where open mesh floors are in use, the feed hole should be closed and insulation placed on top in order to avoid the “chimney” effect.

Triad

NBU ADVICE for OBTAINING BEES**:**

JOIN BEEBASE

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

COLONY COLLAPSE DISORDER

http://www.soilassociation.org/Whyorganic/Welfareandwildlife/Wildlife/Bees/Beeresearch/tabid/439/Default.aspx (control+click to follow link)

Your Regional Bee Inspectors are: -

Southern Region: Nigel Semmence at: nigel.semmence@fera.gsi.gov.uk, tel: 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, tel: 01 904 462 510, email: mailto:nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk .

South Eastern Region: Mr Alan Byham, fax/tel: 020 8571 6450**.**

Georgia Bee Letter http://www.ent.uga.edu/bees/documents/GBL

See like a bee - life - 22 August 2011 - New Scientist

22 Aug 2011 **...** Where you and I see flowers, bees see ultraviolet landing **...**

http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21128261.700-crittervision-see-like-a-bee.html

http://www.youris.com/Environment/Bees/Bees_restored_to_health_in_Italy_after_this_springs_neonicotinoidfree_maize_sowing.kl

Wokingham and District Beekeepers’ Association

There was an excellent attendance for the first meeting of the winter programme and a total of 29 jars were entered in the honey competition. The honey which our bees produce from the locality (and Kent in one instance!) varied from very light to very dark and the range of flavours was quite amazing to taste.

This is the great thing about local honey as compared to honey produced by the big honey packers who blend large quantities to give a uniform taste and colour to their products. After a somewhat sticky tasting session, the marks were totted up and the winner was new beekeeper Alan Newport with Nigel Perkins second and Eric Thompson third respectively.

In the wax competition there were fewer entries but they were all excellent. The winner was Lorna Rivett with her usual masterpiece of a little house, second was Bob Loades with a group of nativity figures and third with Nigel with a moulded skep.

After the prizes had been given out, Nigel led an open forum on feeders and winter feeding. This brought out some interesting questions and discussion. Many thanks to Nigel for organising the evening and to Lorna and Bob for counting the votes.

Derek Porter, Hon. Sec. Tel: 0118 979 0326

http://wokinghambeekeepers.moonfruit.com

Reading and District Beekeepers' Association

Tuesday 11th October started the first of Reading Beekeepers Winter Programme, with the first of our beekeeping talks held at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall, in the larger room to fit our burgeoning membership. Our speaker was Will Steynor from High Wycombe.

Will knows us in Reading well, having started his beekeeping in the old orchard at Leyton Park School while a pupil there. His first hive was his version of a WBC, made in the woodwork class.

Will has used his woodworking skills and enthusiasms well over the years. He 'peaked' at 80 colonies with up to 200 supers each requiring 10 frames! Will informed us that he'd cut back a bit these days but still enjoys developing his own modifications to beehive designs and producing his own boxes, floors, crown boards, roofs etc. and his own equipment and methods for producing clean beeswax .

Will showed us his efficient wax cleaning system, using old A2 size food tins and made his recommendations about water bath and the use of a 'simmer stat' control in the circuit, and using a 1 kilowatt kettle element. He also recommended and described how beekeepers could make their own solar wax extractor.

To produce his own foundation, frame wire from the usual suppliers is used, and Will applies this in horizontal bands rather than the familiar 'V' pattern, this gives Will the flexibility he needs to make his popular cut comb as well as centrifuge extraction, though Will advises that with his own foundation, his unwired frames give no problems in the extractor. Will frequently fits in half sheets, held into the top-bar with a beading of his own melted wax rather than the standard batten, the bees build down and draw-out.

Will's current hive box designs were demonstrated. His plywood boxes are good for 15 years for brood and 20 years for supers, a corner joint with brass fixing screws glued is simple compared to commercially available items, but inexpensive, suitable for home handiwork and highly effective. Will fixes latch fasteners with adjustable height at intersections, allowing easy movement and insertion of ekes, e.g. to allow for 'Apiguard' with minimum trouble and disturbance

. Will's approach to queen rearing is to his own design. He makes up his mini frames for his own mating nuclei by simply cutting short standard top bars, He sets up a section of brood boxes to allow the five frames from his mating nuclei to be conveniently fitted into his full size hives. Will gave recommendations regarding protection of the new queen to be introduced, and feeding the bees from the nuclei, at the time of insertion. He also demonstrated his own design and make of feeders, covering the top of a box but with removable tops and spaces for 'Porter escapes' which can be placed between the brood and super boxes, and 'clears as it feeds'. Also, his entry block system designed to swing easily in and out, built into a hive floor.

An animated questions and answers completed Will's talk and Reading Beekeepers would like to express their appreciation for such an esoteric and highly original and useful talk by Will on his approach to beekeeping.

Tuesday, 8th November, at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall starting at 7-30 sharp is our next meeting. This is Reading Beekeepers Annual General Meeting, followed by our 'New Beekeeper's Honey Show' with a beekeeping forum to follow. Reading Beekeepers Association beekeeping trophies will be awarded, also, the newly instigated 'Hazel Blackburn Beekeeping Trophy' for the best new beekeeper's Honey. See www.RBKA.org.uk for details.

Martin Moore, Secretary. Tel: 0118 9677386

www.rbka.org.uk

South Chilterns Beekeepers' Association

Honeybee wing morphometrics, presented by Dave Moss.

Dave promised us Latin, geography, history, mathematics and a practical demonstration.

Morph means shape, and metron means measure (in fact Latin borrowed these words from Greek) so morphometrics means measuring shapes.

Dave has been keeping bees for about 5 years, and, finding himself fascinated with the discovery of what measuring bees' wings can tell us about the different species, shared it with us.

Plate tectonics have moved the continents around the surface of the earth, so the world map we know now has only been like it for about 14 million years; before that it was very different, with the continents grouped closely together. Africa moved northwards, and the Indian plate is colliding with the Asian plate, pushing up the Himalayas. Flowering plants evolved between 14 and 100 million years ago in Africa, and nectar-eating insects evolved along with them, including the honeybee. The last glacial maximum was only 18 thousand years ago, causing insects that had evolved in one climate either to migrate south, adapt to the new conditions, or die out during these ice ages. Honeybees that had moved north with continental drift moved south again, and the Himalayan barrier cut off Apis cerana from the four main European species; although Apis cerana is very similar to Apis mellifera, the two cannot interbreed.

The result of this long evolution was four main European sub-species coming from different and distinct geographical areas: Apis mellifera mellifera (Mellifera or black bees, northern Europe), Apis mellifera caucasica (Caucasians, from the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea, Eastern Europe), Apis mellifera carnica (Carniolans, from the Alps and the Balkans) and Apis mellifera ligustica (Italians). Dave tells us that Linnaeus made a mistake in naming them mellifera, as it means "honey-carrying" – which they don't do; what he should have called the species is mellifica – "honey-making". Each of the four sub-species has its own characteristics, detailed in the table; for example, the northernmost race, mellifera, evolved as dark bees further north where there is less sunshine, and they needed to absorb more energy early in the day. This is the British native bee. Italian bees get more sunshine and can afford to get up later, so they have more yellow colouring, but they are less well-adapted to British winters and tend to eat all their stores early. Carnica swarm easily but Mellifera don't (though this year they seem to have forgotten that characteristic!).

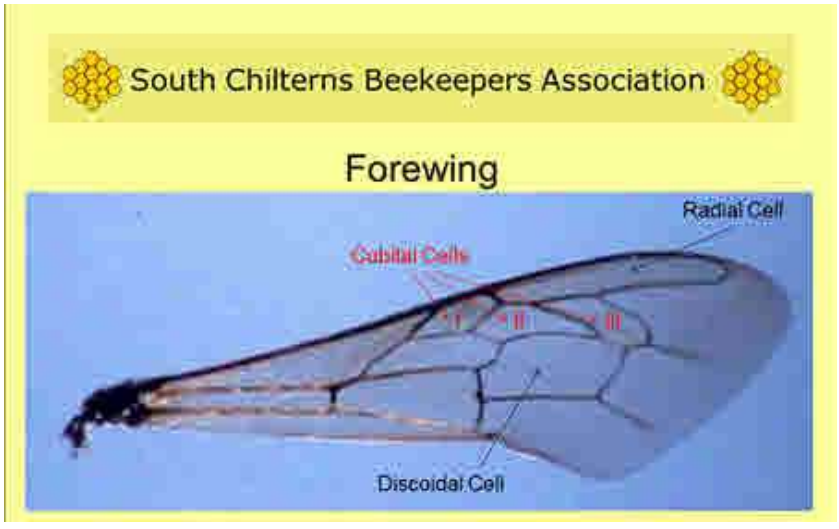
South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

Honeybee Races
Apis Mellifera

Race	Italian	Carniolan	Caucasian	European Dark
Species	Ligustica	Carnica	Caucasica	Mellifera
Origin	Italy	Alps, Balkans	Caucasus Black & Caspian sea	Northern Europe
Colour	Golden Yellow	Grey/brown	Lead grey	Brown/black
Over Wintering	Good	Good	Poor	Good
Other	• Most popular honeybee • Use lots of winter stores • Tendency to rob • Use little propolis • Usually gentle	• Swarms readily • Consume stores slowly • Use little propolis • Gentle	• Use lots of propolis • Gentle, calm on the comb • Susceptible to Nosema	• Defensive character • Low swarm tendency

In the early 1900s British bee populations crashed spectacularly, with 80-90% of colonies lost. This is often attributed to an outbreak of acarine disease originating from the Isle of Wight, but the First World War may have had an impact, either directly or indirectly by contributing to poor colony management. Beekeepers faced with re-stocking began importing bees from elsewhere in Europe, resulting in complex mixtures of cross-race breeding.

The Victorian craze for scientific investigation, observation and measurement gave us a data set of the mathematical relationships of the cells of a bee's forewing which we can use today to distinguish the racial characteristics of any colony. The discoidal shift is assessed by drawing a perpendicular line from the widest point of the radial cell down to the discoidal cell and seeing which side of this line the node or meeting-point of three cubital cells occurs. If to the left or negative side, the breed is mellifera; if to the right or positive side, the breed is ligustica. Two further values, the cubital index and the Hantel index are based on the ratios of the lengths of the sides of the three cubital cells.



Taking a sample of several bee forewings from a colony, it's possible to plot graphically the discoidal shift against the cubital index, and the discoidal shift against the Hantel index, showing a cluster of values. By comparing the positions of the clusters for the offspring of known species of queens with known species of drones, it's possible to designate the separate areas on the graph where the data points should be for each of the four European breeds of bee.

As the honeybee genome has already been mapped, this technique has been corroborated by correlation with DNA analysis. So for any colony, Dave can work out from these measurements which sub-species you have, and how pure the breed is. It's a very useful thing to find out, as the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association is trying hard to conserve and restore the native dark Apis mellifera mellifera to Britain and Ireland. They are running "Project Discovery" to find out where all the bees with racial characteristics nearest to the native type are. If you have a native or near-native queen, it would be good to breed from her rather than one of the other sub-species. Of course, to be sure of keeping the strain as pure as possible, there is the challenge of trying to make sure she only mates with drones of the same sub-species!

Dave then gave us a practical demonstration of how to do the measuring. A sample size of 25-30 bee wings is needed to be sure of getting an average – preferably collected from recently deceased bees, please; no need to pull the wings off live ones! Once stuck onto white paper and put under the microscope connected to the pc, a picture file of each wing can be saved. Dave uses a free software programme originally designed to measure tree rings. A click of the cursor at each of the critical points on the cells of the bee's wing does the measuring automatically. The numbers are mapped onto the graphical plot, and compared with the known distributions for each of the four sub-species to reveal what you have.

If you'd like to find out what sub-species your bees are, contact Dave or the BIBBA (Alan Jones, 14 Dermott Avenue, Comber, County Down, BT23 5JE, Northern Ireland http://www.bibba.com) and start collecting wings! If you're keen on having a go yourself, Dave will be pleased to tell you all about the kit and the software he uses.

Meryl Toomey

Our next meeting will be at Woodcote Village Hall on Wednesday November 16th. A talk by association member, Heidi Sheridan, Beekeeping year four – Progress to date (or not)

Joanne Shanagher, Secretary. Tel: 01189 721067

http://www.southchilternsbeekeepers.org.uk

Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

Our winter meetings resume on Tuesday, 13th September, with our Annual Review of the Year. It was held, as usual, at All Saint's Parish Church Hall in Alexander Road, Windsor SL4 1HZ. Our apiary meetings, at the site about a mile north of Wexham Park Hospital, will continue fortnightly throughout the summer. For details about meetings, please see the website. 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 website, www.britishbee.org.uk/local/slough-windsor-maidenhead and on the website www.wherecanwego.com. - click SL4 + gardens + nature (boxes).

Newsletter items: Liz Juby, tel: 01753 859382 lizjuby@hotmail.com

Michael Sheasby, Chairman, tel: 01753 642656 michaelsheasby@lineone.net

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

Watch bees online at: http://www.sysonby.com/beecam

Contributions, including emails, to arrive with the Editor by the 20th of the month for the following month. Contributions received after this will be held over for a later month.
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Don't put up with the hassle of making up sugar syrup for feeding bees winter stores this year. Use specially formulated ready to use **Ambrosia Syrup.**
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