



# THE FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

**August 2012**  
**Number 667**

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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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## In The Apiary

We are now looking forward to more settled weather, maybe nature repeating itself and giving us a late harvest. Indeed, blackberry and willow herb is three weeks late and July is going out with sun shine. Clover is coming into full flower but requires a ground temperature of 50-60°F, a late yield from clover has been known, much depends on the weather.

This year most colonies have been near to starving and have had to be fed. Looking on the positive side, they are less likely to have gathered from pesticide treated crops, therefore, our bees should over-winter with fewer problems.

Some new queens were not laying, old queens stopped laying, and some beekeepers bought new queens and promptly lost them thinking that brood-less colonies were queen-less. Before introducing a new queen it is essential that there is no queen or laying worker present. On a brighter note, there will be a lower varroa count where colonies have been brood-less and have recovered.

Should a honey flow not materialise, colonies short of stores must be fed. When utilising (clean) plastic milk bottles as feeders, the perforations in the bottom must be clear. The holes are likely to close if made by just pushing a sharp instrument through, heat the instrument first. Take care not to perforate anywhere that will not be in contact with the bees.

It is normal for colonies to throw out their drones as forage becomes scarcer, but will retain them if the queen is failing or has failed. If the queen is then superseded, both queens are often found in the hive, leave well alone if this happens and close the hive up. Make doubly sure that there are adequate stores for the winter.

Foul brood is more prevalent this year; bees have been sorely stressed by weather conditions. One beekeeper has been alleged to have said that he is alright as he is over three miles from the packing station. An incident has been dealt with at Goring, more than three miles from the nearest packing station. Disease has also been found where there is no packing station. BeeData has not yet been updated at the time of writing.

Check your bees for anything that is not normal; do not shake combs with queen cells. Kits for disease checking are obtainable from your equipment supplier. If there is any doubt, ask for assistance, either from an experienced beekeeper or from a bee inspector. These days it is very unlikely that the destruction of colonies with European foul brood is ordered. Note: It is a statutory requirement that any incidence of brood disease is reported to NBU

Triad

## **NBU ADVICE for OBTAINING BEES:**

### **JOIN BEEBASE**

By joining BeeBase you can access beekeeping information and ask for advice or request a free inspection visit from the Bee Unit: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase>.

Registration is free of charge.

### **Your Regional Bee Inspectors are: -**

**Southern Region:** Nigel Semmence at: [nigel.semmence@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nigel.semmence@fera.gsi.gov.uk),

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: 01306 611 016

**Letters to the Editor** are always welcome as long as they are signed. Anonymous letters and letters not in English will not be published. The Editor reserves the right to withhold names.

### **Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society**

#### **Taking the Basic Assessment**

At the end of May, nine members took the Basic Assessment. Over the course of two days the assessor, Serena Watts put each of them through their paces, patiently watching and coaching her way through the hive examinations.

On the assessment days the weather was kind and the sun shone but there were some interesting discoveries made when one candidate found newly opened queen cells and several virgin queens emerging. Two new queens were caught and removed for making up 'nuclei' but everyone could only watch as another queen was stung to death by hostile workers. It was all very instructive and the basic assessment turned into a real learning experience as Serena gave useful feedback.

It is pleasing to report that all the candidates passed, and more members will be encouraged to take this very straightforward assessment of basic beekeeping competence in future. The successful candidates owe many thanks to Tony Wolstenholme, the Society's Education Officer who coordinated the Assessments and gave his time in preparing them for the test.

#### **Open Farm Sunday**

On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June Tony Wolstenholme and other volunteers manned a stand at Rowley Farm, which is close to the Society's apiary. Although the weather was dull the stand was set up in a barn and the virtual hive proved to be a hit with all, old and young. The next door stand was demonstrating butter making so lots of people bought honey to go with their freshly made butter.

It proved to be a successful day all round, with many interesting questions about beekeeping asked and answered, and there was even an offer of land, for a potential out apiary.

#### **The Royal Windsor Rose and Horticultural Society Show**

The Observer newspaper, reporting on the Society's 120<sup>th</sup> summer show on 14<sup>th</sup> July, turned the spotlight on Don Church and Liz Juby. They were snapped showing off their golden harvest. Once again the virtual hive was a valuable way of demonstrating how a hive works without frightening the locals.

## Coming up

During the autumn, winter and early spring, we have a monthly meeting, usually on the second Tuesday, when we have discussions or demonstrations on bee related subjects.

The first meeting of the season will be on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September. Just when we are wondering what to do with this year's harvest of beeswax then a talk on candle making by Will Steynor will provide us with some good ideas.

Meetings usually begin at 8pm and are held at All Saints Parish Hall, Alexandra Road, Windsor SL4 1HZ.

Lorraine Godenzie

## Apiary Meetings

Our apiary meetings provide an excellent opportunity to learn from other beekeepers, and to share experiences, no matter what level of experience you may have. Even if you are a total beginner, don't have any bees, or whatever, please feel free to come along, (we have bee suits in various sizes and colours!). Meetings in August are on Saturdays 4<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>, and Sundays 12<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup>.

As always, details of all our meetings, topical articles and much more are on our website at: <http://www.bbka.org.uk/local/slough-windsor-maidenhead>

Neil Coxhead Secretary SWM BKS



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## Wokingham and District Beekeepers' Association

Some good news at last. Our elusive queens were in the hives all along and most came back into lay, except for one colony with drone laying workers. Rather than try to re-queen this colony, we shook the bees out, to remove the drone layers, and the flying bees moved into the other hives in the apiary. A few weeks later, at the time of writing we now have six hives, two of which are in the process of re-queening and one which could be classed as a nucleus. With good weather forecast, hopefully the bees will manage to get out and forage on a regular basis, rather than shooting out between the downpours.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> July Peter Seagrave ran a two hour honey extraction demonstration, which was kindly hosted by Robin West. Numbers were limited by the amount of space available but there were at least twelve of us eager to learn how to extract our crop. However, the location was definitely not bee proof as we soon found out!

Peter started by demonstrating the use of a Pratley uncapping tray for extracting granulated (solid) honey. If you are purchasing your own tray, try and pay the extra for one with a thermostat. If the honey gets too hot, this may result in high levels of HMF (Hydroxymethylfurfural), which is to be avoided. More detailed information on this subject can be found on the web.

The whole honeycomb was cut from the frame and melted in the tray. The liquid wax and honey was then allowed to run into a bucket, which was placed as close as possible to the tray, to limit the amount of air that gets trapped in the honey.

The wax floats to the top, and when set can be removed in one piece and the liquid honey can be filtered and bottled before it sets again. Wax can be kept and used for anything from candles to polish, or can be exchanged for new foundation.

We then all had the opportunity to practice uncapping a frame using either an uncapping fork or an old kitchen knife, which Peter finds works very well. The frames were then loaded into the extractor and spun. Unfortunately, some of these were in the process of granulating, so instead of a steady flow of clear honey, a cloudy glue like substance oozed out, but it was still very good experience. One very important point mentioned, was that when cleaning your extractor, use only cold water initially. If you use hot, you will smear wax all over the extractor, and it will be almost impossible to remove. You can switch to hot once you are sure all the wax has gone.

During a very busy Q & A session, we were provided with refreshments by Robin's wife, which included delicious vanilla and chocolate sponges.



Thanks to Peter for an informative and enjoyable session, Robin and his family for their hospitality and all the members who took the time to attend.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> July five of us arrived at Neil Marshall's apiary to take the BBKA Basic examination. This was the second try for some of us, as our previous assessment had been rained off, so we were keeping our fingers crossed as it was cloudy and overcast. Fortunately, our examiner managed to fit everyone in between showers and we were told today (20<sup>th</sup> June) that we had all passed, myself included. Congratulations to Alex and Ian Atherton, Colin Gregory and my brother Gerald. Thanks also to Neil and Sue for hosting us, providing refreshments and

giving up most of their Saturday, and Rosemary Bayliss for coming along to provide support and encouragement. It was very much appreciated by everyone.

As a final note, if the person who has the Club's small extractor would please get in touch, it would be appreciated, as some members have expressed an interest in using it.

Lynn Janes. Hon. Sec. Mobile: 07721 338833

<http://wokinghambeekeepers.moonfruit.com>

**For beekeeping equipment and supplies** contact Joan or John Belcher on 01189 842321, 07292586073, or mail [john.r.belcher@talktalk.net](mailto:john.r.belcher@talktalk.net) anytime.

Beeswax exchanged hives, frames and foundation always in stock, treatment for varroa and brood disease detection in stock. A new range of stainless steel extracting equipment is well designed and economically priced; ambrosia syrup and fondant are stock items.

## Reading and District Beekeepers' Association

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, and the first fine day for weeks. At the Invitation of Giles & Emma Mc Loughlin at their garden apiary at Crays Pond. Giles has made a considerable investment in new beehives, five pristine structures with new frames and wax, and a nucleus in waiting.

We opened four of the hives, hive 1 showing good brood, with a modest amount of stores above the excluder the foraging apace today, with contented sounding humming from well-mannered bees. Possible sign of some K winged bees (also in hive 2) will need monitoring.

Giles has a large field of oilseed rape behind his garden, now drying in pod, almost no insect activity was seen during the flowering period, (chilly and wet), and little yield of honey, though we did see a couple of frames of what appeared to be granulating honey in his apiary although mostly fluid.

Giles has taken off some kilos of Oil Seed Rape honey, now well-set! From the size of the field you would think he would have hundreds of kilos! A watch should be kept on this hive regarding stores; there is a lot of brood to be fed. Hive 2 then, with similar results, a little more honey to be seen, some in the corners of the deep frames. Plenty of drone brood capped in 1 & 2, some raked-out, no varroa seen. Hive 3 has an interesting history, appearing to go queenless, Giles has patched-in comb from hive 1 with eggs, and certainly on today's inspection queen cells were developed, they'd been broken into from the side which is what should happen, so the first virgin out can sting her rivals to death, though, still no signs of a queen or activity, after some discussion a frame with sealed honey was scored to try some stimulation, maybe there's a queen in there not laying yet. Nevertheless, please read-on about what we did next!

Hive 4 gave a plenty of good beekeeping. There were sealed queen cells, two on one frame and emergence starting on one during our inspection. Giles advised that this colony is believed to have swarmed in last few days, in this heavily wooded area, mixed with fields under crops. We moved through the brood box cutting-out 5 more queen cells: we then found a frame with two rather magnificent looking sealed queen cells so we shook-off the bees (shaking frames with queen cells is normally not to be recommended Ed), and re-opened hive 3 and inserted, into the brood box. There was also sealed worker brood on the frame; we believe our action to be a good decision for hive 3. The overall picture of hive 4 was good, plenty of bees, brood and stores, some nearly ready for capping.

Our demonstrator, Mike Blackburn had several of our newer beekeepers working the frames and boxes throughout, and the session was of great value to one and all.

Refreshments were ready for us, thanks to Emma and Giles and to all who attended.

The August meeting is in a lovely garden with bees in WBC hives, at the invitation of Tim and Hilary Whitaker in Mapledurham Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> August, The session will start a 2 PM, and we will look forward to relaxing with a cup of tea in the garden afterwards

Jon Davey

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

## C WYNNE JONES

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## Reading Beekeepers on BBC Radio Berkshire outside Broadcast on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

Listeners to an outside broadcast from our award winning local BBC radio station, between 7-10am on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, would; have no doubt enjoyed hearing about some Reading honey bees and beekeepers, as much as we did participating. The BBC presenter, Sarah Walker, did the interviewing at Mike



and Marion Dabb's splendid garden apiary in Tilehurst, with plenty of hives to look at. And then on to Tidmarsh, very tranquil, (apart from the usual speeding motorists) at Cathy Tuckers, and partner Jerry's apiary with the bees and other livestock.

There the attractive, modern, young woman which is Sarah, highly motivated, was able to relax more and not reveal her dread of flying insects! See photos' of Sarah with Mike in Tilehurst and with Cathy & Hazel Blackburn in Tidmarsh.

Also shown is the sound engineer Adam

who positively loved bees! With thanks from the bees to 'the Beeb'



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## South Chilterns Beekeepers' Association

. On Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July we visited Jemima Hume-Humphreys' apiary on the outskirts of Henley.

The afternoon started off badly for Reg, who fell down a huge hidden hole in a load of nettles. Linda, who was just behind him, was unable to help as she was laughing so much!! You certainly find out who your friends are in your hour of need. After rescuing Reg and covering the hole, we looked at 3 hives.

Hive one. The queen never got going after an artificial swarm in late May. A few eggs were seen in June then nothing. Reg looked carefully through the hive to see if the queen was there. No sign of eggs or young brood. The queen was not seen so some eggs were grafted into the colony after the meeting.

Hive two. The queen was superseded in June, all well now. Eggs and brood in all stages were seen, so the colony was shut down fairly quickly.

Hive three, was an artificial swarm from hive one in May. Eggs and larvae were seen in late June, but a queen cell appeared in early July. The cell was left alone. The inspection showed polished cells but no sign of eggs. It was assumed that either a virgin queen or a newly mated queen was present.

After the meeting the sun was still shining so we gathered in an adjacent field for soft drinks, cake and the usual beekeepers' chat.



Dave Moss

Joanne Shanagher, Secretary. Tel: 01189 721067

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

**Contributions**, including emails, to arrive with the Editor by the last day of the month for the following month. Contributions received after this will be held over for a later month.

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