



# THE FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

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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

This has been a wet, cool summer. Despite some warmer weeks in August, there have been some signs of some honey going into frames at last. Most beekeepers will probably feel that they will be well down on honey harvested this year. Indeed beekeepers spoken to, who have just one site for their hives, and two or three colonies there, are preparing to leave what honey there is for the bees to use over the winter and early spring period.

This may well be a very good strategy because, although there will be nectar to come over the autumn, empty cells may be filled with ivy honey. This granulates rock-hard, looking like sugar bullets, if you break the comb, and is a poor overwintering food for bees, particularly for smaller colonies that will probably lack the hive heat to expel moisture, sheer colony mass and energy to solubilize and break into the ivy honey stores. This approach will probably be used by some of our more experienced beekeepers for individual colonies as well as for uniting colonies where there has been a fall-off in queen activity and population. This is often done in early autumn while there is some nectar flow to give the united colonies a chance to build-up to a bee mass that gives them the best chance of surviving winter.

The techniques are well-known, check through your weak colonies and dispose of any queens you find. If you see signs of a laying worker, take the brood-box frames out and standing about 5 metres away, shake-off all the bees. They will all fly home except for the heavy laying worker, replace frames and check what's crawling or in a knot of bees at the shake-off point. Euthanize anything suspicious, you may find your 'believed to be spent' queen there, If you have a nucleus and a frame of bees and stores to spare in the hive under treatment you might set her up in the nucleus to see what transpires. Otherwise rub her out on a convenient low branch or post; this will be a swarm attractant in the coming season. Unite the two brood boxes with a sheet of newspaper between, with a few slits, when they are well-united say in 7-10 days you can sort through the frames and re-configure with one brood box.

Some beekeepers who are working with colonies that are from a swarm, perhaps collected in June or July i.e. not the prime value for a swarm of "a load of hay" may be worried that their bees have little or no stores in the hive. They are right to be worried. The twenty first century 'hybridized' queens all too frequently produce wall-to-wall brood in the frames, no necessary honey stores at the top and top corners of the brood frames, with frames out to the side partially or not drawn-out. These bees should be fed. However, it is also time to start your anti-varroa treatment. This takes four weeks and there may be chilly weather around the corner and the active of recommended treatments such as 'Apiguard' work best in warm weather conditions.

Apiguard uses thymol as an active ingredient; similar products use a blend of strong aromatic oils, thymol, eucalyptol etc. They all have to diffuse throughout the colony to denature and kill the varroa mite, the vapours are heavier than air, so slide-in your floorboards if you have varroa floors, this will be an ideal time to count your varroa drop after the treatment.

What about these threatened colonies with no stores that need immediate feeding? Propriety feeders are available at little cost, but if funds are tight, make-up a couple of 'jar feeders', perforate the lid a number of times (small holes, about the size produced by the tip of a dart,) fill with sugar syrup 2 parts sugar/1 part water or use the proprietary liquid feed brand 'Ambrosia'. The objective is to obtain a meniscus of syrup when you invert over one port in your crown board, the bees will feed from this, and the other port is for the bees to access the unit of Apiguard you are going to put-on. **Read the instructions on the pack** but do not worry about advice not to use while feeding or during a honey flow. You have something of an emergency here. Check every few days and add syrup as necessary, or another full jar-feeder which you can slide in-place to replenish a depleted jar with minimum disturbance to the bees. Feed continuously in this way until you have finished your anti-varroa treatment, then you can use a full-size feeder with syrup until the first frosts. Afterwards any feeding should be with fondant. Good luck.

Triad

## How to use Vita Apiguard (all pack sizes)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RGSp3VEeAq>

For added interest: What are the different types of hive demonstrated in the video?

## 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>.

## 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.

## Wokingham and District Beekeepers' Association

Two of the apiary hives were queenless, one of which had drone-laying workers, so they were each combined with a nucleus. In the case of the DLW hive, this was moved to one side and a fresh hive was put on the original stand. The bees from one nucleus were then transferred into that new box. The bees from the old DLW box were shaken on to the ground in front of this hive and the flying bees joined the bees from the nucleus in the new box. We asked Nigel Perkins, who carried out this procedure, whether the bees would fight. He believes not. The new hive does not smell of "home" to either of the colonies that now occupy it, so they are unlikely to fight.

This means we are going into autumn with three full hives and two nuclei. All remaining supers have been removed and our varroa treatment started. We are also feeding one to one sugar syrup and ambrosia.

We do not have a figure for our total honey harvest this year but it is well down on previous years due to the bad weather this season. We are hoping for better things next year.

On a brighter note, two more of our members recently took the BBKA Basic examination and passed with flying colours. Congratulations to Robin West and Garth Matthews.

Lorna Rivett and Bob Loades have been clearing out the honey sheds belonging to an ex beekeeper and because of the amount of work that is involved, this has been on going for some time. One of the items they found was a very old honey knife, marked with the name of the original owner. Bob thought it would be a good idea to have this mounted and presented to the person who comes first in the class "Best Wax Exhibit" at our club honey show, which takes place later in the year. As most of you know, Lorna's beautiful work of art came first last year, so we took the opportunity to present the trophy to Lorna at our recent committee meeting. It will be called the Frank Napper Honey Trophy, and will remain with Lorna until the next show (date to be announced). If anyone feels like giving Lorna some competition, please start thinking about your entry now.



The date and timing of the Association's Annual General Meeting (AGM) also came up for discussion at the same committee meeting. For many years, the AGM has been held in November, being the second of the winter meetings.

As part of the purpose of the AGM is to elect the Associations Officers for the ensuing year, the annual membership cards cannot be printed until the AGM has been concluded. The result of this is that membership cards are either issued with incomplete details of the Officers for the ensuing year, or issued late into the winter meeting programme.

To alleviate this situation the Committee propose to move the date of the AGM from November to October each year, which will allow accurate membership cards to be issued by the November meeting at the latest. By the time you read this newsletter, you will have received an email calling an Extraordinary General Meeting, to be followed on the same evening by the Annual General Meeting. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the night.

Lynn Janes. Hon. Sec. Mobile: 07721 338833

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## Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

On a sunny Sunday afternoon (and we have not had many of those this summer) towards the end of August, members met at the Association apiary for the weekly meeting and hive examinations.

There are ten hives at the apiary and they were all due to be given their varroa mite treatment. The size of the colonies varies and each one was opened and examined. Records of brood and stores were updated before adding the varroa treatment 'biscuits' on top of the frames at the edge of the brood nest and closing up the hive again.

There was some debate about whether entrance blocks should be left in or removed whilst the varroa treatment is in place. It has been said that the collective noun for beekeepers should be 'an argument' as everyone has their own opinions and they are usually different but a decision was made by consensus.

There were a couple of strong colonies that were looking a bit crowded after supers of honey had been removed and they no longer had space 'upstairs'. There were signs that the Queen's laying was reduced and it was thought that they were feeling too crowded, so they were given an empty super and hopefully a bit more breathing (or should that be breeding) space.

- Lorraine Godenzie

### Apiary Meetings

Apiary meetings in September:

Saturdays 1st, 15th

Sundays 9th, 23rd

The meeting on Sunday 23rd September will be the final one for this season.

### Winter Talks

September sees the start of our 2012 programme of winter meetings. We have a great range of talks, starting as follows:

**Tues 11th Sept 8.00pm** Candle making – Will Steynor

**Tues 9th Oct 7.00pm** Honey Show (7pm for 7.30pm start)

**Wed 24th Oct 7.30pm** Anatomy of the bee – Graham Royle, NDB

**Tues 13th Nov 8.00pm** AGM followed by Beekeeping Q&A

**Tues 11th Dec 8.00pm** Making Mead – John Gamble, followed by Christmas supper.

Winter meetings are held at All Saints Parish Hall, Alexandra Road, Windsor SL4 1HZ, usually on the second Tuesday in the month, but with some exceptions so please note the times and dates above.

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>

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## Reading and District Beekeepers' Association

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> August and a good turnout of Reading beekeepers at one of our favourite venues in our summer programme. Tim and Hilary Whitaker's garden apiary at Mapledurham. It is a big and beautiful garden; with Tim's WBC hives facing-out over fields a short distance from the river Thames in view.

We opened four hives. Tim has been active in collecting and hiving-off swarms this season being left with just one strong colony overwintered from the previous year. Hive one was a fairly recent swarm and though there were a few thousand bees actively foraging and producing cleaned out, and shiny cells, no queen activity or sight of a queen so-far. These bees are likely candidates for 'uniting' with a queen right colony.

Hive number two was just the opposite regarding queen activity. Wall-to-wall brood in eight of the frames, eggs, larvae in all stages. One of our newer beekeepers luckily spotted the long-bodied, splendid queen, gold coloured abdomen, though all her offspring at this stage are blackish and very fast moving on the frames. This hive will need a good store of honey to go into the winter, as there is almost none in the brood box. Tim replaced the super above the excluder where some honey is going-in; he tends to prefer to operate on one deep of brood, and will monitor during the autumn.

Hive number three was an excellent example of what we beekeepers like to see in late summer, good frames of brood, eggs and larvae seen, and a nice round brood shape with good amounts of honey stores at the top and corners of the frame.

The super above the excluder was heavy with stores, but Tim intends to keep this for the bees rather than harvesting, additional boxes above the excluder on hives 2 & 3 were sorted through and various frames assessed and assembled. Tim had placed a deep, with new frames of foundation above hive 2, as they were so active. There were few bees in there today, but all the foundation had been nicely drawn-out. This will be a splendid box to receive a swarm next spring, so it was removed and replaced with a super.

Hive number four was less populous than two & three, but a nice active colony with plenty of brood, eggs and larvae seen, again the brood pattern was in the desirable form with good stores above the brood. Plenty of drone brood here so some raked-out. No varroa found. Our demonstrator, Mike Blackburn, used newer beekeepers as assistants during the inspection and all had a thoroughly valuable beekeeping session, a number of queen cups seen and broken down, empty queen-cells were seen in hive 2, these were examined and removed.

Our day ended in great pleasure in fine warm weather, with a relaxed and relished tea, provided by Hilary & Tim and beekeepers who brought along cakes, and sandwiches. As said above, one of our favorite places. With very many thanks to Hilary & Tim and to all who attended and participated.



September's meeting is on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>. Starting at 11-30AM. We meet at Tim Sheldon's Home at Collins End, Goring Heath. Tim takes us out in his 'beater's trailer' to his hives located around the rural estate. When we return to the garden, the big barbeque is ready, using fragrant fruit logs, We eat and talk beekeeping to our heart's content.

**Do not forget to bring along something for the feast!**

**Postscript.** Giles has kindly sent us a follow-up report after our beekeeping meeting at his apiary on July 22<sup>nd</sup> where an 'apparently queenless' colony was worked-on. Viz.

On inspection a week after the apiary visit, the unopened queen cell we added, was open in fact, only half of it left. I had added an inch square of eggs prior to the Queen Cell addition. Two weekends ago, this being 5 weeks after the inch patch was inserted I found a good patch of brood so maybe there was a queen there ex the 'inch' all along! The donor hive on 22<sup>nd</sup>.has swarmed and that colony continues to produce queen cells. Giles Mc Loughlin.

Jon Davey

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## South Chilterns Beekeepers' Association

### August Meeting:

Nearly forty members of SCBKA and a few family members had a fascinating visit to Duncan and Carol's garden west of Henley-on-Thames set in an area of beech woodland. Although the visit was to the apiary, a few steps took us through a garden wall and into an acre of the most beautiful garden, which they have created over a dozen years. It was no surprise that they were awarded the National Garden Scheme Gold Medal in 2008!



The garden was full of colour and, on this the hottest day of the year so far, full of foraging bees. This must be a factor in Duncan's success this year while so many beekeepers have had a difficult season. The bees were very calm and seemed happy with their lot!

Duncan started beekeeping just 2 years ago with a course at the BCA, Hurley. He started with two Nuclei in May 2011 This spring he produced artificial swarms to expand his

apiary to 4 National hives. This year he also started a top-bar hive with observation window, which he says, is just an experiment.

After falling down 'Jemima's booby trap' at our last meeting, Reg Hook had made a good recovery and kindly manipulated the bees. The meeting was concentrating on "Disease and Varroa control", so Duncan had extracted eight Supers of honey prior to our meeting.

The National hives are on mesh floors, with one trialling a tube floor. The brood boxes are Standard brood-and-a-half, being replaced by 14x12s. Queen excluders are now removed for Varroa treatment.

Hive One. Plenty of brood and a good-looking active queen discovered.

Hive Two... This very strong colony on a 14x12 produced loads of honey and still had a super on for the bees to finish ripening some honey. The queen was not seen but there was an abundance of brood. A Porter bee escape board was fitted and Duncan will make sure that the queen is down in the brood box in a few days.

Hive Three. Has a standard brood box plus eke and frame extension to 14x12 size. This first year colony became queenless after the artificial swarming but resolved matters by producing two supercedure cells. Now healthy, but need feeding for the winter. Reg pointed out that feed now would go into the brood box, where the bees could access it in the depths of winter. Left to their own devices, this space would probably be filled with late Ivy honey, which crystalizes and is difficult for bees to access in winter.

Hive Four. Healthy colony from an April swarm on brood-and-a-half with good brood pattern.

Overall all colonies doing well but all need feeding prior to Varroa treatment.

After a cup of tea and delicious cakes in the garden Reg went through the options for Varroa treatment.

During the season and supplementary to the autumn treatment, use:-

Hive Clean -

Varroa Guard - Powder best sprinkled down through the frames.



For autumn treatment use one of these:-

Apistan- Not recommended as it taints the comb and Varroa is now probably resistant.

Apiguard - 2 X 2 weeks treatment using two trays.

Apilife Var- Strips applied for 4-5 weeks

Thymovar – 2 X 3 weeks of treatment.

The message was – get feeding done now before the Ivy crop, (which needs extra water to metabolise). Then, if possible, complete the Varroa treatment by end Sept/ start of Oct.

Many thanks to Duncan and Carol for their generosity in sharing their beautiful garden.

Max Vine

Some of our members have reported that foul brood has been confirmed in their bees, the required measures have been carried out, one non-viable nucleus destroyed.

Joanne Shanagher, Secretary. Tel: 01189 721067

**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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