



**FEDERATION OF
BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS**
President: Mr. George Hawthorne

April 2001
Number 541

NEWS

Hon. Secretary
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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 28 th April	Spring Convention Stoneleigh	Tickets in advance From Mrs B. Showler
Saturday 5 th May	Meon Valley BKA Auction sale	Tel/fax 023 8027 0622 e-mail: mintybees@hotmail.com

URGENT ACTION PLEASE.

As you know the National Bee Unit and the Regional Bee inspectors are under economic review at the moment. **THIS MEANS THAT THEIR EXISTENCE IS UNDER THREAT.** Please write in their support NOW!!!! to The Marketing and Policy Research Team, ADAS, Woodthorne, Wergs Rd., Wolverhampton. WV6 7BR. The following is a specimen letter. Please use the points, but put them in your own way, plus any other points you have to make.

I would wish to register my support for and request enhancement of the current services to beekeepers through the National Bee Unit and other organisations. The following are our reasons:-

1. The importance of honeybees as pollinators is paramount.
2. There are no longer significant numbers of wild honeybee colonies to do the job.
3. The number of amateur beekeepers has been declining for many years.
4. Much of this decline has been due to a number of bee diseases and parasites.
5. The NBU supports the remainder by providing **ESSENTIAL** disease inspection, diagnostic facilities and training for amateurs who could not afford the cost under private enterprise. Very few of us make a profit from our hobby.
6. The current level of staffing of the disease inspection facility is entirely inadequate to do more than spot check and respond to outbreaks. We have our own versions of Foot and Mouth, which are endemic but cannot, as things stand, be eradicated.
7. The MAFF also provides essential research facilities and is well on the way to providing an environmentally acceptable treatment for two of the currently most serious bee health problems.
8. The NBU also supply supporting expertise to help us correspond effectively with professional beekeepers and foreign organisations.

Bernhard Schumann, Federation Chairman

THE APIARY IN APRIL

By now, your bees will be building up very rapidly. The Queen excluder should now be in place if you haven't done this already and at least one super filled with comb or foundation should be in use. To give the young wax makers some work to do, I would always include two or three frames of foundation in this first box. This will sometimes help in dissuading the onset of swarming. When it is one third full, fit a second box, and so on throughout the season.

I used to "bottom super" i.e. place the fresh super at the bottom of the pile each time. This works well if you can do it, as the bees do not have so far to travel to deposit their load. But due to advancing years, I found I was unable to lift several 301b boxes from the top of the pile each time I wanted to check for swarming. The problem was most acute when trying to finally replace the heavy top boxes gently without squashing any bees! Try not to squash bees for several reasons, as you will release an alarm scent, which rouses the bees and makes them aggressive, and as they clean up the mess afterwards, will distribute any disease the victims may have had.

You should be checking for swarming at least every 10 days now, until the end of May. For my brood I use a brood chamber together with a super box on top, (without a queen excluder between), known as a 1½ Many people will say that the Queen finds it difficult to travel between the boxes to lay, but I have never found this a problem.

All I have to do to check for the first signs of swarming, is to separate these two boxes, bring the top box forward a bit, tip it up and look underneath it. Generally, the first Swarming cells are built on the bottom of the frames in the 'half'. If you are going to use them for Queens later that day, you have a problem. When you place the 'half' back, you are in great danger of damaging these cells. To overcome this, place an Eke underneath the 'Half' to protect the cells. (An Eke is easily made using four pieces of wood about 3 inches wide (the width dimensions are not critical), joined together to the dimensions of the boxes). However this is only a temporary measure, so do not leave the eke on more than a couple of days as the bees will extend their combs into the extra space you have given them.

If you want to prevent them swarming, you will have to either remove the Queen or remove the Q Cells before the first one is capped. There are other methods such as the Demaree method, moving colonies, reducing the population etc, but this is a large subject, too big to go into here.. You can of course destroy all the cells, going carefully through all twenty-two frames, but this is not recommended more than once. They will build more again, and include inferior scrub cells, which you will overlook. Once they have decided to swarm, to repeat this method several times will not make them decide otherwise, they will 'win' in the end. It is nature's way!

If you want to produce some comb honey, put four or five frames of thin unwired foundation in the centre of the second super. If you put this directly above the brood in the first super, you will find a number of cells filled with pollen. Although pollen is edible, it doesn't look very nice, especially if you are selling this product to the public.

Ambrosia

FROM THE EDITOR

The news that foot and mouth disease has been at an Essex abattoir in animals originating from the north of England is disquieting. As with foulbrood, when first recognized, it will already have spread in the neighbourhood. Probably by the time this Newsletter has been distributed, MAAF will have been "caught by surprise" and the outbreak will be widespread, with over 100 cases nationally. **If this happens, (as historically it will), I trust that those of us who have apiaries on, or adjoining farmland will take a responsible attitude.** Keep apiary visits to a minimum (if allowed), disinfect where necessary and abide by any rules or requests.

The report on the Federation AGM has not yet been given to the Editor but will probably appear next month. However, I can say that the subject of the 2001 Autumn Event was discussed, a brief report together with a request form is at the end of the Newsletter (page 6).

I was very surprised recently to find some of my stocks out to seven and more frames and much heavier than would normally be expected. Have they robbed colonies that may be weak with Varroa? I am not the only one to notice this phenomenon so be very wary, as well as collecting Varroa the bees could also bring back other nasties including foulbrood.

Other stocks that I was able to look at are doing well and I am expecting a repeat of the 1947 season when I, among others more experienced than I was, ran short of equipment. That was a record season for most. Incidentally therefore, interest in beekeeping which, in the immediate post war years, had been on the wane, suddenly forged ahead. Hopefully the fears of the pessimists among us will be allayed and that our Autumn Event will be a huge success so put your name forward on the form on page 6 or ring the General Secretary.

BEE INVOLVED

BEGINNER'S COURSE at the COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, BURCHETTS GREEN

An eight week course for beginners will commence on Monday evening 23rd April, 6.30-8.30pm

Lessons will continue on subsequent Monday evenings.

This is a Practical course using the College's bees and is aimed at giving the students confidence in handling bees, Queen finding, making increase, and extracting and bottling honey. Hive assembly will also be covered.

For further details, contact the Tutor, George Butler
Home telephone: - .0118983275



SWARM COLLECTION

An attempt is being made to list beekeepers willing to collect swarms. If you are willing to have your name and telephone number included on a list initially on the Kentbee.com website, URL: <http://www.kentbee.com/kentswarms.htm> please contact your own Secretary, News Editor, or direct to Steven Turner (Postmaster BeeNet) on st@zbee.com

DISEASE

Your Regional Bee Inspectors are: -

Dr. Beulah Cullen. Hillingdon, Middlesex.
South Eastern Region:- Mr. James Morton

Fax/Telephone number 01895 810469
Fax/Telephone number 020 8571 6450

Wokingham & District Beekeepers Association

Our February meeting was talk with photographic slides highlighting the work of the Berks, Bucks, and Oxfordshire Naturalist Trust (BBONT) given by Nigel Phillips, warden of the Warburg Reserve at Bix Bottom. He is also co-ordinator of work carried out on 90 other sites and is a campaigner for fund raising to support this activity. This was a very informative talk, well illustrated by excellent slides. There are several local reserves within our territory so becoming a BBONT member is very worthwhile. (Call 01865 775476 for joining instructions)

Two members attended Beulah Cullen's microscopy teach-in held at Beulah's home. We checked out own bees for disease, nosema, and acarine, using high-powered microscopes. This was followed by identification of pollen grains. It was a very worthwhile day with satisfactory results - thank you Beulah.

Several Wokingham members attended Slough & District's talk by Beulah entitled 'Help, my bees have died'. It was most instructive and many of us took the opportunity to compare experiences of the last winter. It has been a new learning curve due to the unusual pattern of weather, particularly wet with higher daytime temperatures.

The invitation from LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) to tour Jealott's Hill Farm, in Warfield has now been confirmed for the evening of Wednesday 13th June 2001. The tour is obviously conditional on a speedy resolution to the terrible outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Reservations should be made with John Edwards on 0118 934 0238, before 1st June. Numbers will be limited to 30 people.

Members are reminded that there is no Club meeting in April at St Pauls Rooms

Hon. Joint Secretaries: Sylvia Smallbone & John Edwards 0118 934 0238

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION

An evening of mini lectures for our February meeting, given a by our own members, proved very interesting and enlightening. An excellent and easy to understand lecture was given by Dr Ian Wootton on G.M. pollen and its effect on our bees with Ian coming down positively in favour of G.M. crops. Ron Crocker, Reg. Hook, and Don Thomson gave other lectures.

Our annual dinner was again a sell out success, squeezed into the home of Anne and Peter Arlidge at Lower Assendon with 31 members attending.

Much as I enjoy attending our winter programme talks etc., I always look forward to our summer apiary visits. Our first for the 2001 season takes place on Saturday 21st April at the home of Marcella Skinner when our president George Hawthorne will be the demonstrator. He will assess the colony strengths, queen-rightness, and do a general spring cleaning operation

Please check that you have renewed your annual subscription. It is worth reminding you that if you have not done so, you are not covered by be BBKA insurance and should you have a third party claim against you it could prove very very expensive.

Hon. Secretary: - George Butler 0118 983 2735

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

The meeting in February was well attended, our local Bee Disease Inspector, Beulah Cullen, talked to us on the many varied reasons for our bees failing. She passed on some very helpful tips and information to help us to avoid this disaster in the future. With some diseases becoming more prevalent, it is more important than ever that the newer beekeepers amongst us are able to recognise them.

The next meeting at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor is on Tuesday the 10th April at 8 o'clock. To complement the start of the summer schedule, this is to be a video evening on the subject of 'The Bee-keeping Year'. So, do join the regular members at this final winter evening, when we hope to announce plans for some of the summer meetings at our apiary.

The first apiary meeting will then have taken place as it is on Sunday, 8th April and we encourage you to join us there as well, to see how our bees have fared over the winter after their upheaval last summer and subsequent recovery from EFB. The meetings will then follow the bi-weekly pattern on Sundays at 3pm throughout the summer and this year we hope to put on demonstrations occasionally, so your input regarding what you would like to see will be of great assistance.

Newsletter items to: Joy Dodson. Burnham (01628) 664091

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

On February 8th Mr. James Morton showed us his method of producing a few Queens, even if you haven't found your existing queen. He used an overhead projector and slides to illustrate his talk. It seemed so easy. This was followed by lots of questions and discussion, so it seems his audience found his talk very interesting I know I did.

I shall not attempt to describe his method, as only seven of us turned up, it seems you either have a method of your own, or maybe you are just not interested!

We met at The PackHorse on Friday 23rd February for our annual dinner. Reading members and their spouses were joined by beekeepers from South Chilterns and Wokingham. In all there were 22 people present. The food and service were excellent. Thank you Michael, you chose a winning venue at short notice. During the vote of thanks after the meal, Michael appealed for members to invite us to their bees during the summer and to become more involved in our association, as well as attending meetings. He pointed out that we do not have a chairman, have only four committee members and the running of the club is left to the same few people. He said that if things do not improve, next October, we might have to consider reducing our activities. Do you want a club with no monthly meetings? The decision rests with you.

Secretary: Mr. R. Kiff, 114 Silverdale Road, Earley, Reading RG6 7LU Tel. 0118 966 5358

Newsletter "Deadline": - Contributions to arrive with the Editor by the First Post on the First of the Month for the Following Month.


To enable the Advertisement Manager to place adverts with the Editor for the 1st of the month deadline; adverts should be sent well before this time.

ADVERTISEMENT ENTRIES: - 2 Lines for £1.00. Commercial, £1.00 per line, together with your cheque made payable to FBBKA. To be sent to the Advertisement Manager:-
Mr. Michael Blackburn, M.B. Photography, 41 Prospect Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8JV.
Telephone:- (0118) 947 9450/5451

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