



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

April  
2003  
Number 563

## NEWS

Hon. Secretary  
S. Napper  
56 Lamorna Crescent  
Tilehurst Reading  
RG31 5WF  
(0118 945 5094)

The Federation, its Council, and its Officers cannot be held responsible for the views expressed in the Newsletter or possible errors.  
(E-mail: berksbees@lineone.net)

Hon. Editor  
R.F.Crocker  
25 Shiplake Bottom  
Peppard Common Oxon  
RG9 5HH  
(0118 972 2315)

### Future Events

Saturday 26th April	The B.B.K.A Spring Convention Stoneleigh	
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### From the Federation General Secretary: -

The Federation A.G.M. was held on 25<sup>th</sup> February.  
Item 4/03 on the Agenda was  
“Amalgamated Berkshire Association – Results & Conclusions”.

The results of the survey carried out last year were as follows -

A total of 88 replies had been received.  
The withdrawal of South Chilterns Association from the Federation discounted a total of 22 returns as ineligible.

Of the remaining 66 - 13 were for Option No. 1  
(Amalgamation under one central Association with central committee control).

33 were for Option No. 2  
(Amalgamation under one central Association with local branches controlled from centre).

There did appear to be some confusion over Option No. 3 which asked for suggested alternatives.

A total of 20 votes were received for this option and all were for retaining the status quo with variations in their wording.

After these results were announced, much discussion took place with the outcome being a general consensus of opinion that things had moved on since the survey was originally sent out, i.e. the withdrawal of South Chilterns Association & the potential merger of Reading & Wokingham Associations.

It was agreed that no definite conclusions could be made from this survey, but that it had been a useful tool in obtaining member’s opinions and should now be closed as an Agenda item.

It was also agreed that the Federation should continue in its present form for the immediate future.

Finally on the subject of Agendas, if there is anything which you feel should be raised for discussion at a meeting of the Federation Council, please let me know.

Sandra Napper

## THE APIARY IN APRIL

THIS MONTH. This month the rape comes out and so does everything else.

- Make sure you have cleared out all surplus and solidified stores, and replaced the comb with foundation.
- Put on queen excluders and at least one super and have another available.
- Start the "10daily" inspections. The first should concentrate on the strength of the hive and the second on disease. Send samples of all suspicious-looking brood and beetles (see BBKA newsletter) off to CSL, Sand Hutton as quickly as possible by first class post.
- Prepare spare brood chambers and foundation for setting up artificial swarms on colonies showing signs of swarming. The Demaree method still seems to be the simplest and best.
- Check your extracting gear and be ready to take off rape honey just as the rape fields begin to lose the total golden colour.
- Introduce New Zealand queens by the nucleus method as soon as they arrive
- Make early Varroa checks to ensure that none of your colonies has over-wintered with a high count. If you do find one with plenty of mites get a kit from your Association Secretary and do a resistance check.

**Go to the BBKA spring convention on the 26<sup>th</sup> and see what's new in beekeeping.**

MAIN TOPIC -**A timely reminder.** I'm grateful to Mr Evans (letters, last month) for reminding us that the weather in February can preclude all consideration of work on the hives. However, over the last few years things appear to have begun to change. I sit writing these note on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March at the end of a week which has been so warm that almost anything could have been done on almost any day (56F at 3 o'clock this afternoon). I wish I had not been at work and doing overtime.

Last year the first of my 20 hives swarmed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March and a further six had to be Demareed in the second week in April. On looking in them yesterday (glass crown boards) 8 of them were covering 9 frames and still weighing like lead. If they are to have room to expand I will have to get some foundation in them in the next fortnight.

As I've said before, I use 14" x 12" brood chambers and a New Zealand strain of bee, but I don't believe I am the only one who's bees are taking advantage of the current run of early springs. The occasional cold night or even cold spell does not appear to slow them down, if they have enough stores. The excellent ivy crop last autumn left my bees with plenty of stored honey and pollen so perhaps they can get going without much coming in from the fields.

Just as we've learnt to deal with rape honey by extracting before it all goes solid, far earlier than the traditional summer harvest, I think we need to prepare for swarming far earlier –if the weather permits.

When I started writing the "In the Apiary" column a few years ago I made it quite clear that tit was not intended for beginners. They are well catered for by George Butler's courses at the BCA and the provision of advice by fairy godmothers from their Associations. A one-page column like this can't give them the depth of understanding they need. When I took over (in a hurry) from "Ambrosia" I neglected to restate my terms of reference. Mea Culpa.

My stuff is intended to remind those of us with a bit of experience what they may not be prepared to do each month and, of late, to be a bit controversial –hence the stuff about importing, last month.

**Garulus.**

### **From the Editor**

To many people, April is considered the start of the beekeeping season. It could be if there is plenty of forage, however, it has been known to be an extension of winter. The forecast for March is not good but with plenty of moisture in the ground, we could see an abundance of blossom in April catching many people out with shortage of equipment. You will of course, have carried out your of Varroa treatment, if not, do it now.

At the time of writing, early March, the weather is changeable

I joined the Berkshire beekeepers association in 1937, the county adviser, Bugs Berkeley, in those days worked from Reading, I not know what happened to him, I lost track of him at the beginning of World War 2. Major Berkeley was followed by Mrs. Jerome, not a patch on Major Berkeley or George Hawthorne. I was a member of the newly formed Wokingham branch when the Federation came into being, in those early years I received a lot of help and advice, some good and some poor. It was then my turn to help others, time has now turned full circle and now I have to rely upon others for lifting, even for relatively light equipment.

RFC

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

Dr. Beulah Cullen. Hillingdon, Middlesex. Fax/Telephone number 01895 810469

South Eastern Region:- Mr. James Morton Fax/Telephone number 020 8571 6450

### **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

As a part of our winter programme on 20th February, Reading and District beekeepers Association visited Rowse Honey in Wallingford where we were able to tour their sophisticated operation which has become one of the "big two" in retail honeys. The 'rival' Gales has recently been sold by Nestle and is now owned by Standard Brands who also sell honey under the Hartley and Chivers labels. All of this in the lifetime of the late Tony Rowse who started packing and selling honey at his home just after the war in much the same way our members may do.

As well as the tour we were able to glean valuable information including the startling news of likely EC legislation where labelling of any honey produced from a crop which may possibly be subject to genetic modification will have to show this on the label irrespective if the farmer planted GM seed or not! This will almost certainly have implications for honey that we as beekeepers sell.

Sunday April 13th is the first of our summer programme. We are meeting at 11.30 at Peter Kimber's house at Conisboro Avenue Caversham. If you haven't seen Peter's Gazebo style bee house where the bees rocket-up to clear the hundred foot trees, you'll not want to miss it!

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

## **SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY** **Incorporating Windsor, Maidenhead and adjoining communities.**

After the success of the Annual Dinner in January, we were able to welcome our February speaker with a wonderful turnout. We heard Robin Dartington describe the benefits of the Long Deep Hive, which he illustrated with a slide show as well. It is a formula that is successfully used in several parts of the world and has great potential for those that find lifting heavy supers etc a little too much. For those DIY'ers amongst us, there is now a copy of the booklet giving directions on making a hive like this in the library. They can also be purchased ready made from Robin. The whole concept was favourably received and afterwards we were invited to inspect the equipment that Robin had brought along with him.

The last winter meeting this season will be on the 8<sup>th</sup> April, when we will be welcoming the new Bee Disease Inspector for our area. This will be at the usual time of 8pm, at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor. Do come along to meet this very important member of the bee-keeping fraternity, when we shall no doubt hear more news on the various diseases and pests that are around at the moment.

Don't forget that the apiary inspections will have started on Sunday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> March this year and will continue at two weekly intervals, at 3pm at the Society's apiary in Fulmer. For directions, call the Apiary Supervisor, Jim Cooper on 01628 783228, or myself as below. The April meetings are scheduled for the Sundays of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. In May they will be on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Do try to support and assist those who attend regularly.

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

Our February meeting encouraged some 16 Members & Friends (including a sprinkling from Reading) to come along to hear Dr. Keith-Lucas speak on Pollen.

A fascinating subject, with an insight into how plants have developed to encourage efficient distribution of their valued pollen by bees and other insects. Often resorting to underhand tricks!

It was also pointed out that the outer shell of pollen is the toughest "anti-decay" material known.

A fortune awaits the person who can reproduce it for clothing in the future.  
Indestructible, absorbs ultra-violet light, stretchable and water repellent.

One last thing – All you bumblebees out there, take it from me – "Lime Pollen Can Seriously Damage Your Health". Learn from your honeybee friends.

## **Bee-book of the Month**

The beginning of spring! At last we can get out on a sunny day, enjoy our gardens, and have a look at our bees, which, with any luck are showing signs of having survived the winter. Out in the

garden, we'll probably notice one or two fat black bumblebees buzzing busily among the early willow catkins and flowers. As beekeepers, we know all there is to know (???) about honeybees, but few of us have much idea of the way bumblebees live. In our library, we have a most informative little book - "The Life of the Bumblebee" by Dr D.V.Alford.

There are many similarities between the honeybee and the bumblebee including the imperative need for the rearing, feeding and over wintering of successive generations, but the ways the two types of insect do it differ in significant and surprising ways.

For instance, the earliest bumble bees we see are queens looking for food and for suitable places on the ground in which to make a nest. It is only the mated queen who hibernates and she starts the new colony in the spring on her own. She lines a cavity with moss, leaves, and strengthens it with nectar. She makes a little pile of pollen and lays eight to sixteen eggs close to it so that the larvae have a supply of food. She incubates the eggs herself. The first bees to hatch out are all workers. Drones are laid later, towards the end of the season, and their presence prompts the nurse bees into rearing queens who go off after mating to find a suitable place to hibernate and start the cycle all over again.

The book is full of surprises like these. It is fascinating and of interest to all of us who care about insects.

Secretary John Edwards. [ejedwards@btinternet.com](mailto:ejedwards@btinternet.com) 0118 934 0238

**Newsletter "Deadline": - - Contributions**, this includes **E-mails**, to arrive with the Editor by the **FIRST POST** (Around 10.00am) on the First of the Month for the Following Month

To enable the Advertisement Manager to place adverts with the Editor for the 1<sup>st</sup> 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

Honey for sale, surplus to requirement in 30lb containers at £1.25 / lb Telephone. 0118 9479450