



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

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NEWS

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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

Spring Convention Stoneleigh

FROM THE EDITOR

Response to "News-on-the-Net" (beedata.com) is encouraging but we still have much to learn. This issue of the FBBKA newsletter will get a link added in the BeeData News & Events page, so it will be easier to find current news.

While we are pleased to receive contributions from any one by letter or by Internet, anonymous letters will be ignored, as will be e-mails that do not include a name or source.

Reports from other parts of the country give much the same picture as our own area, the odd colony within an apiary giving an excellent crop with the remainder poor and even short of stores. Colonies that we know about that have been treated for EFB and put on new foundation seem to have bucked the trend and have given very good crops.

Many colonies are using up their stores at such a rate that further feeding will be necessary, a block of fondant can be used but apply it over a queen excluder to avoid it "flowing" down between the combs.

Some of our readers have had problems with wasps this year. Strong colonies have been robbed and wiped out, one case was independently observed and was reported at a recent meeting. It was pointed out to me that wasps collect other insects, mainly flies for their brood; this year, in some areas, there were few flies and little nectar, even on the ivy so the wasps turned to bees, which were more plentiful.

At our Annual Convention, our two speakers generated great interest. First Phillip Denwood told us about the work of the Bee Breeders Association. With the amount of international effort taking place to breed bees that suit individual geographical locations and climates, there is little risk of the world being swamped by a single breed of super bee. It was also interesting to hear that BIBBA are not yet contemplating getting involved with Genetic Modification. Peter Riley of Friends of the Earth scared the pants off us on that very subject. The global nature of GM development means that there appears to be little chance of stopping it. It was interesting to hear that FOE appear to be changing their approach to one of attempting to develop the safest forms of trial protocols, despite some recent dirty tricks by the multinationals. All strength to their elbows!

Thank you Philip and, particularly, Peter who managed to keep a full hall riveted for three-quarters of an hour without the benefit of a single visual aid.

RFC

THE APIARY IN DECEMBER

As far as beekeeping is concerned, December is a quiet month. A time to reflect on the past season, a time to read our hive records and maybe think how we could have done better. If you don't already keep hive records I strongly advise you do so next year. Even if you have only one or two hives, they may prove a great help in not repeating past mistakes.

If boxes and frames are stored in cold conditions, the wax and propolis will be easier to remove. I cut out the old comb from the frames I removed from my hives earlier in the year. This is most easily accomplished by removing the top wedge and one of the bottom bars and sliding a knife down each side bar. If the frame has been assembled correctly originally, it will be quite easy to remove these items. I boil my collection of empty frames in my Burco boiler filled with rainwater and a good squirt of non-perfumed washing up liquid. This puts paid to any lurking wax moth and cleans the channel in the sidebars nicely. When you have completed this job and have allowed the boiler to cool down, remove the floating wax and empty the water. Refill with fresh water and washing up liquid, bring to the boil and empty through the tap to remove residues of wax in the tap. You will be unable to use the tap again unless you clean its mechanism thoroughly. Although I am by no means a carpenter, I made most of my equipment in the winter and I found the task most enjoyable, but if you feel that this is not for you, a visit to Thornes at Windsor can be most rewarding.

Check your hives from time to time in the cold winter months. If it has snowed, make sure the entrance is not blocked by snow. Its always reassuring to see a small area of melted snow on the roof, letting you know your bees are still 'alive and kicking.' If you have bees at out apiaries, check more frequently to ascertain that the roof is secure and that the hive has not been knocked over by cattle or vandals.

Quite a number of people possess computers these days so it is quite possible to design and print your own coloured honey labels. Self-adhesive label blanks mounted on A4 size paper and are readily available. However, there are a few rules laid down on size of printing and positioning. The label must be clear, legible, and indelible, and include the full name and address of the producer, packer, or seller. For your guidance, the BBKA has issued an 8 page Advisory Leaflet number 103, setting out the recommendations required by law. This can be obtained from: - The British Beekeepers Association, National Agriculture Centre, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire, CV8 2LZ.

Enjoy your Christmas among friends and family and look forward to a bumper honey crop next year.

Ambrosia

The Ghost of Christmas Present.

I don't know how you found this year, but I had about the most absorbing year's beekeeping I can remember in 30 years. Perhaps that is because I have had more time to devote to it. In short, despite finding EFB in both of my apiaries, my bees produced the finest crop of honey I have ever had –one hive giving 11 supers. So they all went into winter in fine fettle and I am making plans to do better next year.

I wish I could say the same about the Federation half of Berkshire beekeeping.

Put simply, our numbers are still slowly declining and it is proving virtually impossible to get people to help organise things. Most of us are busy people and can easily find too much to do elsewhere when our Association is looking for help. I find it difficult to accept this argument! If you care for the craft and all that it stands for, you can find time to further it!

SO! What can we all do and still find time for less interesting things?

- **Those of you who have NEVER been to an Association meeting** (and are only in it for the insurance). Try coming along to just one meeting. You won't be forced to do anything you don't want to and you may learn something and even enjoy yourself. Nobody will make sarcastic remarks about having never seen you before. Others PLEASE NOTE.
- **Those of you who come regularly.** Don't shy away when you are asked to do something to keep things going. Don't accept any old job, but do make sure the job is at a level that you can accommodate. Most require less effort than you think.
- **Association Officers.** Try breaking down the jobs into smaller units so that those who do them don't feel that they have millstones round their necks. When a new beekeeper volunteers don't lumber him with a job, which is so onerous as to stifle all of his enthusiasm. I've seen a bit of that recently.
- **All of you older members who have seen it all and done it all.** Times are changing. Many of the aspects of Association procedure, which worked well with 80 members and a strong committee, may have to be put on one side until that situation is restored. Maybe you've been putting off some serious re-organisation.
- **All of you men.** Realise that more ladies are coming into the craft. They have different aspirations to yours, particularly on the social side of things. Accommodate them and encourage them.
- **Experienced beekeepers.** Be a godmother to a beginner for his first two years. Help him through the rough bits. Remember how you sweated during the first years.
- **Everyone,** particularly the older ones. Just down the road from you is someone with a big garden who has retired early. He is sick of the stress of working for someone else, but still wants to do something challenging and worthwhile which keeps him out from under his wife's feet. What better than beekeeping? At this level it makes a wonderful one-man business and he probably has skills that the Association can use. Buy him a pint and sign him up for one of George Butler's courses!
- **Everyone,** particularly the younger ones. Take one of the BBKA starter schools training packs down to your local school and help them to get a training programme going. These kids are the future of the craft; kindle their interest now.

I think I've made my point by now. The furtherance of your beekeeping, your Association, and everything beyond it, all the way up to the BBKA, is up to YOU and nobody else. Just taking on one of the above will make a tremendous difference.

May I wish you all a very happy Christmas and, if you are the sort that makes New Year resolutions, don't include any of the above. So few resolutions are ever kept and we need something much more positive!

Bernhard Schumann, Federation Chairman.

BERKSHIRE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE - INTERMEDIATE COURSE.

- Having trouble with excessive, unexplained, swarming?
- What do you do with a colony that has suddenly turned very bad tempered?
- You have never tried to breed your own queens.
- Recognising disease.
- How to choose the strain of bee that suits your method of beekeeping.

These topics are just a few that will be covered on the intermediate beekeeping course at Burchetts Green College of Agriculture. Commences Monday evening, 7.30 - 9.30 19th of February 2001 for a total of 6 evenings. Ring the college and request a brochure 01628 824444 or contact the Tutor, George Butler, on 01189 83 2735.

DISEASE

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

The Editor has cartons and pre-paid labels for sending complete combs to the National Bee Unit. He can also provide plastic containers to send suspect larvae for examination or, on application; one of the inspectors will send a box or plastic container. Secretaries also have plastic containers.

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

The last meeting at the time of writing was the review of the year, which was rather disappointingly attended. Those who were present had quite a variety of tales to tell about their year and the most worrying outcome was the apparent increase of diseases being found in the district, in particular, EFB. After the experience at our own apiary and the disease sweep carried out by Beulah Cullen as part of the summer programme, it seems that this is prevalent in most apiaries and therefore we would be well advised to be vigilant for other problems apart from Varroa.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, the 12th December, when Tony Vetta will be visiting us to talk about his bats. Hopefully, we will learn much more about these fascinating creatures of the twilight, so we look forward to seeing you all there for 8 o'clock, at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor. Some festive fare will be served afterwards.

We wish all our members a Happy Christmas and New Year, and hope to see many more of you at the meetings next year, kicking off on the 9th of January. The order of the programmed events for next year has not yet been finalised but will follow with the next newsletter.

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

The new programme of winter meetings started with a visit to The Museum of English Rural Life at Reading University on 11th October. By arrangement with the curator, we were treated to a visit to the store where articles not displayed in the public area are kept. A group of nine, (eight from Wokingham BKA and Ted Conway from Reading BKA), gathered in the foyer and we were then lead through a corridor lined with huge tomes of the records of obscure societies and Government Departments. Then into the store where we were left to our own devices having been warned to be careful with the objects as some of them are very old and fragile. It was really interesting to see the old fashioned hives which were beautifully made but found to be impractical in use. There were lots of little gadgets and home-made things to examine. The time passed all too quickly and almost before we had seen everything, it was time to go. A big thank you to Rosemary Bayliss for organising this event which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.

The Federation Show on 21st October was a great success with two interesting speakers and a reasonable amount of entries in the various classes. We offer our congratulations to Robin Roberts who won four trophies and to Steve Dexter who won two. It would be good to see a few more people entering the Show next year.

Don't miss the meeting on December 13th, which will be about making mead. Why not bring along some mince pies or other seasonal fare to have with our tea.

Hon. Secretary: Derek Porter 0118 979 0326

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION

Our AGM took place on 18th October with 21 members being present. A vacancy on the committee was filled by John Belcher and all officers re-elected with the exception of our Chairman Anne Arlidge. Anne's 3-year term of office had ended but despite much arm twisting no nomination could be obtained to fill the post of Chairman. To allow The AGM to continue Anne agreed to chair the meeting for the rest of the evening. The item on the agenda as to whether our association retained its BBKA membership was handled deftly by the chairman when the decision was made to retain membership for one more year and the matter to be reconsidered at our next AGM.

Our next meeting will take place on Wednesday 20th December. A social get together with traditional Christmas fare will be followed by our non beekeeping evening when Nigel Snell will talk and show slides on the re-introduction of red kites in Oxfordshire

Hon. Secretary:- George Butler 0118 983 2735

READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Many of our hives are infected by disease, but we may not be aware of this, as the house bees can clear out the infected cells before it is noticed, in doing so they spread the infection throughout the hive. The micro-organism of EFB (Streptococcus Pluton) quickly fills the mid-gut of the young larvae and prevents the absorption of food. Thus, the larvae are literally starved to death. The overall performance of the colony is affected, it becomes weak, and the honey crop is reduced or non-existent. The remedy is free and available. Learn the early signs to look for, by joining an Apiary tour conducted by Beulah Cullen. We arranged one of these tours this year, but there was a poor response and it was cancelled. Don't let this happen next year.

Our first winter meeting was a real cracker! We were entertained by bee farmer Mr J Hamer. He brought with him a super that had not been furnished with frames, so the bees had filled it with wild comb. He then removed the combs, cut them into suitable ½ lb. blocks and fitted them into cut comb containers ready for sale. He dealt with the remaining pieces of comb by slicing them up into smaller pieces and spinning them with a domestic spin dryer he had modified for his purpose. The end result was run honey free from wax and a pile of quite dry wax. He explained every action in detail as he proceeded.

Our Christmas meeting on Thursday December 14th will be held at the Wesley Room at the Caversham Heights Methodist Church. The speaker will be Mr Alan Copeland. He is going to describe some of the interesting sights in and around Reading. His talk will be non- beekeeping, so bring along spouses and friends. There will be mince pies etc. afterwards. This promises to be a very enjoyable evening, so I hope many of you will be able to join us.

Sec. Mrs E Granados 4 Portway, Riseley, Reading.RG7 1SQ 0118 988 4790

£ 7.50 More notes from the BBKA open forum.

The open forums are there to let ANY member "talk" to the BBKA and to discuss matters of interest. Lively discussions result, this cannot occur in the formal atmosphere of the Annual Delegate Meeting. An example of this was the Executive's concern about the small numbers and poor quality of propositions last year. The resulting discussion centred on ways of shortening the time-scale for proposition submission and how we might discuss and agree approaches with other counties in advance. Email was much favoured for this work.

Other new developments were:

6. BBKA are developing a syllabus and guidance for Associations wishing to start formal basic training for new beekeepers. In Berks. where we have the benefit of George Butler, it's easy to forget that the vast majority of other counties are left to their own resources. Why don't we maintain our benefits by taking up more of his intermediate and queen rearing courses? This means YOU!

7. BBKA has started a trading company called BBKA Enterprises. This DOES NOT mean that you will be showered with junk mail with the BBKA trying to sell you things. At the moment, the BBKA has to pay VAT on your subscriptions. As a limited company, they will be part of its income and VAT will be recoverable. They will similarly save on everything else they buy, with our money! This will help to keep the subscription down.

8. BBKA has discovered that, UNLIKE Berks, many Associations don't (for reasons that mystify me) pass on copies of the BBKA news to individual members. BBKA want to send your newsletter direct to you but would have to charge you £1 per year for it (through an increased sub.). There is an estimated saving of 70p on Association mailing so the real cost is 30p per year. Another problem is that to do this BBKA will have to be given the names and addresses of all individual members. This is something most Associations have avoided doing despite the fact that it is mandatory under BBKA rules. - **Note:** The Berkshire Federation Newsletter is limited in size, not only to keep costs down in the Newsletter itself, but also to keep postage within bounds when there are enclosures, therefore there would be no saving on the majority of our mailings. - It is anticipated that there will be hot discussion on this at Association and at Federation level in the near future. Nothing gets people going quite so much as a demand for an extra 30p a year PLUS an "unwarrantable intrusion into their privacy". Make sure you have your say --preferably on the side of common sense.

9. BBKA is pressing ahead with the proposition (Devon, 2000 ADM.) for health inspection certificates for all colonies and nuclei offered for sale. MAFF. and the disease inspectors are willing - in return for a small fee. Before you start ranting on about the dubious value of a certificate, which states that a colony only APPEARS to be free from disease, remember that a start needs to be made somewhere. Also, remember that last month I told you about the cost/benefit study that is to be done on the NBU in the very near future. If they can demonstrate potential extra sources of income, it may help them assure their continued existence. If you must oppose it, wait until it is up and running and then look for provable objections.

Bernhard Schumann, Annual Delegate.

"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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