



**FEDERATION OF
BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS**
President: Miss Margery Cooper

December 2001
Number 549

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

19 th February 2002	Federation Annual General Meeting	
27 th April 2002	Stoneleigh 2002	

THE APIARY IN DECEMBER

In the cold month of December we think of gathering around the fire, having parties and visiting friends and relatives, and perhaps have little thought for our bees out there in the cold. They are by no means asleep. The Queen begins her duty of providing the next generation for the busy months of the spring and summer. Yes, she starts laying in January. Although outside it might be freezing, her offspring will raise the temperature around the brood nest to 95°F 35°C in order to keep the brood alive. They do this by consuming enormous amounts of honey, and honey being an, energy' food, the bees, by movement, are able to convert the resulting energy, by metabolism into warmth. Moreover they will not defecate in their home, but can store their waste products for up to three weeks, and when the outside temperature goes above 45°F they will make a cleansing flight to empty their bowels, with I expect, a great sigh of relief!

At a meeting recently I was asked to explain Granulation and its properties but at the time I felt my explanation was somewhat inadequate. Consequently, I looked up this complex subject to refresh my memory. Let us suppose sugar is continually added to water, there will come a time when no more sugar will dissolve, it is then known as a saturated solution. If the temperature is raised, then more sugar can be dissolved in it. As the temperature is lowered but before the sugar begins to crystallize out again, then the solution contains more sugar than it would do at the **Saturation point**. It is then said to be supersaturated.

Honey is a very complex product; moreover it is supersaturated sugar solution. It contains some water; the bees having considerable reduced this, thus making it highly supersaturated. It contains Glucose, Fructose, other sugars and substances. Some honeys granulate, (crystallize i.e. form crystals), more readily than others. Glucose is less soluble in a liquid than Fructose therefore it is the Glucose which crystallizes out in most honeys and brings the solution back to the saturation point.

Oil seed rape, Raspberry etc granulate very quickly as they contain a greater percentage of Glucose than Fructose. Other factors have a bearing on the rate of granulation, such as the honey's viscosity. A high viscosity will slow down the rate of its granulation, as the crystals will travel more slowly. If the honey is placed in the freezer, the process of granulation can be slowed, as the lower temperature increases the honey's viscosity. Unfortunately when this finally granulates it will have a coarse grain. Conversely some beekeepers warm their honey before extracting or bottling so that it pours quicker.

It has been found that if honey granulates slowly, the resulting crystals are coarse, but if it granulates quickly, its crystals are fine. I make use of this property by mixing liquid summer honey with the bland OSR partially granulated honey, which produces a fine-grained textured, soft set, honey.

This will be my last offering as I find I myself repeating past publications. I have enjoyed writing about my hobby and I hope I have been a help to some of you. Get involved in beekeeping enjoy your hobby and may your supers be full.

Happy Christmas.

Ambrosia

FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE

Our Federation Event and Honey Show on 20th October was a great success with two interesting speakers Ged Marshall and Clare Waring and a honey show of a good standard although down on the number of entries It was good that the trophies and cups were distributed to some different beekeepers in the associations Our thanks go to all the small "hardcore" of helpers However the bad news is that your officers cannot recommend to the Federation members that an event and honey show in its present form should be organised for October 2002. This is mainly due to our small band of hardworking, some elderly, members declining to the point where your show secretary had to seek help from her friends in the W.I. in order to keep the honey show running due to the lack of volunteers to act as stewards.

Our treasurer has pointed out that it costs nearly £300 to run this annual event. How can it be justified when less than £100 has been taken from tickets sold? It means therefore that every association member has subsidised the event in excess of £1.00 and those that bought tickets by £4.00. Our treasurer also saw red when at 6.00pm on the day of the show, he found an elderly helper shifting heavy wooden tables on his own, down a steep flight of stairs.

This gentleman had received a major heart by-pass not that long ago. It is therefore the old story "If you don't use it you will lose it". Perhaps all our bee-keeping colleagues will re-think their commitments in view of the precipitous position of two of the "Berkshire" associations Reading and South Chilterns as regard to volunteers to run the committee, no association can function without officers.

I have received two VRT kits from the Central science laboratory, would there be any beekeepers in the Berkshire area who would be interested in using the kits. If you are interested please phone me so I can get the kits to you.

Last but not least if you were not able to attend the Berkshire show you missed me sporting some very interesting hair ask someone who was there!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Sandra Napper

The Trophy Winners List is on Page Eight.

Letter to the Federation

Enthusiasts, Volunteers, Where are You?

Increasingly in recent years those of us who care for the quality of our Beekeeping Associations have noticed a troubling tendency for members (and their spouses) to avoid serving in positions of responsibility in their Associations. This unfortunate trend is usually claimed to be due to inability to find the little extra time needed to serve as Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer or even as a committee person.

May I assure these 'reluctant' beekeepers that the pleasure and benefits gained from serving as an elected officer are very considerable and well worth sharing with those who have gone before. **But, what is to happen when all willingness to serve has disappeared?**

Either a few stalwart members struggle to carry an unfair burden, or their Association ceases to exist. Such demise has already afflicted the Maidenhead Association and is now threatening all others in the Federation. Is the fall of local beekeeping associations at hand, or is it merely that we have too many conflicting interests and too much general anxiety in today's troubled world?

Enthusiasm is a precious attribute in most of life's activities: let us hope that enthusiasm for our craft has not left us entirely at the start of the 21st century.

Donald Thomson

REMEMBER: There will be no January Newsletter!!!

FROM THE EDITOR

"The leaves so brown come tumbling down – in September", so went the song, this seems to be no longer true, there was plenty of rain in September and October was the wettest on record. The 31st October, a fine day and the trees are still holding their leaves, wasps are still in evidence and the bees are still working the ivy. Most brood chambers are heavy; this must be watched in the spring, as there may not be room for the queen to lay. Some small stocks or nuclei have not stored so well these will require a cake of fondant or candy.

Those who did not attend the Federation Event missed some interesting talks, Claire Waring's was of general interest as was Ged Marshall's, the latter's was of particular interest to the up and coming beekeeper who wishes to expand his/her operations.

The Federation Annual General Meeting is again almost upon us, (February 19th 2002); it is time to appoint a General Secretary, an Editor and a Treasurer. This time we also have to elect a Chairman; Bernhard Schumann retires in rotation, nominations or volunteers are invited. This is a General meeting, which means that anyone who is a member of a Federation association is entitled to attend and give some input.

RFC

BEE INVOLVED Follow Manufacturers instructions implicitly – do not under-dose

Why not borrow the very instructive Apitherapy disk from your Association library, it is interesting to children and adults alike, you might even purchase your own copy!

The Newsletter can be sent by e-mail by the first of the month, requests for this service should be through your Association Secretary thereby saving your Association postage. Contributions or photographs for the Newsletter can be sent by e-mail but the name of the sender must be included but need not be published. berksbees@lineone.net Editor

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

This piece of equipment, otherwise known as a melting tray or a Pratley Tray, is one of the most useful that a beekeeper can have. It can perform some useful tasks but there are certain things to bear in mind when choosing one and also when using one.

The trays are available in various sizes so it is important to buy one that suits the amount of honey and wax that you need to process. For someone with one to four hives, a small size is sufficient. If one has a lot more hives, then a larger size is well worth the extra cost.

Nowadays, all melting trays are made of stainless steel but the early ones were of tin. Unless a tray made of tin is in very good condition, it is best to acquire a modern one. They come with a kettle-heating element and some have a thermostatic control. The larger tray can take a long time to heat up so I always fill mine up with hot water from the tap. I have also fitted a second element, which considerably speeds up the heating. Once the water is up to temperature, one element can be turned off and the other keeps the water at just the right temperature.

The main use of a melting tray is to melt down granulated combs. With so much oil seed rape honey about nowadays, quite often one is left with supers full of combs that are either fully granulated or have a high proportion of solid honey. Without a melting tray, this honey cannot be used which could represent a considerable loss. Another use is to render down old brood combs, which can contain a fair amount of honey and wax. I do not advise melting old blackened combs with no honey in them as they produce a lot of disgusting looking, if completely harmless, slum gum which then has to be disposed of.

An important point to remember when setting up a melting tray is that even a small model will be quite heavy when full of water. It is therefore wise to set it on a strong and stable base. I use a Black and Decker Workmate as this has a wide top and the tray is at a height which gives a comfortable working position. It also means that you can position the receptacle under the spout to catch the honey and wax as it issues. A most important piece of equipment that is not supplied by the manufacturers is a good bung. I use a cork from a champagne bottle as these are of sufficient diameter to fit the spout without the risk of leaks. A certain amount of trimming may be needed to get a good fit but once you have a bung that you are happy with, guard it with your life!

Place the tray on two slats of wood about 25-30mm placed at each end. This is to prevent the bottom of the water jacket damaging the Workmate but also to allow the spout end to be raised or lowered by turning the slat through 90 degrees. The reason for this is to slow down the flow of the slum-gum so that it can be pushed up the slope away from the melted honey and wax. Eventually, the slum-gum is free, or as free as possible, from useful liquids and can then be removed. To do this, use a paint scraper (which obviously must never have been used for its true purpose) with a blunt edge to the blade to avoid scratching the tray and transfer the rubbish into a newspaper. Care must be taken to use a glove on the hand, which holds the paper, or have several thicknesses of paper, as the slum-gum will be very hot. It will also contain some honey and wax, which always finds its way out and runs down your fingers.

The natural reaction to the sudden surge in heat is to either add some more heat to the proceedings by way of some ill-chosen words or to drop the lot back onto the tray from where it has to be retrieved and the process repeated. The other alternative is drop the lot on the floor and tread it around over a wide area. This is definitely not recommended if you are brave enough to be doing the melting in the kitchen.

Once you have started melting a lot of combs you have to finish and this entails running the honey and wax into suitable receptacles. A good supply is important so that once one is full you can start on another. For most melting sessions, I use ice cream tubs as they are strong and have tight fitting lids. If I have a whole day session, then I use 30lb buckets as they take a super's worth of honey and wax. During a long melting session, the level of water will drop due to evaporation. It is therefore wise to keep topping it up with a kettle of boiling water so that the temperature of the tray does not drop. This will keep the honey flowing and the wax molten.

There are two golden rules with filling the tubs or buckets. The first is to never leave the tray to its own devices. As soon as you have turned your back, you will be distracted by something, forget all about the honey until you suddenly remember, dash back only to find that there is a lovely stream of golden liquid spreading over the floor with the wax hardening like lava as it goes. There is nothing as silent as honey overflowing. So make sure the bung is to hand and stop the flow from the tray well before it reaches the top of the receptacle. The second rule is to make sure you have a level surface onto which you can move the full tubs, and there must be no obstacles between the spout and where the tub will be placed that could possibly cause you to drop the tub. The utmost care must be used in moving a tub full of hot honey with molten wax on the top. There is nothing to compare with the mess that ensues if you drop such a tub. For this reason, the lid should always be fitted to give the tub a certain amount of rigidity and again, gloves should be worn in case the heat causes panic to set in.

Assuming you have accomplished all the melting and managed to get the tubs safely placed, leave them to cool overnight. By the morning, the wax will have solidified into a delightfully yellow cake on top with any remaining debris adhering underneath. The honey can then be run off, after carefully lifting a corner of the wax, into a honey bucket with a tap from where it can be bottled with a final filter if needed. The melting tray can then be used to melt all the cakes of wax from the tubs. With care, the resulting wax will be very clean but will need a final filtering if you want to use it for candles or showing. If you intend to trade the wax, do try to remove as much of the debris as possible before taking it to the dealer.

When you have finished the work, turn the element off and leave the tray to cool. Do not attempt to move the tray when it is full of boiling water. A nasty accident will surely result. With a stainless steel tray, the water can be left in it, as no rusting will occur. A tin tray should always be emptied and left to dry before being stored away.

SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION

I write these notes as your non-secretary. Unfortunately at our AGM we were unable to fill any of the vacant posts, namely, Chairman, Treasurer or Secretary, as a result it was unanimously agreed by the 12 members present that there was no alternative but to either wind up the Association or put the Association on hold until officers are appointed or the Association is closed down. This decision will be ratified or not, at an **Extraordinary General Meeting** which will take place on **Wednesday 5th December**. If you wish to have a say in the future of your Association, please attend.

It was also decided that as our members are fully paid up until the end of the year the winter programme will continue until and including the December meeting which is our Christmas Evening with traditional Christmas fare which follows a talk illustrated with slides by Russel Cherry on 'The Thames – a Journey along the Thames Path from Source to Barrier.

George Butler. 0118 983 2735

Congratulations go to Marcella Skinner for winning the Eric Morris Salver, Natalie Jennings, the Junior Cup also our other winners, Reg Hook and Adrian Stanmore.

READING AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

We had a quiz in October, ably conducted by Matthew Allen of Thornes of Windsor. Mathew brought along some weird and wonderful sundry items with beekeeping connotations, which we were invited to identify. Have you ever seen a hive for solitary bees, or a Roman note pad? Our team managed 7 out of 12 for this section. It was followed with Anagrams, identifying pictures and a number of quotations from short stories. Much light-hearted banter peppered the proceedings .it was great fun.

The Federation family event and honey show, also in October, was not very well attended this year, but despite this was very entertaining and enjoyable. High-class speakers Claire Waring gave an insight into beekeeping in Nepal, and bee farmer Ged Marshall told us how he runs his 400 hives successfully to provide him with a living. Reading's newcomer John Davey is to be highly congratulated for scooping our silver ware.

Our Christmas meeting will be on the 13th of December, where we welcome Mr. Nigel Snell to talk to us about Red Kites in Oxfordshire. Mince pies etc will be provided by our members. As you will see in our program, we will not have a meeting in January, so February 14th George Hawthorne will tell us about his life with bees and on March 7th we will have our Flood memorial lecture. Hope to see you all at both meetings.

Have a great Christmas with family and friends and happy beekeeping

I have just heard that an old and valued Reading member Jack Grattan has passed away. We extend our sympathies to his family for their great loss.

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

SLOUGH AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS' SOCIETY

Our Honey Show in October was a resounding success yet again, as we saw the 65 exhibits from 15 entrants judged in front of us. We were entertained as well with various anecdotes and very helpful tips for showing. The tables were turned this year when John Ashby was successful in winning no less than four of the cups on offer, the other two being awarded to Bridget Way and Bernhard Schumann.

Our sincere thanks go to Bernhard for his efforts in organising and staging this event for us again and to those who helped out on the night. Not least, though, our thanks go to all those members who went to the trouble of preparing and entering the exhibits. Several of the entries were sent on to the Federation Show held just afterwards.

The meeting for December will be on Tuesday the 11th, when we shall be listening to John Furzey, whose talk is entitled ' A Year on the Bee Farm'. This should be another very interesting evening for everyone and we hope you will all join us at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor for an 8'oclock start.

Our meeting in January is to be on Tuesday the 8th, when Matthew Allen from Thornes of Windsor will be in the chair for a quiz on bee keeping. Those of us who have seen Matthew in action before will know that it will be a lively and informative evening, so we look forward to seeing you all there.

Meanwhile, your committee wishes you all a Very Happy Christmas, and Successful New Year.

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

WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Our October meeting featured a talk by Derek Porter entitled *Candle and Polish Making*. Derek demonstrated various techniques for constructing candles including the use of coloured foundation, pouring in glass and silicone moulds and dipping. Care was taken to remove all the air bubbles, thereby eliminating voids in the candles. Derek stressed the need to use a Bain Marie and an electric heater when melting the volatile wax. This is even more important when making polish that incorporates turpentine. Samples of floor polish, furniture cream and cosmetic cold cream were produced for the audience to sample.

The Committee has proposed that subscription fees for next year remain unchanged at £18. This will be confirmed at the AGM and renewal forms will be distributed with this newsletter. The Treasurer looks forward to receiving member's cheques in the near future.

Our December meeting at St Paul's parish Rooms is on Wednesday 12th and will feature a selection of wildlife videos presented by Harry Peace.

Secretary John Edwards.

ejedwards@btinternet.com

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

GET THE BEST DEALS LOCALLY by ringing John Belcher on 0118 984 2321 for the full range of Thornes equipment. Most items are in stock and the rest just a phone call away. Apistan, together with other approved treatments at very competitive prices including the recently released Thymol based products, Apiguard, and Thymovar. Rendered beeswax in exchange for foundation.

Free:- To the first person to collect from Henley, a Thornes Mk1 12 frame radial extractor in A1 order. (Why spend £675 on a Mk2 model in SS?)

Also available free: Smith hive deeps, shallows and 14" x 12" extra deep.

01491 574728

Feeding your Bees with Syrup

By now, in the depth of winter, your bees should be furnished with adequate stores, whether they be honey or honey and sugar syrup. Most experts agree that an average hive ought to contain 14 to 16 kg of food at the end of autumn in order to carry the bees through to the spring. There is, of course, no better sustenance for a colony than honey. For this reason, the beekeeper must resist the temptation to take honey from below the queen excluder in July, in a case where the bees occupy a brood-box and a half. Any late honey, from whatever source, is also better left to the bees.

It was probably in the early part of the Nineteenth Century that the concept of feeding bees with sugar syrup emerged. Before then, the beekeeper simply returned some honey to his bees if they were judged to be deficient in stores. Initially, there were some interesting ideas as to what bees would regard as suitable food. WC Cotton, writing in "My Bee Book" in 1842, recommends one pound of sugar dissolved in a quart of ale. Other beekeepers went as far as to suggest using wine to dissolve the sugar. In the event, it was concluded that the bees were quite happy with a syrup made from sugar and water. Nevertheless, many recipes advocated the addition of common salt, whilst vinegar was also frequently added in an effort to invert some of the sugar to glucose, with the objective of preventing re-crystallisation. There also used to be a preference for cane sugar rather than that extracted from sugar beet. Today, your local supermarket invariably sells "pure cane sugar".

Incidentally, beekeepers were allocated a sugar ration during World War II, amounting to 10-20 lb per hive per year. As a result, the writer's father acquired a couple of hives with the idea of obtaining extra sugar — if only life had been that simple!

Any analysis of the suggested recipes for sugar syrup contained within books on beekeeping will reveal a wide diversity of ratios between sugar and water. However, for autumn feed, the writer would suggest dissolving 6 kg of sugar in 2.75 litres of boiling water. Where the beekeeper is left with wet cappings after extraction of the honey crop, these can be washed in hot water, which should be subsequently reheated so as to dissolve as much sugar as the solution will hold. Because the amount of honey left in the wash water will vary widely, the correct amount of sugar will be a matter of trial and error.

There is some argument amongst beekeepers as to whether feeding with syrup in March to April is a useful way of speeding up the expansion of the colony. It is advocated that where this is practised, the syrup should be thinner than the autumn feed. The author quite often resorts to spring feeding if a hive seems especially light in the early part of the year. In this event, he uses syrup at the same strength as the autumn formulation.

C McCombe

**FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATIONS HONEY SHOW
HELD ON 20 th October 2001**

Winners of Trophies

TROPHIES: All Trophies are Perpetual except the Guests Trophy

The Federation Cup	B. Schumann	To the member gaining points in this show.
The Federation Junior Cup	N. Jennings	To the Junior exhibitor gaining most points in classes 27-32
The Maurice Dixon Cup	John Davey	To the gentleman member of the Reading Association gaining most points in this show and in the honey section of the Wokingham and Reading Agricultural Show.
The William Main Cup	Hazel Blackburn	To the lady member of the Reading Association gaining most points in this show and the Wokingham and Reading Agricultural Show.
The Reading Cup	John Davey	To the member of the Reading Association gaining most points in this show and in the honey section of the Wokingham and Reading Agricultural Show.
The Godfrey Nicholson Cup	John Davey	To the best exhibit in the novice classes.
The Frank Napper Bowl	D. Porter	To the Wokingham Association member gaining most points in shows in the Federation.
The Beale Challenge Tankard	D. Porter	To the Wokingham Association Member gaining most points in classes 5,6,7,8 and 11
The Arthur Everest Cup	D. Porter	To the Wokingham Association Member gaining most points in classes 20,21,22, 20a,21a & 22a
The Nonsuch Goblet	D. Porter	To the Wokingham Association Member gaining most points in classes 11,12,,13 and 14
The Wokingham Challenge Cup	D. Porter	To the Wokingham Association Member gaining most points in this show
The Geoffrey Weston Cup	Not Awarded	For the best entry exhibited by a Wokingham Association Novice Member
The Eric Morris Salver	M. Skinner	To the South Chilterns member gaining most points in this show.
The South Chilterns Trophy	Not awarded	To the South Chilterns novice gaining most points in Classes 2 and 3.
The Slough Trophy	B Schumann	To the Slough member gaining most points in the show.
The FBBKA Guests Trophy	Not Awarded	To the guest exhibitor scoring most points at this show.
The Cooper Cake Rose Bowl	No entries	To the non beekeeping member gaining most points in the cookery classes
The George Hawthorne Skop	South Chilterns	To the association winning Class 1.
The BBKA Blue Ribbon	Not Awarded	For the best exhibit in the show.
The BBKA Medal	B. Schumann	To the winner of mos. points in the honey classes (4-9 inclusive).
Entrance Tickets to the National Honey Show	M. Blackburn	Awarded for most points in novice classes