



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

June 2002  
Number 554

## 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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### THE APIARY IN JUNE

As this month is normally the peak of the swarming season, it seems topical to continue with this subject. When you come to think about it, it really is rather extraordinary that a beekeeper can capture a crowd of about 20,000 flying insects without so much as a butterfly net. How is it done?

Whether you realise it or not, you do it by taking advantage of the behaviour patterns inherited by the bees. The process is initiated long before the swarm emerges and includes the production of swarm cells (queen cells started at different times and hence at different stages of development). The swarm usually emerges after the oldest cells are sealed, in fine weather and in the middle of the day.

It used to be thought that the queen led the swarm out but that is not believed now and certainly on the only occasion that I was present when a swarm came out of one of my own hives, at least half of the bees were already flying about before she appeared. She was easy to spot and also to catch because she was marked and clipped.

It seems that the swarm does not have any particular destination in view at the outset so there is a period of rather aimless milling about in a crowd before the bees cluster and give you your chance to capture them. While they are clustered, nearly all the bees are clearly inhibited from flying, as otherwise on a fine day at least half of them would be out foraging in the fields. The exceptions are the scouts searching for the new home; you can sometimes spot them investigating likely places and if it is one of your house air-bricks you would be well advised temporarily to block it off!

When a scout finds a good place it returns and dances on the surface of the swarm with more or less enthusiasm. An enthusiastic dance causes other bees to go and see for themselves and if they agree, they also return and dance, starting even more bees to look at the site. There may be several possible sites but in time (anything from a few minutes to a few days) one becomes favoured by the majority and the bees then go and occupy it.

To take the swarm therefore, you transfer as many bees as possible into your skep or other container and put it down on the ground nearby. This divides the bees into two lots, the lot in the skep and the lot, which were missed, including the ones out scouting at the time. What happens then depends on whether the queen is in the skep or with the other lot. If she is in the skep then the bees outside will soon become unhappy and will join the skep so that by sunset, when flying has finished, every last bee can be removed and hived. If she is not in the skep then the reverse happens and all the bees end up back in the cluster so that the job has to be done all over again.

Since you don't normally see the queen, its entirely a matter of chance where she ends up so that the more of the cluster that you can get into the skep the better is your chance of success. But how is it that the returning scouts do not tempt the swarm away to their preferred new home? Presumably, the process of skepping the swarm, including the bees left outside finding the way in to the skep with much tail-waving and scent production, is sufficiently like the normal process for the bees to be fooled that they have chosen the skep and to settle down peacefully. Which is handy in many ways, not least because it makes the beekeeper look a lot more clever than he is really.

Matrix

## **From The General Secretaries Office -**

Like everyone else I received the latest BBKA News with my May Newsletter, and prominently on page one was the proposed capitation increase from £7.50 to £10.00. If passed this would come into effect from October 2003. (Capitation - The fixed amount paid by each member to the BBKA).

It strikes me that this is an ideal time to revisit the argument "What does the BBKA do for me?"

1. Gives you Public Liability Insurance cover of up to 5 million pounds.
2. Provides Bee Disease Insurance cover via B.D.I. Ltd.
3. Organises a Spring Lecture Convention and Exhibition at Stoneleigh each year which you are encouraged to attend.
4. Organises a BBKA Honey Show as part of The Royal Show at Stoneleigh each July. Your entries are encouraged. (Schedules available from BBKA Headquarters).
5. Arranges Beekeeping Examinations in an effort to increase beekeeping knowledge and expertise.
6. Publishes the BBKA News five times a year (soon to be six) to keep everyone up to date on the latest information and beekeeping topics.
7. Acts as your mouthpiece to government departments and official bodies on all matters relating to beekeeping.
8. Makes available a library of video cassettes, projection slides and audio cassettes on beekeeping and allied subjects. Microscope slides are also available.

All in all still not a bad return for your investment even if it does jump from 14p a week (£7.50) to 19p a week (£10.00).

Your delegate to the BBKA is still Mr. Bernhard Schumann. Through him you have an opportunity to change/influence BBKA policy, if you wish, by putting forward formal propositions for discussion and voting at the Annual Delegates Meeting at Stoneleigh. If you have any questions or propositions please give him a call.

The BBKA is there for you. You are all members.  
Make the most of what it offers and you will certainly get more than your money's worth.

Sandra Napper

## **FROM THE EDITOR**

This season has started with fine weather in early spring, so much so that swarms were reported from as early as mid April. I suspect that many of these were due to brood chambers being congested with the late heavy flow from the ivy last autumn however, April ended with the proverbial showers.

When at Stoneleigh I heard of cases of "Neighbourly Hostilitis", bees placed over flying a footpath and a kindergarten playground and also of bees being placed on land without permission, these were not the only cases. Not only is this sort of action inconsiderate and possibly dangerous, it could result in the sort of adverse publicity that would damage the reputation of our craft. See also the cautionary tale in the Reading contribution.

Some of you have been posed the question "is your honey organic?" indeed one person is reported to have stated that most English honey is organic. For the record a statement taken from "beedata.com" is reproduced below.

## Organic Honey in the UK

Organic Honey is regulated by strict set of guidelines, which covers not only the origin of bees, but also the siting of the apiaries. The standards indicate that the apiaries must be on land that is certified as organic and be such that within a radius of 4 miles from the apiary site, nectar and pollen sources consist essentially of organic crops or uncultivated areas. Also enough distance must be maintained from non agricultural production sources that may lead to contamination, for example from urban centres, motorways, industrial areas, waste dumps, waste incinerators. The 4 miles guideline originates from research done by The National Pollen Research Institute, which is the maximum distance bee's travel from their hives. These strict guidelines mean that it is almost impossible for any UK producer to be certified as organic. Therefore as you pointed out most organic honey is unfortunately imported. Helen Ireland (Information and Supporter Services Officer) Soil Association. More information on the campaign for organic food ([link:http://www.beedata.com/news/organichoney.htm](http://www.beedata.com/news/organichoney.htm))

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

### Appointed Bee Inspectors: -

Mr. Julian Johnston. Oxfordshire & North West Berks: Telephone number 01993 850432

Mr. David Purchase. Hampshire & South West Berkshire: Telephone number 01256 781288

### BEE TOUR 2002 to Provence (La Route des Miels)

At last, ambition realised! This year I was able to obtain a place on Brian Palmer's Bee tour No. 23. These annual visits to European beekeepers have been arranged since the late Seventies by Brian, and James Edwards of Hadlow Agricultural College, Tonbridge, Kent since the late Seventies.

Leaving Hadlow at 6.30am we arrived at our hotel in St. Raphael on the Cote d'Azur at 9.00pm having travelled 1300 km by coach to Paris and then by Train de Grand Vitesse. Forty-four enthusiasts enjoyed two days of sunshine before the weather turned gloomy.

At Grasse, perfume capital of the world (with 40 resident 'noses' of the 230 worldwide) we learned about the 700 constituents of perfumes, and the very great importance of wild flowers, which alone are used by perfumiers. We returned to St Raphael to find our coach (with our heavy baggage) safely travelled from Paris.

The next day at Biot near Cannes we visited a queen rearing business run by Mme Monition. Despite some rain she kindly demonstrated beneath the pines, her excellent methods: a truly remarkable, very knowledgeable and charming beekeeper. That afternoon we coached along narrow roads to our first bee farmer, Rene and Isabelle Celse, deep in typical Provencal countryside in the Massif de Mauve, with 400 Dadant and Langstroth hives producing pollen and several types of honey.

The remaining days were very happily spent in visiting other professional beekeepers at Dragignan, the ancient market at Corguer and its very large Romanesque church, and our final bee farmers, newly married Frederic and Stephanie Monnet. We were always very well received by all hosts and it was a pleasure to see their bees and their enterprises. Buying some of their excellent honeys was a small but important recompense.

All hive floors are now open mesh, as advised by Brussels, and all wax moth control is by low temperature storage. And, yes, you can stroke Buckfast bees.

Any queries welcomed. Donald Thomson

## **READING and DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

As you probably already know, honey imported from China has been banned in this country due to being contaminated with traces of antibiotics. It is to guard against this happening to our honey that the ministry applies such strict rules when they have treated our bees with antibiotics against EFB, by applying a standstill order. The shortage of imported honey in the shops has had a beneficial effect to me personally. I supply a shop in Reading and have found that now they are ordering three or four times more honey from me due to the increased demand from the public. Fingers crossed that this season will be as prolific as last season.

### **Another cautionary tale from the Daily Mail Saturday 4th August 1900**

“At Basingstoke County Court, yesterday, Judge Gye dealt with a case affecting the liability of beekeepers.

John Butler, a wood dealer, sued the village postmaster, Mr Longley for the recovery of part of the value of an old mare which the defendant's bees stung to death, also 10 shillings on account of pain from bee stings suffered by the plaintiff, 10 shillings for the loss of use of part of a field adjoining the postmaster's garden where the plaintiff's labourers could not work owing to the bees, and 20 shillings for extra labour through having to make a hayrick in another position”.

Through our membership of the BBKA we have a Public Liability insurance of up to £5,000,000 in any one incident, a good reason for belonging to an association.

Reg Harper

On Sunday June 16<sup>th</sup> we have a bee meeting at 12:00 midday followed by a barbeque at 1:00pm in the lovely garden of Tim and Hillary Whittaker, Tel 0118 972 3465 spouses are very welcome.

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

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION**

Our first outdoor meeting of 2002 took place at the apiary of Marcella Skinner. On a pleasant beekeeping day our President George Hawthorne, who did his usual no-fuss competent examination of Marcella's three hives, including marking and clipping queens and general colony assessment, did the honours. A reporter from B.B.C. Radio Berkshire was present and an interesting report went out on air the following day with good publicity for South Chilterns. The reporter got a few facts wrong when the opening of the programme started with an announcement “Berkshire Beekeepers fear that their colonies will be devastated by an invasion of the Varroa mite which has come from China!” I think he mixed up Chinese honey imports with Varroa. The programme was accompanied by background music of Arthur Askey singing his ‘busy bee ‘song!

The June meeting will be held at 2.30 pm on JUNE 15 at EDDY LOCK'S APIARY in STONOR

The apiary is sited at White Pond Farm, Balhams Lane, Stonor, (OS reference 734902). The apiary is approximately 700 yards from the road and there is vehicular access in dry conditions but wellingtons are recommended if it is wet.

Secretary: Brian Carter. 01491 680226

## Wokingham & District Beekeepers Association

Our June visit to a member's apiary is planned for 3.00pm on **Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> June** where we will inspect Derek Porter's hives at Park Farm, Hurst. Members should phone 0118 979 0326 to declare an interest in attending.

The programme of meetings for the coming winter has now been finalised and members should have received their booklets. Any members without a booklet should contact the Secretary.

### Rosemary's Books of the Month – **Books for Beginners**

There isn't a gentle, gradual introduction to beekeeping: you either keep bees or you don't, so you need the answers to all sorts of questions right from the word go.

You can go to demonstrations and courses and so on where you will get practical advice, but you really need to take time to consolidate your new knowledge and to understand what you are trying to do, and this is where the introductory guidebooks come in. Sit down and read two or three before you go near your own bees.

There are many books in our library that novices will find useful — I've picked out three:

'*Introducing Beekeeping - a book for the Novice*' by H J Wadey. It is described as 'War—time Production' which makes it about 60 years old. Our way of life may have changed since then, but bees haven't and this compact little hook is clear and precise and interesting to read. Unfortunately it doesn't have an index, so it's not that easy to pinpoint the answer to a particular question, but it gives a good overall view of beekeeping. Move on to 1972 and Robert Couston's '*Principles of Practical Beekeeping*'. It is a comprehensive guide, with a lot of information on subjects like queen-rearing, moving bees or dealing with the honey crop, which probably will not be a beginner's chief concern. However its opening chapters on how a hive works and what equipment you need, and its chapters on management are very good reading for all beekeepers.

'*Beekeeping for Beginners*' by Andrew Richards came out in 1991. It is intended to be a straightforward, no-nonsense practical guide. It covers the basics clearly and offers a sound introduction to beekeeping — and it gives an idea of how much time and money the hobby will need. The text is well set out with key words in bold type to catch your eye. There are good photos and drawings. It gets down to fundamental things like how to get hold of your stock or how to put a frame together. There are some good pages on swarm control and how to find the queen. Well worth looking at before you get going.

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

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

The speaker for the final winter meeting had to be changed at short notice, so our local Bee Disease Inspector Beulah Cullen kindly stepped into the breach, bringing forward her talk about resistant Varroa from the original December slot. It proved to be timelier at the start of the season, serving as a reminder to be ever on the watch out for signs of all the diseases. We were urged to be diligent regarding the use of the Varroa treatments available at present to help slow the spread of the resistant mites. It seems that even with correct treatment, a few can survive to multiply, so the spread of these mites needs to be monitored closely. A recent newsletter carried details of how to check for resistant Varroa and we were all urged to carry this out as soon as possible and report back.

Our first apiary meetings in April were well attended, but we found that for the first time in the memory of those present, woodpeckers had attacked over the winter with devastating results. One hive was completely wrecked where the bird had got right inside and damaged some combs as well. The others had varying amounts of damage to the outside.

Some members present reported that early swarms had been emerging from their hives after the warm bout of weather and this appeared to have happened in some of the apiary hives too. One or two had queen cells and not many bees. Another was split to replace the one destroyed by the woodpecker and various measures were taken to build up the other hives.

The apiary visits this month are on 2<sup>nd</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of June. We shall look forward to seeing even more new faces this month. The hour or so that we spend on these Sunday afternoons is a pleasant way to learn how others would deal with the variety of circumstances found in the hives there.

We start at 3pm - if you need directions, call any of the committee as shown on your programme for the year, or the number below. In July, the dates are the 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. Mark your calendars and do make the effort – it's well worth it!

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

**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 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

**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 Thymol based products, Apiguard, and Thymovar. Rendered beeswax in exchange for foundation.

**Bees available**, surplus to current requirement due to enforced apiary move. Healthy, quality stocks, on 11 BS brood frames (short lug), 2001 queens. All aggression culled over past 20 years. Telephone 01491 574728

Extensive range of beekeeping equipment for sale. New and used. Phone 0118 9842913.

**SECOND HAND EQUIPMENT FOR SALE;** Holyport - Tel; 01628 632054 - Nationals - 5 supers. Rest Commercials - 6 Brood boxes, 7 supers, 3 Roofs, 2 floors, 2 feeders, 2 clearing boards, 3 Queen excluders. Frames for most but no combs, free with boxes. Expect approximately 1/3 of new price for main items. Some other items such as Snelgrove Boards, Nucleus Box. Price Negotiable.

Honey for sale, surplus to requirement in 30lb containers at £1.15 / lb  
Telephone. 0118 9479450 (4-4)