



# FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

President: Miss Margery Cooper

November 2002  
Number 559

## 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

November 14,15 and 16th	National Honey Show	
-------------------------	---------------------	--

### From the Federation General Secretary: -

On the 20th September I attended the one-day Workshop/Conference on GM Crops, Beekeeping & The Honey Industry organised by the B.B.K.A. at the National Beekeeping Centre at Stoneleigh. Leading up to the day I had several letters from other Associations & Organisations declaring the evils of Genetic Modification and the possibility of a biased meeting in the GM Industry & Government's favour due to the people invited. Despite this I tried to attend with an open mind!

Over eighty beekeeping delegates from across the country attended the meeting, together with representatives from the UK Honey Industry (Bee Farmers Association & Honey Association).

The meeting was designed to allow beekeepers to express their concerns over impending commercial planting of genetically modified crops in the UK.

We were able to put our views to, and question representatives of DEFRA, ACRE, SCIMAC, the Agricultural Biotechnology Council and the Food Standards Agency.

The main points to come out of the meeting were as follows -

1. Beekeepers must recognise the importance of the public perception of honey quality and respond to it.
2. The six-mile exclusion zone should be retained for the time being.
3. There should be peer-reviewed, publicly available, accessible, and comprehensible scientific evidence on all GM matters relating to beekeeping.
4. Evidence for the full impact of GM crops on full colonies of bees has yet to be fully demonstrated.
5. There is consumer demand for non-GM honey in the UK.
6. GM issues have been poorly handled by the government, which creates uncertainty and concern with the public.

I will give a fuller report on the meeting itself later, if time and space allow.

Finally, by the time you read this, the Federation Event will have taken place. I hope I will be able to report next month on its success. If it was a success it will be down to you for entering the show and attending on the day.

Sandra Napper.

## THE APIARY IN NOVEMBER

THIS MONTH. –Fit mouse guards, woodpecker protection and contrive some sort of windbreak on exposed sites. Hedging is the best, since it limits rather than stopping the wind altogether. This is about as late as you can plant small shrubs reliably. Solid fences cause turbulence on the downwind side, which is almost as much of a nuisance as no protection at all.

-Put matchsticks or, better still, small triangles of hardboard under the corners of crown boards to ensure good ventilation during the winter. If your hives are properly prepared for winter, damp is the only thing you need worry about.

-Make sure all of your roofs are waterproof and put a brick on top of the lighter ones against the autumn gales.

-Clean and flame out all spare brood boxes. Thoroughly scrape the insides and treat with creosote if woodpeckers are NOT likely to be a problem. If they are, and you don't have woodpecker screens try treating with Sadolin or paint with two coats of household EMULSION paint.

-Attend your Association AGM and give a great deal of thought to what you want from it. Many Associations are currently in a "use it or lose it" situation, principally, because the older organisers are running out of good ideas and younger people are not coming forward to replace them. THIS MEANS YOU! In the meantime, have a go at writing something for this newsletter.

MAIN TOPIC –**Winter vigilance.** Many beginners spend the winter worrying about whether their bees are surviving. The first point is that if you haven't prepared your hives properly by now the only thing you can do is to hope for the best and plan to do better next year. If you heft (lift one side just clear of the stand to judge the weight) and it feels like a dead weight, you are probably all right. Get into the habit of doing this fortnightly so that you can judge the rate at which stores are being used up.

Other occasional checks depend on what equipment you use. If you use an opaque (wooden) crown board with an open feed hole take an occasional sniff at the feedhole (not a good idea if they are active and coming out of it). All is well if the smell is warm and sweet. They are alive, keeping warm and clean. With practice you can tell by the warmth how strong they are. Cold air and a rancid smell mean that they are dead or dying. DON'T WAIT. Get the hive up to the shed, cleaned out and STERILISED. If there is still food in the hive, they have probably died of disease or dysentery. Get a sample (matchbox (not a polythene bag) full of dead bees) off to Sand Hutton right away.

If, like me, you use a single, deep brood chamber with glass or plastic crown boards you can see what is going on. I like to keep feedholes covered with perforated zinc so that I don't need to put a veil on when I am sniffing. If they smell right, then no sign of the bees means that they are low on the frames and there is plenty of feed left. Later on, I can watch them working their way up through the stores and see how the strength and, to some extent, how the brood pattern begins to develop.

It's also a good idea to keep an eye on the hive entrance and see what is being thrown out. Compare one hive with another. Too many dead bees is a sign of trouble. Large bits of wax etc. are a sign of mice. Small bits of wax and pellets of pollen, later on, are a sign that spring is on the way and that breeding has started again.

Blobs of dark brown muck are a sign of dysentery, but if there isn't too much and the air is still warm coming out of the feedhole don't worry too much. Check that the roof is not leaking and wait until you get a fine enough day to do a quick inspection (February at the earliest. Make sure you have a spare clean brood box into which you can transfer them and have some frames of foundation available. There are bound to be some fouled combs that will need replacing.

Garulus.

## FROM THE EDITOR

The end of September and bees are collecting pollen and nectar apace, as this is likely to be from the ivy (stores from which tends to set hard) we would be well advised to put on a block of fondant or candy as insurance.

I was surprised to find that wasps had together with at least two supers of honey, destroyed a colony that was strong at the beginning of August. What had gone wrong I do not know, the presence of a number of queen cells suggest that several casts had emerged, a common occurrence this year. I have heard of several instances of this, mainly loss of nuclei, one South Chilterns member lost six.

Now is the last chance to return your "Survey" if you have not already done so. We shall know the result at the next Federation meeting, I fear that too much damage has already been done; I hope that I am wrong

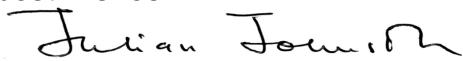
RFC

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

As the Bees Inspector looking after the bees in your Association over the past years, I would like to express my deep gratitude for your help and forbearance and my regrets for those I have not seen. I finally retired on 14<sup>th</sup> September, and hope that my successor will be afforded the help and kindness you have all shown to me over the years. I have been highly privileged to meet so many of you, some of whom were commercial bee farmers as well as amateur beekeepers.

To many people in the earlier days, the "man from the Ministry" was to be avoided at all costs, but more recently with the growing awareness of brood diseases and the lessening of the secrecy that surrounds it, I have found that my visits -without exception have been welcomed. Brood disease remains, and unfortunately will continue to do so, but vigilance must be maintained by all beekeepers to minimise the threat. I thank you all, and if in the future I can be of any assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

With best wishes



JULIAN JOHNSTON

## Matthew Allen NDB leaves Thornes.

At the end of September, Matthew left the beekeeping appliance trade to join the Oxford Bee Company as their propagation manager to be based at Eastleigh, Hants. Firstly with Steele and Brodie and latterly with Thornes at Windsor, Matthew has decided on a career change which will allow him to continue his unflagging interest in the bee world, now to move from *Apis mellifera* to *Osmia rufa* and other solitary bees.

All beekeepers in Berkshire and in a wider circle will wish Matthew well, and thank him for his never failing courtesy and knowledgeable advice so freely given. Beekeepers will be pleased to know they will be able to continue to follow his advice, currently monthly in Beecraft, and to meet him at Stoneleigh and the National Honey Show at the OBC stand. At Windsor they will be able to meet his replacement at Thornes, Steve Thurwell.

Donald Thomson, friend of  
20 years from Aberdeen days.

# BERKSHIRE FEDERATION FOULBROOD

## SEPTEMBER 2002

Number of infected apiaries in 10km squares  
 [Number in brackets ( ) = Number of infected colonies]

SU29 Buscot	SU39 Stanford in the Vale  <b>EFB 1(2)</b>	SU49 West Abingdon  <b>EFB 1(1)</b>	SU59 Dorchester  <b>AFB 1(1)</b>	SU69 Benson	SU79 Stokenchurch	SU89 High Wycombe	SU99 Amersham	TQ09 Rickmansworth  <b>EFB 4(12)</b>
SU28 Bishopstone	SU38 Letcombe Re- gis	SU48 East Wantage	SU58 Blewbury  <b>EFB 3(6)</b>	SU68 East Walling- ford	SU78 Henley on Thames	SU88 Marlow	SU98 North Slough	TQ08 Uxbridge
SU27 Aldbourne	SU37 Lambourn	SU47 Chieveley	SU57 Yattendon	SU67 Pangbourne	SU77 Reading  <b>EFB 3(4)</b>	SU87 White Waltham  <b>EFB 2(2)</b>	SU97 Windsor	TQ07 Staines
SU26 Great Bedwyn	SU36 Inkpen	SU46 Newbury	SU56 Thatcham	SU66 Burghfield Common	SU76 Shinfield  <b>EFB 1(1)</b>	SU86 Crowthorne  <b>EFB 2(4)</b>	SU96 Ascot  <b>EFB 2(3)</b>	TQ06 Weybridge
SU25 Ludgershall	SU35 Hurstbourne Tarrant	SU45 Litchfield	SU55 Kingsclere  <b>EFB 1(2)</b>	SU65 Basingstoke	SU75 Hook  <b>EFB 1(2)</b>	SU85 Farnborough	SU95 West Guildford  <b>EFB 3(14)</b>	TQ05

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

There were no farm animals at the Wokingham show this year due to unacceptable restrictions placed upon the organisers by our government, (though Newbury were advertising cattle at *their* show, which is being held two weeks later). Nevertheless, in spite of this, our show was well attended by the public. Although I have taken part in beekeeping here in previous years, I had not had the opportunity to see much of the entertainment in the show ring. This year not being involved however, I was able to enjoy the motorcycle display, the dog whisperer, brass bands, and many other events on display.

Unfortunately I didn't locate our bee keeping section, because I was unable to look around too much after having had to walk a considerable distance from the car park and round the show, also because of the crush of people in the various marquees. Although I carried our nameplates in my vehicle it would have made our site more identifiable had they been used.

I have been told the honey show went well, ably judged by Hazel Blackburn, whilst the usual intense public interest was given to Reg Granados' observation hive. We offer our grateful thanks to all the competitors and those who took part. I wish more people could get interested in this worthwhile event.

Our next meeting at the Methodist Church, Highmore Road, Caversham Heights is on Thursday November 14th at 7.30pm, it is our Annual General Meeting so please make every effort to attend.

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

## **SOUTH CHILTERN BEEKEEPING ASSOCIATION**

Our last summer meeting was held on the south facing side of the Hambleden valley, at the Apiary of Allen Armstrong. Julian Johnson took us through the pre winter colony checks. This was one of his last demonstrations as Bee Inspector before he retires. It was good to watch the practised vigour with which he handled the bees and listen to anecdotes from his years of experience. A glass or two of wine from the vineyard was the perfect end to a glorious afternoon.

The November meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November will be an illustrated slide talk by David Derrick entitled 'Honey Hunting in Nepal'. The presentation will also cover beekeeping on the Caribbean island of Tobago.

Secretary: Brian Carter. 01491 680226

## **WOKINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

### **Association meetings**

Remember our meetings are on the second Wednesday in each winter month.

- 9<sup>th</sup> October - Bees and GM Crops. A talk by Doreen Wyatt from Green Watch.
- 13<sup>th</sup> November - Annual General Meeting.
- 11<sup>th</sup> December – Theory and practice with Dartington Deep Hives by Robin Dartington.

### **Rosemary's book of the month – Seventeenth Century Beekeeping**

A little while ago one of our members, John Hosking gave a talk to the Wokingham Association on the history of beekeeping. Among his references he quoted from the first book of beekeeping that was written in English – Charles Butler's *The Feminine Monarchie or a Treatise Concerning Bees and the Due Ordering of Them* of 1609. After the talk he made a copy for our library.

I have never read a more fascinating book. Butler was a clergyman whose hobby was beekeeping. He studied bees first-hand and the book is full of his accurate observations. In some ways his advice on the management of bees is surprisingly like that of a modern manual. At first the book is a bit daunting because of the old spellings (hony, cheerefull, bataille) the old use of a sort of 'f' for 's', the use of Zodiac signs instead of the names of the months and the quality of printing of 400 years ago. Nevertheless, once you get used to these setbacks it is one of the most interesting books in the English language especially for beekeepers.

Mr Hosking also gave us a copy of Samuel Hartlib Esq's *The Reformed Commonwealth of Bees Presented in Severall Letters and Observations* of 1655. This is a kind of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Letters Page and covers all sorts of topics such as *A very cheap way, how to keep a stock of Bees all Winterlong* (the writer suggests *Tostes of bread sopped in strong Ale*) or the benefit of rubbing anise round the inside of the hives to make them productive. One letter describes a way of generating bees: you slaughter a calf, bury it for eight or ten days, dig it up and lay it by a hedge or wall in the sun and the heat will turn it into maggots which will turn into bees. Not many of us today have an opportunity to try this method!

The book has a few letters discussing the best way to build a hive, some of which includes modern ideas, although they were not aware of bee-space in those days. The most interesting of these is a plan for a *pleasant and profitable Invention of a Transparent bee-hive written by that much accomplish'd and very ingenious Gentleman, Fellow of All-Soules Colledge in Oxford, Mr Christ. Wren.*

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 first winter meeting was quite well attended and it was soon evident that there had been quite a variety of events experienced this year. The early start this year in particular had affected many of those present, especially at the Society's apiary. Next year, the routine visits will start there much earlier. Nevertheless, most reported a good crop of honey.

Our next meeting is on November 12<sup>th</sup>, when it will be this year's AGM and Supper. Nominations are invited for all officers and may be sent to the Secretary, Michael Sheasby at the address on the back of your annual programme, or you can call him on Slough (01753) 642656 for details. Please bring along a contribution for the Supper table afterwards, it will be much appreciated. We look forward to a good turnout again for this most important meeting. Your society values your continued support and there will be much to discuss this time.

Just a reminder for those who will be attending - the re-scheduled committee meeting will be held on Thursday, 10th October.

December's meeting has changed from that shown in the program, as we had to ask Beulah Cullen to step into a vacant slot at short notice earlier in the year. Harry Peace, who has made some new videos to show us, will now treat us to a video evening. We look forward to an entertaining and informative evening; so do join us on the 10<sup>th</sup> December, at 8pm. As usual, we shall be at the All Saints Parish Hall, on the corner of Frances and Alexandra Roads, Windsor.

I have been asked by Don Church to alert you to the fact that the 2003 Annual Dinner has been brought forward from March to January, which, it is hoped, will round off the festive season in style. It will be at the usual venue of the Aurora Garden Hotel, Bolton Road, Windsor, on Friday the 24<sup>th</sup>, at 7 for 7.30pm. Order forms will be included with this newsletter, so please return them to Don as soon as possible to book your place.

Newsletter items: Joy Dodson Burnham (01628) 664091

**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