



# South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

President: Ian Wootton

**The November meeting will be held on Wednesday 19th November at 7.30pm at Langtree Community Centre, Langtree School, Woodcote. See Secretary's report.**

Newsletter No.11  
November 2003

Forthcoming events:

National Honey Show  
13<sup>th</sup> –15<sup>th</sup> November

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## In the Apiary: November

This autumn it is not a question of where have all the flowers gone; the question is where have all the wasps gone! Record numbers of queen wasps were seen early spring that should have heralded serious wasp problems later in the year for everybody, beekeepers in particular. In all my apiaries not a wasp hardly to be seen: Any explanation, anybody?

I made a prediction early in the year that more autumn feeding than usual would be necessary for the bees. Wrong! In my experience I have had to feed less. The mild autumn has enabled the bees to build up their stores from late sources of nectar, principally ivy.

A plea to all of you who have used Bayvarol or Apistan. Strips should be left in the hive for a minimum of 6 weeks and not more than 8 weeks. Leaving them in for longer will not do any good, in fact the reverse. After 8 weeks the dose from the strips will have fallen to near the sub-lethal dose for the mites. This will be the beginning of tolerance by the mites to the treatment. So remove them. Do not put off by inclement weather. The disturbance to the bees is minimal.

Ventilation is of prime importance during the winter months. Increase the width of your entrances to at least two thirds of full widths (mouse guard in place of course!) and put a matchstick under each corner of the crown board. Clean out the gummed-up, cobwebbed-up roof ventilators and all in all that should take care of ventilation. Excessive damp in the hive will severely stress or kill the bees. I have one apiary on

a good but very low-lying site and I winter the bees with no crown board! They winter very well.

A final further reminder to put your woodpecker guards on; wire netting loosely wrapped around the hive should deter but keep an eye on things. Clear away overgrown grass from around the base of the hive; a couple of bricks on top of the (watertight) roof will see your bees O.K. for the winter.

George Butler

Internet access to the beekeeping world [www.beedata.com](http://www.beedata.com)

## Secretary's Report:

The final summer meeting of the year was held at Anne Arlidge's out apiary at Lower Assendon when well over 20 members attended on a lovely sunny afternoon. Anne had arranged 'a two for one offer' with Ian Homer, the Regional Bee Officer, and his wife Ruth demonstrating simultaneously. According to Ian, Ruth has kept bees the longer.

Anne currently has three National colonies and the theme of the demonstration was 'The Start of the Season'. September can be seen as the start of the new Bee Year and preparations now will be reflected in the bees next spring. Topics dealt with included stores (a typical colony requires approximately 20Kg of syrup or honey), disease, Varroa, weather proofing, pest proofing, the supply of water, manipulations, and ensuring every colony contains a laying queen by checking for eggs and young larvae.

We were very fortunate to have Ian for a second summer meeting in one year. At the end of the meeting Ian handed out a questionnaire designed to evaluate the workshop (demonstration) and those members who did not hand in a completed questionnaire are asked to send their form to his home address which is given at the bottom of the form.



New member "Kate" under Ian Homer's supervision

The meeting ended with afternoon tea in Anne's gazebo.

The November meeting will be held on Wednesday 19th November at 7.30pm at Langtree Community Centre when Julian Johnston will recall his various experiences in support of bee keeping. The talk will be based, loosely, on his book 'Nomad amongst the Bees'

Brian Carter

## Chairman's Chatter

At our last Committee meeting the question of whether to hold a South Chilterns Honey Show was brought up. As you know there are a number of cups and trophies that were formerly competed for at the Federation Honey Show. It was suggested that we might have our own little honey show together with our usual Christmas meeting in December. Your views please. The matter will be discussed at our AGM on 15<sup>th</sup> October. If you do not attend the AGM, please let any committee member or me know your views and then the Committee at their next meeting can make a decision.

Nothing really to do with South Chilterns, but it is comforting to know that more and more people are taking up an interest in beekeeping. My practical course at the College of Agriculture in the summer was over subscribed and I am currently running a Theoretical beginners course with 18 students, all very keen and absolute beginners, mostly from Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire areas. They have been given all the necessary information to enable them to make contact with an Association within easy reach of their homes.

George Butler

## Newsletter

To add to the debate about the newsletter, can I suggest that 'From the Apiary', 'Chairman's Chatter' and 'From the Editor' are often repetitive? The former is necessary but we could easily dispense with the others. The subjects covered by the Chairman, Secretary and Editor could then be presented as separate topics, under headlines which would encourage us to read them.

Using a larger type for headings and closing up spaces between paragraphs would make each article more distinct. This would also leave room for more space between articles, so that they stand out and are easier to find.

Incidentally, in the October issue, the vital notice about the AGM was lost in the 'Secretary's Report'. It would have been more easy for people to read and, as a result, attend the event, if it had been featured elsewhere with outlines of subjects to be discussed, details of standing for the committee, voting procedures and suchlike.

Speaking of 'Forthcoming Events', was the Ploughing Match relevant to members? And if it was, where was it and where was the FBBKA Lecture and Show and where is the National Honey Show? These facts may be known to some readers, but not everyone and especially not to new members.

As a professional editor myself, I know what a thankless task it can be, so I hope these comments are taken as constructive and not as being too critical.

Lynn Penfold



Prospective Beekeeper at the Ploughing Match

#### The National Honey Show

13-15 November 2003-10-13  
Kensington Town Hall  
Hornton Street, London

Admission: £10.00 Children under 16 and Members  
FREE

#### Show Opening Times:

Thursday 13th November 2.00 pm - 7.00 pm  
Friday 14th November 9.30 am - 7.00 pm  
Saturday 15th November 9.30 am - 5.00 pm

## Disease Grid:

I think the foulbrood map is an important part of the newsletter. It provides an 'at a glance' picture of the infection trend and provides all with food for thought. I accept that most beekeepers don't really need to think further than robbers' foraging, but would argue that it has been the enforced stretching of our minds past the parish bounds that has curbed foulbrood to the low levels we see today. Far from lose the map I would like to see it contain resistant Varroa reports, and even hive numbers per square, as well. Because these diseases can spread like wildfire, the best weapon we have is information, and at the price of bees today I think that worrying about the extra pennies spent on our newsletter is foolish and counter-productive. And you can quote that!

John Sewell

## Publication of the Diseases Grid:

My thanks to those members that stated their views by telephone, it is a pity that some of these were not in writing. I take note of all comments and clichés, for example, 'a picture says a thousand words'; 'I cannot relate to a string of references but I can to a diagram'; 'you were naïve to expect comments if you are doing it right'. The most important comment I feel was "You should not deprive a section of the membership of a service to which they are entitled".

In view of the response from the many responsible members, the grid will be included whenever there is a change in the disease situation and then only when there is copy space.

R.Crocker. (Editor)

## The Honey Regulation 2003

***The new Honey Regulations are now in force in England.*** We have a transitional period, until 1st August 2004, to comply. This may be slightly different for Scotland, Wales & Ireland. The details of the act, however, apply throughout Europe.

The regulations are designed to be interpreted by a court. Copies may be obtained from the Food Labelling and Standards Division of the Food Standards Agency, Aviation house, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6NH. This issue is too important for me to give you my interpretation of them and maybe miss something.

The changes include:

**Labelling:**

Permitted ("reserved") descriptions have been specified and must be used.

There are differences for finely filtered honey (where pollen has been removed)

There are new requirements for labelling baker's honey

The country of origin must be specified

**There must be a "Best Before" date.**

Any particular storage requirements must be specified

**Other:**

The HMF limit has been reduced to 40 mg/kg for most honey (\*)

The maximum permitted water content has been reduced to 20% (\*) (!)

There are new rules for electrical conductivity.

There are some other minor changes.

(\*) except for baker's honey

(!) except for heather honey

The Food Labelling 1996, and Weights and Measures regulations remain in force (packing weights, etc).

The new honey regulations (2003) revoke the sentence in the food labelling regulations (1996) that exempts honey from some parts of those regulations - most significantly the "best before" date.

I've raised some questions with Hampshire Trading Standards and Peter Martin. You may have more..

I asked:

It would seem that we may now need both best before and lot number if we are to retain traceability. Can the two be combined?

The durability of honey is variable. Will we be given, or are there, guidelines for calculating the best before date for honey?

It seems we are still permitted to use a county name (eg, "Hampshire Honey") as a description. Am I right in assuming that the country of origin is still required? Also, is the height of the typeface and precise wording specified, please? For example, would the wording "English Honey from Hampshire" be permitted, or does the country have to be completely separate?

**Hampshire Trading Standards replied:**

Deciding on an appropriate durability indication is a problem for manufacturers of all types of foodstuffs. The best before type indication is intended as an indication of the date up to which the packer says it will retain its intended quality provided it is stored correctly. If the method of storage is important this will also need to be stated. Many manufacturers run shelf life trials to establish actual shelf life or confirm if their estimates are correct etc. I do not have any expertise in this area in relation to the shelf life of honey. I assume somewhere in the knowledge of the beekeeping community there is data on factors which increase HMF and other factors which cause deterioration (crystallisation?). The sort of declaration I would expect to see appearing would be something like: 'Best Before day month year', in association with 'Store in a cool dark place.' The appropriate date probably should be worked out from the date of production of the honey rather than the date of final packing in jars if there is a significant time lapse between the two.

The good news is that durability indication and lot mark can be combined into one indication. The lot marking Regulations allow for the lot mark to be provided in the form of a durability indication provided

this is sufficiently precise to distinguish between batches. For most home packers this means using the day, month, year format as they will only pack one batch occasionally.

It is important to remember there is a transitional period. Product packed and labelled before the 1st August 2004 can be sold provided it fully complies with the old regulations at the time of sale. Also, many packers will be able to use up old labels in conjunction with supplementary labels giving the additionally required information. The problem will be for those who have large quantities of labels that contain information which is no longer accurate. The immediate precaution is not to have any more labels produced unless they comply with the new requirements.

The country of origin information is required whatever supplementary origin information is given. In all other legislation where this provision has been introduced this means the recognised EC member state, (i.e. United Kingdom). England, Hampshire etc would be a supplementary geographic indication. I believe most people can satisfy this requirement by adding 'U.K.' to the end of their address line. Where supplementary regional, topographical, or territorial, information is given ALL of the product must come from the indicated source. (This may need careful thought where hives are moved around or are located on or close to geographic boundaries).

In relation to positioning of information. There are no specific requirements as to size except for the quantity marking where the Weights & Measures legislation makes minimum character size requirements. (These have not changed). The Food Labelling Regulations provide that the required information must be legible and the name must be together as a whole and uninterrupted by other written or pictorial material. There is also a requirement that the name, the durability indication (or a statement as to where this can be found on the pack) and the indication weight must be in the same field of vision. (This means capable of being read without turning the pack around.)

I asked Peter Martin for his comments, his reply follows:

As honey lasts forever, I've never been very convinced about there being a definite best before date. The industry is using 18 months, but I think this is largely on the pragmatic basis that it will all get through the supermarkets in that time. To my mind, it depends on 'perceived quality', i.e. if you are selling creamed rapeseed, if well creamed, it will stay that way for years. If you are selling borage it will stay liquid. But something in between might produce big crystals and give rise to customer complaints. There is no need to store honey in the dark and I would resist such a statement on the label. I would also ignore any delay before bottling. We do not usually have an HMF problem, although one experienced bee farmer did, and I think it is as well to remind bee farmers that all processing should be designed to keep the temperature low. However, the increase in HMF from sitting in the shops is likely to be minimal unless they put it in the window in a climate like last August.

I agree with your other comments.

Regards, Peter

By kind permission of John Howat (Bee Farmers Association)

**Newsletter deadline:** 10<sup>th</sup> of the month for inclusion in the next Newsletter

**Advertisements:** - Small advertisements free to members. Traders £1 per issue (up to 5 lines) additional lines 20p per line. Cheques to be made payable to South Chilterns B.K.A. and forwarded to the Editor.

**EXTRACTOR FOR SALE:** Thomas manual, tangential extractor on legs and in stainless-steel. Will take eight frames up to Langstroths. Excellent condition £120 ono. Lynn Penfold, Telephone 01628 825718.

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