



# South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

President: Ian Wootton

**The November meeting is on Wednesday 17th at 7.30pm at the Langtree Community Centre, Langtree School, Woodcote. See Secretary's report.**

## Newsletter No.23 November 2004

Forthcoming events:

Spring Convention  
16th April 2005  
Stoneleigh Park

Apimondia Dublin 2005  
21st – 26th August

[www.apimondia2005.com](http://www.apimondia2005.com)

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## In the Apiary, November

It is always said that if you only extract from sealed combs then the honey will be fully ripened with a low moisture content and with good keeping properties, i.e., not likely to ferment. This year might be different. The bees can only reduce the moisture content of their honey down to the ambient humidity of the air outside the hive. With our exceedingly wet summer I fear that our extracted honey will have a somewhat higher moisture content than normal thereby increasing the danger of fermentation.

What to do about it?

1. Store all your honey in airtight containers
2. Store at as low a temperature as possible – a concrete floor in the garage for example, would be good.
3. Use the honey as quickly as possible – fermentation usually starts when the daytime temperatures start to rise next year.
4. If fermentation does start, heat the honey to kill yeasts and feedback to the bees or use for cookery purposes. It would be illegal to sell this honey unless marked "Bakers Honey" as provided for in the regulations.

You should have finished feeding by now but if the weather is still mild and one or two hives need topping up the bees might still be tempted to take syrup down.

Mouse guards on; woodpecker protection on; if you had glass quilts on during the summer, replace with wooden crownboards. Wasp problems should have receded by now so I increase the entrance widths of the hives to help ventilation.

Clear away any overgrown grass from around the hive; check that your roofs are 100% watertight. A couple of bricks on the roof will stop those shallow roofs from blowing off. Your bees should be snug and dry now for the winter.

Have you taken out your varroa strips? They should easily have been in for six weeks by now.

**DO NOT LEAVE THEM IN ALL WINTER!**

George Butler

## FROM THE SECRETARY NOVEMBER MEETING:

At the November meeting to be held at the Woodcote Community Centre at 7.30pm on Wednesday 17th November, Will Messenger will give a slide presentation on Britain's Beekeeping Heritage. The talk will cover historic hives, bee houses, bee boles and bee walls. Will has been involved with bees for many years including a spell as a Seasonal Bee Officer for the southern region.

Brian Carter

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

The new apiary on the side of the valley at Lower Assenden is in its second year. In spite of both my husband and my son now being pretty much desensitised to bee stings, the bees will probably stay up there, just in case!

Reg took us through the hives. The first one has done much better than expected this year, producing just under 100 pounds compared to well under half that last year. They have the same clipped and marked queen who evidently had a good patch this year. On inspection she was found to have become a drone layer, so no hope for her. Various possibilities were discussed, uniting with another colony etc. Brian offered a nuc that he had made and then not needed to use, this was accepted gratefully.

The second hive that we looked at was a swarm collected in late May from Henley. They had settled well and quickly, and seem vigorous and have been productive. The queen had been marked and was now clipped. There followed some discussion on clipping queens at this time of year, several people suggested that it would be better to clip in the spring.

The third hive we looked at is one of a pair that every year promises great things and then just under perform, they do well enough for them selves but not enough to harvest much.

All the hives have plenty of stores and the second two had brood in all stages. Handled by Reg the bees were quiet and well behaved, though we have known those very same bees in quite a different mood

The following Monday I picked up Brian's nuc and put it beside the colony to be requeened. The old queen was killed and the nuc opened. Later that day the bees were united by the newspaper method, covered by quilt and then the roof. A week later the new queen was found to be laying in the top box and the newspaper had been chewed through. 5 poor combs were removed from the lower brood box and replaced by the frames with the new queen on them.

It was good to see everybody. I really enjoy the support and friendship that is to be found in our association.

Anne Arlidge

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

Wanted: Second hand solar wax extractor. Paul Moorcroft. 0118 9863743 (Not the number on the membership list.)

Beekeeper Downsizing Four colonies in Smith hives available, BS short lug frames, QX, ventilated floors, C/B, metal covered roofs. Local strain all aggression culled. £50 each O.N.O. 01491 574728

Wanted: Observation hive in reasonable condition. Paul Moorcroft. 0118 9863743

**Don't Go Miles** to get your bee supplies or pay expensive carriage. **Go to John Belcher** who has most of your needs in stock and everything else at the end of the telephone. Please call any time on 0118 984 2321

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## ***Around and about the region***

October 2004

As I write this, on the last Saturday in September, I realise all too well that the active beekeeping season is rapidly drawing to a close. It is wet, grey, cold and the leaves on the trees are rapidly changing colour. It has been a season of very mixed weather and very mixed fortunes. In many parts of the region we have had record temperatures this year and yet the summer season, in terms of beekeeping, was rather subdued for many beekeepers.

Unlike fishing, in beekeeping there is no shame in admitting that the crop was not brilliant and many are in just that situation this year. My own crop was about one third of last year's crop and I know that there are beekeepers who have not taken any crop at all this year. All of the bee inspectors in the Southern Region team have, at some time or other during the season, reported finding colonies on the point of starvation and have recommended the beekeeper to feed their colonies on an urgent basis.

Other beekeepers are reporting reasonable crops, though not the magnificent outcome that the spring flow had suggested. The strange thing is that, often, there has only been a matter of 6 or 10 miles between sites where the bees are near starving and those where crops of a hundredweight or more per colony have been obtained.

As one of my colleagues often remarks, "the more I learn about beekeeping, the less I seem to know"!

*Ian Homer*

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### Coming and Going.

Or more correctly going and coming as we are saying goodbye to Brian Roberts as a member of the Southern Region team. Brian has been inspecting bees for over 40 years and he and his wife Sylvia have become familiar sights in and around apiaries in Dorset and Hampshire.



Over 70 guests gathered to say farewell to Brian on September 14<sup>th</sup> when he was presented with the customary engraved hive tool, a cheque and a gas torch to allow him

to continue sterilising his own hives! Sylvia, who has helped Brian throughout his career, often acting as map reader and navigator when visiting unfamiliar sites, was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

Brian told us that when he was first approached to be a bee inspector, he had agreed to do the job for just one year! Somehow, that one year extended to over 40 and Brian briefly talked about some of the highlights of those years.

Hopefully by next season there will be some comings as well. With the retirement of Brian and the existing vacancy for an inspector in the South Bucks/Oxfordshire area, I am looking for suitably qualified people to join the team next year. If you live in Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire or South Bucks and could spend 2 to 4 days per week making appointments and visiting beekeepers to carry out inspections, then do please contact me for an informal discussion. If you cannot take the job on but know someone who could, then please encourage him or her to contact me.

**Brian Roberts writes;** 42 years – where has it gone? It was so nice to see so many beekeeping friends at my retirement party and I should like to thank everyone who made such an enjoyable evening possible. Also, my thanks for the hospitality shown to Sylvia and I over the years.  
Brian and Sylvia Roberts

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### Winter Losses?

Those of you who are subscribers to "Bees for Development" magazine may have noticed some recent correspondence regarding winter losses. Apparently these have been quite significant in some parts of Europe over the last couple of winters and the question was posed as to why.

In the most recent issue, Jeff Rounce has written that he too has suffered heavy winter losses on several occasions during his near 60 years of beekeeping. He notes that, without exception, these losses have followed an unusually cool, wet summer and autumn. He also notes that the colonies have perished surrounded by plenty of stores. He concludes that this may be due to colonies going into winter with only old bees that reach the end of their lives before they can be replaced by young bees reared after the turn of the year.

Whilst the weather conditions have not been exactly as described in Jeff Rounce's letter, there are some similarities evident this year. In many parts of the region, queens went off lay in late July and August and the amount of brood declined significantly over the next few weeks.

From my own observations, it would appear that lack of pollen was the problem for many colonies. Only since the ivy has been in blossom in the last couple of weeks has this situation been redressed and, with pollen now being copiously available, queens are trying to re-build a brood nest.

However, I do wonder whether, in those places where there has been a significant break in brood rearing (and I include two of my own sites in that category), the age profile of the bees remaining in our colonies will allow the colonies to over winter satisfactorily.

This situation is by no means universal around the region. Only last week I attended an association apiary meeting in Oxfordshire where each of the colonies had 6 – 8 frames with brood on, bees had flown almost continuously since February, crops had been heavy and the nectar and pollen being gathered from Himalayan Balsam was remarkable. It appears that the northern parts of the region (Northants, Bucks and Oxfordshire) have fared better than the southern parts but there are reports of queens going off-lay early from many other parts of the country.

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## Pyrethroid Resistant Varroa

Strangely, despite numerous tests for resistance during this season, we have still to identify any sites within the region where high proportions of pyrethroid resistant varroa mites are present. This is all the more strange as cases have been confirmed in a number of locations around the country during the season. During 2004, resistance has been confirmed in Avon, Hereford & Worcestershire, Leicestershire/Lincolnshire border, Powys and Surrey (on border with Greater London). Further apiaries with resistance have also been confirmed near to established areas in Cornwall, Devon, Durham, Kent, Shropshire, Somerset and South West Wales.

This does not of course mean that resistance is not present in Southern Region - all beekeepers should, in addition to routinely monitoring to assess mite populations, aim to sample at least a proportion of their colonies to detect resistance. Only by doing this will you be able to ascertain what varroa treatment will be appropriate – continued use of pyrethroids after resistance has developed will be a waste of both your time and your money. Most association secretaries have monitoring kits available but if your association does not have any, please contact me and I will make one available. The NBU website ([www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)) contains more information about pyrethroid resistance, including distribution maps showing the location of all confirmed cases.

In the main, the new cases identified this year appear to be spontaneous eruptions of resistance rather than a result of colony movements – this makes it all the more essential to continue to monitor your own bees.

## Foul Brood Statistics 2004

The foul brood figures for the Southern Region are shown below and compare favourably with the last two seasons. Both Hampshire and Dorset have seen significant reductions this season. For reasons of efficiency, the data is presented in tabular form rather than the usual map form; any association which particular needs the data in map form should contact me.

County	OS 10km Square	Principal Habitation	AFB Apiaries	AFB Colonies	EFB Apiaries	EFB Colonies
<b>Berks Total</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Bucks	SP84	Newport Pagnell			1	1
<b>Bucks Total</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Dorset	ST50	Evershot			1	2
Dorset	ST71	Sturminster Newton			1	1
Dorset	SY88	Wool	1	1	2	8
Dorset	SY89	Bere Regis			1	1
Dorset	SY98	Wareham			2	4
Dorset	SY99	Lytchett Matravers			4	9
Dorset	SZ09	West Bournemouth			2	10
Dorset	SZ19	Christchurch			3	3
<b>Dorset Total</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>
Hants	SU10	Ringwood			4	14
Hants	SU11	Fordingbridge			1	5
Hants	SU23	Winterslow			1	1
Hants	SU31	Totton			1	2
Hants	SU40	Hythe			1	5
Hants	SU41	Southampton			1	1
Hants	SU54	North Waltham			2	3
Hants	SU60	Portsmouth			4	8
Hants	SU72	Petersfield			1	1
Hants	SU83	W.Haslemere			2	2
<b>Hants Total</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>IOW Total</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Northants	TF00	Stamford	1	2	0	0
<b>Northants Total</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Oxfordshire	SP32	Enstone			1	1
Oxfordshire	SU38	Letcombe Regis			1	3
Oxfordshire	SU48	East Wantage			2	3
Oxfordshire	SU69	Benson	1	2	1	3
<b>Oxfordshire Total</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
Wiltshire	ST92	Swallowcliffe			2	3
<b>Wiltshire Total</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Regional Total</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>94</b>

(as at September 24th 2004)

Despite the reduction, we should not assume that we are any less prone to these diseases than in previous years and continued vigilance is necessary. Regular inspection of colonies is the most effective way to monitor, with the bees being shaken off of combs at least twice each year. This allows the brood to be thoroughly inspected for any irregularities. If you are uncertain of what to look for, the CSL brochure "Foul Brood disease of honey bees: recognition and control" carries some excellent photographs to use as a guide. At the very least, try to be able to recognise the appearance of healthy brood in all stages; anything that looks different should be investigated by an experienced beekeeper or referred to a member of the bee health inspection team.

As always, we are happy to arrange disease recognition courses for any association that wants one. These are particularly valuable to people in their early years of beekeeping though beekeepers who have previously attended one of these courses often benefit from them. If you are an experienced beekeeper but have not seen either EFB or AFB in the last few years, would you still recognise it??

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## Southern Region Associations Day 2005

Plans are in hand for the Southern Region Associations Day for 2005 which, provisionally, is to be held on Sunday March 20<sup>th</sup>. Rather than restrict the number of delegates to two per association as we did this year, we hope to have an open invitation for anyone to come though, in order to know what numbers to expect, this will have to be by prior registration. This will essentially need to be done on a first come, first served basis. The programme for the day is still in the early stages but more details will be published in the next edition of "Around and about the region", due out in February 2005.

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### NATIONAL BEE UNIT - SOUTHERN REGION Survey of Honey Prices and Yields 2004

Please indicate the current price **per pound** which each category is achieving in your area.  
If there is a significant variation in the price of any item, please indicate a price range.

	Wholesale	Direct Sales	Bulk
Run, Set or Creamed Flower Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Cut Comb Flower Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Heather Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Heather Comb Honey	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	lbs		
Average yield per colony (excluding heather)	<input type="text"/>	{ Please indicate the yield <b>in pounds</b>	
Average heather yield per colony	<input type="text"/>	{ which has been experienced in	
Highest recorded yield per colony	<input type="text"/>	{ your area.	
Name, Association, Location			

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