



South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

President: Ian Wootton

This year's December meeting will be the Christmas meeting on Wednesday 15th starting at 7.30pm at the Langtree Community Centre, Langtree School, Woodcote. See Secretary's report.

Newsletter 24 December 2004

Forthcoming events:

Spring Convention
16th April 2005
Stoneleigh Park

Apimondia Dublin 2005
21st – 26th August

www.apimondia2005.com

Hon Secretary:

Annette Cleaver
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Cookley Green
Henley on Thames
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Hon Editor:

Ron Crocker
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Peppard Common,
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Regional Bee Inspector:

Ian Homer

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In the Apiary – December

The 2004 season for most in our area started with a heavy spring honey flow including a crop from the hawthorn. Both Manley and Herrod-Hempsall asserted that if the may yields honey there is likely to be precious little else. So it has proved this year.

There should be very little work to do with the bees this month, other than the usual checks to see that all is well in the apiary - no roofs blown off, mouse-guards missing, woodpecker guards in place, hives knocked over or fallen branches.

Colonies that had been denuded of their honey in spring were found to be almost starving in June and required feeding.

Following the unusual summer and autumn weather this year it is well worth checking that colonies have sufficient food. You can check by hefting the hives, or, if the hive is light, by removing the crown board gently and having a look, you will be able to see down between the combs to judge the situation. At this time of year it is unlikely that there will be much brood to chill. **If food is really needed**, then give them fondant directly over the cluster. Remember that bees use very little stores in cold weather, so if they have stores near the cluster then they will probably be all right until very early spring when you will be able feed syrup with a contact feeder – it is unwise to feed syrup now. If you do, it will be likely to ferment leaving a legacy of dysentery.

Now is a good time to repair and prepare your spare equipment. By all means assemble or clean frames ready for the spring but do not fit foundation just yet. Make sure that any wood preservative used does not contain anything that will harm the bees.

Ron Crocker

FROM THE SECRETARY

DECEMBER and JANUARY MEETING

An evening with traditional Christmas fayre is on Wednesday 15th December. This year, in a departure from a traditional non-beekeeping subject, we start with a talk by Martin Buckle on 'Beeswax - much more interesting than honey'. Martin will show examples of items crafted from this versatile hive product. The January meeting is on Wednesday 12th when Ian Homer will discuss bee health.

FROM THE EDITOR

By the time that you receive this Newsletter, it is expected that our Association will have been received back into the BBKA through the Berkshire Federation. This means that this Newsletter will be the final independent issue.

You will note from the report on the AGM that, while we were teamed up with Newbury and Wantage for insurance, we did not have individual third party and products liability cover. This is in the process of being rectified.

Please note that third party and products liability cover is only effective where membership is up to date. This means from January. Pay your subscription before then.

On our acceptance into the Federation of Berkshire Beekeepers Associations, the Federation website will be amended to include South Chilterns. The newsletter archive is now linked to the Federation archive. Links will be provided from the front page to this and to the winter programme.

LETTERS

From Audrey Hawthorne:

Will you please thank the members of South Chilterns Beekeepers Association for their kind donation to Cancer Research in memory of George.

We have been overwhelmed by the kindness of people and realise just how much George was loved and respected.

The number of people at his funeral was really heart warming.

Yours sincerely

Audrey & family

Linda's lot was not a happy one

Dear Editor

When I took on the role of treasurer I knew little about bees and nothing about the Association, but I agreed because no one else wanted to do it. This time last year, I wanted to stand down but, again, no one came forward. I reluctantly agreed to continue for one further year provided I had support.

Now lack of support and attitudes at the AGM have left me feeling angry, insulted, upset and humiliated.

The accounts I presented at the AGM were accurate but failed to balance by 52p. This was 50p underpaid by a new member and 2p overpaid to someone in expenses and hardly worth chasing, or so I thought.

The accounts were audited two years ago by Eric Morris. Last year they were checked by Brian Carter, presented and adopted at the AGM without being audited.

This year accounts were submitted to Eric for auditing and, although they were correct, he declined to sign them because he felt the balance sheet showed too much money in petty cash. A balance sheet is a snapshot, one moment in time – this August 31 – and it would have been incorrect to show the position differently. In criticising petty cash levels, no allowance was made for funds recently deposited.

Like other committee members I have given my time freely. I have not charged for phone calls, postage, stationery or photocopying – 40+ copies of renewal forms a year, 40+ telephone lists, copies of the accounts – the list goes on.

I wish the new committee good luck in taking the Association forward and ask you as members to give them your support. Remember, they have volunteered, but they need your help during the year, not your criticism at the end of it!

Linda Scurr

AGM agrees key developments

It was all change at October's AGM when Association members elected three brand-new officers.

Guy Simpson, replacing George Butler who had filled the post of chairman for the past three years, was, like many other Association members, one of George's beekeeping students at Berkshire College of Agriculture. Although new to the art, Guy showed within minutes of taking over that he's no newcomer to chairing meetings.

Annette Cleaver, also a relatively new beekeeper, is now secretary. She steps into Brian Carter's shoes after his maximum of three years in the job. Virtually self-sufficient with her rare-breed goats and vegetables, Annette runs her own garden maintenance company.

Although unable to be present, Bill Sievwright had agreed to be treasurer and has been handed all the necessary paperwork by outgoing treasurer Linda Scurr. He is an engineer.

The re-elected committee members – John Westcar (programme secretary), librarian Tim Sewell, Reg Hook and one of the social secretaries, Lynn Penfold – have been joined by Ron Crocker and Linda Clarke. Harry Jessup, while not on the committee, will continue to represent the Association at the Woodcote Rally with Reg's help.

In a typed report, George Butler thanked officers and members, especially John Westcar, who'd organised an excellent summer and winter programme; secretary Brian Carter and Linda Scurr who 'had given their time generously', and members who had raised money for the Association. Membership is still in the upper 40s, which he hopes will continue. He paid tribute to George Hawthorne (one of the Association founders) who died this year. Eric Morris thanked George for his work over the last three years, while Eddie Locke thanked other officers.

Two other key pieces of business were transacted at the AGM. First was the adoption of a modernised and more prescriptive constitution and rules. Second was the Association's decision to return to the Berkshire Federation and the BBKA fold.

This followed Brian Carter and Linda Scurr's concerns that the insurance we took out on our withdrawal three years ago didn't provide third party and product cover for individuals. In the absence of any reply to their many requests from representatives of Newbury and Wantage BKAs, whose insurance we had joined, insurers NFU confirmed our concerns. As a result, and because insurance ran out on September 30, the Association committee took what it considered was the vital decision to ask to rejoin the BBKA and benefit from its proven insurance cover.

The meeting approved this and subscriptions will become £20 and £15 (concessions) to cover the cost.

Retiring treasurer Linda Scurr presented a detailed balance sheet and profit and loss account. This showed total assets of £2,812.65 – ‘a good level but not a big safety margin’. She reported that being treasurer was made difficult by subs not being paid until very late; the necessary inconsistency of the financial year end with insurance and subs’ date, and the fact that, this year, five cheques had not been presented. Although the accounts couldn’t be approved as they hadn’t been audited, the meeting agreed with Eddie Lock’s suggestion that they should be approved at the November meeting.

Linda also suggested a ‘buddy’ scheme. As this was agreed, new members will be given the name of an experienced member who can give advice and, if necessary, make them feel welcome by accompanying them to meetings.

Lynn Penfold

The following, a press release from the BBKA, is of vital importance to all beekeepers.



The British Beekeepers' Association

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BEE HEALTH UNDER THREAT

Her Majesty’s Government is planning to reduce support of the Honeybee Health Programme from £1.25 million to just £1 million. This saving of just £250K or 20% of the budget, risks the decimation of the UK honeybee population and the £100 million plus contribution that these insects make to agriculture through their pollination activities.

The Honeybee Health Programme, managed through the National Bee Unit of DEFRA, has been operating successfully for many years, helping the 30,000 beekeepers in England, 95% of whom operate on a small scale, to control diseases that can destroy honeybee colonies. The diseases include American Foul Brood, European Foul Brood and Varroosis. Since the arrival of Varroa (a parasitic mite that kills honeybee colonies) in this country in 1992, wild colonies of honeybees have died out and it is only beekeepers that maintain stocks of honeybees.

The Government’s own survey conducted by ADAS, published in 2001 showed that honeybees contribute at least £120 million to the agricultural economy of the country. This does not include the benefit to horticulture or to the environment as a whole. The survey underlined that the Honeybee Health Programme was very important in protecting our bee stocks from the introduction of disease from outside this country.

In fact the next threat to honeybees, the Small Hive Beetle, has already been found in Portugal and other members states of the EU. This pest has devastated bee colonies in USA after being introduced from South Africa. It is only a matter of time before it arrives on our shores. When it does, beekeepers will need all the help they can get to defend their bees. The planned Government cuts mean that there will not be adequate professional support in the battle against the beetle.

The British Beekeepers’ Association (BBKA) fears that if these cuts are made, many small scale beekeepers will give-up keeping bees because they will not have access to local professional support should their bees become sick.

Ivor Davis - Chairman of the BBKA said:

"We fear that withdrawal of this support from the Government will force many beekeepers to give up the craft with a consequential large reduction of honeybees in this country. We believe that this is economic folly in that trying to save just £250,000 could result in a loss of many £ millions to the agriculture of this country, especially to early flowering crops such as fruit trees that rely on honeybees for pollination.

Tim Lovett - Vice Chairman of BBKA speaking on Radio 4's Today programme said:

"In a nutshell, if we lose this service, we put at risk the whole bee population in the United Kingdom"

For those receiving newsletters by internet, DEFRA leaflets can be downloaded by clicking [here](#) or from <http://www.csl.gov.uk/science/organ/environ/bee/factsheets/>

From the Federation General Secretary –

Further to the press release from the BBKA concerning proposed government cuts in support for the Honeybee Health Programme, which is managed through the National Bee Unit (NBU) of DEFRA.

These cuts are due to start from 2007/2008 and follow the Haskins report into the Civil Service.

DEFRA have also indicated that they would be deregulating Varroosis from next year and have plans to deregulate European Foul Brood in about three years time.

The BBKA has stated that " while it is prudent for us to plan with the NBU how we should work together to minimise the impact of this reduction and the proposed deregulations, we need your help to try to reverse the Government's mind on these cuts."

I have been requested to ask you, the members, to write to your local MP explaining the situation, and the risks, and to seek their support in attempting to reverse the Government's decision on bee health.

"The cuts neither make economic sense nor protect the bio-security of our bees that is important for the future."

Suggested key points that you could include are also attached and can be used in compiling your personal letter to your MP.

The BBKA has asked that you also send them a copy of your letter so that they can keep track of the campaign.

Thank you in anticipation.
William Napper



Key Points for a letter to your MP asking for support in reversing the Government's proposed cuts to NBU Funding –

1. The proposed cut is part of the Haskins Report.
2. They are proposing a £250,000 cut from £1.25 million pa (a 20% cut).
3. The cuts will only affect ENGLAND; Scotland and Wales are dealt with by their assemblies.

4. This will come into effect in 2007/8.
5. Varroa is to be deregulated in 2005 and there are plans to deregulate EFB in 2007/8.
6. It is probable that the cuts will mean a considerable reduction of about 50% in the number of seasonal bee inspectors.
7. NBU and DEFRA believe that EFB should be manageable using the shook swarm technique without antibiotics even though, as yet, there is insufficient published evidence available.

However –

8. We rely on the RBI/SBI network to help beekeepers recognise disease and search out local spread once EFB is found.
9. They have a statutory right to inspect whereas a voluntary body like a local beekeeping group could not do this.
10. Most beekeepers find it difficult to recognise EFB until it is too late therefore the success of the shook swarm technique does not affect the spread of EFB.
11. We fear that, without the support of the RBI/SBIs, many beekeepers will give up beekeeping once they have lost their bees.
12. If the cuts take place NBU will not have enough resources to combat the inevitable arrival of the Small Hive Beetle (this has just been found in a number of member states in the EU including Portugal) and this latest pest will have a devastating effect on beekeeping in the UK.
13. Since Varroa arrived in this country there are very few feral colonies and it is only beekeepers that maintain the current stocks of honeybees.
14. ADAS (2001) stated that honeybees contribute £120 million to the agricultural economy of England (especially for top fruit).
15. Rothamsted estimated this figure to be about £150 million.
16. Very few beekeepers benefit from their beekeeping in this country as it is mainly a local craft and not commercially viable.
17. The private benefit to beekeepers of keeping bees is estimated at only £11.3 million.
18. We consume about 25,000 tonnes of honey in this country but only produce about 6,000 tonnes of honey.

The story is that the cut of £250,000 will have significant impact on beekeeping. We believe that some bee diseases will spread and make beekeeping very difficult. Many beekeepers will give up. This will impact on the environment and economy of the country and we believe the impact will be much greater than the savings the government hope to make.

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: Secondhand 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 ONO 01491 574728

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

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