



# THE FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

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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## Editors Corner

Some time before I had my first colony of bees I was made aware of the risk of disease to bees. In fact, after listening to a couple of talks on Varroa and other common diseases during my first year of winter meetings, I wondered how I was going to cope with my own bees. Three summers on and I am fortunate that I have not had to deal with American Foul Brood (AFB) or European Foul Brood (EFB) and by taking seasonal precautionary steps I have been able to keep Varroa under reasonable control. Although this is good news for me and my bees, it has concerned me that I have not really had 'practice' in identifying many of the known diseases.



Well, you will no doubt have seen in the last couple of newsletters the promotion for the Bee Health Day, which was organised by Nigel Semmence and his colleagues from the National Bee Unit (NBU) for the benefit of beekeepers in our Federation on 4th July at Bracknell Leisure Centre. More than 60 beekeepers came along and we began the day with a briefing from Nigel about the key diseases we had to be concerned about and how to recognise them. This was followed by a series of short workshops where we focused on specific aspects of bee health. One of these involved us looking at frames

that were actually infected with AFB, EFB, Chalk Brood and Sac Brood (we had to put on plastic aprons and gloves before handling the frames). Although I have read the FERA booklets and studied the photographs, there really is nothing better than seeing the 'real thing'. Despite the fact that the AFB infected frame was quite old, we were still able to do the match test for roping. The exercise brought the photos to life and as a result I feel much better equipped to identify problems in the hive.

I know I am not alone in saying that this was an extremely useful day and I would recommend both beginner and experienced beekeepers to take advantage of any opportunity to spend some time focussing on the issues of bee health.

A couple of weeks earlier, representatives from our Associations attended a Bee Health Advisory Day, also run by Nigel Semmence and colleagues. In some ways this was similar to the sessions last week, but the focus was on educating more experienced beekeepers in how to help others identify and manage disease. I haven't spoken to all the Associations, but as a result of this training day, South Chilterns now has 3 Bee Health Advisors who are on call to talk through the concerns of our members on issues to do with disease.

On behalf of everyone who attended either of these sessions I would like to take the opportunity of thanking Nigel and his colleagues from the National Bee Unit (NBU) for the invaluable service they provide. See [www.beebase.com](http://www.beebase.com) for more information.

*Sue Remenyi*

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## In My Apiary

My daughter and I both overwintered two colonies of bees. My bees are kept on a site at the edge of a small copse on the local allotment, whereas my daughter's bees were across the river near Green Park. The colonies at the allotment had collected a lot of ivy honey for the winter which along with ambrosia put on in January kept them supplied with enough stores. One colony was quite strong after the winter but it was always quick to defend itself, the other was much smaller and the queen was slow to pick up laying with any vigour despite having enough stores and room. I decided that I would unite the two colonies and take the opportunity to get rid of the queen producing an aggressive colony. At the same time I agreed with my daughter that we set about raising a new queen later in the season from one of her colonies.

In order to unite the colonies I removed the aggressive queen and 24 hours later put newspaper over the queenright colony put perforations in the paper and then placed the queen-less brood box on top.

In late April we set up a small six frame nuc with frames of sealed and unsealed brood. Frames of food stores and pollen along with bees shaken into the nuc. Now we had to wait to see if queen cells were drawn out. As the colony supplying the bees for the nuc was strong as brood emerged in the nuc newly capped frames were swapped into it, the frames were checked to make sure we only raised one queen. This proved successful and after six weeks pollen entering the nuc and eggs, larva were the sign that we had a new queen. The new queen was given more time to establish herself and then the reuniting process was repeated so that the queen which was only laying slowly was replaced [she was three years old]. This colony is now building up well with their new queen.

The next challenge was to move my daughter's bees as she was relocating to Devizes. She decided to move only one hive to Devizes so I gained the larger 'Italian' hive. Two brood boxes and a super to move!!!! The super was cleared using Porter bee escapes so it could be removed easily before the main hive was tackled. The sun began to set and the bees finally went home. The entrance was closed and left for a few minutes to check that all the bees were in. Straps were secured around the brood boxes –two straps means there is less opportunity for sliding. Before taking the hive off the stand long straps were put out under a large cotton sheet we then carefully lifted the hive [note to self – put solid floors on before we move the other hive]. The hive was placed centrally on the sheet and systematically wrapped making sure that all the folds kept the bees in. More strapping – we now had a large heavy bee parcel which hummed! After much huffing and puffing we managed to get the double brood box into the car boot. By now it was getting dark so we drove across town and reversed the process at the allotment site. The bees were not very happy but were now in their new home we made a quick exit once the

entrance was opened. The next day I returned to give them back the super without further disturbance. They quickly settled and expanded further.

In order for my daughter to move house we had to relocate her bees to the allotment while the house contents, cats and chickens were moved. By now we had realised that a sack cart would make moving heavy hives easier and putting a solid floor on the hive meant that you are able to get hold of the hive with less chance of damaging the floor. So this time the bee hive sat on the sack cart after being strapped and wrapped – much easier for us but possibly a bit bumpy for the bees. The hive stayed at the allotment for a week before they were transported to Devizes where they have settled in well. It is a wonder that we have not been stopped and questioned, as being clad in bee suits, searching round with torches late at night, must have created a sight.

My advice for anyone moving bees is to plan and make sure you have everything you need to hand, a solid floor makes life much easier. A hive full of bees and stores is very heavy and a sack cart is a very valuable aid.

*Jenny Morgan, Reading BKA Education Officer*

  
**John Belcher**  
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## South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

SCBKA apiary meeting with Max Stone in Shiplake

On a humid and thundery Saturday afternoon we ventured onto the field at the bottom of Max Stone's garden to inspect some of his seven hives. Max is fortunate to be able to keep his hives on the edge of a field that is currently populated with opium poppies – which at the time were in full bloom and looking gorgeous.

After a couple of routine inspections, which included marking a couple of queens, the group moved onto a hive that Max reported as having a drone laying queen. A quick look through the frames by Reg confirmed this to be the case and it was decided to take the bees away and shake them off the brood. A small group of volunteers carried the brood box along one side of the field until they were a 25 metres or so from the original hive site. Each frame was then shaken and cleared of bees. The box of beeless drone brood was then removed to be destroyed.



Those of us who remained at the hive site were soon to be entertained to a swirling dance of bees looking for their home. After some disorientation caused by the empty space it did not take long for the bees to start drifting into the hives either side. On one side was a nuc and the photo shows the increased activity around the nuc entrance. Subsequent to the meeting, Max has reported that the nuc built up rapidly after this procedure, welcoming the sudden increase in population and is now ready to move into a brood box.

The rain held off and we ended the afternoon with a talk about queen rearing from Reg, whilst enjoying a feast prepared by Jo and Max.

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## Reading and District Beekeepers Association

Sunday 17th May Reading beekeepers assembled at Mike and Hazel Blackburn's Cross Lanes Apple Farm apiary. We enjoyed an excellent turnout for a welcome return to this beautiful location where the bees provide pollination services for this well known and much appreciated local fruit growing business.



With a big turnout it was decided to split into two groups and the party making their way down to the lower group of hives noticed that the bees had obligingly arranged a nice big swarm for us at a convenient height in an apple tree. All the fruit trees at Cross Lanes are properly pruned for fruit production and harvesting heights, which meant no step ladder was needed and the swarm was speedily collected into a skep. This was an ideal demonstration for our newer members who might think swarm

collections to be a bit of a daunting aspect of our craft, but Mike Blackburn with the help of his 'trainee' Pete showed how-to do it. A hive was available to receive (hive-off) the swarm. On then to the lower hives where the first hive we looked at was a very good colony with eggs and larvae in all stages. The queen was seen, together with a couple of play-cups. The super was checked



for available honey and though good amounts were seen in all ten frames only one was viscous enough to be collected, another week and the rest should be ready. Mike was harvesting honey today as oil seed rape is grown in quantity nearby which should be harvested as soon as the honey doesn't drip when shaken, i.e. prior to being fully capped to prevent the trouble and waste of having to 'melt-out' this fast granulating OSR honey. The second hive down here had been set-up as a bait

hive and indeed a good size swarm had gone-in. There was no queen activity yet, but many cells contained uncapped liquid stores, presumably carried by the bees in their honey stomachs to their new location, so this should develop into a good colony.



Up the hill then to join the rest of our party, pausing to admire the collected swarm in its skep (see photo) to find the early honey harvest in progress from hive no two in this group. The bees had been examined and showed good egg and larvae pattern with only a couple of unoccupied cups. We were all together for the opening of hive no three in the group. Populous and fairly fast over the comb, there was brood a plenty, including tiny larvae. This colony was possibly a bit congested, we

couldn't seem to spot eggs or the queen, but two sealed queen cells in the 'half' and on splitting and inclining this six more to be cut-out! Mike went through all frames leaving no Q.C's inside. This colony is probably the source of swarms and Mike now has the option of re-queening to produce a less-swarmy stock. Drone cell patches were raked-out and we were unable to find any signs of varroa. Plenty of frames of honey ready to be harvested on this colony and we soon had a rapid, remove, shake and brush and switch for new frames with foundation sequence in progress. We used a travelling screen on top of the harvesting super to prevent bees getting-in. Everything very efficiently done! This ended a thoroughly instructive and pleasant beekeeping session, with thanks to Mike and Hazel who had refreshments set-up for us in the apple shed. Photos courtesy of Lee show our genial host with obliging bees in their swarm, collection sequence, swarm cells from hive no three & varroa-free drone.



July Meeting courtesy of Giles and Emma McLaughlin on Sunday 26th. This is a beautiful location and Giles's garden apiary is surrounded by fine trees and agriculture above the Thames valley. Be there promptly for an 11-30 start, look out for e-mail details of parking arrangements and in web-site [www.rbka.org.uk](http://www.rbka.org.uk)

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## Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

### The Society's Apiary in June

There were two apiary meetings on the 7th and the 21st June and the colonies of honeybees provided a range of situations and conditions to challenge both the newest and the wisest of beekeepers.

Groups of mixed experience beekeepers gathered at the apiary on each of the Sunday afternoons in June. The group usually splits into two; with each half being led by an experienced member hives are opened and inspected, appropriate action discussed, decided upon, taken and recorded.

The first hive was the product of an artificial swarm last month and had settled down nicely. The bees were calm and the marked Queen was easily spotted while the eggs, larvae and sealed brood cells and good stores indicated that everything in this colony was 'hunky dory'. The challenge of trying to find the queen is shared by all the observers, but it always pleasing to witness the delight of a new member who spots her for the first time. Another super was added on the second inspection.

The next hive was not as happy, the Queen wasn't seen and there was no brood so a brood frame with eggs was swapped from the hive being examined by the other half of the group. At the second inspection an empty queen cell was found, there was no sign of brood yet but the bees were calm and easy to handle.

A further hive showed all the signs of wanting to leave home soon even though it had been given extra brood space by the addition of a super. This gave the novice beekeepers a chance to experience the challenges of examining 'brood and a half' but this arrangement also gives the bees more space for creating queen cells. An artificial swarm was performed and a week later an interim inspection found 45 queen cells – they had certainly been busy! By the second meeting the old queen had settled down nicely, the super was filling up and so another super was added.

In the other hives it was business as usual; a new queen still learning the ropes revealed her inexperience when we saw a few cells with two eggs in.

Once again the apiary proved that it is a wonderful learning opportunity for old and new bee-keepers alike.

### **A swarm collector gets a surprise**

As a swarm collector many of the calls I receive are from people who do not know what kind of bees they have in their gardens. I am usually pleased to be able to help them, either by providing advice and information on the phone or visiting them. I recently received a call from a very concerned older gentleman; his gardener had been stung on the face by a bee whilst weeding under a hedge and so had refused to work in that area of the garden again. A pest controller had told the gentleman that if it was bees then he could not destroy them (which was good to hear) and so he contacted the BKA for help. He was very worried as from previous experience he knew that he could suffer anaphylactic shock if stung and he was afraid to go anywhere near the area.

I paid him a visit and after squeezing between a hedge and fence, having a good look around and seeing only one bee (not a honeybee) I could reassure him that there was no swarm of bees living in his hedge and it was possibly a solitary bee that had stung the unlucky gardener. Afterwards he talked about his time working in Africa with the British army and demonstrated that he had lost none of his interrogation skills by eliciting my address. He was a charming man and I was pleased to reassure him, but I was totally unprepared when an hour later he turned up on my doorstep with a bunch of beautiful pink roses which he told me came from Kenya where he used to work.

It seems that being a swarm collector has some unanticipated benefits although I am not sure that my husband was entirely convinced by my explanation for the mysterious appearance of the bouquet!

### **Apiary Meetings**

Our summer meetings are held at the society's apiary where members can learn and gain hands-on experience of all aspects of beekeeping. Meetings are held at 2.30pm on alternate Sundays and the next meetings will be on the 5th and 19th July.

### **Winter Meetings 2015**

Our schedule of winter meetings will recommence on Tuesday 8th September. Meetings are held at All Saints Parish Hall, Alexandra Road, Windsor SL4 1HZ. The meetings are usually scheduled on the second Tuesday of the month beginning at 8 pm and refreshments are available.

General information and details of all our meetings can be found on our excellent website: <http://swmbks.weebly.com/meetings.html>.



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## ***An invitation from the Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects***

The Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects (LASI) are delighted to invite you and the members of your Beekeepers' Association to attend two workshops to be held at the University of Sussex.

### **Planting for Bees and other Flower Visitors**

Saturday 25 July, 1300-1730

This workshop is targeted at anyone who is interested in providing more pollen and nectar-rich plants for our wild and managed bees and other flower visitors. We aim to show you how to identify different categories of flower visiting insects and how to survey plants to determine which attract the most insects, and also the types of insects attracted (i.e. different plants attract different insects). The workshop will also describe the latest results of LASI research aimed at helping bees and other insects in gardens.

### **Integrated Varroa Management**

Friday 7 August, 1300-1700

Saturday 8 August, 1300-1700

This workshop is targeted at beekeepers who are interested in methods of pest and disease control. There will be lectures giving the background on various techniques such as hygiene, including queen rearing; how to carry out drone trapping; and the use of oxalic acid as an acaricide. This will be followed by demonstrations on how to use these methods.

For more information about the workshops please visit LASI's [event page](#).

If you would like to reserve a place at either, or both, of these workshops then please book online at the secure [booking page](#). There is a charge of £5 per booking towards refreshment and administration costs which will be payable when booking.

We hope to see you there and look forward to welcoming you to the Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects.

Contact :

### **Sue Hepburn |Head of Donor Relations**

University of Sussex, Development & Alumni Relations Office (DARO), Room 4b29 Mantell Building, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9RF | Tel: +44 (0)1273 872657 | Email: [s.hepburn@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:s.hepburn@sussex.ac.uk)

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## ***For your Diary***

Date	Topic	Event Host	Contact
25 July	Planting for Bees and other Flower Visitors	LASI – University of Sussex	<a href="http://www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi/newsandevents/events">http://www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi/newsandevents/events</a>
7 & August	Integrated Varroa Management	LASI – University of Sussex	<a href="http://www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi/newsandevents/events">http://www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi/newsandevents/events</a>

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## ***Association websites***

All four Federation member association websites have a lot of information – some of which may only be relevant to that association, but there is also quite a bit that is useful to us all. Here are the links for your reference:

Reading & District Beekeepers Association: <http://www.rbka.org.uk/>

South Chilterns Beekeepers' Association: <http://www.scbka.org>

Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society: <http://swmbks.weebly.com/>

Wokingham and District Beekeepers Association: [www.wokinghambeekeepers.org.uk/](http://www.wokinghambeekeepers.org.uk/)

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## **Useful Links, Advice and Information**

<http://www.apinews.com/> This website is a mine of information from around the world. You can subscribe to their newsletter.

<http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/newhome.html> This website has a lot of really useful information for the beekeeper.

<http://www.beekeepingforum.co.uk/> This is a portal for all things beekeeping.

<http://www.bbka.org.uk/> The British Beekeepers Association.

<http://hymenopteragenome.org/beebase/> Beebase is a comprehensive data source for the bee research community.

<http://www.lapisonline.it/index.php/en/l-apis-excerpt> A long standing Italian publication which now has an English section.

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## **NBU Advice for Obtaining Bees:**

**Join Beebase** - By joining BeeBase you can access beekeeping information and ask for advice or help from the Bee Unit: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase>.

**Your Regional Bee Inspectors are:**

**Southern Region:** Nigel Semmence at: [nigel.semmence@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nigel.semmence@fera.gsi.gov.uk),

The main website is: <https://secure.csl.gov.uk/beebase/public/Contacts/contacts.cfm>  
National Bee Unit, Central Science Laboratory, Sand Hutton, York YO41 1 LZ, tel: 01 904 462 510, email: <mailto:nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk> .

**South Eastern Region:** Mr Alan Byham, fax/tel: 01306 611 016

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**Contributions to the Editor** are always welcome as long as they are signed. Anonymous letters and letters not in English will not be published. The Editor reserves the right to withhold names.

**Contributions**, including emails, to arrive with the Editor by the 20th of the month for publication by the 7<sup>th</sup> of the following month. Contributions received after this may be held over for a later month.

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