



# 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.

January 2014

Number 684

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## Editors Corner

I hope that you had a jolly holiday period and that neither you nor your bees have suffered too much from the dreadfully wet weather. I wonder how many of you received a bee-related Christmas gift? I will certainly enjoy wearing my T-shirt in the summer and the lip balm my daughter made from last year's wax is a constant companion in my handbag.

One gift I think I am pleased I did not get is a jar of Bee Venom Cream. I read about this strange product in the newspaper where it was described as follows *"It works by gently stinging the skin with melittin and apamin, both derived from the bee venom. The skin reacts as if it has been stung, thereby jump-starting the production of elastin and collagen, which are essential to youthful looking skin"*

Tempting perhaps, but I think I'll stick to my simple moisturiser! You can read more about this from <http://www.skincareorganics.co.uk/black-label-bee-venom-p-281.html>

I hope you enjoy the photos from our various association Christmas gatherings – much fun being had by all. You may be surprised by the tale of a bee rescue by John White from SCBKA, which one would not expect to be telling in January! I wonder if anyone would like to suggest what they might have done differently to John in that situation.

There continues to be some important Federation matters to report and I hope that you managed to digest the information we provided last month. Caroline has prepared a summary of the responses and her feedback is provided in this newsletter. The AGM of the Federation will be held on Saturday 22 February in Woodcote Village Hall at 10.30am. Any Association member can attend this AGM.

Wishing you all a very happy, healthy and honey filled beekeeping year!

Sue Remenyi

### C WYNNE JONES

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## Propositions to go forward to the BBKA ADM

Following on from last month's publication of the propositions that are being put forward at the BBKA ADM, Caroline Bushall has collated the responses and as a result will be taking the following recommendations with her.

The responses are summarised below. Where the voting is tied, I am suggesting that I use discretionary powers based on arguments presented during the day. Please let me know if you have any comments on this.

<b>Propositions for 2014</b>					
Prop No.	Slough, Maidenhead & Windsor	Reading	South Chilterns	Wokingham	<b>Summary</b>
1/2014	y	y	n	n	tied
2/2014	n	n	y	y	tied
3/2014	n	y	y	y	y
4/2014	y	y	y	y	y
5/2014	n	y	y	y	y
6/2014	y	y	y	y	y
7/2014	n	a	y	n	n
8/2014	y	y	n	y	y
9/2014	n	y	y	y	y
Budget for 2014	y	y	n	n	tied
<b>Elections</b>					
<b>Exam board</b>					
3 years	Discretionary	Discretionary	Discretionary	Bayley, Hunter & Murdin	Discretionary (Bayley, Hunter & Murdin)
2 years	Discretionary	Discretionary	Discretionary	Sutcliffe & Welch	Discretionary (Sutcliffe & Welch)
<b>President</b>	Discretionary	Discretionary	Discretionary	David Aston	Discretionary (David Aston)
<b>Exec Committee</b>	Winning	Winning	Discretionary	Brown, Homer, Morgan, Patterson & Winning	Discretionary (Brown, Homer, Morgan, Patterson & Winning)

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## Beekeeping in December!

The December issue of the newsletter began by saying 'December is a quiet time for the bees'. Very true and likewise for us beekeepers ... or so I thought, until a few days before Xmas when sitting in the Madjedski stadium at a conference I had a call from Ron Crocker asking if I could help out a colleague who had some bees near a stop-cock. After a couple of phone calls and an email complete with photo it appeared a colleague of mine was trying to fill a new service reservoir and was putting off the fill because a colony of bees was in the way! He had tried our company conservation group who put him in

touch with Oxfordshire BKA then on to SCBKA and Ron. Ron suggested moving and feeding them. As a relatively new beekeeper I thought this sounded interesting and also bewildering.



7.15am the next morning found me in West Hagbourne near Buckleberry being escorted by my colleague onto a building site with cranes, diggers, spotlights and a team of builders all hard at work. The new reservoir needed filling and there was apparently a colony of bees at the top of the hydrant that was needed for this purpose. I arrived with a brood box and equipment all ready to go. We entered the site and drove down to the foot of the new reservoir through two sets of locked gates and onto a very muddy building site with a small fenced off area around two boreholes.

On opening the manhole plate there they were 4 or 5 sheets of comb with bees on them and a few moving on the surface. The site was exposed and cold. The bees had not chosen well – a concrete apron and metallic

plate. I will say now this is a story without a happy ending, but with several positives - hopefully not just for me.

I prised the comb away from the sides and it came away very easily. Four sheets of comb complete with bees. They were as light as a feather – no stores at all with little life in them. My colleague and I carried bees and equipment across the site beneath cranes and equipment back to my car. One pair of burly construction workers asked for a peep into the box and I obliged. My colleague later laughed and said they would not go near them for 2 days concerned for their safety! Somehow seeing a beekeeper carrying them in a box added a safety margin!

I thanked my colleague John, shook hands, was released from the site and headed east to Pangbourne. En route the noise in the back of the car definitely grew and grew and I nervously kept using the rear view mirror and wondered how close to hand my veil was. We made it safely back to Pangbourne by 9am. The sun was just appearing and the bees were active and trying to get out. I placed the combs into a hive as gently as possible, placed half a block of fondant in and cut a couple of small strips and placed these directly on top of the bees. Job done and some self-congratulation felt in order. It had all gone to plan!



A couple of days later, looking through the glass quilt we could see that both strips of fondant had gone and the bees were on the move upwards. Had we missed a vital clue? A week later took us to Boxing Day when we went for a stroll and visited the bees on our allotment. We could not resist a quick peep into the new colony. They were still, completely without motion – dead! I was crestfallen. It seemed we had done everything right, carried out a rescue and re-housed the misplaced bees. On closer inspection the bees nearest to the comb were head down in the comb in that typical 'starvation pose'. We found the deceased queen in the middle of the bees. The block of fondant, their only source of food, was some 6" away. Was this too far from them? Should we have placed more strips of fondant directly on or above the bees? Were they beyond help?

So many questions and we have so few answers. I will run these by those who are wiser and more experienced within SCBKA. I can say this experience was wonderful - to have done some active beekeeping in December and it felt great to rescue some bees. Lots of learning points. If only they had made it ...

*John White, SCBKA*

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## Wokingham Beekeepers Association

Some photos of our Christmas meeting.



*Lynne Janes*

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## South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

SCBKA has had a busy December, beginning with the need to move the association apiary to a new location – fortunately just a short distance from the original site. This was managed over a two week period with volunteers first collecting equipment from the shed



to clean and/or to store. The following week a work-force dismantled the shed and moved it to the new site where it was re-erected in record time! The hives were then moved.

### Christmas Q&A session

We had an enjoyable Question Time style session at our Christmas meeting on 11 December and



we have summarised the topics that were raised. The panel was chaired by Dave Moss with Kate Mz, Reg Hook and Tim xxx as panellists

We ended the evening with a scrumptious selection of Xmas fayre provided by members and a raffle which raised over a £100 for the Association.

Q1	<b>What should I be doing with my bees for the next 3 months?</b> Leave them alone! Check that dead bees do not block the mouse guards to ensure that they are able to fly on good days Heft regularly to monitor the loss of weight and feed if necessary Prepare to change floors at the end of Feb
Q2	<b>How should I ventilate my hives thru winter?</b> Open mesh floor: close the hole in the crown board and insulate, leave the trays OUT all winter Solid floors: Matchsticks under the crownboard and insulate
Q3	<b>Do I need to worry about snow?</b> Not really, you can shade the entrance a bit to reduce the glare and discourage flying
Q4	<b>HMF in honey - do I need to worry about it?</b> No. It is a natural chemical that occurs in honey – a breakdown product of sugars. It can give an indication of storage conditions: levels increase with age and temperature but it's not poisonous to humans. Limit in honey of 20mg/kg, compare to natural level in plums of 2,200mg/kg. Generally nothing to worry about.
Q5	<b>In August when honey is taken and replaced by sugar syrup – how much honey should be left for the bees?</b> It's really personal preference. Bees need to work to store sugar syrup and you need older bees to do this work to ensure winter bees are not worn out, so best to feed earlier Generally can't over-feed in August if the bees don't want it they won't eat it.
Q6	<b>Can we check insecticide levels in honey to ensure safety?</b>

	Yes if you want to Trading Standards can check for a fee. Bees are likely to be more susceptible than humans to insecticides (they are insects after all!) so if bees are OK unlikely to have anything to worry about.
Q7	<b>Do bees store water?</b> No.
Q8	<b>How do you cream honey?</b> Allow a bucket of honey to set hard. Heat to about 30 <sup>o</sup> c for about a day to get the honey malleable and agitate with a creamer tool (like a potato masher) to break up crystals without introducing air to the honey. Mash the honey until smooth and creamy, leave for 2-3 hours to allow air to come out and bottle. Yummy!  <b>OR</b> you can liquefy the honey, seed with finely granulated honey, mash it and then bottle (but this sounds harder to do ... I got a bit lost here to be honest!)
Q9	<b>What causes honey to granulate coarsely?</b> Probably the origin of the nectar e.g. Rape honey is finely granulated, ragwort honey can be coarse.
Q10	<b>In Chicago hives are insulated with foil wrapped foam – do I need to do this?</b> Advised not to – our climate is warmer and more humid so unlikely to need this degree of insulation and condensation likely to be a problem if you do.
Q11	<b>What records should I keep?</b> Some of the panel keep a few written records tho this is not recommended (!).  Ted Hooper is useful in terms of records to keep – generally obvious things like Date, food/stores, eggs present, Queen cells, no frames covered by brood etc. Records cards are available from the web.
Q12	<b>Why does temperament change thru the year?</b>  It may be that the queen uses sperm sequentially ... so early bees have a different father than the later ones.  The state of mind of the hive also has an effect if the bees are happy and not stressed they are less likely to be aggressive. Weather also important.  If your bees are aggressive then re-queen.
Q13	<b>Do bees recognise us?</b> Apparently they can remember faces (!)
Q14	<b>Have you hints to manage aggressive bees?</b>  Be gentle, purposeful and calm, never open a hive without a purpose.  Wear clean suit and gloves to reduce pheromones  Water spray can calm them down a bit  Temporarily moving the hive from the site can help as flyers return to the original site, so fewer bees to manage – remember to put it back tho after you are finished  Re-queen
Q15	<b>How much water should be in honey?</b>  20-22% you can test it with a refractometer, but generally you can tell by shaking frames before extraction - if nothing drops out it will be OK to extract.

Q16	<b>When can I move a hive?</b> Whenever you like in winter – ideally if bees not flying for a week. In spring/summer when bees are flying need to move 3ft or 3 miles.
Q17	<b>How much does a laying queen eat?</b> Equivalent to about 4 teaspoons of sugar per 2,000 eggs (apparently!)

The **SCBKA HONEY SHOW** is on Wednesday 15th January at 7pm in Woodcote Village Hall. With the wet weather Members children may be getting bored and this would be a great time to get them involved in the honey show by finding photographs they took in the summer and painting or drawing (see Classes 9 and 10 below). Bring your entries to be booked in between 7pm and 7.15pm. You may enter as many Classes as you wish, but please note: only one entry per person for each Class.

See the Honey Show Schedule of Classes below for the competitors amongst you, but all are welcome for an interesting evening, made more so by Reg Hook explaining his judging criteria for the honey and mead. I

#### ADULTS

CLASS 1: 1 x 1lb jar of clear honey

CLASS 2: 1 x 1lb jar of set or creamed honey

CLASS 3: 1 beeswax candle and/or 3 x 1oz moulds of beeswax

CLASS 4: 1 bottle of mead

CLASS 5: Honey Cake (the Devonshire Honey Cake recipe attached **MUST** be used)

CLASS 6: Honey Biscuits (the Honey Cookie-Biscuits recipe attached **MUST** be used)

#### ADULTS

CLASS 7: A photograph of Bees/Beekeeping

CLASS 8: A painting or drawing of Bees/Beekeeping

#### CHILDREN

CLASS 9: A photograph of Bees/Beekeeping

CLASS 10: A painting of Bees/Beekeeping

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### Reading Beekeepers Association:

Here are some photos from our Christmas meeting which began with a talk from Dr Michael Keith Lucas on bee colony decline and collapse in the UK. (Full report for February Issue). We then enjoyed a festive punch. The other two photos are of Matthew Linnard receiving the Hazel Blackburn Novice Beekeeper's Trophy and the entries for The Novice Beekeeper Honey Show.




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## John Belcher

### Beekeeping Equipment & Supplies

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Mobile: 07929 586037
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## Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers



In our last meeting of the year we were instructed in candle making by Martin Buckle. Martin arrived with a marvellous array of equipment and demonstrated his creative ingenuity in making and adapting tools for candle making. He supplied many useful tips for successful candle making and by the end of the talk we were all planning how to use our surplus beeswax.

After the talk we indulged in the festive spread of savouries and sweets contributed by the members which included the rather fun and very tasty marzipan bees pictured below.



Our winter 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.

Forthcoming meetings:

Saturday 11th January (7 pm) Anniversary Dinner at Stirrups Country House Hotel

Saturday 25th January (2.30 pm) 'Beekeeping under the microscope' - Dinah Sweet

Tuesday 11th February 'Selling honey and the law' - Honour Ryan, Windsor Trading Standards

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

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### ***For your diary***

**8 January:** Reading BKA Ron Hoskins talking about hygienic bees

**11 January:** SWMBKS anniversary dinner

**15 January:** SCBKA Honey Show

**25 January:** SWMBKS Dinah Sweet on "Beekeeping under the microscope"

**11 February:** SWMBKS Honour Ryan on "Selling honey and the law"

**19 February:** SCBKA The Birds and the Bees with Dr Michael Keith Lucas

**13 February:** Reading BKA Roger Patterson on "Bee Improvement"

**22 February:** Berkshire Federation of Beekeepers Associations Annual General Meeting, Woodcote Village Hall at 10:30

**8 March:** Beekeeping for Beginners Day at Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association

**12 March:** Reading BKA Bee Diseases. Nigel Semmence giving us an update on diseases, the Asian hornet and any other relevant hot topics.

**19 March:** SCBKA The Decline of England's Bees with Dr Thomas Breeze

**29 March:** SCBKA Skep Making (booking required).

### ***Beekeeping for Beginners Day***

A one day course will take place on Saturday March 8th 2014 to provide information for people who think they may like to take up beekeeping. This is an annual event, now in its ninth year, run by the Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association.

The event is useful for those who may have had a long term interest, but aren't sure if beekeeping is for them or not. All the information needed to become a beekeeper will be given in the presentation. There are follow-up sessions at the well equipped Wisborough Green teaching apiary for those who think they will be able to manage and wish to go further. This provides the opportunity to learn and achieve competence on someone else's facilities under supervision before buying bees and equipment. The course is also suitable for those who may have just started beekeeping, but have had little or no guidance.

The presentation will be by very experienced beekeepers with others available during break times to provide advice and information.

The Wisborough Green BKA covers a wide area with members in West Sussex and South Surrey, but for those a bit further afield details of surrounding Associations will be available on the day.

Further information for beekeepers and non-beekeepers can be found on the Wisborough Green Beekeepers Association website [www.wgbka.org.uk](http://www.wgbka.org.uk) where you can find further details of the Beginners Day on the Events page. Contact Roger Patterson 01403 790637 or 07976 306492, [roger-patterson@btconnect.com](mailto:roger-patterson@btconnect.com) for course details, or Gordon Allan 01798 343470, [petworthgordon@btopenworld.com](mailto:petworthgordon@btopenworld.com) to book.

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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.

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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 will be held over for a later month.

**Advertisement entries**, to be received by the Advertisement Manager in advance of the 20th of every month. Rates: 2 Lines for £1.00; Commercial rates: £1.00 per line. Please make cheques payable to FBBKA. To be sent to the Advertisement Manager: Mr Jon Davey, 107 Northcourt Avenue, Reading RG2 7HG. Tel: 0118 975 0734.

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