



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

What a busy month it has been – swarming continues, the flow has been good and much honey extracted. I was eager to try out my newly acquired extractor and it had seemed a long wait until the honey in my one viable super was sufficiently capped to go ahead. Eventually the day came when I decided that it was good enough and the areas not capped definitely did not dribble when shaken. Out to the hive I went with my Rhombus and drawing pins carefully placed in a



little dish so that I would not drop them in the grass. It was a lovely quiet evening last week and I took my time to open up the hive and lift away the crown board. I removed one of the two bits of wood covering the holes and placed the rhombus over it; in went the drawing pins and Bob's your Uncle – I was ready. I paused for a moment to consider which way up this should go. Obvious I say – the bees can go down through the ends, but can't come back up. So I removed the super heavy with honey and placed the board on top of the super below with a small eke on top to make

room for the Rhombus, put back on the full super, and as I was short of crown boards, I just put the roof on the top – OK for 24 hours I thought.

The following day I eagerly returned to remove my bounty. Hmm – quite a lot of buzzing I could hear – I carefully removed the roof and pow! A million bees (or so it looked) angrily poured out. The super – far from being empty was packed with bees. How could this be? It did not take me too long to work out that the culprit had to be the Rhombus – and I quickly realised what an idiot I had been to think that my considered decision the day before could possibly have been correct!

After apologising to the angry ladies I turned the crown board the other way up so that they would go down through the crown board hole and out through the angled exits – which they then really would not find easy to return through. I closed up and waited anxiously until the next day. As I approached the hive there was a sense of calm – I could not hear any buzzing and I gingerly removed the roof – not a bee to be seen! I peered inside the super and it was empty of bees. I levered it off and removed it from the hive. To my astonishment and delight, there were only three bees munching away in a couple of frames. So, what a success the Rhombus method of clearing the bees proves to be – when executed properly using common sense rather than considered thought.

Our Associations should be congratulated for the time and effort they put in to bee-awareness in the community – with Reading and Wokingham both involved in local shows/open days during the course of the past month.

Sue Remenyi

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In My Apiary

This is a tale of two swarms – the first of which ended up ‘In my apiary’. At the start of June we were called to a neighbour’s house to retrieve a swarm that had settled in a copper beech tree. It was a dream swarm on a low hanging branch and easily accessible. However, we were unprepared for the attentive and growing crowd that had gathered as we got ourselves sorted out and prepared to go into action. Lots of photos were taken and the irony was not lost on us that we were suitably clad in all the appropriate gear whereas the onlookers were mighty close and in shorts and t-shirts! Despite the pressure of performing to a live audience, the swarm was quickly collected and now happily inhabits our apiary.

Two weeks later we had another call from the same neighbour reporting another swarm. My goodness - two in two weeks. Caroline took up the challenge whilst I was returning from work.

On arriving home I sent her a text for a progress report and half expected a ‘job done’ reply. I got one word – ‘help’. On arriving at our neighbour’s house, I viewed the tree line from the outside but could see no bees and no people. Odd – the front door was ajar and smoke was issuing from the front room window. On entering the front room of the house, I was both shocked and mystified to see the room filled with smoke, some bees and two figures in bee suits. The smoke was so thick I could barely make out Caroline puffing on the smoker in the hearth, with our neighbour on the settee in my suit! The swarm was obviously well settled in the chimney.

I left the room pretending to observe the chimney from outside whereas, in actual fact, I was finding it very hard to breath without choking. I started doing frantic mental calculations as to the amount of insurance cover we had and what the initial excess was. The scene in the front room did not look good to me at all. Worryingly the chimney was only showing the barest sign of smoke coming out of the top. It was clearly blocked and the smoke was pouring into the room.

The lady of the house came home about then and looked very concerned. I was feeling we had bitten off much more than we could chew and began to think this was a hopeless task. Then there was a loud thud followed by the speedy appearance of our neighbour. A bunch of bees had fallen down the chimney into the front room. Immediately smoke and more bees began appearing at the chimney. The front room now looked like a complete re-build might be in order. The only thing doing well seemed to be Caroline’s smoker. At this point it was actually glowing red at the base. I seriously think some kind of smoking award is due here!

Eventually the bees at the top settled and bees gathered around the base of the stack. Caroline came out to applause from the growing crowd. I tried to add value by providing a running commentary on how bees swarm and what might happen next and suggested that the smoking could discontinue. However Caroline, keen to be sure that our neighbours would not have more problems after we left, quite rightly ignored my advice, went back in, reloaded the smoker and was off again. I think by now she had developed an obsessional attachment to the smoker.

However – a few minutes later the smoke drove the swarm off the chimney and onto a nearby holly tree. I recovered my bee suit and sprung into action. One tall ladder and a pair of loppers later soon found the by now exhausted swarm safely ensconced in a box on the ground. The

house owners were very relieved to be rid of the bees and no litigation solicitor was mentioned. My relief was far greater!

Two doors down live a couple of keen novices who were awaiting their first colony. We waited until early evening and invited them to view the scene, the chimney and the box of bees. We reminded them of their desire to keep bees (including a potential swarm) and the rest is now, as they say, history. Lessons learned include – chimneys are not insurmountable providing you have an enthusiastic colleague who is zealous with a smoker. If a new beekeeper or otherwise – be careful what you ask for. When using a smoker indoors always ask the homeowner's permission! We are of course maintaining a watching brief and will re-queen should the temperament of the swarm be unsuitable for new beekeepers in a garden setting.

John White, SCBKA

A colorful advertisement for 'Becky's Beezzzs' beekeeping supplies. The title 'Becky's Beezzzs' is in a large, stylized blue font with a bee illustration. Below it, the text 'For all your Beekeeping needs...' is in a smaller blue font. The main body of text describes the products offered, including mated queens, nucs, and various beekeeping equipment. A list of stockists is provided, including Cedar Hives, Polystyrene & Ply Nuc Boxes, Frames & Foundation, Rauchbox Smokers & Smoker Fuel, Varroa Treatments & Medicines, Vita Gold & Vita Green, Ambrosia Fondant & Syrup, Pollen Substitute, Disposable & Leather Gloves, Bee Suits & Gauntlets, Feeders, Extractors, and Jars. The advertisement also features a photo of a beekeeper in a white suit and a blue banner that says 'WE SELL LIVE BEES AND MATED QUEENS'. At the bottom, contact information is provided: 'Visit us online at www.beckysbeesonlineshop.co.uk', 'Or contact us 01264 351104 • 07973 423628 • beckysbeezzzs@gmail.com', and 'Distributors for Aulumgaard's Ambrosia Beefeed, competitive quotes for pallet orders.'

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Api-puncture – An Ancient Chinese Treatment

Reproduced from an online posting of the Metro Beijing.

Lying on her bed in the Beijing Apitherapy Hospital, Liu Yu, 27, gritted her teeth as she was stung repeatedly by bees.

Using tweezers to hold a bee above Liu's neck, attending doctor, Wang Menglin allowed the insect to sting her jugular acupoints, and leave behind its stinger and venom sac on the skin.

"The devil of disease is more horrible than the stings of bees," said Liu, who takes an average of 80 stings over her entire body during her daily treatment.

In 2010, after experiencing numbness in her legs, Liu was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS), an often debilitating disease in which one's own immune system eats away at the protective myelin sheath that covers the nerves. There is no known cure for MS, but Liu sought treatment at West China Hospital of Sichuan University. After being injected with hormones for five days, Liu's condition worsened. She lost faith in Western medicine.

Based on a few recommendations, Liu then turned to the Beijing Apitherapy Hospital in Shunyi district, where she met with Wang. After a month and a half of treatment in 2010, Liu was back on her feet.

"The treatment is definitely painful, but after being stung, I feel better and there is no pain in my legs," said Liu.

"Apitherapy is a comprehensive treatment for more than 30 diseases. This biological therapy of traditional Chinese medicine includes bee sting acupuncture and injections of bee venom," said Wang, who is also the director of the Beijing Apitherapy Institution.

The active substance in bee venom is said to strengthen the immune system by stimulating the acupoints and spreading to the surrounding area. Apitherapy is especially effective for people suffering from forms of arthritis, according to Wang.

There are now 100,000 medical workers in China administering apitherapy to about 1 million patients, said Wang. He notes, however, that it is very difficult to promote it in large hospitals. "Many clinics or private hospitals in the mountainous areas where medicine is scarce prefer apitherapy, because it is very cheap but very effective. But most public hospitals do not accept it because it doesn't bring much profit to the hospital," said Wang.

"Bees have been used for more than 3,000 years in China to treat arthritis," countered Wang. "We have been treating patients since 1989, when the clinic was established. And there are almost no cases of relapses after they receive a treatment."

Wokingham and District Beekeepers Association

Hurst Show & Country Fair 2014

Over the weekend of the 28th & 29th June association members manned a stall at the Hurst Show to promote the aims of the association and hopefully sell some of the honey that had been extracted this year. We met a great many people who came to look at the observation hive, which really drew the crowds and gave us an ideal opportunity to explain the life cycle of the bee, whilst educating people to the plight of bees and what we can all do to help them. Having drawn the public to the stall, the members were able to sell honey and honey related products.

The weather leading up to the weekend was warm and sunny so everyone's fingers were crossed that it would stay that way. Well, we are talking about the British weather so, in its usual imitable style, a cold, wet front moved in on the Friday. The forecast for the Saturday was sunshine and showers – not certain what happened to the sunshine and the showers turned into monsoon rain at times! Still, some people came along and we were able to educate and sell our wares.

Sunday's weather proved much more amenable with not a rain drop seen. The show was packed and the honey and other goods were flying off the stall. Talking of other things flying that day, one of the owls from the falconry display flew up into an oak tree at the beginning of the day and was still refusing to come down as everyone was packing up to go!



The observation hive proved a major attraction once more along with Garth (dressed in nothing but his bee suit) - he claims it was only for show but I have my doubts. In the observation hive the queen was obviously quite happy as she spent the two days constantly laying. It was a real treat and an amazing opportunity to see this taking place. It was also fascinating seeing the bees trying to dispose of deformed and deceased larva. Many thanks to Bob for taking the time and effort to set it up for us.

Much to everyone's surprise many of the children thought the bees were wasps – worrying as it

sounds, it does make you wonder what flying insects they swat in the garden or on the playground. Hopefully many will now return to school better educated and think twice before swatting anything else!

Despite the damp Saturday the weekend show proved to be a huge success so it is likely that there will be a repeat performance in 2015. Very many thanks to all the club members (and some partners) who took time out to assist on the stand.

Katie Holmes

South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

Apiary meeting 7 June 2014 - Max Vine's apiary

There was wind, rain, thunder and lightning and for all we know pestilence as well in the morning but thankfully the weather cleared for our visit to Max's apiary.

We arrived at Max's beautiful home in warm sunshine. Max has 8 hives (4 new swarms from this season) on two locations. Altogether we looked at 5 hives

Hive 1: Initially we were looking for a Queen cell in this hive although it seemed that any queen cell had hatched and the queen was already laying, although slowly as there were relatively few eggs. We did not spot the queen but the demeanour of the bees, (nice and quiet) alongside the presence of eggs suggests that the hive is queen-right. There was one comb in poor condition which Reg moved to the back of the hive so that it can be removed at a later date. Max needs to watch these in case they need feeding to help them through the June gap.

Hive 2: This was a new colony from a swarm that Max retrieved approx. 4 weeks ago. There was plenty of sealed brood and larvae but no eggs and we did not spot the queen. Reg considered it likely that the queen in the hive had perhaps slowed or even stopped laying due the lack of nectar flow. She will start to lay again when the summer flowers establish themselves. Again the demeanour of the bees suggests strongly that the colony was queen-right.

Hive 3: This hive was a new colony, a swarm 3.5 weeks ago and had been well fed ever since. In this hive there were relatively few bees, but brood evident in all stages, but the pattern was very speckled, pepperpot-ty suggesting that the queen may be inbred. There was no sign of disease or anything nasty but Reg suggested that Max should perhaps import new blood in to his apiary to get the lovely smooth brood pattern that we all strive for.

Hive 4: This hive was the result of an artificial swarm Max had made a few weeks ago. There were lots of queen cells and we were just in time to see a new queen hatch. Reg destroyed the remaining queen cells to prevent casts and closed the hive – all looking good there.

Hive 5: we just looked in the supers here Max had removed some honey and replaced the wet super, with some crystallised honey on the hive and we were checking to see how well the bees were doing to clean the combs up. Unfortunately the bees didn't realise that was what they were required to do and were depositing new honey! Reg told Max to almost cover the holes the crown board below the super –if the bees have to squeeze into the super they regard it as "outside the hive" and will rob the honey back into the hive, cleaning the frames as they go. Spraying the combs with water would help the bees to recover the crystallised honey.

And then we all went for tea and a marvellous spread of real homemade cakes. Many thanks Mary!

After tea we had a good poke around the garden and Max's bee shed, where he showed us his Heath Robinson inventions for a honey warmer cabinet and other accoutrements,

Many thanks to Max and Mary for a fab afternoon and to Reg as ever for his insight and expertise.

Caroline Knight

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Reading and District Beekeepers Association

On Sunday 18th May Reading Beekeepers plus potential new recruits to our craft met at Cross Lanes Apple Farm. This is one of Michael and Hazel Blackburn's out apiaries where bees are welcome pollinators of the fruit crop and honey is made available for sales to customers visiting to purchase the wide selection of apple varieties produced by the farm. Also at 'Cross Lane's Apple Weekend' Hazel, Mike and Reading beekeepers have a Bee & Beekeeping Awareness presentation stand. (See photo)



As we had a big attendance of new members and interested people Giles Mc Loughlin broke-down an empty hive explaining the elements and their function. Michael proceeded to open four hives. Hive 1 was a separation from late in 2013 season; the bees were fairly 'aerial' but friendly enough. The colony had built-up well in the spring months, queen activity was seen together with stores, but not enough honey to contribute to Mike's plans to remove frames for extraction. As well as the acreage that comprises Cross Lane's fruit trees there are large plantations of oil seed rape close by and honey from this source needs prompt extraction if granulation in the comb is to be avoided. Hives 2-4 were good docile colonies. Queen activity with eggs and larvae in all stages, a few play-cups but nothing to suggest 'swarmyness'. Here there were frames ready for removal. Mike recruited some new beekeepers as helpers to each hive and shaking the partly capped frames to check for 'drips' these being signs that the frames would need a few more days, brushing or carefully shaking away the bees Mike made a start on a good early harvest. It was noted that as well as partly capped light honey there were also some fully capped frames of new season darker honey. If we read Hooper in *A Guide To Bees and Honey* we will note that apple blossom provides the bees with pollen, but the nectar production in the blossoms tends to be low, for example a tree with one side in full sunshine may have nectar bearing blossoms, whilst the other side may not. Often in our chilly Springs we don't see much from the apple tree, but in 2014 April was fine and warm so we may have some of the scarce apple blossom honey! New beekeepers had the opportunity to handle and examine brood frames. Some small patches of capped drone were raked-out to check for varroa, and none was seen.

Hazel had kindly set-up some splendid eats and drinks in a nearby apple shed to which we all repaired. With many thanks to the Blackburn's for their hospitality and demonstration of good beekeeping. After some time most of us had departed and Michael went further down to hill to do a check on a hive where he had a bit of a caper to deal with as the hive fell over due to a problem with the stand. The Rogerson's (Linda and John) and new beekeeper David Morton were still at the farm and were able to help putting the hive to rights, reassembling etc, things were a bit buzzy apparently! So thanks to them also and to all who attended and participated.

July meeting: Bob & Karen Challis at Emmer Green on Sunday 27th. Be there in good time for an 11-30 start. There are plenty of bees to see at 'Nevada'.

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John Belcher

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Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

A visit to the Association Apiary

The afternoon of Sunday 15th June saw an assembly of eleven people at the association apiary. The weather was fine although there had been one or two spots of rain threatening. Currently there are seven colonies located in a shady area on the edge of a field. The group was split into two groups for examining the hives; one group headed up by Dennis Way included a family of four who are planning on learning about beekeeping so they can start beekeeping next year.



Association apiaries provide an excellent introduction for new beekeepers giving them the practical experience of handling bees which underpins the necessary basic knowledge gained from a formal class.

As usual the examination of the hives provided a variety of challenges including the need to find a Queen whose yellow marking has faded and needed a touch up. Don Church's expert eyes spotted her and he soon had her imprisoned in a queen marking cage and

given a new paint job.

Most of the hives have two supers on but have varying amounts of stores; hopefully these will increase as the lime trees and the blackberries come into flower.

The final challenge of the day was dealing with the strongest colony who were evidently making plans for leaving home (charged queen cells a plenty). The red marked queen is usually referred to as 'the scrub queen' who was nearly lost when she dropped off the frame and was later found on the ground and so returned to the hive. She is a small queen and last year demonstrated Houdini-like skills when she managed to lay up the super with brood in spite of the queen excluder being in place. She proved to be elusive on this occasion and so we ended up having to perform an unconventional split of the hive in the hope of deterring a swarm.

Each visit to the apiary gives everyone a chance to learn and exchange information, experiences and opinions and we are all grateful to the core of dedicated and experienced members who turn up each time to guide the budding beekeepers.





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For your Diary

Date	Topic	Event Host	Contact
24-25 August	Reading Beekeepers Honey Show	Swallowfield Show	Jondavey.foodnet@virgin.net
23-25 August	Traditional Skills in Action – The crafts that built the Abbey – SCBKA running a stall	Dorchester Abbey	http://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/events-at-dorchester-abbey.html
6 October	London Honey Show	London Bees	www.londonbees.com

Looking Forward to August. We have our Reading Beekeepers Honey Show at the Swallowfield Show (in the horticultural produce tent) which will be held on Sunday 24th and Monday 25th of the August Bank Holiday weekend. We have 13 classes covering honeys, beeswax, honey cookery and bee flora. Entries to be received by the show secretary by Wednesday 20th August and staged at the showground on either Saturday 23rd or by 9.30am on the Sunday. Full Horticultural schedule available online at www.swallowfieldshow.co.uk Cost is 20p per entry, but hey! you can win cash prizes! and the Reading Beekeepers Association trophies will be awarded. The honey classes are open to all so do consider entering. For your convenience, Jon Davey, the honey show secretary will process your entry and stage it for you if you like. Jon-davey.foodnet@virgin.net 0118 975 0734. Entries to be notified to Jon by 19th August and entries for staging by 22nd. Telephone entries accepted.

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/

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.

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,

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

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 7th of the following month. Contributions received after this may 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.
