



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.

May 2014

Number 688

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Editors Corner

It has definitely been a busy month for us with the arrival of queen cells galore and swarms a plenty! Having managed to bring a strong colony through the winter, with much trepidation I have, within a week increased my apiary with the addition of a both nuc and a swarm – very exciting for a novice. As I am in the 'leave it alone' period I can only go and say hello every morning and hope that virgin queens are flirting and that the eggs will start to flow soon! The rape is in full flower now and my bees at least are gorging themselves.

I was browsing through my bird book the other day trying to identify an unusual a couple of attractive ducks that had landed on my pond (which turned out to be a pair of wigeons) and came across the Honey Buzzard. Fortunately this is not a predator we have to be concerned with in



our area. Unlike most UK birds of prey, the honey buzzard, rather like the red kites, have adapted to a diet of insects and their larvae. They rob bee and wasp nests for the insects and their grubs inside, although a small proportion of their diet includes little mammals and reptiles. They have a coating on their feathers that make them immune to wasp and bee stings. These magnificent birds are now being seen in a number of parts of Britain – including the New Forest – but there is not much evidence of their breeding on our shores. I found the picture above in a free to use catalog – but you can see a much more dramatic shot from this link, which I cannot reproduce due to copyright.

http://ibc.lynxeds.com/files/pictures/hbwcontest_crested_honey-buzzard.jpeg

There are some interesting contributions to the newsletter this month with an amusing In My Apiary piece about an apiary located in the grounds of a business in Bracknell.

Sue Remenyi

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In My Apiary

Andy Pillidge from Wokingham writes about the hives at Boehringer Ingelheim, Bracknell

I feel a bit of a fraud writing this. Technically, it is not 'my' apiary. We got approval from the Management at Boehringer Ingelheim to put a couple of beehives on our office site in Bracknell back in 2012, but it was not until June last year that the bees arrived. That lovely warm sunny day in June when I collected the nuclei from Thornes, will be forever in my memory as a very exciting step into beekeeping for me and a group of colleagues.

Several of the team had tried and failed to get onto beekeeping courses, so we had no idea what we were letting ourselves in for. 'How hard can it be?' I suggested at one of our weekly planning chats before the bees arrived. Thank goodness for Kevin at the WBKA, who volunteered to be our mentor. Without him we would undoubtedly have had a hopeless mess.

This year I managed to sign up to a course with the Weybridge Beekeeping Society, closer to home, and throughout the ten weeks which have just finished sat there shaking my head at the dawning realisation that we did pretty much everything wrong. So here is my little list of things I wish we had done differently.

Buy hives with flat roofs. We thought the ones with nice angled roof shapes were much prettier. It was only after doing the weekly inspections that we discovered how much fun it is to watch the smoker fall off the sloping roof where we plonked it and almost set the grass on fire, and how much more of a challenge it is to balance bits of hive that are not in use on a bevelled surface.

Jumbo National Broods are all very well but the nucleus boxes are just National size. So when the untrained novice beekeepers come to transfer the frames, without smoke by the way, there is a four inch space that the bees promptly fill with extension comb. The bees clearly have no idea that this is really not convenient.

Assemble the frames properly. If you prefer, you could get a random gang of office workers to hammer the bits of wood together sideways, upside down, and back to front, maybe with foundation held firmly, maybe not. This is the approach we took. Some of our frames disassembled themselves when we put them in the hives. I have surreptitiously dismantled and reconstructed them now. Don't tell my colleagues.

Don't Panic. If something is not going quite right you could relax and let it sort itself out, or you could do it the way we did when we saw some new queen cells, and run screaming around the field thinking that we were about to be engulfed in a swarm any second. Even shifting the queen cells to a new hive was probably unnecessary, with hindsight. They were just superseding, because it was a box full of drones with a probably dead queen.

Propolis is very sticky. For proof of this, take an old queen excluder home and scrape off the propolis with any old metal scraper thing you can find, on your kitchen sink draining board. You will be scratching off dark amber flecks from the kitchen walls, ceiling, and floor for weeks. Somehow I even ended up with some stuck in our bathroom shower. Must have got there on the bottom of my foot.

Get the right type of queen excluder. If you have a bottom spaced hive, then a flat zinc queen excluder works very well as a worker excluder too, can save you fifteen quid, and stop the workers getting to the supers. Or you might like to get the correct excluder.

Do not promise everyone in your company a jar of honey. I am fending off questions, just nine months after the arrival of the bees, as to where the honey is. We employ about five hundred people. There is no honey at all. The maths is easy.

Do not leave your smoker ... uncorked in the office storage room after doing a hive inspection. There is a smoke detector in there, and there is a company fire evacuation procedure.

The good news for 2014 is that both of our hives made it through the storms, and pollen-laden foragers are coming back with big leg-fulls. I am not sure how much more excitement I can handle. Maybe if we get a swarm I will find out.



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A new line in bee suits

Manuel Juraci's best friend is a beekeeping donkey named Boneco. Juraci is an inventor and beekeeper from the town of Itatira in Brazil. Manuel wears the standard beekeeping uniform while on the job, and his trusty steed Boneco wears a full head-to-toe protective suit as well. The unlikely pair is turning heads and bringing home more honey than ever before.

Juraci is one of around 120 beekeepers in the small town of Itatira, which is in the Brazilian state of Ceará. Farming is difficult in Itatira because of the region's arid climate, and many in the area, Manuel included, have turned to honey production as a livelihood and means of support. But among the beekeepers, the duo of Manuel and Boneco are among the more successful: Manuel can bring far more honey to market with the help of his friend than he could otherwise. To protect Boneco, Manuel developed the full body beekeeper suit that the donkey wears.



Manuel is something of an inventor, known locally as Professor Pardal. His design has been noticed not only by other beekeepers, but also by the Association of Honey Producers, who would like to see more of these suits made for their own donkeys. Manuel is considering their offer, but insists that it isn't just the suit that makes him successful; it's the hard work of his faithful friend, Boneco.

<http://inhabitat.com/brazilian-beekeeper-gains-advantage-with-worlds-first-beekeeping-donkey/>



In Tintinara in Australia Bazz the Labrador has been trained by his owner Josh Kennet to detect American Foul Brood by smell. The only problem was that he kept being stung! So, his owner designed a special bee suit for him. Bazz has been trained by his owner to recognise the scent of the near-invisible *Paenibacillus* larvae that proliferate as a result of the disease.

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/04/23/beekeeper-bazz-black-labrador_n_5198380.html

Wokingham and District Beekeepers Association

The first apiary meeting of 2014 took place on Sunday 5th April. Although the thermometer said 15 °, it certainly didn't feel like it and there was a nasty breeze whipping round the corners. As some potential new beekeepers had come along for a first look, Andy Mason carried out the inspections and Neil Marshall took the opportunity to run through some of the basics with them.

We are down to five colonies as we lost one over winter. All hives had been supered, as we are very close to rape and we wanted to be ready, in case we ended up with a strong flow. So far no such luck as all supers had plenty of room with a small amount of honey in each one.

We started with Colony No. 3, which is on 10 frames. We saw the queen, so Neil took the opportunity to clip one wing. This hive is not looking too good as we found two wax moth larvae and evidence of deformed wings, which could indicate a heavy load of varroa. There were 6/7 frames of egg, larvae and brood but it was pepper pot. On the plus side they had plenty of food.

We inserted the varroa floor and will check next time we visit the hives to see what sort of drop we are getting.

We then looked at Colony No. 6 which is also on 10 frames. We saw eggs, larvae and brood and the queen, who is marked. This colony looked to be healthy.

Colony No. 4 is on 11 frames. We saw the queen, who is unmarked but unfortunately the marker pen would not release its ink so she will be marked next time we see her. We saw eggs, larvae and brood over 5 frames and they had plenty of stores and room to grow. We saw a small amount of wing blight so have inserted the varroa floor.

Colony No. 2 is over 11 frames. We did not see the queen in his colony, which is quite small. We also saw signs of wax moth and a small amount of wing blight. They had seven frames of brood and three of stores.

We left Colony No. 1 to last. They lived up to their reputation and stung Andy Mason twice. There were two frames of larvae and patchy brood but no eggs. They also had two frames of stores, so had plenty of room. We saw the queen but Neil believes she might be failing and the bees were building play cells, which may be an indication they are planning to replace her. We were hoping to requeen this hive later in the season but they might beat us to it, which is a shame as we would prefer to requeen from a hive with a better temperament.

Overall our apiary is not looking as good as we would like. Due to the very damp and mild winter, it was never cold enough to give the bees the winter oxalic treatment and we appear to be paying for it now. We will see what sort of varroa drop we get and then make a decision on treatment.

*Lynne Janes
Hon. Secretary*

South Chilterns Beekeepers Association



The first summer apiary meeting was held at the Association Apiary. This was the first opportunity we had to show off the new location of the apiary to our members. Although the move was a short distance –about a field and a half! The territory is quite different. The hives now nestle among an orchard of small trees, but with open land around and Bluebell woods in the distance.

We divided into two groups and reviewed half the hives within each group. The bees had been quite active and supers were added. After the inspection everyone headed back to the cars for tea and cakes and then went for a wander through the bluebell wood. Everyone commented on what a wonderful location the apiary finds itself in.

Caroline Bushall

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Reading and District Beekeepers Association

22nd March was an all-day Saturday Session for Reading & District Beekeeper's 5th Annual Beekeeping Day at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall. Our aim is to invite interested people, families in particular and introduce them to the craft of beekeeping with talks, demonstrations, displays etc.

We were pleased to have an opportunity to promote our beekeeping day via BBC Radio Berkshire, Thames Valley Newspapers as well as the Caversham Bridge and Around & About local publications. As a result we had a very good foot-fall and as usual gained some new members.



Our first speaker was Tom Salter who has recently re-located to Hampshire and is probably one of the most highly qualified and knowledgeable beekeepers in the south of England. His talk entitled 'Managing the Swarming Impulse in Honey Bees' was a very comprehensive presentation covering all aspects of swarming, the desire for strong colonies for good honey harvests and overwintering, the decimation of colonies by multiple casts of bees, of queen activity, swarm cell control, ma-

nipulation & artificial swarm methods, transferring brood chambers, Queen clipping, re-queening etc. This was very important information for the coming season.

Rob Nickless spoke on 'Introduction to Beekeeping'. We are very fortunate to have Rob's continuing support as a Lecturer at Reading Beekeepers successful 'Introduction to Beekeeping' courses which are held in January & February each year. Rob is a farmer, bee Farmer, Chairman of Newbury & District Beekeepers, producer of beekeeping wood artefacts and a range of beehive product based cosmetics, toiletries and household goods. He gave an excellent 'new beekeeper friendly' talk and particularly pleasing was his advice to newly interested persons which included "at all times you should enjoy your beekeeping".

Clare Waring gave a fascinating talk on 'Honey Hunting in Nepal, Belize & Africa'. Another distinguished guest speaker Clare, editor of Bee Craft, has marvellous illustrated stories of her trips to experience the traditional ways in which the locals gather highly prized honey and larvae (valued protein rich food, tastes a bit like bland scrambled egg, according to Claire). The S.E. Asian bees in Nepal build a large single comb mainly under cliff ledges and unprotected collectors with simple but effective tools climb dizzying heights to cut-off and drop the comb into baskets for lowering to the ground. We saw many stunning pictures, heard of honey-guide birds and learned of the importance to these people who live with few artificial resources of the local strains of the giant and also the stingless (but aggressive) honey bee.



Our members donated cakes and homemade soups, the proceeds of which helped with the hall-hire costs, as did the tombola kindly organised by Lynn Jenkins. Thank also go to our secretary Drew Cuthbert for registration and greeting of visitors, Mike and Hazel Blackburn for displays and honey tasting and Jon Davey for Bee diseases and pests. Honey sales were brisk from Mike Dabbs and Tim Whitaker and mead recipes and a fermentation demonstration was provided by Jill Davey. Ukrainian egg painting was provided by Mr & Mrs Clark Hunter. Thanks also to the support from John Belcher with a display, Robert Kiff for assembling frames, Children's activities with comparisons of bees & bee-like insects & bee flower identification and bee suits to dress-up in from Linda and John Rogerson. Stirling work in the refectory from Marion Dabbs, Karen Challis and Hilary Whitaker. If I've forgotten anyone all I can say is 'apologies!' We all pulled together and had a good Beekeeping Day.

Our May meeting is Sunday 18th May at Cross Lanes Apple Farm, courtesy of Mike and Hazel Blackburn. The apple blossom should be out and a chance to see examine honey bee colonies where the bees work to pollinate fruit for our 'five a day! Session starts at 11-30 sharp.



Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

Selling Honey and the Law

The last of our winter meetings was an enlightening talk given by Honor Ryan from the Windsor Trading Standards.

Honor introduced us to the regulations that need to be adhered to when labelling our jars of honey for sale:

- The Honey (England) Regulations 2003
- Food Labelling Regulations 1996
- Weights and Measures Act 1985

She outlined all the information that must appear on the label as well as the optional information. The label must show the word 'Honey' and the weight must be shown in a particular format. It must also include your name and enough of an address for you to be found. There must be a country of origin and a best before date and finally if you are selling the honey through a third party then there must also be a lot number to ensure traceability.

It was interesting to find out that honey used to have to be sold in 1lb jars and it is only relatively recently that this has been de-regulated so that smaller jars can be used. Honor emphasised the importance of ensuring that the weight of honey in the container is correct and she advised us that scales used for weighing the honey need to be approved for trade and have the relevant certification mark.

The talk was rounded up with a short quiz to test our knowledge of the regulations and lively discussions were sparked about the different methods used for filling jars.

We showed our appreciation for the talk with a jar of honey and we all hoped that the labelling was correct!

Summer Apiary Meetings

Weather permitting, these are held at 2.30 pm on alternate Sundays at the Society's apiary, situated north of Wexham. Meetings in May are on Sunday 4th and 18th and will continue throughout the summer until October 5th.

Our winter meeting schedule recommences on 9th September and meetings are held at All Saints Parish Hall, Alexandra Road, Windsor, SL4 1HZ.

The meetings are usually held on the second Tuesday of the month beginning at 8pm and refreshments are available.

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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And Finally A story from the US

Teens are no longer sniffing glue or huffing cinnamon — they're apparently slathering their eyelids with Burt's Bees lip balm to experience a tingly, stingy high. According to multiple reports circling the Web, teens are now using the ubiquitous drugstore balm to coat their eyelids — an act called "beezin".

"It's the peppermint oil that's causing the burning sensation and I suppose some people think that is kind of funny," Dr. Brett Cauthen told Fox affiliate KOKH-TV in Oklahoma City.

And though social media has been flooded with pictures of teens holding a tube of the signature yellow-and-red lip balm, it's likely that this is the latest in a long line of so-called alarming trends that teens are partaking in.

Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/beezin-teens-slathering-eyelids-burt-bees-lip-balm-article-1.1769242#ixzz3178v1FBSI>

Support the Friends of the Earth Bee Cause

http://www.foe.co.uk/what_we_do/bee_cause_petition_to_lord_de_mauley_40967.html

For anyone interested the link below is to DEFRA who are carrying out a consultation for a national pollinator strategy.

https://consult.defra.gov.uk/plant-and-bee-health-policy/a-consultation-on-the-national-pollinator-strategy?dm_i=I1,2E3T3,20XIGJ,8OQMB,1

For your Diary

Date	Topic	Event Host	Contact
21 May	visit to Syngenta	SWMBKA	http://swmbks.weebly.com/syngenta-event.html

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.

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