



# 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



The recent spell of warm weather has certainly got the bees dancing! The Easter break was a great time for getting doing first inspections and preparing kit for the forthcoming season.

Although my bees are located in an area away from other property and gardens a friend has her vegetable plot within eyeshot. For the last two years she has been harassed by the odd bee on regular occasions whilst working on this plot. It made me think whether there are any natural repellents that she could use to keep the bees away. On investigation,

some of the more popular remedies seem to be clove studded lemons and sprays made of peppermint and mint extracts mixed with alcohol. I wonder if anyone has other suggestions?

The discussion on the Flow hive continues this month with an interesting reflection from Dean Madden on how the system may – or may not – work in this country. We start the In My Apiary articles this month and kick off with some delightful ‘ramblings’ from Drew Cuthbert of Reading Beekeepers.

Winter programmes around our associations are coming to a close, but there are plenty of summer activities lined up including apiary visits and summer training sessions – not to mention the BBKA Spring Convention on the 17-19 April. The Federation would also like to bring your attention to a Bee Health Day that is being run by the Regional Bee Inspectors from the National Bee Unit at Bracknell Leisure Centre on Saturday 4th July. Spaces are limited to 100 so book early to avoid disappointment. The cost will be £10 for adults and £6 for juniors. More details including a programme for the day can be found on page 10 of the newsletter.

*Sue Remenyi*

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## Letter to the Editor

You asked in the last newsletter whether the Australian 'Flow hive' ([www.honeyflow.com](http://www.honeyflow.com)) would work here. Behind this question probably lies another, namely: in our temperate climate, and with the sort of nectar that bees gather here, would the honey 'flow' or would it be too viscous to drain from the comb? Of course, no one knows yet. The inventors are from near Brisbane,

where the temperature remains high year-round. They say that their device has been trialled successfully in the cooler climate of Canada, although they advise people to harvest early and often to avoid crystallisation.

Another issue is whether the Flow™ frames can be fitted in a British National hive. Strictly speaking, they can, but making them fit would require some work. Although they are too long to fit in a National (being devised for a Langstroth 'deep' box, each frame measuring 240 mm high, 50 mm wide and 480 mm long), the Flow™ frames can be shortened in 12 mm increments, so they could be made to fit in a standard National brood box, provided it was deepened by 30 mm. A more important concern is the cut-outs that would be needed in the box to allow access to the ends of the frames so that they can be emptied in situ. One might need to construct a custom box for the new frames. Incidentally, you'd need eight frames to fill a British National hive, so it could be rather expensive (US\$ 560 + shipping).

There are many other questions, particularly about durability, beespace, dealing with disease, whether the bees propolise the moving parts and so on. It looks like a great invention -- if it works. As I write, the makers have raised 8.5 million US dollars and have extended to deadline by which money must be pledged (the project is crowd-funded, so you're not, strictly speaking, buying goods from them).

An old Radio Rentals advert said that two million viewers couldn't be wrong, but numbers are no guarantee that this will work in other contexts. Let's hope that the frame functions as described and is successful -- in a year or so, we'll know the answer.

Dean Madden



**John Belcher**  
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## In My Apiary

### ***Ramblings and Rumbings from my Apiary by Drew Cuthbert, RBKA***

Last year was my third year of bee keeping since I finished the introductory course in February, 2012. I have learnt a lot each year, but still make so many mistakes, which hopefully I will learn from and not repeat in the future. I will start keeping proper notes and not rely on an aging memory.

My year started with one small colony which over-wintered successfully, having lost my other one late in the season. My pre-ordered over-wintered nuc arrived early in April and a 'Spring' nuc early in May. The latter did not start well as on the journey home from near Banbury, it became a trifle tense when a bee came in to my peripheral vision as it crawled along inside my side window. Thoughts of How did it get out of the nuc? How did it get out of the boot? (The seats do flip forward, so there will be gaps, I remembered later) How many more were there? Why had I left my bee suit and veil in the boot with the bees and will I leave them on the back seat in future when transporting bees? I decided not to stop and to get home as soon as I could. It transpired she wasn't the only casualty as some bees had crawled under the side flaps into the cavities of the plastic nuc box and it was quite fiddly to get all of them out. Many had been trapped in crevices and had died. I did not see the queen (marked) during the transfer in their new hive and was worried that she might be absent. I fed them some fondant and pollen substitute and let them get on with it. I did find her during my first inspection about three weeks later. They were rather slow to get going, but when they did, they were pretty successful. So much so, that I took the bold decision to give them a brood and a half - by adding a super below the

queen excluder. I took a full super of oil seed rape honey from them and it was really delicious. During the nectar flow, I had three supers on top. Even the top super was nearly filled by the end of the season, but that was mainly ivy honey which I decided to leave for them.

Sadly this hive went quickly downhill as I discovered later. I always thought that the swarming season ended around the end of July, and my weekly hive inspections fell out of their regular weekly cycle. Mistake! as they must have swarmed without my noticing. Also, I am not astute enough to notice there may be fewer bees flying as perhaps I thought they were slowing down towards the end of the season. On Christmas day and also New Year's day the bees ventured out of all of my remaining hives and I gave the three of them some liquid feed to hopefully give them a boost before the new season. But by the middle of February there were no more bees emerging from this hive, whilst the other two were active. I decided to have a quick look in the hive and discovered a lot of dead bees around the queen excluder (QE) I had left on just below the super filled with their honey. Of course most of the winter lectures had said do not leave QE's on over winter. But I found that they had not died of starvation. The brood cells at the centre of the hive were all empty apart from a lot of random cells filled or partly filled with pollen and stores, but no eggs or polished cells. So I was sure that they had lost their queen. Either she had died or the colony had swarmed earlier in the season and the new queen had not successfully hatched or returned to the hive mated. This was a big blow to me. But I hope I have learned from it for next year.

Of the other colonies, the over-wintered one was also fairly active, but they are rather prone to swarming or attempting to swarm. We had decided to remove a large horse chestnut tree located about 15 yards away from the apiary. I confirmed with the tree feller that he was happy to work close to the bees particularly with a noisy power saw. I gave him a little encouraging talk on bee behaviour and left him with a bee suit for him to use if he felt he needed it and went in to work. At about two o'clock, I got a call from him saying that there were two swarms in my garden and they had fallen out of the tree when he cut the last large branch down. Of course it wasn't two separate swarms but one that had separated when it hit the ground and about half had flown in to an apple tree which had previously had swarms gather on it and the other half stayed around the fallen branch. Although I had volunteered to assist as a swarm collector, I had never been called on to help out anywhere so I just had to improvise as best I could. I had managed to buy a grass skep earlier and found it quite easy to get both of the clusters in to the skep and then in to a new hive that I had quickly assembled from available components. The only problem was not having enough frames assembled with foundation, and it does not take the bees more than a few days to fill in the gaps with their own foundation – which of course is nearly impossible to work with as it is designed to remain upright and it wobbles about if you have to move it. Whilst I continued this operation trying to exude an air of confidence that I knew what I was doing, the tree fellers quietly sat by having their lunch. When the bees were all safely in their new colony, the guys continued cutting up the rest of the fallen branches. All of this was achieved without one sting nor any sign of aggression by the bees at all. Having observed that they don't mind my wife driving a foot away from the hives on the ride-on lawnmower, even I don't mind mowing that section of the lawn now, as it gives me another opportunity to look at my bees as I ride past. Alas I can't match the straight stripe of my wife! I have been told that it is grass trimmers with the high pitched whine that bees cannot stand. So if anyone else would like to test that theory and confirm it to me, do let me know.

A few days later I had another swarming, but they no longer had a horse chestnut tree and did not like the apple tree, so decided to rest on the 8 foot high Leylandii hedge. At first it looked easy, but of course there were many clusters and they are not all on the outside edge so I could brush them into the skep – they were mainly on the inside of the hedge and there were many twigs which make extraction more difficult. After about an hour's collecting when I was getting a little tired balancing on the ladder, I thought it would be easier if I balanced the skep on the branches and twigs and waited for the bees to go into the comforting dark interior. All well until, just as I was getting into place on the ladder, the weight of the bees unbalanced the skep and they all landed on the ground and were well dispersed and it was another hour till I managed to get them in to their new home. So now I was up to 5 hives!

Another amazing thing happened shortly after the second swarming; on a Saturday morning, I heard the bees while I was still a little way from the apiary and realised that they were swarm-

ing. They flew about 20 yards and reached about the same spot, when they had second thoughts and decided to fly back to their old hive and actually all went back inside. This happened a second time while I was near them with my wife. I told her to stay while I ran to get my bee suit, skep etc., and by the time I got back, my wife said that they had flown back to the hive and re-entered it. If I wasn't there on those two occasions, for about five minutes at a time, I would not have seen the swarm flying out and then back again. I wonder how many times they have 'practice runs' and return to the hive? Or were they genuinely not happy with their current home, but couldn't decide where else to go? Or had the queen not come out with them?

Whatever, they managed to finally fly off a while later as I found a small colony of bees had entered a hole in my west facing wall. They were doing very well there and grew into a large colony which unfortunately my dear wife noticed and was reasonably happy with until there appeared a damp spot on the soft wall behind the toilet. This grew and grew and as the moisture penetrated the wall it expanded and eventually moved away outward from the skirting board. The bees were deemed to be responsible and I was told they had to go. I pleaded to wait till the summer so I had a chance to remove and re-home the bees, but I had to agree that they did have to be removed. I had already tried blocking their hole with a porter escape, sealing the edges to the wall, and supporting a vacant hive about six inches from their entrance. They managed to evade my tactics and they even got under the duct tape and loosened it from the wall and got back in. On one occasion, the whole porter escape had been loosened from the wall. Although there were lots of bees flying around and many of them had entered the hive, I could not get them to stay in with bare foundation alone, so I tried with made-up frames and later with super frames from which I had extracted the honey. This meant there were hundreds of bees entering the hive, but by the morning, there were none left. Of course these were mainly robber bees from all the other hives around me, Stupid Boy! By now my wife's patience was fully exhausted and I took the sad decision that we could not wait till spring to humanely remove the bees. We had two options - go in from inside through the soft boarding or remove some bricks from the outside. The cost of re-decorating the inside wall was considered to be too costly, as I was advised by a builder who was happy to remove the bricks, do some other work round our house and then replace the bricks later.

This was where bee keeper Dr. Mike comes in to the picture. He had previously advised me on all the actions I had tried earlier, and now it was time to use his wonderful homemade bee vacuum cleaner. We knew that as it was early January and only three degrees Centigrade, the bees would have almost no chance of survival, but by then I had no alternatives left and we could not delay this extraction till the spring. The builder removed about five bricks and we found in the first wall cavity the main nest which had grown into three main bits of brood cells, the largest about twelve inches across and the same down. But it was also clear that the (brown) brood cells were empty and they looked like they had been for some time as they were partially filled with stores. Probably in early January the queen would not be laying, but they did look like they had not been used for some time, and we did not find a queen. Mike worked as quickly as he could but when we opened the collection chamber all the bees were rather dusty and shrivelled up from the cold. They all looked absolutely dead to us and of course we were both very sad, but we had to take action then. Mike asked me if he could take the bees in the box home with him so he could study them under his microscope. Mike takes over the story from here.

'When I got home I left my kit and the dead bees in the car and didn't get round to doing anything with them until mid afternoon when I brought a handful of the dead bees indoors in a small container. I left them for about half an hour when I was called away. When I got back I was amazed to find a lot of them showing signs of life. I grabbed a nuc together with a mixture of drawn frames plus ones with foundation and emptied all the bees into it including the ones indoors, followed by a spray of light syrup. I covered the feed hole in the crownboard with a piece of mesh and put the whole lot into my warming cabinet, set at 32 deg C, for a little over 2 hours. When I looked again there were bees crawling over the top bars. I put a small feeder of heavy syrup over the feed hole to see if they would take it down and allowed the warmer to cool to room temperature (18 deg C).

After posting on the BBKA web forum and getting advice, I transferred the nuc outside, opened the entrance and fed them fondant. The following morning, I removed the floor of the nuc and

collected the floor debris. I found that there were approximately 550 bees and I estimated that this represented a little under 10% of the bees extracted from the wall.

The whole exercise has been a revelation to me but one of the bee-keepers on the forum did say that chilled bees would revive if moved to a warm room. If only I had acted sooner rather than leaving them until mid-afternoon, I may have saved even more. I didn't think that they would survive the winter but who knows. There were still live bees in the middle of January but when I looked a fortnight later the colony was dead. Post mortem examination revealed that the colony was riddled with nosema.

Beekeeping is just one big learning curve!!!!'

Back to me – I would like to thank Mike for his input, help, advice and allowing me to witness his expertise at extracting a colony with his bee vacuum cleaner. I did give him an old variable power vacuum cleaner that we were throwing out, so it might be incorporated into his Bee Vac Mark2.

Looking at my fruit trees in winter, when all the leaves had fallen, I found two small branches which had lovely white wax comb hanging on them. Perhaps these will be resting posts for some of my missed swarms later this season. Who knows what new challenges will face us now that Spring is finally upon us.

*Drew Cuthbert, RBKA*

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## Wokingham and District Beekeepers Association

Next month it is our turn to give you a report on the happenings in our apiary so this month I thought I would share a few photos with you.



This first photo demonstrates what can happen when a clipped queen swarms out of the hive without it coming to the attention of the beekeeper. This photo was taken in June last year and the old queen had clearly established a full colony under the mesh floor of the original hive. The hive was situated in long grass and this, together with the fact that the colony was not properly inspected for some months, led to the issue going undetected.

Unfortunately I don't have any photos of the corrective action that was taken, due to the fact that the sticky mess and bee chaos that ensued, prevented the use of a camera. However, I am pleased to report that by carefully cutting out the combs and securing the brood frames into empty frames with long plastic cable ties, we were able to re-hive the colony. I re-inspected this colony after the winter a couple of weeks ago and all is well and the original queen that we found under the floor is laying well, but no doubt considering her next escape plan.

This second photo is of a colony that had established itself in the space between the kick boards and outer wall of a stable. I was asked to remove the colony by the owner as it was causing a nuisance and Nigel Perkins and I went to work on the problem early one Saturday morning. With the kick board removed, you can see that the colony had built beautifully long



straight combs some 4 inches wide and up to 4 feet long!

It was during this colony rescue that Nigel taught me the method of cutting out brood and securing it into empty frames with cable ties, the same method that I employed in recovering the first colony referred to above. However, due to the fact that we didn't have any 4 foot brood frames we had to cut the comb down to fit into a 14"x12" box! Much to my amazement, Nigel did actually find the queen in this colony too and the whole thing was transported off to my apiary where the colony continues to thrive several generations on.

As far as the Wokingham Association is concerned, we are looking forward to getting underway with our summer meetings, the first of which is a chance to talk bees for a few hours at the Two Poplars Pub in Wokingham on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April at 7:30pm. This will be followed by our first open apiary session at the Diana Bimblecombe Animal Rescue Centre in Hurst on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April at 2:00pm.

Well it looks like spring has finally sprung, so happy beekeeping everyone!

*Neil Marshall  
Treasurer – W&DBKA*

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## South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

### Medical Honey Simplified by Julie Hewish



The Association's last winter meeting March 18 2015 attracted a full house. The guest speaker was Julie Hewish, Senior Wound Care Nurse at the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust Tissue Viability Service on the subject 'Medical honey simplified'.

Julie's presentation was directed towards human wounds, wound care and how honey assists in healing. Julie began by defining a 'wound' and described the four phases of the healing process: vascular, inflammatory, proliferative and reconstruction phases.

When skin is broken bacteria enter the wound making the patient at risk as bacteria multiply; Julie mentioned some common bacteria which can cause wound infection e.g. Staphylococcus Aureus and MRSA. Some 5% of wounds become infected and develop into a chronic problem. A warning appeared on the screen to "**look away now**" and Julie advised those of a delicate nature to avert their eyes! Indeed, the three photographs on screen were horrific, each showing a huge infected area where bacteria had killed healthy tissue causing ongoing damage with cellulitis and exudate very evident. Apart from pain these severe chronic wound infections go on to cause many problems including patient incapacitation and psychological issues.

The aim of the Tissue Viability Service is to destroy the bacteria so enabling the wound to heal, thus alleviating the patient's physical and psychological suffering. Julie mentioned some earlier wound treatments, e.g. iodine, silver nitrate and leeches. One other treatment, a natural, non toxic substance, used for thousands of years is HONEY. The Ancient Egyptians were one of the first beekeeping societies and mention of honey is made in the Bible. With the introduction of new antibiotics in the 1960s honey became used less and less. However, since a number of antibiotics are now no longer effective in treating infections honey has reappeared in the care of wounds.

Not every type of honey is suitable or can be used for treatment of infected wounds and as with all products used for patient care strict regulations exist to protect patients. Research has shown that *Apis Mellifera* Manuka honey from *Leptospermum Scoparium* (common name manuka or tea tree) is considered to be the best. Can table honey from the local supermarket or health food shop be used? No, honey for wound care must be Medical Grade honey having undergone scrupulous process production. Julie welcomed questions during and after the presentation; some members asked about filtering and sterilising the honey - medical grade honey is extremely finely filtered and is not altered by gamma irradiation.

How does honey help in wound healing? Here members learnt some very interesting facts. Honey is hygroscopic, i.e. it draws moisture out of its environment; the bacteria in the wound become dehydrated thus inhibiting further bacterial growth. When honey becomes diluted with wound exudate hydrogen peroxide is produced through an enzyme reaction; hydrogen peroxide debrides the wound yet does not damage nearby healthy tissue. The pH of wound exudates (>7.3) is reduced by the acidity of honey (pH 3.5-4.5) and since the oxygen content is higher in an acidic environment healing is further aided. Honey also penetrates the biofilm killing the bacteria inside. As a result of these activities inflammation, swelling and pain rapidly subside, malodour stops quickly while debridement occurs painlessly.

Julie passed around five types of wound dressings for the audience to examine and smell. To date there are approximately 400 products available on the market; the sterile wound dressings are impregnated with honey and some dressings have 100% manuka honey. Sizes, shapes and weights of the dressings were different depending on the type of materials used: gauze, gel, ointment, seaweed, even rope. Some members found the odour of the dressings unremarkable while for others it was rather unpleasant. The cost of one dressing on average is £4.50 and generally the dressing is changed every 3 to 5 days; honey dressings for treatment of a less severe wound over a recommended two week period might cost £30-£40.



The types of wound treated by medical honey include long-term ulceration, burn and graft sites, and high bacterial wound beds. Though medical grade honey is considered safe to be used over and over again all treatment must be prescribed by a clinician. Diabetics' wounds may be treated with honey dressings as the evidence so far has shown blood sugar levels are not affected by the honey. The honey dressing must be in direct contact with the wound, this can cause temporary discomfort sometimes even pain: a drawing sensation is experienced as fluid is 'pulled out' of the infected tissue, also stinging may be felt due to pH normalisation. Occasionally a patient may not be able to tolerate the dressing and requests immediate removal due to the pain felt through damaged nerve endings.

For the end of the presentation Julie reminded us of the three horrific photos seen earlier, then, photos of the same three wounds taken only two weeks after commencement of the honey dressing treatment were shown. Improvement in the three wounds was evident, new healthy skin had developed making the wounds already smaller in size.

Honey dressings are being used country wide in all NHS Trusts. To hear about the many actions which occur spontaneously and rapidly when honey dressings are applied to infectious hard to heal wounds was fascinating. The positive rewards experienced by patients heart warming. A huge thank you must go to *Apis Mellifera*.

Mohammed Al-Ghabban

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## Reading and District Beekeepers Association

Tuesday 10th February Reading Beekeepers were pleased to welcome Tom Salter MBE and Master Beekeeper, who is also assistant moderator for the BBKA exams board. Tom's topic for the evening was 'Getting Started on Queen Rearing'. Tom informed us he splits this topic into three or four talks, ours being part 1, i.e. 'the basics'. As there are many ways to influence bee breeding characteristics, this will be based on 'what bees do naturally'.

Bee colonies are at their best when they have a new young mated queen. Her egg laying potential, pheromones and bee substances are strong, all of which is good for the colony. It's far better for your apiary and for the beekeepers good husbandry to aim for this in all your colonies rather than waiting for swarming etc. Although queens in swarms may have some good egg laying characteristics; they may become damaged during swarming, collecting & hiving etc. Introducing a newly mated queen with the characteristics you look-for is better than waiting for even a selected queen cell you might have in your hive to hatch-out, and losses of queens during mating flights can be as much as forty percent! Tom discussed what the beekeepers like us might be looking-for from our bees: honey production? In this case the advice is super-on when super comes off throughout the honey flow. Docile character: 'yellow bees', although considered docile, in his experience tend to convert honey into brood and are prodigious 'robbers' whilst darker bees tend to have more aggression, but good honey production and defence against wasps etc. Aim for a balance of good characteristics, not swarmy, good tidy capping of stores, 'steady' on the comb, healthy, not prone to excessive varroa counts etc. Hard working for honey production and good over wintering on not excessive stores.

The natural situation with drones produced in a colony is that they are not sexually mature for 12 days after emerging, meaning little chance of interbreeding from queens produced in the hive. In Tom's apiaries he runs five 'family lines' and he buys some newly mated queens in from sources he is satisfied with every two years. His own colonies, which he wishes to donate from, are used and he recommends harvesting the typical 'hook-shaped' queen cell from the face of the comb, i.e. 'supercedure' queen cells, to receive donated cells which are selected and existing queens are removed. Tom makes some recommendations as to nurturing the harvested cell, harvest when larvae is 2 days old and transfer into a queenless 'swarmy' colony who will nurture (royal jelly, queen brood food, etc.) the new queen better than the donor as colonies producing supercedures are often weak. The reasoning is better nurtured, better ovary formation!

Other methods of raising queen cells were described and discussed, including grafting into queen cups formed from wax by the beekeeper, cup kits, Hopkins case methods, Miller push-outs, punch-outs etc.

This was a very comprehensive talk and it's only part one! Reading beekeepers will have taken a lot of insight from it, this beekeeper certainly did. With very many thanks to Tom & all who attended.

April Meeting, now in our summer programme is at the home apiary of Clark Hunter on Sunday 26th April. See you there!



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## **Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society**

### Ron Hoskins – Breeding Hygienic Bees

In March we met up to hear a sprightly 84 year old, Ron Hoskins from Swindon talking about his beekeeping experiences.

Ron founded the Swindon Honeybee Conservation Group (SHCG) based in Wiltshire. He learned his beekeeping over 70 years ago (1943) but he considers that the years following the arrival of Varroa in 1992 have been the most testing, for beekeeper and the bees. He started his research in 1995 when he discovered that chemicals being used by us to control Varroa mite numbers were having an adverse effect on the viability of the drone semen

In the 1980's Ron experimented with artificial insemination (AI) of Queens and found that in general AI fertilized Queens were readily accepted in colonies.

The varroa mite arrived in the UK 1992 and started to make its presence felt in the following few years. Beekeepers, including Ron, started to notice more problems with their Queens' performance; they were not being introduced as easily or were being superseded earlier and colonies were swarming more frequently.

Ron studied the varroa mite intensively, conducting daily mite drop counts and examining the dead mites by microscope. He observed that in some of his colonies the dead mites appeared to have been damaged: there were dents in the carapace, bites on the sides and missing legs. Ron concluded that the bees in the colony were actively removing mites by grooming.

Further study of the debris on the varroa monitoring boards revealed substantial numbers of light coloured antennae which indicated that immature bees were being extracted from capped cells when varroa mites were detected inside. This is now known as hygienic behaviour.

By selection and breeding Ron has developed his varroa tolerant bees known as 'Hygienic Bees'. He abandoned using chemical anti varroa treatments 20 years ago and has continued to maintain healthy colonies whilst concentrating on breeding the Queens that demonstrate these desirable traits.

Ron continues his research this year as he tries to establish why his hygienic bees also have relatively low levels of Deformed Wing Virus (DWV).

It was a fascinating talk and it was interesting to see Ron's video film of worker bees grooming mites off each other.

Further information can be found on: <http://www.swindonhoneybeeconservation.org.uk/>

### Winter Meetings 2014

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.

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday 14th April and the speaker will be Peter Higgs, a certified pest controller, who will be speaking on the subject of 'Bees, wasps, honeybees and hornets in difficult places' which will be a very timely talk as swarm collectors are preparing for the new season.

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

*Delia Higgins*

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## ***Petition for a ban on bee imports from Italy***

Wally Thrale, a member of Bedfordshire BKA has set up a petition for a ban on imports of queens and bees from Italy due to the presence of Small Hive Beetle (SHB). Although bees will be inspected in Italy and given a Health Certificate there is the possibility of human error allowing a beetle to come into the country.

If SHB reaches our shores it will be almost impossible to eradicate it. Surely the advent of varroa has taught us that we should strive to keep out other exotic pests from our country. We are an island and we can protect our bees in ways beekeepers on the continent cannot.

If you would like to sign the petition please follow the link:

<http://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/ban-importation-of-honeybees-from-italy>



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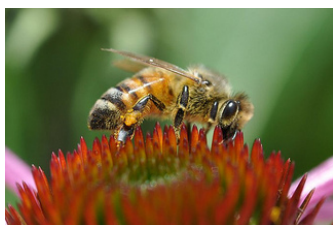
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### Did you know .....



South Africa is home to two honeybee sub-species – namely *Apis mellifera capensis* and *Apis mellifera scutella*. *Apis mellifera capensis* only occurs in the winter rainfall region of the country – which includes Cape Town, Cape Point and Table Mountain and this species has a unique behaviour in that if they lose their queen, laying workers are produced that develop ovaries which enable them to lay eggs without being fertilised, effectively cloning

themselves. From this a new queen can be raised. (In other races of honeybees eggs laid by workers will develop into drones).

### **Bee Health Day run by the Regional Bee Inspectors from the National Bee Unit**

A bee-health training day consisting of lectures and workshops has been organised for Federation members at the Bracknell Leisure Centre on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July. Spaces are limited to 100 so book early to avoid disappointment. The cost will be £10 for adults and £6 for juniors. Details of how to book will be emailed to you via each of your associations.

The workshop is being run by Nigel Semmence, our Regional Bee Inspector, together with some of his colleagues.

#### **Programme**

- 10:00 **Arrive – tea & coffee**
- 10:30 **Welcome; general outline of the day**
- 10:35 **Observing the colony** Nigel Semmence, Regional Bee Inspector
- 11:05 **Comfort Break**
- 11:15 **Bee pests and diseases** overview by Nigel Semmence
- 12:00 **LUNCH** – please be ready to re-start promptly at 13:00
- 13:00 **Workshops** Four half hour sessions, with 10 min's comfort breaks in-between
  - A Apiary hygiene
  - B Diseased frames
  - C Varroa control
  - D Exotic pests
- 15:30 **Tea/Coffee break**
- 15:45 **Final wind-up,**
- 16:00 **Depart**

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## Season bee inspector vacancies

The National Bee Unit has a number of Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBIs) vacancies. If you are interested in applying please use the following [link](#). The closing date for each vacancy is 17th April 2015.

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### For your Diary

Date	Topic	Event Host	Contact
17-19 April 15	BBKA Spring Convention	Harper Adams, Newport, Shropshire.	<a href="http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention.php">http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention.php</a>
14/15 and 16/17 May	BIBBA Practical Course - Improve Your Bees by Raising Your Own Queens - a 2 day course.	Glan-yr-afon, Corwen, LL21 0HA in North Wales	Steve Rose <a href="mailto:steve-rose@bibba.com">steve-rose@bibba.com</a> or see <a href="http://www.bibba.com">www.bibba.com</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://hymenoptergenome.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](mailto: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.

**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.