



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.

October 2013

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Editors Corner

September has been the month for Varroa treatment. For the first time this year many of us are using the new MAQ strips and there has been much deliberation among my beekeeping friends as to the benefits of this over the more traditional ApiGuard and ApiLife Var. Although it is too soon to be able to judge the overall benefits of one treatment over the other, it has been interesting to hear the differing reports about the initial effects the MAQ strips have on the bees. I chose to use this treatment, primarily because it is one application and the process is complete in 7 days. With the weather so variable in September and the need to complete 4 weeks of ApiGuard with an average day time temperature not less than 15 degrees, I was worried that I might have left it too late to start.

The instructions on the MAQ strips is a little sketchy and a friend well versed in pharma-jargon telephoned the manufacturers in Canada to obtain more details – particularly with regards the ventilation required. We were concerned about the need to open up the entrance to the hive completely because as discussed last month, this year is a bad one for wasps and the invasion of hives continues.



We would be pleased to hear your own experiences and thoughts and will publish them next month.

Whilst on the topic of disease, I was recently asked why the Bee Disease Map is no longer published in the newsletter. The answer is that we feel it is better to keep an eye on this very useful source of information by regularly visiting BeeBase where it is maintained. The link for this is:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/public/BeeDiseases/diseaseIncidenceMaps.cfm>

I invited Ron Crocker, beekeeper of many years, and a Life Member of SCBKA to provide a reflective piece for the In My Apiary column this month, looking back over the cold Spring and hot Summer and how conditions have affected the beekeeping in our region.

Apiary visits organised by our associations over the Summer are coming to an end and we eagerly await the opportunity for education and revision that the winter programmes offer. The Associations welcome attendance from visitors at most winter meetings and in addition to the listings provided by individual associations I will maintain a list in the Calendar at the end of the newsletter.

Sue Remenyi

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In My Apiary

Reflections on the 2013 Beekeeping Season by Ron Crocker.

The beekeeping season is generally affected by conditions in the preceding year and 2013 was preceded by a very wet and cold 2012. This is nothing new, as Herrod-Hempsall in "*Beekeeping New and Old*", records cold and wet seasons and winters in the late 19th and early 20th century followed by spring losses of bees being experienced by many beekeepers. So, although today it is easy to blame pesticides, we should not forget the damage that can be wrought by the weather.

Blossom time? A little late this year and coupled with a spell of wonderful weather, colonies started to recover. Bees were in and out of the orchards and growers reported a heavy set of blossom, even hawthorn blossom yielded nectar this year.

St. Swithin lived up to name, albeit with just an occasional rumble of thunder, allowing colonies to recover. As swarms have been scarce, especially in the more rural areas, not many nuclei were raised, leading to an inability to fulfil the demand for nuclei and swarms.



There has been a noticeable lack of insects in the rural areas, notably flies, the main diet of wasps, which, unfortunately, turned to attacking bee colonies. There have been reports of strong colonies being wiped out, but small ones with little brood sometimes being left alone and this is probably due to the wasps being more interested in the plumper larvae. One lady, finding an attack in progress completely closed the hives resulting in the sacrifice of returning bees and bees outside of the hives. The carnage of both bees and wasps was terrific, but the colonies were saved, and the following day the hives were opened by one bee space,. Although the wasps are still present the bees seem to be coping. Feeding may have to be delayed for the time being, but should be done before the ivy comes into bloom. Wasps will

forsake the hives for better pickings on ivy blossom.

Foul brood has reared its head again this year in the Wallingford, Pangbourne, Shinfield and Henley postal areas. Anyone registered on Beebase will have been notified if they are within any designated area. Details of incidents together with maps are available on Beebase whether or not you are registered.

This has not been a bumper season, and crops have been "average" to non-existent. Maybe the ivy will yield this year; buds are early and very profuse. Remember, ivy honey will set so hard that the bees cannot use it therefore it is essential that useable stores are available. If in doubt apply a block of candy or fondant.

Wokingham Beekeepers Association

Only a mini report this month as weather stopped play. A few hardy souls arrived at the Club apiary on Sunday 15th September for the final open session of the season. Unfortunately it was cold, blowing hard and it was also raining. We therefore limited ourselves to removing the Apiguard trays from all the hives and topping up the feeders with Ambrosia. We also removed the varroa boards which were showing low counts, which was good news.

Our first meeting of the forthcoming winter season is the AGM, which takes place on the 9th October at the Bowls Club. We will also start the raffles again, as they raised a considerable sum of money towards Club funds. If you can bring a prize, it would be appreciated. The full winter programme is as follows:

9th October – AGM followed by an update from Nigel and Garth on their queen rearing efforts this year.

13th November – Club Honey Show. Classes as follows:

- Honey bake – Any baked item containing honey
- Jar of granulated/soft set honey
- Jar of runny honey
- Any wax item
- Mead (any style), and
- Photography (beekeeping theme, any size photograph but must be printed, either black and white or colour).

If we have enough good quality photographs available, we will look at getting calendars made which we can sell on behalf of the club. Anyone who submits a photo will be asked to keep it digitally and this electronic version, if selected, will be used in the calendar.

11th December – Question Time, followed by Christmas nibbles

8th January – Ron Hoskins talking about hygienic bees

13th February – Roger Patterson on “Bee Improvement”

12th March – Bee Diseases. Nigel Semmence giving us an update on diseases, the Asian hornet and any other relevant hot topics.

We look forward to seeing you all at the meetings.

We also have the “Bee Improvement for All” seminar on the 9th November at the Bracknell Leisure Centre, in conjunction with Roger Patterson and BIBBA. We have already exceeded expectations on the number of people who have signed up to attend. If you are not yet aware of the event and would like to come along, details can be found on <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/beeimprovementforallday.html>, the BIBBA website at <http://www.bibba.com/events.php> or email direct to me lynne.d.janes@gmail.com

If you have not yet visited our Facebook page, you might want to take a look at what happens when someone leaves the door open when you have been extracting in the house. Getting them out again was the problem as opening the windows let more in than went out!

Also a note of warning from Lorna. Her best hive was forecast to give well in excess of 100lbs of honey. She went back to remove the last two supers and realised that they had been replaced slightly crookedly, allowing wasps to gain entry and they had helped themselves to the lot. About 60lbs in total. It is easily done but at the wrong time of the year you pay dearly.

Lynne Janes

Report from South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

The last SCBKA summer meeting was held at Grey's Court. The weather was cool and showery but nevertheless we had a good turn out. The hives belong to the National Trust and are managed with the help of SCBKA.

The 3 WBC hives are nestled at the edge of woodland overlooking a small valley. A lovely place to live if you are a bee. All 3 colonies had been treated with the first pack of Apiguard 10 days previously.

Colony 1

There was evidence of a moderate drop of Varroa on the Varroa tray.

It had a Miller feeder with about a pint of syrup left in it. An empty super was being used as an eke for the Apiguard pack so the bees had a bit of a climb to get to the feeder. The brood box was brood and a half with the half at the bottom on the floor. There was only a small patch of brood and not many bees. There were also very little in the way of stores. It was decided to remove the empty super and place the feeder directly onto the brood boxes. The Apiguard tray edges were bent so that the bees could still access it. There was some discussion about whether the half should be above or below the almost empty brood box. It was left at the bottom so once the queen got going, she could move up into the empty box.

Colonies 2 and 3

Both colonies had ample stores and were thriving. Lots of bees were present in both colonies. 3 or 4 frames had been removed from the super to allow space for the Apiguard tray. After checking the outer frames in the brood box for stores, the hives were closed up as it was getting colder.

Colony 3 was hefted as a comparison to colony 1. Everyone agreed that colony 1 needed more food especially as the weather forecast for the following week was rain and cool conditions.

The discussion about our experiences with MAQS which started earlier, continued whilst we had tea and cakes in the tractor shed.

The Winter season begins with our AGM on 16 October which is followed by a talk on talk on Varroa and small cell foundation trial. The season continues with an interesting programme:

10 November 2013: Acquiring immunity to the honey bee sting with Dr Burnett

11 December 2013: Christmas special with Beekeepers' question time

15 January 2014: Honey Show

11 February: The Birds and the Bees with Dr Michael Keith Lucas

19 March 2014: The Decline of England's Bees with Dr Thomas Breeze

29 March 2014: Skep Making



Reading Beekeepers Association: Report On The Reading & District Beekeepers Association Honey Show held at The Swallowfield Show on 25th & 26th August 2014.

This event is staged and judged in The Produce Pavilion of The Swallowfield Show, an 'August Bank Holiday' event, earlier this year because of the calendar. Our friends at The Swallowfield Horticultural Society intimated that overall produce entries were down, possibly because of regular 'exhibitors' being still on holidays etc! Although Reading beekeeping entries seemed to be similarly effected we had some great support from our newer beekeepers with the entries in the 'Novice Class' at an all-time high and our 'Honey Cake' & 'Honey Biscuits' classes were also popular and attracted some non-beekeeping entries for which support we are grateful as well as to our new members and indeed to all who entered.

Results.	1st.	2nd.	3rd.
Light honey	Ian Duddle	Sian Morgan	Bob Challis
Medium	Mike Dabbs	Martin Moore	Hazel Blackburn
Set honey	Bob Challis	Tim Whitaker	Hazel Blackburn
For Sale	Jon Davey	Marion Dabbs	Dru Cuthbert
Novice	Kirsten Lennard	Marion Dabbs	Sian Morgan
Wax blocks	Hazel Blackburn	Jon Davey	
Candles -	Jon Davey	Hazel Blackburn	
Chunk	Jon Davey		
Cut comb -	Jon Davey		
Cake	Marion Dabbs	Jean King*	
Biscuits	Maite Graham*	Barbara Davies	
Marmalade	Marion Dabbs	Hazel Blackburn	Jon Davey
Bee Fodder	Hazel Blackburn	Jon. Davey	

Judges: Margaret Johnson (Southampton) assisted by husband Alan. Where no award then entries not to adequate class level or absent.

* Non beekeeper. (We claim Mrs. Maite Graham as our own, although not a beekeeper yet she & husband attend our meetings & expect to formally 'join' for 2014 season).



The picture shows our layout on two sides of the table in the produce tent, a good number of entries will be seen in 'cake' & 'biscuits' tho. these two rather technical recipes, e.g honey being the only sweetener in the Welsh Honey cake created difficulties in the baking to avoid scorching or adequate cooking thru.(Marion managed it beautifully!)

Magnificent result from Marion Dabbs; ladies winner, also Sian Morgan for being placed in Light & Novice, Ian Duddle our last year's novice winner carries-off the Light Honey class & The Reading

Plattern. All trophies to be awarded at our A.G.M. in November.

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Report from Reading Beekeepers Association

On 18th August in fine weather we assembled at South Hill Sonning, an attractive garden site, and the former Matenga apiary now in the hands of Jon Davey who admits to doing very little with it except for taking off some frames for extraction and keeping an eye on queen activity and bee population on the two big 'commercial' hives. Nick Matenga had ended up with a deep and 2 shallows below the excluder. Our demonstrator Mike Blackburn considered it advisable to re-configure as the more manageable 'brood and a half' so as well as checking all brood frames (i.e all below the excluder) looking for queen activity, the sorting out of frames and reconfiguring was embarked upon. The current 'beekeeper in charge' as well as having a bad back and getting stung twice within a minute of opening was glad to hand-over to a new beekeeper and we must congratulate young Tristan Parr, in his mid teens on his deftness and clear accurate commentary. Tris. and his father have a colony in this their first season and intend to expand in 2014. They should do well!

Mike Blackburn busied himself with the second hive helped by Annette Jukes. A queen was possibly glimpsed but as this was unconfirmed all boxes and frames had to be thoroughly examined among most of the flying population. They were good strong colonies mingling with the beekeepers! A number of full frames of honey were available to be removed for extraction and the re-configured hives re-assembled. There was a hive here where an attempt had been made to install a frame from hive number 2 with a queen cell. No subsequent evidence of queen activity had prompted Jon to insert a frame with eggs and tiny larvae. Today this showed evidence of three queen cells, apparently broken into and maybe one had been exited. There were bees in there but little or no stores. Some partly full frames of honey were inserted. Unfortunately re-inspection later that day observed major robbing, and the small hive is now deserted. The work was interesting and the reconfigured hives have since been doing well with queen activity in the right boxes.

On then to the Tracey Hicks apiary in nearby Charvil Lane and those who wished could enjoy a present stroll through King George's Field and environs. Tracey with the support of her father, the well know Wokingham Association member Maurice Hempson who keeps bees at Finchampstead (must be a good place for heather honey), has rapidly built-up a substantial apiary in her beautiful garden. She has 4 big Commercial hives with 14 inch deeps, plus nucs including a polystyrene 6 frame nuc of the type offered by Thornes, which few of us had an opportunity of seeing before and was very interesting. All in all splendid equipment with additional foil faced insulation above the crown board.

The bees were in good condition with queens seen, eggs, larvae and brood at all stages. Tracey is doing extremely well in this her first full season and she has even been able to take some honey off. In the 'polystyrene nuc' Tracey has a swarm which appears to have rapidly built-up with queen seen and brood at all stages. Some minor manipulation was done to place the blocking slide into the aperture fitted in this design to isolate the side

chamber intended to house a frame feeder. This type of hive is obviously thermally efficient and although the swarm has built-up in population, the six big 14 inch frames should provide a good housing for the winter with extra foil faced insulation fitted under the roof. The bees in this apiary are considered to be the best housed bees we have seen this season and they are a credit to Tracey and her dad.

The Hicks kindly invited us to be seated at their patio for some refreshments and we would certainly would like to visit again during our 2014 summer programme. With thanks to all who invited & participated.

First Meeting Of Our Winter Programme. Tuesday 8th October Caversham Heights Methodist Hall. 7-30 Start. Topic & Speaker to be confirmed. Bee there!



John Belcher
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Advert

Report from Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers

Apiary Meetings

Meetings at the association apiary continue throughout September and the various hives still throw up challenges. September brought a chance to see how the colonies had reacted to the new varroa mite treatment MAQS beehive strips. Having examined all the colonies we were surprised to record that there was relatively little brood to be seen and the general consensus of opinion was that this may well be a side effect of the varroa treatment. Feeders were applied to the hives and sugar syrup administered to help the bees with their winter stores.

Winter Meetings 2013

Our schedule of winter meetings commenced in September with the meetings being 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.

The first meeting of the season gave members a chance to catch up and compare notes on how the summer had gone. Two circles of members were set up and, led by experienced members; tales were swapped of both productive and bad tempered bees. Many reported that wasps had been a particular problem around their colonies. The bees seemed to recover from the delayed start to the season and the late spring blooms ran straight into the high summer honey flow without the usual 'June gap'.

We were also interested to hear from Lewis Thomas (15) about his experiences as part of the English team at the International Meeting of Young Beekeepers held in June in Munster, Germany. Lewis reported that polystyrene hives seem to be much more widely used in Germany compared to the UK and he was surprised that the bees they handled

were remarkably docile. The English team came 4th in the competition, an impressive result.

Forthcoming meetings:

- 8th October - Honey Show*
- 12th November - Annual General Meeting
- 10th December - Candle Making followed by Christmas Supper

* marks changes to usual date and time

In October we have the annual Honey Show which gives everyone a chance to show their own honey and other products in a friendly arena. There are 14 classes with something for everyone from beginners to old hands. In addition to judging the many forms of honey products there are classes for beeswax, baking and photography. There may still be time for the winners to enter the National Honey Show later in the month!

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



The advertisement is for Bee Basic Ltd. It features a central list of products and prices, flanked by two images of people wearing beekeeping suits. The top left has the company logo 'BEE BASIC LTD' in a hexagonal pattern. The top right shows the website 'www.beebasic.co.uk' and the tagline 'All the protection you need, and more'. The product list includes: Jackets from only £32, Bee suits from only £42, Leather gloves £10.50, and Smokers £16. Below this is a note '+ bee vests, smocks, hat & veils, tools and more...'. At the bottom, it states 'Free delivery on orders over £100', 'Call us for a free brochure, or visit our web site', and provides the address '5 Hillcrest Avenue, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 1AJ', email 'sales@beebasic.co.uk', and phone number '020 8866 3864'. A small note at the bottom right says 'Open 10 to 6 pm except Sundays'.

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For your diary

8th October: – Slough Windsor & Maidenhead BKA Honey Show*

9th October: Reading BKA AGM followed by an update from Nigel and Garth on their queen rearing efforts this year.

12 October: Bucks County Beekeepers Honey Show, hosted by High Wycombe Beekeepers Association, Trinity Church in High Wycombe. For more information contact Olwyn French on olwynfrench@btinternet.com

16 October: South Chilterns BKA AGM followed by a talk on Varroa and small cell foundation trial.

24-26 October: The National Honey Show, St Georges College, Woburn Hill, Weybridge, Surrey, KT15 2QS. Opening times: Thursday 24th October 9am to 6pm (open in the morning but limited to lectures). Friday 25th October 9am to 6pm, Saturday 26th October 9am to 4.30pm. More information from <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk>

10 November: SCBKA Acquiring immunity to the honey bee sting with Dr Burnett

12th November: Slough Windsor & Maidenhead BKA AGM

13th November: Reading BKA Club Honey Show.

19th November: "Bee Improvement for All". A whole days learning how to improve your bees 2013 at Bracknell, Berkshire. In conjunction with Wokingham and District BKA. Further information available from <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/beeimprovementforallday.html>

10th December: Slough Windsor & Maidenhead BKA Candle Making followed by Christmas Supper

11th December: Reading BKA Question Time, followed by Christmas nibbles

11 December: SCBKA Christmas special with Beekeepers' question time

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

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

19 March 2014: SCBKA The Decline of England's Bees with Dr Thomas Breeze

29 March 2014: SCBKA Skep Making

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 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.
