



# 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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General Secretary:  
Martin Moore  
Tilehurst  
Reading  
0118 967 7386  
07729 620 286

E-mail: [berksbees@btinternet.com](mailto:berksbees@btinternet.com)

Web: <http://www.berkshirebeekeepers.btck.co.uk/>

Newsletter Editor:  
Sue Remenyi  
Curtis Farm  
Kidmore End  
RG4 9AY  
0118 972 3699

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## In The Apiary

We beekeepers in the 21st century may be presiding over, and hopefully alleviating, the sufferings of our honey bee charges caused at least in part by our fellow mankind. Culprits include the world-wide distribution of pests such as varroa, the over exploitation of honey bee colonies resulting in stress to our bees, not to mention global warming, leading to the decimation of bees foraging habitat etc. We could continue on this theme, but we do have one major benefit in our modern electronic beekeeping world - *Information*, possibly almost in excess! Through journals and the Web, a mass of advice confronts us as to what we should do. We will have read, for example, that in November we should have completed our liquid feeding and if not, that we should start to feed fondant. There are feed additives available, but as well as the sweet stuff, beloved by both mankind and bee, it is interesting to consider a paragraph from the October issue of 'BBK News' in, both 'in the Apiary' (Dr. Bee) and the article following 'On The Topic Of Honey Bee Nutrition' part 1.

The article points out the essential reliance our bees have on pollen. Although here in the South of England we generally have a good early supply of pollen from catkins, garden crocus etc., the very poor foraging conditions this summer may mean that our bees are short of the pollen they need to enable them to stay healthy whilst over wintering. To quote BBK news October p4 para 6 "bees will still (in autumn) consume large amounts of pollen and, instead of metabolizing this to brood food will store it in their fat bodies as a food reserve .... In this condition, the colony prepares for winter .... these bees will survive a long time in the hive (they stay young) and once conditions improve in the following spring they will be ready to feed on the new larvae and forage for fresh pollen and nectar".

The 'information highway' on beekeeping suggests that there is an average of 1.5% European Foul Brood (EFB) and 0.25% American Foul Brood (AFB) in British beehives, i.e. 5 times as much European over American foulbrood. However, in our area AFB and EFB has been detected (see Berks newsletter September issue, SCBKA) and it is possible that this may be influenced by the honey storage and receiving bay at Rowse Honey Co. Honey from infected colonies contains potentially large numbers of the highly resistant spores of *Bacillus larvae*, which is the cause of this devastating disease. Look for a 'pepperpot' brood pattern, black scale at the bottom of cells and shrunken darkened cappings. The non-spore forming bacteria *Melissococcus plutonius* infests the larval gut and essentially starves it to death. In high season, the colony will often remove dead or dying larvae and are able to feed-up and save larvae, although the resultant adult bees will carry the bacterium and can transfer it to new victims during feeding. Both diseases are notifiable by law to DEFRA and it is good to see that the affected beekeepers in our part of Berkshire have done the right thing.

Triad



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## ***Around the Associations***

### **Wokingham and District Beekeepers' Association**

The 10th October was our first winter meeting and we held an EGM, followed by an AGM.

For many years the AGM has been held in November and for a number of reasons it made sense to bring it forward this year to the first winter meeting of the season. By changing the AGM we also needed to change our year end accounting date, to allow time for the accounts to be completed a month earlier. The members present were asked to vote on the various resolutions, all of which were passed unanimously and the rules will be redrafted accordingly.

In the absence of our Chairman and Vice Chairman, Neil Marshall welcomed everyone to the start of the winter season. It has been a very difficult beekeeping year but, hopefully, with the benefit of the talks that will take place over the next few months, we can learn a little more, which will give us more ammunition to cope with the 2013 season.

Robin West, our Hon Librarian, now has approximately 200 books in the library, the oldest being published in 1905. There is a full list on the club website. Subjects range from candle making to building hives and even baking, so there is something for everyone. There is no charge so feel free to keep them for as long as you need. Just get in touch with Robin, who is either happy to bring them along to the meetings or arrange for you to collect them direct.

Rosemary Bayliss presented Certificates and Badges to those members who had passed their BBKA Basic Assessment earlier in the year - Alex and Ian Atherton, Lynne and Gerald Janes, Robin West and Garth Matthews. Colin Gregory will receive his separately at a later date as he was not present at the AGM. Well done everybody.

If anyone would be interested in taking the assessment in 2013 please speak to Rosemary. It is not onerous and there is no written element to the assessment. It is all practical and you can pick up some useful hints and tips from your assessor.

Alex Atherton, our Club Apiarist, reported that the season this year was one of damage limitation rather than a wonderful hobby. We had some honey from the Club hives and still have some to bottle, which at the moment is solid in buckets as our crop this year was mostly from rape.

Copies of the new Apiary Best Practice guidelines have been circulated to the membership. These had been put together by Alex, Bob Loades and Nigel Perkins and the committee have agreed to follow these with the Club apiary. The aim is to ensure we are consistent in the way we handle the Club bees, even if we do things differently in our own apiaries. They will also be good background notes for new beekeepers that join the club and should hopefully get them off to a good start.

Over the next few months we will be asking for volunteers to take part in some projects, for example the Donkey Shed needs a clear out and equipment needs to be cleaned before the new season. If anyone can spare a few hours to help please get in touch with Alex.

We now have a new post of Learning & Development Officer. There is currently no responsibility within the Club for the management and coordination of educational, training or development programmes for W&DBKA members, especially those new to beekeeping. Garth Matthews had offered to take on this role and had put together a proposal, which was presented to the AGM. It was unanimously agreed and Garth is now our new L & D Officer. Look out for updates over the coming months.

Having done sterling work for the Club over a number of years, our Chairman and Vice Chairman, Peter Seagrave and John Edwards have decided to take a well-earned break from the committee and are standing down. However, they will still continue to be members of the Club, so we will be able to tap into their considerable knowledge and experience and John will still manage our website. Our thanks to them both for all their efforts on behalf of the Club. Our new Chairman is Nigel Perkins and our Vice Chairman is Lorna Rivett. Congratulations to them both.



Alex Atherton reminded everyone that the Microscopy Group is now up and running at Maiden Erleigh School nr Reading. We are using the school laboratory so everyone can have the use of a microscope. If anyone else is interested in attending the meetings or would like more information, please contact Alex. One of the things we would like to do is analyse some of our own honey next year, to find out what forage the bees are bringing in. If you would like to learn how to do this for your own hives, amongst other things, then come along and join the group.

We made a profit of £55.50 on the first raffle of the season. Many thanks to all who participated and contributed.

Our next meeting is our Club Honey Show, on the 14th November. We have new classes, including baking, so channel your inner Paul Hollywood or Mary Berry and take part. We also plan to eat the baking entries after the judging.

Classes are as follows:

- Best Honey in Show
- Best Granulated Honey in Show
- Best Wax in Show - in any form
- Best Honey Bake in Show - any bake as long as it contains honey

The meeting closed with a short Q & A session hosted by Nigel Perkins. Nigel has 16 colonies, all of which are within flying distance of rape. His crop this year, which was down on last season, was 1045lbs. Can anyone else top that? He also has two queens in one hive, one without any wings. One of them is laying and from the length of her abdomen he thinks it is the queen without wings. Has anyone come across anything similar? It will be interesting to see if she survives the winter.

**Lynn Janes**

**Hon. Sec. Mobile: 07721 338833**

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## Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

<http://www.bbka.org.uk/local/slough-windsor-maidenhead>

### **Neil Coxhead, Secretary SWM BKS**

There was a real buzz in the air in Windsor on the evening of Tuesday 9th October when the Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead BKS held their annual Honey Show. The show always gathers a good number of eager competitors and interested observers.

It was an earlier than usual start, allowing time to register and set up the entries. The meeting started with the introduction of Vivienne Brown from High Wycombe BKA who would have the task of judging this year's crop.

Vivienne is an experienced honey judge who was looking forward to the Honey Show in Weybridge at the end of October. She shared with us an amusing anecdote about when she was judging honey at a show in Guildford: She was interrupted by a gentleman who kept asking questions, she answered all his queries until someone tapped the man on the arm and said that they were running behind time and that they had to press on. It was only later that Vivienne found out that she had been chatting to Prince Edward!

There were not as many entries in the show as last year, which just reflects the fact that this has been a miserable year for most bees and their keepers. However the members rallied round magnificently and there were entries in every class with the largest numbers in the honey cake class and the 'black jar' honey class where the honey is judged only on flavour.

The new beekeepers put up a good show with seven jars entered in the novice class which was won by Glen Pearson who also went on to win the cup for the Best newcomer.



Congratulations are due to Dennis Way, who was the overall winner of the show. He almost swept the board with first prizes for his runny honey, a frame suitable for extracting, a portion of comb honey and he even proved his culinary skills with his winning honey cake!

Congratulations also to Matthew Robertson for his Medium Honey entry, which won the Best Exhibit.

Maureen Williams was the steward during the judging process and was clearly delighted to 'assist', especially when it came to judging the honey cakes class! Maureen was a first prize winner too when her pair of pretty rose candles burned brightly and scooped the prize.



As always there are the folk behind the scenes whose efforts should be recognized; many thanks are due to Joy Dodson, who organised the show with marvellous precision. She ensured that every entry was labelled and remained anonymous until the 'owner' was happy to reveal their identity or the beautifully written prize cards revealed the name.

The evening ended with the presentation of the cups to the winners and we all look forward to the quiet time of winter and the challenges that 2013 may bring.

*Lorraine Godenzie*

Forthcoming Meetings:

13th November at 8pm: SWM BKS Annual General Meeting

11th December at 8pm: Making Mead - John Gamble, followed by Christmas supper.

As always, details of all our meetings, topical articles and much more are on our website at:

<http://www.bbka.org.uk/local/slough-windsor-maidenhead>

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## Reading and District Beekeepers' Association

**Jon Davey, Secretary**

[www.rbka.org.uk](http://www.rbka.org.uk)

The first meeting of our winter programme was held on 9<sup>th</sup> October at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall. The speaker was Rob Nicklas on the topics 'Varroa Treatments (discussion) and The Overwintering of bees and Preparation for The New Season'.

Many Reading beekeepers know Rob well as he lectures on the Beginners Beekeeping Courses that Reading Association hold in January and February at Denefield School Tilehurst. He is also a bee farmer with over 100 colonies and Chairman of Newbury Beekeepers Association. Rob has previously given talks and demonstrations about his skills making beekeeping artefacts and hive elements from free or very cheaply obtained wood and household and cosmetic products (all to BRC standards) made with beehive products produced by Mrs Nicklas and himself. We had a good turnout of Reading beekeepers for this session, the majority being recent 'pupils' of Reading's beginner's courses and newer beekeepers, so Rob's illustrated talk was principally aimed as a follow-on applicable to the autumn/winter season now upon us.

Rob outlined the requirements for a healthy colony during this season with the essentials of food, a dry ventilated hive, a sufficient number of healthy bees, treated and virtually free from pests, and a viable queen. Rob bases his feeding plans on a minimum requirement of 20 kg equivalent of 2:1 sugar solution feed per hive and he recommends 'Ambrosia' which is an 'enzyme inverted' sucrose that enables the bees to utilize the sugars more speedily. As the bee gut has to make the inversion, reducing this also reduces stress on the bees and stressed honey bees are less able to overwinter. The hives should be hefted as a guide. If possible feeding should be done before the ivy blossom becomes the main bee forage. As soon as the weather becomes colder, fondant or candy should be used. Again, Ambrosia paste is recommended. Beekeepers using tartaric acid (cream of tartar), vinegar or lemon juice to 'invert' the sugar as found in many recipes for fondant should be aware that other writers have considered these 'acids' to be harmful to bees. Rob emphasised the importance of hygiene with regards hive tools & beekeeping wear, the good construction of beehives, the identification and avoidance of frost pockets, care when feeding, avoiding spillage, assessment of nearby good bee forage for the spring season and protection against larger pests ranging from the tiny but sinister

'pigmy shrew' thru woodpeckers, badgers, cattle and lastly people - including imprudent beekeepers all of which can threaten and stress the bees!



Rob went on to illustrate agents such as 'poisoning' from crop treatments and viral diseases, now unfortunately the main challenge being vectored by varroa mites, as well as the life cycle of varroa showing how they need brood cells to reproduce. He also highlighted other macro pests and bacterial diseases including foul brood. Treatments and procedures were discussed in some detail. Rob suggested that all beekeepers use the internet to assess the range of treatments available. He personally has found the use of 'Hive Clean' very beneficial and there were beekeepers present who endorsed his high opinion of this product. The use of oxalic and formic acid was discussed; these will basically work best to destroy varroa when the colony is in a broodless period, i.e. during winter months. It was noted that speedy application is essential in cold weather. Bee Base will advise their 'members' if there is a case of foul brood within 5 km. Queens, including their marking & clipping were discussed, this being something for early next spring. May it speedily be with us! This was an excellent illustrated talk from Rob and a good discussion with questions and answers followed. It was especially helpful to our newer beekeepers, who we are glad to say are now in the majority at Reading & District!

Our November meeting is Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November at 7-30pm and will start with our Annual General Meeting. This will be speedily concluded and be followed by a commercially produced DVD 'Dance of the Honeybee' to be followed by a questions and answers session.

*Jon Davey*

### **For beekeeping equipment and supplies**

contact Joan or John Belcher anytime on  
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## **South Chilterns Beekeepers' Association**

**Joanne Shanagher,**

**Secretary. Tel: 01189 721067**

**<http://www.southchilternsbeekeepers.org.uk>**

Following the AGM of the SCBKA one of our own Members, Stephen Kaseki, gave an excellent and extremely interesting presentation, which he usefully illustrated with coloured slides. He spoke knowledgeably and enthusiastically about the plants that provide the nectar and pollen so vital to honey bees. He is Head Gardener of an Estate in Oxfordshire, and his vast experience as a professional gardener, qualifications gained at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden and Professional Gardeners Guild, and a fellow hobbyist bee-keeper made Stephen the perfect speaker for this subject.

Discussing the presentation with Stephen he told me that "it has been two years in the making, every time I've seen a honey bee forage from a plant, I've noted it down". With its vast and varied collection of plants in the Gardens of the Estate, it was obvious he spoke from personal experience and frequently mentioned other insects e.g. bumble bees, butterflies and moths that were attracted to the same food sources.

The emphasis was on the cultivated and in some cases the unusual, rather than wild plants and Stephen's in-depth knowledge as a plants-man came into its own here. As he talked us through

the slides he emphasised that single flowers should be planted, as plant breeders deliberate breeding of double flowered hybrids means that the pollen producing parts have been sacrificed resulting in sterile 'doubles' or unusual shaped flowers that do not attract or feed insect life. Included were also useful tips, for example, on the best sites for various plants perhaps to brighten up a shady or dry area or to ensure a long flowering period and when to prune to help achieve a second flush of flowers and thus more provide extra forage.



A very useful feature of the talk, especially for the hobbyist gardeners in the audience, was that rather than arranging the plants into groups such as bulbs, annuals, herbaceous perennials, shrubs, etc, the plants were introduced in 'seasonal groups' i.e. when they are out in flower during each month of the year. The picture of Hellebores is a suggestion for January. With this information in mind and Stephen's encouragement to apply an 'insect friendly' approach when choosing plants for our gardens, it will greatly aid the health of our

honey bees and other pollinating insects in three main ways, all of which scientists constantly advocate, by:

- a) providing a wide range of pollen and nectar
- b) greatly improving the availability of food sources throughout the year
- c) extending the foraging season

Steve's list of seasonal plants can be found at:

<http://www.southchilternsbeekeepers.org.uk/SeasonalPlantsforbees>

Finally, a very big thank you to Stephen for a very informative and fascinating presentation and also for generously providing his list of plants, which is now available on the Association's Website.

*Margaret Moore*



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## ***Useful Links, Advice and Information***

**Video on how to use Vita Apiguard (all pack sizes)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RGSp3VEeAg>

For added interest: What are the different types of hive demonstrated in the video?

**Interesting article on how Honey suffers after bad year for bees** by Hannah Briggs on the BBC Food website.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/0/19585638>

### **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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**Letters 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 last day of the month for the following month. Contributions received after this will be held over for a later month.

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