



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

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

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

Editors Corner



With the temperatures continuing to be above average our bees are reluctant to retreat into the hives for winter. Unfortunately the wasps have also not yet got the message that it is time to move on!

Last month I was musing about the wax moth and having now frozen all my frames to kill off any eggs and larvae, I have placed two stacks of boxes with frames outside to over-winter in the cold (! .. Hmm ..).

I stood the boxes on an upturned plastic plant tray and put a hive roof on the top to ensure that the structure stays dry, but I naively assumed that no further protection was required – such as wire to keep out the woodpeckers. I thought that it was only the bees that the woodpeckers were interested in and that is why they attack hives during winter given half a chance. Well – that may indeed be true, but I can now say from first hand experience that they enjoy pecking away at the wood on an empty hive too! Fortunately, I noticed the beginnings of a hole quite quickly and have now encased the stacks with chicken wire!

Winter meetings are well underway together with our associations honey shows – what a great time of year to share the bounty (or maybe not such a bounty this summer!) from our good husbandry and our bees hard work!

There will be no 'In My Apiary' pieces now until next March – but we will continue to keep you all up to date with the winter activities of our four associations. Thanks to all those who contributed and we look forward to hearing more beekeeping adventures next year. In the meantime occasional articles are welcome!

Sue Remenyi

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Its all in a word

The extract below is from an issue of the British Bee Journal published in 1919.

ON BEING STUNG Somerset BKA

Speaking of being “bitten” reminds me of the various terms used in different parts of the country synonymous for being stung. While in this locality [Huntingdonshire] you are “bitten”, further north in parts of Lincolnshire, you are “punctured”, while in Yorkshire you are “blown” or “pricked”; in parts of Lancashire you are “kicked”, and in the North Midlands “tapped.” In South Wales you get “picked”, and Somerset is contented with “stunged”

Hemming, EF. Jottings from Huntingdonshire. British Bee Journal, 1919.

South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

The Bumblebee's Needs: Ecology & Conservation

Before I start, here are two notes to the wise. Firstly, when your chairman asks you for a favour – your reply should be ‘maybe’ rather than yes! As a ‘Probie’ (NCIS TV reference meaning new/inexperienced) committee member I found myself having inadvertently agreed to write up this talk.

Secondly in addition to a pen and paper, ask for a head torch and a brain transplant. The head torch; so you can at least see the paper you are trying to write on when they switch off the lights and from a purely personal point of view, a brain capable of keeping up with the plethora of facts that were bombarded at us from the podium.

Have said this, I really enjoyed Dr Mathew Heard's talk. Not just because he's also a member of our association and therefore more likely to read this review, but because of the direct correlation between honey bees and bumble bee health, which, when it comes to ecology and conservation is something every beekeeper should have an interest in.

Mathew has worked for 14 years as a lead scientist at the Centre of Ecology and Hydrology in Crowmarsh Gifford in Oxfordshire and is particularly interested in the interface between plants and insects with a special focus on biodiversity.

Now, I'm not going to attempt to write up Mathew's talk word for word as it would end up looking more like a PhD dissertation than a review for the newsletter. Instead I will try and summarise what he discussed and also pick out some of pearls of wisdom that my limited brain could keep up with.

The first part of Mathew's talk was taken up with Bumblebee Facts:

- 1) Bumblebees collect nectar in their honey crops but do not concentrate it in the same way honeybees do. They feed and mix near normal nectar to feed to their young, which is why they

seem to work much harder than honey bees as they only have less than one week's stores at any one time.

- 2) They collect pollen on their body hairs, but do not have corbicula like honey bees. Some have a very limed food range while others have a much greater diversity
- 3) Eusocial bees such as Bubble, Honey, Carpenter and Mortar bees cooperate in the care of their young. They divide reproductive tasks throughout the colony and have overlaps of offspring. Unlike honey bees, Bumblebees are annual. So a mated queen hibernates over winter and emerges in the spring to build a nest and have up to 2 broods a year. New queens will then emerge and singly mate, and only those queens will survive the winter.
- 4) There are about 400 bumble bee species in the world and some 25 in the UK. There are two types; true bumbles bees and Cuckoo bumbles, which are parasitic and rely on true bumbles to raise their young.
- 5) In terms of colouring there are 6 main types. Most colonies are small, anything up to a few 100 workers. Most nest are found underground in old rodent holes. A few make nest above ground in matted grass called tussocks and the third type (Bobus hypnorum) will occupy bird boxes
- 6) Bees are refereed to, as long and shot tongued species. Different tongue lengths are suitable for different forage. Apis has a tongue length of 6.6mm on average while Bombus have double this. That means they are able to exploit different resources.



The second half of the talk covered the importance of pollinates and the work he was focused on.

Multiple threats to pollinators.

Apart from the obvious impact on agricultural crop pollination thought to be worth 200 billion pound globally, 90% of our wildflowers are insect pollinated. There has been a significant decrease in pollinators in the last 50 years and this is particularly prevalent in long tongued and specialist pollinators. There is no one individual threat we can identify, that would explain the population decline in our pollinator populations. This problem is compounded by lack of reliable data although it is suspected that this decline is slowing.

Loss of Suitable Forage Plants

Habitat loss due to agricultural practices play a major role in the decline in wild species while pathogens and insecticides are affecting our managed colonies.



Mathew's research has shown the importance of putting the right food in the right place. With limited resources and falling funding, Mathew is trying to convince officials that spending on targeted options is the way forward. Agro-environment schemes have been in place for many years now with up to 60% of our UK farmland signed up to the scheme.

Unfortunately only very targeted action has any real affect. Less than 1% of what farmers choose to implement has an increased effect on visitation and abundance. Pollinator responses are moderated by landscape context, so we should therefore be focusing on these targeted schemes, rather than the ones farmers consider easier to implement.

Future focus should be on multiple impacts including the combination of chemicals, pests, bee disease and the availability of food sources.

I can highly recommend Dr Mathew Heard as a speaker. Mathew I hope I have done your fascinating and information packed talk justice and hope to see you at more of our meetings in the future.

We are looking forward to our honey show on 18 November – further details can be found on our website www.scbka.org

Duncan Heather

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Members of



BEE FARMERS ASSOCIATION

Reading and District Beekeepers Association



For the final meeting of our 2015 summer programme we were the guests of Simon & Katie Holmes at their Arborfield site where they have a business training & supporting learners in land based industries (forestry etc). They also keep bees at home, but here we were able to open five well established and well-sited hives. As we had a good attendance we as usual split into two groups with our good friend Lee Whitaker with us to take his splendid photos. Katie and Simon have suffered bad wasp attacks this summer and have re-

duced their hive entrances to a minimum. They located and destroyed a nearby wasp colony and the bees in all five hives have survived and in the better weather conditions this autumn are looking populous and healthy and are actively foraging. Most of us have had a poor season for honey because of the hot, dry and windy six weeks in mid-summer and as a result Katie is supplementing the bees stores by feeding, see photos.



As we worked through the hives in our group a few wasps were dispatched but that crisis seems to be over, good signs of queen activity, eggs, larvae in all stages and now some build-up of stores. We saw a particularly attractive new pollen store in several colours, apparently there's good drifts of Indian Balsam along the Loddon and earlier in the season some oil seed rape was being worked by the bees. Stores at this time are of light coloured fluid honey. The third hive revealed an unmarked queen, the earlier marked queen per-

haps having been superseded. Katie deftly caged and marked her. This hive was heavy with stores with one full super, another super added which Katie plans to leave as stores for the bees. Hives four and five were also populous, one exceedingly so! Stores coming in and feeding continuing, a marked queen was seen in this as well as eggs, larvae & brood. No 5 hive was healthy looking, with brood but no tiny larvae or eggs, the queen might have stopped laying. Katie and Simon will continue to monitor their excellently housed and husbanded bee colonies for feeding, weight etc (no 3 was good and heavy!) We had a good number of newer beekeepers and interested persons with us and we are very grateful to the Holmes' for allowing us to work with and see such a 'proper-job' of an apiary! This will give an example & guidance to one & all.





Food and drink was provided by Simon and Katie, very many thanks to them & those who attended.

Our November meeting is our Annual General Meeting 7.00 pm for 7-30 start at our usual venue of Caversham Heights Methodist Hall. The AGM should last for not more than 60 minutes and meantime judging will be in progress for our annual New Beekeepers Honey Show, for The Hazel Blackburn Trophy. Other trophies and bee-

keeping prizes to be won. Check our web site www.rbka.org.uk for schedule and details.

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Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

The Annual Honey Show



Tuesday 13th October was the date of our Honey Show – the end of season chance to demonstrate the fruits of the bee-keeping members' labour.

The entries for the show started arriving before 7pm for registering and setting up. The hall was a hive of activity as the entries were double checked, honey jars were polished and lids swapped where necessary. Beeswax candles were positioned carefully in their holders; beautiful well-filled honeycombs were displayed to their best advantage whilst cakes and other honey products were attractively laid out. Eager en-

trants surveyed the competition.

The honey show is always a fun event with twelve classes to enter and we had entries in every one. In addition to being our education officer, this year Jim Cooper has taken over the role of Show Secretary and with it the reins for running the show. He encouraged us to register our entries before the event so that labels could be prepared in advance thus saving administration time on the evening and ensured that the winners from last year returned their freshly polished cups.

This year there were 50 entries across the classes which were judged by Sue Carter from our neighbouring Chalfonts Beekeepers Society who was assisted by our Chairman Glynis Morse. At the beginning of the judging Sue explained how she would be judging the class and what specific characteristics she would be looking for. She used a torch to examine the honey for debris and granulation and fortunately she had brought her own colour grading glasses as she pointed out that our society's were about 30 years old and probably 'collectable antiques'!



The overall number of entries was fewer than last year which seems to support the reports of variable honey harvests this year. Many members reported that their honey is darker in colour this year compared to last year when light coloured honey dominated the show entries.



Sue gave a running commentary as she judged each class which provided the audience with an excellent insight into the most important considerations for each class. We learnt that our jar lids and necks must be clear of stickiness to ensure that they 'sing' when they are unscrewed and how to use cling film to remove foam and debris from the surface of the honey. The candles were lit, allowed to burn for a while then extinguished before being relit. The honey comb both in frames ready for extraction and that packaged ready for sale was scrutinised.

The 'Made with Honey' class had an interesting variety of entries including mead, honey maple syrup, honey oat flapjack and baklava whilst the honey cake class was a popular one with six closely matched entries.

By the end of the judging the audience was considerably wiser about how to present their entries for judging and we had worthy winners chosen for every class.

At the end of the evening there were nine cups presented. Congratulations to Jim Cooper who took the top prizes for the 'Most points in honey classes' and 'Best exhibit in Show' together with a further four cups and also to Eli Lanham for her success with her first entries in the Honey Show.

CUPS AWARDED

Maidenhead Presidents Cup Most points in Honey classes 1 to 8 - *Jim Cooper* **Slough Cox Cup** Honey Cake class 15 - *Jim Cooper*

Maidenhead Novices Cup class 9 - *Eli Lanham*

Maidenhead Goblet Best first time exhibitor - *Eli Lanham*

Slough Kemsley Cup Candles class 10 - *Jim Cooper*

Slough Apis Best exhibit in Show - *Jim Cooper* (Frame for Extraction)

Slough Tweedie Cup Beeswax class 11 - *Jim Cooper*

Slough Gray Cup Most points in Slough Show - *Jim Cooper*

Maidenhead Vince Haverley Cup Photograph class 12 - *Lorraine Godenzie*

The Slough Cup Most points in FBBKA Show - *not awarded*

Maidenhead TJ Cox Challenge Cup Something made with Honey class 13 - *Lorraine Godenzie*

Maidenhead Challenge Cup Most points in Slough and FBBKA Show - *not awarded*



Winter Meetings 2015

Our next winter meeting will be the AGM which will be held on Tuesday 10th November with a start time of 8.00pm

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.

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

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Wokingham and District Beekeepers' Association

Our winter meetings commenced with the AGM on 14 October. Nigel Perkins was re-elected as Chairman, Neil Marshall as Treasurer and myself as Secretary. As mentioned previously, Garth Matthews our L&D Officer has stepped down for a year in order to concentrate on his own L&D, although he will stay on as a committee member. We welcome Peter Hayward as our temporary L&D Officer and John Waddelove who is taking over as Apiary Manager.

I was hoping to relay some good news about our apiary following the AGM, but this is still not possible. Although Neil has been to see a paddock in Wokingham, the lady who owns it has been on holiday and Nigel has still been unable to view it. Hopefully this can be done over the next couple of weeks. We feel as though we will have to take it, as there is little else available in the surrounding area.

One piece of good news relayed at the AGM is that W&DBKA have now obtained 'world' recognition of our Association's work. Thanks mainly to the hard work of Garth Matthews, we have won an industry award in the 'Vita Honeybee Health Initiative Scheme 2015' for the varied programme we run focussing on the identification and control of bee diseases. Our prize is a microscope.



As well as congratulating eight of our members on passing their Basic Assessment, we also congratulated Nigel on obtaining his General Husbandry Certificate, being presented here by Garth.

Nigel welcomed us to the AGM with what is his usual comment, 'it's been a funny old year for bee-keeping'! He also stated that despite being a 'funny old year' it had been a good year for honey. Neil eventually prized out of Nigel just how much honey he had extracted from his bees this year. From 14 hives Nigel had obtained 1,260 lbs! I wonder who can top that? W&DBKA are proud to have a Chairman with such a wealth of knowledge and excellent beekeeping skills.

As we are aware, the National Honey Show takes place at the end of October. I'm looking forward to going along, attending a couple of workshops and hopefully honing my skills in the craft of bee-

keeping. I can of course have some retail therapy and purchase equipment in the trade hall. I will also be getting some ideas for our Association Honey Show which is taking place in November, with categories such as runny and set honey, a wax item, mead, a bee related photograph, a frame of honey for extraction and a bake which includes honey. With my pathetic honey harvest, my chances of entering most categories are minimal, but I'll bring something along, even if I win the booby prize!

On 29 November, W&DBKA will be taking a stand at the Wokingham Winter Carnival. This not only promotes beekeeping and our Association, but gives us the opportunity to bring in some funds by selling the honey we harvested at the apiary, together with wax items, gift bags and confectionery made by members.

We hope to have a good turnout at our Honey Show, with plenty of members entering their produce for judging and it would be great to have as much support and help as possible at the Winter Carnival.

Carol Butters

Secretary – W&DBKA

For your Diary

If you subscribe to Bee Craft Magazine, you might like to join their hangouts/webinars. You will find details of how to join a session in the magazine. The dates and topics for the remainder of 2015 are:

18th November Winter projects DIY ideas

16th December Relax - Beekeeper to Beekeeper

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.

<http://www.lapisonline.it/index.php/en/l-apis-excerpt> A long standing Italian publication which now has an English section.

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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