



THE FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

February 2016

Number 709

The Federation, its Council, and its Officers cannot be held responsible for the views expressed in the Newsletter or possible errors.

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

Editor's Corner



I find that February is a month that I am itching to get going with 'real beekeeping', but alas it is really still winter, and despite some activity when the rain stops for a while, the action is still mostly inside the hive where hopefully the brood is starting to build, and other than checking for stores it will be another few weeks before first inspections can be undertaken.

The same cannot be said for the bumble bees – I have encountered a number of very large queen bumbles in the garden, seemingly struggling to keep airborne whilst they search for a home for the coming year. The queens have emerged from their winter hibernation in the soil, with much reduced fat stores and so will be looking to feed on pollen and to drink nectar to gain energy.

Frequent nesting sites include holes in the ground, tussocky grass, bird boxes and under garden sheds or compost bins. Once the queen has chosen a nesting spot she will begin to collect pollen from flowers, to bring back to the nest. She forms a mound of pollen and wax (which she secretes from her body) and lays her first brood of eggs. If you have the patience to sit and watch you can sometimes be lucky enough to observe a queen bumble settle upon a nesting site. The bottom of my compost bin is a favourite site, which has been home to nests the last three years.

Sue Remenyi

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Ty Brith Pentrecelyn Ruthin Denbighshire LL 15 2SR
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Federation News

The Federation AGM was held on 20th January. Following officer elections, three positions remained vacant (chairman, vice chairman, secretary). As a result, the previous debate from 2013 took place regarding the dissolution of the Federation due to insufficient volunteers to manage its limited operations. Delegates voted 6 (out of 8) in favour of its dissolution in 2017 (2 abstained). The four associations have until 29/2/16 to reply to me either, endorsing this vote and if not providing the necessary volunteers to fill these officer positions.

The four associations will have the option to apply to the BBKA to become member associations. In practice the only change to workload within each association will be sending (or not) a delegate to the BBKA's ADM.

The current collaborative working practices between the four associations together with the newsletter will continue even if the Federation is no more.

BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM)

A full debrief is provided at the end of the newsletter. The main highlights are:

- The fees will not increase again in 2017. As a reminder, they are increasing in April.
- There will be a £1 per BBKA member levy in 2017 to pay for the International Young Beekeeper's Conference, which BBKA will be hosting (unless BBKA can raise sufficient funds to cover the costs).
- The Exam Board will no longer be funded out of our membership fees; it will have to become financially self-sufficient.
- BeeConnect is to be launched later this year. This will facilitate the automatic relay of farmers' spraying forecasts to beekeepers within their area if the beekeepers have registered on the system.

Caroline Bushell, Outgoing Federation Chair

Beekeeping equipment and supplies

All types of hives and accessories kept in stock.

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Did you know

UK researchers from the University of Exeter have found that the *Apis mellifera* honeybee, native to Europe, is a transmitter of Deformed Wings Virus (DWV). The deadly infection, mostly carried by the Varroa Destructor mite, threatens the existence of bees worldwide. "*The deformed wing virus is a major threat to honeybee populations across the world and this epidemic has been driven by the trade and movement of honeybee colonies,*" says the study, published in the Science magazine on Friday.

Varroa mites are parasites that feed on adult honeybees and also on their larvae, and endanger entire hives. The virus attacks a honeybee pupa, causing it to shrink and deform bees' wings.

Researchers have studied genetic samples of mites and honeybees from over 17 countries. They discovered the virus originated in Europe and subsequently migrated to North America, Australia and New Zealand.

"This is the first study to conclude that Europe is the backbone of the global spread of the bee-killing combination of Deformed Wing Virus and Varroa," said Dr Lena Wilfert, senior author of the study.

The report calls for immediate action to halt the spread of the virus and prevent it from entering regions where the infection is yet to manifest.

"We must now maintain strict limits on the movement of bees, whether they are known to carry Varroa or not. It's also really important that beekeepers at all levels take steps to control Varroa in their hives, as this viral disease can also affect wild pollinators," Wilfert said, advocating stricter approaches to the transportation of bees.

Extracted from <https://www.rt.com/news/331646-bee-agriculture-people-trade/>

Listen to a podcast with Dr Lena Wilfert from <http://www.sciencemag.org/> (towards the end of the page).

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Reading and District Beekeepers Association

18th December at our usual venue we assembled for an illustrated talk by Surrey beekeeper Andrew Gibb entitled 'Beekeeping with a Full Time Job'. Andrews is a mechanical engineer for John Laing and since 1978 has been a director of Bee Craft magazine. He is Secretary for The Surrey County Show, a BBKA examiner and also teaches beekeeping in adult education.

Andrew is pretty busy! And he has evolved a formulae to enable him to run 16-20 colonies each year, building-up in a controlled way from 6-8 colonies in out apiaries around Bisley & Woking. Last season (not a productive one for most of us) Andrew produced an average of 55lbs of honey per hive! There's no oilseed rape in his foraging area, and Andrew says the bees that can forage in Naphill nurseries are good performers. As Surrey has many trees and fruit orchards, not to mention well planted productive gardens there is no shortage of nectar sources.



Andrew works alone. He has his mobile phone with him and is strict in his routines, with nine-day examinations from April through August. He works only with brood and a half Nationals, avoid mixing equipment. In the winter months he plans ahead and ensures he has enough available kit for the spring season. Aggressive colonies are re-queened and he aims to re-queen fifty per cent of his colonies each season in late August-early September. Although he will buy-in queens from local sources he know and trusts, Andrew also raises his own queens using the cell-punch method. He makes up his own from small bore copper pipe and the Miller method which he illustrated for us. Good

queens are a large part of successful beekeeping and Andrew reminded us of this. Andrew marks his queens but does not clip. Techniques he uses for disease control and swarm control include shook artificial swarm methods which he also described illustrated.

Andrew also talked about microscopy for disease and pest identification, apiary hygiene, frame spacing for brood and super boxes to give higher honey yield and brood boxes with good workable frames free from brace etc. An active question and answer session followed. Reading beekeepers were privileged to meet & be addressed by such a distinguished beekeeper as Andrew Gibb (see photo) with lots of very useful information and recommendations. With thanks to him and all who attended as well as to those who set before us a selection of festive eats & cordial

Our February meeting at the usual venue of Caversham Heights Methodist Hall is on Tuesday 16th. 7-30 start for a talk by messers BeeGone on Non Lethal Removal of Honey Bees from Structures. Now this is something we all have to face up to eventually. Be there!



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Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

Trade was brisk at Sports Direct following Andrew Beer's talk to SWM beekeepers this month on "Beekeeping and the Law". '*Always have your running shoes on when you when you visit your bees,*' was Andrew's advice, because a beekeeper who sees his swarm emerge has a right to follow them. There were caveats, of course, but expect to see plenty of beekeepers sprinting around East Berks come next swarming season!



Andrew's objective was clear - identify the danger areas for beekeepers and try and avoid them! He certainly gave us pause for thought; our swarm collectors may not be quite so cheerful about helping out in future now they appreciate the potential risks. Andrew's advice - if collection of a swarm looks risky to you, the public or private property, walk away, unless you've got those running shoes on, in which case a brisk jog is advisable.

Bribery was also suggested - especially in the form of regular jars of honey to neighbours and other stake holders who might take umbrage with your bees. He had a serious point; the cost of litigation is prohibitive so maintaining cordial relations with neighbours and being a responsible and reasonable beekeeper is the best strategy. Those that provoke the wrath of neighbours could be served an Abatement Notice under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, something that is relatively easy to serve and expensive to remove. Andrew's advice: A beekeeper threatened with a statutory abatement notice, whatever the rights and wrongs of the situation, may be best advised to take his or her beekeeping activities elsewhere, given the likely costs of any action - whatever its outcome.

This was not an evening for the anxious and neurotic, and those of us that thought we would carry on blithely in ignorance of the law are now a little less complaisant. Many of us were doing a mental check on our honey labels and seriously contemplating getting a Food Hygiene Certificate, and even getting our premises registered. All in all a sobering but thought provoking evening.

Stephen Jones

South Chiltern's Beekeepers' Association

On a frosty winters evening a large turnout of members clustered in Woodcote Village Hall to hear Roger Patterson, supported by his dog Nell, give a highly informative talk on the subject of native and near native honey bees.

"All Honey Bees are not the same".....and Roger explained why this is the case detailing the 'Out of Africa' transition many millions of years ago of 4 distinct groups of bees which subsequently, became isolated by natural barriers such as the Alps and thereafter, developed certain characteristics to suit their environments.

The Italian bee is very prolific and very active for most of the year. They need more space and consume more food. They are ideally suited to the warmer climes of the Mediterranean and their brighter yellow colouring might be designed to combat the sunshine.

Its more easterly neighbour the Carniolans have very prolific Queens in the summer and need half the pizzas of the Italians, however they swarm like crazy.

The Dark North European bee has adapted itself for long winters and cool unpredictable summers. They are ideally suited to the conditions we face in the UK being very adaptable, non-prolific and frugal. They are darker and longer than their cousins are.



For well over 15 years now Roger has been rearing his Queens with the intention of promoting the characteristics of the North European bee, by deselecting smaller yellow in favour of darker and larger bees. In so doing his bees are happy to spend the year in a single brood box, wintering well with much less (if any) feeding. As a result of needing less food more colonies can exist in a given space, making up for them being less prolific. So all in all a better result for bee and keeper!

In his spare time, Roger is the Editor of the definitive Dave Cushman's website and has his own book on the subject: Bee keeping: A Practical Guide, which I can thoroughly recommend.

Rob Owen

Bee Improvement Day

South Chilterns and BIBBA have joined forces to offer a one day course on "Raising your own Queens" on **Saturday 13 February 2016** at the Berkshire College of Agriculture. It is hoped that by attending this course beekeepers will learn how improve their bees and those of the surrounding area by raising local queens from their best colonies and culling the poor ones.

Honeybee improvement should be of interest to all beekeepers for a number of reasons including temper, hygiene, quietness on the combs and suitability to the locality.

The course will be presented by Roger Patterson and is organised to help and encourage beekeepers of all abilities to improve their bees, using simple techniques and without the need for specialist equipment.

Topics covered include:

- Setting the criteria you want in your bees;
- How to assess your own and other people's colonies;
- Recording your assessments using simple methods;
- Rearing queens from local bees to avoid relying on buying them;
- Deciding which colonies to use queen cells from and which queens to cull;
- Using natural queen cells the bees build;
- Producing "Artificial" queen cells for those who want more queens;
- Changing queens in colonies;
- Making up mating nuclei;
- Getting queens mated
- Working with other beekeepers and local BKAs.

There will be plenty of information on colony management, with an emphasis on understanding what is happening inside colonies and keeping things simple.

Many beekeepers believe some of the current bee problems have been caused by the continued importation of bees and queens. This course will help beekeepers to rear their own queens from local stock and not rely on imports.

Bee Improvement courses are organised by BIBBA on a nationwide basis, in conjunction with local BKAs or bee breeding groups.

The cost to attend is £12 for South Chiltern members and £20 for anyone else. Bookings can be made from <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/raising-your-own-queens-honey-bee-improvement-day-tickets-20033388404> (South Chiltern members will receive a separate link).



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Out Apiary Offer

I have received the following offer. No further details are known.

We live in Henley - RG9 3ET and we have a fair bit of land. I would be interested in allowing some hives on the land all I ask is if I could help the keeper from time to time so I can learn from him /her.

Please call me 01491 877177. Nick Bee

Dates for your Diary

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 17 February | Beecraft Hangout on the topic of BBKA Exams
http://www.bee-craft.com/hangout |
| 20 February | Bucks County Spring Fair, Wendover Memorial Hall, Wharf Rd, Wendover, HP22 6HF
http://www.buckscountybeekeepers.co.uk/whats-on/20th-annual-spring-seminar/ |
| 5 March | Bee Tradex Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG
www.beetradex.co.uk/ |
| 11-12 March | Ulster BKA Spring Convention, Greenmount College, Co. Antrim.
www.ubka.org/conference/ |
| 2 April | Welsh BKA Spring Convention, Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells
http://www.wbka.com/news-events/convention-2016/ |
| 8-9 April | BBKA Spring Convention, Harper Adams College, Shropshire
http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention.php |
| 27-29 October | National Honey Show, Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher, Surrey, KT10 9AJ
http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/ |

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.

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.

BBKA 2016 Annual Delegates' Meeting (ADM) 9th January 2016

Debriefing notes

Present were 60 voting delegates out of total of 68. As usual, the first 40 minutes was wasted, this time debating whether to adopt the standing orders (SO) or re-order the agenda items. A vote was taken as to whether to use the Constitution's version of how to elect officials rather than the SO's version. As the Constitution takes precedence, the vote to adopt this process was accepted. In general, this meeting was held with good grace apart from one ill-tempered incident involving Mr K Basterfield refusing to answer the chairman's legitimate question which wasted another 5 minutes.

Matters arising from the 2015 ADM

- "BeeConnected" a web based system for spraying is launching this year.
 - It is undergoing beta testing in March 2016, it should go live in the UK from June onwards when Beekeepers should be able to register

With the current ban on neonics, the use of spraying has increased. The new system is supported by the NFU, Crop Protection Association, BBKA and the Voluntary Initiative.

In brief farmers and/or contractors will input GPS coordinates, the crop type and the pesticide to be used and the timing of the spraying. Beekeepers will have to register to join the system and will receive alerts when spraying is due to take place within a radius specified by the beekeeper

The Australian version of this can be viewed on this link <http://beeconnected.org.au/>

[An enhancement expected in the future is the facility for farmers to locate beekeepers in their area who might move colonies to their crops.](#)

2015/10 Sugar Waste

This appeared to be an issue best covered by local associations reporting suspected lack of control to the Environment Agency and if that fails to BBKA

2015/07 Neonics

At an EU level, interactions of herbicides and fungicides with bees should also be considered not just the effect of pesticides.

Dept. for Hydrology and Ecology @ Wallingford are doing research to see what neonics are present in honey. They may want samples of honey. BBKA office is to send out details of what they want from beekeepers. Keep a look out if you want your honey tested. Wallingford will provide sample tubes and pay for postage.

2015/16 No change to the legislation so far on importing bees.

There is an EU agricultural scheme which compensates beekeepers for the loss of colonies due to disease or environmental impact. However DEFRA doesn't operate this yet.

BBKA are trying to encourage good queen rearing.

Annual Cycle Working Party, 2014/04

The chairman advised that the EC had rejected the WP recommendation to amend the Constitution to include a three year costed strategic plan and a one year costed business plan in lieu of a budget for delegates to approve. They are however considering creating these documents for the future as well as other recommendations made in the WP's report.

Only one delegate commented and this was put to the EC- would it please seriously consider the topic

The BBKA membership survey

Around 700 responses, 585 from members, 25 from area associations and 25 from branches.

There is a clear 50/50 split in terms of opinions. Presumably BBKA will publish the results at some point and advise if any action is to be taken but no commitments given

The Annual Accounts

Have run at a loss again to the tune of around £ 38K. In future they are considering putting most of the Handbook information online and only printing an “officers” handbook so that should save money.

Not satisfactory nor complacent, but did not mean Association was approaching bankruptcy - £600K – 3 X annual operating costs in reserve.

Membership had increased by 5%

- The annual accounts for the year 1/10/14- 30/9/15 [accepted](#) (51Yes, 2 No, 7 Abstain)
- Appointment of the auditors [accepted](#) (58Y, 0 N, 2 A)

For the details of each proposal see the Federation newsletter, December edition.

Proposal number	yes	no	abstain	comments
The budget	29	19	12	Accepted
1/2016 Capitation fee increase of 10%	32 10,167	27 12,874	1 216	Rejected. Delegate vote in favour but membership vote rejected it. (i.e. the 27 associations voting against represented more members than the 32 voting for).
2/2016 Exam board to continue to be funded out of capitation fees	17	41	1	Rejected
3/2016 standing orders	55	4	0	Revised to be referred to the EC
4/2016 standing orders	-	-	-	Was not voted on. Revised to be referred to the EC
5/2016 standing orders	-	-	-	Was not voted on. Revised to be referred to the EC
6/2016 standing orders	-	-	-	Was not voted on. Revised to be referred to the EC
7/2016 standing orders	14	44	0	Rejected
8/2016 delegates votes to be published	11	47	1	Rejected
9/2016 BBKA Enter- prises accounts to be more visible	31	26	2	Accepted
10/2016 General Hus- bandry exam to be split in two	55	4	0	Revised and referred to the EC
11/2016 VAT reduction for beekeeping kit	-	-	-	Was not voted on
12/2016 BBKA minutes to be available on line	-	-	-	Was not voted on but referred to the EC
13/2016 BBKA to host the International Young Beekeepers Conference (IYBC)	43	15	0	Accepted

Proposal number	yes	no	abstain	comments
14/2016 members to pay £1 each to fund the IYBC	41	15	2	Accepted. Revised so that £ 30K of external funding must be obtained first but a £1 fee per member will be charged
Elections				
President				
John Hendrie	43			<i>Elected as the new president</i>
Doug Brown	15			Not elected
Trustees				
4 vacancies: 3 for 3 years, 1 for 1 year				
Margaret Wilson				<i>Elected for 3 years, came first in first vote</i>
Simon Cavil				<i>Elected for 3 years, came second in first vote</i>
Stephen Adkins				<i>Elected for 3 years, came third in first vote</i>
James Laughton				<i>Elected for 1 year. Beat John Morison in second vote</i>
John Morison				<i>Not elected in second vote</i>
Exam Board				
6 vacancies:3 for 3 years, 2 for 2 years, 1 for 1 year				
Marin Anastasov				<i>Elected for 3 years, came first in first vote</i>
Celia Perry				<i>Elected for 3 years, came second in first vote</i>
David Blower				<i>Elected for 3 years, came third in first vote</i>
Alistair Welch				<i>Elected for 2 years, came first in second vote</i>
Gordon Cutting				<i>Elected for 2 years, came second in second vote</i>
Robert Smith				<i>Elected for 1 year</i>
Roger Patterson				Not elected
Lea Bayley				withdrew
Ken Basterfield				Not elected