



# 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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## Editors Corner

Around our associations, we have been busy with the BBKA Basic Assessment this year. South Chilterns have 7 members who passed with credit in July and a member from Reading joined the group also passing with credit. Wokingham put 10 members through the assessment. As one of the South Chiltern members who undertook this challenge I can say that we all found the experience a very good exercise in focusing the mind on what is required to be a competent beekeeper. The BBKA rules say that to undertake the assessment the entrant has to have managed a colony of bees for a full season – and in fact, most of us have had our colonies for longer. All the Associations in our Federation provide varied and ongoing training and education and as a result of this we had all the basic requisites. However, as always when any kind of ‘test’ is looming, we particularly appreciated the syllabus overview sessions that were offered. For another view of this experience, see Tracey Hick’s In My Apiary piece this month!



The wasps have been the main curse of the past month and despite offering up some of Brakespears best brew as traps, my bees are still having to put up a constant fight at the hive entrance. It would be interesting to hear about successful deterrents any of you have found to this annoying pest.

There are some interesting topics in the newsletter this month. Firstly, special congratulations go to Reading and District Beekeepers who launched their new Association Apiary at the end of June. Following on from my piece about bee health last month, it is interesting to read the report from Slough, whose Association Apiary had a visit from the Bee Inspector, Dan Etheridge. This was as a result of being within 5km of reported European Foul Brood. And you can also read about Dan in action in Wokingham with their Bee Health Safari.

*Sue Remenyi*

### C WYNNE JONES

Ty Brith Pentrecelyn Ruthin Denbighshire LL 15 2SR  
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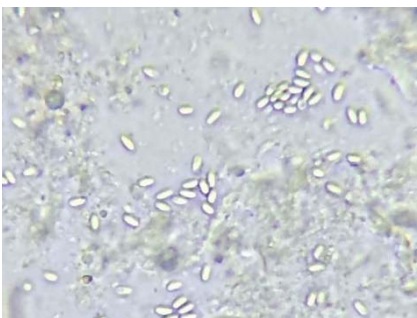
## In My Apiary

## Microscopes, Safaris, Assessments and other happenings in a Wokingham Apiary!

As I sit here writing this, looking out of the window, it is dank, dreary, dismal and drizzling. It currently feels more like November than July! Apart from the odd day here and there, the temperatures this month have barely crept into the 20s and I assume that I'm not alone in having pretty light supers at the moment. The lime trees in the village, which yielded so well last year have been 'bee free' and the brambles lining the lane outside are now almost finished. I suspect that this is not going to be a record-breaking year for honey. Luckily there has been a lot going on both in my apiary and in the Wokingham Association to distract me from the disappointing summer weather!

### Nosema Surprise

At the end of May, Garth Matthews and Nigel Perkins held a one off microscopy workshop where members were able to learn how to test for the presence of both Acarine mites and Nosema. "Bring a sample of 30 live bees", was the brief. Mmmmm, so - which lucky hive to choose to provide this necessary sample?? Fortunately at that point so early in the season, all of my hives were looking strong, were queenright and thriving with an Oil Seed Rape field a short distance away. So I randomly chose the closest hive in my apiary. At that point, this hive had 2 supers on, was full of OSR honey and had lots and lots of bees and as I naively thought.....no problems! So my smug little smile soon turned to one of complete disbelief when I looked down my microscope to see hundreds and hundreds of tell-tale rice shaped Nosema spores floating around in my sample of mushed up bee abdomens! I still can't quite believe that a hive apparently thriving could have had such a problem. I won't be so smug in the future and now that I realise how simple it is to test for, I will be sampling all my colonies for Nosema next



year. After talking to the more experienced members in the room I decided to perform a Bailey Comb change on this hive. Despite outwardly appearing strong, a heavy Nosema load may have reduced their chances of overwintering successfully. A complete comb change is one of the recognised ways to deal with Nosema. The comb change was a great success and within 6 weeks this hive had wall to wall healthy brood on fresh clean comb and will hopefully overwinter as a nice strong colony ready for next spring.

### Bee Disease Safari

So after my 'Nosema Surprise', I was actually very glad that I had volunteered my apiary for part of the 'Disease Safari' being organised by the Wokingham Association. What other problems might I have lurking in my hives? The Safari was organised as an 'educational day' with a group of us following the Seasonal Bee Inspector (SBI) around different members' apiaries. It was hoped that the day would be especially useful to those of us that would be taking our Basic Assessment the following month. So bright and early on a lovely June morning ten of us met at the first apiary site, which happened to be mine. Sparkly clean bee suits and freshly scrubbed wellies were the order of the day! SBI, Dan Etheridge, introduced himself to everyone and explained that he would go through each hive primarily looking for signs of disease, but would point out any other interesting features as he went along. It's always a bit of an anxious time when other beekeepers start looking through your hives, especially because as everybody knows, every beekeeper has a slightly different way of doing things. But more worryingly, would my bees behave? Generally they are pretty good and they usually remember their manners when in company. I need not have worried - they were generally ok, most probably due to Dan's gentle handling and careful use of smoke where needed. One hive was a bit spicy and was due to be re-queened anyway so when Dan spotted the queen she was promptly dispatched leaving the hive ready for a unite with a much more placid nuc housing a new (and hopefully more gentle) queen. Luckily after a couple of hours, the consensus was that my apiary was found to be a bit boring! Aside from a few cases of deformed wing virus, probably varroa



related, there were no signs of any other disease or other problems in any of my hives! Hooray! And happily the day continued in a very similar way. Dan was able to inspect 27 hives in 4 apiaries and nothing serious was found in any, although he was able to show us a good example of some chalk brood in one hive and some bees with Chronic Bee Paralysis virus in another. Neither was at worrying levels and the hive owners were advised to monitor. Dan explained to the group what signs of disease we should all be looking for during routine inspections, with any signs of the notifiable diseases EFB or AFB necessitating a call to the bee inspector. Garth then explained who the Wokingham Association 'Bee Health Advisors' are – Garth, Nigel and Kevin – should you find anything suspicious in your hive, give one of them a call and they will be able to come and take a look and advise on what action to take or indeed suggest if the bee inspector needs to come and advise.



### **Basic Assessment**

So, a month later and the day of the BBKA Basic Assessment has arrived. A few weeks previously, Garth kindly ran a classroom based 'basic assessment revision session' for the 10 of us who had signed up for the assessment so by the end of the morning of course we were all now experts in bee keeping and destined to pass our Basic Assessments with flying colours!

A flight delay meant that I was there by the skin of my teeth without having had time for that crucial last minute revision to remind myself of those all-important bee life-cycle dates, that yes, I was asked about! So finally arriving back from Heathrow I turned up at the apiary site, a few minutes late and decidedly flustered only to find the assessor, Sheila along with Garth and Nigel sat under a gazebo chatting away whilst munching sandwiches and drinking coffee. Never a more laid back group of people had I seen. Suddenly all of my stress evaporated. This wasn't going to be so bad after all. First I made up my frame. One positive thing about the cool summer weather we have had is that the foundation was still nice and firm. There is nothing worse than trying to get floppy foundation into a 14x12 frame in the heat! With that done and Sheila happy with my workmanship, we headed over to the hives. The great thing about the basic assessment is yes, obviously at the end of the day, it is an assessment but most importantly it is an opportunity to learn. Whilst going through the hive with Sheila I learnt so much. Sheila is a patient and easy going assessor with a wealth of knowledge to share and she has that special ability, of making you really think about things in order to make sense of what you are seeing. So no, I didn't have an immediate answer to every question asked, but with Sheila encouraging me to consider various pointers, I was able to work out what I was seeing in the hive. The final part of the assessment was a question and answer session. The first question..... "So Tracey, tell me what you know about the life-cycle of a drone"..... Arghhh, curse that flight delay, robbing me of my precious last minute revision time!! All in all though, a thoroughly worthwhile hour or so, a great learning opportunity and if I pass, some tangible evidence of my basic capability as a beekeeper. I do recommend that anybody considering it for next year to give it a go.

*Tracey Hicks - W&DBKA Member*

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### **Member on TV**

If you have a chance to catch the Chanel 4 TV programme "Guess This House" series 1 Episode 2 you will see one of our members showing his beehives. The programme has aired, but should be available on the Channel 4 catch up. (Ed.)





## John Belcher

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## South Chilterns Beekeepers Association

### Apiary Meeting 18th July

It was a lovely sunny day for all those who turned out to look at the bees in next-door neighbours Duncan's and Tony's gardens in Checkendon. Reg Hook started with an inspection of 3 colonies at the bottom of Duncan's garden. Two of them were well behaved whilst one was a lot more aggressive, "they're just fussing" said Reg as everyone else took a step back! It was clear that the main summer flow had ended and Reg advised removing supers as soon as possible to ensure the bees filled the brood chambers with stores prior to winter.



A short walk led to the other side of the hedge where Tony's bees live and an inspection of his polystyrene hive showed they were thriving. Much discussion followed on the merits of polystyrene hives, which seem good for the bees, but can't be scorched to clean them!

Lots of tea and homemade cakes followed plus a tasting of some unusual monofloral honeys from the Netherlands. Opinion was divided with some preferring the dark red Sweet Chestnut honey and others opting for the almost salty 'Dune' honey from the windy shores of The Hague. Some people needed lots of repeat tastings to make sure of their choice!



The next apiary visit will be on 15 April in Whitchurch.

*Duncan Brown*

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## Reading and District Beekeepers Association

Reading and District Beekeepers Association had great pleasure in meeting at our association's newly commissioned 'Club Apiary' which is intended as a teaching apiary for newer members. Our committee member Clark Hunter, who planned, promoted, persevered-with, administrated and finally got the project up and running had already got a Tuesday evening session started to



check on the bees, which are from donated colonies and swarms. The team also worked on the bee-shed and other effects.

Clark would like to thank everyone for the equipment donated including a water butt, guttering, shelving, a petrol strimmer and not to forget people's valuable time with help clearing the area and getting the show on the road.

Big thanks go to Matt McTernan, Ross Smith, Frank Decmar, Keith McCall, Jenny Morgan, David Chin and to all others who come along on a weekly basis to share experiences and help out!"

Clark would also like to mention "all those on our Facebook page (20 plus regular participants and 50 members) who provided a shoulder to cry-on, a shouting box when help was needed, a place to express any concerns and a general good place for shared wisdom."

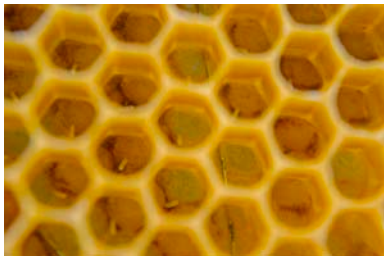


Our first full summer programme Sunday meeting was on 28th of June and Clark organised the use of the large carpark at Dunsden Parish Church. The session was very well attended by members older and younger, as well as by some newly interested people, who, if they join us will get the benefits of our new teaching apiary. The hives area is surrounded by fencing so observers have a good view of proceedings over the fence without causing congestion around the hives. They were shown frames with eggs, a

queen, queen cups and an occupied queen cell was also seen. The hives currently in use are two Nationals and one WBC. The latter housed a large donated colony, and the frames were on older wood and wax, but they looked well, with plenty of brood in all stages. The queen was seen (Clark has marked queens in red), a couple of cups were removed and a good area of eggs was displayed. The two Nationals contain swarms housed on pristine wood and wax (all three hives are new). Again there was very good presentation with an ideal circular pattern of brood on the frames and capped stores on the top and across the corners. A



nice queen found which was shown to observers. Honey was seen going into the supers, which will shortly be ready for extraction, if not destined to be retained in the hives for winter stores. The apiary abuts corn fields, with blackberry, elder and other trees nearby, plus cottage gardens in Dunsden village so the bees have an excellent view over the fields between Play-hatch and Sonning, which are usually planted with oil seed rape. We have Lee Whitaker to thank for our photos and he managed to get a picture of the larvae in its royal jelly. There



was also a queen in a cage offered at the meeting and there were takers.

This was a really good meeting and introduction to our new facility. Many thanks indeed to Clark Hunter and his 'team'.

The August meeting is on Sunday 23rd August at the Club Apiary. We will assemble at 12.00 and start at 12.30. There will also be a service at the Church that Sunday so the car-park might be a bit congested at our usual time.

Reading and District Beekeepers annual honey show will be held at The Swallowfield Show on the August Bank Holiday Weekend, Sunday 30th and Monday 31st August.

Jon Davey is Honey show Secretary [jondavey.foodnet@virgin.net](mailto:jondavey.foodnet@virgin.net) (0118 975 0734 or 0783 678 9064). Open to all local beekeepers, entries should be notified by 26th August. The website for The Swallowfield Show is [www.swallowfieldshow.co.uk](http://www.swallowfieldshow.co.uk) follow the links to 'horticultural schedule' and scroll down to section 9, that's us! If you need any help with entering or staging contact Jon. Why not enter some of the classes and try your honey, hive products and honey cookery against your neighbouring beekeepers!



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## Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

There were two apiary meetings on the 5th and the 19th July.

The second July meeting started with some trepidation as Bee Base had made contact to notify that European Foulbrood (EFB) had been identified within a 5 km radius of the association apiary. Fortunately we had two of our four newly trained Bee Health Advisors on hand to ensure that the best hygiene practice was observed during the examination of the colonies.

The Bee Health Advisors (BHAs) are experienced beekeepers who have volunteered to assist our Full Registered Members in the recognition and control of diseases and to provide advice and help on good husbandry methods. They are also a liaison between beekeepers and the National Bee Unit (NBU) and may act as the first point of contact for local beekeepers to approach if advice is needed on the health of colonies. Contact details can be found on the Society's website

One of the colonies in the apiary had already been identified as being weak and a possible subject of disease so the Seasonal Bee Inspector for the area, Dan Etheridge, was contacted and inspection arranged for the following day. Meanwhile the other colonies were examined in the usual way with some beginners taking the opportunity to examine the bees with the guidance of the more experienced members.

The BHAs made sure that very strict hygiene practices were enforced during the meeting by using a fresh pair of gloves for each colony and thoroughly cleaning the hive tools between each inspection. Extra care was taken to ensure that all debris from each colony was collected up and none left around the apiary.

The other colonies demonstrated just how elusive Queens can be when you are looking for them. When we did find one we noticed how her green marking had almost disappeared and so she was pinioned to the comb with a crown of thorns and her green marking refreshed. At the earlier meeting in July one colony showed signs of having laying workers and so the bees had been shaken out. It was pleasing to see that there are several supers ready for extraction so plans will have to be made to start the harvest soon.

Once again the apiary proved that it is a wonderful learning opportunity for old and new beekeepers alike.

Providing that you are a Full Member, please do make use of the BHAs if you have any concern about the health of any of your bees. Together we can make a real effort to improve the health of all of our bees in the area.



## The results of the Seasonal Bee Inspector's inspection

Good news!

Dan arrived at 10am and the apiary was declared free of EFB by 11.30am. However the eagle eyes of the experienced inspector spotted that some of the hives showed other minor problems such as sac brood, bald brood and some bee-damaged brood caused by Varroa presence. One colony had some stunted bees and some with wings held apart which could be due to mild Bee Paralysis Virus (BPV) or acarine. Interestingly, he observed that the recently re-marked green queen had a very long slim abdomen which was unusual. Overall there was nothing to unduly worry about, so we had a good result.

## Apiary Meetings

Our summer meetings are held at the society's apiary where members can learn and gain hands-on experience of all aspects of beekeeping. Meetings are held at 2.30pm on alternate Sundays and the next meetings will be on the 16th and 30th August.

## Winter Meetings 2015

Our schedule of winter meetings will recommence on Tuesday 8th September. 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 excellent website: <http://swmbks.weebly.com/meetings.html>



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## 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:

15th July	Photography
19th August	Discussion about Apimondia and what it is
16th September	Removal of supers/treatment
14th October	Configuration of winter hives
18th November	Winter projects DIY ideas
16th December	Relax - Beekeeper to Beekeeper

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## **Association websites**

All four Federation member association websites have a lot of information – some of which may only be relevant to that association, but there is also quite a bit that is useful to us all. Here are the links for your reference:

Reading & District Beekeepers Association: <http://www.rbka.org.uk/>

South Chilterns Beekeepers' Association: <http://www.scbka.org>

Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society: <http://swmbks.weebly.com/>

Wokingham and District Beekeepers Association: [www.wokinghambeekeepers.org.uk/](http://www.wokinghambeekeepers.org.uk/)

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

<http://www.apinews.com/> This website is a mine of information from around the world. You can subscribe to their newsletter.

<http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/newhome.html> This website has a lot of really useful information for the beekeeper.

<http://www.beekeepingforum.co.uk/> This is a portal for all things beekeeping.

<http://www.bbka.org.uk/> The British Beekeepers Association.

<http://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.

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## **NBU Advice for Obtaining Bees:**

**Join Beebase** - By joining BeeBase you can access beekeeping information and ask for advice or help from the Bee Unit: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase>.

**Your Regional Bee Inspectors are:**

**Southern Region:** Nigel Semmence at: [nigel.semmence@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nigel.semmence@fera.gsi.gov.uk),

The main website is: <https://secure.csl.gov.uk/beebase/public/Contacts/contacts.cfm>  
National Bee Unit, Central Science Laboratory, Sand Hutton, York YO41 1 LZ, tel: 01 904 462 510, email: <mailto:nbu@fera.gsi.gov.uk> .

**South Eastern Region:** Mr Alan Byham, fax/tel: 01306 611 016

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**Contributions to the Editor** are always welcome as long as they are signed. Anonymous letters and letters not in English will not be published. The Editor reserves the right to withhold names.

**Contributions**, including emails, to arrive with the Editor by the 20th of the month for publication by the 7<sup>th</sup> of the following month. Contributions received after this may be held over for a later month.

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