



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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Editor's Corner



I failed to take the advice I pass on to everyone else and did my weekly inspection last weekend wearing a sleeveless T-Shirt under my bee suit. And yes, you've guessed – I was stung on the arms – and not once, but three times. Each sting came during the inspection of a different hive. This led me to ponder on whether different colonies of honeybee have different degrees of sting venom. I realise that there are many contributing factors, not least how deep the sting goes, whether it is cut off, removed, or left, but could some bees be more venomous than others?

In my own case all three stings were on the upper arms and through my bee suit. I immediately scratched the spot with my gloved hand to hopefully break off any sting that was in the arm and the result was that one sting had hardly any redness or swelling – just a small pierce site; one had mild swelling and no discomfort, whilst the third had significant swelling and considerably more discomfort.

As a result of a Google search I discovered that at least one scientific study reported that "Measurements were made on bees of known age at various times during the summer season. The amount of 5-HT in the venom system varies with the age of the bee and with the time of year at which the bees reached a specific age". (Without getting too scientific 5-HT is a key component in the venom of worker honeybees). So, maybe it was such a silly thought! More information about this study can be found here <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0041010188902383>

Look out for information on the Swallowfield show, which is on the Bank Holiday weekend. This is an opportunity for everyone to have a go at exhibiting honey and honey products. I have also appended an announcement for the National Honey Show, which is being held in October at a new venue this year – Sandown Race Course.

Sue Remenyi

Letter to the Editor

Thanks to Lorraine Godenzie who responded to my question about how to transport sugar syrup without ending up a sticky mess.

"Regarding your question about transporting sugar syrup: I make up batches of syrup in 15lb honey buckets then transfer it into clean 4 pint milk containers - they are easy to carry and I can pour the syrup into any size of feeder without difficulty."

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In My Apiary

I was excited about getting bees, but was terrified of the thought of opening a hive and a mass of angry bees emerging. So, a beekeeping course was make or break. I must admit that my heart- and breathing rates rose as the tutor lifted the lid on a colony, but even bumping, bumping and slightly grumpy evening bees were nowhere near as bad as I thought. I was immediately more fascinated and more hooked.

The first step was to get a nucleus. The man who delivered my bees had been stung through the mesh bottom of the nucleus box, probably a travel sick bee had seized the opportunity to get its own back. So, my nucleus colony was further enclosed in a supermarket home delivery box. A spray of water and a gentle trolley ride to the car was followed by air conditioned luxury all the way home.

A sheltered apiary was prepared. Early morning sun (check), not too hot (check), not near neighbours (check), no overhanging trees or branches (check). The hive was painted, solidly placed on breeze blocks, slightly tipping forward and waiting for its new arrivals. The queen nearly didn't arrive as she fell onto the floor during the transfer and it was only the blue spot on her thorax that saved her.

As the first month was the "June gap" I spent most of my time settling the bees in, with liberal amounts of sugar solution provided in upturned baby-bottles. I eagerly watched the comings and goings and spent far too much time hypnotized by the rate of entry-and-exit. The bees soon became "the girls" and after hellos to the family were my first port of call on arriving home from work.

As a nervy new apiarist I spent too much time "taking a peek", when I should have left them alone, but the colony was good tempered and tolerated the intrusion. I was so proud when I observed a mass of new foragers orienting to the hive, circling up, up, up, sometimes returning briefly and then away. Go girls, go!

The next challenge was collecting honey. 2015 was a bumper year for wasps and hornets, and many inspections were intruded upon by opportunistic predators feasting on stragglers. I decided to put the crown-board and escapes on in the afternoon of a sunny day. The next day I arrived and discovered that the porter escape was bent, so the super had not cleared. At this point I was inundated by wasps and hornets, so decided to seal-up and leave the crop to the colony.

Then it was varroa treatment and the run-up to the winter, with frequent hefting and hopes for mild weather around the time of the ivy crop. A mild and wet winter meant that the colony was quite active, so the feeder went on. When I treated for Varroa on Boxing Day they were still very active.

Spring 2016 brought a rapid increase in colony size combined with inclement weather, so inspections had to be fitted in around rain showers, which often resulted in very grumpy bees. I had decided the previous autumn to move from a standard national brood-box to 14x12, so placed this

box on top of the standard brood. Along with removing any queen cells I kept an eye out for the queen moving up, which she duly did. I placed an excluder underneath and prepared a nucleus hive from the standard brood box, complete with an uncapped queen cell. Despite my best efforts a swarm duly issued, but I did not have the experience or the equipment to deal with it, so could not keep it for re-uniting. On checking the colony the old – marked – queen had disappeared. There were several queen cells, but I left one capped. A cast swarm emerged a day-or-so later. When I checked the colony I could not find a queen, so I chose to introduce a new mated queen. This queen was accepted, but a day-or-so after removing the cover another swarm emerged, which indicated to me that the introduced queen was treated like a queen cell. However, this marked queen has never been seen. As a swarm had issued my top two assumptions were (i) that the colony already had an elusive queen or (ii) the colony was hopelessly queenless. I left them alone for two weeks and saw eggs, but these were eventually dome-capped and ended up as drones.

Now we move back to the shook swarm in the nucleus. Although the queen cell was subsequently sealed and uncapped this queen was never seen in the nucleus. An introduced mated queen also disappeared and one introduced queen cell was capped but never emerged and a final cell was torn down. The nucleus then started producing brood, but it was soon clear that this was all drone brood. So, two lots of bees all laying drone brood. I do hope that some of these were able to pass on their genes.

It is a shame that I do not currently have bees, but I am very excited about re-entering the fray in 2017.

There were some bright spots.

- I was able to see the bees through a first winter and largely lost my fear, while gaining a lot more respect for “the girls”
- I had a small honey crop of 6Kg or so
- While they remained vigorous I persuaded the workers to draw out a lot of clean and disease free super- and brood-comb, which is safely tucked in the freezer to give my next bees a good start.
- I enjoyed giving a talk to children at my daughter`s school about bees and beekeeping and hope to have inspired some younger recruits.

There have been many trials and tribulations in the first year, and I have learned a lot from trying to run before I could walk. I am sure that there were some schoolboy errors and can hear the groans of disbelief from the more experienced readership, however, key lessons for me are that there are some things that can only be done one way, the right way, but outside this there are as many opinions as there are beekeepers.

Paul Green Ph.D., FRES (SCBKA)

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Did you Know ...



Well, we all know that lavender has a powerful scent. But could its scent have even more power than we think?

Aromatherapies like lavender have been around for a long time and are known to be affective in modifying stress and anxiety in humans. However, Charles Claudianos, Professor of Neurogenetics and Development at Monash University has discovered that in the honey bee lavender similarly changes

their behaviour, their memories, even their DNA, and these studies might be potentially very useful in how we study the human brain. See here for more information

<http://www.abc.net.au/catalyst/stories/4437579.htm>

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Reading and District Beekeepers Association

Sunday July 31st we were the guests of Mike & Marion Dabbs at their home apiary in Tilehurst. We are well catered for here with up to twenty hives and nucs available to look at. With a good attendance including 'first-timers' we were able to split into three groups, each with an experienced beekeeper. Our first activity was to a talk and demonstration on the subject of tackling wax moth infestation of stored boxes and hives. Viz.



Jenny Morgan, Reading Beekeeper's education secretary demonstrated sulphur strip burning techniques. Sulphur dioxide and acid fumigation techniques can both efficiently fumigate empty hives and stored boxes. Deep freezing is also recommended for the effective destruction of wax moth, larva, pupa and eggs (if you've a large enough chest freezer! It could be worth investing in a cheap second-hand one for this purpose). The discussion included descriptions by Martin Moore of his successful use of 'Certan', a biological method, available from the usual stockists and by Mike Blackburn, who advised on close inspection prior-to

Careful wrapping of extracted supers and frames with black polythene and after unwrapping for use, removing pupa etc at each stage. It is important for beekeepers as they build-up their colonies and have increasing numbers of extracted boxes to store to control wax moth, which is highly destructive to wax if allowed to proliferate. Look out for wax moth while inspecting your hives and give any detected moths and larvae the coup de grace! Picture shows Jenny and assembly.

Inspection of hives then proceeded, Mike's hives had been used for BBKA exams the previous week (he has twenty including nucs at last count) and he did in fact quarantine one colony with 'following tendencies' and two others where he's trying a Bailey comb change. Being very proactive on swarm collection Mike's accumulated some small 'cast-like' swarms too small to pass-on to our new members. These have regrettably mainly 'gone-queenless' or are drone laying; one hive our group opened had workers and drones nearly in majority and nothing younger brood-wise than a few uncapped drone larvae, capped drone and drones emerging. No sign of the queen, so we inserted a frame with a few areas of worker brood, tiny larvae and eggs from another hive in the hope they might make a scrub queen. We then examined a recent split ex a nuc, now in a hive and showing very good brood pattern in all stages, stores at the top of frames and one super heavy with honey already and another well on-the-way. This is a very good colony and a donator of a frame to the previous hive. We attempted to inspect a big hive prior to these two, but got a bad response from the bees with aerial assaults on our veils in a cloud and the demonstrator scurried off to put on his over-trousers. As we had some young first timers in our group we closed this one off, though one of our experienced beekeepers expressed surprise as she had done her BBKA exam on this hive a week previously and they were quite all right! We understand from other groups that a welcome queen was found and marked in a nuc and a small swarm in another nuc was producing drone and chalk-brood so obviously the queen was on her last legs. Mike and Marion do a terrific job in managing their apiary and actively supporting Reading Beeper's activities in every way. Mike has taken at least 100lbs from his hives already this year.

We relaxed with the splendid spread of drinks, cakes and sandwiches provided by Marion with eatables also donated by other beekeepers after a thoroughly instructive and diverse session with many thanks to the Dabbs, to Jenny and all who contributed and attended.

August's meeting is at Reading Beekeeper's association club apiary on Sunday 21st. Apiary manager Clark Hunter in charge up at Dunsden. See you there.

Bank Holiday weekend, on the Sunday & Monday 28th & 29th August, Reading Beekeeper's Honey Show at the splendid 'Swallowfield Show' open to all who wish to enter. Reading beekeepers invite entries in the honey classes, see pages 15&16 of The Swallowfield Horticultural Society Horticultural schedule. Follow links on web-site www.swallowfieldshow.co.uk Details of how to enter and stage are there, but if you need any help you can contact Reading's honey show secretary Jon Davey, e-mail jondavey.foodnet@virgin.net tel 0118 975 0734. It's 20p each item but there are cash prizes for the first three places. The Swallowfield Show supports local charities, notably The Berkshire Air Ambulance. Come test your honey, wax, bee flora knowledge and honey cookery against your neighbours! The show is a great day out!

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BIBBA

The Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association (BIBBA) would like to inform you about a free newsletter that they are making available to anyone interested in improving their bees. You can read a copy – which is called BIBBA Humm from the link below. There is a link from this page to subscribe to future issues.

<http://us8.campaign-archive2.com/?u=539749ff0ecfb725b841f2421&id=0169c1dfc9&e=680a88ff6c>

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Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

A Visit from the Seasonal Bee Inspector

On Friday 1st July, our association apiary had a visit from Karen Smith, a seasonal bee inspector for the southern region. Karen contacted us to request the inspection as part of a programme of checking for exotic pests. Although we are not a designated 'sentinel api-

ary', our location is close enough to Heathrow, a major import gateway, to be considered 'at risk' and therefore warrants monitoring.

In the morning, a small group of members assembled at the apiary to observe the inspection; it seemed to be an ideal opportunity for us to see an expert at work and learn about how they would approach the task.

Karen provided an instructive narrative as she opened and examined each colony of bees. After ensuring that the queen was not lurking on the underside of the queen excluder, she extracted a frame from the brood box, cast her eye over it looking for the queen and/or queen cells then with two firm shakes, she returned most of the covering bees to the brood body. With the frame clear, she was then able to check the nooks and crannies that could be harbouring the exotic pest for which she was searching.

The small hive beetle was the inspector's main quarry and Karen was looking out for small beetles scuttling away from the light. She looked at all the frame edges and turned the frames up to have a closer look along the bottom bars, a favourite crevice for the beetles to site their white eggs.

The inspector worked smoothly, efficiently and methodically through the remainder of the brood frames and then continued onto the other colonies. As she worked, she made further observations about each colony and highlighted where further action may need to be taken. Karen also talked about her recent experiences and confirmed that it had been a strange start to the year with reports of colonies coming successfully through winter only to die out in March and April.



The whole operation took about one and a half hours but this was probably longer than strictly necessary as the onlookers made the most of picking the brains of this captive expert. At the end of the visit we were delighted to be given the assurance that no small hive beetles, or for that matter any other 'nasties' had been detected in our apiary.

Small hive beetles are however, a threat for which we must all be prepared and following their arrival in mainland Europe, Italy then all beekeepers need to be vigilant.

Our sincere thanks go to Karen Smith for her valuable and instructive apiary inspection.

Regular apiary meetings

On the 10th and the 24th July, there were two regular meetings to the apiary for members to attend. Following the seasonal bee inspector's visit, when some colonies were showing clear signs of getting ready to leave, some artificial swarm activity had taken place.

One brood frame, with a nice looking sealed queen cell, was transferred to a polystyrene nucleus box in a new position in the apiary, together with a second frame of brood, two frames of stores and enough nurse bees to care for them. By the second meeting it was evident from the calm and happy temperament of the bees that the colony was 'queen right' and just needs to be build up some more before it can be promoted to a full size brood body.

Each meeting provides a mixture of members, of varying amounts of experience, with the chance to practise handling the bees, to discuss their recent beekeeping experiences and ask advice if needed.

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.

In August the apiary meetings will be held on the 7th and 21st subject to weather permitting.

Winter Meetings 2016

Our indoor meetings now take a break for the summer but our winter meetings will recommence on Tuesday 13th September 2016 with a talk about 'Cooking with Honey' by Celia Rudland.

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

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 Inspector is:

Southern Region: Julian Parker at: julian.parker@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.

National Honey Show Newsletter June 2016

2016 Venue: Sandown Park Racecourse

Thursday 27th, Friday 28th and Saturday 29th October 2016

Preparations are well underway for this year's show at the new venue with our usual excellent programme of lectures and workshops. It's over to you all now to plan your visit, your entries, give the stewarding and staging entry teams something to do, and make it the most spectacular display ever. As always, do please get in touch if you can spend any time helping with the stewarding please e-mail our chief steward steward@honeyshow.co.uk.



National Honey Show Posters and Leaflets

We have some A3 and A4 posters, plus A5 leaflets available for distribution at your local meeting, county show or other events in the lead up to this year's National Honey Show. If you would like some, and particularly if you can display posters in the Esher area, please e-mail publicity@honeyshow.co.uk and let Val know how many and what size posters, how many leaflets, and whether you would like some raffle ticket booklets too. Remember to add your address. Val would also like to hear from you if you have any contacts in the schools, scout groups etc in the area surrounding Esher. It would be great to encourage more entries and young visitors.

National Honey Show Schedule

The 2016 Schedule will be going to press shortly, when the last pieces of information are finally added, and should be mailed out to National Honey Show members at the beginning of August in good time for the Show. This year it will include a programme of events over the three days.

New class for 2016: Skep. To be made by the exhibitor using traditional materials and suitable for use.

If it has been used the skep must be in a clean condition with no comb inside. So all those of you who have attended the skep making workshops over the years will have a chance to show off your new skills.

The Trade, Educational Stands and Attractions

There will be a children's table with candle rolling, a children's quiz, a (virtual) observational hive, a skep making demonstration on the Saturday. It will be a very welcome novelty to have everything happening under one roof. Our usual supporters have already booked, plus some newcomers, so there will be lots to see alongside our competitive display. As we have more space this year, there is still time for new traders and supporting groups to contact us with a view to taking space over the three days: e-mail tradestands@honeyshow.co.uk.

National Honey Show Membership

Just to mention that if you take out or renew membership across the summer, as many of you do, you'll not only receive your copy of this year's Schedule in the post, but it makes admission the day a much faster process which will really pay off if you're delayed in traffic. It's a slightly longer trek to the lectures upstairs for 2016!

Val

NHS Publicity Sec

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