



# 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



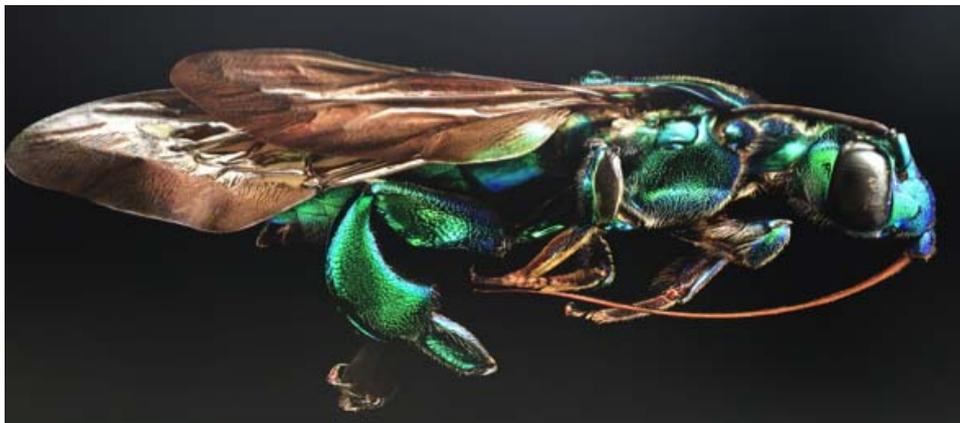
As the oil seed rape is turning to seed the supers are filling and it will not be long now until the first extractions of the season take place. I always look forward to this – and especially so this year as a group of us have invested in an electric extractor so the job will not be a replacement for a trip to the gym as it has been in the past!

I don't think I'll be selling my honey on the side of the road in the way the man in the picture is – this was taken by a friend of mine travelling in Uzbekistan. The beekeepers carry the hives around the country on large trailers, resting for days at a time to allow the bees to take advantage of the flora of the region.



If you are in Oxford over the next couple of months there are two very interesting bee related exhibitions. The picture on the left is part of an exhibition called *Bees (and the odd wasp) in my Bonnet* by Kurt Jackson and this image shows all 270 British bees. The majority of exhibits are paintings, with some other types of artwork interspersed.

The second is a micro-photography exhibition. This is a collection of a dozen or so very large photographs of insects showing remarkable colour and detail. The picture here does not do justice to the full size photo. It is the Orchid Cuckoo Bee from Brazil. Instead of collecting pollen and constructing their own nests, female cuckoo bees enter the nests of other bees and lay their eggs in the host's brood cells.



The winter meetings are all over now and the associations are reporting the first apiary visits in this issue of the newsletter. Fun and games with queens behaving badly in Wokingham and swarm management underway in Reading. Unfortunately South Chiltern's reported being too busy with their bees to produce an 'In My Apiary' piece for the newsletter this month.

Sue Remenyi

**C. Wynne Jones**  
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## Did you know ....

Traditional African beekeeping methods offer better protection against hive-destroying varroa mites than pesticides. "Bee farmers in most developing countries have little to fear from the mites", says Richard Ridler, the chairman of Bees Abroad, a charity that supports indigenous beekeeping methods. The main difference is that African bee farmers are relaxed about swarming, Ridler explains. "When bees swarm or abscond, the majority of mites are left behind, because they mostly live in the bee brood,".

"In Africa, hives are not even treated for varroa. And farmers get away with this because their style of beekeeping is different."

Ridler says that Western bee farmers spend a lot of time preventing swarming, despite it being a natural process, as it temporarily halts honey production. But housing large bee populations in close proximity and preventing swarms encourages the spread of varroa mites, he explains.

For developing countries, the priority should be to support traditional and indigenous beekeeping styles to ensure local bee farmers do not become reliant on expensive pesticides or lose their swarms to varroa, says Ridler.

"In Africa, hives are not even treated for varroa," he says. "And farmers get away with this because their style of beekeeping is different."

See the full story at <http://www.scidev.net/global/farming/news/african-beekeeping-mites-hives.html>

## Beekeeping equipment and supplies

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## South Chilterns' Beekeepers Association

Apiary visit Chalkhouse Green Farm 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016

It was a dull cold day in May and the clocks were striking fourteen (apologies to Orwell) when we stood in the yard at Chalkhouse Green Farm debating whether the cold wind and forecast of imminent rain should dictate leaving the bees alone. We decided to go ahead as there are just two hives and we thought perhaps we could get it done quickly before the rain came on in earnest. Turns out we were wrong about that.

By the time we trudged to the top of the hill (the long way round, not to disturb the animals) it was already colder, windier and drizzling. Hive no. 1 had recently had a Bailey comb change to get them off the old black combs, and Reg and Linda had very kindly turned out some weeks before to lend a hand in finding and marking the queen to make things easier this time around. The bees had spent some time with the old black brood combs turned warm way at the bottom of the stack, waiting for the sealed brood to emerge, with a queen excluder dividing it from the box of nice new brood combs just being drawn – and turned cold way. Apparently this is ok in these circumstances, as there is a queen excluder between them. This old brood box had subsequently been put on the top of the stack over a crown board with a robber hole to encourage them to clean out the remaining capped stores, though it seemed they had been putting nectar in there instead. Reg zipped through the new brood box fairly quickly, and found a number of the combs well drawn but not much brood. The queen turned out to be in the half-brood and had been laying happily there, so Reg put her down into the brood box to try and give her a hint that she should be paying some attention to her business down there. There are no signs of intention to swarm. We shut it up as fast as possible, added a super, and after some debate left the old black-comb brood box on the top for them to clean out ( though some days later they still weren't doing so, so we finally gave up and took it off again).

Hive no.2 had had a very slow start this spring, so the only job required was to check that the brood was in fact expanding. By now the rain was heavy, but this one is a commercial, so it was a quick job to ascertain that the brood had spread from 3 frames to 5, so all is well after all. They got a super too in case the expansion accelerates.

By this time the bees and the people were all pretty soggy, and the two big umbrellas intended to cover the bees had been pressed into service for people instead. The bees disturbed from no. 1 hive were by now starting to climb back up to the entrance, so we fled back to the farmhouse for a scrumptious cream tea, cake and bottomless teapot while we dried out; many thanks to John and Sarah for their legendary and very generous hospitality, and for letting us all steam quietly in their kitchen. And if anyone knows what happened to my two umbrellas, I'd be very grateful!

The Chalkhouse Green Farm Open Day will be on 3<sup>rd</sup> July this year.

*Meryl Toomey*

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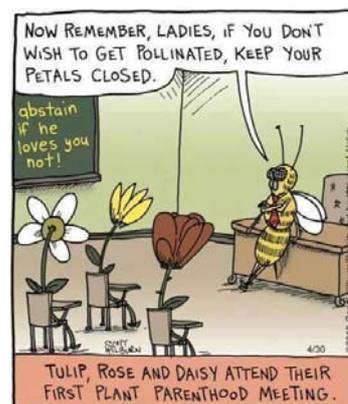
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## Wokingham and District Beekeepers Association

Just when I thought I nearly knew how to keep bees, they rewrite the rule book and don't let us know about it. The rules seem to change every year!

I find it quite a challenge to help new beekeepers to find the answers to their problems when the books don't give a clue what the bees are doing. Here are just a few examples of what I mean:

- Bees swarming when there are only open queen cells, when the book's tell you the bees will swarm on the first queen cell sealed and hence the seven day inspection. But sometimes a six day or less inspection would be needed to avoid the loss of bees.
- A new problem for me and two other beekeepers in the Wokingham Beekeeper Association this year were queens happily laying in the autumn. My last inspection was in the autumn and the same queen was there, I know this as I had marked and clipped her wings. To date eggs still haven't been laid and the queen walks around happy as Larry. I've placed a frame of eggs and larvae in the brood box so the bees would have the opportunity to replace the queen if they are not happy with her, and you guessed it, not a queen cell anywhere. Now the date is 26th May and worker bees are walking around with zimmer frames or most of them. So what to do, I add two more frames of brood in all stages but mostly sealed brood and replaced the queen by swapping two queens just to see if it kick starts the queen to lay or will these different workers replace her. I love beekeeping it keeps you on your toes. I'll let you know what happened later in the season.
- Do worker bees move eggs? Yes they do! A few times over the years I have found two /three queen cells but no worker brood in the supers and that can make you scratch your head when your bees swarm and you cannot find any queen cells in brood box.



Happy beekeeping and I look forward to more changes in their rule book.

*Nigel Perkins, Chairman*

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## Reading and District Beekeepers Association

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May & our second member's apiary visit of our summer programme at the home apiary of Clark Hunter in Sonning Common.

Clarks hive are numbered left to right 1-4 (3 WBC's, 1 National) starting with the busiest we worked right to left! So hive four. On a 10x12 brood box. Good population, actively bringing in pollen & nec-

tar with eggs larvae & brood in all stages, good round brood patterns. Clark has trialled using a strip of foundation at the top of a number of brood frames here, being aware of the risk of pyrethroid contamination in foundation from suppliers & the bees have built comb down well but left nice 'ease of access' bee space for themselves at the bottom of each comb, i.e. not attached to the bottom bars, so Clark cautioned our newer beekeepers whom he allowed to take out frames, examine & describe not to hold these unwired frames horizontally. Looking good, marked queen found (Clark keeps his queens in a cage to protect them during examination, releasing afterwards) a few play cups seen but no signs that the bees are feeling 'swarmy' tho plenty of drones about. Brood pattern circular on most frames with stores in top corners. A few signs of bald brood on one frame. We had a look at the super above the excluder & liquid honey filling the comb, capping started in patches, Clarke had some fondant and some comb pieces above the crown board. Another week if the temperatures get-up a bit should be ready to fill a second super. Good colony.

Hive 3. WBC 14X12 brood box, seemed less busy but a decent sized colony, a lot of last year's honey stored on the outer 3 frames at the back, mainly granular or pasty, The brood nest itself looked fine, eggs & larvae etc in all stages. Nice fat marked queen found & caged during examination. No sign of any cups, this colony has plenty of room and should build up when nights are warmer. The super above the excluder had some weight, some of the frames revealed OSR type of granulation, some fluid, and most frames capped or in process. Promising colony.

Hive 2. WBC on 14X12. This was an interesting exercise for our newer beekeepers. The evening before In wet weather Clark had collected a sizeable swarm in the evening from Tilehurst and at dusk had tipped them into the vacant hive 2 onto wood & wax. Quite a lot of bees flying around entering by the escapes as well as the entrance. We took off the crown board ,lifts including the porch. There were bees in quantity between the brood-box & the porch & first lift, smoking away and with gentle handling we succeeded in driving most of these up and into the brood box, we re-assembled & and situation seemed much improved, plenty of bees fanning with nasimoth glands exposed at the entrance & with much less general flying. Odds-on in this beekeeper's opinion that this swarm will be staying-on.

Hive 1 WBC. Vacant and available for a healthy well-behaved honey bee colony!

Clark & Mrs. Iryna Hunter were excellent hosts, good educational beekeeping. Eats and drinks were enthusiastically consumed by well introduced new beekeepers & interested people as well as our regulars.

Clark will be looking after us again for our June meeting on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 11.00 for 11.30 start at Reading Beekeepers 'club apiary' at Dunsden. Look out for e-mails from our secretary & at our web site [www.rbka.org.uk](http://www.rbka.org.uk)



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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

April saw the last of our winter evening meetings, leaving us free to dedicate all of our time to our own bees.

In May we followed up on a talk we attended in March about first aid for beekeepers. At the end of the talk many of the attendees felt that there was much more to be learned on the subject than could be fitted into the evening so a further training session was organised.

On a Saturday in May, we met up in Windsor for a further four-hour training session about anaphylaxis for beekeepers with Andrea Woolley who has many years' experience of working in hospital Accident & Emergency. She holds a degree in occupational health and safety and has extensive experience in teaching cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and anaphylaxis management to GPs and childminders.

The most important message of the training was that beekeepers need to make risk assessments and establish an action plan for handling emergencies in the apiary.

When working in an apiary it is vital that the following points should be considered:

- ❖ Mobile phones:
  - is there a signal?
  - is it fully charged?
  - have emergency contact numbers have been saved?
  - can you operate the phone whilst wearing your protective suit and gloves?
- ❖ Any visitor to the apiary who knows that they may suffer anaphylaxis should ensure that they have informed colleagues and advised them how to help them in an emergency
- ❖ Set up lone working rules such as:
  - Tell someone when you will be back home
  - What to do if you do not return
  - Agree a regular 'phone in
- ❖ Check that your protective suit is fully zipped up and all gaps sealed
- ❖ Deal with any 'followers' that may try to go home with you in the car

The training session ended with an opportunity to administer CPR to 'little Anna' the training dummy. We all felt a little self-conscious as we knelt beside the dummy but Andrea coached and encouraged us and thus provided us with a 'hands on' experience that will stick in our memories. Although we hope that we will never have to use the knowledge we all felt that this was a valuable learning experience.

### The Society's Apiary



The society's apiary provides an excellent facility for new and would-be beekeepers to gain confidence and experience in handling honey bees. It also proves to be a forum for more experienced beekeepers to swap notes, pick brains and have a chance to compare their own bees progress against others.

This year started with colonies that had survived the winter but with very different levels of success; one colony had died out whilst another proved to be queen-less.

In April we saw evidence of higher levels of Deformed Wing Virus (DWV) in the remaining colonies, perhaps indicating raised levels of Varroa mite.

In May the strengthening colonies appeared to overcome this problem and supers were added to the stronger colonies in anticipation of a Spring honey flow.

The opening and examination of each hive gives some new beekeepers a chance to get used to handling and inspecting frames and searching for queens.

In early May one colony showed signs of superseding the queen; a new queen was found and marked -another new experience!



### 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. The apiary meetings in June will be held on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> subject to weather permitting.

### Winter Meetings 2016

Our indoor meetings take a break for the summer but our winter meetings will recommence on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> 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>.

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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://hymenoptergenome.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 Inspector is:**

**Southern Region:** Julian Parker at: [julian.parker@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto: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

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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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