



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.

March 2016
Number 710

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



At this time of year winter is ebbing away and we are eagerly awaiting the arrival of spring. Although it has been quite cold so far this month, I can see the blossoms out and on fine days when the temperature lifts the bees are out foraging and beginning to build up their colonies in terms of stores and brood. Every little bit helps in terms of opportunities to forage and strengthen the hive – the Mahonia close to my hives is working hard to produce pollen. We know that the colony is a collective of individuals, but it is hard not to get emotional when noticing on the ground in front of my hive, as shown in the picture, this

one individual forager who went out, gathered her large bundles of pollen and so nearly made it back. The pollen is that characteristic bright orange that looks suspiciously like snowdrops or crocus.

Where did she go and what was her story? What happened to get right back to the hive entrance with such a bundle only to fail at the end? Was it too cold, was she too old? Of course this is a daily occurrence in a hive with many thousands of foragers, but at this time of year with little flying and even less active beekeeping everything seems very precious. There is no room for sentiment within the hive and many others will have made it back with valuable forage and I can see this on days that are mild enough for them to be flying. It is part of the beauty of nature and the wonder of beekeeping to be able to see the evidence of survival and expansion. Good to see the bees flying when they can. I trust that your hives will come through the winter successfully even if there are a few fallers along the way!

Sue Remenyi

C. Wynne Jones

Ty Brith Pentrecelyn, Ruthin, LL15 2SR



Beekeeping Equipment,
Bottles, Jars and Lids



Visit our Website for full range or contact us for
our price list 01978 790279
www.beesupplies.co.uk
e.mail: wynnejones@btconnect.com



Federation News

The Federation is to dissolve in 2017

Following the Federations' AGM on 20th January 2016, all four Associations have now confirmed via email that they are in agreement with their delegates vote to dissolve the Federation.

All four Associations will now have to apply to join the BBKA as Member Associations in their own right. This will be done via formal propositions being submitted to the BBKA by 1st October in readiness for the BBKA's ADM in January 2017 when the current 68 Member Associations will vote to approve all four applications.

Caroline Bushell, Caretaker Chairman

Beekeeping equipment and supplies

All types of hives and accessories kept in stock.

Second quality cedar items seasonally available.

Varroa treatments include Bee-Bay hive clean and Vita Apiguard from stock.

Giordan main supplier for extracting and honey processing equipment.

Honey packaging jars and containers always available.

All Sherriff, BB Wear and Thorne protective beekeeping wear to try on for fit.

Ambrosia syrup and fondant feed products.

Telephone or e-mail your order for collection or delivery at cost, or visit anytime.

Tel 01189 842321

Mobile 07929586037

E-mail john.r.belcher@talktalk.net

Did you know

Were you aware that the bees on the Isle of Man are Varroa and Foulbrood-free?

We have been asked to spread the word about the danger to them, as in the past week the Isle of Man's Senior Bee Inspector has announced that a colony of bees may have been brought in from outside the Isle of Man.

This could be a catastrophe for their bees and they are asking that anyone who might know of the colony(s) to get in touch as swiftly as possible so that the situation can be contained.

If anyone has any information that could help, the contact details of their Bee Inspector, Harry Owens, are: harryowens@manx.net and phone: 01624801315.

The Bee Shop

Top Quality Beekeeper Clothing at Affordable Prices

See our website www.thebeeshop.co.uk

Full Suits (Round Hat & Fencing Veil Styles) in White, Camel, Olive & Camo

Smocks (Round Hat & Fencing Veil Styles)

Sizes from Infant to XXXL

Full adult suits under £50 - delivered free

Reading and District Beekeepers Association

Tuesday 12th January found us assembled at Caversham Methodist Hall for a very welcome return visit by Dr. Nikki Gammans, Project Manager of The Short Haired Bumblebee Project. On this occasion, Nikki gave an illustrated talk on 'An Introduction to Solitary Bees'. Most of us are aware of several species of these non-colonial bees, especially the fast flying, pollen covered (while foraging) Red Mason Bee. These bees are also good pollinators some of us have set-up the 'tube-nest bee hotels' to provide nesting sites. Dr Nikki expanded our awareness considerably during the talk, essentially an 'outline' of this extensive subject.



There are 230 species of solitary bees in the UK, which are usually listed in three groups. The females collect pollen and construct cells for eggs to be laid onto a ball of pollen, moistened with nectar. The eggs are mated individually and the cells are typically in a line of five, constructed of mud in the case of the 'red mason', leaf or petal material by the 'leaf cutter', or plant fleece material by the 'wool carder' who often utilises old beetle tunnels in tree wood or stiff dried plant stems like 'hogweed'. The

dreaded 'mortar bee' is quite capable of digging tunnels into lime mortar of ancient buildings such as Hampton Court Palace! Dr Nikki introduced us to many other species, including the 'hairy footed flower bee' common in the south, mason-type but looks like a small bumble but with hairy feet! The female is black, whilst the male is gingery blond. These bees emerge early and have a 6-8 week flying period, frequently being seen on pulmonaria (lungwort). The early mining bee is a ground nester in light soil and has foxy red fur. The Ivy bee, increases and spreads using soft soil – the males 'ball' the females when mating, often in largish numbers, causing minor panics when they favour someone's lawn as nest sites. The ivy bee is monolactic,



i.e. one nectar source, which in this case is ivy blossom. Polylectic refers to bees that forage several blossoms, this together with whether there are one or two matings a season places these bees into their grouping. The first egg laid by the female emerges as an imago and breaks out of the cell and either nips it's sibling on the abdomen to wake it up to get all five to emerge or exits sideways depending on the species and type of nest site. The underside of the female's abdomen of several species have special bristles which enables the collection of quantities of pollen to form



the nesting food ball for the larva to eat (e.g. the familiar red mason). This pollen smother makes solitary bees good pollinators. The afore mentioned wool carder emerges late summer, obtains it's nesting material from fleecy leaved plants such as 'lamb's ear'. It is long-tongued and can forage from legumes. The bigger males drive rivals away and the females favour old beetle tunnels in wood for nesting.

Dr Nikki showed many pictures of these fabulous insects, all taken by herself and some are reproduced here. I regret that this honeybee-keeper can't match them up with descriptions or Latin names! No doubt with some web research some matched names and illustrations could be obtained.



Dr Nikki brought us up to date with progress made since her talk to us in 2015 (on bumblebees) with her project to re-establish the previously extinct short hared bumble bee *Bombus subterraneus* into the south east of England, carefully quarantined examples being brought across from Sweden. Progress is quite good with a number of Kentish famers and nurserymen now co-operating with the project, Dr. Nikki has re-located to Ashford Kent herself to be in the project area. Check on website

www.bumblebeereintroduction.org for further details. We would like to express our gratitude to Dr Nikki Gammans for travelling to give us another of her excellent illustrated talks. We learn more about these environmentally important insects each time she visits. Some illustrated pamphlets and publications were made available to us. Thanks also to all who attended.

For any stamp collectors amongst us Alderney (Bailiwick of Guernsey) issued a set of stamps in 2009 with splendid illustrations of solitary bees, Bulgaria a set in 2003 and our GB post office in 2015, e.g. in this set the Scabious bee, monolactic; foraging the scabious blossom. All these are

beautiful illustrations. Available from philatelists e.g. Stanley Gibbons Ltd. In fact their catalogue lists at least sixteen countries issuing most attractive detailed bee illustrations on postage stamps.

On 19th March. Saturday 10-AM to 4 PM we invite beekeepers and interested people to our 6th annual 'Beekeeping Day' at Trench Green Hall, displays, demonstrations talks by prominent beekeepers. Free entry, **see advert**, bring the family.

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>

Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

On Tuesday 9th February we were pleased to welcome Roger Patterson together with his constant canine companion, Nell. Roger was due to give a talk about bee improvement- turning mongrels into a productive colony but the topic was changed because of the imminent BIBBA course being run by Roger for the South Chilterns on similar lines. Instead, Roger delivered an alternative talk about bees in the wild and what we can learn from them.

Roger Patterson has been keeping bees for more than 50 years, managing up to 130 colonies. Now he keeps a more manageable 25 colonies in addition to looking after the Wisborough Green BKA teaching apiary. Roger also maintains the Dave Cushman website which is an invaluable reference resource for all beekeepers (<http://www.dave-cushman.net/>) and also <http://www.honeyrecipes.org.uk/> a database of recipes incorporating honey.

Over his 50 years Roger reckons that he has collected in excess of 200 wild colonies of bees, mainly from trees and few in buildings but significantly most of these were collected in the days before Varroa Destructor had a firm grip on the UK honey bee population. He observed that much of the recently published research about wild honeybee colonies has originated in the USA but he reminded us that these bees are not indigenous to the USA but were mainly descended from stocks of the European *Apis Mellifera* introduced by colonists and settlers. The research may still have relevance for bee behaviour in Europe. The bees tend to swarm early in the season and live very happily in hives with a reasonable expectation of the colony surviving for a long time. Wild colonies do not have the same longevity and we were asked to consider what factors may be influencing this. Roger suggests that wild colonies do not always select the best of sites for their new homes – maybe too close to the ground; these honey bees may just not be suited to the wild environment.

However the natural choice for many of these colonies is in hollow trees and suitable locations are searched for by scouts in the 7 to 10 days prior to the swarm. The scouts are looking for a cavity that is dry, defensible and the right size; once such a site is found then the scouts will guard it from scout bees from other colonies.

The wild colony inside a tree will construct a tall, chimney-like nest which rarely has a problem with wax moth. Roger suggests that perhaps the design of the tall Warre or Rose hives may be better suited for honey bees. Roger recommended the book 'The Rose Hive Method' by Tim Rowe as containing sound information and tips as a useful source.

However he has also removed colonies from in between floor joists in a barn where the brood nest was about one foot deep but spread sideways for about eight feet.

In conclusion Roger makes the point that honey bees do still survive in the wild and this must reflect their ability to adapt to the environment available to them.

The year ahead

There is selection of forthcoming events at which the Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead beekeepers will be representing local beekeepers. Volunteers from the local association are always wel-

come to help out manning the stands at these events and should contact a member of the committee to express an interest.

Saturday 21st May Burnham Show
Wednesday 8th June Windsor Great Park open school day
Saturday 16th July Windsor Rose Show
Saturday 3rd September Windsor Allotment Show
Sunday 11th September Sunninghill Carnival
Saturday 24th September Eton Action Fair

Winter Meetings 2016

Our next winter meeting will be on Tuesday 8th March with a start time of 8.00pm. This month we will learn about first aid for beekeepers from Andrea Woolley. This is an essential subject for all beekeepers and Andrea will be giving an introductory talk about the subject, including the dangers of allergies and anaphylactic shock.

Our 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> .

Reading's Beekeeping Day.
Saturday 19th March at Trench Green Village Hall, Mapledurham RG4 7UA. 10-30am to 4-30 pm.
FREE ENTRY.
Reading & District Beekeepers invite all interested people to our annual **BEEKEEPING DAY**. Displays & demonstrations by prominent beekeepers, meet the beekeepers, honey to taste, items of children's interest. Family's welcome. Find out about becoming a beekeepers to protect & house the essential honey bee for our environment and have pure delicious honey for your family.
Homemade cakes & refreshments available
www.rbka.org.uk

South Chiltern's Beekeepers' Association



On Wednesday 17 February about 30 members braved the wind and the rain to listen to a most interesting talk by our member John White. John decided a couple of years back to experiment using small cell foundation as an aid to reducing varroa. He presented his ideas to us early on in the exercise and returned this week to provide an update on what is still very much work in progress.

John began by reminding us that varroa is one of many other mites, bacteria, yeasts and fungi that lurk in the beehive. Chemicals, together with essential oils and thymol, that work against varroa can also kill these other bacteria – including those that perhaps would be better left alone. So looking for complementary methods of varroa control is important.

Standard brood cells are 5.4 mm, whilst small cell are 4.9mm. To change over from standard to small will take two to three brood cycles – this is sometimes referred to as regression, i.e. going back to 4.9mm which is sometimes suggested as was the norm for wild bees. Interestingly bees that are bred from small cells are smaller. There are two theories about this – one is that as the cells are small there is less room for the larvae – unlikely. The second is that the life cycle of the egg to pupa to bee is shortened by a day with cells being capped on day 8 or 9. Mature varroa mites enter a cell and lay after 3 days and then lay 1 egg per day. The varroa take 6 days to mature and eggs take 6 days to hatch. Therefore with the additional day there is time for 2 varroa to have hatched and emerge with the bee, whereas with the small cell and the one day shorter life cycle there is only time for 1 varroa mite to hatch and emerge with the bee.

John showed us some charts which he has produced to monitor varroa and on the small cell hives the count goes up initially and then comes right down with the help of a final treatment. This initial increase is as yet unexplained and is confirmed by much of the short term research that does not support small cell. John summarised by saying that over the three years he has been using small cell the varroa count is consistently down, that his bees are good natured and he has had plenty of honey. What more could a modern-day beekeeper want?

Our last winter meeting is on Wednesday 16 March at Woodcote Village Hall. Peter Higgs will give a talk on Removing honeybee swarms from difficult places and related legislation.

An advertisement for Bee Basic Ltd. The top left features the logo 'BEE BASIC LTD' in a honeycomb pattern. The top right shows the website 'www.beebasic.co.uk' and the tagline 'All the protection you need, and more'. Below this, there are two images of beekeeping gear: a full-body bee suit on the left and a hooded jacket on the right. In the center, there is a list of products and prices: 'Jackets from only £32', 'Bee suits from only £42', 'Leather gloves £10.50', and 'Smokers £16'. Below the list, it says '+ bee vests, smocks, hat & veils, tools and more...'. At the bottom, it mentions 'Free delivery on orders over £100' and 'Call us for a free brochure, or visit our web site'. The bottom left corner has the address '5 Hillcrest Avenue, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 1AJ' and the bottom right corner has the phone number '☎ 020 8866 3864' and the text 'Open 10 to 6 pm except Sundays'.

Wokingham and District Beekeepers Association

You would think that beekeeping in the 'dead of winter' would be a layback time of year, but you would be wrong. Spring is just around the corner and plans and ideas need to be formed for the coming season. For me and for Garth Matthews, it starts with a visit to BIPCo 5th Annual Bee Improvement Day in Liskeard, Cornwall. A journey of 3 hours plus and an early start at 5.20am, to talk about bees all day.

BIPCo (Bee Improvement Programme for Cornwall) was established in 2009 by a small group of like-minded beekeepers, whose aims are to select and improve bees of native or near native strain. They had put together a great programme for the day and the guest speaker was Willie Robson from Chain Bridge Honey Farm. His whole business, in Northumberland, is based on harvesting honey from 1800 colonies of dark native honey bees. He talked at length about the types of stock he brought or was given when building his honey farm. The local native bee always came up trumps for him and if you ever get a chance to hear a talk from Willie, it would be time well spent.

The second speaker was Maureen Wakefield from the (NBU) Smartbees or Sustainable Management of Resilient Bee Populations. It's a programme being run across Europe on local native bees and their importance to the environment and beekeepers. There was also talks from Eric James at (SBI) about Bio Security and Jo Widdicomb from BIPCo. They all sung from the same hymnbook, that local native dark bees are the best bees to have and happily that was same conclusion as Garth and myself, before we left Cornwall.

So now plans to start our near native queen rearing programme will carry on a pace. Please let us know if you think that the near native dark bees should be encouraged by us all.



Beckys Beezzz Ltd

FOR ALL YOUR BEEKEEPING NEEDS...

At Beckys Bees we sell top quality mated queens and nucs as well as stocking a wide range of beekeeping products from cedar hives and varroa treatments to smokers and fuel and bee feed.

All our nucs comply to the standards set by Defra and NBU.
Manufactures of Correx boxes that take both national & commercial frames, ventilated for optimum air flow when transporting bees. Light, strong and secure.

Stockists of Top quality cedar hives • Polystyrene & Ply Nuc Boxes • Frames & Foundation • Rauchbox Smokers & Smoker Fuel
Varroa Treatments & Medicines • Vita Gold & Vita Green • Ambrosia Fondant & Syrup • Pollen Substitute • Disposable & Leather Gloves • Bee Suits & Gauntlets • Feeders • Extractors • Jars and lots lots more...

Distributors of Aulumgaards Ambrosia Beefeed & Enolapi Candipolline Gold,
Competitive quotes for pallets orders.

Visit our online shop for our full range at www.beckysbeesonlineshop.co.uk
Discounts given where I can. Please email me at beckysbeezzz@gmail.com
or Contact us on 01264 351104 • 07973 423626

Member of
BEE FARMERS ASSOCIATION

Dates for your Diary

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 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 |
| 7 May | 37th Annual Auction of Beekeeping Equipment and Bees
The Meon Valley Beekeepers Association
The Greatham Village Hall, Hampshire GU33 6AD
Further information: Margaret Pallant. 07784 773345 |

27-29 October margaretpallant@btinternet.com
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 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.