



THE FEDERATION OF BERKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATIONS

January 2016

Number 708

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'm feeling somewhat lost at the moment as my bees are on holiday with a fellow bee keeper. This is due to my having a new greenhouse located where my apiary used to be. Rather than move the bees the few metres necessary to the new location the warm weather has seen a lot of flying activity so we decided the 3 mile rule should apply. No excuses now however, I need to organise the plot for the new apiary and get them back before the queen starts laying in earnest! The Mahonia is in full bloom and someone's bees are enjoying my plant – see photo!

I hope that you enjoyed the Festive period and perhaps you received some bee related gifts? If by chance you have found yourself lacking a calendar, South Chilterns have some 2016 calendars with 12 beautiful photographs! Drop me an email if you are interested.

The Federation of Berkshire Beekeepers Associations is an umbrella organisation that your Association belongs to. The Federation enable us to benefit from BBKA services as a group. The current officers of the Federation are standing down this month and volunteers are sought to take these places. The work is not arduous, but it is important that the Federation is properly run, so if you would like to get involved please see the Federation News section below and contact Martin for further information.

Our associations were busy in December with Christmas gatherings, where quizzes were certainly the order of the day, as you will see from the write-ups. We also have the second part of an occasional series of articles about the Zest Hive by Bob Busby.

Happy New Year to you all.

Sue Remenyi

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Federation News

Federation Officer Elections at the next AGM

The AGM of the Federation of Berkshire Beekeepers Associations will be held on Wednesday 20 January at Woodcote Village Hall. The meeting will follow the South Chilterns regular monthly winter meeting, to which everyone is welcome to attend. The talk is on "A look at Native and Near Native Honey Bees" by Roger Paterson.

Positions to be elected are Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Treasurer, Editor, Exam Coordinator, ADM delegate (this is the Federation's voting delegate at BBKA's annual delegate meeting)

Currently there are only two positions where the current incumbents are able to stand again; Ian Duddle as Treasurer, Sue Remenyi as Editor of the newsletter.

Stepping down: Caroline Bushell as Chairman and ADM delegate, Martin Moore as Secretary, Katie Rennie as Membership Secretary, John White as BBKA Exam Coordinator.

If you are interested in supporting your local association and its three sister associations by becoming a Federation officer, please contact either myself on membership@scbka.org or Martin on mmoore52@gmail.com or your local association. If you need any information on what the duties entail please do not hesitate to ask.

Martin Moore, Outgoing Federation Secretary



John Belcher
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Did you know

The first ever assessment of European bees was made in 2015 by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and they found that one in 10 wild bee species face extinction in Europe, while the status of more than half remains unknown.

Given that there are around 87 main crops worldwide that we humans use for food, medicine and materials rely on pollination, this represents a global economy of some €153 billion.

The UK national planning policy framework mandates that the purpose of planning is to achieve sustainable development. Among its 12 key principles are protection and enhancement of the natural environment to improve biodiversity, respect for agricultural land and developing ecological corridors.

Clive Harridge, secretary general of the Commonwealth Association of Town Planners, named three existing sustainable development goals (SDG) backing the protection of bees: SDG 2 – food security, SDG 11 – making cities and communities sustainable, and SDG 15 – safeguarding the use of ecosystems and halting biodiversity loss.

One of the main challenges to food security and biodiversity is the rate of urbanisation. The annual rate of population growth in Commonwealth countries is over 25 million a year.

Harridge prescribed the drawing up of strategies and plans to protect agriculture, involving communities and a "move away from top-down planning where decisions are forced on people. We

need new approaches to how we look at urban areas and their role in food production. Badgers, bats and newts are all protected species in the UK and bees should be included on that list.” More information can be found from <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/topics/topic/beehealth>

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The Zest Hive – Part Two

Notes on Using a Zest Hive.

In the October Newsletter I set out my experiences in constructing a Zest Hive, with the thought that it might be helpful to others intending to go down a similar route. That article covered the build process from inception to the point where the Hive was complete and ready for the introduction of bees.

This follow-up article covers the period from the introduction of bees through to where we are now at the end of December. If you didn't catch the first article you might want to take a look at it before reading on as I am sure that at least some of what follows may not appear to make complete sense without that context.

At first glance the completed Zest Hive is characterised not only by its rather utilitarian appearance but also by its sheer size. The chamber of the Zest Hive is more than two and a half times the size of a 14 by 12 National Hive fitted with two honey boxes. It therefore appeared logical from the outset to install a colony at either end with insulated division boards separating the colonies. The Zest website also recommends overwintering in this double configuration, but then relocating one colony in Spring to allow the other to expand into the full capacity of the hive. Back in May however my intention was simply to populate my Zest Hive with a swarm in either end which, even allowing for reasonable growth, would still be unlikely to require more than half the hive for each colony come September, and aided by the indifferent beekeeping season in 2015, so it has proved.

But first things first, the photograph below is of a plastic Zest frame mounted on an inspection stand. Whilst these frames are the same width as National frames they are half as deep again as a 14 by 12. No foundation is used and the bees are left to build their own comb from scratch. As can be seen from the photo, each of the three sections of the frame has a central nib projecting down from the top bar and it is simply necessary to paint a coat of wax on each nib to give the bees a hint as to where they should start to build comb.

Both my swarms were kindly passed on to me by one of our swarm collectors who used a Commercial Nuc Box for the purpose. In both cases the swarms had only been in the box for a matter of hours and what I should have done was simply to tip them into the end of the Zest hive with just two or three empty frames and then a division board. However, partly because the swarms seems so small compared to the vastness of the Zest, and also because I was concerned about absconding, I instead opted to house one of the swarms in a National 14 by 12 on foundation and the other in a 14 by 12 Nuc box also on foundation, placed on top of the Zest. In the National I used a queen excluder under the box for few days to deter absconding. In the usual way I withheld food for the first couple of days and then fed them continuously with thin syrup to assist them in drawing out the foundation.

After two months or so I transferred the 14 by 12's from the Nuc into the Zest underneath and put a false floor under them to avoid any possibility of wild comb in the bottom four inches of the Zest. I then placed three of the Zest frames alongside and continued to feed. The bees appeared to thrive

and built comb progressively across the plastic frames to the same depth as the 14 by 12's, but had not gone down in to the bottom section of the frames before my final inspection.

In the opposite end of the hive I installed the swarm which I had initially housed in a new National 14 by 12 Cedar Hive situated about three metres away from the Zest. This made the transfer to the Zest much more challenging than it should have been as over the course of two weeks I moved the National from its original position to sit on top of the Zest in a series of five moves a few days apart. At the same time I raised the National one metre off the ground whilst turning it through 90 degrees. Its a good job I have a lot of spare building blocks about the place.

As by this point I could only just lift the National Hive single handed, it was a lot of heavy work and I hope to arrange things so that I avoid this in the future.

I left the National Hive in place on top of the Zest for a few days before transferring the frames underneath and removing it. Perhaps because this was done somewhat later in the season this second colony didn't really build very much comb on the new Zest frames although it has remained viable and now in late December is by far the more active of the two. As with the first colony I continued to feed them thin syrup for some time before switching to thick syrup in September in an attempt to mitigate the effects of them collecting and storing Ivy and having it set hard. Reputedly this is less of a problem in Zest hives anyway, but I didn't know that then.

As many will no doubt appreciate, I could have avoided a lot of unnecessary work had I thought things through properly at the outset and simply tipped the swarms in to the Zest as I had originally intended. Of course, I now also have to address the gradual removal of the old 14 by 12 frames which is where the brood is still mainly located. I am not expecting this to be a simple process and do not recommend that anyone else goes about populating their Zest Hive in this way.

With the bees finally in residence and feeders on I left them to get on with it as the Zest Hive is not intended to be opened with the same frequency as a traditional hive. That said, opening a Zest Hive can present some challenges beyond those experienced with traditional hives. Although it appears simple enough to lift off the end roof block and expose the tops of the first few frames, in practice I have found that the instant the block is lifted up the bees swarm (not literally!) up the sides making it very difficult to put the block down on top of the hive (or anywhere else) without squashing bees. Probably a simple stand with a couple for sharp edges could get around this but instead I intend to install a Crown Board underneath the blocks so that they can be lifted clear without disturbing the bees and then the CB lifted off in the same way as for a conventional hive. The options are either to make two CB's each underlying three blocks or three CB's each underlying two and this is now on my 'to do' list for the new season.



Once the frames are accessed, a full Zest frame of either stores or brood can weigh in at up to four kilograms and, of course, does not have the benefit of wired comb. The frames have to be manipulated with care and in order to assist the process I have constructed a rotary frame rest which is shown in the photograph to the left. The rest simply stands on top of the hive and the frame is lifted out and placed in it, the frame rest incorporates a 'Lazy Susan' bearing (let's see if that gets past the Editor!) which enables it to be turned through 360 Degrees so that both sides can be inspected and the frame quickly returned to the hive. The rest was easily made from timber off cuts and the bearing bought off ebay for about £7.00.

As I was feeding almost continuously through the summer for one reason or another the opportunity to take honey did not arise. Had it done so then the process is simply to lift out frames away from the brood nest, check for any brood and if absent cut out the sections to be harvested and return the frame into the hive to be refilled. Clearly, with this arrangement the bees are rebuilding on fresh wax after each harvesting although the fact that the honey cannot be extracted by spinning does mean that other, perhaps less convenient methods must be used.

Finally, a word about entrances, in the Zest hive these are all situated on the top edge of the plastic bearer frame, there are six along each side and one at each end. In my innocence I initially left all of these open, which meant that there was no way to approach the hive without blocking one or

more flight paths. Later on I blocked off one side to remedy this and now I have only the two end entrances open and may leave it like that in the Spring so that the bees will build on the frames along the length of the hive away from the entrance (that's the theory anyway).

Happy New Year!

Bob Busby

Reading and District Beekeepers Association

On 10th November Reading Beekeepers assembled at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall for our Annual General Meeting and our 'New Beekeepers Honey Show' with classes for entrants prepared and judged by our own senior honey judge Hazel Blackburn. Classes were divided between entrants not yet past their third season as beekeepers and 'open' classes (honey cookery & photography).

The AGM proceeded satisfactorily apart from the sad news that our Association Secretary Drew Cuthbert and Membership Secretary and joint swarm co-ordinator Katie Rennie would be stepping-down in the New Year. Very many thanks to them for their assiduous service over the past years. Otherwise officers and committee members are going forward into 2016 and we welcome K.C. McCall onto our committee plus Philip House as acting secretary and Mike Graham who we hope will be able to confirm as 'membership secretary' in our next committee meeting (Jan.19th). A special thanks was expressed to committee member Clark Hunter for setting-up and establishing our association's 'Club Apiary' this year. K.C. (Keith) McCall has been a strong collaborator with Clark throughout and has made several practical donations and committed his time to this new enterprise for our association. Our minutes secretary Marion Dabbs did however mention that she may have to finish next year. We certainly hope Marion can carry-on as long as possible, such fast transcribers of Pitman's shorthand are rare nowadays!

On then to the Honey Show.

Honey clear (any colour) 1st Jackie Henderson, 2nd Claire O Brian, 3rd Ross Smith.

Beeswax blocks. 1st Claire O Brian, 2nd Ross Smith.

Beeswax candle. 1st Claire O Brian, 2nd Ross Smith.

Honey judged on taste alone. 1st Ross Smith, 2nd Claire O Brian, 3rd Imke Wilson.

Honey lemon marmalade (open) 1st Claire O Brian, 2nd J. Davey.

Honey orange cake (open) 1st Claire O Brian, 2nd Marion Dabbs, 3rd J. Davey, highly commended Ross Smith.

Photography (open) 1st Claire O Brian, 2nd Ross Smith.

Tremendous effort by Claire who receives The Hazel Blackburn Trophy & Apiaries Cup, worthy runner-up Ross Smith; The Reading Horse-brass. Beekeeping prizes were also awarded to successful entrants.

Awards Made for The Reading Honey Show at The Swallowfield Show 24th & 25th August:

The Reading Platten. Annette Jukes.

The William Maine Cup. Hazel Blackburn.

The Godfrey Nicholson Cup. Claire O Brian.

The Reading & Maurice Dixon Cups. J. Davey.

Readers might be interested to see the photo. Various colours of pollen shaken from a frame exhibited as an entry to the photography class by Claire O. Brian.



Our January meeting will be at Caversham Heights Methodist Hall on Tuesday 12th January. This will be an illustrated talk by Dr. Nikki Gammens from Reading University on 'Solitary Bees'. These highly environmentally important bees of many species should be added to the knowledge of

keepers of honey bees, some of us may remember the talk given by Dr. Nikki on bumble bees last winter. Don't miss this!

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Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Beekeepers' Society

A Christmas Gathering

On the evening of Tuesday 8th December members of the Society gathered for a pre-Christmas social event. This year proved to be a very convivial occasion and started with a table laid with a lovely spread of food contributed by the attendees and refreshment was provided by the Society.

In addition to the usual chat and brain picking the evening entertainment was supplied with a fiendish Christmas Supper Quiz set by our Chairman Glynis Morse. Glynis ensured that the teams had a fair share of the most experienced of the Society's beekeepers but even so the forty one questions proved a challenge to everyone. The questions were divided into the following headings: general beekeeping, bee anatomy, honey and wax and each category included some easy questions to get us started but there were also some tricky questions which we thought we should know but did not get quite right.

By the end of the quiz we all felt that we had learnt something and we came away feeling that there is always more to learn about beekeeping. The winning team was awarded chocolate decorations for their Christmas trees!

Our thanks go to Glynis and the whole team for wrapping up our Christmas and the year with such fun. Don Church rounded it off by providing the following link for some interesting beekeeping facts: <http://bbc.in/1p6vvlx>

The year ahead

As we start the New Year we can look forward to a selection of interesting and informative talks scheduled for the monthly winter meetings.

In 2016 we can learn about Bees and the Law from Andrew Beer and how to improve our bee stock from Roger Patterson.

In March we will learn about first aid for beekeepers and in April there is a very timely talk about the use of nucleus boxes.

Winter Meetings 2016

Our next winter meeting will be on Tuesday 12th January with a start time of 8.00pm. This month we will be fortunate to hear Andrew Beer talking on the subject of 'Bees and Law'. His talk will cover many aspects of the law in relation to bees, beekeeping and honey.

Winter 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>.

Wokingham and District Beekeepers' Association

The start of a New Year and January 2nd brings our annual clean up session of the apiary equipment and storage facility, better known as "The Donkey Shed". All very Christmassy when you think of shed and donkey??

Seven members braved the quite miserable weather on the day and set-to to clean the stored supers, brood boxes, stands, crown boards, queen excluders and frames of varying quantities. We even established "super" and "broody" teams to keep a low key competitive edge to the hours ahead.

With a most welcome open fire burning Nigel was able to heat up his branding tool so the message was quite clear to keep on the move and not stand still or else.

The clean-up is quite therapeutic enabling those with sensitive post New Year celebration heads an opportunity to benefit from the cold damp air of the hut, filled with clouds of burning wood from the branding iron. Lovely.

Garth and Nigel having already set work benches up the intrepid team started work promptly at 10am. A coffee break with biscuits appropriately at 11am and down to the café for 1 pm. A Job well done.

In the meantime lots of discussion on topics varying from mild weather and its impact, hive weights, honey stores, candy and oxalyic acid treatment. And anything else us beekeepers could think of in the time available.

My thanks to the members who found the time to help with the clean-up despite the quite awful weather and enabling the club to be ready for the forthcoming year- Nigel, Garth, Lynn, Gerald, Mary, Alison and Leo.

John Waddelove, Apiary Manager.

South Chiltern's Beekeepers' Association

Wednesday 9th December was our Christmas Quiz night. Early arrivers help to set up tables and chairs, whilst Simon and Bev were busy organising the mulled and festive food.



A number of people brought raffle prizes and bought raffle tickets. Once everybody had arrived we had enough members for four teams – 25 players in total, and we named the teams Queens, Drones, Wasps and Hornets. The evening was made special by Ron our President being present and taking part.

Reg was quizmaster and he read out the 36 questions that made up the quiz. It was very enjoyable and we all had a good laugh. Each team marked another group's sheet. Perhaps not entirely surprisingly there were some amusing answers to some of the questions. For example, question 19 was "What

is the Latin name for the pollen baskets of the worker bee?" The correct answer is Corbicula, but one team responded with "BAGS".

Question 16 was "What is the difference between the sting of a worker, a queen and a drone?" The correct answer is that a worker is barbed, a queen is curved like a sword and a drone has none. One team responded saying a worker has a barbed sting, a queen's has no barb and a drone has a "WILLY" we couldn't stop laughing.



The results were very close with the Queens scoring 44, the Wasps 43.5 and the Hornets and Drones coming in with 42 each.

The Queens were presented with bee shaped bookmarks.

We then enjoyed mulled wine and Christmas snacks, which was plentiful.



We drew the raffle and there were many winners. It was nice that, in true Christmas spirit, those who drew more than one prize requested it be put back. Congratulations go to Tim who won the Christmas hamper. The raffle made £60, which was good considering we didn't have too many members.

All in all we had a very enjoyable evening and everybody joined in clearing away. Special thanks do go to Simon and Bev - the mulled wine was delicious.

Which leaves us to wish all our members a **SUCCESSFUL BEE KEEPING YEAR** for 2016.

Reg Hook and Linda Clarke

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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Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 18th January at 8.00pm Beecraft Hangout on the topic of Beekeeping with children

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.

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