



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

INTRODUCING NEW 'BEEKS' TO BEEKEEPING 2024



2023 was a very difficult year in our training apiary after experiencing European Foul Brood for the second time in three years.

The bee Inspectors advised us to reduce the number of people who came into the apiary this year in order to give the bees time to recover from the outbreak. At the same time further hygiene routines were also incorporated to help support their recovery.

Almost all of the trainees who come along on the Tuesday night sessions are from our training courses, so to make sure there would be less trainees this year we decided to only hold one weekend session of 20 people. As it happened in the end there were 17 folks who attended.

There always has to be some times during this weekend when there are talks and the trainees are sitting in groups listening to the speakers, but there are also times when they can get involved with practical sessions

such as learning about the constituent parts of the hive and the other pieces of equipment required to carry out an inspection.

Along with this basic knowledge the trainees also learned how to carry out a split, using a hive and a nucleus box, they made a frame, tasted various honeys and discussed which colour pollen came from which plant. And they also had plenty of time to chat with experienced members and to eat cake – the staple diet of beekeepers it seems!

This year we also told the trainees about the Asian Hornet threat and they were given materials to make hornet traps to take away with them.

But probably the best and most anticipated part of the weekend was when they went to the training apiary to meet the bees. No one was stung and it appears they all enjoyed the experience.

Let's hope a lot of these trainees go on to keep bees and enjoy the pleasure of working with these amazing creatures.

Val Dillon

A GRAND DAY OUT TO THORNES



WLBK has booked a 34 seater coach to take members and friends to Thorne's at Rand in Lincolnshire on the day of the Grand Sale - **Saturday 12th October 2024**. There will be a trip round the factory, opportunity to buy kit and a visit the museum. Bring a picnic or eat in Thorne's café. Cost is £25 per person. Pick up from Johnson's depot in Henley in Arden (free parking) at 7.45am or Kenilworth Railway Station (parking £2.00) at 8.30am. Return to Kenilworth 5.35pm, and a bit later at Henley. Booking via the website.

BEEKEEPING TASKS FOR MAY

This year, spring has been just like last year- but wetter. It's been cold and wet, but as far as the bees are concerned it's past the equinox and they are building up. Some have made queen cells and are ready to swarm, but may hold back a few days. I predicted that Monday 29th April would be a HUGE swarm day. Hopefully you managed to do some swarm control before then to stop this.

If you do spot queen preparations (read what to look out for in our Hints & Tips on page 8), the easiest thing to do for swarm control are one of these three manipulations:

- Take out the queen in a nucleus (queen, some brood, some stores, some foundation and feed) and leave one queen cell in the old colony.
- Do a Pagden - queen and foundation in a new box on the old site; brood, nurse bees and one queen cell on the new site.
- If you are short of kit, do a Demaree. Queen, one brood comb, foundation and flying bees in new the bottom box, two supers above to give space and old brood and fliers in the top box above all the rest. Separate with queen excluders above the bottom box and the supers.

If you do any of these you need to go back in 5-7 days to remove additional queen cells. It's the secret of making these things work.

This month you really need to be prepared for fast growth. Tasks to do:

- The mouse guards and woodpecker protection should be off now- it is build-up time.
- 'Tis the season for weekly inspections (nine days if you have clipped queens). Look closely for queen cells and make sure colonies have enough stores.
- Add a queen excluder and super when there are six frames of bees (or before) so that you can relieve pressure on the colony. The bees will need space as the population increases and, we hope, when the nectar flow really gets going.
- Do your disease inspection. I usually do it on the second visit of the season (though swarm control may delay it this year).
- Make sure you have spare brood frames - for swarm control. You will need a spare hive and box of frames for an artificial swarm (Pagden) or Demaree. You need a nuc box full of frames to make up a nuc.
- Do a varroa and nosema check. Put the board in for at least seven days, divide the mite drop by the number of days and use the beebase calculator. Treat if you need to.
- If one of your colonies unaccountably does not build up collect a sample of 30 bees. Barry Meatyard or I will do you a test. Just deliver the 30 frozen bees (and your name) and we will let you know. If there is a high level of nosema, its time for a Bailey for a weak colony.
- Remove and extract rape honey as soon as ripe.

Jane Medwell, WLBK chair

WLBK BRANCH BUZZ

The latest buzz from the branch committee:

- At its April Executive Committee meeting, the committee decided to close down the branch loan hive arrangements for novice beekeepers, taking on board the advice of the local NBU Bee Inspector, and that Andy Threlfall was wishing to step down from the role of coordinator. Many thanks Andy for running with this task over many years. The issue of bio-health was very much to the fore with our recent experiences of EFB over the last three years in taking this decision.
- Another change is that Paresh Pankhania has stepped down from coordinating talks given to organisation by our pool of volunteer speakers. Our members meeting organiser, Judith Masson, has volunteered to take on this role. If any of the members wish to find out more about arranging talks or adding themselves to the panel of speakers, just email Judith at judith.Masson@bristol.ac.uk. To support talks, the branch has a library of slides and the necessary hardware of projectors, screen and laptop which can be loaned for such events. From my experience they are fun and people requesting talks are genuinely interested. The best type of audience.
- In looking to the future and with an eye on cost we have also decided to move the Members Meeting planned for the autumn from Kings Hill Nurseries to the Kenilworth Senior Citizens Club. An upside is that this location is more central to our membership rather than Kings Hill being on the periphery and as a result we would anticipate an increased participation.
- Finally, and just in time, we have filled the vacant Swarm Co-ordinator position. The role has been taken on by Richard Pierce. He won't be taking up the post until mid-May when he can be contacted at swarms@warleambees.org.uk. Until then please direct any enquiries to messengerbee@outlook.com or to secretary@warleambees.org.uk

Bernard Brown

SWARM SEASON

The first swarm of the season has been reported! This is only going to escalate now that Spring seems to finally have arrived. We ask members of our branch to volunteer swarm collectors.

Some of you will have registered last year to become a swarm collector, appearing on the swarm collectors map posted on the BBKA website, to be contacted by the public with swarms. This registration is carried forward from year to year so if you know longer wish to feature please contact us at swarms@warleambees.org.uk Equally if your contact details have changed, please let us know.

For those who wish to join the swarm collectors list, please be aware that your name and contact details will be in the public domain, but you can do so by going to the members area of our website, clicking on the Swarms tab and following the instructions.

Under the Swarms tab you can also register on the "Swarms Wanted" list. Swarm collectors will consult this list when they have collected swarms to pass on. This will often be with very little notice and in the evening, so have your hive/nuc fully set up ready to receive it.

Bernard Brown

ITEMS FOR SALE

COMPLETE BEEHIVES FOR SALE

All wooden parts are Cedar Nationals comprising: Roof, Crown board, Two supers with castellations & ten frames, Queen exclude, Brood box with eleven frames mainly fitted with plastic ends but some have hoffman frames if preferred, Floor, Entrance reducer & mouse guard.

All the wooden ware has been thorough cleaned and scorched ready for use.

The frames have been dipped ready for foundation to be fitted making it very simple to rewire (I can show you how to easily do this)

Complete hives are £95 each with ten available

If interested please send text to Mike Townsend 07983 339612

SUPERS FOR SALE

Thoroughly cleaned and scorched ready for use and fitted with castellations & 10 frames ready for rewaxing.

All are cedar Nationals with castellations £25 each.

I have a few in other wood from £10 each. Again they are all thoroughly cleaned & scorched with dipped frames ready for use.

If interested please send text to Mike Townsend 07983 339612

EXTRACTION KIT

Everything that you need to extract your honey!

All used, clean, VGC and GWO

Thornes light weight universal 9 frame radial extractor with side handle (manual). £150.

Paynes uncapping tray. Plastic tray with metal frame stand. Uncapping fork and knife. £50.

Plastic 40 kg settling tank with nylon valve and tap. Bucket rest. 2 conical straining bags and attachment to fit the 40 kg settling tank. Stainless steel double strainer. £50

Unopened box of 72 new 1lb honey jars with new lids - unused. £25.

Box of 56 clean used 1lb honey jars with used lids. £10

38 cut comb cases. £5

Polythene buckets and lids: 7 x 30lb and 3 x 15 lb £15.

Or take it all for £250. (North Leamington)

Please contact Jane Traynor - pippajaneytraynor@gmail.com

MANAGING VARROA



NBU recently launched the 2024 re-write of the old varroa guidance. This is a relief, as they had taken down the varroa calculator some time ago and left us adrift.

The new guidance is [here](#).

Much of it is familiar but there are some changes:

- **Monitoring:** Ideally, you should aim to monitor at least four times each season: early spring, after the spring honey flow, at the time of honey harvest and late autumn. If you think significant mite invasion is taking place, then the frequency with which you monitor should be increased.
- **Several monitoring methods are given:** varroa boards, drone brood removal, sugar roll and alcohol wash. There are helpful QR codes which lead to useful videos. It is worth watching these as there are some changes to the details.
- **New thresholds for treatment:** The old calculator has gone, so now it is down to a percentage of the sample. Full details are in the leaflet and it is different for each monitoring type.

This new advisory leaflet has everything we need and is worth downloading.

Jane Medwell

BEE SAFARIS 2024

There will be Bee Safaris again this year:

- Thursday June 18th to Bernard and Jane Brown's Apiary in Langley
- Thursday July 25th to David Blower's Apiary in Brailes
- August tba to Tim Newcombe's Apiary in Pillerton Hersey

Sign up via the website. You must book separately for each safari and agree to the terms and conditions, which ensure members'

safety and hygiene in the host's apiary.

Queries and questions to Judith.masson@bristol.ac.uk

SAVE THE DATE – Saturday 29th June!

Bee safari to Chris Rickett's apiary, drone congregation hunt and picnic in Snitterfield. Further details in next month's Bee Talk.

Judith Masson

CONGRATULATIONS

Our chair, Jane Medwell has been made an Honorary member of the Warwickshire Beekeepers association as has David Blower, formerly of WLBK but now an associate member being a full member of Shipston Branch, both for their commitment and exceptional contribution to the education and training of beekeepers. Dave Bonner of Coventry Branch also received this accolade which has not been granted to any one for at least 10 years. All are Master Beekeepers so if any one does they certainly know what they are talking about. Congratulations to all of them.

EQUIPMENT SALE

We are holding a sale of surplus beekeeping equipment which includes live bees in hives, some of which are from beekeepers who are reluctantly giving up the hobby through becoming vulnerable to severe reactions, in one case to bee stings and in another to honey, would you believe it!

It is possible that this has already happened by the time this issue of Bee Talk has hit the streets, so maybe its no longer news but history. However, your inboxes should have received the details by now and we hope you secure a bargain.

WORLD BEE DAY

On 20 December 2017, the UN General Assembly unanimously approved a resolution, proclaiming 20 May as World Bee Day proposed by the Government of Slovenia. Celebrated since 2018, this event has received little recognition by WLBK but this year, on the 17th and 18th May, the weekend beforehand, we will be rectifying this by our displays team attending 3 events at Hill Close Gardens, guys Cliffe walled garden and Stoneleigh Village Orchard Blossom event.

The World Bee Day theme in 2024 highlights the importance of involving young people in beekeeping and pollinator conservation efforts, recognizing them as the future stewards of our environment. It emphasizes global cooperation to engage young individuals in protecting these vital species. By doing so, we safeguard food security, preserve agricultural livelihoods, and combat biodiversity loss.

Keep an eye on your inbox for opportunities to volunteer to help on our stands.

MEMBERS' MEETING REPORT – APRIL



Members were introduced to Apitherapy by Barbara Dalby, who became interested in apitherapy, became member of Board of the American Apitherapy Society and has lectured at Apimondia. Barbara told us that that all hive products have been used for health and some, like dressings are used in the NHS for skin lesions, such as bedsores. This reflects David Bonner's experience (January 2023 and Brian Durk April 2023, who talked about the work of Bees Abroad. One of the benefits of beekeeping in communities in Africa was teaching how ointments could be made with honey, wax and propolis and used in local clinics.

There is a long history of beekeepers and others to treat common ailments. However, there was little high quality research into the effectiveness of apitherapy treatments. Rather, apitherapy is seen as 'natural' or 'alternative' therapy. In order to write about Barbara's talk, I searched for some scientific literature on apitherapy. There is a recent article in a peer reviewed journal, Phytomedicine Plus: Weis et al., 'An overview about apitherapy and its clinical applications' (2022). <https://bit.ly/49Xw8eF>. This gives an account of clinical trials, including a number of RCTS (randomised control trials) into various apitherapy treatments. The evidence is thin, but it is a start towards assessing the subject.

Barbara provided some handy hints about collecting pollen – leave plenty for the bees – they need it, and collecting propolis. First make sure you have a sealing plastic bag big enough to take your propolis screen and space in the freezer for it. Once you have collected propolis put the screen in the bag and in the freezer. This will ensure that the propolis you collect is in the bag and not all over everything in the freezer!

Judith Masson

MEETINGS MEETINGS MEETINGS

Barbara Dalby's talk was the last one until September when Gerald Collins will be talking about successful overwintering. **We have a new venue. Meetings will be at Kenilworth Senior Citizen's Centre, Abbey End.** See you there.

OUT APIARY

There are three new opportunities for out apiaries, one at the Motor Museum near Gaydon, one on farmland at Hatton, Warwick, and the third on farmland on Wedgock Lane, Warwick. Each site will accommodate one beekeeper and up to 6 colonies. For further details contact: Alistair Walker alistair.walker@btinternet.com. A schedule of all available out apiaries is on the WLBK website.

A LITTLE SQUIRT SAVES TIME

60lbs in 15 minutes!!!! That was the statistic that impressed Clive Joyce when he test drove a machine for jarring honey. This machine automatically tares the jar and injects the correct weight of honey. It can be programmed to suit all common sizes of jar. Not only was it faster but created much less collateral mess, much to Clive's brownie points score with Mrs Joyce! To acquire this piece of kit for the branch to add to its list of facilities and resources it provides, was a no-brainer.

The honey jar filler will not be available for home loan but kept at our Hurst Farm resource centre where, from time to time, we will organise bottling days for which time slots to use the machine can be booked.

A MUST WATCH

The BBKA has produced short AH awareness video (1min 20secs) aimed at the public which is worth watching.

[BBKA Asian Hornet Awareness Film \(youtube.com\)](#)

As you know, we are campaigning actively to get this message across to the public and this provides a very good way to broach the subject. Please play this at every opportunity. It can be followed up by our Asian Hornet Action Team with leaflets and/or a presentation to interested parties.

Please forward any requests to either Liz Bates bates.liz@outlook.com, your Branch AHAT co-ordinator, or Bernard Brown bernardbrown@outlook.com, County AHAT co-ordinator.

HOW THE “COUNTY” OPERATES

For the uninitiated, the term “County” refers to the Warwickshire Beekeepers’ Association, which is the umbrella organisation to which all eight Warwickshire branches belong. It is a registered Charity with the charitable objectives:

“to advance the education of the public and beekeepers in the craft of beekeeping and promote the importance of bees in the environment”.

Charitable status entitles us to reap several benefits, not least the ability to claim gift aid on your subscriptions which amounts to a significant proportion of a branch’s income. However it also brings responsibilities.

Under its constitution, the County is managed by trustees drawn from the branches. Each branch can nominate up to two trustees, Bernard Brown and Chris Cox are ours. Although drawn from the branches, the trustees have collective responsibility for the sound operation of the whole WBKA Charity, rather than a partisan role for their nominating branches. It is their job to ensure that the charity and its branches comply with Charity Law and the Charity Commission’s rules and regulations. The way this is done is via the

County’s constitution.

Much of the management of the charity’s activities is devolved to individual branches who operate under “Branch Rules” established under the WBKA constitution but some can be more efficiently carried out centrally by the “County.” For some of these, County establishes policy on behalf of the branches e.g. safeguarding, Health and Safety, governance, finance etc. For others it has an executive function co-ordinating activities conducted at branch level such as financial accounting, Asian Hornet Action etc. and in taking the lead on the honey show, education and training and the Warwickshire Beekeeper magazine.

It is important for any organisation but particularly for a charity such as WLBK to look to the future – to identify its strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities and to plan accordingly. It was to this end that the trustees recently embarked upon a strategic review, selecting the areas of Finance, Education, Communications and Governance for starters. This has produced a range of ideas for further development and consultation with branches and other stakeholders which the trustees will be addressing over the next few months.

Chris Cox and Bernard Brown

HOW BEES BUILD HEXAGONS



The most plausible theory is that honey bees do not actually build hexagons. Instead, they build wax cylinders that conform to the shape of their bodies. They take the secreted wax flakes, soften them with their mandibles, and assemble them in a tube around themselves. For worker cells, they build a

size that just fits. Small bees build small cells and larger bees build larger cells.

The flattened areas result where two cells touch each other. The most obvious example can be seen in soap bubbles. Wherever two bubbles touch, a flat wall is formed between them. Imagine building row after row of tightly packed cylinders. If you warmed them up so the walls flowed like liquid, they would develop flat sides wherever they touched, just like soap bubbles. A similar effect is found with those large round bales of hay or straw when stacked several layers high after some months have elapsed.

Researchers now believe that as the cells are constructed, they are warmed by the bees’ bodies which causes the common sides to flow together and form a flat wall. Because they are closely packed, the rows form a series of hexagons that we recognise as a honeycomb. The transition from round sides to flat can happen in just seconds, depending on the temperature of the wax.

Also telling are the shapes of supersedure cells and swarm cells. Since queen cells are built separately and do not touch other cells, they remain cylindrical. Even queen cells that are started on hexagonal foundation soon depart from the embossed shape and become cylindrical.

Based on an article from, and with the permission of, the Honey Bee Suite

NEW RESEARCH UPGRADES

SWARM CELLS



I've always been taught that any female (diploid) egg can be a queen. It is the royal jelly the larvae is fed from the day it hatches (Day 4) until it is sealed that makes it a queen. Evidence from as long ago as 1971 established that the later bees start feeding the larvae royal jelly, the smaller the queen (Woyke, 1971). This is why emergency cells may produce smaller queens. There is plenty of evidence that bigger queens live longer, produce more queen mandibular pheromone (which keeps the colony together), lay more eggs and produce better offspring (Wei, 2019; Yu, 2023). However, almost all queen rearing methods rely on humans choosing the larvae and so, usually, on emergency cells.

In the last few months there has been growing interest in papers which have added something new to this position. Researchers have established that queens lay bigger eggs in queen cells than in worker cells. This is a new finding. And it is not just that they move the eggs around- the lab tests have actually established the queen lays bigger eggs in queen cups. We don't know the mechanism – does she just keep her legs crossed a bit longer...? However, we do know that bigger eggs become bigger, better queens.

The impact of this finding is enormous. It means that the best queens are likely to come from swarm queen cells! The queen is likely to lay bigger eggs in queen cups made for swarm cells, which are fed royal jelly right from first hatching.

I have always been taught not to raise queen cells from swarm cells as I'll get swarmy bees. Now, I am questioning that. What do we mean by "swarmy" bees? That's something I will write about next month, meanwhile, I shall be using swarm queen cells from my best colonies to rear new queens- something I have never done before!

There is ALWAYS something to learn in beekeeping.

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Jane Medwell

HINTS AND TIPS



Many thanks to Clive Joyce for these tips.

When carrying out your weekly inspections in May, June and July (or even April!) keep a close eye out for the signs that may indicate swarming preparations are taking place. Look out for these signs and you will be better prepared:

1. An increase in the number of drones or drone cells.
2. Play cups (vertical, empty hemispherical wax cups) suggest the colony is practicing the art of making queen cells.
3. During swarm preparation the young bees stay in the centre of the frame and the older bees collect around the outer parts.
4. The number of bees around the queen increases as she is fed more. This leads to increased egg laying and eventually the space is not available so possibility of swarming increases.
5. Scout bees will be out about 14 days before a swarm. They will be looking for a favourable site for the swarm to go to. Look out for bees with no pollen doing a waggle dance on the comb, these will be the scout bees communicating their findings.
6. Set up a bait hive and look for interest being taken.
7. Look out for bees zig-zagging across the comb. This recruits bees and stirs up the colony to prepare for swarming.

..... BUT after all this, if they still swarm then collect them up and rub carbolic soap on the area they chose to swarm to. Then they will not all abscond back to that place as soon as your back is turned!

Many thanks to Mike Townsend for this brilliant tip to help find the queen:

There had been difficulty in finding the queen and I was having the problem too as it was rammed full of bees. I decided to add a second brood box and moved almost all the brood into the top one after shaking the bees off. Then put excluder below, above the remaining couple of frames with brood in the lower box. On the next inspection most of the bees had moved up so the queen was easy to find in the bottom box.

If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to h.essex211@gmail.com

Helen Essex

The editor of Bee Talk is Tanya Weaver.
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WARWICK AND LEAMINGTON BRANCH
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