



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

HAPPY NEW YEAR AND NEW DECADE

While many feel that a new year brings with it a clean slate on which to enthusiastically write all the good intentions we plan for the year

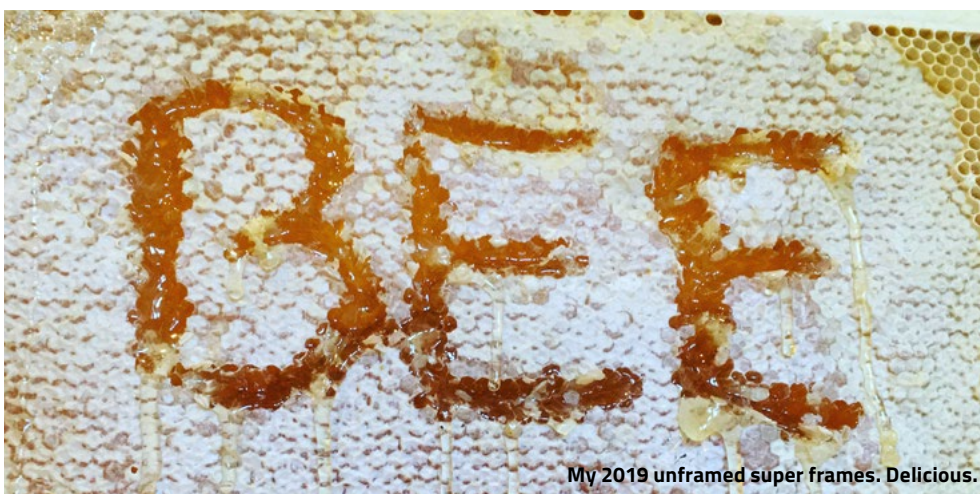
ahead, I really dislike all the pressure that comes with a new year. I don't feel the need to atone for my festive over indulgences by going on a strict diet and exercise regime, and with January being such a cold, long and penniless month I can quite frankly do with the wine. I also don't like the pressure of setting resolutions and then the guilt when I may not keep them.

Saying all that, I do have two resolutions for the upcoming beekeeping season. The first is to not get caught out (again) by early swarming. For the past two years I've had my bees up sticks in March. So the plan is to have all the equipment I need to carry out a swarm control method as soon as we have a mild day in early March.

The second is that when I extract my spring and summer supers, admittedly not a job I do myself despite the excellent facilities at the branch, is to get the honey out of the buckets (thanks David Stott!) and into jars the same day as I currently still have a bucket full of rock hard honey in my cupboard.

Apart from resolutions, a new year also brings with it a time for reflection. Looking back at the past decade, it's been a busy time for me as I not only increased the size of my human family but my bee family too. A similarity I can draw between the two is that, much like children, bees' behaviour can be unpredictable. It certainly keeps you on your toes!

In the vain of reflection, the National Bee Unit (NBU) has published its Western Region Annual Report that takes a look at the 2019 season. Written by Colin Pavey - Regional Bee Inspector Western England - it makes for interesting reading. The full report can be read on NBU's website but I'll extract a few interesting



My 2019 unframed super frames. Delicious.

insights below.

Colin starts the report by saying that, "Overall, this has been a fairly good year for beekeeping in our Region - not an outstanding one, but one with the usual mix of successes and disappointments and a reasonable honey crop (in most parts!)"

An observation that his fellow inspectors noted in 2019 was a high level of varroa in colonies. "It is important to monitor levels and to be prepared to help colonies with a treatment if necessary; we do still find a lot of colonies failing to thrive and suffering due to varroa and deformed wing virus," says Colin.

He also reminds us that it's important to register your apiaries on BeeBase. This will ensure that if any risk of notifiable disease or an exotic pest incursion is identified in the Region, you will be contacted. Registration is free and can be done [here](#).

In terms of disease and pests, our Region has low levels for incidences of European foulbrood. However, there is no room for complacency as outbreaks can take off rapidly. And, of course, there is also the threat of the Asian Hornet, which was worryingly spotted in 2019 a bit too close to home near Tamworth.

He closes the report by saying, "Please be vigilant, check regularly for brood disease and look out for Asian Hornets, if you don't look, you don't find! It's a good excuse to spend a bit more time in the apiary, just watching!"

So, on that note, I wish you all a very Happy New Year. May your honey crop be plentiful, the weather be favourable and your bees be healthy.

Tanya Weaver

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HOW TO AVOID FLOODING DISASTER

Last month's Bee Talk featured photos of one of our branch apiaries devastated by the November floods (right). The affected beekeepers were immensely moved by the response from WLBK members who offered to help them re-stock with donations of colonies. What a way to brighten their Christmas!

However, flooding seems to happen most years now so what can we do to avoid such disaster as these beekeepers experienced?

The obvious thing is to find out whether your apiary is at risk of flooding. You could ask anyone who knows the site what they have noticed over the last few years but more reliably you can log on to the [Department of the Environment's website](#), enter the postcode of your apiary or the nearest town/village and up will come a map showing its vulnerability (You may have to zoom in and navigate to your exact location). This shows three intensities of risk: low, medium and high each with a percentage probability.

So, if your apiary is vulnerable what then can you do?

You can prepare by taking physical measures such as raising the hive entrance above flood level and preventing the stand from toppling over in the torrent. Hives can float, particularly polystyrene ones, so they should be fixed to the stand. The force of the flood can cause the boxes to separate so a means of keeping them together and aligned is necessary.

Most important is vigilance. If there is a threat of flooding it is best to remove the hives to a safer position. Other branch members may have space at their apiaries and the branch itself may well have some unoccupied out-apiaries that can offer temporary accommodation. We also have an isolation apiary which is vacant most of the time. An email may allow you to save the day!



Be prepared and sign up to receive a flood warning from the Department of the Environment by text, e-mail or facebook, by going to this [link](#). Once alerted the situation needs to be monitored because floods can rise quickly. In fact, floods usually peak well after the rain at the apiary has stopped due to weather patterns further up-stream, so don't be lulled into a false sense of security. Ask around (or look online) to pinpoint the time at which the floods will peak at your site.

It takes time to organise the relocation of hives. The key message is: don't leave things too late.

In the sad cases highlighted last month, physical measures had been deployed well beforehand and the progress of the flooding had been monitored and a decision made for action. Unfortunately, the situation deteriorated too rapidly.

From the experience, lessons have been learnt. If you have any other ideas of flood mitigation, please contact us so we can share them in Bee Talk. With climate change, this is a problem that is here to stay!

Ivan A Perry

BRANCH AGM ON 13 FEBRUARY

On Thursday 13th February 2020 at 7.30pm the WLBK Branch Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be taking place at Kings Hill Nurseries. All members are welcome to attend for an evening that promises to be both informative and educational.

Taking place in two parts, the first 'formal' part, which we try keep as brief as possible, will feature the usual business of an AGM where members will hear annual reports from both Peter Stanworth, branch chairman, and Val Dillon, branch treasurer. We will also elect our officers and general committee members to ensure the smooth running of the branch for the next 12 months. Details of nominees for officers (chair, treasurer and secretary) and general committee will be tabled and there is still time for you to put your name forward for election into these positions should you so wish. Equally, there is also time for any branch members to make proposals or to raise any other matters for discussion at the AGM. The deadline for receipt of proposals from Members is 30th January 2020. The circulation of

agenda for the AGM will take place by 6th February 2020.

At the AGM we will also present for the first time the Foden Award. Given to the branch by Ann Foden in memory of her husband Tim, who was so pivotal in many aspects of the branch, it will be awarded to a new beekeeper (less than three-year beekeeping) who has made an exceptional contribution to branch activities throughout the previous year.

Following a short break for refreshments, the second educational part of the AGM will commence. This will feature a talk by Scott Dwyer, a PhD student at Warwick University, on the Biological Control of Varroa. The successful management of varroa is pivotal to the maintenance of strong and healthy stocks. His talk will cover his particular interest in the subject, existing varroa control methodologies and most importantly biological interventions under consideration for usage in the future.

We look forward to seeing you there. Please send apologies if you can't attend to Chris Cox at secretary@warleambees.org.uk

Chris Cox

NEW IN THE 2020'S

In our apiary we have re-used the wax in supers for many years, saving the bees the work of making more. But getting OSR honey out quickly is not simple. Sometimes we end up with unripe honey, or combs with some granulated honey in cells.

Our branch has equipment that will enable us to do things differently and, perhaps, make life easier. So why not try something a little different this year? We are trying out the use of unwired, ultra-thin foundation in supers and changing the way we extract. We can choose when we extract or offer a wider range of products.

The first big convenience would be extracting all the honey after the season in one go, as used to happen before OSR. Using the branch Apimelter means it does not matter if the honey has granulated. The apimelter gives us lovely runny honey and big flakes of wax to trade in for next year's foundation, and leaves the frames ready to be boiled in the branch boiler. The only disadvantage is that the bees will need to draw out new wax each season.

Or we could go for creating some different products. At a recent visit to Fortnum and Mason, we saw combs of honey beautifully presented (and expensive). Combs can be cut from frames and kept in the freezer for optimum presentation when needed. To present them you need plastic containers, but you don't really need special equipment beyond a sharp knife.

At Fortnum and Mason we also saw gorgeous jars of chunk honey, which is essentially a chunk of honey suspended in a jar of liquid honey. This is easily achievable (and can be sold at a premium price) but will only work if your chunk is exactly the right size to be held down by the lid of the jar, and your liquid honey does not granulate quickly.

Of course, none of this is new. Our own Clive has plenty of experience in using unwired foundation in supers, so there is always expertise at hand. Maybe in the 20's it is time to experiment a bit.

Jane Medwell and Alex Wray



Fortnum & Mason chunk comb honey 908g at £24.95

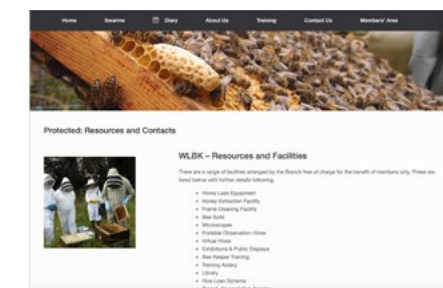


Fortnum & Mason honeycomb 170g at £14.95

WHAT WLBK CAN DO FOR YOU

We have kicked off the new year by updating the "Resources and Contacts" page of our website which now covers some 22 services made available to members by the Branch. Attached to each of these is a summary of the service and details of how to access them.

To find out more, the page can be found in the Members' area of the website warleambees.org.uk (the password is mandible).



BEE LINES

We have dug up some fascinating facts about WLBK that many of our members may not know and may find interesting. We'll share a few of these in each issue.

- WLBK attended 19 public events in 2019 and sold 1,278 items of honey and wax products on behalf of members valued at £4,520.
- In 2019, the branch sourced 9 out-apiaries making a total of 28. Of these, 19 are occupied and 7 are community out-apiaries i.e. more than one beekeeper in occupation.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE BASIC

Have you completed one or more seasons of beekeeping? If so, now is the time to prepare for The Basic Assessment.

The format of this practical assessment is a "talk over the hive" with an assessor and many of our members have successfully enjoyed doing it each year.

As a branch, we run three refresher sessions to allow members to prepare for the basic assessment during the summer of 2020. These sessions will take place at 7pm - 9pm on 11th, 18th and 25th March at the National Beekeeping Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG. After these sessions we will also do a practical apiary session and "mock" assessment at the Training Apiary, Kings Hill Nursery, CV3 6PS.

The cost of the sessions will be £30, which includes your BBKA Basic Assessment entry fee. To sign up, head to this [link](#) on the WLBK website.

Jane Medwell

HONEY BEE HEALTH CERTIFICATE

Last year a new BBKA Beekeeping Assessment was launched – the BBKA Honey Bee Health Certificate. This course and qualification aims to encourage beekeepers to improve their understanding and beekeeping practice. Candidates must have already been awarded the BBKA Basic Certificate and have kept and managed bees for at least three years. The Assessment cannot be taken in the same year as the Basic, General Husbandry or Advanced Husbandry Certificates.

Early in 2019 a group of Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers – around 15 of us – met together with Jane Medwell, Examinations Secretary, to complete our applications and plan how we would keep in touch and share useful articles and information. We found it most useful to be in touch by group email, this became a real hotline once the season got going!

To boost our learning we held a Nosema Clinic in early March. This was opened up to the entire branch membership. It provided a good opportunity to practice collecting a sample of bees for testing. An NBU Bee Inspector was also invited to speak at this meeting – his perspective was invaluable.

In March, as the weather warmed up a little, those who wanted some practical experience, met at an out-apiary where we carried out some Bailey Comb Changes and a Shook Swarm. This gave me the confidence to carry out three of my own Bailey Comb Changes the following week. The bees made enhanced progress on all that lovely clean foundation and went from strength to strength all season. It really made me wonder why I had put off doing this before.

The group also met at the Branch apiary for a practical session which included not only mock assessment activities but also covered our own questions. It was interesting to see how the combined knowledge of the group had grown and most questions were actually answered by members of the group.

The Assessment itself is a practical one with questions throughout

but no formal written paper. This takes place in May, June or July either at an Association apiary or other suitable apiary – but not your own!

There is no denying that I felt very nervous before my assessment which was scheduled at the Warwick and Leamington Branch Apiary. My Examiner was very reassuring however, and once he had selected the hive I would inspect he told me to just ask if I needed help with any lifting – it was a Commercial to be fair!

During the practical and afterwards there were a lot of questions to answer and I knew lots of the answers – but not all! I was upfront with the Examiner when I was ‘stuck’ but told him what I thought I would do and where I’d look for help and information. At the end of my assessment I was told I would receive my result in the post but that this might take a couple of weeks. It actually came in much less time.

I passed! The letter also gave some excellent feedback about what I had done well and a couple of areas I should improve on. This was really useful moving forwards.

The whole learning experience was extremely valuable – I inspect my bees quite differently now and I feel much more confident at tackling some of the tasks I had previously dreaded or ignored.

If you are interested in the Honey Bee Health Certificate and have already taken the Basic do consider this as your next step in bee learning, whether en-route to the General or Advanced Husbandry or just to keep your bees healthy and happy.

WLBK will be running an introductory meeting about the Honey Bee Health Certificate on 19th February (as entries must be in by 28th February) in the BBKA Boardroom (upstairs) at the National Beekeeping Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG. If we have a group of beekeepers who would like to enter, the branch will run practical sessions in the apiary, and provide materials for reading. To sign up, follow this [link](#).

Jane Ford

FESTIVITIES TO SEE OUT 2019

The Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers’ final meeting of 2019 ended successfully at Kingshill Nurseries with the popular Christmas social of ‘Mead and Mince Pies’ for beekeepers, their families and friends.

We were treated with a lovely feast of festive goodies alongside mulled wine and juice. Mary and Linda had a stall of bee products for our last minute Christmas gifts ranging from bee friendly seeds to Christmas decorations and artistic candles.

The seasonal quiz organised by Barry Meatyard was hotly contested and the anagrams of ‘What’s found in the Apiary’ challenged the beekeepers present; here’s one to mull over ‘aid humane tit’.

Rachel Dove’s feely bags were innovative and fun-and she had incorporated some very interesting bee adjuncts into her bags-amazing what we beekeepers use!

Big thanks to Barry and Rachel for organising us all, and to Kingshill for a very festive venue.

Nicki Maritz



WHAT'S THE BUZZ

THE LATEST BEEKEEPING BOOKS, PODCASTS, ARTICLES, RESEARCH, PROGRAMMES AND DOCUMENTARIES THAT ARE CREATING A BUZZ.

While not much active beekeeping is happening this month, it’s the perfect time to read up on beekeeping. There are, of course, various materials and media available to brush up on all things beekeeping and even interesting reading not directly related to beekeeping itself, such as the planting of bee-friendly plants. Plant producer [Rosybee](#) has published a report entitled ‘Quantification of the attractiveness of bee-friendly plants to bees’, which it claims is based on eight years of hunting for the best plants and six years for quantification analysis. The findings of this report can be read via this [link](#). (disclaimer: Geranium rozanne comes out tops as the best plant for all types of bees but it’s the Calamint, pictured below, that’s best for the honey bee).



MEMBERSHIP DUE

Happy New Year to every member of Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers. Welcome to 2020 and another exciting year of beekeeping. Thank you to the 120 members who have already renewed their membership for 2020, and a reminder to the other 164 members that your membership payments are now due.

You should have received an email at the beginning of December asking you to complete the attached link to confirm your personal details and then requesting you make your payment.

A number of people have already completed this link, but have yet to pay, so this is a nudge for them to complete the process please. If you can’t find the link in your email, please try your Junk Mail and if it’s not there you can contact me and I will resend the link.

If you no longer wish to be part of our branch, could you let me know please, and I will remove your details from our files and you will not receive any more emails from us.

So to all our wonderful members who want to continue keeping these amazing creatures and sharing your experiences with us, I wish you a happy and healthy New Year.....and lots of honey in 2020.

Val Dillon

Treasurer

val.dillon@outlook.com

BEEKEEPING GIFTS

Christmas may be over but the January sales are here and there is no better time to pick up a gift for the beekeeper in your life (or, indeed, for yourself).

For the **Lone Beekeeper**, try the new Hive Barrow for National Hives from [Thorne](#), which has been designed to allow one person to move a whole hive easily. Just make sure you get a strap and foam entrance block, too.

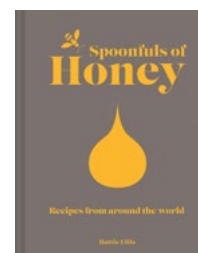
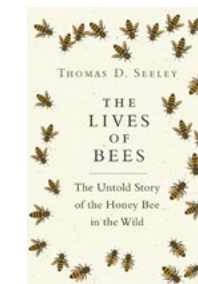


For the **Reader Beekeeper** there are some wonderful choices but I’d have to put Thomas Seeley’s latest book ‘The lives of Bees’ at the top of the list. One of the great world experts, he describes how honey bees live in nature and presents an entirely new approach to beekeeping-Darwinian Beekeeping! I haven’t read it yet but if you have then send your review to Bee Talk.

For the **Chef Beekeeper** there is lovely cookbook called ‘Spoonfuls of Honey’ that explains what to consider when storing honey, gives tips on its use in your cooking, examines the benefits to your health and includes the role bees and honey play in nature. It gives recipes and instruction for dishes as varied as Caribbean jerk, Spanish tapas, French sauces, British biscuits and Turkish cakes. Yum!

For every other beekeeper, there are dreams of Spring and of the Bee Tradex show on 14th March 2020 at Stoneleigh. There are dozens of traders and around 2,500 beekeepers so you will be amongst friends. Booking is cheaper online and you can book at: <https://www.beeetradex.co.uk> This is the place to take your shopping list and your recovered wax, which can be traded in for lovely new foundation.

Jane Medwell



HINTS AND TIPS

The marmalade season has arrived so why not try something a little different this year? I found this recipe below in a book published in 1948. I am going to risk it. If you do too let me know how you get on.

HONEY MARMALADE RECIPE

- Slice 10 Seville oranges and 2 lemons very thinly.
- Put the seeds in a muslin bag and weigh the fruit.
- To every 1 lb of fruit add 0.5pt cold water.
- Put the bag, fruit and water together in a bowl and leave for 3 days, then boil until the rinds are tender and the juice is thick.
- Remove the bag.
- Let the pulp stand for 24hours then weigh the pulp.
- For every 3lb pulp add 2lb of honey.
- Boil until a sugar thermometer reads 220 .

GOOD LUCK!



If one of your New Year Resolutions is to try to be more organic this year, a good place to start would be to think about what you put in your smoker! Because smoke by definition contains pollutants and toxins, the type of fuel used in the smoker is important. Ideally only use smoker fuels that are derived from natural sources. Natural in this case means in its natural form without any added ingredients or chemicals. This therefore excludes newspaper and cardboard but wood shavings and sawdust (from untreated wood), pine needles (recycle your Christmas tree!), leaves and dried grasses are all fine.

If you are thinking about a new addition to the garden why not consider a Japanese Quince? *Chaenomeles japonica* is a shrub that produces deep orange flowers from February, providing vital early pollen and nectar. It can be trained against a wall, used as hedging or ground cover and later on produces edible fruit ideal for jam making.

Get ahead of that rush of jobs by making up some fresh frames with foundation, so when you make your first spring colony inspections, you have them ready to change whilst the brood nest is still small.

HELEN ESSEX

If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to Helen on h.essex@virgin.net

The editor of Bee Talk is Tanya Weaver. Please send content for the newsletter to her by the 28th of each month:
tanyaweaversa@yahoo.co.uk

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