



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

WELCOME TO THE NEW WLBK CHAIR

Following the annual WLBK AGM in February, the branch has a new Chair, Jane Medwell, who has been a beekeeper for many years. Her beekeeping experience started in the 1970s, before oil seed rape or varroa, with her handing the hive tool to her mother.

"Beekeeping is important to me because I feel I am part of a tradition which connects me with the countryside. It provides endless challenges; there is always something new to learn and new people to learn from. I'm glad to say my son is now involved in beekeeping, after a number of years of handing the hive tool to me," says Jane.

Jane has also been a member of our branch for many years. Following a move to Warwickshire in 2000, she soon joined WLBK when finally settled enough to have her own bees. At that time the Branch was around 30 strong and met in the old Pavilion in Stoneleigh. "We met in a delightful bee garden, which we were soon to lose to the expanding equestrians. Those were the days of the Royal Show and the Honey Show was wonderful. Warwick and Leamington was always a welcoming crowd, and some of the guiding lights, like Clive Joyce and John Home, are still leading the way and starting new ventures and facilities," remembers Jane.

In her time with the Branch, the training courses have come on a long way. Starting off with an introductory course with Celia Davis (and one other student) she then got practical instruction from members Bernard Collins and Brian Pritchard. It wasn't long before she followed this up with BBKA Exams and Assessments to become a master beekeeper.

Jane is very active locally and nationally often speaking at national conventions and



now herself assessing all levels of exams and assessments. "I love to see other apiaries and learn how other branches do things. Training is more structured than in the past. Warwick and Leamington have dozens of new beekeepers every year and offers training in everything from microscopy to skep making. The branch training apiary has changed too - from a small row of hives at North Leam School to a dozen colonies in a dedicated space," she says.

Although beekeeping has changed tremendously in the time that Jane has been a member of our branch, beekeepers haven't and for her they remain the best aspect of beekeeping. "Our members offer unstinting help, multiple opinions and several ways to fix anything at almost no cost! We come in all shapes and all inclinations- from the data driven to the artistic. Beekeeping truly has something for everyone," she comments.

While Jane admits that she doesn't go in for mission statements or environmental manifestos, she does have this to say about

her new role: "As Chair, my goal is simple; I want Warwick and Leamington to keep doing what it does so well- producing new beekeepers and supporting them to become old beekeepers with lots of fun along the way!"

Tanya Weaver

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REPORT FROM WLBK AGM

Early every year, as has happened on 86 previous occasions, the branch holds its Annual General Meeting (AGM). With 40 members present, for this year's AGM our incoming Chair, Jane Medwell, gave a talk on "Uniting", which followed the formal matter of business that is an AGM.

Current Chair Peter Stanworth kicked proceedings off by giving a quick review of the past year and made specific mention of the training apiary at Kings Hill Nurseries becoming well established. He also referenced the Extraction Unit at Hurst Farm with its new bulk frame cleaning equipment for members, the co-operative purchasing on behalf of the members, including its seven tonnes of Ambrosia, and the fact that our library was being brought up to date. Peter also mentioned our considerable presence at many local events in the area and that talks were given to schools and other groups during the year. He also commented on how the membership of the Branch has grown from a mere 30 when he started to some 300 now. From this large membership, 41 members had taken on specific roles to support the membership

and Peter expressed his thanks to them.

Jane Brown reviewed the financial position on behalf of our treasurer, Val Dillon, and demonstrated the sound financial management which had met the approval of the Independent Examiner. A brief discussion with the floor was had on the Reserves and the sums held for possible land procurement. Peter Stanworth thanked both Jane Brown and Val Dillon for the considerable work undertaken to manage the 1000 plus transactions in the year for external review.

Peter then passed the baton of Chair onto Jane Medwell and also welcomed Chris Price as a new member of the committee. The new committee agreed at the AGM includes 15 members: Jane Medwell - Chair; Peter Stanworth - Immediate Past Chair; Val Dillon - Treasurer; Chris Cox - Secretary; Bernard Brown; Clive Joyce; Maggie Curley; Liz Gurney; Nicki Maritz; Chris Elliot; Paul Kerr; David Phillips; Gill Donaldson; Rachel Dove and Steve Poynter.

A date for your diary is the next Branch AGM, which will be held on Thursday 18th February 2021.

Chris Cox

THE FIRST FODEN AWARD

At the WLBK Branch Annual General Meeting (AGM), Ann Foden presented the Foden Award to Steve Poynter for the first time. The award is in memory of her husband Tim, who was so pivotal in many aspects of the branch, and will be awarded each year to a new beekeeper (less than three-year beekeeping) who has made an exceptional contribution to branch activities throughout the year. Ann Foden had this to say...

I should just like to say how much it meant to me to be invited to present the inaugural award in memory of Tim at the AGM. I was very touched by the committee wanting to establish a trophy in Tim's memory and should particularly like to thank Clive Joyce for sourcing it and, indeed, for making the plinth which set it off perfectly. Given Tim's enthusiasm for so many aspects of beekeeping, as well as for the general well-being of the branch, it was so appropriate for the trophy to be awarded to the member(s) who had, over the year, made a significant contribution to the continuing success of the branch in any of a number of different ways. I'm sure he would have approved.

Once again, thank you.

Ann Foden



Together with Peter Stanworth, Ann Foden presents the Foden Award to Steve Poynter at the WLBK Branch AGM

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. This month's bee line:...

- We reckon that in 2019 we had approximately 850 members' colonies in the branch.

BBKA SPRING CONVENTION

This year's Spring Convention for BBKA members is being held between 3rd - 5th April at Harper Adams University near Newport, Shropshire.

Billed (erroneously as it so happens) as the Beekeeping Event of the Year - they obviously haven't heard about WLBK's summer bar-be-cue!! - the programme includes lectures from world-renowned experts at the cutting edge of research into our girls as well as by expert practitioners of our craft. There are also workshops covering the more practical aspects. For those who were unable to attend or, are kicking themselves for not buying those bits of kit you were musing over at, Bee Tradex, there is a Trade Show with most of the usual firms there.

This is an event well worth attending, not only to improve your knowledge and skill, but also to network with other beekeepers just as keen you are. There is usually a contingent of WLBK members there and some even giving lectures - well, one... actually.

Harper Adams is about one and a half hours drive away so it is quite feasible to attend for just one day but, if you want to stay longer, then there is accommodation at Harper Adams itself and at nearby Wolverhampton University. Also, there is space for camper vans, or there are local hotels. We got a deal on a Travelodge in Telford.

You can book to attend any combination of the three days by going to :- <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/britishbeekeepersassociation>

Prices are £26 for the 3 days; £13 for Friday; £17 for Saturday only; £12 for Sunday; £5 for the trade show (on the day only).

Lectures are free with no booking required but workshops and seminars attract a charge and must be pre-booked.

Full details can be found at <https://www.bbka.org.uk/2020-spring-convention-everything-you-need-to-know>

See you there.

Bernard Brown

MARCH'S MEETING

The Branch's next members' meeting will be held on Thursday 19th March. The talk will be given by Jim Vivian-Griffiths on Spring Management - very apt as we get closer to the start of the season.

Jim qualified as a Master Beekeeper in 2014, winning the Wax Chandlers Award. He passed the Lectureship Examination at the Gormanston Summer School in 2015 becoming a Certified FIBKA Lecturer. He is a BBKA assessor for Basic and General Husbandry and has been beekeeping with his wife Val, who is also a Master Beekeeper, for 17 years. They live in Monmouth and run some 30 colonies on three sites in Monmouthshire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. Jim is now in his 10th year as trainer for Dean Forest BKA, which is a branch of Gloucestershire BKA.

Members' meetings are held at King's Hill Nurseries, King's Hill CV3 6PS and start at 7.30pm.

We hope to see you there.

Rachel Dove

FOR SALE

- National hive with bees. Docile bees so ideal for beginners. Includes brood box and 1 super.

- Empty national hive and 1 super.

- 2 rhombus clearing boards, queen excluder, new frames (flat), 2 syrup feeders.

£300 for the lot. Ideally sold as a bundle but willing to split it.

Contact Jenna: jenna.justice@sky.com

14 x 12 Nuc for sale with a great stock of bees that have faired well over winter and have been treated for varroa. Good laying Queen (in her second year), who has been clipped. Available for immediate delivery from Kenilworth area.

£90.00

Contact Paul: paulstephenson1961@msn.com or 07786 020419.

FRAME CLEANING

In last month's Bee Talk we announced that we would be firing up our Frame Cleaning Tank and holding another frame cleaning session on Sunday 9th February. We are pleased to report that even storm Ciara couldn't stop members from frame cleaning. Everyone turned up and around 200 frames were cleaned!

Alan Deeley



STRUTTING OUR STUFF IN 2020

The catkins have been out for weeks as have the snowdrops and buds are swelling – all of which are harbingers of Spring and, whilst winter is still not quite over, the branch's displays subcommittee is already turning its attention to summer and to the programme of events at which we promote our craft.

Bringing awareness of bees and beekeeping to the general public is part of our charitable remit and we have the kit to mount a range of different activities for which we rely on you, our members, to help man the WLBK displays.

Helping on our stand involves sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm with the public, making sales of honey and wax products (playing shop), demonstrating various pieces of beekeeping equipment and answering queries and is well within the capabilities of anyone who has been on our introductory course. We arrange the help in shifts and volunteering for a couple of hours on our stand usually entitles you to free admission to the show, so there is time to sample the wider delights of the event.

We seek volunteers a few weeks before a particular event and

publicise this, together with the arrangements for registering your interest, in Bee Talk and by e-mail. At this time, you will be able to find a link to enable you to volunteer on line. You will also find these links on our website.

These events range from village fetes to those on a regional and national scale, but all provide a thoroughly enjoyable day out in this delightful County of ours and, of course, there is plenty of opportunity for "Bee Talk". So, if this prospect appeals to you, please note the dates of events listed below in your diary now and keep your eyes on your in box and on Bee Talk nearer the time. A full list of these events are also included in the Branch Diary section of our website.

Additionally, the display kit we own can be made available for the promotion of bees and beekeeping by members should, for instance, you be involved in a local community event.

To take advantage of this please contact Bernard Brown at

bernardnbrown@outlook.com

Bernard Brown

Public Display Co-ordinator

2020 EVENTS CALENDAR

Napton Village Fete
Saturday 2 May
Organiser: Dave Faulkner

Racecourse VE Day
Friday 8 May
Organiser: Bernard Brown

Mollington
Saturday 16 May
Organisers: Chris Fisher and Robert Park

Kings Hill Nurseries
Saturday 23 May
Organiser: Val Dillon

Ecofest
Sunday 31 May
Organisers: Pete Benson and Di Hetherington

Kenilworth Agricultural Show
Saturday 6 June
Organiser: Bernard Brown

RHS Chatsworth
Wednesday 11 – 14 June
Organiser: BBKA

Leamington Peace Festival
Saturday 13 June – Sunday 14 June
Organiser: Bernard Brown

Armed Services Day – St Johns Museum
Saturday 27 June
Organisers: Mick Smith/James Regan

Shotteswell Village fete
Saturday 4 July
Organisers: Chris Fisher and Robert Park

Warwick Folk Festival
Sunday 26 July
Organiser: Pete Benson and Di Hetherington

Art in the Park (Leamington)
Saturday 1 August to Sunday 2 August

Dassett Country Show
Saturday 1 August
Organiser: David Faulkner

BBC Countryfile Live Show, Windsor
Thursday 20 August – Sunday 23 August
Organiser: BBKA

Party in the Park (Warwick)
Monday 31 August

Kings Hill Nurseries
Saturday 12 September
Organiser: Val Dillon

Hill Close Gardens Apple Day
Sunday TBA October

ATTEND BEE TRADEX

Are you getting excited about the forthcoming season? In need of new/more kit or just curious to find out what is new this year? Well, if any of these apply, bee aware that Bee Tradex is back in town and right on our doorstep at Stoneleigh Park. Taking place on Saturday 14 March, it's billed as being the biggest beekeeping show of the year and is open from 9:00am to 4:30pm.

Tickets cost £6 for adults if booked online and £7 on the day. But bee warned, there are long queues to buy tickets on the day, so buy on-line to avoid missing the bargains

Tickets are available [here](https://www.beetradex.co.uk/) and more details about the event here: <https://www.beetradex.co.uk/>

NOSEMA CLINIC

By popular request we are repeating last year's 'Nosema clinic' to screen members' bees for possible infection.

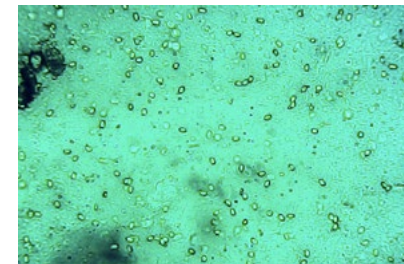
This will be held on Thursday 16th April from 7.00pm to 9.00pm at Kingshill Nurseries.

Although Nosema infections can be associated with diarrhoea, and have been implicated in colony collapse disorder, its accurate diagnosis is best done by using a microscope capable of giving high resolution images at magnifications of x400 and more.

The clinic will enable members to examine a sample of their bees and hunt for Nosema spores. You will need to bring a 'standard sample' of 30 'flying' bees which have been killed by placing them in the freezer.

We have found that an excellent way of collecting a sample is to use the cardboard tube of a toilet roll one end of which is inserted into a small (6x4 inch) poly bag, secured at the neck by a rubber band (or your hand!). When the bees are flying (you need flying bees since the spores are more developed in older bees) hold the tube upright above the entrance with the bag at the top. If the bees oblige they will fly into the tube and up into the bag. When you count more or less 30 bees in the bag it can be slid off the tube and sealed. Self sealing bags are ideal. Pop the bag into the freezer for 24 hours – job done!

Barry Meatyard



JOIN MICROSCOPY STUDY GROUP

Microscopy can open the window to a fascinating and often beautiful miniature world (OK – it has to be admitted that there are some pretty ugly things there as well!). For beekeepers, microscopy can be both a useful tool to maintain colony health and to find out where your bees have been foraging following which you can start 'forensic beekeeping'!

After two years of running successful workshops for the County, we have had a number of enquiries about starting a local microscopy group. The purpose of the group would be to share experience and good practice and, for those who wish, to build the foundations for the BBKA Microscopy Certificate. Activities will include:

- safe and effective use of microscopes
- making slides
- investigating pollen grains
- bee anatomy and dissection
- monitoring for disease and parasites

Details are under discussion but it has been suggested that the group could meet on a monthly basis throughout the year – to be negotiated and no previous experience is required. The plan will be that we all learn together.

To start the ball rolling so we can focus (sorry about that!) on what resources we need please let me know if you are interested in joining the group by completing the Microscopy Google Form on the WLBK website or on the following [link](#).

Barry Meatyard

TRAINING COURSE

Warwickshire Beekeepers Association is running two training courses this season for those members who wish to further their practical skills. Please book early to avoid disappointment as places are limited.

Introduction to queen rearing workshop

2nd and 3rd May 2020

Warwick & Leamington Apiary, Kings Hill Nursery. Cost £30

Bee Health day with the NBU

4th July 2020

BBKA National Beekeeping Centre, Stoneleigh Park. Cost £10

To book your place visit this [link](#) and click on the green 'Tickets' button.

FINAL REMINDER

Time is running out to renew your membership and pay your subscriptions for 2020 and this is the **FINAL REMINDER** to those members who have yet to renew.

After the 10th March, your membership will automatically lapse and you will have to re-apply to access the benefits of membership.

If you can't find the link to your on-line renewal form from any of the three e-mails sent to you since renewal fell due, please first check your Junk Mail and, if you still can't find one, then contact val.dillon@outlook.com for another.

When you have completed the form, please submit it and make your payment as soon as possible.

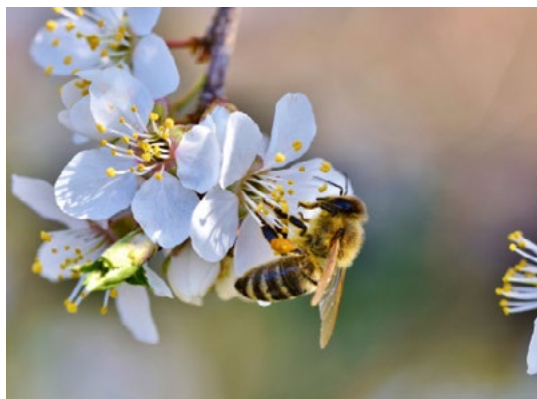
We are unable to accept payment without the completed form.

If it is your intention not to renew, it would be appreciated if you could let us know at val.dillon@outlook.com

We really don't want to lose you, but we can't afford to keep you unless you renew your membership

Val Dillon
Treasurer and Membership Secretary

HINTS AND TIPS: GARDENING CLOSE TO A BEEHIVE



Hopefully the weather will encourage us to rediscover our gardens this month and if your beehives are in your garden, here are a few simple steps for gardening near a beehive.

- Observe the beehive before starting work and be aware of the route the bees take so that you can avoid their flight path to and from the hive. The flight path may vary daily depending on where their food source is, so make this observation every time you work near the hive.
- Bees are less active on cool, gloomy days and early in the morning when the temperature is lower, so plan your work when their activity is lowest.
- Bees, along with most other insects including wasps and other stinging insects, generally are highly sensitive to body odour. Also their eyes work quite differently to ours having a high 'flicker factor', which means they are also highly sensitive to movement. With these points in mind make sure you are well washed, and in clean clothes, but avoid scented hair and body washes. Plan work around the hive for the morning before working up a sweat elsewhere in the garden later in the day.
- Carry out tasks such as weeding close to the hive by kneeling, working slowly and steadily and only work standing up, for example when hoeing, when you are well away from the hive. When standing you may be in their flight path and a bee may bump into you accidentally so wearing a hat is helpful. Bees will try to avoid or go around you. If one gets into your hair do not try and tease it out as the bee will become anxious and entangled; smartly smack your head and kill the bee instead.
- Working close to the hive may lead to a single bee coming to investigate you; just move steadily away from the hive and do not wave your arms about trying to 'swat' it as this will make the bee more anxious. However, if following persists it should be reported to the beekeeper.
- A swarm issuing from a hive, with lots of bees in the air can be quite an alarming sight. The bees are however in a benign state simply dividing their nest to start another colony somewhere else. The intense activity lasts only a few minutes before they fly away or land in a bush or tree nearby. Keep the public away and tell the beekeeper.

- Keep a special eye out for Asian Hornet primary nests, which the hornets will be building this month. Now is a good time to remember what these hornets look like:

The thorax is velvety black/dark brown with brown abdominal segments bordered with a fine yellow band.

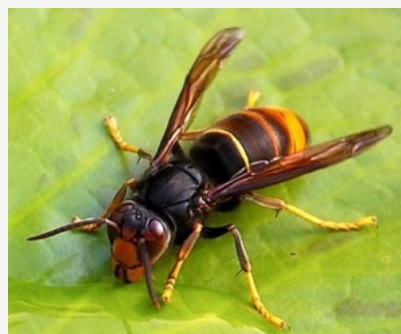
Only the fourth abdominal segment is almost entirely yellowy-orange.

The legs are brown with yellow ends.

The head is black with an orange –yellow face.

They are 25mm about 1" long. Put out your traps in a sunny and well lit place and bait with a sweet syrupy apple juice. Remember to inspect the trap regularly to ensure other insects are released without harm.

If you would like to make your own Asian Hornet Monitoring trap, it's fairly simple and instructions can be found in this [document](#) from the National Bee Unit's website.



Many thanks to Mike Townsend for his contributions to this month's article.

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

WARWICK AND LEAMINGTON BRANCH
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