



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

After completing an 'Introduction to Beekeeping Course' in the Cotswolds in 2018 I got a real buzz for beekeeping. I wanted to join a local group that would enable me to pursue this vision. However, I didn't want to get a hive immediately, I rather wanted to firstly gain knowledge and experience from fellow members of a group.

My enthusiasm was quenched somewhat when I received absolutely no response whatsoever when I approached my local branch. My husband then got details of WLBK and I dashed off an email and was elated to receive a response within hours!

This was more like it.

The email suggested that I get myself along to their public display being held that weekend at King's Hill Nurseries and to ask for Val Dillon who would be able to help me. This I didand that she did. Not only had she been primed that I might be putting in an appearance but, having explained my situation, she was able to outline what the branch provides its members.

Impressive or what?

What an amazing day. I met some lovely people and lovely members of the public all with their own experiences and tales to tell.

That was it for me. It was the start of a very busy summer, seizing every opportunity to take part in the shows. I was meeting a variety of beekeepers, some experts, some recently having completed the Introduction to Beekeeping Course at Kings Hill and some partners of the beekeepers who were supporting their other halves. I learnt so much being able to ask more experienced members questions of my own and eavesdropping on answers given to other people's questions. It was just like having one-to-one tuition.

The branch even arranged for me to shadow an experienced beekeeper last year giving me



hands-on experience and, just last month, has found me an out-apiary and some second hand kit, so now I'm really motoring.

When asked whether I would join the WLBK Display team I leapt at the chance to put something back into the branch, which had helped me so much. Here we share ideas and make decisions on what we want to see on our displays at each show.

Whilst the current situation has thwarted our plans for this year, we are all set to hit the road running in 2021. I would definitely recommend novice beekeepers to volunteer to steward at these shows. Apart from being great fun, they are very sociable as well as informative sessions. Just a couple of hours is greatly appreciated, and you can decide when and what these will be. You also do not need to commit to the whole day. We have a range of activities on the stand and stewards swap around between them, so everyone has the opportunity to learn new skills and to talk about something different if they want to.

So keep an eye on both Bee Talk and your inbox for details of next year's stewarding opportunities and give it a try.

I am so glad to have found WLBK. Thank you all so much.

Marie Day

IN THIS ISSUE

- European Foulbrood
- Gift of latex gloves
- June Gap
- Honey extraction
- Using a queen clip

MESSAGE FROM WLBK'S CHAIR

Summer is with us and beekeeping is taking on a less frenetic feel. There will be more swarm preparations in our hives, but we are ready for them. The sticky evenings extracting the first honey crop is past, and we are gazing into the June gap.

This is definitely the year of doing things differently. Ruth and Barry ran a great Zoom-based meeting. Feedback suggests members enjoyed the range of discussion and seeing each other (although they couldn't change their library books). We will do another video meeting soon.

No daily commute has given me time to do a few new things such as:

- I got to inspect Tanya's poly hives - a new experience and great fun. They are so light!
- I have taken an interest in wax. Despite the wealth of internet information, the best advice has come from other members - lots of it. We have discussed Maslen pans (my aluminium one discolours the wax), slow cookers, lint filters and putting bricks in the oven! For the first time ever, I might just start preparing for the Honey Show now by choosing my best wax.
- I have learnt to make Bara Brith using honey (SO simple).
- I have also used biomechanical varroa control - doing shook swarms and using sacrifice combs. This is what I love about our beekeeping branch - we have a wide range of members who



share lots of advice.

Enjoy your beekeeping this June and If you need help or advice, contact me or any other member of the committee at warleambees@warleambees.org.uk

Stay safe!

Jane Medwell, WLBK Chair

FINANCE UPDATE & OTHER THINGS

I've had very little to record on the branch accounts recently. It does seem really strange not to sit at my laptop each morning with a cup of coffee and a slice of toast as I update the branch finances. Before lockdown there was rarely a day when there wasn't someone wanting stock from our Co-op, wishing to join the branch, renewing their membership or presenting me with an invoice.



But on the flip side, it's been wonderful looking out at the garden in the early morning sunshine watching the birds building their nests and seeing the trees come into leaf as bit by bit they obscure the view of my hives. So that's been a bonus!

It's been so sad to have to suspend the Introduction to Beekeeping course as we were really enjoy delivering it and the trainees were a lovely group of people. A few of them have joined the branch despite not having completed the course and we will

support them as we always do for as long as it takes. It will just be a different sort of support via phone, photos, emails etc. Hopefully before the end of the beekeeping season we will be able to work together.

Some trainees have asked for refunds and hope to start again next year. Others have asked us to hold onto their payments and transfer it to next year's course. I will continue to send them all Bee Talk to keep their enthusiasm going.

Mike Townsend and I had planned to hold another Skep Making class in October. This hasn't been ruled out yet, so hopefully it will still be running. If so, you will find details in Bee Talk and on our website.

In other news, I've been the Branch Treasurer for a number of years now. I still enjoy it immensely but the reality is that I'm getting older. My arthritic hands are starting to bother me, so using any IT equipment is a bit painful. So I've made the hard decision that it's time to look for a successor. If you would like to be more involved with the branch and would be interested in taking over the position of Branch Treasurer then please get in touch with me and I will give you further details:

val.dillon@outlook.com

Val Dillon

IN THE APIARY: JUNE

Most of my colonies have had a Bailey frame change, shook swarm

or split (artificial swarm) already this year. This means I can expect less swarming, but certainly some. Changing the wax seems to give colonies a boost so those colonies which have had a Bailey frame change or shook swarm may yet plan to swarm and I still need to keep a stock of brood frames.

My apiaries usually experience a "June gap" when the nectar flow slows a bit, but it is still important to be prepared to give the colony space for bees, as well as nectar, which takes up much more space than honey and needs space for "maturing". I am removing the spring honey but it is hard to decide how much to take. I leave some on in case they need it to get over the reduced flow in June.

Tasks for this month:

- Continue weekly apiary inspections.
- Do a full brood inspection for foulbrood (shaking off every bee), if you have not done this yet.
- Put in varroa boards for a week, check the mite drop in the Beebase calculator and plan your varroa treatment this summer
- You will still need to prevent swarming with artificial swarms, demarees or nucs.
- Extract the spring honey if it contains OSR or wrap the super up tightly, allowing you to melt out later in the year
- Replace the damp, sticky supers on the hive they came from
- Mind the June gap - if you have left too little honey on the hive, you might need to feed.
- Feed using contact feeders if the bees do not have enough stores
- Prepare super frames ahead of the flow - you will need them suddenly.
- Keep ahead of the bees' space needs

This has been quite a good Spring for me - most of my colonies are on new wax and I've had four supers of honey!

Jane Medwell



Changing old wax gives colonies a boost

FOR SALE AND WANTED

- 1 national hive with super and stand (£100)
- 2 rhombus clearing boards (£5 each)
- 1 metal queen excluder (brand new) (£5)
- super frame pieces (brand new) (£5)

Contact [Jenna: jenna.justice@sky.com](mailto:jenna.justice@sky.com)

Also, don't forget about the **For Sale & Wanted Listing** section on our [website](#).

WHY YELLOW?

Elizabeth Holding sent in this photo of a drone with yellow eyes. A genetic defect according to an internet search, however if any of our members can shine any light we'd love to hear and we'll publish it in next month's Bee Talk.



HELPING HANDS

// All that hand washing is very hard on your skin."

This chance remark by a healthcare worker, heard third hand by member, Peter Ellis, set him a-thinking. "Hand cream is a product that beekeepers make. Indeed, it is a product this beekeeper can make". But how to go about it? If only he could find branch members with expertise in this field and, here, the branch was able to point him in the right direction.

Typical of this branch, not only was the advice and assistance freely given by these members but they also donated some of their product. To date, these, together with Peter's own, have brought relief to hands at a local hospital and two care homes. He is now waiting for more containers and labels to continue his good work.

Well done Peter and all who have helped.

Ivan A Perry

BEE LINES

We have dug up some fascinating facts about WLBK that many of our members may not know and may find interesting:

- WLBK was founded in 1932 as a branch of Warwickshire Beekeeping Association which, itself, was inaugurated in 1879, five years after the establishment of BBKA. So we are 88 years old.

Only another couple of years to go to our 90th birthday bash.....and, yes, that means **cake!!**

WHAT A FIRST YEAR BEEKEEPING

As first beekeeping years go, ours was more eventful than most! Towards the end of our first season we were recovering from the immense amount of information that had been imparted to us via the various courses, generous mentor, beekeeping colleagues and training apiary sessions. During a routine hive inspection, we noticed some larvae which "were not right". They were not the usual pearly white crescent grubs, but off-white and misshapen. Further inspection revealed a few more cells with similar contents, all on the same frame. Whilst not quite sure we could name the problem, we knew there was a problem. We took photos and, on Bernard's advice, sent them to the bee inspector on the Saturday evening. On Sunday we received a call from Gordon Bull (our local inspector) who had returned from annual leave that day, saying he needed to visit as soon as possible - the following Tuesday.

This was not our first encounter with our bee inspector. We had attended Healthy Bees Day 2018, which is run at the BBKA headquarters at Stoneleigh by the National Bee Unit's Western Region team. The event included workshop sessions on how to inspect bee colonies for various diseases and also gave us the chance to examine diseased combs (all under licenced conditions). This is what helped us to identify what we think might have been a problem.

On the Tuesday, Gordon quickly identified European Foul Brood (EFB) from inspection of the frames in the hive. This was further confirmed by the use of a lateral flow device.

Once EFB was confirmed, Gordon had to issue a standstill notice, preventing anything from being removed from the apiary. We had already taken this approach voluntarily as soon as we suspected something amiss and we are careful in our hygiene. We use a different hive tool for each hive and we changed our gloves as soon as we realised something was wrong. We were also using different bee suits at home from those we used to visit the Branch training apiary. This may have stopped EFB being spread, as our other hive and Branch apiary were not affected.

Gordon gave us clear instructions to follow. We had to kill all the bees in the infected hive at the earliest opportunity. We did this sad deed late on Tuesday evening after the bees had returned for the night. The hive was sealed up at the entrance and floor (duct tape is very useful). Then we poured a cup of petrol into the top of the hive. It was nasty but efficient: the bees roared for about two minutes and then went quiet. The hive was left sealed until Gordon's return on Thursday. Then I had to dig a pit 1m x 1m x 1m in time for Gordon's return on Thursday. The location of the pit was approved by Gordon away from close or overhanging trees, or watercourses to avoid contamination. I can assure you that 1m x 1m x 1m is a big hole and takes some digging, especially when the ground is hard clay and the weather is hot sunshine. One thing to bear in mind, should you ever do this, is to dig in some steps to allow you to get out. It was hard work. Fortunately the chosen site was intended to be the location for our future bee shed so the disruption would be covered up eventually. Perhaps a fitting headstone to a few thousand bees.

On Gordon's return on the Thursday, we moved the hive to the



pit, disassembled it and emptied all the frames and dead bees into the pit for burning. Gordon ignited the frames, which burnt easily with the presence of the wax and dry wood of the frames. The roof, crown board, brood box and floor were spared destruction- Gordon allowed them to be set aside to be flamed following the burn.

If plastic frames had been used or if the hive was a polyhive or plastic hive, there are different options. They can be irradiated by specialists or they can be immersed in washing soda and scrubbed to remove the propolis and then soaked in a bleach solution (sodium hypochlorite 0.5%). Alternatively they can be steam

cleaned with a high pressure steamer. Any of these alternatives would need to be in agreement with the bee inspector.

If any elements need to be removed from the apiary for treatment (e.g. if you didn't have a steam cleaner on site), the bee inspector would need to issue a licence to allow removal. As the frames and bees burned, Gordon used his own gas bottle and torch to flame each component of the hive, ensuring all internal surfaces had received a flame and paying particular attention to corners and any areas with propolis (which was heated to boiling point to ensure any bacteria were killed).

Once the work was done, Gordon packed up but, before leaving, gave us the paper work to allow us to claim for the destroyed frames on the BDI insurance. The fire was left burning and when burnt out was to be back filled.

Although the diagnosis and treatment all took place between one Saturday and the next Thursday, the process actually goes on a long time. The standstill notice was in place for a minimum of 8 weeks following the destruction of the bees, so nothing bee related could be removed from the apiary during that time. Before the notice could be removed Gordon re-inspected all remaining

hives in the apiary to ensure that the disease had not spread. As our infection was towards the end of the season we were lucky in that Gordon was able to undertake this inspection three days before the end of his season's employment as a SBI, otherwise the standstill would have remained in place until the spring of the following year. No infection was found in our remaining hive and the standstill was lifted. Gordon told us that he would be back to undertake further inspections for the next two years. We really appreciate this, as we found that the information he imparted was interesting and informative and we welcome his visits. He also advised us to carry out a shook swarm on our remaining colony the following season to help mitigate any more risk of infection. This was yet another interesting experience.

We now await the final visit from Gordon, which is being delayed by a disease of a very different nature and equally unwanted. Fingers crossed!

Paul Day

The NBU's Healthy Bees Day 2020 was cancelled but there will be another in 2021.

BEE FRIENDLY PLANTS TO GROW FOR THE JUNE GAP

Here we are approaching that time of year referred to by beekeepers

as the "June Gap"; those few weeks between Spring and Summer when often there is a drop in forage just as colonies are bursting at the seams. The tree blossom is over as is the rapeseed and the summer flowering plants are yet to come into full bloom. So, how to bridge the gap?

Bees love simple open flowers for easy access to the pollen and nectar, fussy double blooms are just too much hard work! Cotoneaster and Pyracantha are prime examples of this simplicity with their masses of tiny flowers. The lovely blue perennial Geranium pratense is at its best at this time of the year as is Centaurea montana (knapweed or perennial cornflower). Grow herbs wherever you can, in pots, in the vegetable plot, in the flower garden, and the bees will love them - especially rosemary, chives, coriander, thyme and borage. And don't forget to scatter Phacelia seeds far and wide - ours started flowering last week.

The weather has been extraordinary this year, even the blackberries are coming into flower so maybe there won't be a gap to bridge!

Maggie Curley



Pyracantha angustiflora



Cotoneaster lacteus

EUROPEAN FOULBROOD — A WIDER PERSPECTIVE

Paul and Jane's excellent account of their experience of EFB on

the previous page makes for interesting reading, and underlines the importance of dedicated disease inspections.

How different their story might have been but for the approach to EFB espoused by our National Treasure – The National Bee Unit* – and set in law under the Bee Diseases and Pests Order SI 2006 No.342 as a notifiable disease.

Fortunately, and due to the increased awareness and vigilance of beekeepers in cooperation with the NBU, the incidence of EFB in the UK is low, and the majority of our estimated 40,000 beekeepers will never have seen it. Estimates of the number of colonies in England and Wales vary. The NBU data indicates that the number of problem colonies like that of Paul and Jane inspected each year is between 24–29,000 – estimated to be 10% of the total. The number of hives infected with EFB in 2019 was recorded as 290. Thus the incidence of EFB is no greater than 1.2%.

This low level of infection is achieved entirely by 'organic' means, with no chemical input in the great majority of common practice, but by a test, isolate and destroy strategy. The 'great majority' caveat is due to the fact that under certain circumstances, and under strict controls, lightly diseased colonies may be treated with an antibiotic such as oxytetracycline. The NBU describes this as 'not the control method of choice' – and it would certainly not be mine.

Regrettably, that is not the case in other parts of the world. In the USA, for example, where 'beekeeping' (I use the term with reservation) is done on an industrial scale. The pollination



of the Californian almond crop is a good example. There are an estimated 2.7million bee colonies in the US with some 80% being tasked with the pollination of almonds alone. This has mainly been driven by the shift of increasing numbers of people to plant based, and supposedly more environmentally sustainable, diets. The consequence has been a huge increase in the consumption of almond milk rather than dairy. The management of bees on this scale results in the use of chemical interventions, for EFB and for other conditions. These interventions are quicker, less labour intensive and therefore cheaper than traditional apiculture, but result in large (up to 30% is recorded) colony losses.

Although the US has recently moved to reduce chemical inputs, the wide scale use of tetracycline based antibiotics is common, with resultant residues in honey. Antibiotics are also allowed under varying degrees of control in Canada, Argentina, Japan, Australia and India. Most of these sources set a 'Maximum Residual Limit' (MRL) for the amount of antibiotic tolerated in honey. As stated above the use of antibiotics in the treatment of EFB in the UK is exceptional and the MRL is effectively zero.

With worldwide (and especially European) concern over the presence of antibiotics in human food we should be reassured, and just a little bit proud, that our honey is free from antibiotic contamination.

* The National Bee Unit operates a number of initiatives including the National monitoring and data register 'BeeBase', which all beekeepers should sign up to. There's a great deal of essential information in the reference below:

The booklet – Foulbrood Diseases of Honeybees can be downloaded from:

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?sectionid=26> .

Barry Meatyard

GIFT OF LATEX GLOVES TO NHS

As members will know, the co-operative purchasing and supply of beekeeping consumables for members has been put on hold for the moment as a direct result of the restrictions placed on individuals during the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the many items that we hold as stock are latex gloves (in boxes of 50). In light of the apparent shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at hospitals and care homes it was suggested that we should gift our

stockholding to the NHS for use rather than just storing them for a future date. The Branch Committee were unanimous in agreeing this approach.

As our gloves are not sterilised they were not suitable for hospitals, however the latex gloves were accepted by the Home Care department and are being used by Carers in the homes of vulnerable.

We trust that the membership is happy with this decision.

Clive Joyce

ARNIA HIVE'S JUNE REPORT

The Arnia colony has been fairly active this month. A third super was added on the 10th May, which can be seen in the weight graph below. Following a good Spring flow from 4th to 22nd May we are now seeing a levelling off as we head into June. There has been no Oil Seed Rape in our area this year, so the bees have done a remarkable job to gather this amount of stores. I think we have benefitted from the University gardening staff not cutting the grass, and some remarkably warm weather bringing out the Spring flowers, shrubs and trees.

The University Apiary is close to the sports fields on campus, but everything has been extremely quiet during lockdown. I was therefore very surprised to find a football resting on top of the Arnia hive when I did one of my recent inspections. I guess the owner didn't fancy dealing with a colony of angry bees by asking for their ball back!

The Arnia business itself is still in lockdown and unlikely to open for a few more weeks, so our plans to complete the set up of two more parallel Arnia hives have had to be put on hold for now.

If anyone has any questions about the Arnia hive, please get in touch.

Alan Deeley

aldeeley@btinternet.com



A LOUD WHOOMF IN THE NIGHT

Browsing through some old WLBK papers, I came across this nugget from the minutes of the 75th AGM held on 21st February 2008 at Whittle Court Leamington. In the chair was our own Clive Joyce.

"Clive Joyce made everyone laugh with his story of leaving a full bucket of a special honey bee feed by a warm kitchen radiator the previous evening. Ignoring a loud WHOOMF in the middle of the night, he and Eileen awoke next morning to a kitchen drenched in brewers' yeast, soya and pollen – all over the walls, cabinets and even the ceiling!"

This strange concoction was regularly used to make patties to add to the hives in the early Spring following on from fondant to provide a source of pollen to stimulate brood rearing. These days we tend to use candipoline for the same purpose.

Isn't it reassuring to know that such things can happen to our gurus as well as to us lesser mortals?

Also from the minutes, the membership totalled 70 and the cash assets totalled £4,620. Times Change, eh?

Ivan A Perry

HONEY EXTRACTION SERVICE

With the approaching end of the spring nectar flow, we can assure members that we are working actively to re-establish the operation of both the extraction unit and the home loan of extraction equipment to meet the restrictions of the pandemic but, in the meantime, Bee Farmer, David Stott at Tomlow Bees near Napton is still able to offer his honey extraction service for members utilising his own dedicated extraction facility.

His service operates like this:-

You deliver your supers to him at Thorn Furlong Farm, Tomlow along with sufficient honey buckets. (Alternatively, David can supply honey buckets). The supers and frames will be weighed before and after extraction, and the difference supplied in honey, minus 7.5% for honey extracted by spinning, and 12% for honey extracted by melting. This is due to losses to evaporation and coating of the extraction equipment and, in the case of melting, the production of dross from pollen, propolis and often pupal cocoons.

Honey will be returned in buckets, unfiltered. Filtration and bottling are offered as separate processes.

On average, a turn-around of 7 days, depending on demand may be expected.

David's VAT inclusive charges are:-

Uncapping and extraction, or melting:	£8.00 per super.
Filtering to 200 microns (suitable for bottling)	20p per lb
Bottling	25p per jar
1lb screw cap jars:	£25 per 72 jars.

David may be contacted at:-

Tomlow Honey, Thorn Furlong Farm, Napton Road, Stockton, Warks, CV47 8HU.

Phone: 01926 813802 / 07903 470417

email: Tomlow.bees@virgin.net

As someone who has used this service over the years, I can recommend it.

Bernard Brown

HINTS & TIPS — THE POINT OF A QUEEN CLIP AND HOW TO USE IT

Thanks to Mike Townsend for this tip:

I can often be heard saying, "I am not very good at finding queens". So, when I do spot her, I find a queen clip very useful.

A queen clip has jaws that you ease open and then place over the queen and inevitably a couple of workers too.

At this time of the year, you are likely to be faced with a hive full of bees and when you start an inspection you may see signs of swarming preparation.

When you spot the queen on one of the first few frames, you place that frame back in the hive as you didn't spot any queen cups or queen cells on it. But you know what happens next? The very next frame has uncapped queen cells, so you know that you need to find the queen that you have just put back in the hive and now you cannot find her!

What I do is as soon as I spot the queen I put her in the clip, which I then rest on the top of the frames. The workers will crowd around her and as long as you are quick about looking through the rest of the frames they will be quite happy.

If there are no signs of swarming preparation, I part a couple of frames, lower the clip into the gap and release the queen who



readily runs down into the dark interior of the hive.

I must stress I only do this when I am anticipating swarming signs as to do this for every manipulation is unnecessary and minimises colony stress.

ELDERFLOWER CORDIAL RECIPE

Really refreshing after a hard day beekeeping!

Ingredients

- Carrier bag full of elderflower heads
- 100ml honey
- 3l cold water
- Large orange sliced into six
- Large lemon sliced into six
- A clean, sterilised bottle



Method

- Place your elderflowers in a large saucepan with the other ingredients, then pour the water over the top.
- Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to medium and cook with the lid resting on top of the pan for 30 minutes.
- Drain with a sieve and continue cooking just the liquid, without a lid on a high heat for 30-45 minutes until it has reduced down to 750ml.
- Allow to cool then strain through a sieve one more time.
- Pour into your bottle and keep in the fridge.

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

BEE JOKE

Man in a record shop: I want a record of buzzing wasps, please.

Shopkeeper: I have one here, Sir. Would you like to hear it?

Shopper: Yes, please.

(Pause)

Those aren't wasps!

Shopkeeper: Sorry, Sir, that's the B side....

Barry Cryer

We could all do with a laugh during these odd times, so if you have any jokes, riddles or anything that will cause a chuckle, please do send them to Tanya on the email address below.

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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