



Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

Getting our Honey Jars in a Row

Arranged specifically to steer members towards submitting entries into our Honey Show on **September 13th**, our next two members' meetings will cover the topics of "**Honey Processing**" on **July 19th** followed on **August 9th** by a talk on "**Preparing your Product for Show**".

For this year's beekeepers, honey processing was not covered on the Introductory Course as there simply was not the space to cover it, so with the summer honey about to be taken off, this is an opportunity to come along and listen to **Mike Townsend** explaining what is involved, how to go about it and, importantly, the kit we as a branch have for both home loan and for use at our extraction unit to help you.

This will be followed on August by a talk by **John Home**, a National Honey Show exhibitor and County Honey Show Judge, on some of the skills, tricks and skulduggery needed to be successful at honey shows.

After all the hard work put in by our girls in producing the raw material we owe it to them to make the most of it and to show it off to the world in the best way we can and these two talks will benefit the presentation of your hive products for general sale as well for our honey show.

There are numerous classes in the honey show including several for novices so go to the website and click on the following link for details:-

<https://www.warleambees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-Honey-Show-Schedule.pdf>

Both talks are at **BBKA HQ** and start at **7.30p.m.**

Both starting at 7.30pm at BBKA Stoneleigh.
Then sort out your entries!

Warwick and Leamington Bar-Be-Que

We had a good turnout of 'Oldbees' and 'Newbees' and the food, drink and banter flowed freely. There was SOME talk about bees, but also we found time to speak of other things too. The food was wonderful, provided by a number of our members and was more than enough for everyone.

Margery and David Blower were our invited guests and it was nice to catch up with them and to hear about everything which was going on at Shipston Branch where they are members, as well as being members of our branch too. David is also Chairman of Warwickshire Beekeepers Association.

Report by second member

The good weather traditionally encountered when WLBK organise a bar-be-cue was matched equally by a superbly run event enjoyed by over 30 members and their families.. With good food and even better company washed down with plenty of "Bee Talk" the considered opinion was that this was the best ever. Huge thanks are due to Mary and Keith Pemberton who masterminded the event and to all who supplied salads and puds.

Thank you Mary for arranging this event.

Here's to the next one





Helping at a bee event at Warwick Market Hall Museum

You will probably know we look after an observation hive at the museum with the bees flying freely from one of the upstairs windows.

It continues to be the most popular attraction, as it has been for around eighty years, and for those of you that have not seen it already it is worth a visit. It allows you to observe behaviour in the hive the beekeeper is less likely to see in their own hive because of the disturbance to the bees normal behaviour when a hive is opened. The queens 'court' and multiple bee dances taking place on the 'dancefloor' near the entrance are two examples.

Because it is such a popular attraction I am asked, particularly during school holidays, to support bee and insect themed events their own staff put on and I have agreed to support one of these on **Thursday 9 August**so **you know what's coming next (!), yes, I would like some help!**

I have a few props to support me like, the mini hive, combs of honey and a couple of children's suits for parent and children selfies at the hive so all we have to do is meet visitors viewing the hive and explain what's going on. The event normally runs from around 10.00am to 3.00pm so I just need a couple of beekeepers to each help for a few hours.

It will be a very rewarding couple of hours so if you can help please email michaelatownsend@hotmail.com, or, I will give in and let you text me on 07983 339612! Thanks

Mike Townsend



No!.... not the opera but a situation just as dramatic for first year beekeepers Jane Richmond and Paul Day who captured this thief in the act of snacking on their newly acquired bees. Being intelligent creatures, this learned behaviour could well be passed on to other magpies so its out with the woodpecker protection to safe guard their girls from yet another threat. Thanks to Jane and Paul for the photo

Going to the Heather 2018

For some years' members have had the opportunity to take their bees to the heather moors of the Derbyshire Peak District. This pilgrimage usually takes place during the first or second week of August with them brought back about a month later.

It is quite any easy journey, up the M1 and through Chesterfield to the moorland at the back of Chatsworth House

A great deal has been written about preparing bees for the heather but essentially you need to consider the strength of your colony; it must have bees over every frame, and I do mean a good covering of bees over each one, be queen right of course, and have at least two full brood frames of stores and I suggest feeding them. A high proportion of young bees with near wall-to-wall brood is ideal. Rearranging frames with unsealed brood to the outside and sealed in the centre allows the queen to lay in the centre as workers emerge forcing honey to be taken up into the super. Further comprehensive advice was given in the July 2017 issue of BBKA News.

You need just one super, ideally drawn comb, but foundation will do. Thin unwired foundation is best as it allows you to make cut comb. The usual way hobby beekeepers extract heather is by cold pressing so thin unwired foundation is also more economical and we are very fortunate in having a heather press in our extraction room.

In fairness to other beekeepers you need to be satisfied your bees are disease free and understand they will be placed on the moor amongst bees from other places with the risks associated in doing this.

The farm we go to is about 1000ft up so the lighter coloured Italian bees and variations of them may not be suitable because when we are enjoying refreshing warm light rain at home up on the moor it is cold horizontal stair rods.

Your hive will need to have a travelling screen and be secured with two proper hive straps or ratchet straps. The floor, particularly the Thornes budget varroa floor, needs to be checked for leaks (of bees) with the entrance blocked with a strip of foam; not tape or wood etc. Pay particular attention to the back part of the frame which Thornes give you a few drawing pins to fix it in place. This is not good enough as when hive straps are tightened the mesh floor lifts and bees come flying out at the back. Staples or large headed nails are required to fasten it securely

In the past we have taken members bees for them. This is no longer practical but as in the past members are able to take their own hives.

The site is secure with reasonable access along a track to a field at the edge of the moor. However the last part of the track is steep and rough leading to the field where we keep the bees which can sometimes be rather soft. Taking this into account the arrangements will be as follows.

- Inform Mike Townsend michaelatownsend@hotmail.com that you want to take bees. I would appreciate an expression of interest in the first instance by email only please.
- I will liaise with heather goers to see if vehicle sharing is practical. This will take into account the type of vehicle beekeepers have with the opportunity to team up with others. Those with four-wheel drive/high clearance vehicles may help others get across the short last stretch of the field leading to the edge of the moor.
- I am exploring the possibility of leaving a barrow on site to make it easier for members who do not have four-wheel drive/high ground clearance vehicles to carry their hives the short distance where ground conditions may be difficult.
- You will be given contact details and map. The 'rent' paid directly to the farmer is one 1lb jar of honey per hive taken.

I hope you will want to try heather going; at the very least you will be able to use the trip as an opportunity to explore this part of the Peak District which includes Chatsworth House just a few miles down the road.

Mike Townsend

Hints and Tips

- Check the spring piece in porter bee escapes before fitting them. When bought they are often too big- the width of a matchstick is a good size.
- Don't be tempted to select out those well filled frames by brushing off the bees. This can lead to anxiety in the hive. It is much better to remove the whole super when it is ready.
- Pallet wrap is a superior cling film and very useful for storing full supers before extraction. It is also good for wrapping frames after they have been treated in the freezer for wax moth.
- When cutting comb make a cardboard template and cut to size using a small very sharp knife. As you lift the cut comb our shine a light behind to enable the wire to be pulled out carefully, if necessary. Remember to put the best side up!
- Put cut comb in the freezer to prevent granulation.(Remember to defrost it before the honey show!)
- Left over pieces from the cut comb frame can be crushed with a potato masher and jarred- lovely on hot toast!
- Mush up granulated honey in the comb and heat at 40 °C for 3 days to separate. A hostess trolley may prove useful for this.
- When extracting, spin slowly to start with and then gradually build up speed for maximum honey yield.
- Tip the honey bucket, towards the tap, to maximise the number of jars that can be filled without scum.
- Fill your jars a bit fuller than is necessary so you have extra to remove the scum that will settle on the surface. Use cling film to remove those last few little bits off the top.
- When pouring creamed honey warm the jars to prevent lines forming. Remember to lay the jars on their side if using a fan assisted oven to prevent the debris from being deposited in your jars.

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

Editor Roger Wilkes, email address is roger.wilkes@kenilworthhoney.co.uk or hard copy can be posted to him at:

12 Mercia Avenue, Kenilworth CV8 1EU. **Content to him for next month by July 27th latest.**

Please send in plain text, unformatted, using Microsoft Word or another common program.

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