



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

A VALEDICTORY TO ROGER WILKES

Without any fanfare, Roger Wilkes simply bid adieu with a short note in September's Bee Talk stating his retirement from role of editor. We couldn't possibly leave it at that without extending our gratitude to Roger. As our branch chairman Peter Stanworth says, "Roger has done a magnificent job over the years putting together news from the numerous sections within the branch for which we are extremely grateful."

Many of us look forward to the newsletter pinging into our inbox at the start of each month, and then making a brew as we settle down to read through it. For those who can't make the various branch events, the newsletter is a vital tool for keeping us up to date and staying connected with our community of members.

Roger took over the editorship of Bee Talk in April 2014 but was helping with the design, production and distribution from 2011. With 186 issues to date, the inception of Bee Talk can be traced back to around February 2004.

Mike Townsend remembers that the idea for launching a branch newsletter came about following a successful lottery bid of £5,000, which was used for various initiatives to encourage new beekeepers to join. "With a growing and widespread membership and more going on in the branch we had to think about how we could improve communication with our members," he says. "I started to write an occasional newsletter which was included when I posted out Warwickshire Beekeeper. Surprisingly this proved popular and I was asked why I wasn't doing one every month!"

Mike admits that he could see a role coming along that didn't quite suit him and



Image credit: Coventry Telegraph/BPM Media

so approached Leamington beekeeper Helen Stalker, who took on the role of editing a simple newsletter with great relish. "Our dear Helen had a unique journalistic style and a favourite of hers was her pen profile of some of the members she used to refer to as the 'Ancients,'" smiles Mike.

The editorship passed through a couple of hands before Roger took it on in 2014. As Mike recalls, from that point on the style and presentation of content improved immeasurably to become an invaluable source of communication that it is today.

"While thanking Roger for everything he has done over the years on the newsletter, I'd also like to mention his utterly reliable, thorough and comprehensive approach in all that he has done for the branch; his involvement in supporting the early courses and the professionalism and high standards he's brought to his role of apiary manager. Once when thanking Roger for work he'd done for our branch, he simply said 'in any group like this you can only expect to take from it what you are prepared to put in'. An example to

us all," comments Mike.

While we're thanking Roger, we would also like to extend our thanks to his wife Pam because, as we all know, behind every beekeeper is a very understanding partner.

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2019 HONEY SHOW REPORT

The annual WLBK Honey Show took place this year at Kings Hill Nurseries on 12th September 2019. It attracted 19 members who prepared and exhibited 95 items, most of whom were new to the “sport”. Of the 19 classes, two did not attract any entries – cut comb and dry mead – however, as usual, the Honey Cake competition was fiercely contested with eight entries. Honey Show manager, Chris Cox, introduced our Judges for the evening, Douglas Nethercote and Amanda Cadge, who were ably assisted by Bev Oakley as steward. Rachel Dove provided refreshments and Paul Stephenson was our photographer.

The judges were impressed by the overall quality of the entries, particularly Bev Oakley’s Soft Set Honey, which won Best in Show and was awarded the Bernard Collins Trophy. Other trophies awarded on the night include Novice Mazer to Richard Mountney, Nancy Wiltshire Rosebowl for Honey Cake to Alex Wray, Jack Taylor Plaque for Cottager Class to Paul Stephenson, and Thorpe Cup for most points to Helen Essex. A huge thanks go to all who participated in making it a very enjoyable and informative event. And a special thanks also to all at Kings Hill Nurseries for their understanding and help.

Helen Essex

2019 HONEY SHOW RESULTS

Class 1 Light Honey
1st Bev Oakley
2nd Julie & Daniel Midgley
3rd Jane Medwell
4th Paresh Pankhania

Class 2 Medium Honey
1st Rachel Dove
2nd Richard Mountney
3rd Jane & Bernard Brown
4th Bev Oakley

Class 3 Dark Honey
2nd Helen Essex
3rd Richard Mountney

Class 4 Granulated Honey
1st Helen Essex
2nd Linda Pound
3rd Bev Oakley
4th Jane & Bernard Brown

Class 5 Soft Set Honey
1st Bev Oakley

Class 6 Heather/Heather Blend
2nd Bernard & Jane Brown

Class 7 Beeswax Candle
1st Helen Essex
2nd Julie & Daniel Midgley

Class 8 Cut Comb
No entries

Class 9 Frame for Extraction
1st Paul Stephenson
2nd Jane & Bernard Brown

Class 10 Cake of Beeswax
1st Richard Mountney
2nd Helen Essex
3rd Paul Stephenson

Class 11 Dry Mead
No entries

Class 12 Sweet Mead
1st Helen Essex

Class 13 Novice Class
1st Richard Mountney
2nd Julie & Daniel Midgley
3rd Dawn Cowgill
4th Peter Ellis

Class 14 Cottager Class
1st Paul Stephenson
2nd Linda Pound
3rd Paresh Pankhania
4th Bev Oakley

Class 15 6 Small Cakes
1st Helen Essex
2nd Julie & Daniel Midgley

Class 16 Honey Cake
1st Alex Wray
2nd Bev Oakley
3rd Robert Park / Helen Essex

Class 17 Flavour only
1st Robert Park
2nd Paresh Pankhania
3rd Rachel Dove
4th Helen Essex

Class 18 Photograph
1st Bev Oakley
2nd Linda Pound
3rd Chris Fisher
4th Paresh Pankhania

Class 19 Gift Class
1st Linda Pound
2nd Helen Essex

BEES ABROAD



John Home accepting the donation to Bees Abroad at the Honey Show

Various fundraising activities have taken place recently in the branch to raise money for UK Charity [Bees Abroad](#). In total £81 has been raised, which includes the sale of new but unwanted honey jars, kindly given to Mike Townsend by a local shop, a personal donation generously made by Lynn Pearson, as well as entry money to the Honey Show 2019.

“As volunteers within the Charity, we seek to encourage beekeeping in developing countries for the benefit of marginalised communities. We all appreciate the various support locally we receive and are always willing to talk about our enthusiasm for the difference beekeeping can make through various ways and improving lives,” says John Home, member of WLBK and volunteer at Bees Abroad.

For more information on the brilliant work Bees Abroad does, visit their website and while you are there, and bearing in mind that Christmas is coming up, have a look through the range of gifts including donation vouchers.

SECURITY AT DHL

Our branch site known as DHL has had several security issues over the past few years. In one particular incident, a complete hive was stolen, full supers from another hive and then dog faeces thrown on an adjacent hive’s roof. The ‘Grimshaw shed’ had the door ripped off and despite having two motor mowers and a small trimmer inside, nothing was stolen. In the attempt to get in, however, the double glazed panel on the composting toilet shed was also broken.

On an earlier occasion I had a cardboard box full of old frames stolen. Having put an appeal out for their return in Bee Talk, they appeared on the shed step a few days later. They were put in a brood box, which was suitably labelled and wrapped in plastic. They disappeared never to be seen again.

Due to these incidences, the padlock codes to both the shed and gate have been changed several times. We also have a security sign on the gate that alerts people to the fact that the site is regularly monitored.

Mick Smith

FOR SALE

Apiguard Shallow EKE’s for National - Western Red Cedar £5.00

Ambrosia Containers (Poly Drums with Screw Lid) £2.00

50lbs Honey Settling Tank with Valve £10.00

Poly Nuc EKE for Apiguard/Feeding - New High-Density Poly £10.00

Insulation Board for National Hive - 1 inch thick Kingspan - excellent heat retention! £2.00

Roll of Pallet Wrap £5

Framed Queen Excluder (Thornes) £12

Contact: 07538 444481 or holyokegrove@yahoo.co.uk

Full colony with this year’s queen, marked green and a good layer. Colony has been fed with Ambrosia and treated for varroa. Quiet bees, easy to handle. £100 including brood frames, brood box to be returned please.

Contact Lynn Pearson: 01295 770580 or Penn.house@btinternet.com



Vaporiser, Homemade, with 12volt (car) battery £50

Contact Mick Smith: michael.smith670@ntlworld.com

If branch members want to buy and sell equipment, please visit [The Beekeeping Equipment For Sale and Wanted](#) section in the members area of the website.

WLBK MEMBERS' MEETINGS

In preparation for our 2019 Branch Honey Show at the end of September, Master Beekeeper David Blower gave a talk on "Preparing Hive Products to Show" at our members' meeting, which took place on Thursday 29th August at Kings Hill Nurseries.

As many of you know, David and his wife used to be members of WLBK but, having moved away, they are now members of The Shipston branch. David is also Chairman of the Warwickshire Beekeeping Association (County).

David started off his talk by telling us what classes to enter if we didn't have any time to prepare. He suggested that entering the frame of honey for extracting or the cut comb classes take the least amount of preparation. If we have already extracted our honey and have some in jars then we could enter the 'black bag class', which is

judged on taste alone.

David took us through various steps to make our entries worthy of a coveted first place red card, such as how to remove foreign bodies from our honey using a straw and removing bubbles with a spoon. He also imparted many other useful tips to ensure the perfect presentation of a jar of honey.

All talks are held at King's Hill Nurseries and start at 7.30pm with refreshments. If you enjoy baking and would like to be involved with helping provide refreshments I would like to hear from you.

Equally, if you have heard an interesting speaker or there is a subject you are interested in then I'd like to hear from you too.

Rachel Dove

Members' meetings co-ordinator

Rachel.l.dove@gmail.com

PROGRAMME OF TALKS FOR AUTUMN/WINTER 2019/2020:

Thursday 17th October - Silent Messengers, Pheromones in the Honey bee colony by Celia Davis

Thursday 21st November - Queen Rearing by Ged Marshall

Thursday 19th December - Mead and Mince pies Christmas celebration

Thursday 16th January - Bumblebees by Paul Hand

Thursday 20th February - AGM and a talk on Biological control of Varroa by Scott Dwyer

Thursday 19th March - Spring Management by Jim Vivian-Griffiths

Thursday 16th April - To be announced

ASIAN HORNET THREAT

Asian hornets have been destroying huge numbers of bees and beehives on the continent over the last few years. They spread rapidly, and, with the sighting of an Asian Hornet in Tamworth, Staffordshire, beekeepers are right to be alarmed. This hornet may well be one of several thousand in a single nest; and a single nest can lead to tens of new colonies being formed.

"In early spring, Asian hornet queens emerge from hibernation, laying their eggs in small nests from which the first worker hornets emerge. As the numbers build up, the worker hornets build new nests that are often bigger than a football. They fly out in huge numbers and can wipe out a colony of honeybees within hours," explains Peter Stanworth, chair of WLBK.

The Asian hornet is smaller than the European Hornet with yellow legs, yellow face and an orange stripe on its lower body, the rest of which is black. Unlike the European hornet, it is not striped all down its back.

If when walking in woodland, you spot a large spherical nest high in the trees with hornets of this description flying around it –



Illustration by Sarah Bunker

photograph and report it urgently. You can do this by visiting the [Asian Hornet FAQs](#) page on the British Beekeepers website.

If Asian hornets take hold in this country they will devastate honeybees and other insects. With a confirmed sighting in Tamworth, we need everyone to "Bee Alert" for this unwelcome visitor.

Liz Bates

TASTER DAY REPORT



There was a distinct buzz in the air last Saturday at Kings Hill Nurseries and it wasn't coming from the training apiary but from the delegates on our Beekeeping Taster Day.

After a morning of presentations, honey tasting and, of course, honey cake, the 11 "wannabees" donned bee suits and were treated to a hands-on bee experience at the training apiary.

Did they enjoy it? Feedback suggests they did with the quality of the presentations and the friendliness of the members frequently mentioned. Would they have said that anyway? Possibly, but it was still nice to see it committed to paper.

Over half the delegates expressed an interest in taking things further so we are hopeful of meeting them again on our Introductory Course next year. Even those who do not intend pursuing beekeeping further left with a deeper understanding of our craft and what they can do to help our girls.

The proceeds from these Taster Days are donated to a bee-related charity and, in this case, to Kings Hill Nurseries itself to further enhance their bee friendly planting. It is looking as though this may well amount to around £300.

So, all-in-all, a very gratifying outcome for all the hard work and bonhomie of the members who gave so freely of their time, enthusiasm and knowledge.

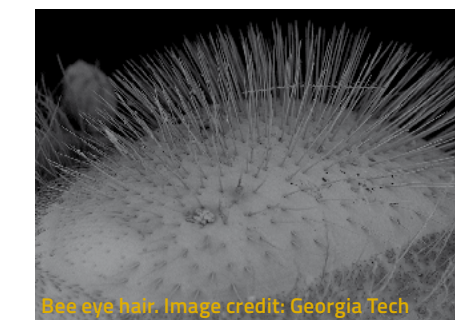
Seemingly, the popularity of our craft continues undiminished at least as far as Warwick and Leamington is concerned. I wonder why?

Bernard Brown

DID YOU KNOW...

According to a [study](#) published by Georgia Tech, a technology-focused college based in Atlanta, Georgia in the US, a honey bee can carry up to 30% of its body weight in pollen because of the strategic spacing of its nearly three million hairs. The hairs cover the insect's eyes and entire body in various densities that allow efficient cleaning and transport.

The research found that the gap between each eye hair is approximately the same size as a grain of dandelion pollen. This keeps the pollen suspended above the eye and allows the forelegs to comb through and collect the particles.



Bee eye hair. Image credit: Georgia Tech

EVENTS

Introduction to Beekeeping 2020

A six session course in the theory and practice of beekeeping. Taking place on Monday evenings during March 2020 at Kings Hill Nurseries.

Still only £70



WHAT'S THE BUZZ

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

This month it's the award-winning documentary [Honeyland](#) about a beekeeper's work in a remote village. From the trailer it looks like a beautifully shot film with a synopsis that reads, "Hatidze makes a living using ancient beekeeping traditions. When an unruly family moves in next door, what seems like a balm for her solitude becomes a source of tension as they, too, want to practice beekeeping, while disregarding her advice."

It was released in UK cinemas on 13th September 2019. If you don't catch it on the big screen, make sure that you do on the small screen via DVD or digital download.

HINTS AND TIPS: MEAD RECIPE

Now that the honey harvest is in why not have a go at making something to celebrate your success..... even if you may have to wait awhile to enjoy it!

DRY MEAD

- 3lb light honey
- 6pt water
- 1tsp yeast nutrient
- ¼ tsp grape tannin or 2tsp of cold strong tea
- Vitamin B1 tablet
- Juice of one lemon
- Campden tablets
- Mead yeast eg Chablis yeast

METHOD

- Dissolve honey in the water in a sterilised fermentation bucket
- Mix in the yeast nutrient, crushed vit B1 tablet, grape tannin and lemon juice
- Add crushed campden tablet to sterilise
- Cover with a clean cloth and place in a warm place
- After 48 hours agitate vigorously with a spoon to expel the sulphur dioxide
- Add yeast, cover and keep warm
- When fermentation is observed transfer to a sterilised demi john with air lock
- Top up to within 2cm of the bung when fermentation becomes less vigorous
- Continue to ferment to dryness at 15-21°C
- After completion rack off into clean demi john
- Add 1 campden tablet and store in the cool
- Rack off again if significant amount of sedimentation forms.
- Keep for 1 - 2 years before drinking..... if you can!

HELEN ESSEX

Get in touch with Helen if you'd like the recipe for sweet mead too. Also, if you have any hints or tips that you'd like to share, please email Helen on h.essex@virgin.net

HI FROM THE NEW EDITOR

I didn't have to think about my answer for very long when Bernard asked whether I'd be up for being the new editor of Bee Talk. I'm delighted to take on this role as both a keen reader of Bee Talk and proud member of WLBK. I have met some truly lovely people through our branch and I'm looking forward to bringing news and all manner of bee buzz to your inbox each month.

I've been a beekeeper and member of WLBK since 2012. My husband and I were actually given the 'Taster Day' in 2011 as a wedding present from a friend who knew about my love of honey. Afterwards I immediately signed up for the Introductory to Beekeeping course in Jan 2012 and by April 2012 I had my first nuc. From a friend's town garden in Leamington to my own back garden in Warwick, then after a sting to my forehead (for which I earned the nickname 'Shrek') and birth of my son, I decided to move my two colonies away from home to a paddock near Norton Lindsey where they still are now.

While beekeeping is my hobby, writing is my job. And while I can't claim to know bees (does any beekeeper ever?), I can claim to know words as I am a writer/journalist/editor in the engineering and technology field. So if you do spot any typos or misuses of grammar in the newsletter I will blame autocorrect ;-)

As with my predecessor Roger Wilkes, I will rely largely on our members for content. Please do send this by the 28th of each month. My email is tanyaweaversa@yahoo.co.uk

