



# BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

## CHAIRMAN'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

**T**he Chinese calendar runs in a 12 year cycle. The current year being the year of the pig and 2020 the year of the rat. In this country, 2019 has been the year of the swarm and now to my wife's disgust my hives have grown to an almost unmanageable number. Due to a hip replacement I could not have managed this number without help from friends within the branch. In this very strange beekeeping year it is hard to imagine what may come next. However, now that it is almost Christmas, the bees should be keeping nice and warm in their hives and we should be celebrating Christmas in our homes with a glass of mead and honey on our breakfast toast. Best wishes to you all!

**Peter Stanworth**  
Chairman



## CO-OP LOCAL COMMUNITY FUND

**A**s beekeepers, it is difficult not to be amazed at the benefits of co-operation exhibited by our bees. So, when the Co-operative Society invited applications to its "Co-op Local Community Fund" we felt a certain synergy.

The Co-op Local Community Fund helps to support local projects and since its launch in 2017, Co-op members have raised £39 million pounds for over 12,000 local causes.

We're delighted that, following our bid to raise funds for additional marquees to promote the cause of the honey bee at the events we exhibit at, WLBK was one of three local causes selected for this funding opportunity.

Essentially, how the scheme operates is that every time a Co-op member shops in a Co-op store or online, they can choose which cause they want to support in their community and then 1% of what they spend on Co-op branded products and services will go towards that particular cause.

Our cause was available for members to select until November 2019. The last time we reported on it in BeeTalk we had raised £371.34. I'm now delighted to let you know that we've now raised £1,985.04, which is £985.04 above our £1,000 goal! You can view the page here: <https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/22003>

**Bernard Brown**

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- Community apiary flooding
- Handling fondant
- ITB course makeover
- WLBK facts



# COMMUNITY APIARY FLOODING

It's with a very heavy heart that we report the devastation of beehives at our Radford Road Community Apiary that occurred during the November floods. Realising that this site was prone to flooding, the stands were built higher than normal and weighed down with a 2' x 2' paving slab. But, unfortunately, the hives didn't stand a chance from the force of the flood waters.

The beekeepers involved are Colleen Abell, Richard Wiggins and Sarah Snelson. "I'm so upset, I'm in tears in the lay-by. I came to the apiary on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November and there was no water in the field at all. But today [Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November] the river has burst its banks in Leamington and that's why I came to check again," said Colleen.

As the images show, no bees would have survived this devastation. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to these beekeepers and if any members in our branch could offer support by helping them set up with bees again next year, please do email Bernard Brown:

[bernardnbrown@outlook.com](mailto:bernardnbrown@outlook.com)



# STORING AND HANDLING FONDANT

Fondant, being a gooey substance, has a tendency to spread outwards in a bid for freedom unless restrained. It relies on the enclosing cardboard box to halt this southwards march and, in particular, on the strengths of the joins in the said box - some of which have been found wanting in the recent consignment.

So if you intend keeping your fondant for any length of time, the judicious application of a strip of duck tape on the box's vertical side joint - there is only one and it is about 3 inches long - and along the join in the bottom flaps will bring a little peace of mind and hopefully save a sticky fondant slide. Store the fondant so that the box is fully supported on a solid surface ensuring that it is well wrapped to avoid premature drying out and in a cool, dry, vermin-free place.

## A tip to help carving slices of fondant from the main block.

Before you start, place a bowl of hot water and one of hand-hot water within reach. Place a length of cling film on a convenient table or worktop. Place your block of fondant on the draining board of the

sink partly overhanging the clean and dampened bowl. Take your knife, - we use a stiff, serrated, bread knife - and dip it in the bowl of hot water. Peel back the blue plastic wrapping on the overhanging bit of fondant and saw away at the fondant with the hot knife returning it to the bowl of hot water to reheat it when the sawing gets tough. Allowing the fondant to overhang the bowl causes the cut section to fall away preventing it from re-sealing with the parent block. Place the severed piece of fondant on the cling film. You can pummel it into the desired shape to suit the depth of your eke and wrap it up ready to be transported to the hive.

It is helpful to have the bowl of hand-hot water handy throughout the process to wash sticky fingers as you go along.

At the hive, score one side of the cling film a couple of times with your hive tool, lift the crown board, add a shallow eke, move the bees away from the top bars and place the fondant scored face down, directly on the top bars over the cluster.

Job Done.

**Bernard Brown**

# IN MEMORY OF TIM



Pictured above making a donation to Myton Hospice is Ann Foden, supported by colleagues from her husband Tim Foden's twin abiding passions of sailing and beekeeping. They were joined by WLBK Beekeeper and Senior Staff Nurse Naomi Abraham, who was involved closely with Tim's care. The funds were raised from the sale of Tim's tools, which he used to make his beekeeping kit, and the kit itself, much of which is being put to good use in the possession of WLBK members. Tim's legacy, however, does not end there. A further sum has been donated to create a flowerbed at Myton Hospice, dedicated to Tim's memory, with colourful, fragrant, bee-friendly plants as a perpetuation of his concern for the benefit for our girls and for all to enjoy.

**Bernard Brown**

# THE BIG BOIL OFFERED BY WLBK

Following Elizabeth Holding's last BeeTalk report about our Branch's frame cleaning session, I am now pleased to report that I am the proud owner of 13 disinfected super frames, ready to re-wax in the spring, thanks to a further frame cleaning session held on 17<sup>th</sup> November. Next season I am only using unwaxed foundation (because removing wires is a pain) and I will melt out my honey using the apimelter, then boil the frames up. This means no scraping, no wire removal, clean frames and wax to trade in for new foundation. I do not have the equipment at home for this approach, but the branch facility is great!

**Jane Medwell**



Alan and Clive ran the big boil



Barry doing the work



Boiler full of frames

# EVENTS

## MEAD AND MINCE PIES CHRISTMAS DO

This year WLBK's annual Mead and Mince Pies Christmas celebration will be held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December at 7:30pm at Kings Hill Nurseries. You and yours are all very welcome for what will be an evening of Christmas cheer.

There won't be Mead (unless you bring your own) but there will be mulled apple cider, mulled wine and alcohol free punch. Please bring a plate of party food - either sweet or savoury - to share (perhaps something other than mince pies!)

The fun will be provided by a Barry Meatyard quiz and the intriguing challenge of "Rachel's Bee Bags". There will also be a craft sales table where you might pick up the odd Christmas present or two.

If you would like to contribute to the Craft sales table please contact Rachel Dove on 0777 3438525 or Linda Pound [lindajpound@aol.com](mailto:lindajpound@aol.com)

We're looking forward to seeing you there.

**Rachel Dove**



# NEW LOOK ITB COURSE 2020

Our ever popular introductory to beekeeping course, affectionately known as ITB, is getting a little makeover for 2020. In response to feedback from recent participants, we will be making the sessions more interactive and practical, letting folk work in small groups enabling them to get to know each other from the beginning. Our usual team of experienced beekeepers will, of course, be explaining the theory during each session.

Another change will be the timing of the course. In order to avoid the dark February evenings, as well as both the February half-term and the Easter holidays but still incorporate Bee Tradex (14<sup>th</sup> March), we will be starting on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March for five consecutive Mondays through to 30<sup>th</sup> March. This means that it should take us into the better weather for the sixth session on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April when we will go to the apiary to "meet the bees" and learn to make frames.

Coming up to Christmas, we do have vouchers for the course so if you have friends, neighbours or family who you think may be interested, it could make an ideal gift. However, a little word of warning, do make sure the recipient is interested in bees – I gave a voucher to my husband one Christmas and he was mightily underwhelmed!

Maggie Curley

## INTRODUCTION TO BEEKEEPING 2020

A six week course in the theory and practise of beekeeping

Held at Kings Hill Nurseries, Kings Hill Lane CV3 6PS

Monday 2,9,16,23,30 March 7.00 – 9.30 pm and Saturday 4th April 10.30am – 1.30 pm

Course fee £70

# HINTS AND TIPS: HONEY BUTTER BRANDY SAUCE

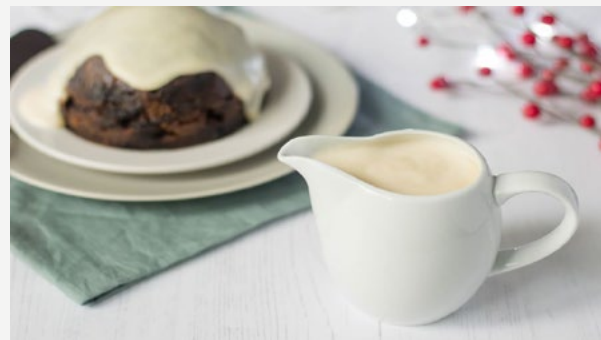
Add a personal touch to your Christmas pudding with this simple but yummy festive treat.

## INGREDIENTS

- 4oz unsalted butter
- 4oz honey
- 1 teaspoonful brandy.....(or more to taste!)

## METHOD

- Cream the butter and gradually beat in the honey.
- Add brandy slowly and blend until smooth.
- Don't add too much because it will not blend!.



If you are thinking about having a change in the garden next season then why not consider planting to provide pollen and nectar. The BBKA publish leaflets that give ideas of suitable shrubs useful to bees (Information Leaflet L3) and one on Trees (Information Leaflet L2). Visit this link to browse all the available leaflets: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/bbka-leaflets>. You might even be inspired to request Garden Vouchers for Christmas!

HELEN ESSEX

If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to [h.essex@virgin.net](mailto:h.essex@virgin.net)

# BEE CONFERENCE

On 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> November, Barry Meatyard and I attended the Central Association of Beekeepers Annual Conference at the Woodside Hotel in Kenilworth. The mission of the association is to bring science to beekeepers and the talks were really interesting. HaDi MaBouDi, (Sheffield University) gave a truly fascinating talk on bee cognition. We saw videos of bees using tools, solving puzzles and playing with balls. It all rather changed my views on bees. This is an annual event ([cabk.org.uk](http://cabk.org.uk)) that's right on our doorstep so look out for it next year!

Jane Medwell



Tom Oliver: Pollinator tracking in agricultural landscapes



Nicola Burns: Genetic studies of European foulbrood

# WHAT'S THE BUZZ

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

At November's Members' Meeting, we enjoyed a talk from Ged Marshall of British Honey Producers Ltd, who spoke about queen rearing and showed us some fascinating facts about the state of the art operation in Denmark and Tenerife. Something that is being stressed amongst the beekeeping community is the need to reduce the import of queens so as to minimise the risk of pests and diseases. If you're interested in reading evidence that local bees are different, more adapted, better able to survive and overwinter more successfully, then read this blog post by The Apiarist (a.k.a. David J Evans, beekeeper and scientist): <https://theapiarist.org/strong-hives-live-hives/>.

# ARNIA HIVE

WLBK Branch beekeeper Alan Deeley has a hive with an Arnia remote hive monitoring system. Essentially, this means that the hive has been fitted with selected sensors, including a hive scale and other sensors for hive humidity, brood temperature and colony acoustics. This data is transmitted to a phone, tablet or PC enabling him to monitor the status of the colony from anywhere - the comfort of his home, the train or even when on holiday. According to Alan, "there hasn't been too much activity with the Arnia hive this month. The colony has been fed and set up for the winter although we are still seeing activity on sunny days. Interesting to see the gradual consumption of their winter stores at about 1lb (0.5kg) per week [see graph below]." For more information about Arnia, visit: [arnia.co.uk](http://arnia.co.uk)



# 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.

- Current Branch Membership totals 282 which accounts for 29% of the County's total membership. 156 (40%) of these are female
- 2019's Introduction to Beekeeping Course attracted 54 delegates, 10 of which had to be referred to adjoining Branch's courses as we were full. Interestingly, of the 54 delegates, 23 came from other branch areas.

The editor of Bee Talk is Tanya Weaver. Please send content for the newsletter to her by the 28<sup>th</sup> of each month: [tanyaweaversa@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tanyaweaversa@yahoo.co.uk)

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