



Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

Christmas Party

In our last event of 2013, the traditional Mead & Mince Pie evening, a chirpy turnout of about 60 beekeepers + friends gathered at Stoneleigh. We were greeted by Bernard slightly incognito in a noddy hat, a cup of some sort of 'warming' drink and a wonderful array of gourmet nibbles. Beekeepers never seem to be too tongue tied so while the usual buzzing was in the air many of us struggled with our first challenge of the evening – namely matching up bee 'celebrity' baby photos with their owners – who themselves were of course buzzing amongst us, no doubt trying to distract. Happy starling like chatter pervaded the evening but we were eventually rounded up into groups for the next series of challenges. Chris Miller put us to the test with various Queen (bee + other) puzzles and conundrums.



Here is a sample of the limericks we had to create – the first line was provided –

(This limerick was the winner)
A beekeeper called Kenilworth Mick
Whose honey made everyone sick
Said I don't like the taste
But for sure it's from waste
He distilled it and is now in the nick

A bee stowed away on a plane
She wanted a holiday in Spain
When she got there
The hives were all bare
So she never went there again

"It's simply not fair" cried a bee
Clive's hands are too cold touching me
Just send him inside
But don't let him hide
Get him warm with a large hot toddy

"I've got to get rid of this drone"
It simply won't leave me alone!
He followed me here
Just hovering near
I'm worried he's fond of me grown!

A drone with a glint in his eye
Spied a Queen just learning to fly
He went t'other way
To enjoy one more day
Said the drone "I'm too young to die"

Please take me to Dalehouse Lane
My hives are rather a pain
They lost all the rooves
Via horses big hooves
And beekeepers reverted to booze

The evening finished up in a melodious vein with a haphazard rendition of several carols – the likes of Oh Christmas Bee with Jane Rigby on the keyboard and Liz Bates on the pointer doing their utmost to keep control. We finally dispersed with a little buzz in our hearts.

Dalehouse Lane Apiary

Is now beginning to look a little more like a meadow than a piece of wasteland as can be seen from the pictures. At present there are several hives installed but plenty of room for more. The two old sheds will eventually be developed for further use.

Mick Smith will be looking for some volunteers to come along with wheelbarrows and shovels to try to clear the old roadway on the left hand side; we will then be able to turn vehicles around so much easier. The date for this winter warming activity will be arranged soon.



Change of Date

A suspended ceiling is to be installed in the BBKA conference room during the beginning of January. This has necessitated a change of date for David Stott's talk on Commercial Beekeeping which will now be held on 23rd January.

Junior Membership

As Branch Secretary, I was charged early in 2013, to establish arrangements for implementing the newly created Junior Membership category of BBKA membership. This involved more than the usual head-scratching! Whilst needing to be cognisant of child protection and insurance issues, we couldn't allow our volunteers to be bogged down with red tape. We have managed to steer a practical course through all this and one of my more rewarding aspects of 2013 has been the receipt so far of four applications for Junior Membership effective from 1 January 2014. In years to come, I feel sure this will have wide implications and be seen as quite a milestone in our history. To mark the occasion, your Chairman has agreed that we should include in this issue of Beetalk a brief profile, which follows, of our very first Junior Member – Daisy Carribine. With a fair wind, these youngsters will be getting their 50 years of beekeeping awards from the BBKA at a much younger age than most of us!!!



Daisy Carribine who will be 9 in May 2014.

First took an interest in bees during discussions about my introductory course in January 2013.

We bought our first hive with bees in March. After helping carrying out an artificial swarm, Daisy claimed the new small colony as her own, which she has nurtured to a good size that should survive the winter all being well.

Daisy has filled in and maintained hive records for both of our hives, she has also extracted honey at home and used the branch extraction facility. She attended a few apiary meetings and was always very keen to get hands on with the bees, being stung a few times has not deterred her either.

Daisy is very keen to further her knowledge and is looking forward to joining a junior study group with the aim of taking either the Junior or basic certificate in bee keeping

Membership Renewal for 2014

My thanks to the many members who have renewed their membership for 2014. A happy new year to all those who have renewed and to those who haven't, although my new year will be a lot happier when you do!!!!

The renewal form is on the right hand side of the home page of our website – www.warleambees.com. This is very quick and easy to complete and contains all you need to know about 2014 subscriptions and methods of payment. I will email all those who have not yet renewed, inclusive of a link to the renewal form, shortly after the January Beetalk has been published.

Tim Foden

Bees Abroad

Bees Abroad has secured major funding from the Government for a three-year project to alleviate poverty through advancing beekeeping skills and supporting bio-conservation and bio-enterprise in the arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) in the Kenyan district of Laikipia.

The aim of Bees Abroad is to provide education and technical advice in Beekeeping and suitable business skills. This is achieved by setting up and supporting field extension services, running training courses for local beekeepers and financing trainers. Bees Abroad projects are designed to become self-funding and terminate after a defined period of time.

The project will be implemented on behalf of Bees Abroad by John and Mary Home, assisted by David Evans. John and Mary already act as volunteer project managers for several of the charity's projects in Kenya. As well as helping community groups improve their beekeeping skills, they have been responsible for teaching beekeepers how to make value-added products such as hand creams and wax polish.

Another of their innovations is the 'A-maizing' bee suit which can be made for less than £1 by utilizing waste maize sacks and the sound parts of damaged mosquito nets.

Some fascinating articles can be found on the Bees Abroad website <http://beesabroad.org.uk>

Coming up

7 January	Introduction to Beekeeping 7.30 pm BBKA
23 January	Commercial Beekeeping Talk 7.30 pm BBKA
23 February	Candle & Wax Products Workshop 9.30 am - 3.30 pm BBKA

Manuka honey fraud

Being a regular reader of 'Beekeepers Quarterly' keeps me in touch with beekeeping happenings in Ukraine, Hungary and other faraway places and I was astonished to read the New Zealand report on the Manuka fraud. Personally I have found manuka honey un-palatable but with a past that included cod liver oil and mysterious embrocations popular in the 1950s administered by my mother when a child has made me accepting that if it tastes this bad it must be good for me.

Manuka was only seen as fit for winter feeding until the magic non-peroxide factor was discovered and since then sales have soared with people prepared to pay a very high price for it because of its' supposed extra health giving properties.

Tests around the world have revealed that some of the product may have nothing apart from price to set it apart from ordinary honey.

Around 1800 tonnes are sold in Britain annually and around 10 000 tonnes worldwide yet only 1700 tonnes are produced annually.

It is thought some of the honey is being substantially adulterated and stretched by the inclusion of syrup and other honey including another NZ honey called kanuka which does not have the same active ingredients but is sometimes traded as manuka.

So are there cheaper alternatives with similar action?

Other honeys have the manuka properties and this has led to research by the University of Glasgow's School of Veterinary Medicine testing the ant-bacterial properties of a large number of different honeys. These were assessed in the treatment of wounded horses and Scottish heather was the best performing product inhibiting the growth of ten bacterial isolates including *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Pseudomonas*.

I cannot make the same claims for the honey we take from our 'Branch' heather apiary in the Derbyshire Peak District but maybe more members

Not so special after all Or don't believe everything you read

If you want to plant one tree for bees make it this one

Following Peter Spencer's introduction of our Branch to him, the famous beekeeper and environmental issues writer Geoff Hopkinson BEM NDB was for a while one of our members. Geoff lived some way off and so was very complimentary of our BeeTalk as the vehicle for him keeping in touch with us. Naturally I took the opportunity to take his advice after hearing him speak about trees for bees. We are usually directed towards native trees and we know the oak which is not very practical for urban gardens is at the top of the tree for benefits to insects generally, followed by the more practical garden tree, native silver birch, an excellent early source of pollen for our bees. I was surprised *Tetradium daniellii* commonly known as the Chinese Bee tree was top of his list.



Since meeting him Geoff has imported seeds under licence raising his own trees that have been given away with donations to various beekeeping charities. I soon learned this tree has very attractive form and leaf shape with beautiful long lasting flowers that honeybees find irresistible. It is now available from UK tree nurseries. Anyone wanting to read Geoff's article about this tree, from Beekeepers Quarterly, should contact me.

Mike Townsend

Candle & Wax Products Workshop 23rd February BBKA

This will cover:

Extracting and cleaning wax - Making wax for shows and exhibitions - Making Dipped and Moulded candles on the day.

Tea and/or Coffee will be provided. Bring your own lunch! To register – there will be a form on the <http://www.warleambees.com/> website. Your place will be confirmed when the Treasurer has received your payment. The price is £20 per person.

Basic Assessment

Have you been keeping bees for at least a year? Have you considered confirming your growing skills by taking the Basic Assessment? Want to know more about what would be involved? Have a look at http://www.bbka.org.uk/learn/examinations_assessments/basic_assessment . The Branch will be organising training and practice assessments and will co-ordinate the application and examination process. For more information get in touch with Jane Medwell (Jane.Medwell@nottingham.ac.uk) or Gill Grimshaw (gill@gillgrimshaw.com)

Crown boards by Dr. Bodgit.

Crown boards cover the hive under the roof and are typically ply with one or two holes designed for feeding and/or Porter bee escapes. Since the most basic function they serve is to prevent the roof being propolised down they can be as simple as a sheet of thick polythene cut to size. The semi-translucent stuff they wrap new furniture in is particularly good. Assuming bottom bee space this can be laid across the top of the frames, easily peeled up for inspections and discarded once it gets too messy. With good insulation above, condensation is not a problem.



However, I prefer crown boards that are rigid with inbuilt insulation, that lack holes and that allow me to see the colony with the minimal possible disturbance - for example during autumn feeding. For a few years I have used Perspex crown boards. These need insulating to avoid condensation so more recently I've been building reversible Perspex crown boards with inbuilt insulation.

Build a square (flat and true ... by clamping it to a 46cm square template of thick plywood) eke out of 46 mm x 21 mm softwood, using simple screwed and glued joints. Cut 4mm thick Perspex or polycarbonate to 46 cm square. Don't be tempted to use 2mm Perspex, it tends to warp and this ruins the resulting bee space. Use a strong sharp knife and a metal straightedge to carefully score the Perspex deeply and then (with a surprisingly hard) sharp blow, break it along the scored line. This is easier if you clamp the sheet to a table edge, using a piece of wood to hold the sheet down and prevent it from moving. Place the Perspex on top of the eke and then cut four strips of 6mm thick softwood ~45cm in length to create the bottom rim of the cover board, overlapping slightly at each corner. Note that 9 mm is too thick and usually results in some brace comb being built on the underside of the Perspex. With the rim in position use a 3mm bit to drill through the thin rim and just mark the Perspex - you probably need 2-3 holes per edge. Remove the softwood rim, but keep a record of the order they were in as you will need to put them back in exactly the same positions. Remove the Perspex and drill through it at each drill-marked point using a 5-6mm bit. This is critical. If you screw the rim in position through a hole in the Perspex that is too small you will inevitably crack the Perspex. Put the Perspex and the softwood rim back in their original positions and fix the latter in place with 4mm x 30mm screws. Now for the insulation.

Kingspan and most other expanded foam-type insulation is available in 50mm thick sheets. Kingspan is particularly suitable as the foil cover makes it a bit more robust. It can be easily cut with a sharp knife. Cut the sheet to size to fit within the thick rim of the cover board. Use gaffer tape to seal the edges of the insulation and to create two simple 'handles'. Finally, fix an additional rim of 9mm x 21 mm softwood around the thick (upper) rim so that it is deep enough to accommodate the Kingspan.

In normal use the Perspex sheet is placed immediately over the brood box and the insulation can be lifted out to view the colony. For Apiguard treatment in the autumn or feeding small blocks of fondant in the spring simply remove the insulation and reverse the crown board. Put the insulation on top and replace the roof. If you use fondant in the autumn the addition of a separate 46mm eke below the reversed crown board gives sufficient space to accommodate a single 12.5 kg block split into two halves directly on top of a queen excluder. The bees will usually eat enough within a couple of weeks to allow the removal of the eke. Once it's all gone, remove the empty plastic bag and the QE and reverse the crown board. In mid-winter you will usually find the cluster immediately below the Perspex - the warmest spot in the hive.



"Next month **2 frame nuc/carry box.**"

Support for new beekeepers

The next Introductory Course starts on 7th January and we have around 40 people enrolled. There is room on the course for 46. This is an encouraging number as last year there were 26 people. Many of these are planning to get their first colony in 2014.

We have always tried to support new beekeepers by offering mentors to those who join the Branch. Would you be willing to act as a mentor? Liz Bates is acting as Course Leader and would be happy to hear from you, even if it is to ask what it's all about before you go any further. Contact her on Liz.Bates@virgin.net.

N.B. The second session of the Beekeeping course on January 14th 2014 has had a change of venue. This will now be held in the Jersey Pavilion on the Stoneleigh Park site. To reach this building, turn left just after the large grassed area, in front of a hoarding that says 'HEREFORDS'. It is at the bottom of this path, with excellent parking.

The varied emotions of Beekeepers



Happy about bees



Was that a wax moth?



Humm, no stores



Disturbed by phone



They have swarmed



Are those eggs I see



I can't find the queen



That's 9 queen cells so far



My smoker's gone out again



That bee is inside my suit



These bees are really, umm, tetchy.



I have no idea what it is I'm seeing

Hints and Tips

The marmalade season has arrived and why not try something a little different this year? I am going to risk this recipe; I found it in a book published in 1948, if you try it too let me know how you get on.

Honey marmalade

Slice 10 Seville oranges and 2 lemons very thinly. Put the seeds in a muslin bag and weigh the fruit. To every 1 lb. of fruit add 3pt cold water. Put the bag, fruit and water together in a bowl and leave for 3 days, then boil until the rinds are tender and the juice is thick. Remove the bag. Let the pulp stand for 24 hours then weigh the pulp. For every 3lb pulp add 2lb of honey. Boil until a sugar thermometer reads 220°F. Good luck!

If one of your New Year Resolutions is to try to be more organic this year, a good place to start would be to think about what you put in your smoker! Because smoke by definition contains pollutants and toxins, the type of fuel used in the smoker is important. Ideally only use smoker fuels that are derived from natural sources. Natural in this case means in its natural form without any added ingredients or chemicals. This therefore excludes newspaper and cardboard but wood shavings and sawdust (from untreated wood), pine needles (recycle your Christmas tree!), leaves and dried grasses are all fine.

Did you know of all the creatures in the wild, the moth is the only one famous for not having a healthy fear of fire. 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

For Sale/Wanted

Have you checked and cleaned your equipment ready for the new season and find you are short of anything? Have you more than you need of any items which could be put to good use?

If either of these apply to you why not advertise it in Bee Talk under the new For Sale / Wanted item which will appear in future editions, who knows you may be doing yourself or other members a favour selling or buying items cheaper than from suppliers also it puts those unused items to good use.

If you wish to take advantage of this service please send me the details of items you have or want.

To:- roger.wilkes@kenilworthhoney.co.uk

Roger

In the Branch Apiary

All the hives have been treated with Oxalic Acid and fondant put on the Crown Board over the air hole, returning this week for my weekly check I found 2 of the hives had taken the fondant down so put some more on, so please check your hives for food with the warmish weather the Bees have been flying a fair number of days so using up more of their reserves.

I have also treated the drawn comb with Certan to combat Wax Moth before wrapping the supers for the rest of the winter ready to use at the first signs of spring.

All kit has been checked for the coming season no good waiting until you need it.

A very happy New Year to you all Roger.

Editor Christine Kehrer, email address is ckehrer@gmail.com, or hard copy can be posted to her at: 13, Brookside Avenue, Kenilworth, CV8 1ES. **Content to her for next month by January 27th, latest!** Please send in plain text, unformatted, using Microsoft Word or another common program.

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