



Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

Branch Annual General Meeting – Thursday 27 February

The Branch AGM which will be held on Thursday 27 February commencing at 7.30pm at the BBKA HQ – Stoneleigh and we need 25 full and partner members in attendance for the meeting to be quorate so all members are invited and encouraged to attend.

Come and hear the chairman's annual report, approve the accounts having heard a verbal summary of a tabled document and elect our officers and general committee members to ensure the smooth running of the branch for the next 12 months. Details of nominees for officers (chair, treasurer and secretary) and general committee will be tabled as there is still time for you to put your name forward for election into these positions should you so wish.

Please send apologies if you can't attend to Bernard Brown at bernardnbrown@aol.com or 01926843416

We try to keep things informal and brief and, as an added attraction, we have arranged a talk to follow from Shipston Beekeeper, Doug Nethercleft, recounting his experiences attending the 2013 Apimondia convention in Kiev which from all accounts is very entertaining.

Feel free to have a word with Bernard Brown (01926843416) for further information.

Thanks to the many members who have renewed their membership for 2014. If you haven't already and still intend to do so, 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. Go on! Make the Secretary's day!

Ivan A Perry

Charles Fessey

Congratulations to Charles who has been a beekeeper for over 40 years and a long time member of the Warleam branch. He currently has 70+ hives to keep him busy so although many have not seen much of him lately he remains one of our most experienced and knowledgeable members. I don't think there are any beekeepers in our group with such a large family. Whilst we struggle along with one or two hives we surely must take our hats off to so staunch a model as Charles.

Advanced microscopy for Beekeepers Sunday 23 March

Quite a few of our members have now attended the Introduction to Microscopy course with Bob Gilbert as tutor. You may now wish to take your microscopy skills and knowledge further by attending our Advanced Microscopy for Beekeepers course on Sunday 23 March. The fee is £35.00 including refreshments and buffet lunch. Please book via the link on the home page on our website, where you will also find a course "flyer". This course covers microscope slide making and more bee dissection. It also explains the requirements of the BBKA Microscope Assessment. The content of this course is not harder to learn, it just takes your knowledge and skill further!

Tim Foden

Shed Shifters



From this.....



To This.....

WLBK members help BBKA Apiary Manager Clive Joyce with a couple of "adjustments" to the BBKA Apiary building.

Commercial Beekeeping in Warwickshire

You missed a treat if you didn't go to the Commercial Beekeeping Talk by David Stott last Thursday. As more and more people arrived, more chairs had to be brought down; perhaps a large turnout wasn't expected. You wouldn't have expected such a talk to be so entertaining, but David had the ability to keep a captive audience and share his vast knowledge whilst continually having everyone laughing. With wonderful pictures of a bee eating bird, his Land Rover stuck in a ditch and from his travels abroad, a market stall packed full of honey products, it was very interesting to hear how one person can care for over 200 bee hives, prepare hives for pollination of orchards, extract honey, reduce swarming and breed queen bees by the hundred. Thanks to David for being so helpful and open.

Mark Pettitt

Introduction to Beekeeping

The ITB course is off to a flying start this year. One striking thing is how much the old proverb "it takes a community to raise a child" applied to WLBKA. Not only were there 56 newbees listening attentively but between 15 and 18 Branch members were in support each evening sharing experiences and doing all the vital jobs like making tea and name badges and tidying up. This leads to a further request, would you consider being a mentor? In general we suggest mentors have two or three years beekeeping experience and perhaps have taken the Basic. If you would like to find out more about what is involved and think you might be able to help, visit the Branch website to register interest or for more details.

Considering the Basic Assessment?

We are running sessions on 24th February, 10th March and 17th March plus a bee handling session to help people considering taking the Basic Assessment to prepare themselves. More info about the assessment on http://www.bbka.org.uk/learn/examinations_assessments/basic and get in touch with Gill Grimshaw if you want to know more.

BBKA Special Interest Days

Details of three events to be held at Stoneleigh are on page 32 of the January BBKA News. The aim of these events is for attendees to pool their knowledge in the field and then share it within their Branches. Events are "Schools and Young People" on 1 Feb, Forage and Landscape on 15 Feb and Varroa on 8 March. No one need be reticent about attending because they feel they have little to offer! An interest in the topic and a desire to share knowledge is far more important. Please email Jan Alcock at the BBKA Offices if you would like to attend (no fee is involved). jan.alcock@bbka.org.uk. It would be helpful if you would also let Gill Grimshaw – our Education Coordinator - know that you will be attending - gill@gillgrimshaw.com

Do you want a Swarm in 2014?

If you expect to want a swarm in 2014, please record your requirement using the link on the homepage of our website. Please appreciate that we can give no guarantee that a swarm will become available or when. Please also realize that if you cannot be contacted or if you don't have equipment ready when a swarm becomes available, you will miss that opportunity.

Do You Think You Can Supply Over-wintered Nucleus Colonies?

There is likely to be quite a demand for early season nucs this year. If you think you may have any to sell, please email Fiona Brookes who is co-ordinating supply this year. She may also be contacted if you are looking to make a purchase. fionajmartin59@hotmail.com
If you purchased an early season nuc last year from a supplier external to the Branch and were satisfied with the result, Fiona pleased to hear of the supplier details.

SNIPPET Which bee was that?

There are around 276 species of bees in the UK. 24 bumblebees, 225 solitary bee species and just 1 honeybee species. As the weather warms up over the coming weeks watch out for different shapes, colours and behaviour of various bees as you see them out foraging. How many can you differentiate?

An extremely useful box

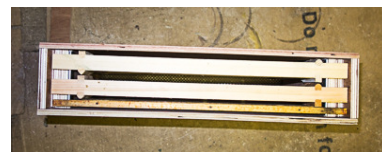
Two frame nuc boxes are extremely useful and relatively easy and inexpensive to construct. I use them throughout the season for all sorts of things, including:

- carrying drawn frames, foundation, stores and/or dummy boards
- mating nucs, primed with a grafted cell or a frame with a swarm cell
- two frame 'split' to protect an old queen while the colony is re-queened
- simple box to protect a frame with the queen while manipulating the colony e.g. harvesting nurse bees to populate mini-nucs, Bailey comb changes
- transport box for grafted larvae, with the frame wrapped in a damp tea towel and a hot water bottle for warmth
- a seat (for grafting, or just avoiding the damp ground)



Design

I think this type of box needs the following desirable attributes; wide enough to take two frames (perhaps plus a dummy board which means an internal width of ~85mm), top bee space so you don't have to worry about crushing bees, ample space below the frames to accommodate a frame containing a long fat queen cell (30-40 mm isn't too much), open mesh floor and secure entrance block. In addition it should be relatively lightweight and have handles that make it easy to carry. The one additional feature I'd like to have is stability, but this is tricky with such a narrow box. Some of these desirable attributes are obvious, others were learnt the hard way (e.g. gently lowering a frame with a precious queen cell on the bottom bar into a box that was 1cm too shallow ... oops). You can build one of these two frame nucs largely with wood from the scraps box and a simple range of tools. Remember *"measure twice, cut once"*.



Dimensions

Internal dimensions of my two (National) frame nuc box are:

- Length - 376 mm (exc. lug space)
- Width - 85 mm
- Depth - 260 mm



The precise measurements of wood needed depend upon the what you have available. The side panels on mine are 8mm exterior plywood. The end panels are built from 18mm and 12mm scrap ply to generate the necessary thickness to accommodate the frame lug. The framed open mesh floor is from 21mm thick softwood. The entrance block is 9mm softwood. The crownboard is a Perspex offcut; although it's convenient to be able to see through it a simple piece of thin plywood will do fine if you've got no Perspex. The roof has 12mm thick end panels but the sides and top are built from thin ply to keep the weight down.

Although it's unlikely you'll keep bees in one of these boxes for long periods (even getting a queen mated and observing how well she lays takes two to three weeks) pay attention to the beespace, allowing about 6-9mm gap between the frame and the end walls.

Construction

Using softwood, with glue and screws holding together simple joints, build a floor frame with suitable external dimensions. The side walls will be attached directly to the floor frame. Cut a piece of mesh to size and nail it down using roofing felt nails or similar. The side walls are simple rectangles of 8-9mm exterior grade plywood. To ensure the crownboard and lid sits flat it is important that the corners of the side walls are exactly 90°.



The end panels are the same width as the floor frame - they are attached 'inside' the side walls. The cross-sectional view is shown (right), with the external end piece also acting as a handle for lifting the box. Remember to take account of the need for frame runners and fit these before assembling the box.

Fit the side walls in place using glue and screws, ensuring that the top edges are parallel and level - that way the roof will sit flat. Fit the end panels in place, ensuring that they are vertical, using glue and screws through the side walls. The top of the end panels should be level with the top of the side walls. Don't worry about minor gaps ... once full of bees they'll use propolis to seal these up.



The easiest way to provide a suitable entrance is to drill a 12-15mm hole through one of the end panels and to use a foam plug to block it when it is not required. However, although more work, a better way to provide a secure and removable entrance is to cut the bottom of one of the end panels down by 9mm, thereby leaving a 9mm slot once the end panel is fitted (flush with the top of the side walls). A short piece of 9mm softwood can be used as an entrance block and this can be held securely in place with a bent nail (see picture).

Cut a thin piece of ply slightly larger than the surface area of the top of the box and frame the inside with 21mm x 21mm softwood. Add end panels (using slightly thicker ply to make the next step easier) and then add thin side panels, securing them with gimp pins to the edge of the end panels. The roof should be lightweight and shallow. Make the side and end panels of the roof sufficiently short that you can easily access the handholds on the end panels of the box body. I've not bothered covering the roof with anything to waterproof it.

Give the entire exterior surface of the box 2-3 coats of something like Ronseal Fence Life or other bee-safe wood preservative.

For convenience fit a carrying handle. I used a single piece of braided polyester cord. Drill four suitable diameter holes through the side wall and floor frame, beneath the mesh floor. Run the cord through these via a short offcut of garden hosepipe to make a comfortable grip, knotting the two ends of the cord underneath the box. Before cutting off the unused cord make sure the handle is a) long enough to move completely out of the way, so the top of the open box can be readily accessed, and b) short enough to ensure the box is clear of the ground when being carried.



In use

I usually carry a frame of foundation, a frame of sealed stores and a dummy board (I'm always losing them) in one of these boxes. That covers most eventualities and saves too many trips to and fro to the car, or worse, to and fro the apiary. When I'm queen rearing I use the box to carry grafts from wherever I've done the grafting to my cell raising colony (which is often in a different apiary). I wrap the frame of grafts in a damp tea towel. On a cool day I'll add a large flat pre-warmed "freezer block" into the box to make sure the grafts don't get chilled. If I'm doing something with the colony and want to ensure the queen stays safe I'll put the frame she is on into the box, put the lid back on and tuck it in a shady corner somewhere. Finally, I've used one these two frame nuc boxes as a mating nuclei, adding a frame of emerging brood, a frame of stores, an additional frame's worth of nurse bees (shaken on top ... actually easier to add first as the 'target' is rather small if the box is full of frames) and primed it with a sealed queen cell hanging between the top bars of the frame.

As indicated at the beginning, these boxes have little lateral stability. If they are going to house bees for any length of time strap them to a hive stand or something secure.

Dr. Bodgit

Branch Swarm Collectors Required

With the general public now much more concerned about the welfare of bees, it is very important that we have an efficient system for the public to report swarms.

The Branch provides the public with details of members who can collect swarms via our Branch and County websites, but the BBKA also provides a very good system for the public to find the nearest swarm collector via their website.

The Branch recruited a very able group of swarm collectors last year, which we would like to further enhance. Ideally swarm collectors need to be readily contactable and available, although we work as a team and refer enquiries to each other. Whilst the aim of our service is to provide swarms for other Branch Members who want them, it is completely understandable if a collector also benefits.

The number of different circumstances from which swarms can be collected is infinite, so being a swarm collector is a great way to enhance your collecting experience and also an excellent opportunity to educate the public about honey bees.

Those new to the role of Branch swarm collector will be offered the opportunity of a thorough briefing.

If you would like to be added to our swarm collecting team, please email Tim Foden – tim_foden@hotmail.com

Tim Foden

Sweet Savings

Manuka honey from New Zealand is famous for its anti-bacterial properties – but at around £4.71 for 100g its fairly costly. However a new study by the University of Glasgow's School of Veterinary Medicine found that Scottish heather honey is just as effective at fighting infection – and at £1.90 for 100g, its much cheaper too.

The Impact of Pesticides on Bee Health

As we try to keep up with any developments and thoughts regarding pesticides and bee health the meeting in late January in London of the British Ecological Society, the Biochemical Society and the Society of Experimental Biology will hopefully reveal some positive progress in this area. There was wide representation from EU countries as well as USA and Canada.

They set out to explore the challenge facing the future of humanity and food security.

“This resource is heavily supported by the actions of insect pollinators and attacked by insect crop pests. Agrochemical intensification has reduced the amount of natural forage and breeding/nesting sites for insects and simultaneously has provided large bonanzas in the form of crops. Therefore, it is currently necessary to fight the battle against pest species using insecticides. This approach is a double-edged sword with both insect pests and pollinators being vulnerable.”

BBKA Spring Convention

Spring Convention, held from Fri 4th –Sun 6th April 2014 at Harper Adams University, **Newport, Shropshire, TF10 8NB** is the major event in the beekeeping calendar and probably Europe's biggest national beekeeping event. With more than 30 lectures from international and leading UK speakers and nearly 40 workshops and courses during the 3 day event, not to mention the Trade Show. There is something for everyone, expert, improver, beginner and non-beekeeper.

[Tickets](#) are now on sale through the [BBKA On-line Shop](#) and by post. www.bbka.org.uk

Trade Show Exhibition

A reminder the trade show taking place at Stoneleigh Park 1st March 9.00am 4.30pm in the Stareton Hall. Get ready and prepared for the new season by buying you needs now probably at reduced prices.

Tickets are cheaper if you buy on line, go to www.beetadex.co.uk for more information

Hints and Tips

Did you have a go at the honey marmalade recipe? From the feedback it would seem that the marmalade made in 1948 was more of a dipping consistency than a spreading one! I reduced the amount of water from 3 pints per pound of fruit to 1 pint. This set well but I will be keeping an eye on it to monitor its keeping qualities.....although judging by its popularity I don't think it will be around for long!

Thought you might like this recipe as we are now in the season for coughs and colds.

Cough mixture

6oz liquid honey

2oz glycerine

Juice of 2 lemons

Mix it all together..... Honey has an emollient action and is therefore very effective against inflammation of the throat where it softens the hard mucus (enough detail, I think!)

Use this month to make up some fresh frames with foundation so that, when you make your first spring colony inspection, you have them ready to change whilst the brood nest is still small. Old brood frames, if left to become black can harbour disease and so are best replaced. Cell debris can build up in older foundation which can lead to smaller bees and could put the queen off laying in them.

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

Coming up

23 February	Wax Workshop	BBKA	10.30am
27 February	AGM + Apimondia 2013 talk	BBKA	7.30pm
1 March	Bee Trade Fair	Stoneleigh NAC	
20 March	Honey Bee Brood Disease talk	BBKA	7.30
23 March	Spring Walk	Kenilworth	
23 March	Advanced Microscopy	BBKA	
26 March	County AGM	WBKA	
29 March	Hive & Frame Assembly Wkshop	BBKA	

In the Branch Apiary- we have moved

The Branch Training Apiary has moved from Bubbenhall to the Dalehouse Lane site this will give us much better parking arrangements not upsetting Bubbenhall residents by parking on their grass it will also be better for the Church parishioners when they visit the graves, the site is divided by a roadway to be used for parking the top field of the two will be used as the Branch Apiary the rest of the field for Branch events, the bottom field will be used for members hives and shared hives.

The ideal situation arrived last weekend having two mornings of frost I took advantage of this and moved the hives to the new site.



Day 1 Pads down



Day 2 Hive stands in place



Day 3 Hives moved on to stands

I will continue to maintain the Bubbenhall site and put some of my hives there, the site will then be available should anything befall the Dalehouse Lane site, it will also be useful as a satellite from the new apiary for putting matting hives there when the Queen rearing session takes place later this year.

The bees look good having checked them after the move.

Roger

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

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 February 26th, latest!**

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

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