



## Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

### It's the Way to Go.....

We were all caught a bit short last Tuesday by the official opening of our composting loo. Anyone who has ever tried to arrange a PR event will empathise with the plight of chairman, Paul Kerr, when, - and I kid you not, - he found that all the Royals were "engaged" and the attorney general - the local MP - was tied up with some tricky briefs. Refusing to become bogged down by these set backs, our ever resourceful Paul, pulled up a stool, squatted and took a wee moment to trot through his not inconsiderable network of contacts. 'Twas then that inspiration struck. Who better than someone with a lot of Bees to their name to open this magnificent edifice?..... And so it was that Bee Bee Cee Coventry and Warwickshire local Radio – renowned for its nose for a good story - suddenly realised that they were bursting to cover this momentous event on the condition that they covered it LIVE THE NEXT DAY on the Vic Minett show. Always prepared to go that extra mile for our bee club, the following morning saw some bleary-eyed beekeepers meeting BBC C&W's ace reporter, Richard Williams, who, having entered into the spirit of the occasion, arrived at the training apiary clutching bottle of eco-friendly disinfectant with which to formally bless this long awaited facility. After some preparatory work which included making a video to be posted on the radio station's facebook page, they could wait no longer and after a live interview– all of 3 minutes' worth - the bottle was duly crashed against the cabin door amid tumultuous applause from the assembled throng.

So our composting loo is now officially open for business.

Funded by a generous grant from the Ecology Building Society Charitable Foundation and turned into a reality by the sweat and toil of volunteer member working parties, this long-awaited facility couldn't come quickly enough particularly for those amongst us for whom any sortie beyond the immediate curtilage involves careful consideration of the availability of 'Pit- Stop' facilities,



"With the lack of water and electricity on the site, the untold comfort afforded by this composting loo, means for us "Apis" fanciers that we can now relax and enjoy much longer training sessions." said Paul Kerr

For some, the idea of environmentally sustainable sanitation conjures up images of 'commando-style' facilities dating back to the days of campsite latrines but today, due to recent movements in waterless toilet technology, urged on by demands from caravaners and canal boat owners, nothing could be further from the truth. Nor is this a sentry box type portaloo with strong smelling disinfectant .

To start with, as can be seen from the photo, the cabin is sufficiently large to accommodate the wheelchair bound and, by happenstance, for members to wriggle their way out of (and into) their bee suits with ease. It is fitted out with solar powered lighting and an extractor fan along with the now familiar grab rails, an emergency alarm and level threshold commonly associated with an accessible environment. In addition there is an alcohol-free hand wash gel dispenser, a paper towel dispenser and towel disposal bin and, at the end of the day, all by-products are recycled.



The jewel in the crown, however, is the cleverly designed, moulded plastic “throne” which automatically separates the liquids from the solids, - essential for the success of the system. This calls for some minor adjustments to normal behaviour, but details of these, and of the operational principals behind the design, are explained on a wall-mounted sign as well as being enthusiastically demonstrated, if required, by the project team to all and sundry.

“Installation was quite a strain at times” recalled Bernard Brown, “We had been given a door which meant we had to get the cabin made to fit around it and, whilst about it, we included a few other bespoke tweaks which gave us the odd twinge initially but the application of gut instinct overcame such obstacles. The installation of The Composting Loo Pan itself was pretty straightforward thanks to the support from the supplier Eco Toilets of Rugby. There was the occasional blockage to the normal flow of the project whilst we were waiting for opportunities for various accessories to drop into our laps gratis ( typical of beekeepers) but eventually the vinyl flooring, a mirror, coat hooks, and paving slabs for the wheelchair friendly access path were dumped on our doorstep. Even the wild flower seeds used in the landscaping were donated to us by the Kew Gardens’ Grow Wild Scheme”.

For members unfamiliar with the site, the composting loo is in the cabin with the green door- giving a whole new connotation to the “green room” concept!

A composting loo may not be the ideal solution but where we find ourselves remote from mains services, it does provide us with something to go on.....and thanks to our grant donor, it has only been a small drain on our resources.



Reflecting the popularity of this facility, Warwick and Leamington beekeepers are seen here queuing for the new composting toilet with flags of convenience in the foreground. ( Tim -I promised I'd get that one in )

The fascination of our hobby was not lost on Richard, the reporter, so we dressed him in a bee suit and opened up a hive which he duly recorded for his facebook page and whoopee! the queen put in an appearance right on cue. We can now expect Richard and another broadcast at one of our beginners’ training sessions.

## Happiness is..... ?



Couldn't resist sharing this photograph of Gill Grimshaw beavering away making bunting for our display stands aided and abetted by Val Dillon (behind the lens) .....and the reason for such merriment? ....well, you will just have to wait and see!. All I can say is that this will be the last time we let those two collaborate on anything!..... Nice scones though!

## Could this be YOU.....?



Summer fun and frolics are just around the corner and what could be a better way of indulging in these than volunteering for a stint on the branch's display stand promoting our craft at one of the forthcoming events?

Helping on the stand involves sharing our knowledge and enthusiasm with the public whilst making sales of honey and wax products, demonstrating various aspects of beekeeping and answering queries from the public. This is well within the capabilities of anyone who has been on our introductory course. We arrange the help in shifts and volunteering for a couple of hours on our stand entitles you to free admission to the show and so there is time to sample the wider delights of the event should you so wish.

We are currently seeking stewards for the following events and you can register your interest by clicking on the link associated with each and completing the on-line form :-

The first of these, is the **Annual Kenilworth & District Agricultural Society Show**.

Held on **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June** in a field immediately opposite the entrance to Stoneleigh Park, this is one of the more significant events in our programme and, having won the trophy for the best small stand last year, we have a reputation to live up to and are proposing the full range of our activities with which to wow the public. So we need plenty of stewards to deliver our message. The gates open at 0930 but we are seeking help not only on the day itself but also on the day before to set things up.

Please follow this link to volunteer for the Kenilworth Show:-

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1S4Mbsq-dQwIkG-ADbaFkCOkiRolhWWAzt669DsXF-C8/viewform>

This will be followed on **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June** by the **Hatton Country Fair**, a village show held at Hatton Country World. This is a very "British" village show with the usual village show attractions of sideshows, plant and cake sales, face painting, fancy dress competition, a children's 'street' party in honour of the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> and fancy dress and some less usual ones such as a companion dog show, dog agility demonstration, beagles, rabbits, cats, greyhounds. **PLUS** their now traditional fresh egg throwing and catching competition!!! .....could get messy!. If that is not enough to keep you entertained then the delights of Hatton Country World itself are on hand to sample.

Please follow this link to volunteer for Hatton Country Fair:-

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/151aY13x4WXWhxefNLAZG2ltwQcF5ZEg0-iVqdcLiBAY/viewform>

The following weekend of the **18<sup>th</sup> /19<sup>th</sup> June** will see us at **The Leamington Peace Festival** held in the Pump Room Gardens. Described as an event aimed at people of all ages wanting to find out ways of living life in a more harmonious way with each other and the environment, - obvious synergy with beekeepers - this Festival provides a mix of family friendly activities, including workshops, talks, free music and other entertainment, vegetarian food stalls and environmentally conscious stands. Our stand proved very popular with the visitors last year and we were struggling to cope so, please, spare a couple of hours if you can.

Please follow this link to volunteer:-

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1BnCNE10iTF2CJsoCvaUAbNOPSy-FLjqvnsP2eYm25U/viewform>

These links are also featured on our webpage

Hoping to see you there.

Bernard Brown

P.S. We will be inviting members' honey and wax products to sell at these events so please keep an eye on your inboxes for detailed arrangements..

## Hints and Tips

This month's gems are courtesy of Clive Joyce who gave a very informative and interesting talk on the Signs of Swarming at the branch meeting in April.

When carrying out your weekly inspections in May, June and July keep a close eye out for the signs that may indicate swarming preparations are taking place. Look out for these signs and you will be better prepared:-

1. An increase in the number of drones or drone cells.
2. Play cups (vertical, empty hemispherical wax cups) suggest the colony is practicing the art of making queen cells.
3. During swarm preparation the young bees stay in the centre of the frame and the older bees collect around the outer parts.
4. The number of bees around the queen increases as she is fed more. This leads to increased egg laying and eventually the space is not available so possibility of swarming increases.
5. Scout bees will be out about 14 days before a swarm. They will be looking for a favourable site for the swarm to go to. Look out for bees with no pollen doing a waggle dance on the comb, these will be the scout bees communicating their findings.
6. Set up a bait hive and look for interest being taken.
7. Look out for bees zig- zagging across the comb. This recruits bees and stirs up the colony to prepare for swarming.

..... BUT after all this, if they still swarm then collect them up and rub carbolic soap on the area they chose to swarm to. Then they will not all abscond back to that place as soon as your back is turned!- Have fun!

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)...  
Thank you Helen Essex

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

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

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