



Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

June Gap ?What June Gap!

There wasn't much evidence of a June Gap for our public displays' team this month with three shows on consecutive weekends and despite the weather ranging from wet and windy (Hatton), through overcast (Kenilworth) and "Phew ! What a Scorcher!"(Leamington Peace Festival – pictured above), our stand attracted as much, if not more interest than in previous years judging from the sales of 330 jars of members' honey, 260 items of wax products, the distribution of 70 leaflets about Taster Days alone (not to mention numerous BBKA leaflets), 40 expressions of interest in learning more about our activities, 8 leads for potential out apiaries and 1500 double ended honey tasting sticks sucked.



Just as satisfying, was to witness several of our newer members volunteering to help and the speed with which they picked up what to do and the enthusiasm and confidence with which they threw themselves into inter-acting with the public alongside the more experienced show stewards. It was also good to hear that the sharing of bee keeping experiences and solutions i.e. "Bee Talk" between ourselves, - so very much a feature of these shows.

Our next major show is the Hive of Activity in the **Jephson Gardens** on **20th August** where, in addition to our live bee demonstration, we are planning a "flower to Jar " theme which involves kids collecting "nectar" from a flower in a syringe and squirting it into a hive and thence into an extractor ending up in a jar. It should be great fun if a little messy but we will need even more volunteers for this event so please make a note in your diaries and let us know if you can help by following this link

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfeZD4uXvnhfxbCunfFioZuob4GR_1-pMBer9ex1UaTHQaGIA/viewform

Bernard Brown

First it was the Dalehouse Lane Training apiary... now it's the Honey Extraction Unit

We reported in February that the Dalehouse Lane Training Apiary (DHL) was under threat from the proposed A46 Road improvements necessitating its relocation but whilst this was exercising our minds we were also approached by our landlord of the honey extraction unit to relocate that as well. Fortunately in this case he offered us a site on another farm in the Kenilworth area which has been checked out and found suitable. Both these events will take place over the winter of 2017/18 and your committee is actively making plans to carry this out. Inevitably, this will require tremendous effort, by ourselves to get everything moved, and, at times like these we will be calling upon the membership for volunteers to help with this work so please be forewarned. It's going to be a rather busy close season.

As far as DHL is concerned we have an agreement in principle to relocate the training apiary to Stoneleigh Park, next door to the BBKA training apiary. Detailed discussions are advanced and we remain hopeful. Discussions with the County Council Highways Engineers have been bedevilled by changes to the original design which have still not been finalised so we don't know yet whether or not we will be able to return to what is left of the site after the works are complete but we remain optimistic.

Meanwhile, there has been substantial activity by various groups of people at DHL of late. The tree conservators have been and made various comments about what should remain and what can be removed. The ecology teams have been and carried out crested newt surveys and are also conducting a bat survey. They have now put down reptile mats which will remain in situ until October time. The mats provide a hidey-hole for all sorts of creatures, beetles, slow worms, grass snakes etc. and will be monitored by the ecologists. We have been told that we can also have a look under them ourselves but we are asked to contact them with our findings. If people let me know the detail (perhaps accompanied by a photo) noting the number of the mat with information as to what has been discovered, I will contact the team with the information.

So we are experiencing challenging times at present but then wasn't it ever thus?

As and when plans begin to gel we shall keep you updated.

Mick Smith

You might like to know

For many years we have enjoyed a discount on quality bee suits from BBWear. A price reduction is appealing but it is also good to know this small family business make all the beekeeping clothing in Cornwall which is still an area of high unemployment.

It is also good to know they welcome suits being returned for repair and I was very pleasantly surprised to find out how reasonable their charges are.

I returned two suits to have the ankle, wrist and thumb elastics renewed and a broken hood zipper replaced all for only £23 plus return postage.

If you want a BBWear suit repaired email James Bright at BBWear. Anyone wanting to buy a suit with the 20% Branch members discount should contact me by email please to michaelatownsend@hotmail.com

Quote from a Grateful Teacher

"The children and adults found the whole talk fascinating; just so much about bees seems incompatible with "brain" size and lifespan. To achieve all they do relies on a fundamental system of co-operation and hard work that shames the humans who benefit from them!"

....Couldn't have put it better myself!

Skep Making Day 2017

Saturday 14th October Held at BBKA Centre, Stoneleigh Park



We are holding another skep-making day this year and are inviting you to join us.

The cost is £27 and this price is for the purchase of the tool and sufficient straw and binder to enable you to complete your skep.

The day will be from 10am until 4pm during which time you will be able to get well into making your skep, which you can then continue at home.

We will have an informal lunch where everyone contributes and this will be arranged at a later date. Soft drinks will be provided.

We can also offer a gift certificate if you wish to give this experience to a friend.

If you are interested, please complete the Google form on the home page of our website www.warleambees.org.uk and then make your payment as soon as possible.

Places are limited to 20 and there are always more people wanting to come along than there are places. So if you want to join us, please don't delay.

Co-op Stock

- Varroa treatments will be purchased to order this year – just as they were last year. A Google Form will be set up in mid July so that you'll be able to place your order in time to take delivery and zap those pesky mites during August.
- We've had a few problems with the supply of foundation in recent weeks. The problems are now resolved (many thanks to the long suffering stockholder Steve Cox for successfully locating and procuring supplies) but for anyone who wants to try using foundation less frames there is useful information at <http://theapiarist.org/starter-strips/> - written by Professor David Evans from the University of St Andrews and Fife Beekeepers (formerly a member of WLBK).
- Breaking news – ambrosia will be available shortly and we're anticipating that the price per 12.5kg will be held at just £9.00 for the third year running. Amazing value!

Going to the Heather

For some years' members have had the opportunity to take their bees to the heather moors of the Derbyshire Peak District. This pilgrimage usually takes place during the first or second week of August with them brought back about a month later.

It is quite an easy journey, up the M1 and through Chesterfield to the moorland at the back of Chatsworth House.

A great deal has been written about preparing bees for the heather but essentially you need to consider the strength of your colony; it must have bees over every frame, and I do mean a good covering of bees over each one, be queen right of course, and have at least two full brood frames of stores and I suggest feeding them. A high proportion of young bees with near wall-to-wall brood is ideal. Rearranging frames with unsealed brood to the outside and sealed in the centre allows the queen to lay in the centre as workers emerge forcing honey to be taken up into the super.

Further comprehensive advice was given in the July 2017 issue of BBKA News.

You need just one super, ideally drawn comb, but foundation will do. Thin unwired foundation is best as it allows you to make cut comb. The usual way hobby beekeepers extract heather is by cold pressing so thin unwired foundation is also more economical and we are very fortunate in having a heather press in our extraction room.

In fairness to other beekeepers you need to be satisfied your bees are disease free and understand they will be placed on the moor amongst bees from other places with the risks associated in doing this.

The farm we go to is about 1000ft up so the lighter coloured Italian bees and variations of them may not be suitable because when we are enjoying refreshing warm light rain at home up on the moor it is cold horizontal stair rods.

Your hive will need to have a travelling screen and be secured with two proper hive straps or ratchet straps. The floor, particularly the Thornes budget varroa floor, needs to be checked for leaks (of bees) with the entrance blocked with a strip of foam; not tape or wood etc.

In the past we have taken members bees for them. This is no longer practical but as in the past members are able to take their own hives.

The site is secure with reasonable access along a track to a field at the edge of the moor. However the last part of the track is steep and rough leading to the field where we keep the bees which can sometimes be rather soft. Taking this into account the arrangements will be as follows.

- Inform Mike Townsend michaelatownsend@hotmail.com that you want to take bees. I would appreciate an expression of interest in the first instance by email only please.
- I will liaise with heather goers to see if vehicle sharing is practical. This will take into account the type of vehicle beekeepers have with the opportunity to team up with others. Those with four-wheel drive/high clearance vehicles may help others get across the short last stretch of the field leading to the edge of the moor.
- I am exploring the possibility of leaving a barrow on site to make it easier for members who do not have four-wheel drive/high ground clearance vehicles to carry their hives the short distance where ground conditions may be difficult.
- You will be given contact details and map. The 'rent' paid directly to the farmer is one 1lb jar of honey per hive taken.

I hope you will want to try heather going; at the very least you will be able to use the trip as an opportunity to explore this part of the Peak District which includes Chatsworth House just a few miles down the road.

Mike Townsend

Bee-Sotted Bee-Trothal

Beekeeping was once described to me as not only a hobby but, for some, as a passion and it certainly does seem to fire up the imagination for some people as evidenced by the bee themed tee shirts, scarves, jewellery ...wellies even ...sported by members at our shows, or by the names given to hives such as **Buzz**ingham Palace, **Kenst**ington Palace or **Wings**or Castle – (well, it beats boring old numbers) - but by far the most spectacular is the cake pictured here made for the recent wedding of Chris Fisher and Robert Park, two of our members to whom we send our heartiest congratulations for both their betrothal and for their inspired cake decoration.



Honey Preparation Workshop

This year, WLBK will not be running a honey preparation workshop, but members need not despair because one entitled "**The Preparation of Honey and other Hive Products for Sale and/or the Show Bench**" has been organised by Doug Nethercleft of Shipston Branch. Doug is a recognised Honey Show Judge having judged our Honey Show last year, is the secretary of the County Honey Show and is an exhibitor himself at the National Honey Show where last year he achieved considerable success with both his honey and wax products. In short he knows what he is talking about and with our honey show coming up in early September the timing of this workshop couldn't be better. His knowledge and tips will help us to avoid some of those simple mistakes which detract from our efforts.

Attendance at this event should benefit every beekeeper from the very beginner with a frame or two of honey for home consumption to those already selling their honey crop and wishing to expand into candle and mead making. There should be no difference between the care taken to present / sell hive products to the public and that necessary to be successful at showing.

The preparation and marketing of polish, soaps, balms and creams will be touched upon as will the need for hygiene in the apiary as well as in the kitchen

This day-long event is being held in **Oxhill Village Hall** on **Saturday 29th July**. Oxhill is some 12 miles south of Stratford upon Avon on the Banbury Road. There is a charge of £15 which includes refreshments and lunch. Places are limited so don't delay, book today by contacting

Douglas Nethercleft – tel. 07850 352905, e-mail djn0001@aol.com

Branch Honey Show

September 14th, 7.30pm BBKA Stoneleigh

Please note that this year's **Branch Honey Show** is earlier than in previous years. This new timing will enable participants to enter the County Honey Show (30th September) on the strength of their Branch successes and then, onwards and upwards to the National Show (26th October)

The Honey Shows are a great chance to get feedback and expert opinion on your hive produce. We are delighted to welcome **John Home** to judge our **Branch Honey Show** this year. Only entry numbers are quoted during the judges deliberations..... no names mentioned so only you will know!

If you are selling your honey it is vital to know that the quality and preparation are correct and the Honey Show provides a ideal forum for this. Experienced beekeepers enter their honey and produce to ensure the highest quality is maintained.

Honey Shows go back a long way and are part of our Beekeeping tradition. This year is an extra special one as the **Thorpe Cup** was first awarded **60 years ago**.

So let's make the **Branch Honey Show** this year a special one to remember by every member entering at least one class..... look out for the schedule and entry forms on the web site. There is still plenty of time to prepare your entries to support this traditional event and make it a **Diamond Show!**

Helen Essex (Honey Show Secretary)

Diamond Anniversary of the THORPE CUP 1957 -2017

The Thorpe Cup is awarded to the exhibitor with the most points in the Honey Show. It was first presented in 1957 and 60 years on it is still one of the highlights of the Branch Honey Show. The plinth will have to be extended this year to provide more space for recording the winners so it will look even more imposing and of course provide even more fun when cleaning it..... that pleasure could be yours..... yet another reason for entering the Honey Show on the 14th September!



Hints and Tips

*At this time of year you go to lift a heavy super and find that the top bars of the box below are being pulled up as well, often too late to prevent a thorough and unfortunate disturbance and unnecessary stirring up of the bees. If you do realise in time what is happening you can lever the box up half an inch or less with the hive tool, then take the weight on your fingers while you bend down to see which frames are stuck and use the hive tool to free them. At this point your back gives up in protest! With a wedge to hand you can stuff it into the gap to take the weight and leave room to drift some smoke in. Then you can change to a sensible position, kneeling maybe, and gently free the stuck frames without hassle to you or the bees. Of course, when you lift the box the wedge will fall into the grass and hide, so dip the blunt end into the brightest paint you have, or put some coloured tape on it. The wedge should be not be much shorter than your hive tool and cut at a shallow angle.

*Porter bee escapes get very gunged up and maybe last time they were used you were more focussed on the honey and overlooked their need for a good clean. So now is the time to get organised and treat them to a good soak in soda solution (200g/litre) followed by a gentle scrub with a nail brush and reset the 'doors' to a matchstick width.

*If you are struggling to keep your smoker alight then try this recipe-

Before you put the marigolds on, tear up some egg box cardboard and light a strip and drop it into the smoker. Add a few more pieces so that you have a bit of a fire going on then add wood shavings(the sort they sell for hamsters etc)Top it all off with as much dry rotten wood as you can fit in. Give it a couple of puffs and I find you have to stopper it with grass as it is still going strong at the end of the inspection!

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

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

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