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## Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

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### National Bee Unit (NBU) Contingency Exercise

You will be aware that a few weeks ago, I invited members with more than three hives to assist the NBU with an exercise in which they wished to test their contingency plan for responding a situation where an exotic pest was found (small hive beetle, *Tropilaelaps* (bee louse) or Asian Hornet). I am grateful to those members who volunteered to assist. This report on the exercise is taken from an exchange of correspondence:

June 26 To Tim Foden from Charles Millar

First of all, a very big thanks to you and to all those who volunteered to participate in the recent contingency exercise.

This was the first time we have included the Asian Hornet in such an exercise, and it gave us a number of valuable insights into the challenges of finding a nest in a real life situation. It was also the largest such exercise the NBU has run, with 6 pairs of inspectors in the field. But if, for example, a real Small Hive Beetle were found, we would initially be searching all the apiaries within a 15km radius of the initial find - ie potentially hundreds of apiaries within the initial search area, many times more than the number we visited in this exercise. (There are 353 apiaries registered as current on Beebase within 15km of Dalehouse Lane for example. Plus the unregistered ones.)

Key points arising from the exercise:

- ☐ The making of appointments with the volunteer beekeepers worked well. Some beekeepers were not contactable in the initial time window, but we got hold of all of them eventually. Only one dropped out.
- ☐ We visited and inspected 40 apiaries.
- ☐ The general standard of beekeeping we observed was good.
- ☐ We found no foulbrood (or real exotic pests!)
- ☐ Inspectors did find pictures of the pests in every apiary where they were hidden, but did not find all of them. (Some were hidden in very sneaky places.) In real life, the fact that the beetles move would make them easier to see; plus once eggs are laid, there would be large numbers of larvae in combs, not just one or two hiding on the floor.
- ☐ We found all six dummy hornet nests; but not every team found every one. The time to find them varied from 2 minutes to 25 minutes.
- ☐ We identified a number of refinements to our internal procedures, which will be incorporated in our Standard Operating Procedures.

Thanks again for all your help.

Regards

Charles

**Charles Millar**

**Regional Bee Inspector, Western England**

### Branch Chair

Having ascertained that no member of the current Executive Committee wishes to put his/her name forward, we need to elect a Branch Chair Elect in February 2015, who will understudy Mary Pemberton for 12 months pending election as Chair for two years in February 2016. The plan is to seek early co-option of interested parties onto the Executive Committee to maximise the learning opportunity before formal election.

It is within the gift of our branch Chair to determine the extent of his/her role. The Chair will be expected to chair Executive Committee meetings, to coordinate our activities, ensure our plans are implemented and charitable objects met.

Whilst the role of Chair may appear a daunting task, there is a huge amount of good-will and support and the branch has a very competent and experienced team responsible for all our major activities. There is no obligation on the chair to assume responsibility for specific branch activities. Our activities are now so extensive that the Chair cannot be expected to attend all functions.

It is quite understandable that some members may be reluctant to put their names forward because they lack beekeeping experience or feel that in doing so they appear "pushy". Please be assured that the branch needs future chairs and beekeeping experience is secondary.

Members who may wish to put their names forward should speak to or email Mary Pemberton in the first instance. Telephone: 02476412801, email: [mary.pemberton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mary.pemberton@hotmail.co.uk)

## **‘Getting the best from your honey’**

WLBK workshop. Aug 19th 6:30-9:30pm. BBKA Stoneleigh.  
Cost £15 (refundable, *see below*)

Following on from where Mike Townsend's recent talk on honey extraction finished, we have arranged a workshop to help WLBK members recognize the quality of their own honey and present it to the public or the show judge to maximum advantage.

Mr Peter Schollick (Richmond, N Yorks.,) will lead the evening workshop. Peter is very experienced in the production of honey (runny, set, chunk, comb and sections) having won many prizes over his 50+ years of experience, culminating in the National Honey Show Gold Medal in 2013. His workshops at the National Honey Show are always among the most popular. Participants are invited to bring a sample of their own honey (preferably this year's) in a clean clear jar or container for evaluation and comparison. Thereafter Peter will take us through some of the steps he has found beneficial in obtaining top quality produce.

We believe Peter's guidance will help those attending to go onto produce prize winning honey for our forthcoming branch honey show. To encourage new entrants, any first time honey show entrants who attend the workshop will be eligible for a £5 refund for each class they enter, at least one of which must be a honey class, up to £15 maximum refund.

There are 20 places available. To book a place please enroll via the link on the homepage of the branch website: [www.warleambees.com](http://www.warleambees.com).

**David Blower**

[davidjb54@gmail.com](mailto:davidjb54@gmail.com)

01608 685918

PS

The workshop is being repeated on Wednesday 20 Aug. for members of Warwickshire Beekeepers Association. If you would like to attend, but cannot do so on Tuesday 19 August, feel free to enroll on the County workshop as an alternative. Please see this month's edition of WB for booking details.

## **Branch Annual Dinner**

The Annual Dinner will be held at Coventry Golf Club on Friday 24th October 2014 7 for 7.30 p.m.  
Cost £25= per head

Choice of Starter

Smoked Salmon & Prawns OR Wexford Mushrooms

Carvery Main

Eton Mess OR Cheese & Biscuits

Coffee/Tea mints

This is an advance notice of the time and date

## **Help Required**

As you may know the Branch Training Apiary, known as DHL, is still in a state of 'work in progress'. Consequently I am looking for a few volunteers to lay a quantity of 3' x 2' paving slabs. The slabs will form a footpath around the portacabin. Volunteers will need to be strong and fit people as the slabs are very heavy. Experience at slab laying would also be an advantage but not essential. May I suggest the following dates, as I am aware that people have other commitments this time of year, initially perhaps Sat 9th / Sun 10th August. Can those of you who fit the criteria please get in touch by contacting me at [michael.smith670@ntlworld.com](mailto:michael.smith670@ntlworld.com)

Thanks in advance

Mick Smith

## Harvest Time!

At last, a summer with some bounty for all our (and our girls') labours and so it is timely to remind members of the following equipment we have available for home loan:-

### Home Loan Item

- the 4 frame hand cranked tangential extractor (held in Warwick)
- the 9 Frame radial electric extractor (this is bulky and easily damaged so its transport needs to be carefully considered) (held at Kenilworth)
- the 30 litre hot water electric boiler for frame cleaning (held at Kenilworth)
- the 30 litre hot water boiler for dissolving sugar for syrup (held at Napton)
- 8 frame hand-cranked radial extractor and two stage s/s strainer (held at Napton)

### To Book Contact:-

Angela Jezard  
01926 419388 [a.jezard@virginmedia.com](mailto:a.jezard@virginmedia.com).

Clive Joyce  
07792222251 or 01926858528

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07792222251 or 01926858528

Mick Ross  
01926 811130  
[mickross@live.com](mailto:mickross@live.com)

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01926 811130  
[mickross@live.com](mailto:mickross@live.com)

## Hive of Activity – Jephson Gardens Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> August

We still need a couple more volunteers to help man our stand at the above event particularly for the morning shift – 11.00a.m. to 1.30 p.m. - and particularly from members who have been on the skep making course to guide members of the public in having a go at this themselves. Also, we could do with some help from someone with a trailer or estate car for an hour or so from 4.15p.m to deliver some of the dismantled kit to Dalehouse Lane.

If you can help out please register by e-mailing Bernard Brown on [bernardnbrown@aol.com](mailto:bernardnbrown@aol.com) or on line by clicking on the following link :-

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1DqGbit5T2TZwaadau5mWX-k1-4Ck7WDgclK7TUx6o1w/viewform> .

Bernard Brown

## Skep Making Day Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September

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

The cost is £20 per head 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 hopefully be able to get well into making your skep, which you can then continue at home.

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

If you are interested, please complete the Google form on the right hand side of our home page of our website [www.warleambees.com](http://www.warleambees.com) and then make your payment as soon as possible.

Places are limited 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.

Val Dillon

## Snippet

Apiguard and wax will not be available to collect between August 24<sup>th</sup> - September 10<sup>th</sup>.

## Steam wax extractor

*Dr. Bodgit*

You can easily extract wax for recycling from old brood frames, cappings or offcuts of brace comb collected during the season. On a hot sunny day a solar wax extractor works well, but needs regular turning to the sun for maximum efficiency. These are also the days on which bees will be flying and the inevitable smell of hot wax and residual honey can be a bit of a bee-magnet.

I prefer to do my wax extracting in the autumn or winter, using a steam wax extractor which also sterilizes frames ready for the next season. Thorne's sell one of these (Easi-Steam), consisting of a modified roof and floor to add to an existing brood box. These are nicely made but not inexpensive, and it is relatively straightforward to build your own.



Steam is generated using a wallpaper stripper. The make is unimportant but ensure it has a reasonably sized reservoir and so generates steam for a long time. I bought an Earlex SS125UKP which has a 4 litre tank and runs for a little over an hour (~£20). It takes about 30 minutes to extract 11 brood frames and quite a bit of brace comb which, with a 2kW element, makes it economical to run. You only need the tank and hose from the wallpaper stripper so might even be able to pick up one with a missing "business end" from a car

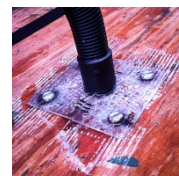
boot sale. If you are going to buy one ensure it has an auto-cutoff should the tank run dry – this allows you to run the steam extractor unattended.

The design is straightforward. You need a solid floor, lined to prevent wax sticking to it, some sort of mesh screen to prevent too much contamination of the melted wax with propolis, cocoons or lumps of pollen, a brood box and a tightly fitting lid through which the steam is piped.



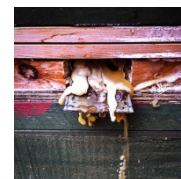
It's worth using thick ply for the floor and lid to minimize warping from the exposure to the steam. I used 12mm ply, but thicker would have been better. I added a lip of 22mm softwood around the lid to provide some rigidity. Using the same sized stripwood I added a lip around three sides of the floor, together with two angled pieces that effectively form a "spout" through which the melted wax will pour. I lined the floor with a suitably shaped piece of sheet metal from the side of an old washing machine, bending the edges up to provide a reasonably wax-tight base. Take care cutting sheet metal – use thick gardening gloves to protect your hands. I originally used an old travel screen to prevent too much rubbish contaminating the wax. However, it quickly gets clogged and this year I'm going to use some galvanized flooring mesh (see photo).

The last thing to arrange is to secure the steam hose to the lid. The best way to do this would be to fix a threaded tube to the lid. However, I'm still searching for something that fits properly. In the meantime I created two Perspex "clamps" through which the hose is held in place (again, see the photos as it's easier to illustrate than describe). These hold the end of the hose and are bolted directly through the lid.



To use the steamer place the floor on a hive stand, add the mesh and a brood box (either dedicated for the purpose or one that would benefit from being steam sterilized). To extract from frames simply fit them into the brood box, squeezing a dozen in if you can – there's space above and below for the steam to circulate well. If you're extracting from offcuts of brace comb, grafted queen cells and all the other bits scraped up and collected during the season, simply spread these evenly across the mesh. Fit the lid in place and clamp the entire thing together with some cargo straps. Finally, add a block of wood under the back of the box to tip it up and encourage melted wax to pour out of the spout. Place a container with an inch or so of water under the spout and turn on the steamer.

It takes 10-15 minutes to get to temperature. During this period honey and condensation may run out of the spout. Once a higher temperature is reached the wax pours out. Once the wax has reduced to a trickle you can turn it off, **let the entire box cool to avoid scalding** (the inside of the box will reach 105°C) and only then open it up. With brood frames you'll be left with black, papery thin cocoons, bits of wire and softened propolis. All of this is easy to discard (though a bit messy) and, after a quick scrape with a hive tool, the frames are ready to be reused. The wax generated is not particularly clean and will need further filtering. If there was residual honey in the frames you will also need to wash this away. Thorne's reckon that wax recovery with steam is about 95% efficient. It probably doesn't need adding ... run the extractor out of doors! Not only does it generate a lot of steam, but it tends to



irregularly drip from various unsealed (*i.e.* poor quality) joints and can pong a bit. Don't use it when bees are flying or you'll be inundated. Unlike a solar extractor you can run it late in the evening once the bees stop flying.



After quite a bit of use I'd noticed that the flush joints between the floor/mesh, the brood box and the lid provided opportunities for the steam to escape, so reducing efficiency. To avoid this I added strips of rubberized self-adhesive draft excluder to the upper surface of the floor edge lip and the lower surface of the lid edge lip. This is not really suited to high temperatures, but appears to do the trick.

As an aside, a slow-cooker provides a great way to melt wax. These can be picked up very cheaply from car boot sales or for nothing from freecycle.

This is the last in the regular Dr. Bodgit articles due to pressure of work, lack of imagination and accumulated DIY-induced injuries.

Remember the DIY motto "*Measure twice, cut once, swear often*".

## LOST

Can anyone email me as soon as possible please if they know the whereabouts of the branch Honey Dispenser, it resembles a large liquid soap dispenser in white food grade plastic.

Thanks. [michael.smith670@ntlworld.com](mailto:michael.smith670@ntlworld.com)

## Leamington and Warwick 2014 Branch Honey Show October 18<sup>th</sup> 7.00 pm BBKA HQ Stoneleigh Park

You are invited to submit entries to one or more of the 20 classes which are purposefully chosen to appeal to all member beekeepers whether you are new to showing or experienced. The classes cover honey (runny, set and comb), wax, mead and gifts not forgetting the legendary honey cake competition.

On the evening whilst closed judging of the entries is underway and excitement builds there will be mini talks about bee related subjects for the audience. Then, after refreshments, the judge will share their findings and winners will be announced. It is a great evening which combines the tension of the competition with the imparting of knowledge from the judge.

Preparing honey, wax, etc for the show bench also improves the quality of the finished product and guidance, compiled by Nigel Coad, can be found on the branch web site along with the 2014 Schedule and Entry Form.

## Co-op Stock

A reminder that the club stocks the following commodities for members to purchase at amazing prices:

Wax   \*   Glass Jars   \*   Apiguard   \*   Apifuge (formerly Fabispray)   \*   Ambrosia  
Honey Buckets   \*   Nitrile Gloves   \*   Fondant

To purchase these goods, you need to go to the WLBK website and click on the link marked 'Co-op Purchasing'. Then select the goods you want to buy and fill in the appropriate order form. When you submit the form you get an acknowledgement and **detailed instructions on how to collect your goods**. You must pay for your goods (preferably by BACS) **before** you collect the goods. Goods will be reserved for up to **one month** only after payment so please pick up before then.

The stockholders are Clive Joyce (for glassware, ambrosia, buckets and gloves), Chris Kehrer (wax, apiguard, apifuge) and Tim Foden (fondant) and they do a wonderful job on your behalf! In order to keep their task within bounds, please follow the instructions closely. And a further plea not to ask for goods without filling a form in – we need to keep track of goods and the order form is an integral part of our record keeping!!



## Hints and Tips

Last year was a good year for wasps and I think this year will follow suit.! In early August it is a good idea to put an entrance block in place to help the diminishing colony to defend itself from these robbers.

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When all the hard work is done and you are admiring the produce from your hives a cool glass of Honey Mint Julep will give you that boost you need to clean the kitchen floor!

### Recipe for Honey Mint Julep

2 lemons

½pt water

Leaves from a bunch of mint

2 tbsp liquid honey

20fl oz Ginger ale

Squeeze the lemons and add water to the juice to make half a pint of liquid.

Put this mix into a basin with the mint leaves.

Leave in a cool place for an hour

Remove the mint and stir in the honey and ginger ale.

Enjoy!

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Oh dear now I need something to accompany this!

It has been a good year for courgettes (again!) Try this simple recipe for a change.

Chargrilling is simple and adds a whole new depth of flavour to a raw vegetable that can otherwise be quite bland. If you don't have a griddle pan use a frying pan instead.... works just as well. The sweet honey tames and complements the salty Pecorino.

3 small courgettes

Extra-virgin olive oil

30g aged Pecorino Romano (like parmesan but made from ewes milk- pecorina is Italian for 'ewe')

Runny honey

Place a griddle pan/ frying pan on a high heat. While it heats up, slice the courgettes on an angle into medium-large chunks. Put them in a bowl, add a pinch of salt and a drop of olive oil and run your hands through to coat them lightly. Lay them in the hot pan and don't be tempted to move them until they have black char lines. Turn them over and cook for another couple of minutes to chargrill the other side.

Using a peeler, shave the Pecorino into a bowl, tip in the courgettes straight from the griddle and mix well. Season to taste with salt. Trickle over a small drizzle of honey to coat the courgettes lightly while they are still warm, to intensify the flavours and bind everything. .together.

Really yummy!

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

## Coming up

August

16 Dasset Country Show

27 Hive of Activity

Jephson Gardens

Tim Foden

Bernard Brown

## In the Branch Apiary

What a year it has been with the colonies growing very quickly with the early supply of nectar from the Oil Seed Rape causing swarming very early and for a longer period, even though we had a bad start with just four good hives but with careful manipulation using not only the branch bees but some of my own to help keep a supply of hives for the new bee keepers from the course but also be able to have fairly successful apiary sessions on Tuesday nights where I have tried to cover the necessary topics when handling bees.

I am pleased to say we will probably come out of the year with six or seven strong hives to go into the winter, I have one other hive that is a bit small but with a bit of luck this one could make it eight, so that is pleasing to double the number of hives in the apiary.

I would like to thank everyone who attended the sessions especially the experienced beekeepers who helped me out, without newbies and oldies there would be no sessions.

Thank you Roger

## For Sale / Wanted

6 pairs of unused 11 slot, galvanised metal, castellated spacers for supers. £2.30/pr from supplier, a snip at **£1.50/pr**

Contact Bernard Brown, 01926843416.  
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Hive roof insulation sheets (Celotex 25mm) for sale, £2.00 each, various sizes available.

Contact Gill Grimshaw at [gill@gillgrimshaw.com](mailto:gill@gillgrimshaw.com).  
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Uncapping knife brand new £12.00. - Thornes price £15.00.

Uncapping knife electric new £80.00. - Thornes price £90.00

40lb bucket £4.00

15lb bucket £2.00 – Thornes price £3.24

Half gall contact feeder £3.00. – Thornes price £4.90

Jar feeder £2.00 – Thornes price £2.20

Uncapping fork £4.00. – Thornes price £6.00

Porter bee escape £0.50 – Thornes price £1.00

Frame spacers £1.00 for 10

Roger Wilkes 01926 852076 – 01785535488 [roger.wilkes@kenilworthhoney.co.uk](mailto:roger.wilkes@kenilworthhoney.co.uk)

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13, Brookside Avenue, Kenilworth, CV8 1ES. **Content to her for next month by August 27th, latest!**

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

**BeeTalk is:** Designed, produced, printed and distributed by Roger Wilkes