



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

A WARM WELCOME TO 2022!

It's been a warm welcome indeed to the New Year. The warmest on record in some places. This warm weather in Autumn and early winter means our bees have been converting the feed we have given them into brood, depleting stores and breeding up new varroa mites. The NBU warnings have been round, so we all know that checking the stores and the varroa drop is vital. A week into January and winter finally seems to have arrived. While Spring beekeeping may be awhile off still, our focus is on making sure our colonies make it through the winter. With the downturn in temperatures there is also another opportunity to do Oxalic treatment, and put December's demonstration into practice.

In preparation for spring our Branch Meeting, arranged for us by Rachel Dove, is on that theme. 20th January will be a session about getting through the winter and into spring. Prepare your questions and join us on zoom (see page 2 for more information).

The New Year is a good time to think about what you might want to do in terms of qualifications. Is this the year you do your Basic Assessment, or a BBKA module? Or any of the other qualifications on the BBKA website? The Branch has a Towards the Basic Course running and the training apiary team are planning for the new year.

This is the year to try something new. I have been ruminating on whether to try pollen substitution or supplementation. I decided against a pollen substitute - something containing soya or even animal protein didn't seem right. But I have been tempted to try a product I saw advertised that offers natural pollen in fondant. Or even to mix some of the pollen in the freezer with fondant. Then my son reminded me that our spring hives usually have whole frames filled with preserved pollen, and



So far the winter has been mild but we may see snow yet

we watched the bees taking pollen in during December. Reluctantly, I must conclude my bees don't actually need supplementing - and, sadly, I don't have a rape crop I want to prepare them for. So that's another experiment I shall miss out on. Still, I am sure there will be other things I can try this year.

Somehow longer days signal preparations for spring - making frames, flaming boxes and cleaning up kit. It's what winter is for. Wrap up warm!

BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH:

January feels so optimistic - we need to keep up the protection and make sure the bees don't starve or become too riddled with varroa. However, this is a low effort month and there is still plenty of reading time.

- Keep checking your hives are well fed after this long, warm autumn. Heft often.
- Consider putting on blocks of fondant if your hives feel light. Wrap blocks in cling film or put into takeaway containers and place them over the feed holes under the roof. If you can do it

without an eke it is best not to make spaces the bees will have to heat.

- Check your hives have decent ventilation - especially if we get snow, which can block entrances. You may also need to remove dead bees from the entrance.
- Fit woodpecker protection. Yes, they will go for poly hives AND NUCS - remember to put the wire over the unprotected top of polynucs. Even if you haven't seen a woodpecker all year they will appear when the ground is frozen and they cannot get their favourite ants.
- Check your mite drop after this warm early winter - and use Oxalic acid if you need to...
- Start to prepare kit for next season. It is a good time to flame broodboxes and repair woodwork when it is cold (and there are no bees about).
- Think of some questions for our branch meeting on 20th. Beekeepers may not all agree but we will get interesting opinions.
- Think about what modules or assessments you might want to take this year.

Jane Medwell, WLBK Chair

JANUARY'S MEMBERS' MEETING

Our next meeting on **Thursday 20th January 7.30pm** will focus on getting your bees through the winter. We will have a panel of club members to talk about their strategies and tips for Spring including subjects like:

- Winter feeding
- Hive weight and consumption
- First inspections
- What to look for in Spring (signs of dysentery, nosema, not building up etc.)
- Do you insulate your hives? If not, why not?
- Can I feed syrup in the winter?
- What do you think about pollen supplementation/substitution?

- When should I do varroa checks?
- What can I use to treat varroa in the Spring?

Feel free to submit your own questions, email them to me at

Rachel.I.dove@gmail.com.

Topic: Warwick & Leamington Beekeepers Zoom Meeting

Time: Jan 20, 2022 07:15 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting : [Zoom link](#)

Meeting ID: 922 6314 9490

Passcode: 925299

Hope to see you virtually soon.

Rachel Dove

Members' meetings co-ordinator

2021 SEASON IN RETROSPECT

The beekeeping season began with a relatively cold April followed by a wet May. In much of the Western region the bees had gathered minimal nectar, and many beekeepers had to resort to supplementary feeding. The weather improved throughout late May and June and colonies took advantage and gained strength. Many colonies swarmed but issues such as missing queens and drone laying queens were common. July was very hot, and the bees were able to accumulate large honey stores assuming that the beekeeper had given them enough space to do so. That said, local conditions such as the effect of altitude on the timing of flowering meant that honey harvests were highly variable. August continued to be warm and dry, but the main flow was over. In September and October, the ivy flowered well and was a good food source for the bees. Himalayan Balsam also seemed to provide a long-lasting source of income to those bees with access to it.

The most significant event of the year was the outbreak of record instances of EFB. Over 70 cases were reported in Warwickshire alone which, compared with levels barely reaching 5 per annum over the last 4 years, was a dramatic increase to say the least. Neither the BBKA apiary, our own training apiary nor some of our member's apiaries escaped its ravages. Such was the number that seasonal Bee Inspectors from other areas were drafted in to supplement our local one who was rushed off her feet. The National Bee Unit believe that this outbreak is due to the high numbers of beekeepers, high apiary density, and the collection of swarms that then spread the bacteria into new apiaries. The confinement of our girls during the cold and wet months of April and May could also have contributed to its proliferation. Outbreaks this year appear to be linked mostly to bee movements and beekeeper spread to different apiaries. For 2022, NBU advocate that all beekeepers to remain vigilant when collecting swarms from unknown sources and to ensure they are following good hygiene procedures to limit any



In the Autumn, bees took advantage of the flowering ivy

spread of the disease.

Please note that it's a legal requirement to inform the NBU if you know or suspect a statutory, notifiable disease or pest is present in your apiary. Beekeepers can contact their Seasonal Bee Inspector during the summer or their Regional Bee Inspector all year round. If you can take a photograph, then you can send it to your local inspector by email or text message. Alternatively, call her on the phone and describe the problem. If she can't rule out there being a statutory disease or pest, she will arrange to visit free of charge.

The importance of the contribution of every beekeeper to disease management cannot be emphasised enough and by registering with and updating BeeBase regularly, future outbreaks can more easily be controlled. We all need to take part.

Bernard Brown

NATIONAL BBKA COURSES FOR 2022

The BBKA is running some courses throughout 2022. Details of the courses are below. If you'd like to find out more and book your place visit this [link](#). If the Covid virus or other circumstances result in any course being cancelled, you will receive a full refund.

1. BBKA Microscopy Beginners course 26 Feb £75.00

2. BBKA Microscopy Intermediate Weekend – 26 to 27 Feb £175

The weekend comprises two streams, Beginners and Intermediates. The emphasis for both will be hands-on. For the Beginners, all the necessary microscopes and equipment will be provided by the BBKA. Intermediates will be expected to bring along their own equipment, although we have some available if they are requested.

The Beginner course is one day, either Saturday or Sunday, and is split into two half day sessions: the morning covering honey bee dissections and the afternoon pollen analysis. Attendees will attain an appreciation of why microscopy is relevant to beekeeping, the scope of the topic, an understanding of the equipment and skills required to become an amateur microscopist.

The two-day Intermediate course covers the practical aspects of the BBKA Microscopy Assessment while working on different aspects of the honey bee anatomy and pollen samples. Attendees are expected to have already attended an Introduction course and have their own equipment. The course is being held early in the year so you can use the skills attained to help you progress to taking the Assessment.

The lead tutor is Sean Stephenson who has run similar events for Buckinghamshire BKA over the last 5 years. Please contact Sean at sean@wendover.co.uk or contact the BBKA office with any questions.

3. Bee Handling and Management 25-29 April – £695.00

This course is suitable for beekeepers with three or more years' experience and will help you learn basic skills and new ones. There will be opportunities to discuss techniques, practice manipulations and gain a fuller understanding of the principles involved. Topics covered include queen rearing, the uses of a nucleus, swarm control, disease and apiary hygiene, microscopy, handling skills, dealing with aggressive colonies, reading bees, and an opportunity to discuss bee related topics.

It will equip beekeepers with the knowledge to improve their stock, and there will be evening lectures and discussions. The cost includes accommodation, meals and refreshments.

Elements of the course will be useful to all levels of beekeepers; it is designed to encourage wider knowledge and expertise. The course will have a large practical element with opportunities for questions and discussion.

4. Queen Rearing Saturday 23 April 2022 - £75.00

This course seeks to equip beekeepers with the knowledge and skills to raise queens for their own colonies and potentially improve their own stock, possibly having surplus queens to share with others in a small breeding group.

The course will cover queen marking, queen cell selection, selecting breeding material, setting up cell raising colonies, setting up and managing nuclei and mininucs for mating queens. It will also cover queen introduction and some simple methods of producing your own good queen.

Suzanne Bennett
Trustee British Beekeepers' Association

FOR SALE

BBwear good quality full bee suit, beige, 5 years use, still bee-proof, currently £163 from BBwear.++Price £75.

Contact Chris Ball:

07831887206

astaandchris@yahoo.co.uk

INSIDE THE HIVE

The winter solstice heralds the first day of winter but for our girls it signifies the first day of their new year. Immediately after the 21st December the hours of daily sunlight start to increase and, like many plants and animals, bees are affected by changes in day length. How the bees assess this is not clear – after all, they live in a pitch black hive – but within a few days of the winter solstice the workers slowly begin to raise the temperature of the brood nest from 21–24°C to 34–35°C. This increase spurs the queen on to start laying eggs..... and so, the cycle begins again.

Ivan A Perry

ON THE MOVE

The displays team bade farewell to one of its stalwarts this winter. Dave Faulkner is moving out of the area but will be continuing his love affair with his bees having joined two branches in the area of his new abode. (It takes two to replace WLBK). Dave's WLBK membership number is 57 and given that there have been 664 members since membership numbers were introduced, this makes him one of the longer serving branch members. In addition to his contribution to promoting beekeeping at our displays, Dave recently took the lead in establishing our new Community Apiary at Deppers Bridge taking four new beekeepers under his wing.

We're sorry to see you go Dave. We'll miss you but many thanks for your support and all the best for the future.

Bernard Brown

WE NEED SKILLS

We are keen to progress the refurbishment of the Extraction Unit at Hurst Farm this month and need a couple of members with carpentry skills to fix timber battens to the roof and to cut and fit PVC panels to them to create a washable, hygienic ceiling. All materials will be supplied, and the unit heated to tempt you to volunteer. Please contact Clive Joyce on 07792 222251 if you can help.

REFLECTIONS OF A TREASURER

As I climbed the stairs clutching the 2021 Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers audited accounts intending to put them with all the other accounts from years gone by, I thought I would take a look at some of the earlier accounts which I had been given by David Stott, our previous Treasurer, when I took over in 2010.

We are required to keep accounts for 7 years but I have never thrown any of them away as I felt they were part of Warwick and Leamington's history and while they weren't taking up too much space in our house they could remain.

When I took over from David the accounts were held in one foolscap book. The left-hand side of the page held the Income information in 4 columns. The right-hand side held the Expenditure, again in 4 columns. In most years there were about 300 entries and they covered a maximum of 3 or 4 pages.

How different things are now. These days everything is, of course, held in spreadsheets. And our accounts consist of 14 pages with some of these pages having 39 columns. In 2021 were 708 Income items, many of which were payments for more than 1 item and 182 Expenditure items.

But none of this would have been possible without the amazing support of Jane Brown, who came to my rescue very soon after I took over the Treasurer's post and set up our accounting system so that whenever a figure is placed in either the Income or Expenditure page it automatically trickles through to other pages, so it only has to be entered once. And it immediately indicates whether the accounts are balanced - or not!

Here's a small comparison of previous years:

	1984	2000	2010	2021
No of members	102	30	136	276
Basic Membership Subs	£6	£30	£39.50	£43
Expenditure on Newsletters	£80	£231.70	£810	£36

Notice how membership has changed over the years. Our newsletter costs are now less than 50% of those in 1984 thanks to most members now taking them by email. And at this point I would also like to thank Bernard Brown for distributing them by email and Chris Cox for posting the few hard copies now taken.

For many years our accounts were audited by Jim Shipp and more recently they have been audited by David Cox. On behalf of myself, Jane and the rest of the branch, I would to thank him for the thoroughness he shows when taking this task on. He doesn't miss a trick.

Val Dillon

WLBK MEMBERSHIP REMINDER FOR 2022

Your membership for 2022 is now due.

You should have received an email from Membership Services on December 1st inviting you to renew your membership. If you've not received this email, please check in your Junk Mail.

If you haven't received a reminder, please contact me or Liz Gurney.

Val Dillon val.dillon@outlook.com

Liz Gurney lizdinks@hotmail.co.uk

REMEMBERING BRIAN MILLWARD

Brian Millward's death was reported just before Christmas following a prolonged illness. He was a very enthusiastic member in his day, contributing to the work, of not only WLBK, of which he was both chairman in 2006 and secretary from 1991 – 1999, but also to that of the County where he held positions of both editor of WLBK and editor of a research project into the County Association's history. His involvement in Beekeeping did not end there. He was Office Assistant at the BBKA to our own Peter Spencer's General Secretaryship – the pair of them being the principal officers at the time. Subsequently he became a tutor on the BBKA's module examinations.

As far as his local beekeeping career is concerned the following tributes pay testament to an accomplished and consummate beekeeper who gave generously of his time and expertise:-

Brian was very active when I started and was the sort of person who was always happy to help anyone. If I recall correctly, he ran the apiary at North Leam School, which we used as a branch apiary. He certainly came to those sessions and I learnt a lot. Brian was the first person to tell me about varroa- but wasn't sure it would really take off. I remember when he tried to convince me that plastic clip-together frames were a good idea, but I found they got all twisted. He was a good man.

Jane Medwell – WLBK Chair

My memories of Brian probably go further back than anyone else's in the branch as he was my science teacher at school when I was 11. As it was an all-girls' school, we spent many a lunch break trying to marry him off to all the single teachers there. But we decided that our form teacher, Miss Lee, was the perfect match. And so it came to be. So, imagine my surprise, when we joined the first ITB in 2000, run by Mike Townsend, to find Brian was teaching me once again. But this time it was about bee diseases.

Then a couple of years later Mike and Brian ran the first Skep making class. The trainees were shared between Mike and Brian, and I was in Brian's group. It was sometime later I found he had not taught us the best way to make the skep. Mike's method created a stronger skep and this is what I teach to others now.

However, my skep is still used every year, it's just a bit weaker than I would have liked.

Val Dillon – WLBK Treasurer

Brian was my very first contact with beekeeping. I had moved bees from my father-in-law's at Rugby and on my first inspection could see they were riddled with something I thought might be varroa. I phoned Brian expecting to have a diagnosis over the phone. The response 'I am coming round now' was typical of his support in my early years.

Brian loved his science, so microscopy was readily offered for disease diagnosis and he was the only beekeeper I know who performed artificial insemination on his queens. He was well known at the Gormanston Irish conventions for top rank beekeepers. Most of all I admired his intelligence, wit and humour delivered with a soft Welsh lilt.

Mike Townsend

I recall visiting the old North Leamington School apiary with Brian in my very early years of beekeeping, probably my first year. Brian was very knowledgeable. Being a former science teacher, I'm sure he knew more than most of the membership. I recall him wearing only a smock top bee suit, short trousers and flip flops to open up the hives. No gloves and never a sting! I was and still am amazed. Nos da Brian.

Mick Smith

THE JACK TAYLOR PLAQUE

Our series looking at the person behind our honey show trophies continues with Jack Taylor. Jack donated the Jack Taylor Plaque to be awarded to the winner of the cottager class (those members of our branch with less than five hives).

Jack was Chairman of the Branch in 1980-81 and, at one time, was the editor of the Warwickshire Beekeeper. He lived on Red Lane, Kenilworth where he had a few hives but, with his son, had

a large apiary between Newbold Pacey and Moreton Morrell in an old quarry.

A senior member of the branch remembers a story about Jack, which is actually revealed in the pages of an Ian Flemming novel. The novel recounts a story of a British ship bombed during World War II off the coast of France which subsequently sank. The blast tore the clothes off some of the survivors who eventually reached a rescue ship stark naked. One of those survivors was Jack Taylor.

Ivan A Perry

GIZMO OF THE MONTH: A SUCKER FOR COLLECTING SWARMS

This epithet could readily apply to those members who enthusiastically sign up to collect swarms reported by the public. Swarms 6ft up on the outside of a prickly free bush are rare and, all too frequently, they settle in the most challenging locations as far as collection is concerned. Posting boxes, cars, busy public spaces, dog poo bins, wedding marquees, prickly hedges and prize-winning topiary have all played host to swarms. And so their collection presents unique challenges for beekeepers.

One way of collecting swarms is by using a beevac. It was witnessing his mentor using one-such that set Fleet and District BKA member, Richard Stainer, a-thinking. The beevac was very efficient and could reach those parts which other methods could not without sustaining injury or damage but required a mains power supply. This was OK for cut-outs of colonies established in buildings where there was time to organise the kit and power supply, but not for swarms where the window for collection is limited and which are off grid, as it were.

What was needed was a portable battery powered beevac. After months of research and development, financial outlay and driving his wife mad, Richard completed a prototype and it worked. After collecting several swarms. Including one 6m up in a tree collected from the ground and seeing how easy and effective it was to use, Richard's "eezeebeevac" went into its first production run and is now being offered to the beekeeping fraternity.

In Richard's own words, here is how it works:-

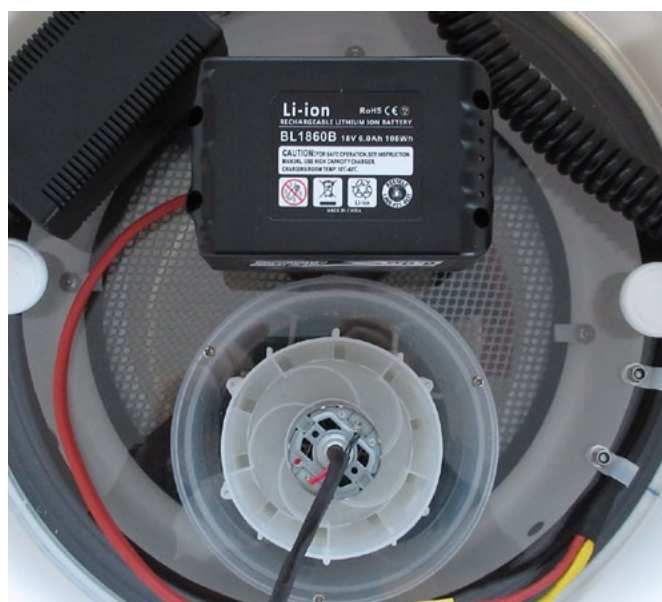
The main unit is a heavy duty 45ltr polypropylene bucket and the bees are collected via an inlet in the lower half of the bucket where they are retained by the motor board. This comprises, an inner ring, a removable

piece of mesh, a rubber seal and then the motor board itself. The motor board carries the motor, speed controller and battery. The motor board is clear Perspex which allows the operator to see into the lower half of the bucket as the bees are collected. To operate the unit, remove the travel cap from the inlet and attach the collection hose. Turn the motor on with the speed controller, this also adjusts the motor speed. Increase the motor speed until there is sufficient suction to "vacuum" up the bees. A hand placed over the end of the collection hose will help in gauging the amount of suction required. The bees are retained in the lower half of the bucket, the mesh keeps them out of the motor. The motor also has a mesh filter which protects it from small particles of dust and dirt. After collecting the bees, the hose is removed, and the travel cap is replaced. The motor speed is reduced to just keep the bees ventilated. To remove the bees, take out the motor board and rubber seal. Carefully remove the mesh, check for the queen then shake off any attached bees into the hive. Remove the inner ring and tip the remaining bees in to the hive.

To keep the cost down the unit is constructed with recycled and new parts. Recycled parts are checked, thoroughly cleaned and only serviceable parts are used. A few of the parts are from a donor vacuum cleaner, so extension tubes and other accessories are readily available. A rechargeable 18v 6ah power tool battery runs the motor. Using just the collection hose a run time of 3½-4hrs should be achieved. If extension tubes are added the motor speed will need to be increased which will reduce the motor run time.

This looks as though it could be a useful piece of kit, so we are planning to acquire one on loan to suss out its potential with a view, possibly, to adding it to our range of home loan equipment available to members. For further details visit eezeebeevac.co.uk.

Ivan A Perry



HINTS & TIPS



**Recycle your Christmas tree this year
and use pine needles in your smoker**

- Well it is about 1°C, grey, foggy and glum outside and here I am thinking what I can do from the comfort of my warm front room!
- Firstly I have just paid my association membership so I can be sure that I have the continuity of insurance cover and membership.
- Now I am going to check on BeeBase to make sure that the colony numbers are up-to-date and that the apiary location details are all correct. It really is an excellent way of keeping informed about local alerts, and after the outbreaks of EFB this year, it really is important that all apiaries are able to be located and beekeepers quickly notified.
- I think planning your equipment needs for the coming season is a really good way to be prepared. It also means that if you plan ahead, as far as is possible, then you can take advantage of the winter sales that are coming up.
- 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.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

HELEN ESSEX

If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to Helen on h.essex@virgin.net

The editor of Bee Talk is Tanya Weaver.
Please send content for the newsletter to her by the 28th of each month:
tanyaweaversa@yahoo.co.uk

WARWICK AND LEAMINGTON BRANCH
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