



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

WLBK MEMEBERS GET "WAGGLING"

The moment I walked in the room, I clocked that something was different. Very different. I was expecting a party, but this was like no other WLBK Christmas Party. The function room at Kings Hill Nurseries was bee-decked with fairy lights. The tables decorated with slips of coloured foil and sweets. A revolving glitter ball, live guitarist/singer music playing music with consideration to all ages, not to mention the infectious enthusiasm of the organisers, Judith Masson and Lottie Buckland, set us all a-buzzin'.

Fortified with prosecco and hot jacket potatoes from a van parked outside and throwing caution to the wind, it was time to get off our backsides and on to the dance floor. What a sight! Beekeepers - like you have never seen them before! Suffice it to say there was a lot of "wagglng" going on. Not only a lot, but with many different styles. Indeed, it was possible to date the Wagglers' salad days from their waggle style. Then there were the party games. With almost everybody on the floor divided into groups based on the month of their birthday, the "twelve days of Christmas", with hand gestures, was given an enthusiastic rendition. But that was nothing compared to the merriment which the "make a hat out of sausage balloons" generated, which, as I'm sure you can imagine from the photo above, was something else.

Meeting old and making new friends; Good Food; Good Company; Good chat; Good organisation and a huge amount of hard work by Judith and Lottie – an unfailing recipe for Good fun. What an evening! Certainly, one to be remembered..... AND REPEATED!!

Bernard Brown



Who made the best balloon hat at the WLBK Christmas Party?



Peter Stanworth, former chair, "wagglng" with Janet, his wife of 55 years

CHAIR'S JANUARY MESSAGE

Happy new year everyone. I truly hope your bees (and you!) are weathering the winter and are warm and well fed. I wonder if the bees would like us to make some new year's resolutions on their behalf. Here are some thoughts.

1. Asian hornet: climate change and the global sources of our food and plants are increasing the threat of the Asian Hornet. Learn how to identify this invasive non native species, be vigilant and know what action to take.

2. Volunteer: take the opportunity to explain the importance of

bees in the environment by volunteering at one or more of the shows at which Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers take a display stand.

3 Forage: leave a little bit of wild or native forage in your garden for bees and pollinators, whether that is brambles, ivy or longer grass.

Apart from that, let's be kind to ourselves as we move through the dark days of winter.

Suzanne Bennett, WLBK chair

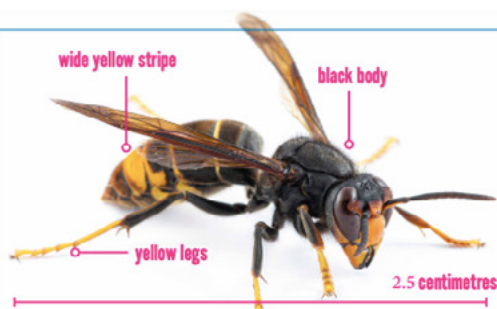


BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH

The solstice has passed, the days are getting longer by a minute a day and we can look forward to spring and summer bee-keeping. There is still plenty of reading time for those Christmas bee books, planning use of all the beekeeping "bits" you got for Christmas and planning any assessments you might want to take next year.

- Heft often. As the bees fly more and brood production starts they use up their stores faster.
- 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.
- Check your hives have decent ventilation- especially if we get snow, which can block entrances- open mesh floors are great for this. You may need to remove dead bees from the entrance if we get snow.
- Keep the woodpecker protection in place and remember to put the wire over the unprotected top of polynucs. Green woodpeckers appear when the ground is frozen and they cannot get their favourite ants.
- Check your mite drop (use boards) - and use Oxalic acid if you need to, even in early January.
- 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).
- Review last year's records. What do you aim to achieve in the apiary this year?

Jane Medwell



Spot Asian hornets and save our bees!



REPORT THEM!

Use the 'Asian Hornet Watch' app
www.bbka.org.uk



IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN

With the end of 2023 and our move into 2024 the little matter of the Branch 91st Annual General Meeting looms on the horizon. Yes, the year has passed that quickly.

The AGM business is set out in the Warwickshire Beekeeping Association (WBKA) constitution as

- a) the receipt and consideration of reports including references to the achievement of its charitable objects and of the Branch accounts for the previous year.
- b) the Election of Officers and Committee Members
- c) the Appointment of an Independent Examiner.
- d) the demonstration of the Branch capitation fee payable by all the grades of Member other than Branch honorary life Members for the next financial year.
- e) consideration of any proposal of other matter of which due notice has been given as set out below.

Items a) is quite straight forward but those at the meeting can question the Chair and the Treasurer on their reports to the meeting when reviewing the past year.

Item b) is the AGM approving the "changing of the guard". The Chair post is set as 2 years and it also allows for others to put themselves forward to be members of the Branch Committee. This is the key committee within Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers and to which the "doing" sub-committees are represented (e.g. The Shows and Events Team). The meeting meets 6 time per year and if you would like to take up a seat on this committee, please contact me for further details on secretary@warleambees.org.uk.

Item c) is where we agree our Independent Examiner, to take on the role of overseeing and signing off our accounts.

Item d) is the point of the meeting where we propose the Membership Fee structure for the Branch to take effect from 1st December 2024. This has already been considered by the committee at the November meeting. It includes our reserves, threats to our membership numbers, membership class inconsistencies, etc. The proposed change will require the AGM's approval.

Item e) is where we are seeking views from the membership on the working of our branch. However, any changes that require a rewriting of the constitution will need to be considered by the WBKA trustees as they will apply to the registered charity, including the other 7 branches. Several of our members have proposed a Schools and Educational Establishment class of membership, mirroring that of the BBKA. This is already being taken forward to WBKA by the branch, but as with all constitutional matters this will take some time.

The key dates leading up to the meeting are:

Notify Members of AGM	by 18th January 2024
Deadline for receipt of proposal	1st February 2024
Circulation of Agenda for AGM	by 8th February 2024
The Meeting Itself	Thursday 15th February 2024

The meeting will take place at Kings Hill Nurseries commencing at 7.30pm. A key requirement is that we must have 25 members present to be quorate.

Chris Cox

Secretary and WBKA Trustee



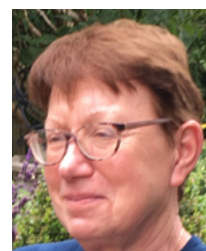
JANUARY MEMBERS' MEETING



Last season was very swarmy! Swarm collectors ran out of kit and the club ran put of swarm collectors! Panel members from the club will the explain the science of swarming; what can be done to avoid losing bees to swarming; provide hints and tips on swarm collection; and encourage members to join the ranks of swarm collectors.

Join us on **Thursday 18th January 2024 7.30-9.30** at King's Hill Nursery for a panel session non swarming - there will be cake!

Judith Masson



GROUP NEWS

Last month we announced the setting up of a County Microscopy Group. The group is open to anyone interested in microscopy - irrespective of experience.

This link will take you to the Group's home page with instructions on how to sign up.

<https://warwickshirebeekeepers.org.uk/members-pages/wbka-microscopy-group/>

Additionally, for any members who might be interested in the cross county Module 1 initiative for the exam in March and a possible Queen Raising opportunity, please email MessengerBee: messengerbee@outlook.com

Barry Meatyard



COUNTY LECTURES 2024

The programme for this winter's County lectures has been announced. They will be held via Zoom for which you will need to pre-register.

Details are:-

- **17th January**, Pete Sutcliffe talking on Colony Nutrition Link to register
- **21st February**, Alison McAfee will be recounting the Perilous Life of Drones Link to register
- **20th March**, Lynfa Davies will guide us on Queen Rearing with a few Hives Link to register

Register now lest you miss out.

NEW LIBRARIAN

Our branch librarian Jackie Ledwidge had to stand down at short notice due to a change in circumstances. This caused a modest degree of panic within the committee (specially amongst those less IT proficient) as Jackie had been instrumental in successfully moving the library on to a social media booking and management platform.

However, help was at hand. A MessengerBee appeal was circulated to all members and an instant response was received from Megan offering to step in. Megan has already been in touch with Jackie to affect the handover.

One thing that goes with being the librarian is the task of spending the £500 annual new book budget and with the threat of Asian Hornet I am sure members will be requesting key study material.

Finally, Jackie Ledwidge must be thanked for her active involvement and leaving the library in such a sound place for Megan to take forward.

If members wish to contact Megan with suggestions for further acquisitions, please email librarian@warleambees.org.uk



DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR WLBK MEMBERSHIP

Happy New Year to every member of Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers. Welcome to 2024 and another exciting year of beekeeping.

Thank you to the members who have already renewed their membership for 2024, and a reminder to the other members that your membership payments are now due please.

You should have received an email at the beginning of December asking you to complete the attached link to confirm your personal details and then requesting you make your payment.

A number of people have already completed this link, but have yet to pay, so this is a nudge for them to complete the process please. If you can't find the link in your email, please try your Junk Mail and if it's not there you can contact me and I will resend the link.

If you no longer wish to be part of our branch, could you let me know please, and I will remove your details from our files and you will not receive any more emails from us.

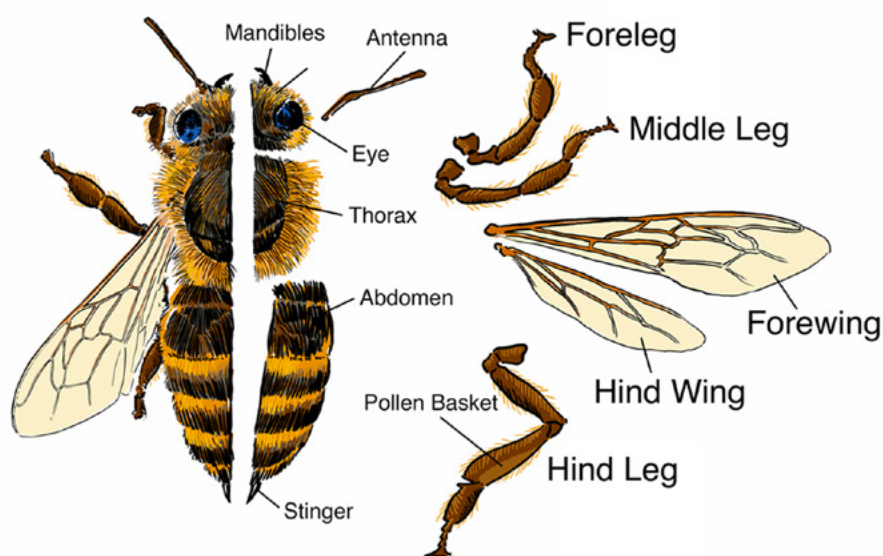
To all our wonderful members who want to continue keeping these amazing creatures and sharing your experiences with us, I wish you a happy and healthy New Year.....and lots of honey in 2024.

Liz Gurney

Membership Secretary

lizdinks@hotmail.co.uk

ALL TOGETHER NOW – SIX LEGS WORKING AT ONCE (PART 3)



Over the last two issues we have been looking at the independent functions of a honey bee's legs individually. In this month's issue we take a look at how they use them collaboratively and what this enables them to achieve.

While the legs of honey bees possess unique parts that work independently for some chores, they often work together. Following activities require multiple sets of legs. Like other insects, the nervous system of the bee coordinates the movement of the legs so they don't get tangled up. Anyone who trips over their own two feet knows how treacherous six could become.

The first and third leg on one side work with the middle leg of the opposite side, which eliminates the trip hazard and looks kind of freaky.

Festooning: The tarsal claws on all six feet help the honey bee grasp onto objects or onto one another. When honey bee workers form a festoon – those lacy-looking scaffolds – the bees hang onto each other's legs to form intricate chains. Because the legs are strong and flexible, chain building gives bees easy access to areas which otherwise would be difficult to reach.

Pollen packing: Another example of legs working together occurs as the bee cleans its body of pollen. A bee that has been foraging will have pollen all over, from head to foot. She needs to collect all of it and somehow get it in the pollen baskets.

In a smooth sequence, the forelegs pass the pollen to the mid-legs, which pass it to the rear legs, often crisscrossing from side to side as the left side cleans the right and vice versa. The next time you can, do watch a honey bee packing pollen and you will see all six legs working in harmony.

Pheromone distribution: All six feet deliver the footprint pheromones used for communication and colony regulation. When a worker walks across a flower petal, or across the entrance to her hive, hive mates can "read" this signal and know they are in the right place.

Bearding: Another use for all six legs at once is bearding. During bearding, you will see many bees on the front of the hive, perhaps hundreds. They all face the same direction and rock back and forth in a mesmerizing display. Look carefully and you can see the rear four legs stay in one spot, while the forelegs step forward and back, forward and back.

Along with the steps, the bees do something with their mouthparts. This baffling behaviour is thought to be related to cleaning, polishing, or pathogen management, yet no one knows for sure. What we do know is that it's great fun to watch.

As foragers enter the hive from the great outdoors, they leave footprints everywhere. The dirt may come from outside the hive, or the bees may collect dirt and bits of pollen on the trek from the hive entrance to the honey storage area. In any case, these dirty trails have a name: 'travel stain.'

Travel stains can hurt a comb honey producer's bottom line. Instead of gleaming white cappings, the potential purchaser may see a smeared darkness, reminiscent of a senescent dishrag. Or sometimes the stain resembles smeared egg yolk — like the yellow brick road, only not in a good way. These smudges result from layer upon layer of pollen laid down by thousands of feet traveling back and forth, day after day.

Some comb honey producers give their bees upper entrances to keep the foragers from stepping in brood box debris on the way to the supers. Others keep a close watch on the frames, immediately removing any that become completely capped.

The bees could do with a footbath of bleach as some of us have for hygiene purposes on entry to our apiary.

The next time you're watching your honey bees, look closely at their complex, underrated legs. Try to figure out what they're doing, how they coordinate, and where they're stored.

Honey bee legs provide a perfect example of the enormous impact that seemingly insignificant parts of nature can have. The complexity and adaptability of honey bee legs, and the feats they facilitate, are examples of those small things that often go unnoticed.

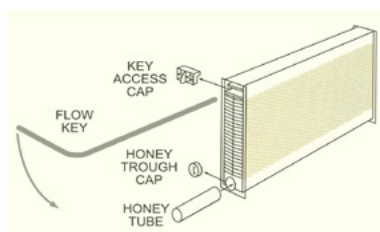
*Based upon an article in, and with the permission of
The Honey Bee Suite*

EXOTIC HIVES SERIES: FLOW HIVE

The Flow hive was invented about 10 years ago by Stuart and Cedar Anderson in Australia. Not so much a hive as a way of harvesting honey with less fuss for the beekeeper and less disturbance to the bees. It has been described as the most innovative invention in beekeeping since 1851.

Initially the Flow hive was only developed for Langstroth hives but can now be bought for National hives in the UK. This is how it works.

The bottom part of the hive is a conventional brood box. The National Flow super houses 8 flow frames. The Flow frames are placed above a queen excluder in a standard sized box. Two simple cut-outs in one end of the super allow access for collection and end-frame observation. Honey will be stored in the Flow frames. When the frames are full and capped the harvesting of the honey can begin.



Follow this simple procedure:

1. Remove the key access cap and honey trough cap.
2. Insert honey tube into honey trough opening.
3. Insert Flow® key into bottom slot.
4. Rotate Flow® key 90° downwards.

When the honey is fully harvested insert the Flow® key into the top slot and close the split frames.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Flow frames are made of plastic with a split down the centre. The bees complete the comb with their own wax then fill the cells with honey, before finally capping the cells. Once capped the honey can be harvested as described above without disturbing the bees as the cappings stay in tact.



Cross section of Flow® frame



Flow® frame opened

You can harvest the whole hive at once or each frame individually. Individual frames could yield about 6lbs honey and will provide the beekeeper some control over separating honey from different sources, showing the variety of colours and flavours present. Take care when lifting. A National Flow super full of capped honey weighs 70lbs (30kg) or more!

VIEWING WINDOWS

A feature of the Flow hive is the provision of viewing windows. The upper and lower access covers on the frame-end side of the super allow viewing of the bees progress in filling up the frames, while the viewing window of the frame-face is like an observation hive. Between the two windows the beekeeper should get a good idea of how much honey has been stored and capped.

FLOW HIVE MANAGEMENT IN THE UK CLIMATE

Bees can be reluctant to move up into plastic frames so how you manage the Flow hive will affect your success in honey production. It is possible to paint or spray the Flow frame surfaces with bees wax to encourage the bees to start building comb. Start with a strong colony in a well-stocked brood box so that the bees' only choice is to move into the plastic frames. Avoid putting your colony anywhere near oil seed rape otherwise there is a danger of the frames being made useless with crystallized honey. Likewise, it is best to avoid ivy nectar late in the year. This is something of a limitation on its application to the UK.

Phew! – that's £750 saved

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HINTS AND 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:
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WARWICK AND LEAMINGTON BRANCH
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