



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

PLANT OF THE MONTH: MAHONIA

I'd never really liked Mahonia and tended to avoid planting it unless it had been given to me by a kind friend. Even then, it got put towards the back of the bed, behind its less prickly neighbours, and rather forgotten about. Then I started to keep bees... The discovery that Mahonia is one of the first flowers of the year to appear and hence a wonderful source of early pollen, made me look at it in a new light!

The genus Mahonia comprises some 70 species of evergreen shrubs, some growing to the size of small trees, and was named after the Irish American horticulturalist Bernard McMahon (1775-1816). It is closely related to Berberis with its beautiful foliage but vicious thorns. The leaves of the Mahonia are almost holly-like in their spikiness but as you can see from Barry's photo, the flowers can be quite magnificent. They are most commonly yellow but there are red varieties and even a blue one called Oregon Grape. After flowering, the fruit sets as small bluish berries which have a sharp, acidic taste so definitely not recommended for human consumption. In fact, the active ingredient in both Mahonia and Berberis is



Image courtesy of Barry Meatyard

Berberine, which on ingestion, can cause vomiting, low blood pressure and slowed heart rate. Interestingly though, it appears that in Traditional Chinese Medicine, Mahonia is used to "... remove toxins, suppress pain, promote

blood circulation, inhibit cough and alleviate inflammation..." - please don't try this at home! Let's just leave it for the bees to enjoy as their early forage.

Maggie Curley

WLBK MEMBERSHIP FINAL REMINDER FOR 2022

Time is running out to renew your membership and pay your subscriptions for 2022. After the 14th February your membership will automatically lapse. If you cannot locate the email sent from Membership Services, please check your junk mail. If you still can not find it contact Val Dillon val.dillon@outlook.com or Liz Gurney at lizdinks@hotmail.co.uk.

CHAIR'S FEBRUARY MESSAGE

Longer days bring me a great surge of optimism for the coming season. I have to remind myself that the Beast from the East was in March and I should not think winter is over. But my bees are collecting pollen as the hellebores, snowdrops and catkins are out and there is new brood underway. It really does feel like our bees are getting going.

The optimism is fuelled by the wealth of events and training underway for all our members- the start of the season is a good time to think of doing something new. We have full Introduction to Beekeeping courses, people signed up to the Towards the Basic course and the Bee Breeding group is getting underway. Maggie, Steve and the apiary team have totally reconfigured the branch apiary for an efficient and organised start to the season and there are plans for skills sessions for all our members. Branch members are signing up to do the Basic Assessment and Modules in November. Knowing that, as a branch, we will soon be meeting face-to-face to talk about our bees is immensely cheering- even though we will, as usual, spend the time moaning about the weather.

There are also training opportunities you might want to take up as part of your county membership. Warwickshire Beekeepers (which includes our Branch) is offering two days of microscopy for beekeepers (led by our own Barry Meatyard) and two days of queen rearing. I shall be dusting off my microscopy skills in preparation for nosema tests in Spring. We also have a County Lecture by Dr Barbara Smith about the Thriving hive project coming up online on 16th February. I really do not know how air quality affects bees- but I hope to find out.

The longer days signal preparations for spring- and I have only just started making frames and have not even printed out new hive records. I'd better stop watching webinars. But there are so many excellent free webinars right now- Prof David Evans, Prof Randy Oliver, Lynne Ingram etc. I must tear myself away from the screen, wrap up warm and get ready for Spring!

If you need help with your bees, or would like to give us ideas and feedback about Bee Talk, contact me or any other member of the committee at: warleambees@warleambees.org.uk.

Jane Medwell



Bees on Hazel catkins

Image courtesy: bredfieldwfv.org.uk

BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH

February still means maintaining the protection for hives and making sure the bees don't starve. Keep checking your hives are well fed after this long, warm winter. Heft often or weigh using luggage scales.

- Review last year's hive records. Establish your goals for this season and print out new record sheets.
- Prepare kit for next season. Flame wooden broodboxes and repair woodwork when it is cold (and there are no bees about). If you have poly hives, submersion in a solution of bleach for 20 minutes is recommended.
- Replace 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 ventilation- especially if we get snow, which can block entrances. You may also need to remove dead bees from the entrance.
- Fit woodpecker protection. 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 winter- and use Oxalic acid if you need to.
- Think about your training needs this year.

Jane Medwell

REPORT FROM THE BBKA'S ADM

The BBKA held its Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) on Saturday 15th January. No early morning start; no frozen windscreens to clear. This was the second 'virtual' ADM, saving over £15,000 of the Charity's funds in travel and venue hire.

As one of the Trustees, I was delighted to welcome Jane Medwell, chair of WLBK, as a new Trustee. Jane will be a valuable asset with her professional expertise in education, teaching experience and thorough knowledge of bees and related matters. Jane will be joined by Jo Widdicombe from Cornwall, Clare McGettigan from Yorkshire and Julie Coleman from Kent: all welcome additions to the Executive Committee.

Val Francis was elected an honorary member of the BBKA for her work over many years on the Examinations Committee.

The ADM featured reports from all the sub-committees:

- Communications – social media continues to be the focus of this work.
- Education and Husbandry – special editions are a focus, as well as sharing expertise in education best practice.
- Finance – reserves and our financial position are in a robust state, despite reduced sponsorship and fundraising in recent years.
- Research, Technical and Environmental – research projects are being identified to provide evidence which will support members in their day to day beekeeping.
- Shows – new opportunities are being considered after a number of the big national shows have closed down.
- Spring Convention – a return to a 'live' convention with a strong cadre of speakers and events.
- Standing Orders and Governance – a more transparent Trustee code of conduct and further work to improve Delegates' experience of the ADM if it is to remain virtual.

Beyond the elections, the propositions generated healthy debate. Laddingford (near Maidstone, Kent) was granted Area Association Membership after bringing this proposition to the ADM for a number of years. The proposition was also passed to communicate better and earlier with Associations to give greater awareness of events happening locally and nationally. The BBKA website and the ER2 mail service is likely to be used to meet this need.

The proposition requiring the BBKA to take further action on banning the import of bees was passed, as was the proposition on stepping up activity to stop the sale of adulterated and fake honey (adulterated=content added to; fake=not actually honey). Such products are currently selling at suspiciously low prices at a supermarket near you in the absence of an agreed, robust honey testing mechanism (see an article on this on page 5).

Annual Delegate Meetings are not the ideal way to spend one's Saturday. But they are an excellent way to have the beekeeping matters that you care about to be voted on and acted on by the BBKA. Considering propositions and getting them seconded in time for the annual October deadline would be time well spent if we want to hold our governing body to account on the issues which keep us keeping bees.

Suzanne Bennett
Trustee, WLBK

BEE TRADEX – SAT 12TH MARCH

Are you getting excited about the forthcoming season? In need of new/more kit or just curious to find out what is new this year? If any of these apply, bee aware that Bee Tradex is back in town and right on our doorstep on Stoneleigh Park.

Billed as being the biggest beekeeping show of the year it is open on **Saturday 12 March from 9:00am to 4:30pm**.

All the major suppliers are represented along with some of the fledgling ones – all with bargains for you. Whether you are an experienced or novice beekeeper, there will be plenty to interest you and encourage you in your hobby or livelihood.

A feature of this exhibition being local to us is bumping into other beekeeping buddies and taking the weight off your feet at the free lectures or in the restaurant nearby.

Tickets are now available for BeeTradex 2022 at a cost of £6 for adults if booked online (which avoids the queues); or at £7 on the day.

See you there!

Bernard Brown



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Compton Verney has a small apiary on site. Its volunteer beekeeper left in Autumn and they are now looking for a new volunteer to take over the care of the colonies. Compton Verney will supply clothing, equipment and training.

Please email Compton Verney's landscape manager, Fiona Tansey, if you are interested. There could be scope for a shared position if you feel it is too much for one person. fiona.tansey@comptonverney.org.uk



NEW MARQUEE

As the restrictions of Covid are relaxed and the first signs are appearing that a programme of summer displays is being revived, the Displays' team have just taken delivery of a new 4.5m long marquee to add to the well-used 6m and 3m ones, now 10 years old. Seen here being erected by members of the team to check it over, the colour should make it hard to miss. This addition to our kit, funded by a grant from the Co-op Local Community Fund, will provide the flexibility to accommodate our display activities to match the scale of the event as well as being able to support more than one event on the same day.



NEW OBS HIVE

The branch has acquired a new permanent observation hive very similar to that installed in the Market place Museum in Warwick. Made by a local (Coventry) craftsman, this two-framed, Oak hive is an ideal means to educate and inform the public about our girls.

BOOK NOW!



Spring 2022
Convention

Friday 8 - Saturday 9 – Sunday 10 April 2022

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Lectures, Workshops and Seminars covering a wide range of practical and scientific topics, directed at all levels of experience, presented by leading experts. Bumper Trade Show Saturday 9th

Speakers and Tutors include; Marin Anastasov, Mark Barnett, Shirley and Richard Bond, Norman Carreck, Lars Chittka, Celia Davis, Joyce Nisbet, Juliet Osborne, Julian Parker, Sara Robb, Nigel Semmence, Jo Widdicombe, Geraldine Wright, and more...

For further information, and to book from 31st January see the Spring Convention pages at www.bbka.org.uk

FOR SALE: STEAM WAX EXTRACTOR

Little used easi-steam wax extractor by Thornes - £40.

Contact Bernard Brown:
bernardnbrown@outlook.com



BUYING "HONEY" IN THE SHOPS



and businesses.

As background, Devon pointed out honey adulteration is a world wide problem and that currently 86% of honey consumed in the UK is imported, with some 36,000 tonnes from China alone. Articles in the press have highlighted that some cheap honey sold in the UK is harvested early, before it is ripe, and then adulterated and bulked out with rice, corn or other plant based sugars. Devon also pointed out that much Chinese honey is initially exported to intermediary countries, sometimes blended, and then sold on labelled as EU or non-EU honey. It is this that is flooding the UK market. Appropriate adequate labelling being an associated issue.

How do we they know it is adulterated? A

group of amateur and commercial beekeepers, The International Honey Authenticity Project, conducted studies in 2018 and 2020 by sending samples of supermarket brand honeys for analysing using Nuclear Magnetic Resonance at an accredited analytical laboratory in Germany. All were found to be adulterated with added sugars.

What about Trading Standards? Well, although complaints have been made no enforcement actions have been taken to date. The question of "which test?" methodology is appropriate is yet to be established within the marketplace, the currently Trading Standards approach being somewhat limited. This is complex problem as for example the US Honey Standard now uses 13 different tests to identify sophisticated bespoke adulterates used by fraudsters.

Clearly the group established by BBKA have much to do.

Chris Cox

At the most recent BBKA Annual Delegate Meeting three resolutions were brought forward by Devon Beekeepers, seconded by Somerset Beekeepers, to action BBKA to be more engaged on the issue of honey adulteration and the issue of "fake" honey. All three motions were passed as they directed BBKA to engage with Trading Standards, Government and the public on this issue. BBKA are already on the case having set up a working sub-group on Honey Adulteration. Brilliant!

The presentation by Devon Beekeepers was both forceful and convincing with much research to make the point. The question "How is it possible for honey to be sold at 69p per 454g jar?" clearly needs to be answered as it both undermines members own honey but also puts at risk UK commercial honey producers' livelihood

WLBK AGM – 17TH FEBRUARY

The 89th Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers Annual General Meeting is to be held via ZOOM on **Thursday 17th February 2022**. As usual the business for the meeting will be:

- The receipt and consideration of reports including references to the achievement of its charitable objects and of the Branch accounts for the previous year
- The Election of Officers and Committee Members.
- The appointment of an Independent Examiner.
- 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.
- Consideration of any proposal of other matter of which due notice has been given as set out below.

Any Member of the Branch wishing to make any proposal or raise any matter for discussion at the AGM must give the Branch Secretary (secretary@warleambees.org.uk) notice by Thursday 3rd February 2022 and this should be seconded by another Member.

The Agenda, along with the ZOOM details, will be circulated to Members on Thursday 10th February 2022.

Chris Cox

TRAINING & EDUCATION NOTES

Thanks to the sterling work done by the Apiary Team the Branch now has possibly the healthiest and potentially most productive colonies in the county – if not beyond! Given that the comb in all hives was replaced after the EFB episode, and all colonies now headed by 2021 queens, the apiary represents an excellent training resource.

Activities already planned for 2022 include:

INTRODUCTION TO BEEKEEPING (ITB)

This is traditionally a popular and enjoyable programme with a blend of practical and theory activities that enable newcomers to beekeeping to gain confidence in handling and understanding bees. We are running two back to back courses on the **2nd and 3rd April** and the **9th and 10th April**, with follow up training evenings on Tuesdays 6.00 – 8.00 from 19th April. The first weekend is now fully booked but there are still a few places on the 9th / 10th – details on our website.

TOWARDS THE 'BASIC'

It is an ambition this year to encourage more of our members to take the 'Basic' assessment. The BBKA describe the Basic as 'it merely lists the basic things which (sic) all beekeepers should know' so it should not be daunting for beekeepers with a year or more experience beyond ITB. Many Branches require members who instruct on training programmes to hold it. My own experience of taking it a few years ago (after 25 years or so of beekeeping!) was both enjoyable *and* instructive!

Our TTB programme will be held at Eathorpe Village Hall on **22nd and 29th March** and the **5th April** plus a one day practical (date tbc). Details on the Branch Website.

BEE BETTER AT....

In addition we are planning a series of small group training sessions on the theme of 'Bee Better At...' to encourage members to identify areas where they feel they need more knowledge and experience. These will be modelled on previous groups that have engaged with bee health and microscopy for example, using WhatsApp groups, visits to the training apiary and to members' own apiaries, timed to suit members of the group. Ideas put forward so far include swarm control, comb changing, managing honey flows. But what would you like to 'Bee Better At...'? Contact me or members of the Training Team with suggestions please!

Some notes from *'A Modern Bee Farm'* by S. Simmins (Published 1893):

On the use of gloves: *'While I regard gloves as a great hindrance to manipulation it is necessary that the novice should commence with something of the kind, just to give 'him' (sic) confidence. Thick woollen gloves soaked in vinegar, wrung out, will answer better than anything...'*

On obtaining a swarm: *'Good swarms of native bees can generally be bought from a cottager in May for 50s. (50p!).'*

However, despite the invention of nitrile and inflation it seems that the general principles haven't really changed that much!

Barry Meatyard

SOCIAL DISTANCING IN BEES

Although humans have practiced social distancing through the ages - for example, when the township of Alghero in Sardinia was suffering from an outbreak of bubonic plague in 1582 the inhabitants were required to carry canes 6ft in length to keep their distance from others - animals also can be observed isolating, or being ostracised, from the herd when ill or infected. I know from experience when checking our sheep that if one is far from the flock there is quite likely to be a health issue.

A form of social distancing has now been observed in honey bee colonies when under threat from disease or parasites according to a study by Michelina Pusceddu of the University of Sassari, Italy.

It was observed that colonies infected by parasites, in this case the ectoparasite *Varroa destructor*, set up their own form

of lockdown. The study focused on areas of the colony occupied by young workers and those frequented by older foraging bees. These were compared to *Varroa* free colonies. Waggle dances and grooming were studied. Normally (in a healthy colony) both activities occur throughout the hive but, in those infected by *Varroa*, waggle dances were restricted to the sides of the entrance. Grooming was concentrated in the very centre of the hive where it would be most beneficial around the brood area. The conclusion was that these colonies were isolating the brood and young workers from the potentially infected foragers in order to reduce infection rates.

Tim Newcombe

The original article written by Michelina Pusceddu in *Science Advances* can be read here: <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abj1398>

NEWS FROM CYBER SPACE

Over the recent months' work has been in hand to update the "County" web presence by a move to another hosting platform with a much-improved layout. This fresh-looking site acts as a pointer to the 8 branches, including Warwick and Leamington, that make up the 1000+ member Warwickshire Beekeepers (the registered charity that we are part).

This website has a Warwickshire wide diary and has a blog to keep members updated with what is happening in the County.

Please make a point of visiting it (warwickshirebeekeepers.org.uk) and by letting us know your thoughts (both positive and negative) it can develop further to meet the memberships wishes.

As an aside, during the year the branch committee took the decision to remove both our Facebook and Twitter presence following issues being raised over both ex-member access and social media management. As the level of use was minimal this decision was a pragmatic one to lessen any challenge and the branch committee intend to review the position in the future.

However, others are tweeting about some of our activities and one particular mention was the return of the Market Place Museum



bees in Warwick (as seen on the left).

As members will know the observation hive on the 1st floor of the museum has been in situ for 80 years. Mike Townshend has had the responsibility of maintaining this presence for many years (not the full 80 years I might add although I know it is some 15+ years) which is one of the ways the charity fulfils its education object for the Charity

Commissioners. To aid the visitors understanding when viewing the observation hive both Mike and Tanya (our editor) have put together seasonal explanation guides this year.

Another initiative agreed at the last branch committee meeting was the circulating of an aide-memoire flyer to all members listing key dates, facilities and main contact details.

Chris Cox

A DELVE INTO THE ARCHIVES

An illuminating record of the history of WLBK has been discovered in the vaults of the County Records office. Compiled by the late Brian Milward who also chronicled the history of our County Association, currently being serialised in WB, this new discovery charts the history of our Branch up until 1965. For this issue of Bee Talk, we will cover the period from the formation of the Branch up until the start of the Second World War.

It was 50 years after the establishment of the Warwickshire Bee Keepers' Association (1879) that demand for the creation of affiliated Branches was met. This was first mooted in 1893 but it took until 1929 for the first Branch to be recognised. This was Stratford upon Avon, followed in 1931 by Sutton Coldfield and North Birmingham Branch, Kings Heath and South Birmingham Branch. 1932 saw Solihull, Coventry (27th May), Nuneaton, and Warwick and Leamington founded.

It was on 9th July that beekeepers in this area met at Whitnash Rectory in order to set up this Branch where the Reverend Mr Bryan had his apiary following in the long tradition of clerical beekeepers.

A committee was formed of the great and the good and an AGM convened in October that year which, more-or-less, set the pattern for the future running of the Branch. At this meeting the County executive had asked for comments regarding the visits of experts and boundaries of the Branches. In those days the County provided an expert beekeeper who would periodically visit members' apiaries to provide help and education. WLBK's committee resolved that the visits of the expert were insufficient and decided to ask the

County for a list of approved, qualified experts who could be called upon, as required, at the Branch's expense. As far as boundaries were concerned the Branch resolved there would be no deliberate poaching of members from outside their boundaries in another Branch's area.

At the meeting, a Mr W. A. Cowles gave a lecture for a fee of 10s-6d (£40.00 at today's prices) not dissimilar to current rates paid). The cost of hiring a room at the YWCA was 5s-6d (£19 at today's prices) which again compares favourably with the £25 of today.

In 1935, the AGM was held at the offices of the Director of Education for Warwickshire County Council — namely Miss Ironside — who was a very keen Beekeeper and capable lady who, by virtue of her position, became a considerable asset to the Branch and the County Association particularly during the war years.

It was regretted that membership turnout for meetings was proportionally rather low (but that generally seems to have been the case throughout history!) and that the subscription rate was not paying for the services given to members, a situation that continued from time to time right up to the turn of the century, but which current management of Branch affairs has successfully tackled.

It is interesting to record that a member of the public claiming damages of E6- 1s-0d for a bee sting (equivalent to £475) was awarded E3 (£220) by the insurance company. I shudder to think what damages for such an incident would be today, but this episode serves to emphasise the need to belong to an Association where Public Liability Insurance is provided.

Next month we'll explore the war years.

Ivan A Perry

WE ARE NOT AN ISLAND: BIRMINGHAM & DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

The continuation of our endeavours to find out more about our sister branches within the County features a profile of Birmingham & District Beekeepers Association.

On June 5th 1935, a meeting was held in Kings Heath Park chaired by Mr George Handley. Following his opening remarks, a proposition was put forward to form an Association named Birmingham & District Beekeepers Association (B&DBKA).

At the 2nd AGM in March 1936 we were accepted into affiliation with the BBKA - Miss Japp was the delegate to the BBKA Council.

A "South Birmingham Beekeepers Association" had been formed as a branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers Association (WBKA) in 1931 and many well-known names are recorded in the minute books. When its the membership fell to 15, the secretary proposed that the branch be dissolved. However, following discussions and a suggestion from the County Chairman, it was agreed to make an informal approach to Solihull Branch to see if they would be agreeable to a merger. At an extraordinary General Meeting held on 9th January 1968 this proposition was to the membership, but a second proposition was made that an approach be made to B&DBKA to see if they would accept amalgamation with South Birmingham on the condition that the joint association became a branch of the WBKA and they requested the County to negotiate the deal. This resulted in the amalgamation with B&DBKA.

The many minute books we hold track the history of the Branch and, from the early days are beautifully hand-written, although sometimes difficult to decipher. They then progress to being printed on a Gestetner machine and latterly, with the age of the computer, an attractive presentation of documents are delivered!

We have selected some interesting comments from these minute books:-

WBKA

In 1941, B&DBKA declined an invitation from WBKA to join them but were willing to cooperate on equal terms as a separate Association we had many members on various borders of Staffordshire and Herefordshire.

In 1943 The West Midland Federation was formed consisting of B&DBKA, Stratford-on-Avon, Herefordshire and WBKA.

1965 we again declined to join WBKA as it was felt that there was no advantage when WBKA's membership from all branches only totalled 270.

1968 following the South Birmingham merger proposal, it

was proposed that we accept the merger and retain our title of B&DBKA and preferring to be affiliated to WBKA rather than a branch.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership was originally 5/- which entitled members to one expert visit, the Association paying the expert 2/- . There was also a 2/6d membership who would pay another 2/- for an expert visit plus travelling expenses. Were expert visits from bee inspectors or Master beekeepers? I don't know, but there are several references to expert beekeepers and of various exams being taken. BBKA capitation was recorded at 9d gradually increasing to 5/- in 1972 and currently £21 in 2022.

Members came from all over the country and recorded at 224 in 1942, presumably more than just local (Birmingham) members. Numbers have varied greatly during the years at times falling between 40 to 120.

Members were urged in 1949 by Mr Morris to enter the exams as it was 'an excellent medium for obtaining knowledge and increasing efficiency'. Through our Educational Coordinator, this still goes on today.

APIARY

In 1940, the opening of an Apiary in Kings Heath Park attracted 300 visitors and was opened by the Lord Mayor. It is evident that the apiary moved into Highbury Park very early on and probably, over the years, moved a couple more times due to vandalism and poor drainage of the site. The poor drainage remains today! Various names are recorded as apiary manager and following the merger in 1968 with South Birmingham Beekeepers Stan Dolphin's name began to appear!

HONEY SHOWS

Annually, the City of Birmingham held a large horticultural show over 2-3 days and B&DBKA ran the Honey competition.

In 1939 a subcommittee was formed for organising honey sections at many local honey shows - Weoley Hill Flower Show, Lewis's Annual Flower Show, City of Birmingham and possibly others. It was recorded in the minutes that the Birmingham show was the largest in the UK with entries exceeding the National on many occasions recording 773 entries from 22 classes in 1956 with entries coming from all over the country, while the National had 709 entries from 106 classes. We still hold an Annual Honey Show which is an Open Show and in 2021 we had over 200 entries from 21 classes with one member from Burton entering. We will continue to encourage other Associations to enter our

show and our own members to enter the County and National shows.

SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

From the start of the Association there has been the loaning of equipment with a small charge funding the purchasing of library books, monthly newsletters to the membership, which of late has found it difficult to find an editor, annual outings, during the season teaching sessions in the apiary, beginner beekeeping courses run twice a year as six weekly sessions, lectures in the

winter season, various workshops and setting up our website, all featuring in our support to our members.

Reports of EFB and AFB, not only country-wide, also affected our own apiary many years ago having a standstill order imposed. Following the arrival of Varroa in the 1990's, one of the treatments recorded was tobacco smoke. I'm not sure how this was done but I am imagining the sight of beekeepers lighting up a cigarette and blowing into the hive (ah ah). I wonder how many smokers we had then!

Jan Willetts, Membership Secretary B&DBKA

HINTS & TIPS

- The weather in February is uncertain, but on warmer sunny days the bees will be venturing out. Check the entrance for dead bees. These will be the older winter bees that have died naturally. It is a good idea to clear the entrance of these corpses to facilitate the movement of bees to and from the hive. If the bees are bringing in pollen then mouse guard can be left off as this can knock off the pollen loads which are vital at this time of year.

- It is a good idea to replace floors and the ideal time is in the middle of a warm day in February/March, when some bees are flying. A clean entrance block should be put in place to help keep the brood warm and repel any robbers.

- If you are thinking about a new addition to the garden why not consider a Japanese Quince?

Chaenomeles japonica (right) is a shrub that produces deep orange flowers from February, providing vital early pollen and nectar. It can be trained against a wall, used as hedging or ground cover and later on produces edible fruit ideal for jam making-it's got it all!



- Get ahead of that rush of jobs by making up some fresh frames with foundation, so when you make your first spring colony inspections, you have them ready to change whilst the brood nest is still small. Old brood frames, if left to become black can harbour disease and so are best replaced. Cell debris can build up in older foundation which can lead to smaller bees and could put the queen off laying in them.

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
OF WARWICKSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
REG CHARITY NO. 500276
WWW.WARLEAMBEES.ORG.UK