



# BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

## SPRING IS AROUND THE CORNER



The Hazel catkins are out in February. While a sign that Spring is on the way don't be tempted to open the hives.

**I** have Spring panic - I have not done all my box cleaning, frame making and re-waxing. And there are signs of Spring. Don't be tempted to inspect those colonies yet, though. This is the danger point - most colonies lost over the winter die from the start of February through March - they starve. Now is the time when your bees will be running out of stores and all the hazel pollen in the world is no good on its own. There is no nectar flow so now is the time for fondant feeding. Pop a block over the hole in the cover board!

Do not do your first inspections yet - it is still winter - wait for warmer March days, but you can use your varroa boards to see what is falling through and see signs that brood rearing is increasing.

Should you feed pollen supplement or substitute (often sold with fondant)? You do not need to but might justify it if you are preparing colonies for early rape. My colonies are bringing in plenty. If you do feed pollen, make sure you keep going until they are bringing in large amounts or you will suffer brood loss. It can get expensive unless you have used a pollen trap in the summer

and frozen their own pollen.

### **BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH:**

- If you did not add woodpecker mesh you might want to fill any holes promptly.
- Continue to heft or weigh regularly to check your colonies have plenty of stores.
- Pop on a block of fondant if the colony is light- the first colonies will be running out of stores anytime now.
- Check your entrances are clear, particularly behind mouseguards- they can become blocked with dead bees at this time of year.
- A good week of frosts is the ideal time to move your colonies if you need to - you do not need to observe the "three miles/three years" rule.
- Frosty days are good times for frame cleaning, box flaming and wood treatments. Collect all the wax scraps together for melting- it can all be traded in for new foundation.

**Jane Medwell**

# CHAIR'S FEBRUARY MESSAGE



WLBK plans to reintroduce Bee Safaris in the Summer. These were taken from our 2012 Bee Safari. (Images courtesy: Tanya Weaver)



Look out for details in the Branch calendar on our website and in BeeTalk.

Work is continuing on the WLBK library and websites to improve the services available to you. Many thanks to everyone involved behind the scenes for the expertise you bring. In the BBKA national world, the Annual Delegates Meeting

took place in January. Propositions brought by associations around the country covered global warming, the approach to BBKA examination- taking, adrenaline auto-injectors and local honey. These issues will now be considered by Trustees. Watch out for updates over the coming months in BBKA News, via emails and on the BBKA website.

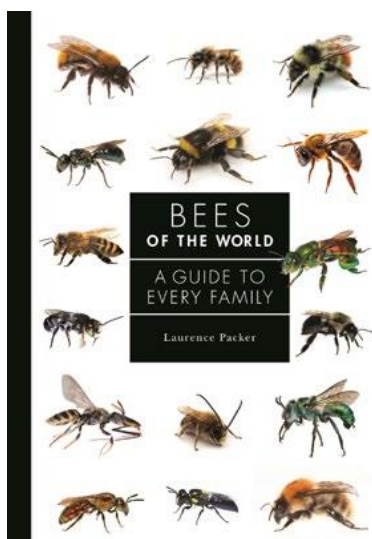
**Suzanne Bennett**  
WLBK chair



The beekeeping year is shaping up well. We'll have the branch Annual General Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> February at Kings Hill Nursery at 7.30 pm. The 'official' part will only take around half an hour, then we can look forward to a talk on photography.

There is much to look forward to on the third Thursdays of the month until April. In March, Alan Deeley is to talk on Small Scale Wax Preparation while in April you may be intrigued enough to come to Keith Durk's talk on Bees and Elephants. Looking forward to the summer months, there are plans for Bee Safaris.

## WLBK LIBRARY UPDATE



If you're in need of a book or two to take you through to the spring, Warwick and Leamington branch can help. I have recently taken over the role as librarian and enjoying the opportunity to discover the wonderful books that are available for the branch members to borrow. There will be a selection of books to loan at branch meetings at [Kings Hill Nursery](#) (CV3 6PS) on the third Thursday of the month during the winter programme of meetings.

On a separate but related note, we have been donated a collection of beekeeping books, some of which may be rare by the daughter of the late Bernard Collins, who was secretary of WBKA for some years, many years back. These will be a wonderful addition to the library. Thank you Debbie Collins.

The last piece of library news for this month is the gift to the library of a brand new book by Laurence Packer titled 'Bees of the world' (left). Princeton Press have recently published this book and are keen to have it reviewed by bee enthusiasts. It is certainly beautifully illustrated and will be available to look through at the next meeting.

**Jackie Ledwidge**  
WLBK Librarian





# JOIN US AT WLBK'S 90<sup>TH</sup> AGM

A major event of the Warwick and Leamington Branch calendar is the Annual General Meeting (AGM) diarised for Thursday 16th February at Kings Hill Nursery, starting at 7.30pm. This is the Branch's 90th Annual General Meeting and the 1st under the new governance of the Warwickshire Beekeepers Association (WBKA), now that it is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

A CIO. What's that you may ask? Well, this is the preferred charitable structure of the Charity Commission for an organisation of our type and has a significant feature of removing the personal liabilities that fell on the WBKA trustees (Bernard Brown and Chris Cox for our Branch) under the previous one. The BBKA has a similar new structure. Much work in making the changes over the last two years has been done by the WBKA to effect the change, in particular our members, Bernard Brown and Gill Donaldson on Governance: and Jane Brown on Finance/Banking.

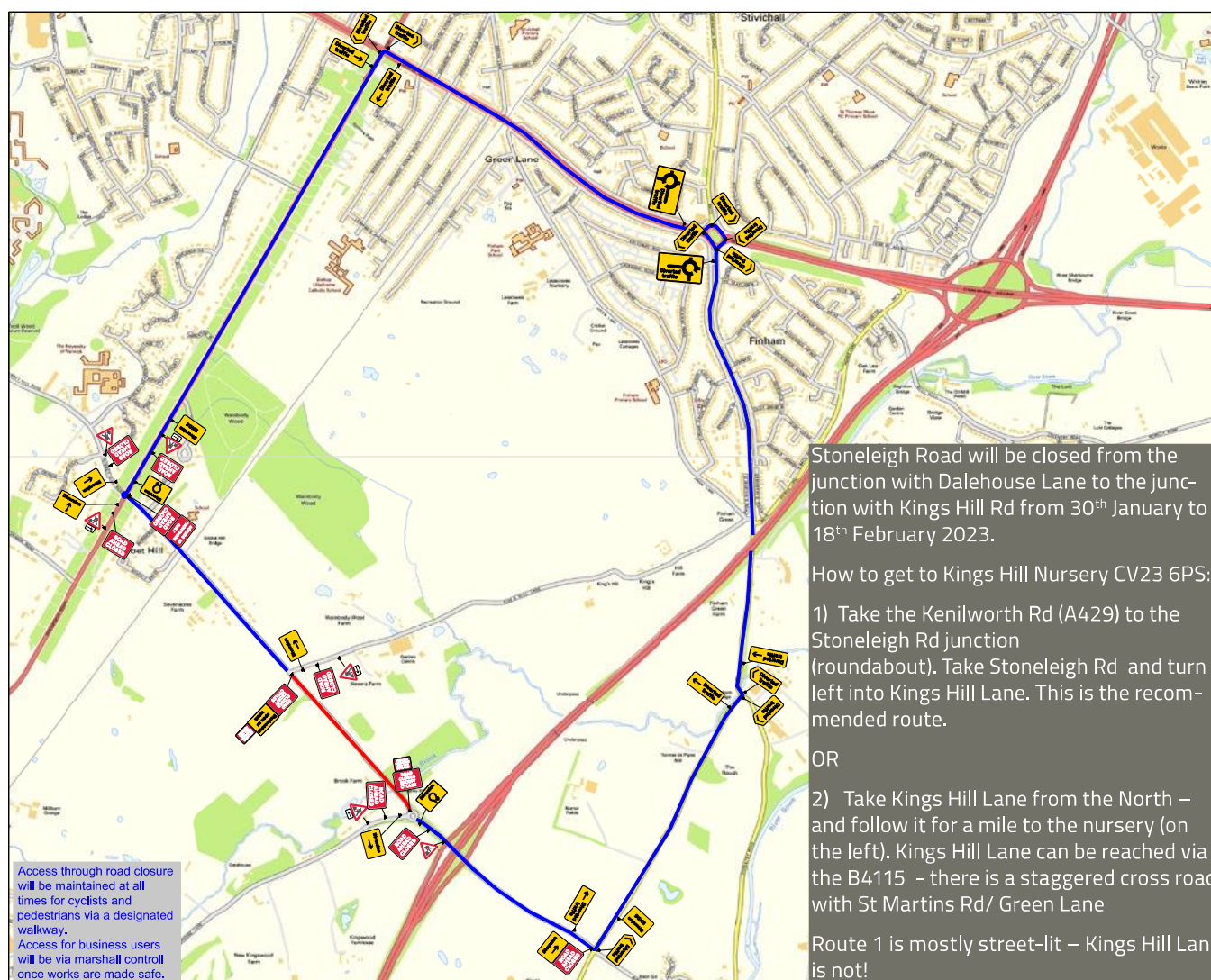
One good feature of the new structure is that the conduct of the Branch aspects of the WBKA constitution are unchanged for those under the previous constitution. As a result, the

requirement for at least 25 members to be present at the AGM for it to be quorate is unchanged. Unfortunately, it appears road works are planned at the junction of Dalehouse Lane and Stoneleigh Road as part of the A46 bridge works. What we know is that the only access on to Kings Hill Lane will be from the North, Gibbet Hill or Finham Green. There will be no access from Stoneleigh as the bridge over the A46 will be closed (see below).

The AGM agenda will include the final accounts of the Branch for the year to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022. On the stroke of midnight on the 30th November the Branch became part of the new charity (the CIO). The papers for the meeting will be emailed out to members and some hard copies will be available on the evening.

The good news is that the AGM will immediately be followed by a talk on photography with the aim of helping members, to possibly feed into the Branch websites, which need updating, and entering the Honey Show class.

**Chris Cox**



# WLBK MEMBERS' MEETINGS

**D**ave Bonner, Master Beekeeper, set himself three challenges when speaking to members at a rather cold Kings Hill Nursery in January.

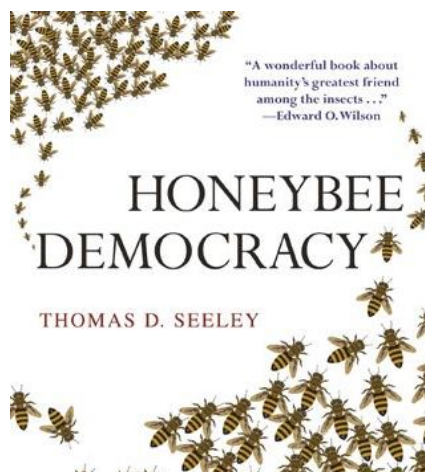
Dave's talk, based on Tom Seeley's book, *Honey Bee Democracy*, explored how scout bees identify a suitable nest site for a swarming colony, communicate its location to other scout bees and reach a consensus on the best choice of new home. In a series of experiments, Tom Seeley demonstrated that scout bees made many visits to cavities, which might provide a home, exploring the size by pacing their extent. Once a scout was satisfied she had found somewhere suitable she communicated to others - another use of the waggle dance! Scouts bullied other dancers, butting them and peeping to stop them suggesting alternatives. Their democracy was even more unruly than ours! Once (or if) scouts reached consensus on a suitable site, they led the swarm there, flying fast and high, slowing down only as they approached it.

Although this answered many questions about swarm behaviour, there was much to think about. How could some swarms find a new home so quickly? And what happened if there was no consensus about any new site? And which way did bees build comb in their new home? Cold way or warm way? Apparently neither, they orient their comb magnetically, to match that in their previous home but will not automatically reject a bait hive, facing a different direction. I am sure everyone agreed that this was a very good way to spend a January evening. And Dave was very pleased with the generosity of members for Bees Abroad. All three of Dave's challenges were well and truly met.

**Feb Meeting: How to take better photos of your bees**  
**Thurs 16<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at Kings Hill Nursery, 7.30 pm**

On 16<sup>th</sup> February after the AGM, Barry Meatyard will be sharing photography tips. You do not need a fancy camera, you can take great pictures with your phone. There will be cake! Please refer to page 3 on how to get to Kings Hill Nursery amidst current traffic restrictions!

**Judith Masson**



At January's meeting Dave Bonner (top) discussed *Honeybee Democracy*



## CUSTODY CHANGES

The custodianship of the Branch's Projection equipment has changed and is now being held by Judith Masson; from whom it may be borrowed to support Beekeeping presentations etc.

[judith.masson@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:judith.masson@bristol.ac.uk)

Sourcing, vetting and making out-apiaries available to members is now being undertaken by Alistair Walker

[alistair.walker@btinternet.com](mailto:alistair.walker@btinternet.com)

## WLBK RENEWAL REMINDER

A number of members may have received a membership renewal reminder emailed recently by Membership Services. This notification is being sent out to those members who have not yet renewed for 2023. If you have already renewed, please disregard this request. If you haven't renewed and would still like to be a member of our branch please do so ASAP.

## SAVE THE DATE: 13<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2023



WLBK is running a training day for members on food hygiene, use of our Extraction Unit and labelling your honey at Eathorpe Village Hall on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Andy Pedley, author of *Food Safety for Beekeepers*

(Northern Bee Books, 2022) will be speaking. This is a FREE event but must be booked via our website. There will be a further message when booking opens.

**Suzanne Bennett, Clive Joyce and Judith Masson**



# ON WITH THE SHOW(S)

**F**or those who missed The Beekeeping Equipment Show formerly known as Bee Tradex at Stoneleigh Park earlier this month, despair not. Two more shows are planned over the next few weeks.

The first is **The Beekeeping Show** – a new event being held on **25<sup>th</sup> February** at the Telford International Centre, Shropshire well within striking distance of our patch. It is a one-day trade show organised by a team of mainly Bee Farmers but of interest to all beekeepers regardless of, scale experience etc. Entrance costs £10 and may be booked online at Tickets on sale now. Visit [thebeekeepingshow.co.uk](http://thebeekeepingshow.co.uk).

Following shortly after this is the **2023 BBKA Convention**. This is a gathering of the nation's beekeepers held over the weekend of **Friday 21<sup>st</sup> – Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March** at Harper Adams University, near Newport, Shropshire.

It covers all aspects of beekeeping delivered in the form of top

quality lectures presented by internationally, as well as nationally, renowned experts, often at the cutting edge of research.

Workshops, demonstrating beekeeping crafts, are also run by expert proponents of these skills. Then there is the one-day trade show, which is so much a part of the attraction of the convention, where UK beekeeping companies (and some from overseas) peddle their wares, often at special prices. Ticket prices vary depending on the number of days for which attendance and types of events are required. Booking is now open and can be accessed on the Spring Convention Page of the BBKA website: [www.bbka.org.uk](http://www.bbka.org.uk).

If any member intends attending either of these events and is willing to collect items for members who can't make it, please let me know on [bernardbrown@outlook.com](mailto:bernardbrown@outlook.com) and I will try to match you.

**Bernard Brown**



## BOOK NOW!



**Friday 21 - Saturday 22 – Sunday 23 April 2023**

**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 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Speakers and Tutors include:** Randy Oliver (virtually), Samuel Ramsey (virtually), Marin Anastasov, Martin Bencsik, Shirley & Richard Bond, Giles Budge, Stephen Case-Green, Julie Coleman, Michael Collier, Lynfa Davies, Stephen Fleming, Mike Garratt, Fani Hatjina, John Hendrie, Luke & Suzie Hutchinson, Lynne Ingram, Angela Kirk, Stephen Martin, Jane Medwell, Jenny Morgan, Chris Park, Tom Pope, Sara Robb, Anne Rowberry, Debbie Smith, Victoria Soroker, Sean Stephenson, Oliver St.John, Jane Stout, Jim & Val Vivian-Griffiths, Alison Wakeman and more.....

For further information, **and to book** from 30<sup>th</sup> January  
see the Spring Convention pages of [www.bbka.org.uk](http://www.bbka.org.uk)

# DALEHOUSE LANE APIARY UPDATE

A major piece in the jigsaw that is the organisation of the A46 Roadworks project was slotted into place in January. On a sub-zero Saturday, with freezing fog, four of our more hardy members watched as the steel and concrete bridge, which has been built up on land immediately beside the east-bound carriageway of the A46, inched its way, turning through ninety degrees to span both carriageways, at 5km/hour towards the supporting abutments. It was an amazing feat of engineering and organisation .....and what's more it fitted!

This 760 tonnes structure was hoisted up and transported on

two motorised bogeys each with 64 wheels to spread the load on the A46's road surface. The bogeys alone weighed 1000 tonnes. This is a critical operation in the progress of the A46 roadworks project for our re-occupation of our former apiary. Once in place and operational, this bridge will enable that part of the scheme immediately adjacent to our apiary to proceed. The latest completion date for the project is May 2023. We vacated the site in 2017. In between the chattering teeth, one member observer mused "760 tonnes is a tad heavier than my supers" ..... speak for yourself came the reply!

Ivan A Perry

## FANCY VOLUNTEERING AT OUR TASTER DAYS?



Many of you may have experienced a taster day in your early exploits into beekeeping and hopefully it helped you make the choice to enter the craft. As you know, the day consists of a morning talk giving a basic information on bees the history and hives. Then, weather permitting, there is a practical opportunity to see the bees up close.

Spaces are available for anybody who has an interest in finding out more about bees. I'm sure I'm talking to already experienced beekeepers, but you may have friends, work colleagues or relatives who have an interest. They are welcome to attend our taster days in May or September 2023. To enrol, please follow [this link](#) or go to the club website. Gift certificates are available for those special occasions or surprises.

To help us with providing the taster days, we are also seeking presenters and helpers to assist with the talks and practical sessions. Presenting is not as onerous as it appears and it's all carried out in a very friendly and informal atmosphere with

delegates always interested in what you have to say. We have guides to help with the preparation of talks so no real previous experience is necessary.

Presenters are needed to cover talks entitled The Honey Bee, The Hive, What Bee Keepers Actually do (presentations are available for these). A general helper for the day is great in making the day run smoother (someone to help welcome the delegates and ensure the drinks are available throughout the day and generally be another person to whom delegates can turn with questions). We will also need helpers for the practical session in the training apiary (the number of people we require will depend on how many delegates wish to attend). IF you can help with any of the above or would like to discuss this further, please do get in touch with on the email addresses below.

Paul Day [paul@paulday.co.uk](mailto:paul@paulday.co.uk)

Jane Richmond [jane@j-richmond.co.uk](mailto:jane@j-richmond.co.uk)



# EXOTIC HIVES SERIES – MODIFIED DADANT HIVE

**M**ost of us keep our bees in either Modified Nationals or 14x12 nationals but there is a plethora of other types out there, each with different features so we thought we would run a series of articles featuring one of these each month. We start this month with the Dadant hive or more precisely, the Modified Dadant hive, often abbreviated to MD.

Charles Dadant emigrated from France to America in 1863. He invented the original Dadant hive which accommodated 10 large frames.

The Modified Dadant (MD) was developed in 1917 from the original Dadant hive and consists of a larger brood box to accommodate 11 slightly smaller frames which are similar to those used in the Jumbo Langstroth hive.

This arrangement gives 93,500 brood cells, making the MD hive the largest standard hive in use in this country. The external dimensions of the brood chamber are 20" x 18½" x 11¼" high, and like the Langstroth, the MD is top bee space with the short lugged frames resting on a rebate cut into the thickness of the narrower sides. Note that the Dadant brood frames are at 1½" spacing (38mm).

Shallow frames are 6¼" high and a super will hold 11 Hoffman frames or 10 Manley frames.

HIVE DATA	LANGSTROTH	JUMBO LANGSTROTH	DADANT
Brood frame	17 9/16" x 9 1/8"	17 9/16" x 11 1/4"	17 9/16" x 11 1/4"
Super frame	17 9/16" x 5 3/8"	17 9/16" x 5 3/8"	17 9/16" x 6 1/4"
Frames / brood box	10	10	11
Cells / brood box	61,000	85,000	93,000
Lug length	5/8"	5/8"	5/8"



Brother Adam at Buckfast Abbey in Devon designed the Buckfast Dadant hive in the 1920s. This consists of 12 standard Dadant frames in the brood chamber and is bottom bee space. The sloping roof design throws off rainwater more efficiently than a flat roof but still maintains a flat surface for resting hive parts on (see diagram). When taken to the heather the hives are held together with a metal rod down the centre.

Four of these hives are placed in a square pattern with the entrances oriented north, east, south and west with the beekeeper working the hives from the centre of the square.

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# HINTS AND TIPS



- This time of year, watch at the hive entrance to see if you can spot bees carrying pollen, which is a good sign that the queen is in residence and laying so there are larvae to be fed. If nothing is happening then check that the hive entrance is clear and not blocked with dead bees on the inside, that are stopping the live ones getting out. If you can, it is better to fit the mouse guard with the holes at the top then the bees can get out more easily by climbing over any dead ones that are by the entrance.
- When feeding with fondant rotate the crown board so the feed hole is over the cluster, making it just that bit easier for the bees to access the food.
- By now you will probably have got spare equipment ready for housing the swarms as they occur. A good idea, to make life a bit easier when doing inspections, put a smear of Vaseline on the runners of the brood box. This deters the bees from propolising the runners and makes the manipulation of the frames that bit easier.
- If you are taking more walks then the chances are your boots are looking a bit worse for wear (like these ones above). This easy recipe will rejuvenate and protect the leather and possibly put a spring into your step as well!

## BEESWAX DUBBIN

60g lard

30g beeswax

10g cod liver oil

Melt the lard in a pan over a water bath

Add the beeswax and stir until melted

Add the cod liver oil and stir well

Pour into suitable container to cool.

I have found this stays soft and easy to use if kept in a warm room. If it becomes too hard to use just warm by the radiator (the dubbin not you!)

If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to [h.essex211@gmail.com](mailto:h.essex211@gmail.com)

**Helen Essex**



The editor of Bee Talk is Tanya Weaver.  
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