



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

WELL AND TRULY WHIPPED



Our merry band of *whip*-pers

It is not often that Bee Talk trumpets an occasion where WLBK incurs a good whipping but that is what happened on a crisp, clear, and unseasonable, but nonetheless welcome, gloriously sunny Sunday in February.

It all happened at our Dalehouse Lane apiary where a dozen or so volunteers, including our newest member, Fran Teton-Filtz, took on the task of planting, staking and adding plastic spiral rabbit and deer protection to some 300+ hedging plants.

These *whips* of native species such as hawthorn, blackthorn field maple and Dogwood – all providing early season forage for pollinators – were generously donated by Balfour Beatty, the contractor who is building HS2 a few hundred metres further down DaleHouse lane, so

we did not even need to have a *whip*-round to buy them.

Not only that, but Balfour Beatty staff even carried out the initial planting of some of the *whips* as part of their staff development programme. Plenty were, however, left for our working party to complete. Working in pairs – one digging the hole and the other inserting and heeling in the *whips* – the mission was completed in one and a half hours well ahead of schedule despite a not inconsiderable amount of bee talk. There was certainly no need to crack the *whip*!

Bernard Brown



SPRING IS AROUND THE CORNER

I know Spring is coming because the microscopy group have started sending excited Whatsapp messages about pollen slides. The hellebore, hazel and crocus is out and our bees will be collecting pollen in warm periods.

But let's not get carried away - there are going to be some arctic blasts and our key role is colony protection now. Winter losses are usually either varroa or starvation. So heft! If your colony feels light and you can feed fondant, fondant with pollen supplement or granulated sugar with water - it's too cold for syrup.

Put a block of fondant on the crown board, over a feeding hole and under the roof. This still leaves a gap between bees and fondant but it's probably better than opening up the colony.

To feed fondant and pollen: If you have frozen pollen, just knead the pollen in first and then put it on top. Commercial supplements are usually pollen and soya (but some have animal protein in). If you start supplementing you have to keep doing this till Spring - you can't stop or the brood will suffer. It's only worth it if you want to boost the colony early for OSR - otherwise they will get plenty themselves.

A traditional feed is a 2lb bag of sugar with a slit in one side, a small cup of water poured in and then placed (slit down) over the feeding hole on the crown board, under the roof.

Keep warm - I'm cleaning and flaming.

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.
- Feed 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.
- Frosty days are good times for moving hives, frame cleaning, box flaming and wood treatments. Collect all the wax scraps together for melting- it can all be traded in for new foundation.
- The last few days of snow saw me finally stack supers of frames (with comb in) outside to get a good chilling. Just make sure they are strapped down!
- Don't forget to sign up to our towards the Basic sessions or the Honeybee Health sessions. Warwickshire will shortly advertise a Beyond the Basic Course and some NBU disease days - so look out for those.
- Try not to get TOO excited by the hellebores, snowdrops and crocuses yielding the first pollen!

CAN YOU HELP US PRODUCE A NEW LOGO FOR WLBK?

We need a new logo for our banners, letterhead, website etc. It needs to reflect our status as a branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers Association (our CIO).

There are some features it has to have:

- It needs to be scalable (big for banners, small for slides, letterheads and t-shirts)
- It needs to show Warwick and Leamington Branch and Warwickshire Beekeepers Association - to reflect our status as part of WBKA.
- It needs to be recognisable and memorable.

There are also things we can't have - it can't have photographic material, copyright material or anything belonging to another organisation.

We are asking members to send in their drawings to secretary@warleambees.org.uk.

We can get some of them professionally drawn and conduct a vote of members, including the old logo and the option to use the Warwickshire logo.

You get to choose - but we need some more ideas to choose from.

Below are some examples from other Warwickshire Branches. Sutton Coldfield (bottom left) have their own logo while Solihull and Nuneaton just use the Warwickshire logo. There are also three examples of our old logo and how it's used.



We hope this gives you ideas. Please send in your thoughts and designs - we'll update you next month.

Jane Medwell
WLBK chair

BBKA SPRING CONVENTION 2025

For those who are new to the convention, this is a three day event over the weekend of **4-6th April** organised by beekeepers for beekeepers. It is held at Harper Adams University near Newport Shropshire. The atmosphere is friendly, with places to have a coffee and catch up with beekeepers you know, and to meet beekeepers you don't know - yet! It consists of 24 lectures from top-flight speakers from around the world, some academic, others hands-on beekeepers and all share their up-to-date knowledge and expertise on things "honey bee".

There are also workshops demonstrating and practising a wide range of related skills and a one-day trade show where old favourites and new start-ups offer bargains galore.

To find out more you can purchase tickets from [TicketSource](#) or by scanning the QR code on the image below.

Car sharing can be arranged.

Bernard Brown



Bookings open Noon 27 Jan!



Spring 2025 Convention

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Friday 4th – Sunday 6th April 2025
Bumper Trade Show Saturday 5th

20+ Lectures & 70+ Workshops/Seminars

Wristband ticket prices held at 2023 prices
 Trade Show only tickets just £6 on the day

Programme, FAQs & Bookings:
www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Just a reminder that after the **14th February** your WLBK membership will automatically lapse and you will have to re-apply to access the benefits of membership.

If you can't find your renewal email, then contact lizdinks@hotmail.co.uk

When you have completed the form, please submit it and make your payment as soon as possible.

We are unable to accept payment without the completed form.

If it is your intention not to renew, it would be appreciated if you could let us know on the email above.

We really don't want to lose you, but we can't keep you unless you renew your membership.

Val Dillon, Treasurer

Liz Gurney, Membership Secretary

WEBSITE MANAGER

Our current website manager is standing down, so we are now seeking a volunteer from amongst the membership to take over this role.

The site is constructed using Wordpress and is hosted on REG123.

Do you or a family member or, even, a non-bee-keeping colleague have the necessary expertise, interest and enthusiasm to support the Branch by taking on this role?

If so, please contact Chris Cox (secretary@warleambees.org.uk) to find out more about it.

OUT APIARIES

There is an exciting new opportunity for Out Apiaries on a large farm close to Radford Semele. The site has good security and access with excellent forage potential and, as it is a large farm, can accommodate more than one beekeeper and numerous colonies. In addition to the apiaries on the farm, the owner is also interested in setting up a "Bee Shed" which would be an interesting project. For further details contact alistair.walker@btinternet.com. A schedule of all available out apiaries is on the WLBK website.

WLBK MEMBERS' NEWS



The Lavender Farm in the summer and the winter (below)

At our January WLBK members' meeting we had a talk from Ian Jamie from Warwickshire Lavender Farm in Bubbenhall. He established his lavender farm in 2019, and it has become, in his own words, a 'monster hobby'.

Ian and five old school friends – the Lav Boys – planted over 14,000 plug plants and created a little bit of Provence in Warwickshire. To prolong the season, Ian grows three types of lavender – Folgate or Old English, Maillette, a variety which produces exceptional quality oil and Grosso, which is highly fragrant.

Running the farm involves a lot of work, all those plants have to be pruned each year and the grass paths between the plans have to be mown each week in the summer – a 5 hour job for Ian's wife, Pippa! As well as the lavender field which can be enjoyed by visitors in the season, Ian has built a business extracting lavender oil, which is made into soaps, creams and scented candles. There is even a café, (open on Saturdays throughout the year), a social enterprise with profits to Ian's chosen charities.

If you haven't been to the Warwickshire Lavender Farm in Watery Lane you should definitely go. Indeed, the club will arrange an early evening visit in the summer when the lavender is in flower and the bees (mainly bumbles) are sinking their long tongues in the delicious nectar.

Ian and the Farm starred on the BBC One Show in September 2024 – here is a link to the [clip](#). If you want to buy any of Ian's lavender products you can order via their [online shop](#).

On the evenings 18th and 19th July 2025 there will be live music – book tickets through [Eventbrite](#).



February Meeting: Thursday 20th February AGM and Beekeepers' Any Questions?

Following the AGM there will be a light-hearted edition of that popular Radio 4 programme Any Questions. On the panel we will have Becky Tabram, beginner beekeeper, Terry Dillon, beekeeping husband and Jane and Bernard Brown, a couple with different approaches to their common hobby. To find out about their disasters, their tips and their successes come with your questions or send them in advance to judith.masson@bristol.ac.uk

The AGM needs to be quorate so there will be more and better cake than usual!

Judith Mason
WLBK Meetings Secretary



YLH – THE LATEST BUZZ

The first draft of this article reported that, thankfully, there was not much to report this month other than that our fellow beekeepers in the South East are preparing their spring campaign of queen trapping. They are aiming to place a trap in each of the ordnance survey's kilometre grid squares.

Since then there has been a confirmed sighting in Shropshire. The YLH was found in a consignment of shallots imported from France. It has been collected by the NBU and sent for analysis. We are pretty sure that this is a stowaway from the continent, but DNA analysis will confirm this. If it is found that it is related to one of those found in the UK in the past, we shall be in a pretty pickle. This just goes to show that we cannot relax our efforts to combat this menace.

Here in Warwickshire, the AHAT is meeting just after the copy date for this month's WB to establish a proportionate response to the threat as it develops in 2025 in both our and the surrounding

counties.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency who manage the National Bee Unit has written to the BBKA expressing their appreciation of the efforts beekeepers are making to prepare for and actively participate in this campaign. This relationship is crucial to the successful containment of this unwelcome visitor

Don't forget, we still need volunteers to act as verifiers of suspected sightings so please seriously consider whether you can help. If so, please contact your Branch AHAT co-ordinator. Liz Bates, bates.liz@outlook.com, for more details.

We are still keen to make presentations to organisations about identifying and reporting sightings of the YLH, so if you have any suggestions as to who might be interested, please let me know on bernardnbrown@outlook.com and I'll follow the lead up.

Bernard Brown
County AHAT co-ordinator

SWARMLINE VOLUNTEERS

Longer serving members of the branch will recall the days when we volunteered to man the BBKA phones, fielding calls from the public during the swarm season to avoid disrupting the work of the office. They will also recall, no doubt some of the bizarre conversations we had with oftentimes agitated callers. One such was a lady who reported "I have bees going in and out of my roof and I've got grandchildren!!" Somewhat bemused by the connection between the two, the advice in the first instance was not to let her grandchildren play on the roof!

It has been a few years since the BBKA requested volunteers to occupy one of these seats and, in the meantime, the whole process has been revamped taking advantage of more modern technology. Nowadays, we can provide this valuable service to the public from the comfort of our own homes. Calls to the BBKA are routed to the volunteers own phone from where they can dispense advice on the best course of action. The volunteers phone number is NOT disclosed to the caller. Full details of how the system works and how to register for this service which, incidentally, does much for the perception of beekeepers in the eyes of the public, can be found by following this link. [Swarmline 2025 - Google Docs](#).

This will be a short term commitment with timings to suit yourself. Volunteers are being recruited throughout the country and so it is unlikely to be either onerous or intrusive. Please give it a try. It really is quite fun.

Ivan A Perry



JAM JARS, CANS AND VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



Clean jam jars and empty ring-pull style cans are needed for children's craft activities.

Each year over 350 children from local primary school visit the BBKA in Stoneleigh to learn about pollinators, especially bees and what they can do to help bees. The children all sow bean seeds in jam jars with blotting paper and make bug hotels with sticks in tin cans. This means the BBKA needs lots of jars and cans!

Please help by saving suitable jars (wide enough so children don't get their hands trapped inside) and without labels, and cans without sharp edges. You can bring your cans and jars to our AGM or monthly meetings or contact Judith Masson (judith.masson@bristol.ac.uk) when you have a large stash!

The BBKA also needs volunteers to support their education programme for primary schools.

For most weeks in the summer term classes of children, mainly from years 4-6 (ages 9-11 years) spend a day at the BBKA in Stoneleigh. In the morning they hear a talk about bees and

pollination, try on bee suits and do craft activities. They spend their afternoon in the BBKA garden with more activities and looking inside a beehive from behind the mesh of the BBKA shed. At the end of the day each child goes home full of new things they have learnt, a bag of items they have made and a big smile. The children love these trips - the feedback is amazing 'the best day ever', 'we LOVE bees and honey.' Creating an educational and fun time requires a lot of helpers with a lot of energy to show children what to do and answer all their questions.

Could you help? You need to want to work with children, and be available from 9.15 am to 3pm for a few sessions between April and mid-June (mainly Tuesdays to Thursdays). If you want to know more before committing, speak to one of the existing helpers: Sue Cooper, Bernard and Jane Brown or Judith Masson.

You must be willing to undergo an enhanced DBS check. If you are interested, please contact Leigh Sidaway at BBKA (Gen.manager@bbka.org.uk)

Judith Masson

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. 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!) or put the jar in a bowl of hot water.



Now it is your chance! If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to h.essex211@gmail.com

Helen Essex



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

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