



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

REPORT FROM WLBK'S 90TH AGM

The recent Annual General Meeting (AGM) was the first where the membership could come together since the end of the Covid-19 restrictions. Yes, we had the difficulty of getting to Kings Hill Nurseries' due to the ongoing roadworks on Dalehouse Lane but 27 members were present and a further 13 tendered their apologies. Clearly the bait of the photography seminar following the AGM by Barry Meatyard worked wonders to achieve the required quorum.

Suzanne Bennett, as chair, quickly reviewed the year and the fact that we are now operating normally with our members' training, practical beekeeping support and public education very much to the fore (see more about this from our Chair on page 2).

In the absence of Val Dillon, our treasurer going to quite exceptional lengths to be away by holidaying on the other side of the world, Jane Brown reviewed the year end accounts which showed the very healthy management of the branch affairs. The accounts had been signed off by our Independent Examiner, David Cox, for onward submission to Warwickshire Beekeeper for consolidation with the other branches and submission to the Charity Commissioners.

The overview of the financial picture for the year is shown below. It should be noted that the 2020/21 year was affected by Covid-19 and the increases in running costs and receipts reflect a return to 'situation normal'.

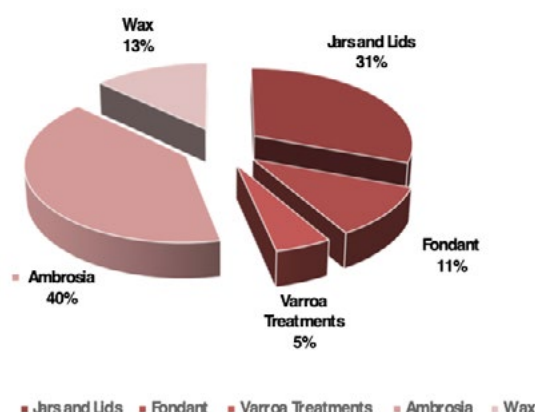
WLBK - Branch Accounts for the year ended 30th November 2022

	2021/22	2020/21
	£k	£k
Total Receipts	13.06	9.42
Running Costs	10.23	7.64
Equipment Purchases	6.11	1.43
Net position	-3.28	0.35
Bank balances brought forward	38.14	37.79
Bank balances carried forward	34.86	38.14

One service that is hidden in the above figures is the current co-purchasing arrangements which procured some £17,600 beekeeping consumables for members for distribution on a "not for profit basis". The breakdown of the value of each commodity provided is shown below for information (some 9 tonne of Ambrosia distributed to members).

WLBK CO-OP INCOME 2021/22

TOTAL £17.6k



The co-purchasing team led by Clive Joyce were thanked by Suzanne on behalf of the members for what is a significant management task (finance, ordering, stock management, distribution, etc) and the substantial time commitment and physical effort. The good news is that the annual subscription will be unchanged with particular attention being given to the current level of reserves within Warwickshire Beekeepers as a whole.

The AGM agreed the makeup of the committee for 2023/4 which is reduced from that last year with the Peter Stanworth, Rachel Dove and Bernard Brown standing down. [Note: Bernard will still be very much involved. He is just stepping back from the committee.]

An early date for your diary is 15th February 2024 when we plan to hold the 91st AGM. The minutes of the 90th AGM will be posted on the branch website following the next committee meeting.

Chris Cox, Branch Secretary

CHAIR'S MARCH MESSAGE

On 16th February we held our Branch AGM, a necessary part of being a charity (see page 1). Here are the edited highlights from my bit of the AGM:

1. We are a very active branch- over 200 members and growing. High points from 2022 are
 - The Introduction to Beekeeping course (ITB).
 - Training and education for exams and beekeeping certificates
 - The annual honey show - more entries at the last minute and a great range of entries
 - Bee Talk award for our great branch magazine
 - Winter Meeting programme full of interesting content
 - Library- under Jackie Ledwidge - do take a look at a meeting or get in touch
 2. Our finances are healthy and helping us to do many things . Many thanks to Val Dillon, Liz Gurney and Jane Brown. Thanks also to Clive Joyce for the excellent discounts we get through our cooperative purchasing agreement.
 3. To the year ahead: it feels like we have shaken off the shackles of COVID and are looking forward to the new beekeeping year.
 - The new ITB course begins in April - we have some great pictures from 2022 that appeared in Bee Talk
 - We're working on improving the Extraction Unit - watch this space
 - There is a developing programme of summer events
- Finally, it was my pleasure to present the Foden Award to a new young beekeeper, Betty Woodley. This award was introduced a few years ago to recognise and encourage new beekeepers to involve

themselves in the running of the branch. This year we have welcomed a fantastic group of new and enthusiastic beekeepers. Tim Foden would certainly have been proud of them, especially our youngest ever member. This little person, hand in hand with her mum, bounced into the life of the apiary in May. Since then, she has popped up all over the place - at the training apiary (where she got her first sting!), helping at working parties and being very much in her element at the local shows. Her creative gift, making little bees and promoting the art of beekeeping, has raised over £700 for Bees Abroad. For this, she is now a Bees Abroad ambassador. As a result, the committee decided that Betty Woodley and her mum, Lottie Buckland (without whom, none of this would have been possible!), receive the Foden Award.

Suzanne Bennett , WLBK Chair



Betty with the Tim Foden Award together with her mum, Lottie Buckland

BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH

This is the month to hold back. Do you remember the Beast from the East- that was late March! Resist the urge to go fooling around in the hives. Ignore those fools on Twitter who are messing about in hives (or in Australia). Restrain yourself till it gets warmer. This month you have the tricky job of ensuring they have enough carbohydrate and not so much they store it in your supers when you put them on. The winter bees will be dying off, but lovely new summer bees are hatching.

- Continue to heft or weigh regularly to check your colonies have plenty of stores. This is the time of year they run out of carbohydrate and starve.
- Put on a block of fondant if the colony is light- any colony may be running out of stores now. But remember, it's no use waiting till it is so cold they cluster, then putting fondant above them- they need to have taken it down to the broods.
- Prepare your hive records- look back at last year and decide what your goals are for this year.
- Revise for your Module exam if you are doing one!
- Make sure your colonies are where you want them for the season- or take advantage of a cold snap.
- Leave the bees alone and watch (on warmer days) to see whether they are bringing in pollen. There is plenty of willow, hazel, snowdrop, crocus pollen about. Pollen means brood rearing.
- If you want to know what is going on put in a varroa board- the wax dropped will tell you the brood pattern of the growing colony.
- If the bees are flying a good deal you can remove the mouseguards (and if you have hard floors, scrape them). Woodpecker guards can come off (but not mine yet- they are devious birds).
- If the weather is very good (for more than a few days at a time), towards the end of the month, the first inspection is due. Is the queen laying? Is there pollen and stores? Is there too much pollen choking up the brood? Mark the queen- red this year.
- Decide which colonies need a wax change and start planning now, before the supers go on. You can only do this when you have had at least three rounds of brood and it is warm. Only summer bees survive a wax change.

Jane Medwell



FEBRUARY MEMBERS' MEETING

The theme of our February meeting was 'Bee Better at Photographing Bees'. Our own Barry Meatyard took time out from his many WLBK responsibilities to share some of his tips and anecdotes about taking photographs. Barry started photographing flowers, which is a whole lot easier because they tend to be rooted to the spot! Photographing Bees is both rewarding and fun, but photos can also be used to help identify problems in your colonies, providing evidence to mull over or to discuss with more experienced bee keepers.

Barry showed us various bits of the kit he has – a fancy camera and a ring light but then revealed that some of his best shots were on an iPhone. Indeed, the audience couldn't tell the difference between images caught with a camera and a phone. Barry shared his top tips:

- 1) First watch your bees so you can see the patterns in their movement.
- 2) Don't expect your bees to pose – keep on snapping, keep the best and discard the others.
- 3) Soft lighting, a cloudy day or by using a diffuser means no shadows and clearer images.
- 4) Composition: think of the picture in thirds and diagonals.
- 5) You can tweak the images too without any fancy software.

Feeling inspired, our March speaker, Alan Deeley snapped one of his bees foraging on rosemary (above right). Alan suggested that we ran a WLBK competition – with the best picture published in Bee Talk each month. For one this will ensure that we have plenty of entries in the WLBK Honey Show photo competition in September's. More details about this in next month's Bee Talk. Barry will you agree to be the judge?

MARCH MEETING: THURS 16TH MARCH AT KINGS HILL NURSERY

7.30PM – 9.30PM

Alan Deeley will be explaining small scale wax preparation. So, if you plan to make prize-winning candles for the Honey Show or just prepare wax blocks to exchange for foundation, Alan will help you do it well, and more importantly, perhaps, avoid covering your (or someone else's) kitchen with a film of wax or starting a fire!



FREE COURSE: FOOD HYGIENE FOR BEEKEEPERS, 13TH MAY AT EATHORPE VILLAGE HALL

As announced in the February Issue of Bee Talk, arrangements have been made for Andy Pedley to deliver a course to members on Food Hygiene and Honey Labelling. Andy will be supported by Clive Joyce, explaining how to use and clean the Club's Extraction Unit. The Committee has agreed that the club will pay for this event because it fits well with our objectives to educate beekeepers and improve beekeeping. The booking page is not yet available on the club website but will be soon. More cake is promised!

Judith Masson



BOOK NEWS FROM WLBK LIBARIAN



The Bee Trade Exhibition at Stoneleigh provided a great opportunity to spend some of the library budget on five lovely books including 'Beekeeping' written by Andrew Davies. This is a super little book offering lots of inspiration and practical advice for beginners. Another great addition to the library this month is 'The Honeybee Democracy' by Thomas D Seeley. This book was featured during Dave Bonner's excellent talk at the meeting in January and explores how Honeybees make decisions collectively and democratically. Thomas Seeley reveals these incredible insects have much to teach us when it comes to collective wisdom and effective decision making. The books are currently being catalogued and will be available to loan during the next meeting at Kings Hill Nursery in March. Please do come and have a browse.

Jackie Ledwidge
WLBK Librarian



TRY YOUR HAND AT ENCAUSTIC ART



DEncaustic is a traditional painting technique and was used in the past to create murals, pictures and wall hangings. Many of the images and objects that were made using the encaustic painting technique are over 1000 years old and can still be viewed in the ruins of Pompey and Herculaneum in Italy. The principle is to burn in or fuse wax using a hot painting iron, and bees wax is an ideal wax to use. I have made my pictures shown here into great greetings cards.

We, as a Branch did consider running a workshop on Encaustic Art but the nature of the method does not lend itself to heating up wax as a group activity. It is one of those crafts that requires experimenting, trying out and discovering so that eventually you find 'your style'.

There are lots of Youtube videos available to illustrate the tools required and techniques. The branch is looking to purchase a starter kit that could be borrowed to have a try before you buy.

Have fun !

If you need any help or further info please get in touch:

h.essex211@gmail.com

Helen Essex



FOR SALE

Overwintered Nuc
2022 Queen marked yellow
£140.00

Overwintered full colony
2022 Queen marked yellow
£190.00

Overwintered full colony in nice National hive
2022 Queen marked yellow
£250.00

Ray Summers
07538 444481
raysummers81@gmail.com

OUT APIARY

There is an opportunity for an out-apiary in a large garden and adjoining fields near Wellesbourne. Security and access are excellent as is the forage potential. The site will accommodate a single beekeeper and up to 4 colonies. For further details contact Alistair Walker

alistair.walker@btinternet.com

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Following last month's article we have had a volunteer for the new beekeeper talk on the taster days. Thank you Kirsty Bax: hopefully you will find it an enjoyable experience. We are still looking for additional speakers and helpers to assist with the talks and practical sessions. So, if you have time available on the 13th of May and/or the 10th of September, please get in touch via one of the emails below.

Spaces are available for anybody who has an interest in finding out more about bees. So please let people know of the availability. Facebook posts may help? To enrol, please follow [this link](#) below or go to the club website. Gift certificates are available for those special occasions or surprises.

Paul Day (paul@paulday.co.uk)

Jane Richmond (jane@J-Richmond.co.uk)

PLANT OF THE MONTH: DAFFODILS

// *I wandered lonely as a cloud,
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd
A host of golden daffodils"*

We all know and love Wordsworth's famous poem, but I suspect the bees may not be quite so enamoured. In general, they seem to set out to avoid them! However, if Wordsworth's blooms were of the wild, naturalising variety, it may be a different story. To paraphrase George Orwell "All daffodils are equal, but some are more equal than others" The least interfered with by man, the more the bees love them.

The daffodil (aka narcissus; jonquil) is a genus of the Amaryllis family dating back to ancient civilisations. It is thought that the origin of the name Narcissus, comes from the Greek "narkoun" meaning intoxicated or narcotic; hence the myth of the youth of that name who fell in love i.e., became intoxicated, with his own image.



All Narcissi contain alkaloids, some more poisonous than others, but despite the danger, they have been used in traditional medicine for hundreds of years for a whole range of illnesses, including cancer. Today, only one of the alkaloids, galantamine, is in

therapeutic use as a treatment for Alzheimer's disease.

How interesting that daffodils, the national flower of Wales, are grown commercially near Brecon, to produce galantamine for the pharmaceutical industry.

Maggie Curley

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 22nd

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 30th January

see the Spring Convention pages of www.bbka.org.uk

INSIGHT INTO THE MIND OF A BEE

The *Mind of a Bee* by Lars Chittka offers a fascinating tour of the highly complex brains and minds of bees.

The commonly held belief that bees are mere automatons driven by instinct as an explanation for most of their behaviour is challenged in this book.

Drawing on decades of research, including his own pioneering work, to argue that bees have remarkable cognitive abilities, he shows that they are profoundly smart, have distinct personalities, can recognize flowers and human faces, exhibit basic emotions, count, use simple tools, solve problems, and learn by observing others.

We learn that a bee's brain has a million nerve cells compared with 86 billion in human brains, but that the bee nerve cells are complex, highly-branched structures resembling a mature oak tree and that each cell makes connections with 10,000 other nerve cells. A bee must learn and remember so much when she works as a forager: where to find good sources not already depleted, and how to skilfully work the flowers of different species to take full advantage of what is on offer.

The topic of pain is covered and we learn that, like us, insects have receptors that register tissue damage and pain but that alarm pheromones flood their nervous systems with built in painkillers making them perhaps unaware of injuries.

Chittka explains why they like drinking warm nectar and how they can learn to associate the colour of flowers with nectar temperature and can predict nectar temperatures based on past

experiences.

He takes the reader deep into the sensory world of bees and, in so doing, reveals a vast body of knowledge about their behaviours which, hitherto, had eluded me. There is an introduction to each chapter and a review at the end which is helpful reinforcement for understanding the message. Written in a most readable

style, the fascinating revelations made this into a very enjoyable read and is available for loan from the Branch Library". Amazon has just delivered the Branch's copy.

The Mind of a Bee by Lars Chittka (pictured above) is published by Princeton University. Lars Chittka is professor of sensory and behavioural ecology at Queen Mary University of London.

Ivan A Perry



BEES PLAYING CHICKEN

Member Emma Bayliss wrote: *'I have a number of bees raiding my chicken feed bins. Just wondering what you think they may be looking for? They have been doing it for a while now so I put some candy pollen on last week for them to see if it would help but they're still doing it. I'm curious to know what is happening here?'*

Mike Townsend replied: *'From memory I think it was the Colonsay bees I was getting for the University that were going to dry chicken feed and it was thought they were taking it as a pollen substitute. You can imagine that the bees on the Scottish Western Islands must have found visiting the chicken meal bins more profitable in poor weather. I think they also visit cow pats for the salts and other minerals. Bees, wasps and hornets will visit bedding inside horse stables for the same reason and can lead to stinging the horses around the mouth area. So horse owners be warned. Check your bedding before retiring for the night.'*

So, what is a pollen substitute why and how is it used?

Stop/start brood rearing is a feature of the early spring build-up of a colony as it reacts to variations in pollen availability

prompted by sharp changes in temperature. Even on a daily basis, it can be just about warm enough for flights during the middle of the day but not warm enough to forage for long or to travel far to collect pollen.

If you want to take advantage of the spring flow to maximise honey production you, need strong colonies early - which means a sustained supply of pollen. The application of pollen substitutes is a way of providing this under such conditions. There are numerous brands of pre-manufactured pollen substitutes readily available of which Candipoline is one I have used. This comes in the form of dough-like patties - a bit like the consistency of fondant and is added to a colony in the same way. You can also make your own and there are recipes for this on the web. However, once you have started to feed a pollen substitute you must continue to do so until natural pollen is freely available. Its withdrawal just when the larvae population has been artificially built up, will result in even greater loss of brood production thus defeating the whole object of the exercise.

However, bee aware that an early start to brood rearing may lead to early swarming or even two swarming episodes in a season.

Ivan A Perry

EXOTIC HIVES SERIES –

THE ROSE HIVE

Tim Rowe, a commercial beekeeper in County Cork, Ireland, became increasingly concerned about the numerous difficulties and stresses that bees were being subjected to. His approach was to study how bees survive and thrive in the wild and applied his ideas to modern beekeeping. The Rose hive and the Rose method are the outcome of those studies.



Rose hive box. Note simple construction and plywood sides.

THE HIVE

The Rose hive is made of boxes all of the same size, a one size box system of OSB. The boxes fit with National floors, crown boards, etc, and the frames are 14" x 7½" with long lugs like the National frame. Two Rose boxes are equivalent to a National 'brood and a half'. This single walled hive takes 12 self spacing Hoffman frames.

THE METHOD

No queen excluders are used so there is no division into brood boxes and supers. The bees create their nest without restriction, as they would in the wild, and expand the nest as they see fit. Most frames are fitted with foundation but Tim recommends that roughly a quarter of the frames be fitted with wax starter strips, allowing the bees to draw out as much drone brood as they desire.

HIVE DATA	NATIONAL	NATIONAL 14x12	ROSE HIVE	COMMERCIAL
Brood frame	14" x 8½"	14" x 12"	14" x 7½"	16" x 10"
Super frame	14" x 5½"	14" x 5½"	14" x 7½"	16" x 6"
Frames / brood box	11	11	12	12
Cells / brood box	54,000	80,000	51,500	80,000
Lug length	1½"	1½"	1½"	5/8"

The amount of comb space in one Rose box is adequate for a modest colony, being slightly less than the National box, but not sufficient for a very prolific colony, where two Rose boxes will be required.

THE ROSE YEAR

It is believed that excessive feeding with granulated sugar undermines the health of colonies, so Rose hive beekeepers tend to overwinter their colonies where ever possible on their natural honey crop. However, it is recognised that there will be occasions when bad weather prevents natural foraging, and some sugar feeding will be required.

REMOVING OLD COMB

In the spring the old comb is rearranged to be in the upper box, from where it will be worked upwards and removed at the end of the season for recycling. No combs should be more than three years old. This operation is the only stressful intrusion in the whole year, but avoids the even more stressful alternatives of Bailey frame change or shook swarm techniques.

From spring to the middle of June, when brood nest expansion is at its peak, new boxes of foundation are added to spread the brood nest, either by inserting under the nest or into the middle of the nest. Conventional beekeepers may find this concept rather alien, but the bees accept it and rapidly draw out the foundation.

After mid-June, additional boxes with foundation are added above the brood nest for the bees to store honey.

ADVANTAGES OF USING THE ROSE METHOD

- First and foremost, simplicity, as all parts are compatible and interchangeable. This makes splitting the hive for queen rearing, swarm

control, etc, much simpler. Apart from frames, all other National and Commercial hive parts are compatible.

- Congestion in the brood nest is removed as there is no queen excluder to impede progress. This will help reduce stress.
- Colonies build more rapidly if new boxes are added when and where they are needed.
- Insertion of new boxes into the middle of the brood nest reduces the work the bees would have to do to expand the brood nest. Normally, they would have to remove the cap of honey at the top of the hive.
- Swarming is reduced due to less congestion.
- Starter strips in a quarter of the frames allow the bees to build as much drone comb as they wish.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE ROSE METHOD

- Warning! A full Rose box of sealed honey will weigh c50lbs (22kg).
- The marine plywood used for two sides of the boxes does not have the same durability or insulation as western red cedar. A bee-safe form of wood preservative may be required.
- Some beekeepers claim bees do not overwinter well in Rose hives.
- With no queen excluder the lack of a clear demarcation between brood and stores is often seen as a disadvantage.
- There is narrow spacing throughout which precludes using wide spacing in boxes used as supers.

MORE INFORMATION

Devotees of Rose hives would encourage both new and old beekeepers to read Tim Rowe's book *The Rose Hive Method*, ISBN 978-0-9567026-0-9, and follow the advice to allow your bees the freedom to arrange their affairs as they wish.

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HINTS AND TIPS

Many thanks to Mike Townsend for the following advice. Very apt as the weather gets warmer and we remember we have a garden out there somewhere!

If a few simple steps are followed honey bees are quite tolerant of gardening near a beehive.

- Observe the beehive before starting work and be aware of the route the bees take so that you can avoid their flight path to and from the hive. The flight path may vary daily depending on where their food source is so make this observation every time you work near the hive.
- Bees are less active on cool, gloomy days and early in the morning when the temperature is lower so plan your work when their activity is lowest.
- Bees, along with most other insects including wasps and other stinging insects generally are highly sensitive to body odour. Also their eyes work quite differently to ours having a high 'flicker factor' which means they are also highly sensitive to movement. With these points in mind make sure you are well washed, and in clean clothes, but avoid scented hair and body washes. Plan work around the hive for the morning before working up a sweat elsewhere in the garden later in the day.
- Carry out tasks such as weeding close to the hive by kneeling, working slowly and steadily and only work standing up, for example when hoeing, when you are well away from the hive. When standing you may be in their flight path and a bee may bump into you accidentally so wearing a hat is helpful. Bees will try to avoid or go around you. If one gets into your hair do not try and tease it out as the bee will become anxious and entangled; smartly smack your head and kill the bee instead.
- Working close to the hive may lead a single bee to come and investigate you; just move steadily away from the hive and do not wave your arms about trying to 'swat' it as this will make the bee more anxious. However if following persists it should be reported to the beekeeper.
- A swarm issuing from a hive, with lots of bees in the air can be quite an alarming sight. The bees are however in a benign state simply dividing their nest to start another colony somewhere else. The intense activity lasts only a few minutes before they fly away or land in a bush or tree nearby. Keep the public away and tell the beekeeper.

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

WARWICK AND LEAMINGTON BRANCH
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