



# BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

## THE SHOW MUST GO ON... MUST IT?



**T**he BBKA shows committee has been suspended for the time being!

The BBKA supports associations in all sorts of ways to outreach to the public in fulfilment of our charitable object i.e. to educate the public and beekeepers about the craft of beekeeping and the importance of bees in the environment. Education and Husbandry, for example, has given 32 grants of money and resources for visiting schools to the branches that applied to the scheme. This means each of those associations has the materials, plans, equipment and money to do at least 6 more school visits, probably more. Our Yellow Legged Hornet outreach to the public has also been done by supporting our associations, rather than being all done by BBKA.

In the last year, BBKA has employed a part-time outreach officer to support YLH. She is leaving, so BBKA is looking at whether to make this

a full time and more general outreach post, to work with associations on public shows, YLH and education outreach. It's all under review at present and, consequently, the BBKA shows committee has been suspended for the time being.

Throughout its history, the BBKA has promoted our craft at various shows around the Country. Of late, these have included events such as Gardeners' World Live at the NEC, the Countryfile show at Blenheim Palace, the Game Fair at Ragley Hall and the RHS show at Chatsworth. WLBK members have been prominent both in serving on the shows committee and also in providing stewards.

A summer without these shows will disappoint many but there is a solution. Having been denied the buzz that comes from supporting such events, why not counter the withdrawal symptoms by volunteering for our Branch's Shows this summer?

**Ivan A Perry**

# HONEYBEES IN ICELAND

**S**aeunn Sigvaldadottir is a member of WLBK and lives in Iceland, where she does her beekeeping.

During a BBKA zoom talk on 19 March at 7:30pm, Saeunn will explain some of the challenges in keeping bees so far north and in an environment where there is no varroa. She will further explain how she received a substantial grant to develop an initiative aimed at making Iceland self-sufficient in beekeeping.

The project's goal is to create sustainability in beekeeping by raising more productive queen bees through artificial insemination. Specifically, the plan is to breed *Apis Mellifera* Buckfast queens using the artificial insemination methods commonly used abroad. This approach will help strengthen the genetic diversity of Icelandic bees, allowing beekeepers in Iceland to become independent from unpredictable weather conditions and enabling them to start breeding earlier in the season. Along with another winterisation method that has not been known in Iceland, which has worked well for her.

**Wednesday 19 March 19.30 - 21.00**

**Zoom link to join the meeting [here](#)**

**Meeting ID: 338 506 4083**



## BEEKEEPING TASKS – MARCH

**M**arch is said to be "In like a lion, out like a lamb"- if only it was that predictable. However, it does feel like the month when we expect to pivot into "bee-spring". The most important thing is to get the bees to a point where we have a consistent flying temperature of at least 14 degrees C. The winter bees will be dying off, but lovely new summer bees are hatching.

▪ If the weather is cool, rainy or even snowy, continue to lift or weigh 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.

- Prepare your hive records- look back at last year and decide what your goals are for this year.
- Take your Module exam if you are doing one! Or enrol for your Basic Assessment or Honey Bee Health certificate- these are practical certificates for all.
- On warmer days watch 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 and it is warming up, you can remove the mouseguards (and if you have hard floors, scrape them).
- 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?
- Decide which colonies need a wax change and start planning now, before the supers go on. You might want to do a shook swarm or Bailey Frame Chances- great ways to change all the wax at once. But remember, you can only do this when you have had at least three rounds of brood and it is warm. Only summer bees survive a full wax change.
- It's just possible you will go into your colony in a warm March and find queen cells – so have a clean nuc box and some sheets of foundation ready. To prevent swarming if you have open queen cells you can make up a nuc with the old queen, brood and stores. Make sure you only leave one queen cell in the old colony, add foundation and feed it.

**Jane Medwell**  
WLBK Chair



# WLBK MEMBERS' MEETINGS

**A**fter the AGM on 20<sup>th</sup> February, members were treated to a light-hearted, beekeeping-themed edition of that popular radio show Any Questions? with Becky Tabram, beginner Beekeeper, Jane Brown County Treasurer and Bernard Brown, Bee Messenger and (importantly) Jane's Beekeeping partner and husband, ably chaired by Liz Bates. We learned what they wished they had known before they started beekeeping; just how much storage space you need and what lovely people the members of WLBK are – Bernard said he would have joined the club earlier if only he'd known!

Also, the biggest beekeeping mistake they were prepared to admit to: For Becky, it was harvesting supers from her field without covering then up so all the bees flew to her trailer to get their honey back as she endeavoured to drive across the field to her house. Jane recounted the horrors of what happened when Bernard picked up one hive from a 2 hive, block and rail hive stand. The rails see sawed up and the remaining hive slid off, tumbled down the bank and separated into its separate boxes. Fortunately, they found the queen. After reassembling the hive and returning the brood, frames and the queen, the bees flew home – its just as well that bees cannot talk although there might have been a rather blue buzz in the air!

While Bernard and Jane share their hives, Liz and her late husband, Steve, had 'his' and 'hers' hives although they processed their honey together (it saves washing up). Each approach has advantages and disadvantages, but most couples need each other when it comes to lifting heavy supers.

A question on clipping queens exposed the need for sharers to compromise. Jane rejects clipping but Bernard 'used to clip'. Like many beginners Becky knows that her hives are queenright but questions of marking and clipping remain academic as she has yet to find the queens. And she is not the only one! It's a good idea to look for queens at the start of the season when there are fewer bees – when you spot her mark (or remark) her to increase your chances of an audience later on.

**March Meeting: March 20th 7.30 – 9.30 pm**

**Kenilworth Senior Citizen's Club, Abbey End, Kenilworth, CV8 1QJ**

## Hive in the Sky

Tim Vivian of Hanbury Honey will talk about the ups and downs of keeping bees on roofs of offices in and around Birmingham.

As always, there will be bee chat and cake.  
Do join us!

**Judith Mason, WLBK Meetings Secretary**  
[meetings@Warleambees.org.uk](mailto:meetings@Warleambees.org.uk)



# WLBK MEMBERSHIP – UPDATE

**O**n February 14th all members who hadn't renewed their membership were lapsed. Since then some of these members have contacted us and renewed their membership.

Numbers to date:      Numbers at the end of 2024

Registered	157	207
Partner	17	19
Junior	2	4
Local	17	29
Total	193	257

**Val Dillon, Treasurer**

**Liz Gurney, Membership Secretary**



# BBKA SPRING CONVENTION 2025

For those who are new to the convention, this is a three day event over the weekend of **4-6<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2025**  
**Bumper Trade Show Saturday 5<sup>th</sup>**

**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](http://www.bbka.org.uk/springconvention)



## THANK YOU

A **BIG THANK YOU** to everyone who brought bottles and cans for the BBKA School Visits Craft activities!

More are still needed – For details see February Bee Talk. Also if you would like to volunteer to help with these fun events in the summer term.

**Judith Masson, Meetings Secretary**

## FUN FACT

A little fun beekeeping fact –

"Did you know that St Valentine is not only the patron saint of lovers but also the patron saint of beekeepers!"



## OUT APIARIES

There are two new opportunities for out apiaries, one in Ladbroke near Southam and the other in Chadwick End. Both sites have good security and access with excellent forage potential and can accommodate one beekeeper and up to 4 colonies. For further details contact [alistair.walker@btinternet.com](mailto:alistair.walker@btinternet.com). A schedule of all available out apiaries is on the WLBK website.

# YLH – THE LATEST BUZZ

**A**re you an organiser? We are looking for someone to join Liz Bates as a joint Branch Asian Hornet Action Team co-ordinator. The role involves putting plans in place to combat the possible arrival of this menace by developing and leading our network of volunteer Verifiers and Monitors in line with support from BBKA, and to develop awareness of the menace with the public, organisations and other beekeepers. To find out more, give me a ring for a chat 07774862749.

Whilst, as previously reported, things have been somewhat quiet on the YLH front as far as Warwickshire is concerned, this is not the situation as far as BBKA is concerned. They have taken the opportunity to follow up several initiatives to support further the efforts of AHATs in 2025. More specifically they have been –

- Reviewing the lessons learned from the experience of AHAT's in last year's hotspots – Kent, Sussex, Hampshire.
- Feeding this information into the plans being developed for 2025 covering such topics as spring trapping, awareness, monitoring etc. tailored to the various risk category designations for each area of the country.
- Addressing the emerging issue of volunteer/monitoring fatigue not only in those hotspots but also of complacency developing in those low-risk areas such as Warwickshire where the lack of developments run the risk of diverting attention elsewhere.
- Developing new and definitive protocols with the NBU for spring trapping to remove foundress queens from the equation.
- Reacting to the observations of the AHAT co-ordinators regarding



the user-friendliness of inputting the information required for the various maps developed by ER2 to record the location of members acting as Verifiers available for consultation by the public, the location of suspected sightings and of monitoring stations. These are very similar to the swarm collectors' map.

- Improving the design and content of information resources – leaflets, posters, social media graphics etc. to enhance public awareness.
- Revisiting the Health and Safety advice in the light of recent events, particularly from Jersey.
- Re-targeting those stakeholders in the frontline of the incursions such as ports, ferry terminals, transport hubs, County and District Councils, schools, and college, and wildlife trusts.

Not the most glamorous of activities, but nonetheless important and welcomed ones.

**Bernard Brown**  
County AHAT co-ordinator



## GET READY FOR SWARMING

**N**o it's not started yet... just a bit early. However we know time marches on so best be prepared. The website is ready to have you register for **Swarms Wanted** and for any of you that would like to join us as **Collectors**. Those who were collectors last year do not need to reregister, it rolls on in the BBKA database.

We had a number of new prospective Swarm Collectors put their

hands up from the branch survey (thank you). We will run a Zoom call towards the end of March to talk through the process the do's and don'ts and answer any questions. If anyone else considering becoming a Collector would like to join please email me to be added to the invite.

**Rich Pierce**  
[swarms@warleambees.org.uk](mailto:swarms@warleambees.org.uk)



# WEBSITE SPRING CLEAN



**WARWICK & LEAMINGTONBEEKEEPERS (WLBK)**

Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers is a friendly branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers. We support local beekeepers and promote beekeeping and its role in the environment to members of the public. Our member events include social events, lectures, training and craft sessions. We have a lively shows team, please keep your eyes on our Events Calendar and Upcoming Events.

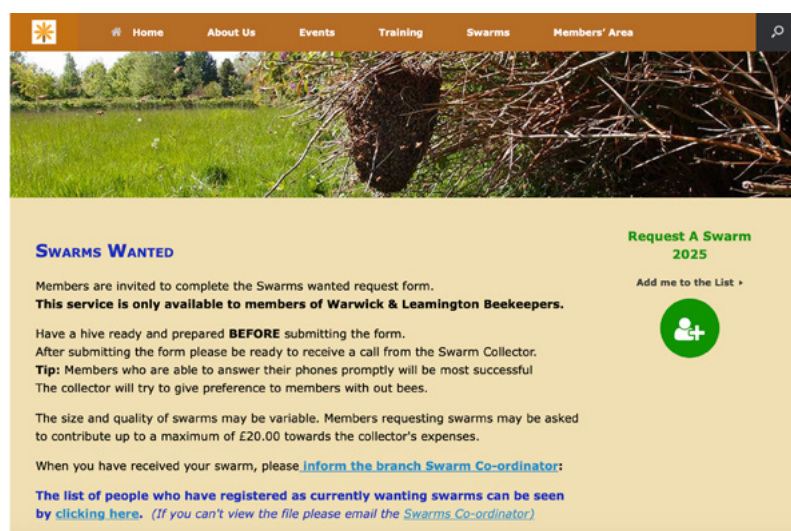
For more about us and our services, please go to [who we are and what we do](#).

 [Become a Member](#)

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

MAR	7:30 pm - 9:30 pm	<b>20</b>	<b>HIVE IN THE SKY</b>
APR	7:30 pm - 9:30 pm	<b>17</b>	<b>DRONE CONGREGATION AREAS</b>
APR	April 26 @ 9:00 am - April 27 @ 6:00 pm	<b>26</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION TO BEEKEEPING COURSE</b>
SEP	7:30 pm - 9:30 pm	<b>18</b>	<b>SEPTEMBER MEMBERS MEETING</b>

[View Calendar](#)



**SWARMS WANTED**

Members are invited to complete the Swarms wanted request form.  
**This service is only available to members of Warwick & Leamington Beekeepers.**

Have a hive ready and prepared **BEFORE** submitting the form.  
 After submitting the form please be ready to receive a call from the Swarm Collector.  
**Tip:** Members who are able to answer their phones promptly will be most successful  
 The collector will try to give preference to members with out bees.

The size and quality of swarms may be variable. Members requesting swarms may be asked to contribute up to a maximum of £20.00 towards the collector's expenses.

When you have received your swarm, please [Inform the branch Swarm Co-ordinator](#):  
**The list of people who have registered as currently wanting swarms can be seen by clicking here.** (If you can't view the file please email the Swarms Co-ordinator)

[Request A Swarm 2025](#)

[Add me to the List](#)

**Y**ou might have spotted some changes on the Branch Website. A few things might not have been working and the overall look and feel is dated.

Firstly, to many people's frustration now in the days of smartphones, the mobile menu simply didn't work. My predecessor and I have spent many hours trying to resolve the issue. I have confirmed that a move to a newer website theme will resolve the issue. Therefore for the time being I have removed the mobile menu to a big ugly menu on your smartphone, but at least it works!

The diary had stopped working but now I've introduced a new

Events Calendar page. You can also see the next few upcoming Events on the Home Page. Keep an eye on this to plan your activities.

You will notice that I've removed a lot of things from the homepage. These things were already in the relevant part of the site.

"Swarms Wanted", "Swarm Collectors" and "For Sale & Wanted" pages are all updated and ready for the start of the season.

We have a website of over 70 pages (built over many years), which is over double the size of the average website. A lot of pages are rarely looked at but hold Branch historical information nobody would want to lose. We will therefore create documents from this information and create document library to download as and when you might need it for some research.

My strategy has been to make some tweaks now to get us through the start of the season to give me time later in the year to work on a new website theme. The new theme will take advantage of a more modern interface that will not require any custom code and take advantage of customisable plugin's. This will help future proof our website and make it easier to pass the web master role on.

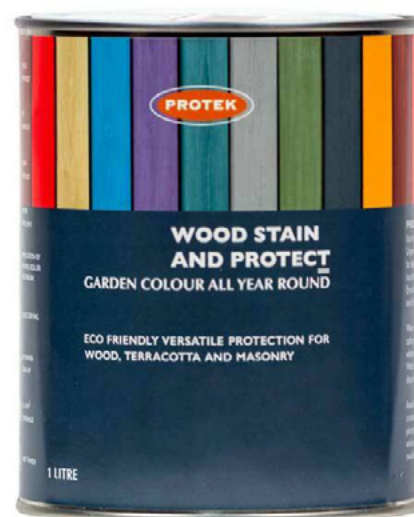
For now please use the site and let me know if you spot any issues.

**Rich Pierce**  
[web@warleambees.org.uk](mailto:web@warleambees.org.uk)

# HINTS AND TIPS



- The bees will be flying every day, when weather allows, and there is a great temptation to have a look at just what is going on! Don't be too hasty - wait to see the flowering redcurrant (*ribes sanguinum*) come into bloom and then you should be able to safely carry out your first inspection. Opening up too early could jeopardise the queen.
- When weather conditions are not favourable for opening up the hive, look out for pollen being brought in as this is a good indicator that brood rearing is happening and so you have a laying queen in the colony.
- March is a month when bees can die of starvation. The brood is beginning to increase as the days lengthen. This puts extra demand on the food sources and if the weather doesn't allow for the foraging bees to get out and the stores are depleted then the future of the colony is compromised. If you think your bees are in need of a boost then feed a 1:1 warm dilute syrup to help them through what is forecast to be a cold start to the month.
- If you are planning to preserve your woodwork by painting make sure you use a bee friendly paint. Protek wood stain and protect is a good one and save postage by visiting Hubbard's Little Beanit Farm CV7 7GH.



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](mailto:h.essex211@gmail.com)

Helen Essex



The editor of Bee Talk is Tanya Weaver.  
Please send content for the newsletter to her by the 28<sup>th</sup> of each month:  
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