



# BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

## SHOW US YOUR HONEY!



**Y**ou've extracted your honey harvest. Family and friends say it's great... but would you like an independent opinion? Then get that all important feedback at a Honey Show.

There are three levels of Honey Show - Branch, County and National.

### **THE BRANCH HONEY SHOW 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER AT KINGS HILL**

This is an informal affair providing advice and support. There are trophies to be won and Certificates for 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> and highly commended.

For the honey classes three colour classes are used, graded by using squares of coloured glass into light, medium and dark. The viscosity is tested with a tiny glass spoon dipped into the honey and then raised up. Cleanliness of jar and cap are judged, as well as correct fill. The smell and flavour are also tested, of course!

But it's not all about the honey! There are

classes for cut comb, a frame ready for extraction, candles, mead (always a popular one with the judges!), honey cake, wax blocks and many more. Full schedule is on our website.

There is a trophy for Novice beekeepers and for those who only keep a few hives.

So, something for everybody to enter.

### **THE COUNTY HONEY SHOW 15<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER AT KINGS HILL**

A bit more formal with entries from beekeepers all over Warwickshire. Qualified judges preside.

Each year there is a class for a Branch Composite Display. The exhibit must have a base not exceeding 600mm by 600mm and be of any reasonable height. The display must include FIVE different items and be submitted by at least THREE members of the Branch. At least ONE of these members must be a NOVICE. The exhibit will be judged primarily on the quality of the items shown (as far as possible we could ask for our Branch Honey Show winners to help with

these). In 2019 we did win with the theme of Suffragettes.

We are looking for volunteers to put the display together for this year incorporating the theme: **100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Discovery of Tutankhamun's Tomb**. Judging by previous years it does not have to be extensive but more a minimalistic tasteful depiction of the theme.

Volunteers are also needed to help at the County Honey Show.

### **THE NATIONAL HONEY SHOW 27<sup>TH</sup> TO 29<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER AT RACE COURSE**

The National Honey Show has nearly 250 Competitive Classes to test your skills. The show attracts beekeepers from all over the world to compete for the much coveted trophies and prize cards.

If you feel able to help to support the Honey Shows in any way, please contact Helen Essex

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

Helen Essex

# BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH

Last month was hot and many sources of forage went over early. Now, the Balsam is out for some and you may want to wait for that flow to finish. This is a month for making important decisions about the shape of the apiary going into winter and ensuring the bees are healthy- the emerging bees will be with you until March.

- Narrow down the entrances to one bee space before the wasps start. They will go for weak colonies and the real solution is to move them.
- Keep inspecting colonies so that you know which ones are strong and queenright. Take your winter losses now, before you feed, and unite weaker colonies for winter (or for the heather).
- Do a full brood disease inspection- this means shaking the bees of every comb and inspecting each comb for signs of brood disease.
- Do a varroa count (mite drop or sugar roll) and if numbers are significant, treat.
- Treat all the colonies for varroa together. If the honey is still on use MAQS but once it is off, you have the choice of amitraz, apiguard or several other substances (over at least 2 full brood cycles). Treating now helps to protect those winter bees, who really need protection to get through the winter.
- If you haven't taken the honey off yet, do so soon. There will come a turning point where the bee will start to take honey down to the brood box and you will miss it. You will need clearer boards or porter bee escapes. Now is a good time to book a branch extractor.
- Extract your honey and get the bees to clean the frames by placing them over the crown board on the hive they came from. Leave for a day or so, then think about storage. Damaged super frames can be melted then boiled, but with care you can keep good ones over the winter.
- Order your Ambrosia (and honey buckets) and collect from Clive.
- Feed if you have removed the honey early. A colony needs 40lb of stores (a full BS brood frame is about 4). Make sure you heft (lift one side) regularly to get the "feel" of what a full brood box should feel like.

Jane Medwell

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT PESKY WASPS

In late summer wasp nests reach their peak and they are hungry. They will sneak (or just storm) into hives for the honey and for the brood - which they feed to their larvae. Wasps are persistent and once they locate your apiary, they will arrive in overwhelming numbers. They work out which colonies are weakest and can destroy whole colonies. What can you do?

- Reduce the hive entrance to one bee space BEFORE the wasps arrive. This helps bees defend themselves.
- Do not leave combs out (put them in a nuc whilst inspecting). Once robbing starts, the wasps will demolish small colonies and the bees will help them.
- You can make or buy wasp traps with all kinds of bait: water with jam or beer and some say a little rotting meat in the solution helps. If you use traps, add a drop of detergent to break the surface tension and drown the wasps more effectively. Bees are not attracted to jam or beer but don't use honey as bait!

- There are many commercial wasp traps available but you can use Dave Cushman's instructions to make simple traps here: <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/wasptrap.html>
- To deter wasps you can make it harder to get into the hive- a sheet of glass over the entrance or special one way entrance (which Barry Meatyard can make the one in the photo for pennies) lets bees out and allows them to defend.
- If the wasps set onto one colony you may need to move it- it is the only final solution.

Wasps are a nuisance for beekeepers, but it is hard to justify destroying nests - wasps are valuable pollinators and a part of the ecosystem, like bees. Aim not to attract them to the apiary at all, help the bees defend their hives and keep colonies strong enough to defend themselves.

Jane Medwell



# HIVE MONITORING DURING A HOT JULY

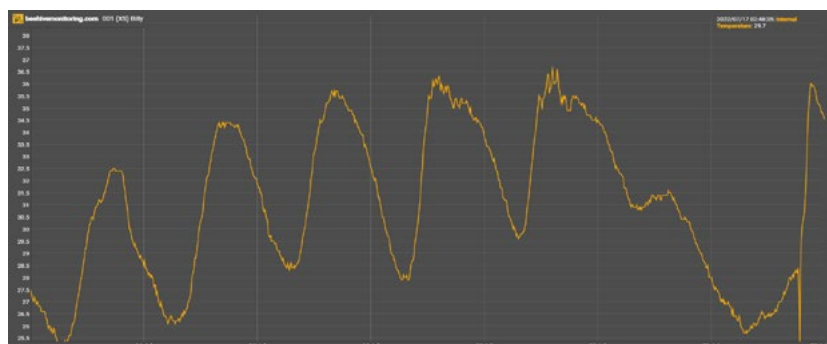
**W**e know that bees have the ability to regulate the temperature within the hive; we see this during the winter months when the roofs of the hives are frost free. The high temperatures over a couple of days during July gave us the opportunity to see how the bees can cope in extreme heat.

The graphs below demonstrate this perfectly, with the external temperature rising to 44°C and the internal temperature of the hive being maintained at a temperature between 34°C and 36°C during the hottest part of the day.

## External Temperature



## Internal Temperature



## How have they done this?

During time of extreme heat, a large number of bees will evacuate the hive to help maintain the correct temperature. The evacuation allows airflow within the hive decreasing the internal temperature. The bees will hang onto the front of the hive; this is known as 'bearding' (*top image*). Bees will also line up at the entrance fanning their wings, pushing air into the hive.

**Chris Price**



## UNWANTED SPLITS

There are many more members wanting splits than have so far been offered any so if you do have any there is a customer base ready and waiting. Contact Chris Cox

[secretary@warleambees.org.uk](mailto:secretary@warleambees.org.uk) or Bernard Brown at [bernardnbrown@outlook.com](mailto:bernardnbrown@outlook.com) to be put in touch.

## TASTER DAY

There are still places available on our Taster Day on **3<sup>rd</sup> September** so if you would spread the word amongst your friends, neighbours, work colleagues etc it would be appreciated. Places can be booked via the website

[warleambees.org.uk](http://warleambees.org.uk) If you would like a leaflet to post on a work or community notice board, facebook page etc. contact Bernard Brown at [bernardnbrown@outlook.com](mailto:bernardnbrown@outlook.com) or Paul Day at [paul.day.500@gmail.com](mailto:paul.day.500@gmail.com)

## THE POWER OF ADVERTISING

The surplus tables, chairs and fridge-freezer advertised last month and previously clogging up our portacabin at Dalehouse Lane have all found new homes with members.

## DOORSTEP HONEY SALES

Embarrassed by the size of this year's crop? You can always sign up to our register of members willing to make doorstep sales in response to enquiries from the public. We have included a way of registering on the form at the following link:- [Wanted and Unwanted Splits; Doorstep Honey Sales \(google.com\)](https://www.warleambees.org.uk/Wanted-and-Unwanted-Splits-Doorstep-Honey-Sales-google.com)



# CHAIR'S AUGUST MESSAGE

There is still lots going on at Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers' this summer. The few things I mention here are just a fraction of the inspiring activities that are happening. There will be many more of which I am not aware. Rest assured that all your contributions towards keeping our bees healthy and spreading the word about the importance of honeybees are valued.

Just some highlights: Maggie Curley and Barry Meatyard's item in the national journal *BBKA News* on flowers for pollinators. A short, sweet, helpful snippet which I hope becomes a regular item. BBKA stand at Ragley Game Fair - a national event for the public, with a substantial input of stewards and logistics from WLBK members. Thank you for sharing your enthusiasm and commitment, and for

your professional approach.

I mentioned in *Warwickshire Beekeeper* the great success of the WLBK stand at the Kenilworth show, winning awards for public engagement and interactivity. Let's also recognise the planning, prestige and authenticity of the skep apiary we have at Kenilworth Castle. Clive Joyce and team are working with English Heritage to share with the public the approach used when the Castle was part of a thriving community. What talent! What great people!

**Suzanne Bennett**  
Branch Chair



## BEE HEALTH DAY REPORT



A whole day focusing on bee diseases isn't likely to grab the attention of the population as a whole, but we are beekeepers! And specifically beekeepers who have just experienced an outbreak of a serious infection of European Foulbrood (EFB) in our training apiary that necessitated the total destruction of two colonies and the replacement of comb in others. So the County Association's decision to organise a day for local beekeepers to become more familiar with the signs and symptoms of disease proved very popular and timely. The day filled all of its 60 places and was packed full of expert first hand knowledge provided by Jonathan Axe (the Regional Bee Inspector) and an NBU team who included Colleen Reichling.

The day focused on the identification of notifiable pests and diseases including AFB and EFB and provided a first hand opportunity to see and examine infected combs at close quarters and to perform the 'roping test'. Other aspects included the role of the NBU and why we should all be registered with **Bee Base** to help manage our colonies with a close eye on biosecurity to reduce the spread of infections. Did you know, for example, that it would be useful (if not essential) to varnish the wooden cheeks of your wooden smoker bellows? This is because bare wood is more difficult to keep sterile since it offers more opportunity for infective spores to get lodged in the grain, whereas a smooth surface can be wiped clean with soda or other disinfectant. You know now!

Many thanks to the NBU team and to Dave Bonner, David Blower and County Chair Jitesh Patel for bringing it all together, and to our WLBK's home team who provided refreshments and helped support a most informative day.

**Barry Meatyard**



# UPCOMING WLBK MEETINGS



## SUMMER BBQ

Despite a forecast of heavy showers, we had a lovely DIY BBQ (photo above) at by the lake at Kings Hill Nursery, with fancy bread, healthy salads and delicious cakes to share. Alongside the scrumptious food there was plenty of bee talk – new experiences to share from the ‘newbees’ and a range of advice from experienced members. The skies darkened but after a two minute shower, the rain veered away, leaving us glad we had ignored the forecast!

### JULY MEETING

Clive Joyce treated us to a virtual trip around our extraction facility embellished with sweet and sticky anecdotes, reminders to make sure you have enough honey buckets and not to leave the honey gate open. There were hints and tips on getting the most out of your frames, dire warnings about trying to extract too quickly and advice about cleaning the kit – cold water and salt NOT hot water and soda! ‘Newbees’ who had honey to extract for the first time this year were reassured that ‘everything was set out in the manual. Old hands reminded that other people make mistakes too. The evening was rounded off, as usual with a vote of thanks to Clive and plenty of homemade cake.

### AUGUST MEETING - 18<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST KINGS HILL NURSERY AT 7.30

With the honey show in mind on 24<sup>th</sup> September at Kings Hill Nursery, Mike Townsend will be encouraging everyone to join in with hints and tips on how to prepare their entries.

### NEW MEETINGS SECRETARY

I have taken over from Rachel Dove, whose time has been overtaken by things other than arranging branch meetings. I am beginning to put together a draft programme of activities and would welcome ideas, suggestions and offers of help, including offers of cake! One event I am planning is an illustrated talk: How to take better photographs of bees. Sarah Laidler, a new member has already agreed to help, but I am looking for other members, who can join her and share their experience and photos.

Meetings will continue to take place on the third Thursday of each month, and to provide entertaining and informative evenings with opportunities to socialise and eat cake.

Judith Masson



## PUBLIC DISPLAYS

It's been quite a month for displays with attendances at Shotteswell Village Fete, supporting BBKA's Ragley Hall Game Fair, with Avon Dassett Country Show and Rowington and Lowsonford Flower Festival and Country Show planned for about the time this Bee Talk goes to press. September is just as busy with Ecofest on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September and appearances at Kenilworth Castle scheduled. Watch out for requests for stewards.

## RUN FOR BEES

WLBK member Colleen Abell is running the Virtual London Marathon in support of Bees Abroad on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October. For this virtual race competitors have 24 hours to complete the distance (run, walk, crawl... whatever it takes!!).

Colleen has set up a [fundraising page](#) and hopes she will achieve her target of raising £500 for Bees Abroad. In her words: 'I'm raising money for Bees Abroad as they are a charity who do fantastic work to develop and improve people's livelihoods through beekeeping, in countries across Africa and Asia. As a beekeeper myself and having had the opportunity to visit a number of countries in Africa with work, it's a charity close to my heart and the work they do is so important. I am not a natural runner at all so this distance is going to be quite a challenge for me! So thank you for your support to raise money for Bees Abroad!'

## DALEHOUSE UPDATE

At the Dalehouse Lane site we now have a new entrance from the newly aligned Dalehouse Lane. No longer will we have to dice with death from vehicles accelerating away from the roundabout as we turn right exiting the site.

We have decided that the site will be used as a community apiary accommodating 3 or 4 beekeepers as well as storage of our expanding range of kit for home loan.

Talks with the County Council about the basis of our occupation, are on going with more discussions due to take place in mid-August and we remain positive of a workable outcome. I hope to be able to update the membership in next month's issue of Bee Talk.

# THE RETURN OF THE BEES



**F**or a number of years we have attempted to populate and manage an observation hive in the Glasshouse in Jephson Gardens over the summer months with a differing amount of success. Unfortunately, in 2019 the hive collapsed totally and with the Covid - 19 pandemic the Glasshouse in Jephson Gardens was closed to visitors.

Well, now it is open and the Warwick District Council Green Space team were very keen that we should reinstall the Observation Hive for visitors and in time for the upcoming visit of the Britain in Bloom inspection team. Needless to say, the Branch responded positively to this request, it meets our charitable object, and during July we have reinstated the hive, full of bees and fully refurbished. Barry Meatyard being the source of the bees, which were housed in the observation hive at Clive Joyce's apiary for a week or so prior to the move.

Earlier in the year, the hive had been cleaned, revarnished by Clive and modifications made to shorten the entry passage. Also, the Green Space team member responsible for the Glasshouse attended one of our taster days to familiarise herself with beekeeping.

On the day and following the closure of the Glasshouse in the evening, Mike Townsend, Clive Joyce, Sue Holmes (WDC) and the Secretary carried out the installation which included the cleaning and reassembly of the entrance arrangements (the bees landing board

is in the high air vent with a short pipe passage to the top of the hive. The bees being encouraged to use the passage with a short length of string covered with honey.)

Already visitors are taking an interest, and many are reporting how pleased they are to see the bees back in place.

After a couple of hours work the installation was complete and a quick check the following day showed the bees passing in and out of the landing board proving that they had successfully navigated the entrance.

After a few days the bees appeared to have undone much of Clive's glass cleaning work but they appeared happy with freshly capped stores, some eggs and brood and much activity at the landing board.

The next step is to bring together a small team of members (from the spring survey) to support the Glasshouse staff in monitoring (walking through the glasshouse and having a look) and periodically emptying the "dead bee" box to keep the entrance passage clear.

[Note: The branch also maintains and manages a WBC hive in the Gardens in the small bee friendly planted garden to the rear of East Lodge at the Willes Road entrance to Jephson Gardens.]

**Chris Cox, Branch Secretary**



## WLBK AND SAFEGUARDING

**A**t the Warwickshire Beekeepers Association (WBKA) meeting on Wednesday 27th July the charity trustees agreed to adopt three documents covering the difficult area of Safeguarding (protecting a citizen's health, wellbeing and human rights; enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect). This has been an area that was of concern to the trustees who took the view that the model set out by BBKA some time ago was both impractical and unworkable at a branch (working) level.

With the assistance of an external consultant in this area and the considerable input of three trustees (Jane Nimmo – WBKA Secretary; Douglas Netherclef – Shipston Branch; Martin Wibberley – Rugby Branch) the final set of documents were unanimously agreed and are

to be disseminated to all members

The documents themselves are a) the WBKA Safeguarding Policy; b) the WBKA Children Policy and c) a WBKA Code of Conduct. As a branch to WBKA these apply to us and to our members. Our policy where children must be accompanied by a parent or registered guardian comply with the documents as it safeguards both individuals and children.

The plans are that the documents will be received by the Branch Committee at their next meeting and the committee will consider what actions need to be taken to both inform and adhere to them.

In the meantime copies of these documents are posted on the WLBKA Website [here](#).

**Chris Cox, Branch Secretary**



# TRIP TO THE HEATHER 2022



The hive barrow proving it's worth over rough terrain

**C**ontinuing our series of articles about taking bees to the heather, started last month with the necessary preparations to be made, we recount the actual experience of transporting and setting up our hives at Red Knoll farm on the Chatsworth Estate, Derbyshire.

After a two-year gap in taking bees to the Heather, my friend Steve and I decided to try another foray to the Heather moors of Derbyshire and see how they would get on. This year the Heather started to flower about three weeks earlier than normal; yet another sign of this year's warm and dry weather.

With the bees sealed up the evening before, I set my alarm for 5:30am to get an early start. I needn't have bothered because pigeons woke me at 5:10am!

When we arrived at the Apiary to collect the bees, horror of horrors, the Duct tape that I had smugly used to seal up the hives had blown off!! Fortunately, it was still cool enough to put off any flying bees, so we were able to recover the situation, seal them up properly, and load up for the journey to the moors.

Note to self: Heed Mike Townsend's advice in last month's article and use proper foam to seal up the hives next time.

We arrived at our destination at around 8am and after waking the farmer (I thought farmers were awake at the crack of dawn) we had a good chat about Cattle and Sheep prices, paid our rent of honey, and

then headed for the heather.

The allocated field was quite breezy so we chose a reasonably sheltered spot by a piece of dry stone wall to set up our hives. The heather was just coming into flower, and the bees wouldn't have far to forage. We had cut down a pallet to fit the two hives and then levelled it with off-cuts of wood. We then strapped everything down tight due to the strong moorland winds.

Thankfully, we had a 4 Wheel drive vehicle to cross the field, however the next group to join us were able to test drive the new branch Hive barrow. This makes transporting hives across rough terrain an absolute breeze (once you work out which way up it goes!). The only thing to remember is to strap up the hives on the flat side of the brood box so that the barrow can slot into the lift points.

With the hives safely installed, it was then a case of finding the closest place for breakfast, and then take the return journey home.

The farmer will notify us when the Heather seems to be going over, and we anticipate leaving the bees for around six weeks before we pick them up. Fingers crossed in the meantime for supers full of delicious heather honey.

**Alan Deeley, Burton Green Honey**



# PLANT OF THE MONTH: LAVATERA

**L**avatera, (*Malva arborea*) the lovely tree mallow, is cultivated in garden beds or more commonly found growing wild near shorelines where it thrives due to its remarkable salt tolerance. It was first named *Lavatera arborea*, by the famed botanist, Carl Linnaeus, in 1753 but some hundred years later was given a new designation in the genus *Malva*. The dark pink to purple, hibiscus-like flowers adorn the shrubby bushes in clusters of between two and seven. The open petals entice bees and other insects to the white pollen stores with which bees can become densely coated.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Lavatera* was considered a nutritious animal feed and even today in parts of Europe, is used as animal fodder. In traditional medicine, the leaves were soaked in hot water

then made into a poultice to treat sprains and burns. It is thought that the lighthouse keepers of old may have used *Lavatera* in this way since burns were an occupational hazard!

**Maggie Curley**



Image courtesy of Barry Meatyard

## BEES HAVE FEELINGS TOO ...

**D**on't read on if you have ever crushed an unproductive queen bee, or even squashed bees by accident while replacing a super. All of us who keep pets can be persuaded that cats and dogs have feelings; that they may even be sentient beings. Beekeepers quickly recognise the differences between the bees from different hives - usually judging their nature by their aggressiveness. But Lars Chittka, professor of sensory and behavioural ecology at Queen Mary, University of London (my Alma Mater, as it happens) argues that bees have a mind that both thinks and feels. In a new book, reviewed in *New Scientist* this month, he suggests that bees, like humans and some primates, are conscious and aware. They have emotional states and can feel pain. When I was studying Marine Biology at what was then QMC, it was already recognised that some cephalopods, the octopus especially, had a remarkable intelligence. Recent research has confirmed this. But bees?

Bees, with a brain the size of a poppy seed, can sense the Earth's magnetic field, smell, taste, hear, and analyse shapes. They can

find their way home, with practice, over huge distances. They can, as we all know, signal distance and direction to each other with elaborate dances in the darkness of the hive. And they can count, sequentially.

But Chittka explains that bumblebees can make representations of objects and identify them later using a different sense. After experiencing objects in complete darkness, they can identify them by sight. They have a sense of their own bodies, making their way through narrow gaps by adjusting their approach. And he argues that bees display metacognition: they know what they know.

Recent photographs from deep space challenge once again our place in the Universe. The activities of bees already overwhelm me. As a friend once remarked, it is difficult to be a beekeeper and not believe in God.

*The Mind of a Bee*: Chittka, Lars, Princeton University Press. £20.99, or £16.25 on Kindle. Reviewed in *New Scientist* Magazine, which can be read [here](#). The magazine also includes an informative comparison of bees and wasps.

**John Stringer**



# CBPV: THE SHAKY SHINIES!



CBPV infected bee, bald and deformed wings. Image courtesy of the National Bee Unit

**C**hronic Bee Paralysis Virus (CBPV) has been around for a long time, but the number of chronic bee paralysis cases increased exponentially between 2007 and 2017, possibly in relation to imported queens. This virus carries off strong colonies, which is particularly frustrating for us beekeepers. The virus may exist in most colonies at low levels and flares up in response to stress, particularly crowding or confinement. A bout of bad weather or rapid expansion of the colony can be just the thing to set it off.

CBPV can be dramatic, causing a huge pile of dead bees at the entrance to the hive; leaving the beekeeper to wonder whether the bees have CBPV or have been poisoned. However, CBPV builds up over time- so if the bees KEEP dying, it is unlikely to be a one-off poisoning event. With poisoning, the bees may be scattered across the apiary, rather than just in a pile at the entrance.

Though two types of CBPV were originally identified, in practice there is little point in separating them. Bees with CBPV may have signs of both or either type including:

## TYPE 1 SYNDROME:

Abnormal trembling of adult bees' wings.

Wings may be spread or dislocated.

Paralysis of adult bees' bodies.

Adult bees found crawling in large numbers on the ground.

Adult bees have bloated abdomens due to swelling of the honey stomach.

"Dysentery" like symptoms.

Infected individuals die within a few days following the start of symptoms.

## TYPE 2 SYNDROME:

Adults appear hairless, looking very darkly coloured and almost black.

Adults take on a shiny, "greasy" appearance in bright light. Infected bees are subject to "nibbling" attacks by other healthy members of their colony, and are often barred entry to the hive, making them appear to be robber bees.

So devastating is CBPV, that heavily infected colonies may collapse, particularly at the height of the season, and collapsed colonies may be found to contain only a few adult bees and the queen. Other colonies do recover- but we do not know why. So what can we do?

CBPV is a virus, transferred within the hive by trophallaxis and faecal exchange so the slightest contact within the hive spreads it. Traditionally, we know giving the bees lots of additional hive space (to reduce bees rubbing against each other) and feeding with syrup can help the colony recover. The NBU has a very good new video guide to CBPV presented by Maggie Gill at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDyQFVBtgak> This video suggests that removing the floor can help colonies overcome CBPV, by allowing infected bees to drop out; but avoid doing this now, as it may well cause robbing and the wasps will finish off the colony anyway.

It seems we must keep bees in ways that do not cause CBPV. A 2020 study found that queen replacement, shook swarm method and varroa control saved some colonies, so good husbandry helps. The science work into the virus continues. A study led by Newcastle University is currently taking place to establish just why CBPV is spreading so fast, whether it has an impact on other pollinators and what can be done. <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=BB%2FR00482X%2F1>.

Meanwhile, we can only maintain vigilance, practice hygiene, give space and make sure the bees are not stressed by starvation or crowding.

Jane Medwell



# MOUSEY (OR DOGGER) REVISITED

In the report on the Branch stand at the Kenilworth Agricultural Show in last month's Beetalk mention is made of the children's toy – Mousey – which went missing. Well, being of a certain vintage this brought back memories of bedtime stories read to my children some 30+ years ago, and one book in particular, Dogger by Shirley Hughes.

Like Mousey, Dogger was a favourite of a little boy, rather than a little girl, who went to a fair and in his excitement on the day he lost his beloved toy. The story has several twists and turns which are not bettered by Mousey. But Mousey's travails on the day runs it a very close second.

Mousey belongs to a little girl who was given the soft toy when a baby and to which she had become inseparable, with the exception of the Kenilworth Show. It went everywhere with her and as it happens it was given pride of place on our candle rolling stand at the Kenilworth Agricultural Show while her owner rolled a candle. When she moved on to other displays Mousey was left behind and was still there at the end of the day. Here the plot differs from that of Shirley Hughes as Mousey was attached to a straw bale rather than finding itself on a Brick-a-Brack stall and sold.

The plot to recover the toy here takes on a twist as Mousey became detached from the straw bale during the clearing up and the straw being returned to storage. Yes, we all remember Mousey at the show, but he/she was nowhere to be found until Clive Joyce in his meticulous way of sweeping out the trailer, found this little toy amongst the loose straw. By this time the little girl's mother had



contacted me to help in recovering the toy. A few calls later and Mousey was found and a happy little girly was reunited with her beloved toy.

As an aside Dogger was returned to its owner by a swap being arranged by the elder sister with the purchaser from the brick-a-brack stall.

All ended happily in both cases.

Chris Cox

# VARROA TREATMENTS FROM CO-OP

There has been some talk recently in BBKA News about hive hygiene and whether we should treat our colonies for varroa as frequently as had been advised in the past, or if in doing so we are not giving them the opportunity to develop resistance by themselves.

But current local advice from Jane Medwell, our Master Beekeeper, is that for the moment we should continue to treat.

The time is fast approaching when we need to take steps to ensure that our hives enter the autumn and winter with as low a varroa load as possible. High numbers of mites dramatically increase the risk of diseases that may lead to winter losses.

With this in mind, the Co-op Sub Committee has arranged to purchase varroa treatments at a competitive price and saving you delivery costs.

If you head over to the members' area of the [website](#) and click on Co-op Purchasing, you'll find a Google Form for varroa treatments. This form will only be available until the 10th August, so please don't delay. On the 10th we will place a bulk order that should then be available for collection within a couple of days.

The product we will have available for late summer treatment is:

**APIGUARD** - Apiguard is a thymol-based product that is sold as a gel in a metal tray. A tray is simply placed on the top of the brood frames for a two-week period – then removed and replaced with another. Apiguard works best when the ambient temperature is above 15°C. Thymol taints honey so this method of treatment is only suitable once the honey supers have been harvested.

And for winter treatment is:

**APIBIOXAL** - This is oxalic acid and is used when colonies are broodless in the winter months. It is usually used in addition to the late summer treatments but you have an opportunity to buy it now and to save it for a cold spell in December or January when you believe that your queens have stopped laying. It can be applied by trickling over the clustering bees or by vaporisation.

A 35gm sachet of ApiBioxal is mixed with syrup to give sufficient solution to treat 10 hives.

You can also purchase a syringe to enable you to administer the correct dose of Apibioxal to each seam of bees.

Other products are available elsewhere and we recommend that you vary the use of products from year to year to minimise the risk of the mites developing resistance.

Co-operative Purchasing Team

# BEE-FRIENDSHIP

**T**he construction Industry's "Considerate Contractor" scheme was extended to honey bees recently by Colas, the contractor for the roadworks which so affected our apiary at Dalehouse Lane.

Aimed primarily at activities such as noise reduction, social hours operation, timing of deliveries, cleaning roads and waste removal etc, the discovery of an established colony of honey bees in the formwork for the concrete abutment to the new bridge spanning the A46 – the abutment provides the vertical support to the bridge superstructure at the bridge ends – caused such concern we were contacted to help out. Throughout this project Colas has been very supportive of WLBK, as have Warwickshire County Council, so we were only too willing to oblige.

It turned out that the bees had taken up residence in a void within the formwork which had numerous holes in it. Although the bees used one as the primary entrance, others were being used to a lesser extent, leaving the workmen making final adjustments at risk to any unwanted attention from the bees.

The first challenge was the location of the primary entrance – some thirty foot above ground. This was no problem for Colas. A phone call brought a cherry picker to the site within minutes and after dismantling part of the support of the formwork, up we went for a closer inspection. The 25mm entrance hole was tucked behind the main steel stanchions supporting the formwork (the orange vertical ones on the photo) and impossible to access. Another phone call and an electric drill with a 100mm hole saw and a generator appeared and so we set about cutting a fresh hole as close to the original as possible. This plan was thwarted by the position of a further structural support behind the formwork.

By now it was obvious that this would not be a quick job, so Colas cancelled the concrete pour scheduled for the following day. I don't know how many thousand of tonnes of concrete it takes to form an abutment, but it is a lot and takes a lot of organisation. Now, any delay on a construction site is no small deal and not to be incurred lightly so this decision was indicative of their concern. I was impressed.

We eventually managed to form holes sufficient to locate the nest but access to it meant that the trap-out and cut-out options



A helpful lift up to the bees who took up residence in an unlikely spot

were now out of the question. Perhaps this was a job for "Pamela" our new Eezeebeevac. After half an hour's vacuuming we had extracted only a few hundred bees. At this stage after an attempt lasting three hours, we reluctantly had to abandon the attempt to save the bees and repaired to the site offices where we spent a further hour with the senior site management brainstorming the options. Colas were very reluctant to bring in pest control to poison the bees as the number and location of holes in the form work meant that the void could not be effectively sealed to prevent the poison being transmitted by escaping bees to adjacent apiaries, one of which was our own training apiary at Kings Hill.

Despite our and Colas' efforts which, by any measure, were "above and beyond", it was obvious that the colony was doomed so in the end the bees were despatched by site personnel donning borrowed bees uits and jet washing the void to destroy the colony.

Not the happiest of outcomes but at least the risk of wider contamination was avoided. Another plus we can take from this episode was the example of informed concern demonstrated by Colas. The message is beginning to get through.

**Bernard Brown**





# THE MAN WHO WORE THE FIRST BEE BEARD



Beehives in Ternopil Oblast, Ukraine.

Below: Petro Prokopovych was recognised on the two hryvnia coin

**T**hink you know your beekeeping? Try answering these three questions:

- Which European country has more than seven hundred thousand beekeepers?
- Which country produced (until recently) the greatest amount of honey per capita in the world?
- Which country celebrated its greatest beekeeper by putting his image on a coin?

If you answered Ukraine to all three, have a house point. The phrase 'until recently' may have given you a clue. The present conflict has severely damaged the industry. Ukrainian apiaries have been abandoned and often destroyed by the invading army; and of course, beekeepers are among those who have joined the defending forces. One beekeeper, Dmytro Kushnir, writes in a recent journal of the Ukrainian Brotherhood of Beekeepers how he drove a vanload of surplus honey to the front, and distributed it among the defenders. A Ukrainian proverb states 'whoever has honey has strength'.

The Ukrainian honey industry was started by Petro Prokopovych (1775-1850), who came from a family of priests. After his military career, he went to work in his brother's apiary. At the time, honey was harvested by smoking out and killing the bees. Prokopovych set out to devise a way of claiming the honey without destroying the hive; and is credited with devising the removable hive frame. He also invented a crude wooden queen excluder. At the height of his career, he owned more than six thousand hives, and became a very wealthy man.



But he didn't keep his wealth to himself. He published widely. He founded a beekeeping school from which at least seven hundred beekeepers graduated, and his contribution to the nation was recognised on the two hryvnia coin. He is also credited with making and wearing the first 'bee beard'.

The industry he founded will be suffering now. Relations between British and Ukrainian beekeepers have always been strong; and contributions are invited to help support them at this justgiving site:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/National-Honey-Show>  
John Stringer

# HINTS & TIPS: HONEY SHOW PREP

**M**any thanks to Nigel Coad for this month's article. Nigel is an amazing 6 times past winner of the Thorpe Cup.

## PREPARATION FOR THE HONEY SHOW: A GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

Our annual honey show is held this year on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and will be a good venue for beginners to try their hand at exhibiting so I am writing this brief article to encourage you all to put in some entries. Our local show is very informal and the judge will undertake 'open judging' where they talk the audience through the finer points of what they are looking for in an exhibit, so for me and I hope other beekeepers, a very good reason for entering shows is to try and improve the presentation and quality of our honey. Apart from that it's good fun and a chance to catch up with friends and swap stories about your experiences during the year.

In this article I would hope to provide sufficient information to beginners to give them confidence to enter a honey show and feel their entry will be competitive. It is not a definitive guide but I will highlight some of the common faults in preparation and presentation and try and give some tips on how to avoid them. Our bees all make wonderful honey but it is up to us to show it at its best. Much of the skill in exhibiting is not about the honey itself but how it is prepared.

The judge will be a highly experienced beekeeper and exhibitor whose first task when confronted with rows of gleaming pots will be to get the exhibits down to a shortlist which he will do by eliminating any exhibits which are not in the correct class or conforming to show rules. Only then will he exclude further exhibits for faults and finally if you have made it that far he will open your jar. Your aim should be to get to the stage where the judge will open your jar. By not complying with the rules you will make the judge's task a lot easier by instant disqualification! So your first step is to read the show schedule well in advance and check which classes you will enter.

## HONEY CLASSES

I personally take all my exhibits from my normal honey stock but do try and keep back a few jars of a particularly good honey if I am lucky enough to come across it during the course of the year. So if you can try and prepare all your honey as if you are going to show it then your honey will shine on the shelf, your customers will be happy and you will also sell more! Do however keep your show honey somewhere safe or else someone in the house is bound to give it to one of the children for the car boot sale or it will end up on toast whilst you are not looking!

## JARS AND LIDS

Should be of the standard 1lb jars with screw lids. Jars should be clean without honey on the threads. The lids should be clean, undamaged and without honey on the inside.

It's best to check jars and lids a few days before the show as the judge will want to smell your honey and the subtle aromas can be lost by a hurried change of lid just before entry.

## FILLING AND LABELLING

Take care not to allow foreign matter, wax, bee legs or dog hairs to gain entry. This causes great interest and the appearance of a spider in one entry is fondly remembered! The jars should be well, but not overfilled and the experienced exhibitor will allow a little extra for skimming the top of air bubbles or wax particles, perhaps for more than one show. Under filling of a jar is a major fault and as a rough guide no daylight should be visible below the lid.

## THE FINAL SELECTION

Should be made about 3 or 4 days before the show. Check jars and lids. Look at honey for clarity. Ideally you should have a bright crystal clear honey. Cloudiness in honey may be due to excess pollen at extraction, or minute air bubbles in a honey which has not been adequately ripened (allowed to settle after extraction), or heated after bottling (60-65C for 1 hour). Finally check for clarity and foreign material with a strong light such as a torch under and through the jar. Multiple fine bubbles can sometimes be cleared by careful heating, but beware of overheating. Minute particles of debris can be extracted with a fine straw. Skim from the surface any excess of bubbles or froth. Clean the threads carefully with a clean cloth and finish with a fresh lid.

## LIQUID HONEY

Usually classified as either light, medium, or dark in colour. To ensure the honey is in the correct class the judge will check colour against grading glasses. These are available on the day so if you are not sure which class to put your honey into ask someone to help then your jar can be checked against these standards.

## GRANULATED OR CREAMED HONEY

May be two classes, either naturally granulated or so called soft set/creamed honey but more usually combined as a single class. Should be sufficiently well set so that it does not fall out if the jar is inverted! Debris in set honey usually falls to the bottom and is easily seen at the base of the jar. The surface should be clean of froth, excessive bubbles and debris. Frosting, although a natural phenomenon, is unsightly and may well detract from an otherwise good honey. It occurs as the honey contracts during setting and is usually seen around the neck of the jar,

particularly in naturally granulated honeys. Some judges do not regard it as a fault. It can be avoided to some extent by using jars that have been slightly warmed. When tasting granulated honeys a judge will also assess the texture of the granulation so if possible always seed your set honey with a fine-grained honey such as oilseed rape.

### ON THE NIGHT

Arrive early and the secretary will give you numbered labels for your jars and other exhibits. The jars unless specified carry no other labels apart from the entry sticker. This is usually fixed to the lower jar about 1/2-1 inch from the bottom. It helps to keep the label straight if you bring a strip of paper glued into a circle that will fit over the jar and act as a guide. Polish the jars and lids with some paper or a clean towel and place on the stand.

### COTTAGER AND NOVICE CLASSES

The Cottager class is for those who have less than five hives and the Novice for those who have never won a first prize in a show. They are both well worth entering for all beginners as there are often few entries so you can be almost guaranteed a prize and you may even go home with a coveted trophy.

### SECTION OF CUT COMB HONEY

May be of stated weight but more usually unspecified. Best presented in an 8oz cut comb container with clear lid. Comb should be evenly filled and capped with clean cappings. Avoid 'travel-stained' brown cappings, wax moth trails and bee debris!

### FRAME FOR EXTRACTION

Usually exhibited in a special box with glass sides but you could improvise to start with. Pick your best frame as you extract and put it carefully to one side. The frame itself should be cleaned of wax and debris. Members have been known to use a hand held vacuum on this one! It should be capable of being uncapped and extracted, so a winning frame in this category will be evenly drawn out beyond the frame with cappings to the edge of the comb on both sides. The honey itself should be liquid. Once again wax moth should be avoided!

### MEAD

Mead should be the subject of an article by itself. Takes at least a year to make and longer to mature so start brewing now for next year! Usually classed as dry or sweet mead. Must look bright, and be clean tasting, with no debris or sediment.

### CAKE OF BEESWAX

Preparing a perfect 8oz block of beeswax is perhaps the greatest, and most frustrating challenge of the show. Once again whole books have been written on the subject. The real experts use only hand-graded cappings carefully washed in soft water but for most of us you it means starting off with your best wax that should not be too dark.

It will need to be filtered through lint several times. Do not overheat the wax more than about 90C as this will darken the colour. Most people use a Pyrex bowl as a mould which should be polished with a small amount of washing liquid. Pour the measured amount into the container through a sieve and lint. Cover and allow to cool slowly overnight in a previously warmed oven. Tap or float the cake out in the morning to find a small fleck of dirt or imperfection so start again! Wrap perfect cake in polythene bag until show. Treat with exceptional care as damage could result in terminal depression.

### THE HONEY CAKE

This often a keenly competitive class, as the skill is all in the making of the cake. There will be a standard recipe which should be adhered to by the letter and in spirit so there should be no additions or variations in the method although you are welcome to experiment with the quality and make of ingredients, the temperature of the oven and cooking time. The cake should be made as per specification. The winning entry will be well and evenly risen with a well-cooked but not burnt surface. The mixture should be well cooked throughout. The cake should have a pleasant taste of honey. It is said to be better to make the cake a few days before and store it in a cake tin to allow the flavours to mature.

Additional information can be found in a series of articles prepared by leading experts for the [National Honey show](#).

Good luck to you all.

**NIGEL COAD**

*Now it is your chance! If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to Helen Essex: [h.essex211@gmail.com](mailto:h.essex211@gmail.com)*

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