



Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

Branch Web Site

Have you visited the Branch Web Site yet ? All the information about the Branch is on it we now have a Members Area to access this the password currently is: mandible.

You will need this for access to all Coop purchases

Skep Making Workshop.

This is a wonderful opportunity to create your own skep, and also to have time to chat with other beekeepers, not only from our branch but from other areas.

The trainees came from as far as Oxfordshire, Hampton in Arden, Stoke Golding, Solihull, Pillerton Hersey and Brinklow as well as our own branch members.

They all soon caught on to how to start their skeps, which is by far the hardest part of the construction and by 12 noon the trainers could have gone home for a few hours and left them to continue alone, as they had all quickly become very competent.

By the end of the day everyone was well into the construction of the base of the skep and some had begun to build the side.

The day was the usual mixture of banter and gentle competition, with everyone agreeing that the communal lunch encouraged people to mix and share ideas and information.

We look forward to running the next one.

Mike Townsend
Mary Pemberton
Val Dillon



Unique Christmas Cards for Beekeepers

These delightful Christmas cards have been designed especially for WLBK for 2015 by Linda Clements, a local watercolour artist. All profits from the sales of these cards are used to support Linda's work with sick and orphaned hedgehogs and to give a contribution to Bees Abroad.

A pack of 10 cards will cost £5.50. Cards will be on sale at WLBK events over the autumn or contact Jane Brown at janebrown100@aol.com.



Branch Honey Show

The Honey Show is always a lovely social occasion for Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers, and this year there was spice added to it – not literally, but by a change to open judging. Never fear – all the entries are referred to by number, and only you know which number is yours!

Julian Routh was the judge, and he balanced rigorous and thoughtful judging with nicely-timed banter with the audience. There were 19 individual and group entries, and there were 73 entries in total. The medium honey, flavour only, and honey cake classes attracted the most entries.

What does a judge look for when examining a jar of honey? The key to it all is a strong torch, a glass spatula, a good sense of smell, and a keen sense of taste and aftertaste. Dust was mercilessly illuminated on the surface of some of the jars of honey, lack of clarity showed up in the pattern of torchlight passing through the jar, and a gap between honey and jar lid meant that two jars were ruthlessly eliminated. Set honey had to retain its hollow when honey was extracted – painful for the entrants as they watched the honey close over the gap. The viscosity of the clear honey was assessed (but not measured) as it was lifted out of the jar with the glass spatula and placed carefully on his outer thumb.



Hello - What's this I see?

Julian explained that flavour-only honey is really difficult to judge. You can produce honey with the texture of grit – but if the flavour is better than the smooth soft-set or clear honey entries, you are onto a winner. For the rest, if you want to win a prize, the name of the game is to get nothing wrong – as well as getting the flavour and texture right.



Traffic problems had meant that we had plenty of time to chat (and eat) prior to the start, and we all enjoyed fantastic goodies made / served up by Nicki and Nicole.

This gave us plenty of time to chat and look at the exhibits, so after judging the jars of honey we only had a short break.....but Julian had not finished work by that time.

He gave us several tips for producing the perfect cake of beeswax. Not only must it have a release agent to allow it to fall away from the mould, but the environment must allow it to cool slowly and away from vibration. His tip was to cast the beeswax cake when the rest of the world was asleep – then creep away. He suggested a minimum width of cake to make comparisons between blocks more rigorous in future shows.

The two frames of honey that had been entered both passed the test that they were liquid, and could therefore be extracted. One had greater depth, allowing for it to be decapped more easily, and that entry won the day.

Both cut-comb exhibits looked lovely and dry from the top, but when tipped out, one was a better example than the other. So now we know that the judge can tip them out!! Julian's tip for every entry was to ask oneself 'would I like to see this in a shop? – would I buy it?'

The gift entries were very closely matched. A good tip here was that one gift had a label which did not match the whole of the contents of the gift basket– referring to pure honey, when other items were in the same basket. If it were for sale, this would be important.

There were only seven photos in the photo class, but they displayed various aspects of beekeeping and bee behaviour. There must be more photographers out there!

Next, Julian was able to indulge in a feast of honey cake. Again, the rule was to get nothing wrong – dark enough but not too dark, cooked through but not crunchy. Finally on to the bottles of mead – all of which were to a very high standard. Despite being closely matched, Julian did not work his way down the bottles 'trying to make sure'.



Helen and Ray – Both were winners

Results are in the table that follows – but just two names in this brief report - Helen Essex for scoring the most points overall, and Ray Summers for best entry in show, with his medium honey. Interestingly, the contestant with the most points all came down to last result – oh, the drama!

Come on folks! – Ray has only been beekeeping two / three years and produced some magical results. The Branch now boasts nearly 200 beekeepers – yet only seventeen people entered this year. I didn't do well, but had a great time and learnt such a lot – and the cakes were delicious!

Julian was absolutely brilliant, and on behalf of all who attended, I'd like to say a really big thank you to him for making it a really good, enjoyable, informative evening, and to Helen and Steve for arranging it all.

As a postscript....next day, my husband Steve spent several minutes in a shop looking at the lumens produced by several high quality torches. He has yet to start transferring honey from a glass spatula onto a well-washed outer thumb to test the flavour- as far as I know...

Liz Bates

Class 1 Light Honey

1st Stephen Bates
2nd Tim Foden
3rd Ray Summers

Class 2 Medium Honey

1st Ray Summers
2nd DHL Tuesday training
3rd Helen Essex
4th Tim Foden

Class 3 Dark Honey: No entries

Class 4 Granulated Honey

2nd Helen Essex
3rd Ray Summers

Class 5 Soft Set Honey

1st Stephen Bates
2nd Clive Joyce
3rd Ray Summers

Class 6 Heather/Heather Blend

3rd Ian Jamie

Novice Mazer for Novice Class-
Ray Summers

Jack Taylor Plaque for Cottager Class –
Helen Essex

Class 7 Judged on Flavour Only

1st Gill Grimshaw
2nd Ray Summers
3rd Ian Jamie
4th DHL Tuesday training

Class 8 Cut Comb

2nd Clive Joyce
3rd Bernard and Jane Brown

Class 9 Frame for Extraction

1st Bernard and Jane Brown
2nd Stephen Bates

Class 10 Cake of Beeswax

1st Stephen Bates
2nd Helen Essex

Class 11 Dry Mead

1st Helen Essex

Class 12 Sweet Mead

1st Clive Joyce
2nd Helen Essex

Class 13 Honey Cake

1st Helen Essex
2nd Bronwen Spraggett
3rd Ann Foden

Nancy Wiltshire Rosebowl for Honey Cake Class -
Helen Essex

Class 14 Cottager Class

1st Helen Essex
4th Gill Grimshaw

Class 15 Novice Class

1st Ray Summers
2nd Ben Heaf
3rd Paul Kerr
4th Linda Pound

Class 16 Photograph

1st Stephen Bates
2nd Ray Summers
3rd Liz Bates
4th Helen Essex

Class 17 Junior Class: No Entries

Class 18 Gift Class

1st Julia Smith
2nd Stephen Bates
3rd Gill Grimshaw
4th Helen Essex

Class 19 Straw Skep: No Entries

Thorpe Cup for most points-
Helen Essex

Bernard Collins Trophy for best exhibit in the show
Ray Summers
For Medium Honey

Wax Workshop

On a bright autumn Saturday, 14 curious Members joined Gill and Mary for a wax workshop at BBKA.

A welcoming cuppa and brief presentations passed on the facts, equipment, safety and regulations.

Our schedule was brilliantly planned with stations set up for small group work to get on and have a go.

As Mary demonstrated the technique of dipping candles the gentle glug of wax was our music to work with. We learnt that careful set up is important when dealing with hot molten wax, and enjoyed taking turns to dip and watch our candles grow.

Gill showed us various ingredients and recipes and how to dispense, measure and mix lip balms.

So we dipped, melted, mixed and poured into pots, and as the butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers of times past we enjoyed the camaraderie and concentration you get from working in congenial company.

The day went like a flash- we went home well informed and content with self made candles and lip balm and ideas on having a go for pleasure or small business.

Gill is currently putting together, on behalf of the Branch, a set of candle making equipment for loan. The purpose of the kit will be to provide all you will need to enable you to take some first steps in candle making before deciding what equipment you would like to invest in personally. You will only need to provide your wax and may purchase wick lengths from Gill.

If you get the chance to go on a future workshop- do have a go- I thoroughly recommend it!

Nicole Woodyatt

Winter Walk

The winter walk will take place on Sunday 22nd November. I have selected a 4.5 mile walk based on Corley Moor, the easy terrain is "dog friendly".

Lunch has been booked for 1.30pm at the Bull & Butcher which is located in the centre of Corley Moor. Assemble in the car park opposite the pub at 10.30am for an 11.00am start.

As I need to advise the pub of the numbers, would members requiring lunch kindly advise me no later than noon on Saturday 21st. I can be contacted on 02476-467356 or 02476-410011. Email michaelradburn28@gmail.com

Best Wishes

Mike Radburn

Do you have friends who would like to take up beekeeping?

Warwick & Leamington Beekeepers are running their annual Introduction to Beekeeping course on six consecutive Monday evenings, starting next February. If you have friends or relatives who have expressed an interest in becoming beekeepers, please could you pass on this information to them.

The course will cover the basics of honeybee behaviour, and how, as a beekeeper, you house and care for them. Participants will receive advice on buying bees and equipment, forage, locating your hive, swarm management and a hands on session on how to build a hive. Those who subsequently join the branch can request the support of a mentor and attend branch training apiary sessions and handle live bees, once the weather is warm enough for the bees to be flying.

Start date: Monday February 8th for six consecutive weeks

Time: 7.00pm to 9.15pm (preceded by tea/coffee from 6.30pm)

Venue: National Beekeeping Centre Stoneleigh Park, near Kenilworth

Cost: £65.00

For further details, please contact the Course Registrar, Val Dillon.

Email: val.dillon@outlook.com

Phone: 02476417374

To register for the course, please fill in and send the booking form on the WWBK website at <http://www.warleambees.org.uk/introduction-to-beekeeping/>

For sale

One new, unused Assembled complete National brood body with 11 DN4 waxed frames, metal runners, for £55 (Thorne analogue price is £103.92) and 2 new, unused Assembled complete National super with 10 SN4 waxed frames, 10 slot metal castellated spacers for £40 each (Thorne analogue price is £85.32). Please contact Ulya Lalo tel 07840850650 or laloulya@yahoo.com."

Ulya

Time for a clean up



Tim and Bernard preparing for the year ahead

Hints and Tips

Many thanks to Mike Townsend for the tips this month.

Advice When Gardening Near A Beehive

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.essex@virgin.net...

Thank you Helen Essex

Benefit of eating honey

Thousands of years ago Greek athletes stuffed themselves full of honey during training for the Olympiad being aware it would boost their energy levels.

Honey contains glucose and fructose, which produce tremendous reserves of glycogen in the liver. The important consideration in any feat of endurance is to maintain blood-sugar levels because those with the best store of glycogen and blood sugar will always emerge from such tests of endurance and races against time as the least exhausted and last to fatigue.

Roger

Editor Roger Wilkes, email address is roger.wilkes@kenilworthhoney.co.uk or hard copy can be posted to him at: 12 Mercia Avenue, Kenilworth, CV8 1EU. **Content to him for next month by November 27th, latest!**

Please send in plain text, unformatted, using Microsoft Word or another common program.

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