



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

WLBK EXTRACTION UNIT OPENING



With supers full, head to our new extraction unit to harvest that delicious honey.

and will be officially opened on the 22nd August. It will function as a training venue to ensure that members are familiar with the range of equipment available to aid extraction – and (most importantly) how to clean and maintain it. All training sessions will be absolutely free of charge.

But once members are fully trained in the use of the Unit, a charge must be levied to satisfy the requirements of the Charity Commission and also to demonstrate fairness across the membership. After all, those members who maintain their own extraction equipment and use their domestic electricity can't be expected to subsidise folks taking advantage of branch facilities

WLBK members already know that a huge number of benefits arise from being part of a supportive beekeeping charity. The charity's focus is on training and education and on promoting the importance of bees in the environment, and any activities falling within this remit are provided all free of charge.

The new Extraction Unit at Hurst Farm will be a fantastic facility

The biggest cost of the Extraction Unit is electricity, but cleaning materials and equipment maintenance are also expensive, so a modest charge of £9.00 per day is levied for private use of the Unit.

Once the new Unit is up and running, you'll be able to book it by contacting Clive Joyce on 07792 222251 and arranging payment of £9.00 per day via BACS to the branch bank a/c no 00173056, sort code 30 94 93. The current terms and conditions in force at the former Extraction Unit will still apply.

Jane Brown

SUPER SOLUTION



Honey and comb stored in supers waiting to be extracted, particularly if stored in sheds or garages are vulnerable to being tainted by the fumes of stored chemicals, contaminated by dirt and dust as well as being attacked by wax moths, wasps and other pests. Hitherto I wrapped each super in pallet wrap (industrial cling film). Never an easy task when handling full supers and because pallet wrap comes in 500mm width it takes at least two wrap arounds to enable a seal to be made. When it comes to extracting the frames, the cling film has to be removed and disposed of which offends those of us trying to avoid single use plastic.

Members Mandy and Steve Ghent discovered that Ikea's blanket bags shown in the photo would accommodate a super comfortably. It turns out they are pretty water-tight, robust and washable for any 'internal' leakage from honey frames and are **re-usable!** The full length zip around the top flap provides easy access – you simply open the flap and plonk the super on top and ease the sides of the bag around the super and once zipped up your supers remain securely stored. The frames can easily be accessed if needed for example to release any stowaway bees or to swap frames between supers.

I bought some at the BBKA convention but Mandy and Steve had found the self-same bags in Ikea at a considerably more competitive price. With delivery included and for an order of 10 bags the price worked out at £2 per bag. There is also a larger size which will accommodate a brood box.

They are so much better to use than cling film and better for the environment too. A definite win-win in my book.

Bernard Brown

MEMBERS' MEETINGS

September's meeting will take place on
Thursday 17th September, 7.30 pm

Bee Nutrition: Margaret Murdin, Master Bee-keeper, NDB and former President of the BBKA

Kenilworth Senior Citizen's Centre, Abbey End, CV8 1QJ (top end of carpark opposite entrance)

If you have not been to any of our club meetings before, or even if you have, do come along. These are friendly informal sessions with a talk from an experienced beekeeper. A chance to ask questions and plenty of time for informal bee chat. There are always refreshments after the talk including HOMEMADE CAKE. This is an opportunity to meet your fellow beekeepers, swap stories and be more involved in our beekeeping community.

OUT APIARIES

There is one recent addition to the schedule of Out Apiaries located in Cubbington on community land.

This is an ideal location for an apiary and it has good security and access with excellent forage potential.

For further details contact Alistair Walker:
alistair.walker@btinternet.com.

A schedule of all available out apiaries is on the WLBK website.

WLBK Christmas Party



**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Friday 11 December

NEW BEE THREAT



▲ **Figure 1.** *T. mercedesae* (left) and *V. destructor* (right) foundress mites on a honey bee prepupae. Copyright Irakli Janashia (photo available on www.tropilaelaps.info).

The BBKA has approved funding for an important new research project focused on Tropilaelaps — a parasitic mite that many bee scientists consider to be an even greater long-term threat to honey bee colonies than Varroa.

Already established across Asia and spreading westward into Europe, Tropilaelaps has caused severe colony losses in affected regions. It is only a matter of time before it reaches the UK, and we believe it is vital that beekeepers are ready.

This two-year project, led by Maggie Gill of PHIRA Science, will develop practical, accessible training materials to help beekeepers identify, monitor, and respond to Tropilaelaps. It includes educational films, written guidance, and webinars.

The project team want to assess beekeeper preparedness and educational readiness for Tropilaelaps and so would be grateful if our branch members completed this [survey](#).

The survey aims to understand how prepared beekeepers currently are, identify knowledge gaps and help guide future education, training and preparedness strategies. The findings will also support future policy and extension work relating to emerging honey bee pests.

The questionnaire takes approximately 7–12 minutes to complete, responses are anonymous, and the study has received ethical approval from the University of Nottingham.



HONEY FOR SALE

Please fill in this [simple form](#) on our website if you have any honey to sell to the public. Those who wish to and are happy to be approached can provide their details.



We don't want lots of details like price etc. as these are subject to change and we'd want to avoid the 'but the website said' scenarios.

We simply want your Honey Name, Area ... unless the name describes it and how to Contact you. The latter can be an anonymous email address, you don't have to share your phone number or email with your name if you don't wish to.

You can email me to remove your entry any-time: website@warleambees.org.uk

Richard Pierce
Website Manager

TRIP TO HEATHER CANCELLED

Because of the weather, the prospect of a substantial nectar yield, the tinder dry state of the moors and the stress on the bees travelling in this heat we decided with regret not to sally forth this year. This is a great disappointment but there is always next year.....we hope!

Bernard Brown



HARVESTING THE UKRAINIAN WAY



When Bohdan came to live with us in February through a placement by Homes for Refugees he had two clear aims: to get a job in retail and to improve his English. In the five months he has been living with us he has achieved both with the help of the

Warwickshire Homes for Ukraine Scheme and his own hard work.

When we first met online while he was living in Germany, I mentioned that I kept bees and he said he had helped his ex-girlfriend's family, who had a bee farm. 'I was just the trolley man' he said but it turned out he knew a lot more than he could explain. The club agreed he could attend the ITB as a guest. I hoped he would meet and talk to some young beekeepers, but he was shy and not very confident with English. However, he and I began to talk about bees. The club loaned him a bee suit as he needed a rather larger size than my partner, Leo, and I bought him some size 12 wellingtons. Bohdan was not very happy with the idea of just using Marigolds – in Ukraine he had had thick leather gloves!

As the season developed Bohdan no longer seemed to feel the need for thick gloves when he helped with my weekly inspections. He lifted and replaced supers effortlessly. He also was expert at finding my queens. He knew how to mark her using a crown of thorns: 'My ex-girlfriend's father showed me.' When time came to harvest some honey, I sorted out my clearer boards and ekes, but Bohdan suggested it would be quicker "the Ukrainian way." Speed matters when you have 100 hives! All I needed was two empty nucs and the kitchen ready for the supers. Bohdan assured me that there would be

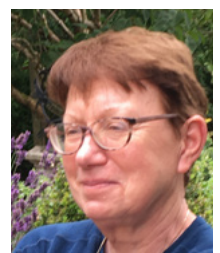
no bees in the kitchen. So, I agreed we should give it a go.

With each super ready to extract, Bohdan shook off most of the bees from each frame and expertly brushed off the few remaining onto the open hive. He then put the frame in the empty nuc and I put the lid back on. Once we had 5 frames cleared, I took the closed nuc to the backdoor – the nuc was heavy but not too heavy for me to carry on my own. Bohdan repeated the exercise with the second nuc and then brushed any remaining bees off the super, which I took to the kitchen and put on clean cardboard. Rather than Bohdan helping me, I was helping him!

Before taking the nucs into the kitchen, Bohdan checked there were no bees hiding there – a couple of taps on the nuc brought any stray bee to the top so she could be picked up and sent on her way outside. The nucs were taken inside and emptied into the original super, and the process repeated with all four supers we had decided were ready. The whole exercise took under two hours. I am sure it would take me longer on my own, at least until I get the nifty shake and brush technique Bohdan has. This works for me because my apiary is in my garden and I really cannot lift a full super on my own. With an out apiary you would need more nucs and more space than I have in my Peugeot 107!

Thanks to Bohdan for all the help you have given me, to the club for supporting Bohdan's British beekeeping and to Homes for Refugees for making such a great match.

Judith Masson



YLAH – THE LATEST BUZZ



Nationally, sightings of the YLAH have rocketed with 82 sightings and 21 nests traced recorded up until the end of July year compared with 108 at this time in 2025. This is rather disappointing given the low number of sightings hitherto, but we can take some comfort in that it is still fewer than last year.

The Buzz from the YLAH Monitoring Workshop 18 July

Held at BBKA, Stoneleigh and delivered by WBKA YLAH Coordinators this workshop was aimed at informing attendees of what is involved in carrying out monitoring for the YLAH and at recruiting YLAH monitors and verifiers.

After a brief resume of the identification and behavioural characteristics of the YLAH, an overview of current UK strategy for defending against this invasive non-native species established that the UK was in what is termed the eradication stage. That is, we are trying to destroy YLAH queens to prevent them from founding new colonies and becoming an established population. Essential to this strategy are "Monitors" and "Verifiers" to spot, identify and report suspected sightings. If we aren't looking for YLAHs we won't know when they are in our area.

This strategy has 2 stages:-

Stage 1. Spring trapping of YLAH queens.

"Selective", "non-lethal" monitor traps are deployed to trap YLAH queens. A non-lethal trap is one in which insects can enter the trap and won't drown in the bait whilst "Selective" means that non-target species – termed by-catch – can leave unharmed through the escapes provided in the trap. YLAH queens are large insects, consequently the trap entrance is large. This allows smaller by-catch to enter the trap. The trap is provided with small escape holes to allow the by-catch to escape unharmed whilst not allowing the larger YLAH queens to escape.

Selective spring queen non-lethal traps are deployed between mid-February and May. The YLAH queens emerge from hibernation between February and May when temperatures are at least 12°C for 4 to 5 consecutive days. Queens need to feed to replace fat reserves, find a primary nest site, build an embryo nest, lay eggs,

feed the first brood and defend the nest. The queens are out and about alone and thus vulnerable for 10 to 12 weeks until the first workers emerge.

During this period, the traps are monitored on a daily basis and any by-catch released. If a YLAH queen is captured she must not be released as that would be breaking the law. Take a photograph and report the capture. The whole trap can be sealed into a plastic bag and frozen for 24 hours to kill the queen.

Selective non-lethal monitor traps should be withdrawn by May or immediately if a European Hornet is in the monitor trap.

Stage 2. Nest destruction

This is an essential part of YLAH control strategy, especially during the pre-establishment phase. Without it, nest densities will rise to unsustainable levels. In May, when queen trapping is suspended, we change from deploying the selective non-lethal traps to monitoring feeding stations. The same selective non-lethal trap can be used as one of these with the entrance cones removed allow insects to enter, feed and leave freely, or one of the many open feeding stations used. It does need to be monitored for about 15 to 20 minutes per day. YLAH demonstrate forage fidelity and will return to reliable feeding sites again and again. So, feeding stations can be left in situ and not visited for a day or two occasionally. The attractant bait needs to be maintained. If the nest is within 1.5km, 15 to 20 minutes is about the turnaround time for a hornet feeding, returning to the nest to unload, then revisiting the monitor feeding station.

When YLAH are seen, take a photo and make a note of the direction the hornet takes when flying off, then report the sighting. **YLAH should not be captured or killed. It's illegal to release non-native invasive species without a special licence. Only live hornets will lead to the nest.**

For 2026 the NBU will continue to track and trace nests from credible reports of sightings. During the spring trapping of queens in 2025 in the Southeast, the NBU made 5,500 spring trap visits which yielded 37 queen hornets. This is not an economical use of their limited resources so, from 2026, they have withdrawn from spring queen trapping due to the increasing demands and reduced resources. Instead, Local Beekeeping Association Verifiers and Monitors will be asked to undertake this task.

Nest destruction will never be 100% successful as not all nests can or will be found. Unless the YLAH nests are found & destroyed, predation pressure in the apiary will begin in August and continue to increase until honey bee colonies are damaged & collapse. Male and female sexual YLAH will start to be produced from September, beginning the cycle again for the following season.

Without diligent vigilance yielding reliable sighting reports the control strategy will fail. If we don't monitor for YLAH we won't know they are there and by the time you do see them, they will be in your apiary. By then, it's too late for your bees and too late for the ecosystem.

At the time of writing, Warwickshire is classed as a low-risk county, but that can change overnight with a confirmed sighting. The life cycle of YLAH shows that, in mid-July to early August, their food demands are huge as nests are expanding. This when workers will begin to predate our apiaries.

Noel Parker

BE PREPARED FOR WASP WARS

The blackberry is over and the rosebay willow herb is in flower and it is still JULY when this article was penned! These traditional indicators that the beekeeping season is past its peak serve to reinforce further the advanced state of the usual cycle of the natural world this year and some members have already been caught out by the early arrival of wasps with evil on their minds.

Wasps will attack your beehive anytime but especially at or just before honey harvest, when the smell of sweet honey acts like a dinner bell for not only wasps but robber bees as well.

Hives are at special risk if they are:

- new
- weak
- small
- battling mites or other pests

On the other hand, a strong colony will be able to defend itself better from attacking wasps.

Once a scout wasp finds your hive, it will return to its nest and tell all its wasp buddies about the awesome honey cache it has just found. Before you know it, your poor hive will be a wasp buffet.

The more the wasps break the honey cells and eat the honey inside, the stronger the honey smell will be—and will attract more wasps. Your honeybees will try to defend their hive and some will be killed. The scent of all those dead bees will also act as a lure for wasps.

So, here are some countermeasures that can be taken to help:

CHECK YOUR HIVE FOR POORLY FITTING COMPONENTS

Pay particular attention to the rear of the open mesh floor where it is fixed to the wooden rail with drawing pins. These have been known to fall out allowing the mesh to bow and providing a back door into the hive. Galvanised clout nails make a far better job.

SHRINK YOUR HIVE ENTRANCES

Make the entrances to the beehive smaller by inserting the entrance block. The hole, in most standard entrance blocks, is still too large so reduce this down to 2cm x 1cm. There are many ways to do this. Inserting a piece of foam is one but, if using gaffer tape, do avoid having the sticky side where bees can get stuck on it. A smaller hive entrance is easier for honeybees to protect.

MODIFY THE ACCESS TO THE ENTRANCE

The "Kewl" floor, much beloved of "The Apiarist", provides a dog-legged entrance which provides two constricted areas on the route in for the bees to defend. For details of its operation and how to make one go to <https://www.theapiarist.org/kewl-floor/>

Then there are beehive robbing screens. Installed in front of the entrance with a space between it and the hive, these screens deny direct frontal access to the hive. The wasps can smell the honey and spend their time trying to work out how to get inside the beehive. When/if they do, they have to negotiate two defendable entrances. Meanwhile, your own bees, being members of MENSА, figure out their way to come and go as they please. It may take them a little longer to get in through the more constrained entrances, but this is actually a good thing as the honeybees, waiting their turn in line, will act as

guards, attacking any wasps that try to enter. Proprietary screens are available from beekeeping equipment suppliers.

They can, however, be easily and cheaply made. Member Barry Meatyard has devised one such, as shown here.

Go to our website - <https://warleambees.org.uk/wasps/> - to find out how.



TRAP THE BLIGHTERS

Although you won't notice wasps as much during the spring, if you set out wasp traps early, you can catch the wasp queens before they have a chance to establish a colony.

There are various proprietary traps available but again these can be fashioned from readily available recyclable materials details of which are on our website at the link above. They work by attracting the wasps by the smell of some juice and once inside the wasps become exhausted trying to escape and fall into the juice and drown. Some rely on a home brewed concoction of something sweet but NOT honey. Left-over wine (who ever has that?), flat beer, discarded fruit juice, mashed, over-ripe fruit laced with a slurp of vinegar and a dash of washing up liquid works well, if a little indiscriminately, trapping hover flies and other beneficial insects as well. One which is more discriminate in its victims is "Wasp Bane". This consists of a trap containing a pheromone to attract wasps and nothing else. Hang traps 10 metres or so from the hives and keep a check on them. When full of dead bodies, replace the wasp juice.



DECOY WASP NESTS

Wasps do have a beneficial role to play in the natural world in controlling aphids and other pests and some people may seek methods of deterrence rather than adopting the final solution. Allegedly, wasps are territorial and will not set up a colony closer than 200 feet from another.

Decoy wasp nests take advantage of this and are available on the internet. Made of paper on a wire frame these are suspended in the vicinity of the hive. Do these work? I will have to let you know as I am trialling them.

HOUSE KEEPING

Finally, be vigilant at honey harvest and be careful not to spill honey or, if you do, clean it up immediately.

Bernard Brown
Based on an article by "The Apiarist"



HONEY BEES AVOID “TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING”



Bees are known for their intelligence, but a new study led by the University of Oxford has revealed a previously unknown nutritional skill: they can adjust how much they eat in response to the balance of essential amino acids in their food. This helps them avoid the potential toxic effects of over-consuming certain amino acids when pollen provides a poor nutritional match for their needs.

Bees feed almost exclusively on nectar and pollen from flowers. Nectar provides mainly sugar, while pollen is their main source of protein. But unlike nectar, pollen is not produced primarily as a food reward for pollinators: it is the male reproductive material of plants. This means its nutrient balance may not always match what bees need to grow, survive and reproduce.

To investigate this, the researchers compared the essential amino acid profiles of honeybee tissues with that of pollen from 99 UK flowering plant species across 26 plant families. They then created artificial diets that either replicated the amino acid profiles of different pollen sources or honeybee tissues and fed these to newly emerged worker honeybees in controlled laboratory experiments.

The researchers found that most pollen sources tested were a poor

match for the essential amino acid profile of bee tissues. Bees fed diets that more closely matched their own tissue composition (rather than pollen) ate more, gained more body mass and consumed a more protein-rich balance of food.

The researchers suspected that this response was linked to histidine, an essential amino acid that bees need only in small amounts. To test this, they fed bees artificial diets where histidine was either high or low relative to branched-chain amino acids (such as leucine and isoleucine) that are important for bee growth and development. When histidine was relatively high, the bees ate less food overall, including both protein and carbohydrate.

The team suggests this may reflect a post-digestive feedback mechanism that helps bees avoid the potential toxic effects of over-consuming particular amino acids, rather than simply eating more pollen to make up for nutritional shortfalls.

Lead author Professor Geraldine Wright, Department of Biology, University of Oxford, said: “Although pollen is often assumed to be a near-perfect food for bees, it is the male gamete of plants and, unlike nectar, it is rarely produced solely as a reward for pollinators. This creates a conflict of interest between the plant and the pollinator.”

However, honeybees appear to have developed a strategy to ensure their developing young obtain a balanced diet. Honeybees collect pollen from many different flowers and store it in the hive as ‘bee

bread’, which is then eaten by nurse bees. These nurse bees convert nutrients from pollen into glandular secretions, including royal jelly, which are fed to larvae. When the researchers analysed bee bread, they found that its essential amino acid profile was better balanced than most single pollen sources. Royal jelly was better still, closely matching the amino acid profile of bee tissues. This suggests that pollen mixing and processing by nurse bees may help honeybee colonies overcome the nutritional limitations of individual plant pollens

Professor Wright added: “We predict that honeybees have evolved to create glandular secretions which are the perfect food for their larvae, providing them with the ratios of essential amino acids that maximise growth.”

The findings suggest that pollinator-friendly planting schemes should look beyond the number of flowers provided and consider the nutritional quality and diversity of pollen sources.

Professor Wright said: “Our results show that planting for pollinators should not only focus on providing flowers throughout the season, but also on ensuring a diversity of pollen sources. A varied diet may be essential for bees to obtain the right balance of nutrients.”

HINTS AND TIPS



PREPARATION FOR THE HONEY SHOW: GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS.

P Many thanks to Nigel Coad for this timely advice if you are preparing to enter the Honey Show.

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 it's 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 (60–65°C 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 day

Arrive early and the secretary will give you or have sent you in advance 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 90°C 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 [here](#). Good luck to you all!

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.
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WARWICK AND LEAMINGTON BRANCH
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