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THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



Geoff Mills

23 May 1925 - 19 December 2014

Monthly Magazine of the
Essex Beekeepers' Association

Registered Charity number 1031419
Furthering the Craft of Beekeeping in Essex

No. 602

www.essexbeekeepers.com

February
2015

Divisional Meetings

February & March 2015

6 Feb	Friday 8.00pm	Romford	From Cappings to Candles - Jim McNeill, Chadwick Hall, St.Michael's Church, Main Road, Gidea Park, Romford RM2 5EL
16 Feb	Monday 7.30pm	Chelmsford	'Gardening for Wildlife and Pollinators' - Steve Perry & Richard Romang (Writtle Garden Design Lecturers) at The Link, Trinity Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford.
18 Feb	Wednesday 7.30pm	Saffron Walden	'Bumblebees for Beekeepers' - Talk by John Taylor. Thaxted Guildhall, CM6 2LA
18 Feb	Wednesday 7.30pm	Dengie 100 & Maldon	Members meeting - The Norton, Cold Norton CM3 6JE
19 Feb	Thursday 7.30pm	Epping Forest	'Swarm Control' - Chingford Horticultural Hall
24 Feb	Tuesday 7.30pm	Saffron Walden	BBKA Module 3 Study Group - St Mary's centre, Great Dunmow CM6 2AE And on 3, 10 & 17 March.
25 Feb	Wednesday 7.30pm	Southend	Herbaceous Borders at Hyde Hall.
26 Feb	Thursday 7.30pm	Colchester	Open Forum - a chance to ask beekeeping questions to a panel of experts - Langham Community Centre
28 Feb	Saturday 7.30pm	Braintree	Annual Dinner - Constitutional Club, Braintree CM7 1TY.
5 Mar	Thursday 8.00pm	Harlow	'Spring Preparation' - Kings Church, Red Willow, Harlow CM19 5PA.
6 Mar	Friday 8.00pm	Romford	Folklore of Wild Flowers and Bees - William Tyler Chadwick Hall, St.Michael's Church, Main Road, Gidea Park, Romford RM2 5EL
16 Mar	Monday 7.30pm	Chelmsford	'What to do with your bees if ' - Ted Grad. The Link, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford
19 Mar	Thursday 7.30pm	Epping Forest	tbc
25 Mar	Wednesday 7.30pm	Southend	Spring Preparation - WI Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh SS
26 Mar	Thursday 7.30pm	Colchester	'Getting Hives ready for the season' - Langham Community Centre

Who's who and how to contact them

President of EBKA *Eric Fenner* Hon Member BBKA Hon CLM EBKA

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Essex Beekeepers Association

Present a Bee Health & Disease Recognition Day

at

Aldham Village Hall, Brook Street, Aldham,

Colchester, Essex. CO6 3RE

on

Saturday 27th June 2015

10am to 4pm

Suitable for Beekeepers of all levels of Experience

Come and meet your Eastern Regional Bee Inspector
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This relaxed and friendly day will include a mixture of presentations,
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Apiary Hygiene - Varroa
Comb Recognition



Plus a practical
session in the
apiary observing how
inspectors
check for disease



IMPORTANT

- You will need to bring a packed Lunch
- CLEAN Protective Beekeeping Clothing
 - Tea & Coffee will be Provided

Pre Booking of Places is Essential as limited no. available

Contact; Jim McNeill on 01708 765898

jimandliz44@aol.co.uk

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

The 2015 EBKA AGM is to be held at

2pm on Saturday 14 March

in Room EO6 at Writtle College, Lordship Road,
Chelmsford, CM1 3RP

Following the AGM, Andrew Beer,
a beekeeper & current chairman of the North Bucks
Beekeepers' Association will give a talk on

"Bees and the Law"

*Beekeepers, and the authorities to a lesser extent, do not have a
sufficiently wide knowledge of the parameters of the law regulating
their activities and may either fall foul of them or, through ignorance,
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Write for our new list in December

Geoff Mills

23 May 1925 - 19 December 2014

**Tributes from Clive de Bruyn,
Eric Fenner and
Jean Smye**

- **Clive de Bruyn NDB**

The Christian name by which I, and most beekeepers in Essex, always used was Geoff. It was only at his funeral on 6 January that I found out he was christened Geoffrey Lionel Mills. There must be many who have known Geoff and Sylvia longer than me but I am glad to talk about our association of over forty years. I was invited by Geoff to give a talk to Essex Beekeepers sometime in the mid 70's. This was my first visit to Essex long before I arrived at Writtle College to take the NDB examination and way before I replaced Ted Hooper as the County Beekeeping Lecturer. I remember little about my topic for the afternoon but I do remember the venue - which was in the Mills Garden at 'Tanglewood' and the excellent hospitality and food.

Geoff was a big man in more ways than one. His deep-toned reliable voice carried weight and his background in teaching gave him authority. He was a valuable participant at the Essex CEC, County Honey Show and Pollination Scheme. Geoff was also active in promoting beekeeping in many fields. I well remember the occasions when schoolchildren were given the opportunity to visit his home apiary and be shown the inmates of the hive. I greatly admired Geoff's approach to keeping bees: he was always eager to learn and kept abreast of new developments and problems in the field. He would regularly appear as a student on courses at Writtle. I also used to meet Geoff and Sylvia at beekeeping events all over the country. Despite this depth of knowledge he was not one to force his views on others.

I discovered at the service that Geoff's great involvement with bees

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Hands on the (Bee) Hive:

An afternoon with Simon Cousins inspecting his beehives and learning how to find the queen:

26 May 10 May 31 May
2.00 - 4.30pm

Cost: £40 including tea and cake



A heavy invasion of Wax Moth in an abandoned hive.

Photograph by Jean Smye

stemmed from a desire to get his fruit trees pollinated when he acquired a house and garden in Essex. His involvement with pollination stayed with him to the end. Many were the meetings of the Essex 'pollination committee' that were hosted by Geoff and Sylvia at Tanglewood. An important feature being the sausage rolls provided by Sylvia.

Knowing Geoff well as a beekeeper after spending so much time in his company it was interesting to hear about his family and his early life before he became a beekeeper. All of us present at his funeral will miss Geoff but none so much as his kinfolk who have our condolences. I found Geoff such an interesting person to talk to and so enquiring on our mutual topic of bees that matters outside that field were generally ignored. I did know about Geoff's activity as a radio ham (one could hardly ignore the mast in his garden). As well as the many people who will miss Geoff in Essex there are beekeepers all over the world who will no longer hear him each Sunday morning when the international 'bee group' used to talk to each other via the radio link.

After my redundancy from Writtle College I often made a short detour when travelling near Danbury. It was always good to see the "Honey for Sale" sign along The Ridge which meant I had reached Tanglewood. Geoff operated an 'honesty box' policy so that people could pick up honey and leave the payment when no one was at home. I was always made welcome and given sustenance (thank you Sylvia).

I returned to Essex from Africa the first Sunday of 2015 when I heard about Geoff's death from Jean. I am pleased I was able to attend the service and meet afterwards so many Essex beekeepers from the past, all be it, on a sad event. It is a pity that it takes such an occasion to bring us all together. I recommend (*N.Y. resolution*) that everybody should make an effort in 2015 to look up their 'old' acquaintances now whilst they are still alive.

Geoff now resides at St. Mary's Church, Little Baddow adjacent to a field of oil seed rape. What better resting place could there be for a beekeeper?

Attention Beekeepers

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- **Eric Fenner President EBKA & Hon. County Life Member**

Geoff Mills was a Norfolk Man by birth and upbringing and was proud of this lifelong connection with that County. An excellent primary education prepared him for Grammar School which in turn led to his professional engineering career with the Post Office. With a career change in 1963 he became a lecturer at the Mid Essex Technical College, now Anglia Ruskin University, in the developing field of Telecommunications and Electrical Engineering.

Geoff became a beekeeper in the early 1960s when he joined Ted Hooper's classes at Writtle College taking the Basic Exam, along with two others, in his own garden with his own bees. He quickly became aware of the value of honeybees in the pollination of fruit, vegetables, and other crops and with other beekeepers, including Miss Avey and Ted Hooper, both NDB, supported the Essex Pollination Scheme. He became the secretary for this in 1982 and remained in this post.

In the same year Geoff took on the onerous task of being the Show Secretary for the Annual Essex Honey Show which was part of the Essex County Show held at the Showground, Great Leighs. He was justly proud that for many years the marquee was awarded Best Exhibit status within the show.

Geoff served several terms as Chairman of the Chelmsford Division of the Essex Beekeepers. He was awarded County Life Membership in 1997 for services to beekeeping within the county and served as the Essex Beekeepers' Association President from 2002 -2007.

He unswervingly upheld the stewardship of the Essex Beekeepers' Association and will be much missed.

- **Jean Smye Editor & Hon. County Life Member**

In beekeeping terms, Geoff's hand was the first to be offered to me in friendship when he and Sylvia took me along to a garden meeting in the 1980's. I got to know Geoff over the years in various roles and it did not take long to appreciate his dedication to the multi-various things that he was engaged in at the time. He was the Chair of Chelmsford Division for many years and was instrumental in setting up the first Divisional Apiary at Sandford Mill.

One of the principal stored proteins is vitellogenin, and quantities of this are also stored in the hypopharyngeal glands, which remain plump. In the spring, as new larvae need food, all this stored protein is converted into brood food. With their protein reserves depleted, our winter bees become foragers, the aging process starts and they die.

What goes wrong? Disease is the biggest problem. Varroa has been shown to change the physiology of the winter bees so that they do not store adequate protein, but the main effect of all adult bee diseases is to shorten the life of the infected bee. Varroa, Deformed Wing Virus (DWV) and Nosema, our 3 main culprits, can have a devastating effect on the colony, killing many of the winter bees before the spring bees can build up sufficient numbers to take over. This leads to the classic situation of colony deaths in February and March. Colonies can also die then if they run out of stores of honey as the increasing population of young bees in the colony puts greater demands on the available stores.

This is all of practical importance to us as beekeepers. The winter bees must be protected by ensuring that they do not suffer from high levels of Varroa during their development. This means treating early, as soon as the honey crop can be removed in August, if Varroa numbers have not been controlled by husbandry means during the active season. It may present particular problems for those taking bees to the heather, as any treatment applied after the return of these colonies will be too late to be effective. They need to go on their travels with low Varroa counts. Controlling Varroa to keep it below the 1000 mites/colony level will also control the viruses, particularly DWV. Nosema has to be monitored and controlled during the spring/summer by testing the colonies and getting them onto new comb if necessary. There is no chemical treatment available. Progress can be made by breeding from colonies not showing the disease and removing those queens which are susceptible. Finally, and very importantly, colonies need good supplies of pollen during the later part of the summer so should be sited where sources are available (The use of pollen supplements or substitutes is debatable). There is of course, no excuse for colonies dying of starvation and every effort should be made to supplement stores of honey if necessary in September.

A Winters Tale

Celia Davis - Warwickshire Beekeeper via ebees

While you were tucking into your turkey and Christmas pud, did you stop to think about the bees in your hives? In the middle of winter we tend to forget about them, but those bees are the most important group of bees that will ever live in your apiary and on them depends the existence of the colonies and the success, or otherwise, of next summer's beekeeping. In late summer and autumn the queen continues to lay, although at a reduced rate. The bees that develop from these eggs will have a lower metabolic rate and little work to do as there are fewer larvae to feed and the available forage is meagre. As a result of this they remain 'young' and do not follow the normal pattern of development and aging which we see throughout the summer, when approximately 3 week old bees graduate from in-hive duties to foraging and, as a result, age and die in about 2 – 3 weeks.

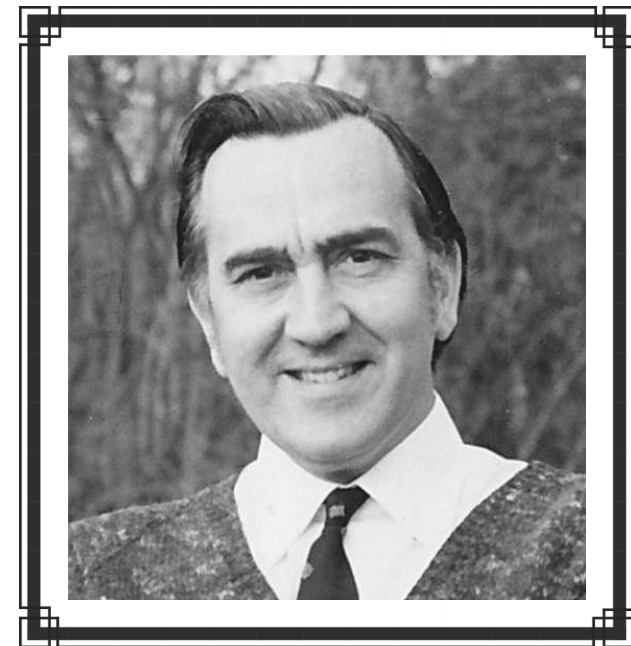
It is important to realise that the aging process in a bee switches when that bee becomes a forager. At that point in its life, a number of changes take place: its protein levels drop, its Juvenile Hormone (JH) levels rise and it is then on the slippery slope to death. Our winter bees do not make this transition at 3 weeks, but continue in their physiologically young state until the spring, when they kick-start the massive colony growth which precedes the swarming season. So, how do they prepare for this lifestyle? All newly-hatched workers eat nectar/honey and large quantities of bee bread, which is stored, fermented pollen. The honey provides the carbohydrate in the diet but the pollen contains large amounts of protein plus some fat, minerals and vitamins, and is used to manufacture brood food in the mandibular and hypopharyngeal glands of these young bees so that they can feed larvae. Young winter bees also consume large quantities of bee bread but they do not use it immediately. Instead, much of it is stored in their fat bodies. These are important as storage places and as factories for the manufacture of various substances, including enzymes and other proteins. They are spread throughout the body of the bee, principally in the roof and on the floor of the abdomen where they appear as masses of white cells. Well-fed, winter bees have abundant fat bodies.

The Miss Avey Award was set up by Geoff, Eric Fenner and Val De Vall (the then President of Chelmsford Division). Miss Avey's effects were sold to provide the foundation of the Award, the rules were set up and the award still exist today.

Geoff was the County Show Secretary from 1982 until 1998 when he stood down and Eric and I took over. Geoff was very helpful to us and was never possessive over the role that he had held for so many years.

Just in case you had not guessed Geoff wrote under the name of 'Pollinator' in the *ESSEX BEEKEEPER*. He provided monthly articles over a number of years that gave help and advice to us all.

My memory is that Geoff did not push for any particular role, but was pleased to be asked and whatever he did he did it well.



Geoff Mills Hon County Life Member EBKA
(A favourite photo of Sylvia's — Geoff in the 1980's)

The Elements of Nutrition

Douglas Nethercleft - Warwickshire Beekeeper via *ebees*

The November Warwickshire County Lecture at Stoneleigh this year was given by Professor Geraldine Wright from the University of Newcastle, whose recent research had concentrated on the different proportions of carbohydrate (from sugars) and protein (from pollen) given to, or otherwise consumed by, larvae and the two castes of *Apis mellifera*. Nutritional change has a causative link to physiological change and thus behaviour. At each stage of a bee's life there is a nutritional optimum or intake 'target' of protein, carbohydrate and fatty acids. The carbohydrate mix of sugars in floral nectars tends to be biased towards fructose over sucrose and glucose.

Bees and their larvae have few body reserves of proteins, carbohydrates or lipids and need to have these 'foods' readily available in the right 'mix' for their growth and development. Pollens, for example, differ in their fat and protein content; there needs to be a mix of pollens coming into the hive. Proteins are complex large molecules which are broken down into simple molecules that can be absorbed into tissue for growth and repair. Foods may contain complex proteins or any of their components; complex proteins are broken down into polypeptides, peptides and amino acids. Some of the latter can be made in the bee's body, but not all. Bees eat protein to obtain ten 'essential' amino acids (EAAs) – Geraldine's research had shown that a surprisingly high 47% of pollens have all ten. Pollen from wild strawberry, cinquefoil, tufted vetch, yellow loosestrife and comfrey all have lots of EAAs. 11.4% of the dry weight of pollen from oil seed rape (OSR) is EAA.

All larvae are fed on royal jelly for the first three days after hatching from an egg; royal jelly is made up of 1.4 parts of protein to one part sugar and one of fat. A larva that continues to be fed on royal jelly is destined to become a queen and is exclusively fed on royal jelly for the rest of her life. Nurse bees primarily feed on bee bread - a stored mix of pollen and honey that has been 'worked upon' by yeasts. Workers feed on / share amongst themselves (by trophallaxis)

nectar .

Nectar and honey but not pollen. Foragers feed on honey and floral nectar but only the incidental pollen filtered from nectar transported in their honey crop — they need twice as much carbohydrate as a nurse bee

Professor Wright and her team are producing a database of pollens and their nutritive content, hopefully to be accessed via the BBKA website. Other research has centred around the effects of neonicotinoids on bee health and behaviour; those present at the lecture were party to the findings prior to the imminent publication of the results.

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