Members of Romford Division who organised and hosted the 2016 Annual Conference

Full report on page 4
## EBKA Divisional Meetings
### Diary dates for January & February 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 Jan</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Romford</td>
<td>AGM - Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea park RM2 5EL</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Jan</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Harlow</td>
<td>AGM - Kings Church, Red Willow, Harlow CM19 5PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 Jan</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Chelmsford</td>
<td>AGM - and 'Bee Inventions' with Richard Alabone. The Link, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Jan</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Dengie 100 &amp; Maldon</td>
<td>AGM - The Oakhouse, High Street, Maldon CM9 5PR</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 Jan</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Saffron Walden</td>
<td>AGM and Annual Dinner, Dunmow Day Centre, Chequers Lane, Great Dunmow CM6 1EQ</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Jan</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Southend</td>
<td>EGM and 'Winter and Spring Honeybee Colony Management' - Clive deBruyn NDB. WI Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh SS6 7ED</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 Jan</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Colchester</td>
<td>AGM — Langham Community Centre, School Road, Colchester CO4 5PA</td>
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<td>27 Jan</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Braintree</td>
<td>AGM - Constitutional Club, Braintree CM7 1TY</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Feb</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Harlow</td>
<td>'Spring Preparation' with David McCorkindale.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Feb</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Romford</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Feb</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Dengie 100 &amp; Maldon</td>
<td>The Oakhouse, High Street, Maldon CM9 5PR</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 Feb</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Epping Forest</td>
<td>AGM recommencement. Beekeepers workshop. Chingford Horticultural Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 Feb</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Chelmsford</td>
<td>Tba - The Link, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 Feb</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Southend</td>
<td>'Watchout! - Exotic pests'. Asian Hornet, Small Hive Beetle, etc. - Bob Smith NDB. WI Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh SS6 7ED</td>
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<td>23 Feb</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Colchester</td>
<td>tba</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Feb</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Braintree</td>
<td>Annual Dinner - Constitutional Club, Braintree CM7 1TY</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### NOTE TO ALL DIVISIONAL SECRETARIES
Please notify Jean by the 4th of each month of your meetings, Jean Smye - jsmye@sky.com
The EBKA AGM

is to be held at 2pm on **Saturday 18 March**
in Room EO6 at Writtle College, Lordship Road,
Chelmsford, CM1 3RP

The Ted Hooper Memorial Lecture

is to be held at 2pm on **Sunday 2 April**
at the Coach House, Marks Hall, Coggeshall CO6 1TG.
The speaker this year is
Professor Dave Goulson of the BumbleBee Trust

**ADDENDUM to 2016 National Honey Show Report**

In last month’s issue we reported the winners of awards and trophies at the National Honey Show. Unfortunately, we omitted:

**Walter Gee** (Chelmsford Division) who gained 1st place in Class191 - Three Moulded Candles, and

**Pam Hughes** (Chelmsford Division) who was successful in obtaining 2nd place in the Gift Class for Clear Honey.

Well done both and apologies to Walter and Pam for the omissions.
This year’s conference was hosted by Romford Division and held at Barking and Dagenham College on Saturday 5th November. The event was sold out, with 122 paying attendees, three speakers, and another half dozen people on the trade stands.

The theme of the lecture programme was ‘**Raising the Standards of Beekeeping Husbandry**’ and all three speakers were excellent and their talks fitted that theme. A summary of their lectures is below. Dozens of photographs were taken and a selection accompanies this article. Much work went into the organisation and it was a good feeling to find that there were so many volunteers willing to help out, with the arrangements beforehand and on the day – many thanks to all of them. It was a real team effort and brought a very successful day.

**Robert Smith NDB  Wild and Spaced Out!**

**or Bee space is not optional**

**Wild** – can we learn from how bees organise themselves in the wild? Langstroth did.

**Spaced Out** – cavity-dwelling with spaced out combs.

Bob showed us a photograph of a wild nest, with all the combs even, and clear spaces between combs. He also showed a neglected hive with lots of wild comb in it. Although this looked a mess, there was still clear space between all the wild combs. Contrast this with a bumblebee nest where there is no symmetry, just a seemingly messy clump of cells. Bob showed several examples of honey bee colonies in odd places – narrow, wide, long, short – in all cases there were clean spaces between the combs.

Bob had been asked to remove a colony from a compost bin and this gave him the opportunity to make some measurements. He found that the space between the combs was consistently 8mm and the space from mid-comb to mid-comb was 35mm. If we want to keep the frames in our hives easily moveable then we need to maintain this spacing. This also helps to keep the bees good tempered as we can handle the frames more gently.
We were shown several types of spacers and Bob believes that Hoffman is best, together with wide top bars. What is often not realised is that not all side and bottom bars are the same and here again, the wider side and bottom bars are better. These frames will give the necessary spacing as above.

Our hive boxes often do not have correct bee space, and wooden boxes can shrink along the grain. Many boxes are neither properly ‘top bee space’ nor ‘bottom bee space’ but something in between. And remember that 1 bee mm is equivalent to 200 human mm. Rebates are often too big and here Bob has solved the problem with thin fillets of wood which mean that the frame tops fit closely across the box and thus maintain the bee space lower down at the sides of the frames. Bob has made himself some large wooden feeler gauges – 4mm, 8mm, 35mm. If you get the spacing right the bees will respect the space and not fill it with brace comb or propolis. The frame size itself is not important, so long as the spacing between combs is maintained correctly. Thus mini-nucs have the right spacing even though the frames are very small.

Finally, Bob showed us two mini-observation hives he had made. Both use the ‘nucleus observation hive’ design with frames in a lower box with mesh floor and a glazed section above for the frame with the queen. These had been beautifully made and showed how skillful a carpenter Bob is. Altogether an entertaining and thought-provoking talk.

Celia Davis NDB  Beekeeper versus Bee

Celia began by pointing out that bees and beekeepers do not always have the same agenda. Bees worldwide are in trouble, and this is largely our fault, so what can we do? Bees have been around for 75-80 million years, evolving with the flowering plants, and bees are dependent upon plants. We humans have only been around a few million years and have always robbed bees and hunted honey. Honey bees began in the Middle East then spread out and evolved according to the habitats they occupied, resulting in lots of subspecies, with mixing at the margins or their areas.
Conflict: The bees' annual cycle is for the population to drop in January and February as the winter bees die off. The population then grows until May when they tend to swarm, bringing the colony population down to half. With a new queen the colony will shrink then grow through the summer. Both the old and the new colony will need to build up for winter. However, the beekeeper does not want the colony to swarm. If the colony does not swarm it will continue to grow, bringing more honey, but the downside is that with no break in brood, we get more varroa.

Conflict: A natural swarm will settle temporarily and look for a cavity, probably about 3m off the ground, with a volume of about 40 litres. It will need to be away from damp, with a small entrance near the bottom of the cavity facing south or south east, and about 500 – 600m from neighbouring colonies to maximise forage available and reduce disease transfer. Most important is to have mixed pollen sources. The conflict is that the beekeeper does not want the hives spread about singly but will group them in apiaries. Celia showed an apiary with 11 hives, crowded together, and the hives were close to the ground. Such a situation may not work all the year round due to damp, drifting, robbing, and lack of forage.

Conflict: If we are to control swarming, then we need to take the hives apart, but not necessarily every week. This causes stress, e.g. moving frames about (leave them in the same order if possible, the bees have a dance floor on which they leave pheromones which get disrupted if the frames are moved), or re-using old comb resulting in build-up of disease and chemicals, or splitting colonies for swarm control.

Further stress factors are:
• Uniting colonies.
• Nurturing small colonies: you need to know why a colony is small; it may be better to abandon it.
• Moving colonies about.
• Mixing different strains of bees, e.g. through imports, may result in more defensive behaviour such as with the mixing of African and European honey bees in the USA.
Bee diseases and our treatments of these also cause problems. Varroa has made the virus problem worse for bees and varroa treatments may get into the wax; even the ‘softer’ chemicals cause stress to bees. Celia mentioned several varroa treatments and pointed out that there are synergistic bad effects with some varroa treatments (principally those used in the USA). AFB is treated in the USA with an antibiotic, often as a prophylactic, which is becoming ineffective, and our policy of colony destruction is now seen to be better. Treatment for EFB was sometimes with antibiotic but now is more usually with husbandry or destruction. A problem with antibiotics is that they kill the good bacteria that the bees have in them and which they need to digest pollen.

Bees have always suffered stress from weather, animals, etc. We need to ensure we do not add to the natural stresses.

**Gerry Collins NDB  What’s going on in my hive?**

Gerry first pointed out that we can work out a lot of what is happening inside the hive from observing activity (or lack of activity) from the outside. We also need to perceive what we are seeing. If anything puzzles you, write it down – it may become clear later on.

Are the bees flying freely? Are they collecting pollen? Look at the guard bees’ stance – is there robbing or other disturbing behaviour? If collecting pollen, this is usually a sign of a queenright colony with brood. If bees are hanging on the outside they may be about to swarm, or they may have come out because you are treating with Apiguard or similar and the weather is too hot. Are they fanning? They may be controlling temperature or perhaps guiding a virgin queen back in from a mating flight.

Brood may be ejected if overdose of Apiguard in a small colony; or drones may be thrown out if spring turns cold. In winter check for green woodpecker damage – this is learned behaviour. Rats may chew to get in. Brown streaks on the outside of the hive may point to Nosema.

Most of the winter stores are used during February and March so hefting may show you if you need to provide a boost to their stores.
Put the floor inserts in for a few days now and then during winter and the debris will show how many seams your bees are occupying. You can check the varroa mite drop too, though ants and slugs will eat varroa which may mislead so don’t leave the insert in too long.

When you open up, note the look of the colony, the sound, the smell. If collecting water, they may be too hot or diluting stores. If they are noisy and agitated, they may be queenless. If you see queen cells, what type are they? Do they have larvae in them? If sealed cells, are any hatched? Are queens being held in them? You may need to brush the bees off to see the cells properly. If you see the queen, make sure she is the only one – remember the possibility of supersession. Do not jump to conclusions, check all through and assess the situation before taking action.

A good colony should not harbour wax moth. Do they need space – the first super goes on to give space when bees on are eight brood combs? Some conditions may be genetic, e.g. chalkbrood susceptibility, so note any concerns, assess, and plan for improvements.

Gerry told us much more, along with brilliant photographs and videos which kept us interested right to the end.

Three very interesting and entertaining speakers.

Also, the raffle prizes were splendid and raffle tickets sales raised about £500. Several Romford members had donated prizes, and prizes were also donated by Maisemore, Thorne’s, Mann Lake, Freeman and Harding, Bee Craft, Northern Bee Books, Calcott Hall Farm, Wilkin & Sons, Billingsgate Seafood Training School, Bee Basics, and Sherriff.

The lunch was excellent, and plenty of it, with efficient service.

As is usual, the Essex Show cups and trophies, and the BBKA certificates were presented to the worthy winners.
A selection of photographs from the 2016 Conference
- lots of happy people.

Photographs by/from Pat Allen
Uganda Beekeepers have their Motorbike!

Thanks to fantastic support from EBKA

It’s arrived! Members of the EBKA have made a considerable contribution to the ‘Motorbike Fund’ for our project in Kasese, Uganda. Special thanks go to attendees at the Microscopy Day, Basic Assessment Training Day, Module Study Groups and some EBKA Divisions - Dengie 100 & Maldon, Southend, Saffron Walden and Braintree, where Richard and I have made our various presentations this year.

The beekeeping project in Kasese is run by LIDEFO (www.lidefo.net) a local charity, and the Ridlers have been assisting for 5 years now. Beekeeping is a brilliant way of providing sustainable support for subsistence farmers in Africa. The forage and the bees (Apis mellifera scutellata) are all around and the low tech Kenyan top bar hives are easily made locally, as are bee suits.

Why does the project need a motorbike? (or more than one!)

The LIDEFO project has grown considerably since we first visited in January 2012. Eight hundred beekeepers in villages spread as far as 30 miles from Kasese are now involved as well as 2 extra honey collection centres outside the town. The terrain is mountainous and the villages are connected by footpaths or at best dirt roads. Access by cars is often impossible and walking is accepted universally – people have actually walked 14 miles to attend our one day beekeeping courses! This is, of course, very time consuming and carrying honey on your head these distances is hard work. The motorbike can be used for collecting villagers’ honey harvests and bringing it in from the collection centres to Kasese.
Don’t underestimate how much a Ugandan can get on a motorbike – 3 adults, a child and lots of luggage!

So, everything can be transported – honey, wax, wood for hive making and sewing machines for making bee suits.

Probably the most valuable use of the motorbike is for delivering bee keeping training and support.

We now have some real beekeeping experts in Kasese. Richard and I tested 8 of the most experienced beekeepers in February 2016 for the BBKA Basic Assessment in Modern African Beekeeping. Do read about its differences from our Basic Assessment and our experience in setting up the tests in the January 2017 BBKA News.

The new beekeepers in the villages need help just as our Essex novices do and now, with the help of the motorbike, the experts or ‘community mobilisers’ as they are known, can get to distant locations in a short time to offer advice and practical guidance. This should enhance the yields of honey considerably for the farmers and make their beekeeping really worthwhile. Whole day teaching courses can now be organised in outlying areas – villagers can walk 5-10 miles and can have a full day’s instruction in groups, with the added benefit of sharing beekeeping anecdotes (beekeepers are the same all over the world!) and the community mobiliser can get home for tea.

The director of LIDEFO, Daniel Ngangasi, is now about to embark on helping others less experienced in the business of beekeeping and honey sales - by supporting newer projects being set up by Bees Abroad (www.beesabroad.org.uk). He is travelling down to the Rwandan border to advise and assess the progress of a project Richard and I set up with the local Batwa tribe – a displaced pigmy people in the mountainous region of the famous mountain gorillas. This is win-win. Expertise is being given to more people in poverty to earn enough to buy medicines and schooling and LIDEFO is benefitting financially (from Bees Abroad) so that the Kasese project can grow further and take on more village beekeepers in that district -
- and also employ more of the Kasese experts on a living wage.

So thank you everyone who donated. The next thing we need is water in the honey processing room!

The honey processing room in Kasese, inside and out

Current honey bucket washing facilities:

Article by Jane Ridler, BBKA Master Beekeeper and EBKA Education Secretary

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2017 COUNTY HONEY SHOW

The organisers of the Barleylands Country Show have decided to discontinue the show and 2016 was their last venture.

The Show Committee has decided to hold the 2017 Honey Show in conjunction with the Orsett Show, subject to financial support for the hiring of the marquee from the County Treasurer, being held on Saturday 2nd September 2017 and organised by the Orsett Horticultural and Agricultural Society.

This is a long-standing event (this will be their 111th show and our 130th) and has a strong agricultural/countryside bias with a footfall of 11,000 to 15,000 for this one day event. The organisers came to Barleylands in 2016 and were very impressed by our show.

It will be our 130th Show so perhaps we can celebrate by having a one-off special Class - what do you think?

The EBKA Show Committee

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Monthly Magazine of the Essex Beekeepers’ Association

Issue No. ...  ............... 2017

Furthering the Craft of Beekeeping in Essex
Registered Charity number 1031419
www.ebka.org
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