

THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



What flavour will the honey have?

Photograph by Jean Smye

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No. 607

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**July
2015**

EBKA Divisional Meetings

July & August 2015

2 July	Thursday	Harlow	'Photographing Bees - in nature and down the microscope and 'Preparing for the Harlow Honey Show' - Kings Church, Red Willow, Harlow CM19 5PA
3 July	Friday 8.00pm	Romford	Lifting & Carrying for beekeepers , with Keith Sparling Osteopath at Chadwick Hall, St. Michaels Church, Main Road, Gidea Park, RM2 5EL
11 July	Saturday 8.00am	Colchester	Annual Tending Show
15 July	Wednesday 6.00pm	Dengie 100 & Maldon	Apiary meeting - Ulting CM9 6QX
18 July	Saturday	Epping Forest	Queen rearing feedback / BBQ at Wanstead Apiary.
20 July	Monday 7.30pm	Chelmsford	Bee Diseases - Prevention, recognition and treatment with Jean Smye. The Link, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB
25 July	Saturday	Saffron Walden	'Working with Carniolan Bees' . Talk and demonstration by Uli Gerhard at his apiary in Stocking Green CB10 2SS
26 July	Sunday 3.00pm	Braintree	Apiary meeting with Stuart Mitson, Great Leighs. Telephone 01376 340 683.
6 August	Thursday	Harlow	Harlow Honey Show - Kings Church, Red Willow, Harlow CM19 5PA
9 August	Sunday 2.30pm	Saffron Walden	Apiary Meeting - End of Season tasks. Talk and demo by Malcolm Legg at his apiary in Thaxted CM6 2RB
15 August	Thursday 7.30pm	Epping Forest	Extraction Day — Chapel Barn
23 August	Sunday 3.00pm	Braintree	Apiary Meeting - Coney Green, Great Bardfield CM7 4PY. Telephone Pat Rowland 01376 326 036
27 August	Thursday	Colchester	Langham Community Centre .
29 August	Saturday	Romford	Outing to Barnards Farm, Brentwood Road, West Horndon CM13 3LX

Please inform the Editor of the full details of all the Divisional events

so that they can be included in these listings

EBKA 2015 CONFERENCE

31st October 2015

Early bird discount

£1 discount if you book and pay for your ticket by the 31 July

This means a total saving of 35% on last year's ticket price!

Email for your tickets now to Keith Lomax at conference@dmbka.org.uk

Representatives from DMBKA will also be attending forthcoming meetings
to sell tickets ... ask your secretary when they are coming.



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Regards, Honey Helpers

GETTING READY FOR THE COUNTY HONEY SHOW 12/13 September 2015

It seems early to be thinking about the EBKA County Honey Show now, but this is the time the bees draw out some wonderful frames and seal it with almost white cappings, when you find one you can bring it home, carefully prop it up in the freezer and get it out the day before the show. When it is near show time you are so busy extracting and the combs tend to be a bit darker. Look out for any honey that seems different - either colour or flavour or very thick - and save some. You may have extracted some honey that's not really ripe, use some for mead, metheglin or melomel. You will have some for Christmas as well. It's a good time to get a photograph of that huge swarm in an unusual place, the photo does not have to be of a professional standard but be bee related. It may be a bit early to start baking and there is a new recipe for scones but practice makes perfection; so they say.

When you get your show schedule check it out read the rules. If you have a problem don't hesitate to get in touch with me on 01708 765 898 or mail to: jimandliz44@aol.co.uk

Why not help out on the show days Saturday or Sunday? Let Mick Barke know what days you can do and he will get free passes to you so long as you get to the show ground before 9.30am. You can get a nice lunch chatting to some lovely beekeepers at a very modest price, plus tea or coffee coming round very often.

This year if you don't want your entry labels sent by return post you can enter on line and stick the labels on when you get to the marquee, but do leave enough time to do it properly as the entries have to be on the show bench by 12.00 noon ready for judging.

If you can help put up the stands and benches on Thursday 11th September from around 2pm please let me have your name - we need at least 6 strong members.

Jim McNeill Assistant Show Secretary

Notes from the Central Executive Committee (CEC)

Meeting on 28 May 2015

Items taken at the above meeting included:

Geoff Pears: Members were notified that Geoff Pears, who was a Divisional Trustee representing Colchester Division, had sadly died.

BBKA Special Delegates' Meeting (SDM) 20 June 2015:

The propositions to the change of the date of the Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM) from 2016 and to accept the budget presented for the year 2015/16 were reviewed at the meeting. The EBKA's delegate will be attending the meeting on behalf of the members.

Grant Requests:

The CEC reviewed grant requests from Divisions where 50% of the cost is made available from central funds. As two Divisions had submitted requests for microscopy equipment, it was agreed that all Divisions should be contacted with a view to the CEC making a bulk buy purchase so that up to date equipment could be available for the use of all members.

It would be of particular help to those who were undertaking a Microscopy course or entering the BBKA examination.

The CEC felt that where a particular item of a capital nature could be of benefit to all Divisions to promote and further the craft of beekeeping then, on an annual basis, a review should be undertaken in order to offer this item to Divisions at the most competitive cost.

Feedback on any matter discussed by the CEC is welcomed
and should be directed to your Divisional Trustee
(contact details on inside of back page)

The Most Important Bee?

Celia Davis

Warwickshire beekeeper - via ebees

Who is most important to a colony of honey bees? You would think the queen, and in some ways she is, but, from a biological point of view, I believe it is the drones. Drones are normally produced from unfertilised eggs laid by the queen, but can occasionally result from fertilised eggs or from worker-laid eggs where a colony has become queenless and broodless. All good colonies, once they have built up in the spring, start to produce drones and the estimates of the amount of comb devoted to drone rearing vary widely. A natural full colony will have probably 10-13% of its comb area devoted to drone production although this may be higher. A weak colony may have very little. Drones are produced early in the year, as they must be ready for the main swarming season when they will be required to mate with the young queens. The bees then maintain a population of drones until later in the summer when they are turned out of house and home and left to die, as they are no longer needed. During the summer there is a feedback system in operation so that, as drones are lost from the colony, new ones are reared to replace them.

Use of resources:

Drones are bigger and heavier than workers and their larvae are fed for an extra day or so more than those of workers. As a consequence they eat more. The differences can be seen in Fig 1.

	Worker	Drone
Weight of larva at cell capping	144 - 162	262 - 419
Weight of sugar/larva	59.4	98.2
Weight of pollen/larva (estimate)	125 - 187.5	325 - 487.5
Weight of imago	116 - 123	277 - 290

All weights in mg. and approximate. Fig 1 From: Differences in drone and worker physiology in honeybees. Hrassnigg & Crailsheim; *Apidologie* 36 (2005) 255-277

The demands on the colony do not end at hatching, as drones are not sexually mature until they are about two weeks old and must be fed on brood food by the nurse bees as their muscles and some of their reproductive organs continue to develop during their first week in the hive. At this time their demand for protein is high. After this they begin to feed on more nectar from the cells and continue to feed heavily as they move to mating flights. Flying uses 14mg sugar/hour compared to 1 – 3mg/hour used when resting. The average drone flight lasts for about 30 minutes after which they need to refuel.

It is clear that the colony invests a great deal of its resources in rearing the several hundred drones that it maintains. We need to ask why, when they could be rearing more workers to boost the colony and ensure more stores for winter survival. The answer is that the drones carry the genes of the colony into the general bee population and the more fit, healthy drones a colony produces, the more likely it is to get its genes into the next generation of bees. A strong colony can have a major effect on the wider bee population.

The big mystery:

When drones go on mating flights they travel to drone congregation areas (DCAs). These are more or less constant from year to year despite the fact that there are no old drones to show young drones the way. Just how they are located is still a mystery but it is believed that they use topographical features. It seems significant that drones develop magnetite granules in groups of cells in their abdomens from about the 6th day of adult life and this may suggest use of the Earth's magnetic field. However they get there, thousands of drones may collect in these areas and young queens will fly there to mate, probably attracted by drone pheromones. The multiple mating necessary for each queen can be accomplished rapidly. Of course, the individual drone mates only once and dies immediately after mating, although his sperm live on in the queen's spermatheca.

A perfectly adapted bee:

Beekeepers often regard drones as a waste of space because they do not seem to do much, but they have one function only and that is to

mate with a young queen and their structure and life -style are beautifully adapted for this to the exclusion of all else. They do not have the 'tools' that the workers have, so they cannot bring in nectar or pollen, feed young, make wax, convert nectar or even feed from flowers. The part of their brains associated with learning and memory are reduced and, of course, they have no sting. They do have increased numbers of sense organs on their antennae, to detect queen pheromones and they have huge eyes, which somehow make them quite endearing. There is a lovely section in The Irish Bee Guide which was written in 1904 by Rev Digges:

'Theirs is a life of brief dependence and submission. They gather no stores; nature has not fitted them to do so. The one object of their existence is to fertilise young queens. To that end they are born, are tolerated in the colony, and are allowed free access to the honey cells. Theirs also, is the sacrifice of life to duty; and such of them as survive to the close of autumn are driven from the hive to end, in cold and hunger, a life which, if seemingly idle or useless, was at least inoffensive, and full of possibilities whose vastness fills with awe and amazement every thinking mind.'

A beautifully adapted, very important bee. So respect your drones and appreciate them as a result of evolutionary perfection.



The Mating Flight

Bees and the Law

Extracts from the talk given by Andrew Beer following the 2015 AGM

Swarms:

There is much confusion, in my experience, as regards the ownership of swarms. There is also a perception held by some that a beekeeper whose bees swarm has an absolute right to follow them and take them from wherever they go. Finally, collecting swarms may involve risks not only to others and their properties but to the beekeeper himself.

Ownership of Swarms:

In earlier times, for all but the very rich, cane sugar and similar crops were unaffordable luxuries, so a swarm or colony provided a vital source of sweetness for the beekeeper and his family. Until the widespread introduction of the movable frame hive, enabling the beekeeper to adopt swarm prevention measures, the acquisition of swarms was the only means of establishing and maintaining apiaries. The emergence of a swarm was therefore a major event in village life. Servants were kept on the lookout for each swarm as it emerged and pandemonium ensued as soon as it did. Bells were rung, drums were tanged (beaten), mirrors shone for a dual purpose: to induce the swarm to settle where a beekeeper could catch it and, as a general warning to the then many fellow beekeepers, that its former owner wanted it back!

What did the law make of this? More pertinently, what is the legal position today? The law can conveniently be summarised in the **Swarm Ownership Indicator** below.

Situation	Owner	Why?
A. Bees in your hive, - your colony shows evidence of swarm plans e.g. larvae in queen cells but no swarm	You	Those in hive belong to you.
B. Bees out of the hive on 'colony business' - not in swarm	You	Their intention is to return to the hive.

Situation	Owner	Why?
C. Bees in swarm and you did not see them emerge	No one. Your ownership is lost when the swarm emerges [but may be regained—see E below]	Bees have reverted to wild state over which you have no control, and nor does anyone else.
D. Bees in swarm and you saw them emerge.	No one - but your right to follow them starts. You can become the owner of the swarm if you take it under E or F below.	A beekeeper who sees his swarm emerge has a right to follow them (see below at F)
E. Bees in swarm described in C or D have landed - i) on your land: ii) on somebody else's private property	i) You - if you catch them and to the extent that they remain under your control. ii) You - if you are allowed access and you catch them, as above. NB: If someone else takes them, whether the property owner or a person authorised by the property owner does so, he/she becomes the owner.	i) and ii). Control gives you ownership.
F. You have successfully followed and collected the swarm described in D.	You	Based originally on Roman Law. A beekeeper who keeps his swarm in view and collects it, can claim it. But if the swarm settles on private land, the right to follow and claim is lost.
G. Swarm has got away, living wild anywhere, including your land.	No one	No one controls it.

Problems entering neighbouring land to collect swarms:

(a) *Swarms on Private Property* -

'Private Property' means any land of any kind to which the general public does NOT have right of entry whatever its use and whoever the owner, e.g. householder, company, government department or local authority, etc. Beekeepers do not have a right to enter private property to collect swarms. A beekeeper's so-called "right" to follow and collect a swarm from where it landed, if that land is another's private property, has long been rejected by the English Courts. That means that if your swarm lands, for example, in your neighbour's garden, you have no right, whatever the temptation, to collect it without your neighbour's consent. If your neighbour refuses, that should

Be the end of the matter. If your neighbour decides to keep it or offer it to someone else, again, you have no right to be compensated.

Even with consent, care is still needed. Are there children around? Is damage likely? Warn that the collection may NOT go according to plan. That seemingly easy swarm may take flight and end up anywhere, including down the neighbour's chimney.

(b) Swarms in Public Places -

By public places, I mean places to which the general public has access or which they use, for example, public roads, streets and lanes, communal places and parks. The first rather obvious point is that if the general public can use these places, then so can we beekeepers. The problem is that whilst the general public may want to use, say, a road to get from A to B, we may, to get swarms, need perhaps to bring ladders, block pavements, restrict traffic (pedestrian and vehicular), which may cause serious interruption for much as a full day. Whilst the powers to do these things are enjoyed by, for example, the police, they are certainly not vested in us beekeepers. You might require either the police and/or maybe other statutory bodies, to provide a safe working environment. If the police do get involved, do not forget to point out that the 'incident' may require up to a day to clear, or at least until nightfall, when you should be able to get the whole swarm housed in your collection box and taken away.

(c) Summary:

Our willingness to collect swarms makes us popular with the public and the authorities alike. The fact that we do not enjoy specific and sufficiently extensive rights to do this is, therefore, invariably immaterial and perhaps our only concern should be this - what are the risks?

Risks:

Collecting swarms, like any other beekeeping activity, involves risks. If you are a swarm collector, you owe a duty of care to those who foreseeably may be affected by your actions. The level of care is that of a competent swarm collector. If you fail to meet that standard then you will, in principle, be liable to anyone injured. The Golden Rule is, therefore, to insist that the public are kept well away until the swarm

has been caught and safely removed. Unless you are confident you can complete the collection safely, leave well alone. Two points are worth stressing. Firstly, if you fail to carry out a swarm collection (or any beekeeping activity) with the care and skill expected from a competent beekeeper, insurers may avoid any claim wholly or in part. Secondly, it can reasonably be expected that insurers, in the event of a poor claims record, may either increase the cost of insurance or alter the conditions of cover.

Risks to property:

When you collect swarms, you are responsible for any damage you cause. Again, don't take on a swarm collection until you have assessed the risks and are wholly satisfied that you can do it; if not, don't even try.

The beekeeper and his/her neighbours:

Fundamental principle: Every landowner can have reasonable use and enjoyment of his/her property subject to any specific restrictions e.g. in case of tenant, tenancy agreement, terms of planning permission, etc. However, a landowner cannot exercise this right if to do so would unreasonably restrict his neighbour's enjoyment of his/her property. It follows that beekeeping is no different from other activity of mankind; you look to the effect of the activity on the neighbour and if it is, or becomes, inappropriate, the law will intervene.

Good relations with neighbours, as well as the good name of beekeeping, demand that beekeepers get on with neighbours, indeed all land users. Sensible location of hives, filled with nice bees, in reasonable numbers, is vital. The test I apply is this. Assuming I was the neighbour and I was wandering permanently around my garden in a swimsuit - would I be happy to have your bees next door?

VIDEO

The video recording of the talk on "Bees and the Law" given by Andrew Beer (a retired barrister, beekeeper and current chairman of the North Bucks Beekeepers' Association), following the 2015 EBKA AGM is now available to view on the EBKA Website



Geoff Bazin judging the Chelmsford Honey Show - probably around the 1990's. Although still a long standing member of Southend-on-Sea Division, Geoff now lives in Pembrokeshire.

It was Geoff who initiated the EBKA Associate Membership category

A bit of a get together in the 1990's with **Les Ridgwell** (centre in the white bee suit) - long time beekeeper and much respected queen breeder (now sadly deceased). **Roy Carter** on the left and **Nan Field** on the right of photo. Roy was Chair and Nan was Secretary of Dengie 100 & Maldon Division at that time.



Eric Fenner

Ex- President EBKA holding The President's Cup. How many of you know that Eric was one of the founders of the Harlow Division ?

Nice People

Photographs: Jean Smye



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Who's who and how to contact them

President of EBKA

Pat Allen Hon CLM

Trustees:

Chairman: *Ian Nichols* 17 Dyers Hall Road, Leytonstone, London E11 4AD
tel. 0798 299 638

Secretary: *Michael Webb* 19 Ingrebourne Gardens, Upminster, Essex RM14 1BQ
email gsecebka@virginmedia.com tel. 01708 250 606 / 07712 490 511

Treasurer: *Bob Manning* 12, Moorland Close, Collier Row, RM5 2AB
email treasurer@ebka.org tel: 01708 760 770

Divisional Trustees:

Braintree	<i>James Jolley</i>	mrjolley@live.co.uk
Chelmsford	<i>Margaret Clay</i>	margaretclay@btinternet.com
Colchester	<i>Tom Geddes</i>	tom.geddes@btinternet.com
Dengie Hundred & Maldon	<i>Glenn Mayes</i>	trustee@dmbka.org.uk
Epping Forest	<i>Mark Chambers</i>	mark@chambersweb.co.uk
Harlow	<i>Martin Cavalier</i>	cavalier@btinternet.com
Romford	<i>Pádraig Floyd</i>	psafloyd@yahoo.com
Saffron Walden	<i>Richard Ridler</i>	richard.ridler@uwclub.net
Southend	<i>Marguerita Wilson</i>	philandritawilson@sky.com

Divisional Contacts:

To contact a local Division:

Braintree: Colleen Chamberlain 01279 876 333 **Chelmsford:** Brian Spencer 01245 490 843
Colchester: Morag Chase 01206 522 576 **D.H. & Maldon:** Carlie Mayes 01245 381 577
Harlow: Nick Holmes 07730 735 752 **Epping Forest:** Robin Harman 07971 237 312
Romford: Pat Allen 01708 220 897 **Saffron Walden:** Jane Ridler 01799 218 023
Southend: Chad Colby-Blake 01702 302 209

EBKA Education Contact:

Jane Ridler Old Barn House, 36 Walden Road
Sewards End, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 2LF
01799 218 023 jane.ridler@uwclub.net

The Essex Beekeeper Magazine:

Editor:	Jean Smye,	email: jsmye@sky.com
Advertising:	Jean Smye	email: jsmye@sky.com tel. 07731 856 361
Web site:	Nick Holmes	email: webmaster@essexbeekeepers.com
Distribution and Mailing Secretary:	Mary Heyes	tel. 01702 588 009 email: ml.heyese@virgin.net

Regional Bee Inspectors for EBKA Region:

Epping Forest and Romford Divisions (excluding Brentwood):

Julian Parker julian.parker@fera.gsi.gov.uk tel. 07775 119 469

All other Divisions:

Keith Morgan keith.morgan@fera.gsi.gov.uk tel. 01485 520 838 or 07919 004 215



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