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THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



Busy at last !

Photograph by Jean Smye

Monthly Magazine of the Essex Beekeepers' Association

Issue No. 631

July 2017

*Furthering the Craft of Beekeeping in Essex
Registered Charity number 1031419*

www.ebka.org

Divisional Meetings Diary dates for July & August 2017

4 July	Tuesday 7.30pm	Saffron Walden	Preparing for Winter. Thaxted Day Centre, Vicarage Lane, CM6 2RL
6 July	Thursday 8.00pm	Harlow	'Propolis and pollen' - Richard Ridler. Kings Church, Red Willow, Harlow
17 July	Monday 7.30pm	Chelmsford	'Farms and bees' , The Link, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB
15 July	Saturday 7.30pm	Epping Forest	'Warre Hives' - Organic Lea. Chingford Horticultural Hall
19 July	Wed 6.00pm	Dengie 100 & Maldon	Apiary visit - Arcadia Apiary Pests and diseases.
23 July	Saturday 2.30pm	Saffron Walden	'Apiary meeting :Bee Photography' Taking better photographs of bees (or anything else) with your 'phone, compact, or SLR. Tudhope Farm, Whiteditch Lane, Newport CB11 3UD
26 July	Wed 7.30pm	Southend	'Bee at ease' - discussion evening. WI Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh SS6 7ED
30 July	Sunday 3.00pm	Braintree	Apiary meeting - Cressing CM77 8DY Contact Jan French 07725 166 609 for details
3 Aug	Thursday 8.00pm	Harlow	Divisional Honey Show - Kings Church, Red Willow, Harlow
19 Aug	Saturday	Epping Forest	'Extraction and the methods' - Chingford Horticultural Hall
20 Aug	Sunday 3.00pm	Braintree	Apiary Meeting - Stebbing/Great Saling area. Contact Jan French 07725 166 609 for details
21 Aug	Monday 7.30pm	Chelmsford	'Label Design' with James Curtis. The Link, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB
23 Aug	Wed 7.30pm	Southend	'What makes bees tick?' (Glands, Hormones, Pheromones, sense organs , etc.) - Pam Hunter (Master Beekeeper & BBKA Examinations Officer) at WI Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh SS6 7ED
24 Aug	Thursday 7.30pm	Colchester	'How was the season for you?' - Successes and Failures. Langham Community Centre.
27 - 28 Aug	Sunday & Monday	Saffron Walden	Countess of Warwick's Show incl Divisional Honey Show. Little Easton. Great Dunmow CM6 2JJ

Please notify Jean by the 4th of each month of your meetings, [Jean Smye - jsmye@sky.com](mailto:Jean.Smye-jsmye@sky.com)

Who's who and how to contact them

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Saffron Walden
BKA

with the
are organising

Bee Improvement
&
Bee Breeders
Association

Bee Improvement for All

with Roger Patterson

Saturday 18 November 2017

9 am to 4.30 pm

Cost: £ 12.50 to include tea/coffee,

but please bring your own lunch.

Booking and enquiries -

Swbka.info@gmail.com

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A new anti-Varroa treatment

Many will remember BeeVital's *Hive Clean*, quite a popular anti-varroa treatment. As it never achieved regulatory approval, it had eventually to be taken off the market. The Austrian company has now produced *Varromed* and this has gained approval for use in every EU country. It may be applied at any time of the year and, just like *Hive Clean*, it has a zero day withdrawal period.

Courtesy of Ipswich and East Suffolk BKA – via ebees

The 130th EBKA Annual County Show

Saturday 2nd September 2017

Orsett Showground, Thurrock, Essex RM16 3JU

To celebrate our 130th Show there are two
new classes - Classes 49 and 52.

Beeswax polish has long been used for preserving and enhancing good quality furniture. There are many different recipes - incorporating turpentine, olive oil, white spirit, linseed oil, carnauba wax, essential oils, etc.

Class 49 Beeswax Polish:

'Any recipe containing beeswax may be used. Polish must be in a pot/jar designated for wax. Entry must comply with the legal requirements for polish. The recipe to accompany the entry.'

[Individual polish tins can be supplied at cost price to any member wishing to exhibit to save you buying a whole pack
- contact Jean Smye 07731 856 361]

Class 52 Needlework:

Any medium may be used, silk, wool, cotton, ribbon, etc. to produce an artistic work with a maximum size of A5 or, if circular, a maximum diameter of 180mm / 7 inches. The work may be framed or left on the loom/frame as you wish. Title permitted. The back of the work must be accessible for inspection. A detailed description of the item may be displayed after judging.

'Any form of needlework depicting any connection to the life of the honeybee. Size no larger than A5 (148 x 210mm or 5.8 x 8.3in) or max 180mm / 7in diameter.

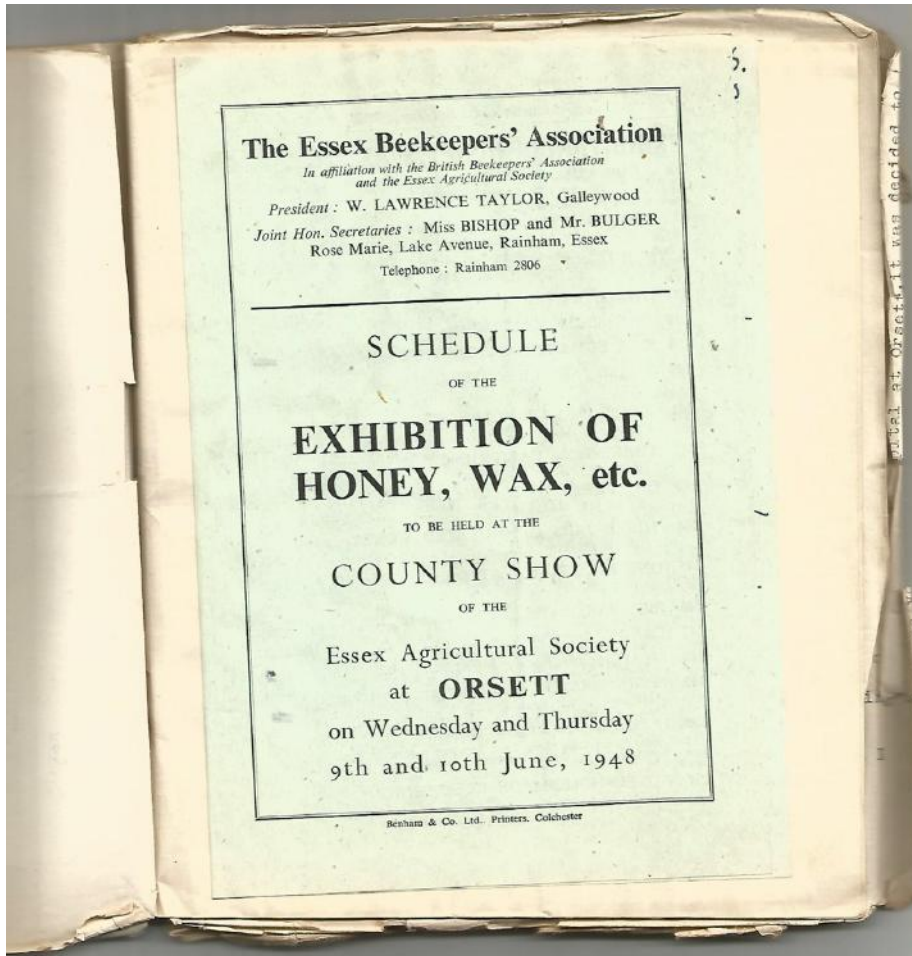
Any fabric. Stitching to cover at least one third of the fabric, but need not cover all of it.

**Kits permitted for those aged 13 or under.
Finished item may be mounted or unmounted.**

Over to you

*Let's make our 130th a real treat of honey, wax, cakes,
confectionary, gardens, polish and artistic expression.*

*EBKA Show Schedule is issued
with this edition of
The Essex Beekeeper.*



Orsett for the County Show?

Well, we've been there before don't you know.

Above is the Front Page of the June 1948 Schedule. There were 20 classes including Honey, Beeswax, Candy, Mead, Honey Cake, a novel home-made beekeeping appliance, a Photograph, an Advertisement for Honey and a Display of Honey and Bee Produce .

Entry fees were 1s and prize money was generally 7/6d for First, 5s for Second and 3s for Third and with a first prize of 40 shillings (would you believe!) for the Display of Honey & Bee Produce.

The first depends on having a super plus frames available (or two supers if it is a really big swarm) and some kind of board which can be put between boxes to provide an entrance. A ventilated area covering part of this board is essential. This can be a simple home-made device like a crown board, with an entrance cut in one side and some ventilation in the centre. The important fact is that hive aroma can circulate without the bees coming into contact. Mine double as ventilated screens for moving bees (making sure that the entrance is on the right side!) The screen is placed over a colony of bees, the super(s) placed on top of it and the swarm tipped in. The whole thing is then left. The hive scent will mingle and after one week the two colonies can be united with a queen excluder between so that the 'strange' queen can be removed.

The second method requires less equipment but is much riskier and should only be contemplated when all else is unavailable. To do the job you will need one or two queen excluders, some newspaper and a box of some sort – brood box (unlikely, as this is the root of the problem) or super. You will also need a colony of bees in a hive, but it goes without saying that you will have this. The super does not need frames in it. Then it is very simple. In the evening take the swarm and put it next to the hive. Remove the roof and very gently and with as little disturbance as possible, remove the crown board, (here I find a quick spray of a fine mist of water helps to prevent bees taking flight) and immediately place a complete sheet of newspaper over it followed by the queen excluder. Put the empty super on top of this and simply knock the swarm into this on top of the queen excluder. Cover with the crown board and roof. Speed is of the essence. Then leave the whole lot to unite and settle down for a week.

There are refinements, and potential problems. It is possible to put the empty box on top of the brood box with any supers on top of the swarm, but this requires a second piece of paper and another queen excluder above the empty box and seems an unnecessary complication. Also, if the bees cluster on the newspaper their weight will probably break it, possibly too soon. However it can be a better option as sometimes the swarm clusters under the crown board and refuses to unite, starting to build comb there instead. (Why is it that bees never understand what they are supposed to be doing?) This can be aided by piercing the newspaper with a few holes at the outset so that the bees from below are more inclined to move up.

After a few days the swarm can then be put into the box below so boosting the numbers of bees there. I must emphasise that this is a last resort method and others out there may have their own solutions. Just as an aside, remember that if you collect more than one swarm on the same day, they can all be thrown in together when you hive them and will sort themselves out, you do not need a box for each.

Where can I put them?

Celia F. Davis - Warwickshire BKA - via ebees



Photograph - guardian.com

However much equipment we have, there comes a point when all, or most of it, is in use, when we have too many bees about the place from swarm controls and other activities, and then a swarm call comes in. What are we to do? One of the excuses I hear from beekeepers who refuse to collect swarms is “*I have nowhere to put them.*”

This is a very real problem of course and the advice to hive a stray swarm well away from your own hives is clearly unattainable for many of us, although it is sound advice and helps to prevent the spread of disease. So, if we accept that we don't have a spare field well away from the apiary and that we don't have a spare hive left in which to put them anyway, what are we to do with the swarm sitting in its skep or cardboard box? Telephone calls confirm that no-one else wants them. The novices have all now obtained bees and most other beekeepers, mid-season, are all in much the same position.

Risks of stray swarms

Most swarms are reasonably healthy. Hives which are sick, from whatever cause, usually do not send out swarms and, of course, there is no brood accompanying a swarm, so many pathogens and parasites which may be present will remain in the original colony, but this is not infallible and we do need to bear in mind that swarms can carry diseases with them and so keep a careful eye on any 'strange' bees that come into the apiary. Indeed, my advice is not the ideal way to deal with bees, but, as far as I can see, the only alternative is to destroy a stray swarm, and what beekeeper wants to kill bees?

EBKA 2017 Annual Conference

Hosted by Colchester Division

Saturday, 21ST October 2017, 9.30am – 4.30pm

Venue: Holiday Inn, Abbots Lane, Eight Ash Green, Colchester, CO6 3QL (just off the A12)

'Future Challenges and Opportunities'

Our theme reflects the challenging times for beekeepers, and our speakers will discuss various aspects of these challenges. The speakers will include:

Dr Martin Bencsik

Martin works in the School of Science and Technology at Nottingham Trent University, and conducts research into automated beehive condition monitoring.

Mr Norman Carreck

Norman, who is well known to many beekeepers, is Science Director at International Bee Research Association. IBRA. His talk will be on '*Science and the Thinking Beekeeper*'.

Margaret Ginman

Margaret is the General Secretary of the Bee Farmers Association, and will discuss the Apprentice Scheme, European Experiences and Brexit implications.

Ticket Price £25, includes lunch.

(Cheques payable to 'Essex Beekeepers' Association Colchester Division'.

Send with your contact details to The Treasurer, Crabtrees, Paynes Lane, Little Bromley, Manningtree, Essex, CO11 2PJ)



There will also be trade stands and an excellent raffle

From the EBKA General Secretary,

Michael Webb

Divisional Gardens at the County Honey Show.

In previous years one of the most attractive features of the EBKA Annual Show, especially liked by the general public when visiting our marquee, has been the Divisional Gardens displayed outside. Members of the Orsett Show Committee, when inviting the EBKA to hold our Honey Show at Orsett this year, indicated that the gardens were very much a contributing factor which led to the invite.

Again this year we are expecting some fine Divisional displays to place in front of the marquee and all Divisions are encouraged to enter. When judged, gardens containing flowers attractive to honey bees attract extra marks. The points awarded to the top six gardens contribute points for those divisions towards the prestigious President's Cup.

From this year gardens should be one metre square in size. However, if Divisions have already started to plant out their garden and they are of a different size, those gardens will be welcomed. It would be really very rewarding if all Divisions this year enter a show garden and divisional committees are encouraged to get to work to meet the challenge.

Michael Webb

As well as having more bristly leaves, Russian Comfrey is a little smaller, 0.5 -1 metres tall, and it may also be less invasive making it suitable for town gardens. At the end of May the Russian Comfrey is in flower and will probably continue to flower for the next three to four weeks – taking it well into June.

Dwarf or Creeping Comfrey, (*Symphytum Grandiflorum*) is the smallest of the Comfrey family. It grows to about 50cm in height and can be used as ground cover in difficult areas of a garden. It can start flowering in late February. much to the delight of the bees, both honey and bumble.

Comfrey can have flowers that range from cream to blue and purple. Look online for the variations of best forms of comfrey, there is even a variegated form of Russian Comfrey.

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About Comfrey

Edited from an article by Chris Macleod
(Manchester Beekeeping Association) via *ebees*

Perhaps one of the most popular plants (to bees of all varieties) is Comfrey. Whilst there is a wide variety of Comfrey plants to choose from all share the same basic habits and all can be used as green fertiliser in a garden. Comfrey will produce seed but it is much easier to propagate the plant by splitting clumps and as all varieties can be invasive this is also a way of limiting over enthusiastic growth!

Our native Comfrey (*Symphytum Officinale*) has a lot of common country names – alum, backwort, black root, bone-set, bruisewort, gum plant, healing herb, knit-back - also knitbone, which gives a clue as to one of its uses by herbalists. In earlier times it was used to treat gout. However, it should be noted that the leaves can act as an irritant if used in direct contact with the skin and all parts of the plant are slightly poisonous as they contain hepatotoxic pyrrolizidine alkaloids.

Comfrey is no longer recommended for internal use although historically it was an important part of the poor man's medicine chest. Nicholas Culpeper (1616-1654) says of Comfrey "*The roots of Comfrey taken fresh, beaten small, and spread upon leather, and laid upon any place troubled with the gout, doth presently give ease of pains.*"

Native Comfrey has pale grey green leaves which are lightly furred and has flowers that range from a cream to pink or soft purple and are shaped like small bells. It grows to just over a metre and has a similar spread. It is happy anywhere as long as it has slightly damp feet. As a wild plant it grows in ditches, water meadows or moist fields. Its flowering season starts in mid-spring and can extend into mid-summer, so it is one of the plants that will span the dreaded June gap.

Russian Comfrey (*Symphytum Uplandicum*) is similar in habitat but is more

bristly and tends to have bluer flowers. As both types of comfrey cross pollinate, many comfrey plants in our gardens have a mixed heritage and it's quite pleasant to see the range of flower colours that this can produce. One such cross, produces a deep clear blue flower and can be bought as Hidcot Blue Comfrey.



Photograph copied from APHOTOFLORA

DIY – Steam Wax Extractor.

Neeta Patel — Southend-on-Sea Division

I thought beekeeping was just about keeping bees and isn't that a job and a half in itself!

As a 'new-bee', I had no idea how involved the craft as a whole actually was. This year I started with a Bailey Comb change. Why??? Well let's just say that's a story for another day but suffice to say, '*If it ain't broke don't fix it*'. After changing all the old brood frames for new ones, I pondered the question of what to do with them. 'Throw them into a bonfire' I hear you say? You would be absolutely right!

However, I had forgotten that minor detail and found myself having a little hissy fit at the thought of dealing with them. I knew I had to get rid of the frames but I thought the wax could be recycled for use as candles. So how do you extract wax from old frames using a method which caused the least amount of fuss, labour and expenditure?

I toyed with the idea of cutting out the wax from 55 frames and melting it in a bain-marie, but how long would that take! Where would I find a large enough container to submerge the frames, on the cheap. I toyed with the idea of buying solar and steam extractors from a well-known bee equipment supplier - not mentioning any names but you know the one I am thinking of, beginning with T. One look at the prices in the catalogue made my eyes boggle.

'So how do you extract wax from old frames using a method which causes the least amount of fuss, labour and expenditure?'

Where to start?

I looked at YouTube videos. Some versions looked like the inside of a mini submarine's boiler room. Another video showed a chap using a large gas tank which he filled with water and heated on an open fire. Seriously! Where do you get one of those? I was struggling to turn a concept into reality. You must realise I have no DIY skills – I can just about use a hammer to make up frames.

But where there's a will there's a way.

I had heard people mention using a wall paper stripper. Huh??? I started to put pen to paper and ideas just started to flow. I must admit that the famous company beginning with T does have some pretty pictures and armed with

that and the information found on YouTube, BBKA and NBU websites, I came up with a plagiarised version of my own, costing no more than £40.

Quite simply it comprised of an inexpensive steam wallpaper stripper; an insulation board (60cm sq.) wrapped with heavy duty aluminium foil with a large enough hole cut out in the centre to feed the pipe through; a metal roof with a V shape snipped off at one corner using tin snippers, allowing the wax to drip into a suitable container and the whole thing assembled on crates to



allow for this container to sit underneath.

The metal roof was turned into a floor, the insulation board was to become the roof and the supers and brood boxes were then placed in between the two. The wallpaper stripper was filled with water and the pipe fed through the hole in the board so that its end was nestled in the centre of the boxes, in between the frames. And that was it! Easy.

I left the thing running for about an hour or so, occasionally checking to see if the wax collecting container needed changing. Once there were signs that mostly condensed water was coming through, I turned off the steamer.

The wax was cooling and solidifying quite quickly in the plastic container, as the outside temperature was low.

The detritus had collected on the metal sheet, so I was able to scrape it off easily.



The frames were completely cleaned with no wax or propolis to speak of. The roof and floor were washed down with soda crystals and rinsed. You could replace either quite cheaply if need be. All that was left to do, was to throw the frames, the wax and the detritus onto the bonfire. At least it proved to be a good trial run!

There were two weaknesses in the design.

Firstly, I needed to form a tight seal so that as much steam as possible would be retained inside the boxes. I found myself having to seal up the gaps around the pipe in the insulation board which I did using a nitrile glove, 'dextrously' stuffing it around the aperture to form a tight seal. However, I am sure the DIY-ers amongst you would be able to fashion something more befitting for the cause. Secondly, I needed to form a tight seal at the point where the boxes met and this was done by attaching the only thing we had to hand - that being aluminium tape (which to my surprise, held in place!).

For me this method proved to be a relatively quick and mess free operation. It took very little time to design once I got my head around it and even less time to set up. I also knew it would save me time in the long run, from not having to cut out wax from umpteen frames and then cleaning the frames with all the processes in between. Also, there was not much more equipment to store away - the bulkiest item being the wallpaper stripper. The insulation board and metal roof would store flat against the wall. I wouldn't have had the space in my bee shed to store a solar wax extractor or a couple of large melting pots.

To conclude, I am glad I had a go at making my own. Apart from the pleasure of knowing that this process has fired up the cerebral synapses, the trepidation of embarking on the project and it actually working well has given me a great sense of satisfaction. Try it – it really is not that difficult.

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