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THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



David Blackwood - Presiding at the 2015 AGM - with Michael Webb, County Secretary

Photograph by Paul Abbott

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**May
2015**

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EBKA Divisional Meetings

May & June 2015

3 May	Sunday 10am - 4pm	Dengie 100 & Maldon	Museum of Power Steam & Garden Show - Langford, Maldon.
7 May	Thursday 8.00pm	Harlow	'Queen Breeding and how to successfully introduce Queens'. Kings Church, Red Willow, Harlow CM19 5PA
9 May	Saturday 2.00pm	Saffron Walden	'All about Swarming' - Richard Pickford at his apiary in Great Easton CM6 2HD.
12 May	Tuesday 6.30pm	Saffron Walden	Improve Your beekeeping 2 - Many Manipulations with Richard Ridler at his apiary in Swards End CB10 2LF.
17 May	Sunday	Braintree	Essex Young Farmers Show - Boyton Hall CM1 4LN - Marquee in livestock area.
17 May	Sunday	Dengie 100 & Maldon	Essex Young Farmers Show - Boyton Hall CM1 4LN.
18 May	Monday 7.30pm	Chelmsford	Members meeting - The Link, Rainsford, Chelmsford CM1 2XB
20 May	Wednesday 6.00pm	Dengie 100 & Maldon	Apiary meeting - Arcadia Allotments, Burnham-on-Crouch.
23 May	Saturday 2.30pm	Epping Forest	'Ensuring a maximum honey harvest' - Peter Dalby at Wanstead Apiary.
23 May	Saturday 12.30pm	Saffron Walden	BBQ with guest Torsten Ellman, Chair of Mecklenburg Vorpommern Beekeepers' Association, Germany at Tony & Linda Yeats apiary in Upper Langley Green CB11 4RU.
24 May	Sunday 11.00am	Dengie 100 & Maldon	Members visit to RHS Hyde Hall with guided tour. £10 - limited space. Call 07979 862952 / 01245 381 577
28 May	Thursday 7.30pm	Colchester	Members meeting - Langham Community Centre
31 May	Sunday 3.00pm	Braintree	Apiary Meeting with Geoff and Alison Brewer, Felsted CM8 3ET Telephone 01371 822 043
3 June	Wednesday 6.30pm	Saffron Walden	'Improve Your Beekeeping 3 - The Perfect Hive Inspection' - Jane Ridler at her apiary in Swards End CB10 2LF
4 June	Thursday	Harlow	tba
5 June	Friday	Romford	tba
7 June	Sunday 2.00pm	Saffron Walden	Apiary visit - Bee Farming with Ian Hart in Halstead
15 June	Monday 7.30pm	Chelmsford	Preparing for the Honey Show - Jim McNeill. The Link, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB.
17 June	Wednesday 6.00pm	Dengie 100 & Maldon	Apiary meeting - High House, Southminster.

Who's who and how to contact them

President of EBKA Pat Allen Hon CLM EBKA

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
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Colchester	<i>Tom Geddes</i>	tom.geddes@btinternet.com
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Saffron Walden	<i>Richard Ridler</i>	richard.ridler@uwclub.net
Southend	<i>Marguerita Wilson</i>	philandritawilson@sky.com

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Colchester: Morag Chase 01206 522 576 **D.H. & Maldon:** Carlie Mayes 01245 381 577
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20 June	Saturday 2.30pm	Epping Forest	'Hints & Tips for Honey Shows' - Jean Smye together with Annual visit to Willow Cottage
25 June	Thursday	Colchester	Members meeting - Open Forum. Langham Community Centre
28 June	Sunday 3.00pm	Braintree	Apiary meeting with Antony Stark, White Notley CM8 1RN Tel: 01376 583 117

Cover Photograph: David Blackwood and Michael Webb at the 2015 AGM. Photograph, and those on pages 15, 16 and 19, by Paul Abbott - Southend member.

Note from Editor

Due to the volume of copy for this month's magazine the pull-out index of articles from the past two years will be in next month's edition.

What the papers say...

Isle Man Varroa Free



The EU has declared the Isle of Man as being officially Varroa free. According to The Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA) there are more than 800 beehives in use on the IoM where a law in 1987 banned the importation of foreign bees to the Isle. The local government has been working with beekeepers to gain disease-free status since 2008. Environment Minister Richard Ronan said it has been a "long and rigorous process" and that Isle of Man bees could now have a "vital role to play in providing bees for research". He said: "We've reached a position where we can fully protect our bee population and maintain and develop its genetic heritage for future generations."

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-isle-of-man-31624975>



Refreshments at the AGM provided by this year's Host Division - Dengie Hundred and Maldon.

Their year will involve providing refreshments for the County Honey Show, organising the Annual Conference (Saturday 31st October) and Chairing the 2016 AGM.

EBKA President - Pat Allen Hon Life Member

At the recent AGM I was elected EBKA President. I was very moved and I feel this is an honour, though I admit to some uncertainty because there is no job description in the Trustee Handbook. I believe one is being produced, so I wait to see what is expected of me!



The Editor, Jean Smye, asked me to write some words to introduce myself as some members may not know me. I do know many members, through doing their Basic Assessments, or events such as the Conference, Essex Show, etc, and I hope to visit all the divisions over the coming months.

I have been keeping bees for 34 years, and currently have nine colonies. It's a fascinating hobby and the longer I keep bees the more they amaze me. There is something to learn all the time and every year is different, with new experiences – and new mistakes too!

It was a springtime holiday in Greece way back in 1980 that got me into keeping bees. My husband, Tony, and I toured the mainland of Greece for two weeks in a hired beaten-up old VW beetle and everywhere there were beehives, and delicious honey at breakfast. Tony had the brilliant idea that I could keep bees (why not himself, you may ask?). I read books that summer and frankly by autumn I could not resist having a go. I joined Romford Division and went to hive-making evening classes that winter. (These classes stopped the following spring and I have never heard of any anywhere since then. How lucky was that? And I'm still using some of the boxes.) The following summer I acquired a nucleus colony and a swarm. I got 30lbs of honey and I was hooked.

Notes from the Central Executive Committee (CEC)

Meeting on 26 March 2015

Items reviewed at the above meeting included:

Welcome to New Members of the CEC

At the EBKA AGM the following were elected to serve on the CEC:-

Ian Nichols was elected as Chair of the CEC replacing Richard Ridler who remains on the committee as the Trustee for Saffron Walden. Pat Allen was elected as the EBKA President replacing Eric Fenner. It was agreed by the CEC that the role of Examinations Secretary should be revised with the introduction of a new post of Education Secretary. Pat Allen was elected as the Examinations Secretary and it was noted that Jane Ridler would undertake the new role of Education Secretary.

At the Divisional AGMs, the following members were elected to join the CEC as Trustees representing their Division:-

Martin Cavalier Harlow	Mark Chambers	..Epping Forest
Margaret Clay Chelmsford	Tom Geddes Colchester
Stuart Mitson Braintree		

Notification of a BBKA Special Delegates' Meeting (SDM)

A meeting will be held in June to agree to the change of the date of the Annual Delegates' Meeting (ADM).

Electronic communications/Centralised Member Record System

The CEC agreed that Southend Division should trial a system for holding members' records to improve greater consistency of data and reduce the burden of record keeping.

Members of the CEC met with Howard Pool, the new BBKA Link Trustee

Prior to the CEC meeting, members met with Howard Pool who introduced himself, spoke about of his role as a BBKA Executive Member and explained how he could be of assistance to members of the EBKA in their dealings with the BBKA. This meeting proved to be a useful dialogue and covered a range of issues. Howard noted the points raised and it was agreed that he should meet again with the CEC. Howard agreed to write an article for *The Essex Beekeeper* - see page 5 of this issue. (A profile of Howard was included on page 103 in the March edition of the BBKA News).

the members to show their appreciation in the usual way. A donation was given to Andrew for his chosen charity, '**Bees Abroad**', a small UK registered charity seeking to reduce poverty through beekeeping.



In thanking the Association for their generous donation, Andrew said that volunteer Project Managers assess and support beekeeping projects in developing countries worldwide, working with local community groups to develop self-sustainability.

Using indigenous bees and techniques appropriate for each location, **Bees Abroad** offers training and support in beekeeping including making hives and protective clothing from local materials, managing honeybees, collecting honey safely and handling and storing it hygienically.

Home-based production of honey and other saleable goods from the by products of beekeeping is introduced, together with marketing and business skills to ensure the sustainable generation of new income by poor rural communities in developing countries. Bees Abroad projects are normally self-sustaining after five years and no longer dependent on external finance and mentoring.

Bees Abroad has projects which need funding and enquiries from community groups in Kenya, Uganda, Cameroon, Nepal, Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. See <http://beesabroad.org.uk> for further information.

Love beekeeping but hate the honey mess?
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Too cold to stand outside and sell your honey?
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Call us NOW on 07809 562045 or email - honey.helpers@yahoo.com
To discuss your requirements or for further information.
You may also sign up for future information.
Regards, Honey Helpers

I soon got involved with Romford's committee (being naturally bossy, I suppose) and later with the CEC. I edited *The Essex Beekeeper* from 1995–2006 and I have been Romford's Chair in the past and Secretary for many years now. When I retired from work in 2001 I increased the number of my colonies and also got involved with teaching beekeeping; Romford Division has now run Beginner Beekeeping courses every year since 2002. Our Division is lucky enough to have dedicated teaching colonies and an apiary. As the EBKA membership has risen since the mid-'noughties' I have been happy to serve as CEC Chair and then General Secretary until the 2014 AGM.

If you are not already aware, your CEC is a great bunch of beekeepers, all working hard for you. Together we have introduced many good things for the membership – such as the Conference grant, Bee Health Days, new website, workshops/education, improved awards for the BBKA examinations, and more. As Membership Secretary and Examinations Secretary as well as President I hope to continue to work as part of the CEC team, for the beekeepers and bees, and to bring knowledge about bees to the general public.

Pat Allen April 2015
~~~~~

**Introducing our BBKA Link Trustee - Howard Pool**

Dear Essex,

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the CEC for its kind hospitality, time, and patience when I was invited to attend a question and answer session with them at the Meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> March in Chelmsford. As mentioned on the night, as a trustee new to the BBKA I have the role within the BBKA executive to act as your link trustee to the national organization. As I see it this is a two-way process, so as I will attempt to keep you informed of national areas which may be of interest to Essex (though I think BBKA News does a pretty good job in that respect), so I would hope/expect for you to advise me of any areas which are of interest or causing concern that I can then raise on your behalf at the national level.

As expected, some of our time last week was spent on talking about issues relating to internal arguments which have been taking place within the BBKA over the past 12 months – culminating in the SDM late last year. While accepting that this has added a certain amount of “spice” to all our lives, I feel it has also done a great dis-service as an unproductive distraction from what we should be focusing on. Together, I suspect with the rest of the executive, I was relieved, if not surprised, that the in depth and independent investigation carried out by Chris Lake – a qualified and experienced accountant – found no evidence of wrong doing within the BBKA.

So let's try to put this difficult period behind us, and focus on issues which are of real interest to us beekeepers. Pesticides, Small Hive Beetle, strains of varroa, and invasion of the Asian Hornet all come to mind !! Having said that, we also understand that we need to rebuild trust and confidence amongst members.

As the “new addition” to the executive last January, it has been interesting for me too to see just how far the BBKA has come in the last 6 years. In 2009 our income was £400k. The current year's budget predicts this to have grown to £901k. Membership has grown at an even greater rate. So at national level we also need to continue the process of changing and professionalizing the organization. As a past businessman and qualified accountant and treasurer, who happens to keep bees, I have been impressed already with the degree of dedication and pure hard work that the volunteer executive puts into your BBKA.

I hope we can rely on your continued support – and if there are any matters which you would like raised at the national level, do please let me know. My E-mail address is [howard.pool@bbka.org.uk](mailto:howard.pool@bbka.org.uk).

### **Colonies for Sale**

The colonies are on Nationals and would include a super each and I would also let them go with a feeder. I have a bait hive that didn't have any bees in it and I therefore have a dozen frames unused that could mean any frames not liked could be replaced from those frames.

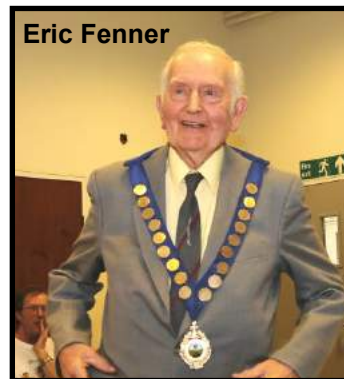
**£125 each for quick sale** as I do need to move them and I can't lift them on my own. I could also sell more supers if needed as I won't need all I have at the moment.

Contact **Brian Churchett Billericay 01277 623 504**

**14 Installation of the 2015 Presiding Officer:** Glenn Mayes, the Divisional Trustee from Dengie Hundred and Maldon Division was installed as the Presiding Officer for 2015. Glenn read from the Book of Commemoration.

**15 Presentations:** BBKA certificates were awarded by the retiring President, Eric Fenner. Recipients were: Ted Gradosielski (Epping Forest) and David Mallindine (Epping Forest) for Microscopy, Janet French (Braintree), Robin Harman (Epping Forest) and Paul Abbott (Southend) for Module 1: Nick Holmes (Harlow) for Module 2 and Christopher Branch (Epping Forest) for Module 6. Morag Chase (Colchester) achieved a credit in the Intermediate Theory Certificate.

**16 Any Other Business:** There was none.

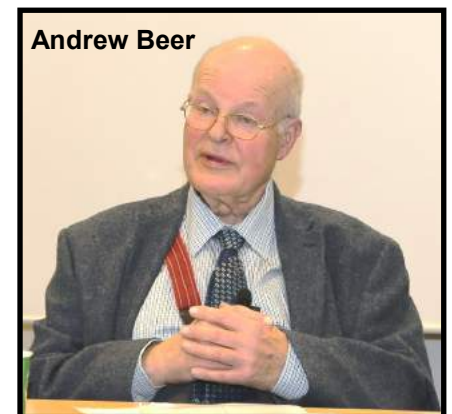


Before the close of the meeting Eric Fenner, the retiring President gave a short address in which he commented on the reasons for having to retire before the end of his term of office. Members expressed their thanks to Eric for all he had achieved as President. As the formal business of the AGM had concluded David Blackwood was thanked by the members for chairing the meeting.

The meeting broke at 2.55pm for refreshments, kindly laid on by members of the Dengie Hundred and Maldon Division. During this interval second-hand books on beekeeping were sold by Stuart Baldwin.

Following the break there was a talk by Andrew Beer, the chairman of the North Bucks Beekeepers' Association entitled “**Bees and the Law**”.

A video made of Andrew's talk would be available to members on the EBKA website. The new Presiding Officer thanked Andrew for a most entertaining and informative talk and asked the



Webmaster: Nick Holmes  
Education Secretary: Jane Ridler (A new post agreed by the CEC – see agenda item 5 above).

### 11 Confirmation of Accounts Examiner (External Auditor)

The Treasurer, Bob Manning said that Emma Baker had examined the 2013 and 2014 Accounts very thoroughly. Members confirmed her appointment as the Accounts Examiner for 2015.

**12 Conference 2014 Report:** The Presiding Officer asked Chad Colby-Blake, the Secretary of Southend Division to give the conference report. Chad reported that the conference was held on Saturday 11th October at Runnymede Hall, Thundersley. The theme was “*Beekeeping for All*” and it had been disappointing that numbers were down on the previous year. The speakers were Nicola Bradbear, Bees for Development; Heidi Hermann, Natural Beekeeping and Terry Clare, whose talk complemented the topics of the two previous speakers. Basic Certificates and the March 2014 Module Certificates were presented at the conference by the President. Chad said that the catering arrangements had been excellent with many favourable compliments from members. Some criticism had been received from members regarding the cost of admission but Chad reported that the overall funding of the event had resulted in neither a profit nor loss to the Division.

**13 Conference 2015 Preview:** The Conference will be hosted by Dengie Hundred and Maldon Division and a preview of this event was given by Glenn Mayes. He said that the conference was to be held on Saturday 31st October at the Orminston Academy, Burnham-on-Crouch. Glenn acknowledged that it was disappointing that the conference would be held on the same day as the National Honey Show but it had not been possible to change the date with the speakers already booked. The guest speakers are Professor Francis Rafnieks, from Sussex University, Professor Linda Field from Rothamsted Research and Barbara Dalby, an apitherapist from Pebadale Apiaries. The cost of admission had been set at £20 per member and, following a request for confirmation, it was agreed that this would cover all types of member. The Division would make use of the allocation of funds for the annual conference agreed by the CEC.

***This article is a must read - Editor***

## Go Fly-About

**Celia Davis – Warwickshire Beekeeper via *Ebees***

It will soon be swarming time, so time to look at some of the control mechanisms that the bees employ to organise this very complex process. Swarming is, of course, reproduction of the colony and a very important part of honey bee life, and the effort that goes into it is amazing. When we understand what is going on it is small wonder that we so frequently run into trouble as we try to control, or prevent it with our clumsy methods.

**Initiation** What starts a colony on the road to swarming? First we have to realise that it is a natural process and most established colonies will attempt to swarm when they have a plentiful supply of food in the early part of the season, and have sufficient bees and enough sealed brood to enable them to split into two. A very young queen may not attempt to swarm, but the older she is, the more the likelihood will be, but bear in mind that a queen reared in May in one year is already one year old by the following May and may not be seen as in the first flush of youth. The first move towards swarming is the production of drones and most colonies will start rearing these as soon as there is a good supply of food. That will be some four or five weeks before the queens are expected as drones take 24 days before they hatch and another 2 weeks before they are able to mate.

Then, the actual trigger for queen cell production lies in two queen pheromones:

1. Queen Mandibular Pheromone (QMP)
2. Queen Tarsal Pheromone (QTP)



QMP is spread by contact and in trophallaxis (food sharing) and each bee must receive a small amount constantly to 'tell' it that a queen is present and all is well with the colony.

QTP is a footprint pheromone which is left wherever the queen walks. The amount and the composition of the queen pheromones changes with age and condition of the queen. Where a queen is not producing sufficient QMP, or there are too many bees, or the brood nest is too congested, some bees may lose their QMP. Similarly, spread of QTP is compromised where the brood nest is very congested and she may not be able to reach all parts of the combs. A reduction in these two together is sufficient to initiate queen cell building.

### **Development**

Once there are occupied queen cells, these act as a cue for the various behaviours which now come into effect. This is probably through the pheromones that the brood produces.

1. The bees slim down the queen by rationing her food. She will lose about 25% of her body weight so that she can fly with the swarm. She will be chivvied and chased by the workers, and generally treated badly, and her egg production will fall.
2. The queen will pipe frequently. The sound is made by the vibration of her wing muscles as she presses her thorax to the comb. It is transmitted through the comb, and workers will momentarily 'freeze', so it may be a protective device on her part. Workers will also pipe by pressing their thoraces onto another bee and vibrating their wing muscles.
3. Workers will fill their crops with honey in preparation for leaving with the swarm.
4. 'Middle-aged' (3 week old) bees will build up their body protein reserves rather than converting them to brood food and there is a huge reduction in the foraging force as the protein-rich bees fail to mature to foraging age and remain physiologically young.
5. Some of the foraging bees switch to searching for potential nest sites and can be observed investigating all sorts of likely cavities.

### **Issue**

Once the first queen cell is sealed over the swarm will leave, providing the weather is favourable. The presence of a piping queen and piping workers unsettles the colony and precedes the buzzing runs which ultimately result in the swarm leaving the hive. In a buzzing run a bee runs in a straight line across the comb with wings

## **8 Notifications of the 2015 Divisional Voting Members (Trustees) and 2016 Presiding Officer**

|                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Braintree:      | Stuart Mitson     |
| Chelmsford:     | Margaret Clay     |
| Colchester:     | Tom Geddes        |
| DH & Maldon:    | Glenn Mayes       |
| Epping Forest:  | Mark Chambers     |
| Harlow:         | Martin Cavalier   |
| Romford:        | Pádraig Floyd     |
| Saffron Walden: | Richard Ridler    |
| Southend:       | Marguerita Wilson |

The 2016 Presiding Officer will be Jim McNeil from Romford Division.

## **9 Elections of County Non-Trustee posts**

BBKA Delegate: Pádraig Floyd was re-elected.

Editor: Jean Smye was re-elected.

Examinations Secretary: Pat Allen was nominated by Jane Ridler, seconded by Jim McNeill and carried unanimously.

NHS Delegate: Jim McNeill re-elected. The Secretary noted that he would advise The National Honey Show of the appointment.

Show Committee Secretary: Richard Ridler and Jim McNeill currently share this post and Richard stated that he would like to stand down if a successor could be found. Mike Barke agreed to work with the current jobholders and take over Richard's position from next year. The current jobholders were re-elected.

Spray & Disease Delegate: Jim McNeill was re-elected.

## **10 Notifications of CEC Appointees and Co-opted Members**

Minutes Secretary: Following the retirement of Eileen Marrable last year, this position has remaining vacant and the Secretary asked that this vacancy should be filled.

Membership Secretary: Pat Allen

Book of Commemoration Secretary: Penny Learmonth

Advertising Secretary: Jean Smye

Distribution Secretary: Mary Heyes



BBKA examination and further CEC workshops were to be organised in 2015 to promote the more advanced learning in the County. Jane announced that four compound x400 microscopes had been donated to the EBKA for use by the Divisions and were suitable for checking for Nosema.

As Jane was due to stand down this year she was pleased to report that the CEC had agreed to introduce two distinct roles for an Examinations Secretary and an Education Secretary. Jane indicated that she was keen to continue to contribute to education in the County. The Presiding Officer, on behalf of the membership, thanked Jane for all she had achieved in the role of Examinations Secretary and was pleased to learn that she was intending to continue in a different role.



Jane Ridler



Pat Allen

## 6 Election of President:

Eric Fenner, the retiring President, said that he would be happy to nominate Pat Allen (Romford Division) as his successor in that role. The nomination was seconded by Jean Smye and carried unanimously. Pat thanked the members and said she was honoured to accept this role.

## 7 Elections of County Officers (Trustees):

Richard Ridler, the current Chair of the CEC had agreed last year to stay on for a further year and he was pleased to nominate Ian Nichols (Epping Forest Division) to succeed him. The nomination was seconded by Jim McNeill and carried unanimously. The Presiding Officer, on behalf of the membership, thanked Richard for his leadership of the EBKA for the past five years. Michael Webb was willing to stand for another year as General Secretary and was re-elected. Bob Manning was willing to stand for another year as General Treasurer and was re-elected.



Ian Nichols

buzzing. When she bumps into another bee they antennate for a short time and then both bees rush off on another buzzing run. This results in such pandemonium that finally the bees start pouring out of the hive. The queen is pushed out with them and they all mill around in a sight that is all too familiar to most of us. Eventually they stop coming out of the hive.

## Clustering

The cloud of bees will soon settle in a large cluster nearby and here the control is pheromonal again: QMP attracts the flying bees to the queen.

One constituent of the pheromone attracts the bees to the cluster and another stabilises the swarm. Nasonov pheromone from the workers' Nasonov glands also helps to pull the swarm together.

So our swarm has left the hive, leaving behind sealed queen cells, most of the foraging bees, some younger bees and a great deal of sealed brood. If the queen is not with them and cannot fly (eg. if she is clipped) they will return to the hive and, in the absence of the old queen, will have to wait until the first of the new queens emerges before they attempt to swarm again.

Meanwhile, scout bees will be continuing to investigate cavities, measuring and inspecting them, and marking them with footprint pheromone and Nasonov pheromone and, on returning to the cluster will dance, using the waggle dance to recruit other bees to their chosen site. It appears that there needs to be a 'quorum' of about 10-15 scouts dancing for the same cavity for it to be selected and then they are ready for the move.

## A continuing story

For this article I am going to leave the swarm hanging from its branch, but with the decision on a new home made, and will return for the rest of the story next month. We have seen that, up to this point, the colony has used a complex set of communications: pheromones from queen, workers and brood, dances and vibrations, and piping by queens and workers. In addition to these, the weather and resource abundance have an important influence along with the age of the queen and the genetics of the bees. A complex process indeed.

[Ed: Part 2 will follow next month]

## OILSEED RAPE

Tony Harris

Moray Beekeepers Association  
- via eBEES



Many beekeepers steer clear of oilseed rape (OSR) due to the problems it can cause if the hives are left unmanaged, BUT autumn sown OSR which flowers in late April/May can provide an abundance of spring honey, and if it does, this could be the only honey you get if the summer is a wash-out! I learned early on in my beekeeping career that bees can build up rapidly on the rape and need stringent management if you don't want to lose a swarm or two. I ended my very first year with 9 hives of bees and after feeding them up and treating them for varroa I was pleased that they all made it through to the spring. The farmer proceeded to sow 25 acres of OSR in the field over my fence and with the sun glaring down for most of February and March the bees were very busy working the early flowering rape. I removed a couple of supers of honey on 17th April and was thinking to myself how easy this beekeeping lark was! Local beekeepers came to my apiary a couple of days later for their monthly meeting and the smugness was wiped off my face when the queen couldn't be found in hive 1. Sealed queen cells were however in abundance and it transpired that the queen had scarpered with an early swarm and there was a similar scenario in my other hives! The following few weeks were pandemonium as I tried to keep on top of the swarming instinct with very little knowledge and I failed miserably. I did however get a good crop of honey and I learnt much, especially what NOT to do. So I move some hives to the oilseed rape every year now, normally about the middle of April when it is due to flower. You may be surprised to discover that a strong colony can draw out and fill a super of foundation in just a couple of days if the weather is right! You then need to remove it from the hive, almost on a frame by frame basis, as it granulates very quickly and can set in the comb. A way of testing if

£3,000 to £4,000 per Division. The CEC Profit & Loss Statement showed an increased income resulting from having up-to-date gift aid claims and from an exercise by the editor of the *The Essex Beekeeper* to claim for outstanding advertising revenue. The CEC Balance Sheet of £33,224 increased by nearly £9,000 over the previous year. The Treasurer said that during the forthcoming year the CEC should re-examine the formula for allocating funds. He reported that the subscriptions for members this year were held at last year's rate as the CEC had agreed to absorb the BBKA increase in



capitation. Finally, the Treasurer expressed his continued concern that some Divisional accounts were still being supplied to him late. This had resulted again in the EBKA accounts being finalised the previous evening. He proposed providing some training for Divisional Treasurers in the coming year. The accounts were approved by the members present. A vote of thanks was given to the Treasurer for his hard work throughout the year.

### 5 Written reports from other members of the Central Executive Committee:

The report by the **General Secretary**, Michael Webb was tabled without comment.

In the absence of the **BBKA Delegate** his report was noted without comment.

The **Examinations Secretary's** report was tabled and Jane Ridler summarised the main points. The number of Basic Assessment candidates was down on last year. Three Miss Avey awards were made. In 2014 Module Study Groups met prior to the March and November examinations where Modules 1, 2 and 3 were covered. 10 candidates were successful in 2014 in BBKA Modules 1,2,3,6 and 8 with one candidate achieving credit in the Intermediate Theory Certificate (4 modules) and two achieving credit in the Advanced Certificate (all 7 modules). Two candidates were successful in Microscopy. Three delegates have entered the General Husbandry

*Essex Beekeepers' Association*

**Minutes of the 135th Annual General Meeting  
held on Saturday 14th March 2015  
in room E06, Writtle College, Essex CM1 3RP**

*These minutes will be considered correct if no objection is raised in writing or by email before Saturday 30th May 2015.*

*Any point challenged will be brought before the next meeting for correction of the record.*

Presiding Officer: David Blackwood, President, Southend Division.  
Also present: 56 people signed the Attendance Book.

At the start of the meeting the Presiding Officer asked the members to stand for a minute silence to remember Herbert (Nobby) Clark, Geoff Mills, Harold Moss, Ann Rolls and others known to the membership who, since the last AGM, are no longer with us.

1 **Apologies for absence** were received from Garry Furnell, Chris Harris, Ian Hunter and David Learmonth.

2 **The Minutes of the 134th AGM** had been published in the May 2014 edition of *The Essex Beekeeper* for review by the members. No challenges to the accuracy had been received so the minutes were signed by the Presiding Officer as a true record.

3 The **Report from the Central Executive Committee** (CEC) Chairman was in the March 2015 issue of *The Essex Beekeeper* (see magazine for details).

4 **General Treasurer's Report and Approval of the 2014 Accounts:**

Copies of the accounts were distributed to the members present and the General Treasurer noted the main points. The EBKA Consolidated Accounts had shown a surplus for the year of £18,783; mainly resulting from a bequest of £10,000 paid to Romford Division and implementing a change in making gift aid claims. He added that this year there would be a change in the accounting procedure so that the 2015 accounts will be on a receipts and payments basis. The EBKA Consolidated Balance Sheet at 31st December 2014 was £86,084 but the Treasurer reminded everyone that the consolidated accounts include all monies held by Divisions and which averaged

it is ready is to shake the frame over the hive. If fresh nectar flies out of the comb it is NOT ready and you need to leave it in the hive for another day or two. If it doesn't you can remove it from the hive and extract immediately. I don't use porter bee escapes to clear super of bees but rather brush the bees off each frame so that it is still warm when I extract it. If the honey does set in the comb it is impossible to extract it. To harvest this set honey, cut it out of the frame into a bucket and place in a warming cabinet until it is mushy (don't over-heat though). When it cools down the wax should settle on the top and can be scraped off while the honey can be poured off – a messy business to be sure!

***Moving the bees to the crops -***

Select a strong colony of bees with at least 7 frames of bees in early April. It is best to keep the colony in a single brood chamber as it is much easier to move. Place a queen excluder over the brood chamber a day or two before the move and a super of drawn comb or foundation over that followed by a ventilated travelling screen. Secure the hive with straps and/or screws and move the next morning after blocking the entrance with a strip of foam. It is important to provide additional ventilation for the bees when moving them as they can overheat, especially if confined for a long time. The results would be devastating for the bees and upsetting for the bee-keeper. The wax reaches melting point and honey pours out over the bees killing them. If there is an open mesh floor on the hive make sure you remove the floor insert during the confinement and move!

You need to be 'on the ball' with swarm control measures otherwise you will undoubtedly lose a swarm and subsequently your honey yield will be much reduced. I clip my queens and check the brood box every 10 days. As soon as queen cells with larvae are found I implement 'swarm control' (*Editor's note: see page 7 for an authoritative article on swarming*). If you want to make increase or have a go at rearing a few queens then colonies at the OSR will invariably give you the opportunity to do so.

***Dealing with the crop -***

If you run the honey straight into jars it will set like concrete and it will be difficult to remove from the jar. You can obtain a fine textured soft set honey from OSR and here is how you do it .....

You must extract the honey before it granulates on the comb and then you must fine filter it before running it into a bucket for storage at 14°C for quick granulation. In a matter of weeks it will be rock hard! To make it into a soft set honey you need to heat it gently so that it becomes 'mushy' but not completely liquid and I do this by placing it in a home made honey warming cabinet for a day or two. My cabinet is simply an old fridge with an electric socket for a 40-watt light bulb (*Editor's note: newer style 'energy-saving' bulbs are not suitable as they do not generate sufficient heat*). If you are very clever you can fit a thermostat to prevent the honey from overheating. But I just check it after it has been in the cabinet overnight and if 'mushy' I take it into the kitchen, and mix it with an electric drill fitted with a paint stirrer until it takes on the consistency of clotted cream. Do this for about 20 minutes (maybe 6 x 3 minute stints) over a 24 hour period. If you haven't got a drill you can use a honey stirrer (available from suppliers) and handmix it. The next step is simple – you just run the honey into clean, sterilised jars and put the lids on. The honey will set nicely and can be spread on toast like butter – it will never go hard again! Some beekeepers do not like OSR honey, it being off-white in colour when set. But taste trials have shown that it is one of the most popular with the general public for taste and I sell more of it than anything else.

The neonicotinoid pesticide debate is still hot on the agenda with passions high on both sides. Most OSR grown in the UK is seed dressed with neonics' and it is claimed that this causes dramatic harm to and losses of honeybees colonies.

I am not a scientist but on a practical side all I can say is that I have been moving my hives to the OSR in spring for a few years now and they have not suffered unduly at all, on the contrary, the bees at the rape have flourished, produced lots of honey and have survived as healthy, strong colonies the following spring.

### **For Sale**

*Colonies of bees in National Hives - Brood + half + excluder + super*  
 £170      Contact Roy Hardwicke  
 01245 225 950 / 0775247681

## **Rural Skills and Craft Courses**

**Assington Mill, Assington,  
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Book now on the website:  
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Assington Mill in Suffolk offers short one to three-day courses on over 50 different topics. We focus mainly on rural and traditional crafts; subjects that fit in with our rural location, but it could be anything that we think people might like to do and that is not available nearby or even elsewhere. Visit our website to see the list of over 55 different subjects.

Our objective is to provide a friendly and welcoming setting where people can enjoy learning something new which will enrich their lives, and have a great day out with like-minded people. Assington Mill, on a small 70-acre organic farm, lies in one of Suffolk's beautiful secret valleys. This is the most likely site for the mill mentioned in the Domesday Book, and again in historic records for 1588.



### **Making Soap and Cosmetics with Beeswax & honey**

**Saturday 6 June 2015**    £85 inc home- made lunch and materials

Dr Sara Robb's no-cure method - easy as baking a cake!

*Repeat of January course due to overwhelming demand*

### **Hands on the (Bee) Hive:**

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

**10 May    26 May    31 May**  
 2.00 - 4.30pm

Cost: £40 including tea and cake

We provide home-made and locally-sourced food, much of it grown in our kitchen garden and can cater for any diet. Gluten-free food and cakes are a speciality.