

THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



Vandalised bee hives

This scene greeted the beekeeper at an apiary near Southend. The perpetrators left boot marks on the boxes. Heart-breaking for the beekeeper after years of nurturing. Mindless vandalism.

Monthly Magazine of the Essex Beekeepers' Association

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No. 617

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**May
2016**

EBKA Divisional Meetings

Diary dates for May & June 2016

5 May	Thursday 8.00pm	Romford	'The Role of the BBKA Link Trustee' - Howard Pool Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park, RM2 5EL
5 May	Thursday 8.00pm	Harlow	'Bee diseases and pests' David Rudland,
15 May	Sunday 3.00pm	Braintree	Apiary Meeting with Claire Fisher, Faulkbourne, Witham CM8 1SP telephone 01376 513 385
16 May	Monday 7.30pm	Chelmsford	'Swarm response and collection' Brian Spencer. The Link, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB
18 May	Wednesday 6.00pm	Dengie 100 & Maldon	Apiary meeting at Carters Apiary, Maldon CM9 6EE. Led by Darren Burge
21 May	Saturday 2.30pm	Epping Forest	'Outdoor Awaits'
22 May	Sunday	Braintree	Essex Young Farmers Show at Boyton Hall, Roxwell Rd CM1 4LN
22 May	Sunday 2.30pm	Saffron Walden	Bee friendly Gardening (with tea & scones) at Charlotte Heales, Wells Court, Laundry Lane, Little Easton CM6 2JW
25 May	Wednesday 7.30pm	Southend	'Quiz Night' . WI Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh SS6 7ED. Teams from other Divisions welcome.
26 May	Thursday 7.30pm	Colchester	tba
2 June	Thursday 8.00pm	Harlow	'Beekeeping in the Caribbean' . Clive deBruyn.
2 June	Thursday 8.00pm	Romford	'The Ingrebourne Valley Project' - Becky Gibson, Essex Wildlife Trust. Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park, RM2 5EL
15 June	Wednesday 6.00pm	Dengie 100 & Maldon	Apiary meeting at Arcadia Road, Burnham-on-Crouch CM0 8EP. Led by Peter Davidson
16 June	Thursday 10 to 4	County Event	Bee Health & Disease Recognition Day at Great Easton Village Hall CM6 2HD - Prior Booking essential
20 June	Monday 7.30pm	Chelmsford	'How to use YouTube to best advantage' . James will show how to use IT to enhance our beekeeping and marketing skills. The Link, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB
23 June	Thursday 7.30pm	Colchester	tba
26 June	Sunday 3.00pm	Braintree	Apiary Meeting with Neil Reeve, High Easter CM1 4QZ telephone 07805 508 568
26 June	Sunday 2.30pm	Saffron Walden	Apiary Meeting with bees in a treehouse! Ted Bozmans apiary, Finchingfield.

Build the Buzz

The Bee Listening Project

At the EBKA AGM members were entertained and informed about the citizens' scientific project launched by the **BBKA** in partnership with **Arnia** aimed at monitoring the life cycle of the honey bee. Nigel Housden, Press Relations and Media for the BBKA's **Build the Buzz** project outlined the background to the venture.

By using high tech monitoring equipment situated in the hive, data is fed back allowing the beekeeper to assess both behaviour and health of honey bees. Nigel reported that "Build the Buzz" is seeking support to raise further funds for the project and encouraging individual beekeepers to participate in this exciting and ground-breaking venture. By installing sensitive monitoring equipment designed and made by **Arnia**, sound, vibration, hive temperature, hive humidity, brood temperature and hive weight as well as prevailing meteorological conditions can all be monitored. This cumulative live and stored data is available to the beekeeper, via smart phone and computer, twenty four hours a day all year round. The data will be collated, reviewed and made available for the wider scientific community.

Members were also very appreciative of the video presentation by Praveen Vijh, the founder of **Eat Natural** a company based in Halstead, Essex which has been making fruit and cereal bars and breakfast muesli for the past 25 years. This partnership support has led to the creation of the PolleNation hive made using recycled pallets – from **Eat Natural** and has been designed in conjunction with BBKA's Clive Joyce. These hives will be ready for release to beekeepers in April, some of whom are based in Essex.

Both speakers entertained and enthralled members with their presentations which were first class. It was disappointing that there were not more EBKA members present to hear about this initiative and enjoy the **Eat Natural** fruit and cereal bars that Praveen brought with him. I am certain that as this scientific project takes off, we will hear more about the monitoring and research initiative which can only be of help to current and future beekeepers. As noted in the literature issued about the project:-

"By enabling the non-intrusive collection of data from hundreds, even thousands of beehives - over wide areas – we can generate a wealth of data that can be used by scientists to evaluate the status and dynamics of honey bee populations on an unprecedented scale. Analysis will fill current knowledge gaps and vastly improve our understanding of the complex issues that impact on honey bee welfare."

If any EBKA members would like to be considered to take part in this scientific project, standard records will need to be completed and training for installation will be supplied.

Report from Michael Webb - **General Secretary EBKA**

The Family Silver?

These engraved and hallmarked silver cups carry the names of their winners between 1928 and 1936. Their final winner was Mr L Dix in whose loft they were found in January 2016. Mr Dix died in 1985 and the cups were found by his relatives to whom we are most grateful for their return. They bear the name '*Saffron Walden Beekeeper's Association*'



Throughout Essex, what we now know as divisions were then associations, only joining into a county wide federation in 1937.

Maybe the Second World War put an end to the local honey show for a time and afterwards, who knows?

The name of Mr Dix is known to our longest standing members whose parents were members of our division but no one remains who met him.

L. Dix also appears several times between 1934 and 1957 on the **Cowan Vase** which is still awarded for the '*Best Comb Honey*' class at the EBKA Annual County Honey Show.

Now we have to decide what to do with them.

Richard Ridler

Bee equipment for sale - extensive list

Email Anna for
detailed list at
annajustwills@aol.com
Anna Dunbavin

Honey Buckets for sale

£2 each
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Email;
tylersbees@hotmail.co.uk

Watch this space!

Roy Hardwicke will in June be selling Nucs & Colonies.
First Come, First Served
Contact Roy on **01245 225 950**

Mind your beeswax

Pádraig Floyd

Romford Division

For many, beeswax is something of an annoyance. You couldn't have honey without it, but most of us have buckets of wax sitting around waiting to be put to good use.



Assington Mill, Suffolk

I've been thinking about doing just that for some time and as my other (she says better) half is allergic to a particular preservative in the vast majority of cosmetic products, we decided to learn how to make our own by attending a course at Assington Mill in Suffolk, run by one Dr Sara Robb.

Dr Robb is an expert in the use of hive products in cosmetics. She is a scientist by trade and runs her own business – www.bathpotions.com – selling her wares in North London.

Her courses are always well attended and this was no different. Of the 16 trainees, around half were beekeepers, most had travelled from within the county, but also Essex, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Lincolnshire, with the furthest having travelled up from Cardiff. There was only one man in attendance and that was me.

As in all walks of life, you cannot walk before you run, so Dr Robb spent the first half of the morning outlining some of the theory about cosmetics and the saponification method (making soap) and the potential dangers.

The process itself is relatively simple – it takes longer to gather your ingredients than it does to undertake the actual process. However, like most things (including beekeeping) you need to have a basic understanding of what you are doing so you can understand: a) how it should turn out, and b) what's not supposed to happen, so you can try and rectify it next time.

Though the lye used in soap making is the only inherently dangerous ingredient when combined with water, other ingredients have properties you need to be aware of. Some people – especially children – have allergies to nuts (almond oil) and essential oils can cause irritation to those who appear to have the thickest of hides. Dr Robb led us through these various considerations before demonstrating soap making just before lunch.

The process is rather prosaic. You mix all your additional ingredients – water, oil, honey, scent, etc – before finally adding the lye. Then it gets very hot and it needs to be kept hot for the chemical reaction to transform the ingredients into a block of soap.

You may not realise it, but you've probably made soap before. Not the kind you'd be happy to receive at Christmas or find in a boutique hotel, but a rather more basic one. When your kitchen drain blocks, it is due to a build-up of cooking fats. You will use caustic soda – or a proprietary product containing it – to unblock it. The lye used in soap making is caustic soda and when it combines with water and fat, it makes soap. That is exactly what you do when you use soda in a blocked drain and that is why it will clear as the resultant 'soap' is dissolved by water.

After a fantastic lunch of locally sourced produce in the main house, we had a go ourselves, making *Waxeline* (a non-petroleum based Vaseline substitute), *Cerate* (a wonderful moisturiser and healing cream) and a *moisturising cream* with honey and essential oils.

They're all very simple to make and recipes can be found in Dr Robb's books (available from her website <http://www.bathpotions.com/>, Northern Bee Books or Amazon), requiring little more than the ingredients, some basic equipment and a little care.

If you are tempted to add these products to your hive-based product list, do remember that if you sell them to the public, you need to have them tested. This costs money, but is not as onerous as you might think.

Anyway, I urge you to try making your own products. There isn't a beekeeper who couldn't make use of *Waxeline* or *Cerate* and I can highly recommend Dr Robb's books, recipes and courses.

Should you see one being run at Assington Mill, do consider it. It's a beautiful site and you'll be given a warm welcome from your hosts – as well as a rather fantastic lunch.



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Essex Beekeepers' Association

**Minutes of the 136th Annual General Meeting held on
Saturday 19th March 2016 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 Tuesday 31st May 2016. Any point challenged will be brought before the next meeting for correction of the record.

Presiding Officer: Glenn J Mayes, Chairman, Dengie Hundred, Maldon and District Division

Also present: 48 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 Eileen Marrable, Geoff Mills, Geoff Pears and others known to the membership who, since the last AGM, were no longer with us.

1 Apologies for absence were received from Mike S Bell, Mark Chambers, Garry Furnell, Robin Harman, Brian Spencer, Jane Ridler and Rita Wilson.

2 The Minutes of the 135th AGM had been published in the May 2015 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 Minutes of the EGM held on Thursday 28th January 2016 had been published in the March 2016 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.

4 The Report from the Central Executive Committee (CEC) Chairman was in the March 2016 issue of *The Essex Beekeeper* (see magazine for details).

5 General Treasurer's Report and Approval of the 2015 Accounts

Copies of the accounts were distributed to the members present and the General Treasurer noted the main points.

The Treasurer noted the CEC chairman's comments in his report that the EBKA finances remain in good health. He added that the EBKA Consolidated Accounts show that the surplus for the year which is down on that of the previous year at £7529.45. This year the accounts have been constructed on a receipts and payments basis so that there will be no direct comparison on the accounts of 2015. The CEC Profit & Loss Statement showed a reduced income resulting from two payments of gift aid claims being made this year. The EBKA Consolidated Balance Sheet at 31st December 2015 was £93,613.74 up on last year. Pádraig Floyd proposed that the accounts be approved, seconded by Ian Nichols and carried unanimously by the members present. A vote of thanks was given to the Treasurer for his hard work throughout the year.

6 Written reports from other members of the Central Executive Committee

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

The Education Secretary's first report was tabled without comment.

7 Elections of County Officers (Trustees)

Ian Nichols (Epping Forest Division) was willing to stand for another year as Chairman of the CEC. As there were no other nominations, Nick Holmes proposed the appointment, seconded by Jim McNeill and was re-elected by the members present.

Bob Manning was willing to stand for another year as General Treasurer. As there were no other nominations Pat Allen proposed the appointment, seconded by Richard Ridler and was re-elected by the members present.

Michael Webb was willing to stand for another year as General Secretary. As there were no other nominations, Ian Nichols proposed the appointment, seconded by Richard Ridler and was re-elected by the members present.

8 Notifications of the 2016 Divisional Voting Members (Trustees) and 2017 Presiding Officer

Braintree:	Stuart Mitson
Chelmsford:	Margaret Clay
Colchester:	Tom Geddes
DH & Maldon:	Mark Hallows
Epping Forest:	Mark Chambers
Harlow:	Martin Cavalier
Romford:	Paul Wiltshire
Saffron Walden:	Richard Ridler
Southend	Marguerita Wilson

The 2017 Presiding Officer will be Ian Milligan, President of Colchester Division.

9 Elections of County Non-Trustee posts

President: Pat Allen was willing to stand for another year. As there were no other nominations, Richard Ridler proposed the appointment, seconded by Pauline Tidmas and was re-elected by the members present.

BBKA Delegate: Pádraig Floyd was willing to stand for another year. As there were no other nominations, Nick Homes proposed the appointment, seconded by Ian Nichols and was re-elected by the members present.

Editor: Jean Smye was willing to stand for another year. As there were no other nominations, Paul Abbott proposed the appointment, seconded by Pat Allen and was re-elected by the members present.

Education Secretary: Jane Ridler had indicated that she was willing to stand for another year. As there were no other nominations, Ian Nichols proposed the appointment, seconded by Eric Beaumont and was re-elected by the members present.

Examinations Secretary: Pat Allen was willing to stand for another year. As there were no other nominations, Paul Abbott proposed the appointment, seconded by Ted Gradosielski and was re-elected by the members present.

NHS Delegate: Jim McNeill was willing to stand for another year. In response to a question from Pauline Tidmas, Jim noted that if Pauline was interested to join him there had been five NHS Delegates in the past. The appointments were proposed by Mike Barke, seconded by Margaret Clay and carried by the members present. The Secretary noted that he would advise The National Honey Show of the appointments.

Show Committee Secretary: Jean Smye had indicated that she would replace Richard Ridler and share the position on a *pro tem* basis with Jim McNeill until an understudy could be trained to replace her. Mike Barke agreed to continue working as a committee member. The appointments were proposed by Terry Watson, seconded by Pauline Tidmas and carried by the members present.

Spray & Disease Delegate: Jim McNeill was willing to stand for another year. As there were no other nominations, Penny Learmonth proposed the appointment, seconded by Eric Fenner and was re-elected by the members present.

10 Notifications of CEC Appointees and Co-opted Members

Minutes Secretary:	Carlie Mayes
Membership Secretary:	Pat Allen
Book of Commemoration Secretary:	Penny Learmonth
Advertising Secretary:	Jean Smye
Distribution Secretary:	Mary Heyes
Webmaster:	Nick Holmes

11 Confirmation of Accounts Examiner (External Auditor)

The Treasurer, Bob Manning said that Emma Baker had examined the Accounts very thoroughly as in previous years. Members confirmed her continued appointment as the Accounts Examiner for 2016 and at the current remuneration.

12 Conference 2015 Report

The Conference, held in the newly refurbished Ormiston Rivers Academy, Glenn Mayes said, had been an excellent event with three speakers who provided a varied and stimulated programme. Professor Lin Field of Rothamsted Research Institute began the proceedings with the effects of insecticides on all pollinators, especially bees and was followed by Professor Francis Ratnieks from Sussex University whose research reinforced the hygienic behaviour of bees and their ability to detect and remove diseased and parasitized larvae. A supporter of the use of oxalic acid treatments for varroa control Professor Ratnieks gave results of its use at different times of the year and at varied concentrations. Barbara Dalby of Pebadale Apiaries is a practicing apitherapist and closed the conference with her address on the use of bee products, being the basis of traditional medicine, which is now becoming more widely used in mainstream medicine.

Glenn added that Dengie Hundred and Maldon Division were grateful to the commercial sponsors supporting speakers' fees and the donation of items for the prize draw; the proceeds of which provided a donation of £500 to the charity, *Bees Abroad*.

13 Conference 2016 Preview

The Conference will be hosted by Romford Division and a preview of this event was given by Jim McNeil. He said that the conference was to be held on Saturday, 5th November at Barking and Dagenham College. The theme of the conference was "Raising the Standards of Beekeeping Husbandry" with speakers experienced in practical beekeeping and scientific learning. Celia Davis is to speak on the "Beekeeper versus Bee", Gerry Collins will present his talk on "What's going on in my Hive" and Robert Smith will give his personal take on "The Importance of Bee Space".

The cost of admission had yet to be confirmed but will be around £25 per member. There will be a raffle, trade stands and presentation of Essex Show cups and BBKA examination certificates.

14 Installation of the 2015 Presiding Officer

Jim McNeil, the Chairman of Romford Division was installed as the Presiding Officer for 2016. Jim read from the Book of Commemoration.

15 Presentations

BBKA certificates were awarded by the President, Pat Allen.

Recipients were Janet French(Braintree) and Chris Branch (Epping Forest) Module 2 with credit, Tom Geddes (Colchester) Module 1 and Module 2 with credit and Ian Nichols (Epping Forest) Module 1.

16 Any Other Business

Pauline Tidmass reported that Jill Solomons had not received her certificate of recognition for being a beekeeper for 50 years. The Secretary reported that he had advised the BBKA on two occasions and he would contact them for an explanation.

Eric Fenner noted his disappointment that the BBKA Yearbook did not appear to give sufficient recognition to the membership.

As the formal business of the AGM had concluded Glenn Mayes was thanked by the members for chairing the meeting. The meeting broke at 2.45pm for refreshments, kindly laid on by members of the Romford Division

Following the break there was a talk on "**Build the Buzz- the Bee Listening Project**" by Nigel Housden, Press & Media Relations for the BBKA's Build the Buzz project and Praveen Vijh, a partnership support project sponsor from the company Eat Natural. The excellent presentation was well received by the members present.

The meeting closed at 4.15pm.

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## Water, water, everywhere !!



The bees are becoming active again. Whenever it is dry and the air temperature is high enough, foragers are about their business. Pollen collection at this time of year is a welcome sign, meaning the colonies have brood and are therefore queenright.

### **The Colony also Needs Water**

When the queen is starting to lay and there is little nectar, bees will often be seen gathering water. Brood food has a high water content, which is normally supplied from the incoming nectar. If there is insufficient nectar, the water has to be brought in. In addition, adult bees need to consume sugar, and the stored honey has to be diluted to about 50% water for bees to digest it. This need for water can occur at any time during the year when a spell of bad weather prevents flying. In hot summer weather, the brood nest has to be kept at the correct temperature, 33-36°C. This is achieved initially by fanning, but in severe cases the workers spread water over the combs and in open cells to give cooling by evaporation. Foraging for water has therefore to be initiated in response to either dehydration or overheating of the colony.

### **Which Bees Collect Water ?**

Foraging bees are the older workers in the colony, over three weeks old in the summer period. They have spent the first part of their short lives in the hive performing tasks appropriate to their glandular development. They then spend their last few weeks of life gathering the four essentials for colony survival - nectar, pollen, water and propolis. Foragers tend to specialise in collecting one of these items and to collect it for the whole of their foraging life. However, a small fraction of them do switch, for example from nectar to water and back, and some will collect mixed loads of nectar and pollen. There is no clear evidence about what decides which commodity any particular bee will collect. There may well be a genetic predisposition, or it may be decided by which recruitment dances a novice forager happens to follow.

### **The Control of Water Collection**

All beekeepers will have observed how rapidly the number of bees collecting water can change, particularly on a hot summer day. How is this foraging force controlled? There is a fundamental difference between the collection of nectar for the hive and the collection of water. Nectar foraging is supply driven; water collection is demand driven. The demand for nectar by the colony changes only slowly.

It depends on the adult bee population and the amount of brood, neither of which fluctuates rapidly. On the other hand the supply of nectar varies greatly from day to day, even from hour to hour. As a result it makes sense for nectar foraging to be controlled by the foragers who are aware of these fluctuations. Conversely, water supply is virtually unlimited except in very unusual circumstances. But demand for water in the hive can vary rapidly, for example in response to temperature changes. It makes sense then for water foraging to be controlled by bees in the hive who are aware of the changes in demand.

What physical stimulus could be used by hive bees to recognise a need for water? Experiments by Kiechle in 1961 indicate that the sugar concentration of the contents of the honey crop acts as the trigger. Over a period of several weeks with varying weather conditions, he took daily bee samples and analysed their crop contents. To measure the bees' motivation to collect water, he placed in the hive entrance a water soaked cloth and counted the number of bees who drank from it for ten seconds or more. He found that when bees were confined to the hive by bad weather, the sugar concentration in their crops rose significantly, and there was a corresponding increase in the number of bees drinking. Concentration of crop contents is a good stimulus because it will operate to initiate water collection, not only in cases of dehydration when nectar input is restricted, but also when hive temperatures rise. In the latter case, workers will start evaporative cooling using their crop contents, the concentration of which will therefore rise. In addition, all hive bees will experience the same stimulus because, by trophalaxis, their crop contents will all be very similar. The first water carriers are triggered into action by the concentration of their crop contents. On their return to the hive they can recruit further foragers by dancing and so the collecting force can rapidly increase.

### **How do they know when to stop?**

Once they start water collection they are no longer in touch with the needs of the hive. They must have some message from the receiving bees who unload them on return to the hive. This message appears to be contained in the time it takes for a returning water forager to unload its crop full of water. If it is taken quickly and eagerly, there is still a need for more. The forager will continue collecting water and may dance for more recruits. If on the other hand, it takes a long time to find a hive bee to unload the water, the demand is at an end and the forager will stop work.



## Which bees unload water from returning foragers?

Are they the same bees who were receiving nectar, who transfer to accepting water when necessary, or are they a separate force of bees, previously unoccupied or otherwise engaged ?

Experiments with observation hives provide the answer. Water demand in an observation hive can be triggered by heating the hive with lamps. Before they are turned on, bees receiving nectar are marked. So too are the foragers working feeders with different strengths of sugar solution. When water collection is triggered by heating it is then easy to see if the same bees switch to water gathering. In fact it is observed that while a small fraction of nectar working bees do switch, most water foragers and receivers were previously not employed. So both water foragers and water receivers are, in general, specialists.

Observation of unloading times of returning water collectors shows that, as expected, there is a big increase once the water crisis is over. The water receivers just stop work. The foragers get the message and stop work too. It is interesting that during these heating experiments giving rise to urgent water demand, nectar foraging is hardly affected. The majority of nectar workers do not switch to water, and continue to collect nectar. There is not even a noticeable switch to collection of more dilute forage. The ability of a colony of bees to provide a completely separate force of workers to cope with water collection when necessary should come as no surprise. At any particular time only about one third of the workers are actually employed. Two thirds are either resting or 'patrolling', and are presumably available in case of an emergency.

courtesy of *eBees* (source unknown)

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