

THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



May 2015: Newly hatched virgin Queen running amongst workers on brood frame

Photograph by Paul Abbott - Southend on Sea Division

Monthly Magazine of the Essex Beekeepers' Association

Registered Charity number 1031419

Furthering the Craft of Beekeeping in Essex

No. 606

www.essexbeekeepers.com

**June
2015**

EBKA Divisional Meetings

June & July 2015

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	'Wasps' with Danny Nicoll, then 'What I would have done differently' Kings Church, Red Willow, Harlow CM19 5PA.
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.
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 - Tendring Show presentation talk. Langham Community Centre, Colchester Road.
27 June	Saturday 10am - 4pm	County Event	Essex Bee Health Day - Aldham Village Hall, Aldham, Colchester CO6 3RE
28 June	Sunday 3.00pm	Braintree	Apiary meeting with Antony Stark, White Notley CM8 1RN Tel: 01376 583 117
2 July	Thursday	Harlow	'Photographing Bees - in nature and down the microscope'
3 July	Friday	Romford	tba
11 July	Saturday 8.00am	Colchester	Tendring Show
18 July	Saturday	Epping Forest	Queen rearing feedback / BBQ at Wanstead Apiary.
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.

Please inform the Editor of the details of all the Divisional events so that they can be included in these listings

Notes for your diary:

Jar Collection Days

**Thursday 25 June and
Friday 26 June**

**Details on the tear-off
strip on the order form.**

**Any queries please
contact Jean Smye**

07731 856 361

**Reminder - Last Call -
*a few places left***

BEE HEALTH DAY

**Saturday 27th June 2015
at**

**Aldham Village Hall,
Brook Street, Aldham,
Colchester**

Essex CO6 3RE

**Pre Booking of Places is
Essential as limited numbers
available**

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Settling Down

Celia Davis – Warwickshire Beekeeper via eBees

Last month we considered the control systems employed by a colony of bees during the process of swarming and we left our swarm hanging in their tree near the hive. Now we will complete the story.

Finding a new home

Scouts from the hive will have been out searching for a suitable cavity, in which the swarm can establish itself, for some days before the swarm issues. Once it is out, the search becomes urgent. A scout discovering a suitable nest site will return to the swarm and perform a waggle dance to 'tell' the other bees both its distance and direction. Some will be recruited to visit the site and will also return and dance. A bee visiting a cavity will inspect it, walking around the outside and inside and making short flights inside, apparently assessing the size. She will scent mark the cavity and its entrance using her Nasonov pheromone as well as the footprint pheromone, which she leaves wherever she walks. She may return several times. Of course, there will probably be several cavities visited, all eliciting dances. Competition between the various cavities will ensue and finally a 'decision' will be made.

Lift-off

With the decision made, it is up to the scout bees to mobilise the swarm. They start to push through the swarm, piping as they go. This starts about 1 hour before the swarm lifts off and results in vibrations in the swarm which cause the temperature of the swarm to rise, enabling all the bees to fly. The swarm bees also commence buzzing runs on the surface of, and through, the swarm, and these reach a climax just as the swarm lifts off. It then rapidly moves off in the direction of the chosen cavity, led by the scout bees who perform dashes backwards and forwards through the swarm and emit Nasonov pheromone. The queen is an essential part of this operation as her mandibular pheromone is necessary to keep the swarm together. If at any stage the queen is lost the swarm will break up or return to its original hive and no amount of Nasonov pheromone can replace her.

Moving in

Once the swarm reaches its goal most of the bees immediately go inside, but some remain around the entrance fanning Nasonov pheromone. It is amazing just how quickly a swarm will disappear and then their work really begins.

Back at the ranch

To complete the process of swarming successfully the original colony must produce a new queen and get her mated, so that the colony can build up its numbers again and gather sufficient food to survive the winter. There will usually be a number of queen cells at various stages of development with at least one sealed when the swarm departs. Once one queen has emerged there will be a great deal of piping by both the free queen and other queens still in their cells. The workers will control any casts that emerge, largely influenced by the amount of sealed brood giving off brood pheromones, and the number of bees present. They are able to hold queens in their cells by performing dorso-ventral abdominal vibrating (DVAV) dances on the queen cells but sooner or later one queen will emerge as the new potential mother. The workers will allow her to kill any remaining queens in their cells and this is influenced by the piping sounds that the sealed queens make in response to the piping by the free queen. A newly-emerged queen will have few pheromones, but these will develop over a few days and then she will become more attractive to the workers and will be pushed out of the hive on her mating flight(s). She will fly to Drone Congregation Areas (DCA) where drones will be attracted to her by her mandibular pheromone (How drones locate DCA's and how queens find them is still quite a mystery. It is possible that the Earth's magnetic field may be involved but this is contentious). When a drone approaches to within about 30cm of the queen, another pheromone, from the queens tergite glands, comes into play and this, together with an open sting chamber, results in copulation. The drone's huge eyes also help him chase the queen. A few days after returning from her mating flight the queen will begin to lay and the colony will settle down again.

A beautifully-controlled process.

The whole swarming process, which is such an essential part of colony life, demonstrates the use of all the various means of control

shown by honey bees, and the interactions between them; pheromones from queen, worker and brood, dances and vibrations of various sorts and piping, from both worker and queen. It is also influenced by external factors such as weather and resource abundance. No wonder we so often struggle to control it, but if we understand what is going on at least it makes it more interesting – remember that as you perch precariously up your ladder with your skep, surrounded by half the bees from one of one of your hives!

~~~~~

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**Reminder - Last Call - a few places left**

### **BEE HEALTH DAY**

Don't miss the Bee Health day on Saturday 27th June 2015 at  
Aldham Village Hall, Brook Street, Aldham, Colchester, Essex **CO6 3RE**

**Pre Booking of Places is Essential as limited no. available**

**Contact; Jim McNeill on 01708 765898**

**[jimandliz44@aol.co.uk](mailto:jimandliz44@aol.co.uk)**

# ***BEEKEEPING WITHOUT SWARM CONTROL!***

A talk by Ged Marshall reported by Judith Rowbottom [via eBees].

Wow! What a title - The Holy Grail of beekeeping - no more weekly inspections in the spring. Too good to be true? This most interesting, entertaining and informative lecture by Ged Marshall was an account of how he has developed his system over many years, so that now he does no active swarm control as we understand the term. It was soon obvious that he has a terrific depth and understanding of practical beekeeping which came across clearly and with great humour.

Ged is a commercial beekeeper from near Milton Keynes who runs some 250 colonies, though he has had many more in the past. As well as producing honey, he also rears many hundreds of quality queens each year. He used to practice traditional swarm control techniques, but found that the extremely busy life of a commercial beekeeper simply did not allow enough time for all the required inspections. This led to the development of his own personal system of management. In describing this to us, he made quite clear that, as in all things bee related, nothing is 100% fool-proof, and sometimes he comes a cropper, just like the rest of us!

Swarms produce swarms! If you rely on swarms for your bees, either collecting or keeping your own swarms or those from other areas, you are perpetuating and selecting for swarming. A hundred or more years ago this was [skep beekeepers'] standard practice and it seems those genes are still with us. However, not all colonies swarm every year, and it is from the non-swarmer that you should try to rear some queens. At the same time, any swarming queens should be ruthlessly got rid of, and their colonies requeened with a low-swarmer. Ged rears queens in an isolated mating apiary, flooded with drones from a low-swarmer line. These are used to requeen any colony that swarms and also any swarms that he collects from elsewhere. As he over-winters young queens, he always has spares available to requeen any colony that swarms early in the year. As open mating is the norm, for us 'lesser beekeepers' it takes time and dedication to weed out undesirables and the swarm genes can reappear quickly. It is not something that most of us can accomplish quickly and any amateur with only one or two colonies really has no option in the short

term but to buy in a queen from a reputable low-swarmer line.

Ged re-queens in August/September, when he is less busy with the honey, and the weather is still warm enough to open the hives. Although regular weekly swarm control inspections are not carried out, obviously others are, particularly to avoid overcrowding. When the colonies are taken to the rape, or to pollinate orchards, they consist only of four 14 x 12 in. frames of bees. This is to stop them building up too quickly - any that do so have frames of sealed brood removed and foundation substituted to give more space. The brood is used to provide nurse bees for his queen rearing operations. As well as space in the brood box, supers are given unstintingly - new ones are put on when the last one is half full of bees and honey. A good tip is to put a 'spare' super over the crown board (feed holes open). This will only be used if the bees really need it, and will help to avoid half-filled supers, all too common when all of them are readily available. Another tip was that if you have, say, three colonies, one strong, one medium and one weak, when taking a brood frame/s from the strong one to give space, don't give it to the weak colony, assuming that you will end up with three colonies all of the same strength. The weak one is weak for a reason and may die anyway. Give the brood to the medium colony and end up with two strong ones, which will be much more productive.

Ged is a great believer in bait hives. He finds these work best with some old comb in to attract swarms if placed as high as practicable. He puts his on top of a shipping container. All swarms collected are re-queened, although Ged did not mention what he did about monitoring them for disease. He did in fact emphasise continually that when moving frames and bees around between colonies, it is vital to know the disease status of all of them. [Almost as an afterthought, he did tell us what his swarm control method used to be about twenty years ago! On first finding queen cells, all of them were removed and foundation substituted for some sealed brood frames. If swarming preparations persisted, he removed the queen and either re-queened, or, as the queen cells were nearly always sealed by the time he looked at them, he left only two queen cells. (One cell might be a dud.) Importantly, these should be close to each other, so that the first queen to hatch would quickly encounter and kill the other queen in her cell. If the cells were at opposite ends of the hive, swarming is much more likely.



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Pull out and keep for that elusive article that  
was important and informative, but you can't  
find it easily



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To sum up his system:

- Re-queen swarms and swarming colonies with young queens from a low-swarming line.
- Give space before it is needed.
- Use bait hives to catch swarms and re-queen them.

As can be seen, his success is predicated on having bred a low swarming line of bees and on having queens readily available for all the re-queening necessary. As amateurs, we might think this is all beyond our scope, but it is not difficult to raise a few queens - finding the low swarming breeder queen might be trickier!

I was hoping to learn a method of beekeeping that bypassed swarm control, and that could be adopted easily and quickly by everyone, but alas, that was too good to be true!

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Bee declines driven by combined stress from parasites, pesticides and lack of flowers

BACKGROUND:

The species richness of wild bees and other pollinators has declined over the past 50 years, with some species undergoing major declines and a few going extinct. Evidence of the causes of these losses is patchy and incomplete, owing to inadequate monitoring systems. Managed honey bee stocks have also declined in North America and many European countries, although they have increased substantially in China. During this same period, the demand for insect pollination of crops has approximately tripled, and the importance of wild pollinators in providing such services has become increasingly apparent, leading to concern that we may be nearing a “pollination crisis” in which crop yields begin to fall. This has stimulated much-needed research into the causes of bee declines. Habitat loss, which has reduced the abundance and diversity of floral resources and nesting opportunities, has undoubtedly been a major long-term driver through the 20th century and still continues today. In addition, both wild and managed bees have been exposed to a succession of

emerging parasites and pathogens that have been accidentally moved around the world by human action. The intensification of agriculture and increasing reliance on pesticides means that pollinators are also chronically exposed to cocktails of agrochemicals. Predicted changes in global climate are likely to further exacerbate such problems in the future.

ADVANCES:

It has lately become clear that stressors do not act in isolation and that their interactions may be difficult to predict; for example, some pesticides act synergistically rather than additively. Both pesticide exposure and food stress can impair immune responses, rendering bees more susceptible to parasites. It seems certain that chronic exposure to multiple interacting stressors is driving honey bee colony losses and declines of wild pollinators, but the precise combination apparently differs from place to place. Although the causes of pollinator decline may be complex and subject to disagreement, solutions need not be; taking steps to reduce or remove any of these stresses is likely to benefit pollinator health. Several techniques are available that have been demonstrated to effectively increase floral availability in farmland. Similarly, encouraging gardeners to grow appropriate bee-friendly flowers and to improve management of amenity grasslands can also reduce dietary stress. Retaining or restoring areas of semi-natural habitat within farmland will improve nest site availability. A return to the principles of integrated pest management and avoidance of prophylactic use of agrochemicals could greatly decrease exposure of bees to pesticides.

OUTLOOK:

Interactions among agrochemicals and stressors are not addressed by current regulatory procedures, which typically expose well-fed, parasite-free bees to a single pesticide for a short period of time. Devising approaches to study these interactions and incorporating them into the regulatory process poses a major challenge. In the meantime, providing support and advice for farmers in more sustainable farming methods with reduced pesticide use is likely to have broad benefits for farmland biodiversity. Enforcing effective quarantine measures on bee movements to prevent further spread of bee parasites is also vital. Finally, effective monitoring of wild

pollinator populations is urgently needed to inform management strategies. Without this, we have no early warning system to tell us how close we may be to a pollination crisis. With a growing human population and rapid growth in global demand for pollination services, we cannot afford to see crop yields begin to fall, and we would be well advised to take pre-emptive action to ensure that we have adequate pollination services into the future. Multiple interacting stressors drive bee declines. Both wild and managed bees are subject to a number of important and interacting stressors. For example, exposure to some fungicides can greatly increase the toxicity of insecticides, whereas exposure to insecticides reduces resistance to diseases. Dietary stresses are likely to reduce the ability of bees to cope with both toxins and pathogens.

Dave Goulson, Elizabeth Nicholls, Cristina Botías, and Ellen L. Rotheray *Science*. 2015; 347:1255957

[Reproduced from Newsletter of Ipswich & Suffolk BKA via *eBees*]

Note to self -

** Don't forget the Bee Health Day*

- 27th June 2015!

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Lead up to the Conference

**Extracts from the 'Conference Diary 2015' being kept by
Dengie 100 and Maldon Division**

Tasks of the Host Division:

1. Required to host AGM at Writtle College and provide refreshments for 60 - No services onsite.
Budget: £100 from DMBKA source
2. Required to provide lunch for 30 each day at Annual Honey Show at Barleylands - budget allowance from EBKA £3 per head - £90
Budget: £90 plus remainder from DMBKA sources
3. Required to host 2015 Annual Conference
Budget: £25 per head (£5 underwritten by EBKA from CEC funds)

Actions:

October 2014

Discussions with Plume School, Jacks Centre and Ormiston Rivers Academy regarding the venue for 2015 Essex Beekeepers' Association Annual Conference.

Historic information received from Pauline Tidmus and Nick Holmes.

Discussions on speakers - 2 scientific keynote speakers and 1 bee orientated relaxed speaker. Slots - 2 in the morning - 1 in the afternoon

Raffle: charity to be decided

Sponsorship sought from local businesses interested in bees/beekeeping.

November 2014

Visits to venues.

After much discussion, DMBKA committee decide on Ormiston Rivers Academy at Burnham-on-Crouch as the venue. The venue is able to offer good theatre facilities with up to date technology. Seating for some 150 delegates is easily possible with the tiered seating affording everyone a good view and acoustic experience.

Separate discussions with the onsite catering staff has resulted in a good value choice of meals for delegates to choose from.

Decision to be made regarding which menu to choose.

December 2014

Visit to Ormiston to confirm layout and H&S.

11 Dec meeting - advised all members of details of forthcoming Conference with guest speakers as Prof. Lin Field, Rothamsted and Prof. Francis Ratniek, Sussex University.

January 2015

Confirmed final guest speaker: Barbara Dalby; Pebadale Apiaries - apitherapy

Announced at Divisional AGM the conference details formally.

Agreed to look at goody bag: cost and what to include: 2oz jar of divisional honey+

February 2015

Catering confirmed.

Details of EBKA AGM confirmed with Michael Webb

Signs made for AGM

Agreed budget of £100 for AGM catering - tea/coffee/cakes/sausage rolls - Zoe/Carlie to organise

March 2015

5 March - Carlie and Zoe meet to confirm catering arrangements and equipment needed.

5 March - Oakhouse confirmed loan of Urn

13 March - collect urn from Oakhouse; collect cups and saucers from Absolutely Delicious café

14 March - EBKA AGM

Conference details circulated to all those attending. Tickets on sale at £20 for EBKA members (£5 to come from EBKA). Junior members £10 (£5 to come from EBKA)

Details circulated in *The Essex Beekeeper*

55 attended the AGM. Feedback requested from Divisions.

28 March - details of DMBKA sent to Jean Smye for *The Essex Beekeeper*

30 March - agreed to keep diary of activity for Conference and Honey Show.

April 2015

Sponsors chased.

Order small 1-2oz jars for divisional honey giveaways

Contact: Penny Learmonth re EBKA merchandise - keen to promote this at the forthcoming conference.

So far, so good

Carlie Mayes

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
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Secretary: *Michael Webb* 19 Ingrebourne Gardens, Upminster, Essex RM14 1BQ
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