THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER

Photo by Paul Abbott

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Essex Beekeeper's Association

The Essex Beekeepers' Association is a registered charity whose object is to further the craft of beekeeping in Essex.

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Please ensure that all material for publication is received by the Editor before the 10th of the preceding month to publication.

September 2012 and October 2012

1 Sep. *Saturday 10.00am* **Epping Forest** at Chingford Horticultural Hall Larkshall Rd, London E4 6NH. Divisional Show.

6 Sep. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. Practical Session on Products of the Hive – By Various Harlow Members. Preparing wax for use – Making Lip Balm & Creams - Candle making.

7 Sep. *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park RM2 5EL. Queen rearing with Clive de Bruyn.

8 & 9 Sep. *Saturday and Sunday All day* **County Honey Show at Barleylands** Help needed from Divisional members for this County event as part of the Barleylands Country Show. Free entry to show for helpers. See advert in magazine.

15 Sep. *Saturday 2.00pm* **Saffron Walden** Taster Session'—for next year's prospective Beginners at Paul Heales' Apiary, Saffron Walden CB10 2AQ.

17 Sep. *Monday 7.30pm* **Chelmsford** Link Hall Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB. Our new beekeepers will be entertaining us with stories of their first year beekeeping experiences.

23 Sep. *Sunday 3.00pm* **Braintree** Apiary Meeting contact Stuart Mitson. Telephone 01376 340683.

26 Sep *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Hilary Hunter, RSPB will talk on the Wallasea Island Wild Coast Project, its aims and progress to date.

4 Oct. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. Microscopy with Roy Cropley.

5 Oct. *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park RM2 5EL. Pollen with Danny Nicoll.

15 Oct. *Monday 7.30pm* **Chelmsford** Link Hall Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB. Open Forum to discuss beekeeping issues and problems. We will be following up on the issues and problems raised by our new beekeepers last month, along with a question and answer session.

18 Oct. *Thursday 8.00pm* **Epping Forest** at Chingford Horticultural Hall Larkshall Rd, London E4 6NH. Microscopy with Roy Cropley.

20 Oct. *Saturday 2.30pm* **Romford** at St Mark's Church. Entries to be in between 1.00pm to 2.00pm. Followed by Annual Supper 5.30pm for 6.00pm.

24 Oct. *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Southend Honey Show. Bring a jar of your best honey (unlabelled) and join in the fun.

25 –27 Oct. **National Honey Show,** St George's College, Weybridge, Surrey KT15 2QS.

26 Oct. *Friday 8.00pm* **Braintree** Constitutional Club CM7 1TY. Deborah Scott to speak about Bee beauty Products. Contact Pat Rowland 01376 326036.

28 Oct. *Sunday 2.00pm* **Saffron Walden** Hatfield Broad Oak, CM22 7HE. Demonstration 'Dealing with Wax and Making Wax Polish and Crème' with Deryck Johnson, Richard Ridler and Sally Freeman,

County Pheromones
Richard Ridler (Chairman)

At the July meeting of the CEC we decided there is now a need to offer skills development beyond the level of the basic assessment. We have a growing number of intermediate level beekeepers who are keen to develop their knowledge and experience but generally there are insufficient in an individual division to justify resourcing and funding appropriate sessions. Topics might include such subjects as queen rearing, microscopy, food hygiene regulations and exotic pest identification and control. A working group will develop a series of skills workshops; watch this space for more news.

If you sell honey please make sure you appear on the map on our website, currently there is nobody selling honey shown for Braintree division and only 2 for Colchester….can that be right? Just send the name and address of your sales outlets to chair@ebka.org.

Editor Wanted

Howard's term as Editor of the Essex Beekeeper comes to and end with the March 2013 issue. We are seeking his replacement now to allow plenty of time for a handover. If you might be interested please contact Howard or the CEC chairman (Richard Ridler). Contact details are on the inside cover.

Little Job Opportunity

We need someone to manage advertising in The Essex Beekeeper. This requires very little time each month but there is a big opportunity to make a big difference by increasing income from advertising. Flexible hours, no pay. Interested, then please contact me at chair@ebka.org or call 0127 718111. Richard Ridler

Beekeeping Tips No.18
Using glass honey jars
By Pollinator

Outwardly this would appear to be a topic that should perhaps be useful to beginners who have never previously filled a jar. If you subscribe to the view that reducing atmospheric carbon products is a useful thing to help reduce global warming then the following ideas might assist. Additionally, it is likely to be cost effective for most beekeepers compared to using jars straight from the manufacturer.

Milk bottles are re-used at least 20 times, so why not honey jars? At the point of sale ask for the empty honey jars to be returned, and encourage this by repaying a deposit on them when the customer returns them. I know some people wash the jars after purchasing new. Having seen the glass jars being made at temperatures exceeding 1000°C it seems unnecessary to wash them before use; commercial honey packers do not wash them. Once used and then returned to the seller, jars and lids must be preferably washed in a dishwasher. Some customers wash the returned jars and then put the lids back on before the jars are dry, the result being that they become rusty and have to be discarded. Lids that have been spoiled by gripping with clamps also have to be recycled. Removing stiff lids is best achieved using a proprietary rubber pad, and not a metal clamp.

When filling a jar from the settling tank the jar is placed as close to the tap as possible and inclined at about 30° to the vertical so that the honey runs down the inside of the jar when the tap is opened slowly. This avoids introducing air into the honey. Slowly bring the jar upright as the honey covers the bottom of the jar and to the half filled position. Carry on filling to a level so that the air between the top of the honey and the lid is not visible once the lid is screwed on. This ensures the honey is the required weight. If in doubt, weigh three jars together and then fill them. Then weigh the three full jars together. If all is well then the difference will be slightly over 3 lb. As jars vary slightly in weight this method gives you an average weight. Nonetheless, this is better than weighing just one jar, which can mislead.

Removing labels from jars can be easy if the labels have a water-based glue; just soak them in water. Most other types of glue can be removed after the label is soaked in water and the paper scraped off. A paper kitchen towel, or piece of cloth, soaked in a solvent such as white or methylated spirit will remove the glue. It's essential to do that before washing. Tamper-proof labels on metal or plastic lids can be dealt with in a similar way, but do not use any plastic or wire based scraper pads as that spoils the lids. Your own fingers, protected by a plastic glove if you wish, are usually effective, in removing the paper, after rubbing the label.

The Many Uses of a Snelgrove Board
Part 3b—Methods for use when queen cells are present: artificial swarming and method II.
By Wally Shaw

This article first appeared in Welsh Beekeepers Association Newsletter, Autumn 2009 edition. It is reprinted here courtesy of its Editor and with the co-operation of EBees.

The artificial swarm is **supposed** to go off the idea of swarming and settle down to re-build itself. If this happens according to plan, it will contain enough bees to produce a reasonable crop of honey when the next nectar flow occurs. I have deliberately used the words `supposed` and `if` because it is the artificial swarm part of the split that has the least reliable outcome. The parent colony will be fine so long as it can get the new queen properly mated and laying, but artificial swarms quite often retain the urge to swarm. There are ways to reduce the risk of a renewed attempt to swarm and these are discussed in the next section. However, it seems that there is nothing that can be done to completely eliminate the risk.

Snelgrove`s Adaptation of the Artificial Swarm

This is simply **a vertical artificial swarm,** where instead of being put on a new stand, **the parent colony** is placed on a Snelgrove board (SB) on top of **the artificial swarm**. The sequence of manipulations is shown in Figure 2:-

The hive is completely dismantled and stood in two stacks (a spare roof or empty box is handy) – one stack consisting of the brood boxes and the other the supers.
A new deep box of combs is placed on the old floor - drawn frames are preferable but some foundation can be used.
The queen is found in the brood stack and transferred to the new box. If she can not be found you can revert to Plan B and use the frame-shake method described in Part 2.
This new box, containing the **artificial swarm**, remains in its original position. All the flying bees will congregate in this box with the queen.
Unless the attempt to swarm occurs very early, one deep box of comb will usually provide sufficient brood space for the re-building colony until the end of the season.
A queen excluder is installed on top of the new box and the supers added.
The **parent colony**, comprising the brood, all the queen cells and any bees on the frames, remains in the old brood box (or boxes) which are placed on a SB on top of the suppers.
A door on the board is opened (usually on one side). The flying bees emerge from this door but return to the bottom of the hive to join the artificial swarm.
After 4-5 days the existing door to parent colony is closed and the door immedi-

ately below is opened. Another door on top of the SB (usually at 90^{o} to the previous one) is opened to provide a new entrance for the parent colony. This door change diverts bees from the parent colony to join the artificial swarm below. Another door change can be done in 4-5 days to siphon off more bees.

These door changes are equivalent to the two extra hive movements in the Pagden Method – but without the grunt and groan bit. By now (8-10 days on from the split) there is likely to be a virgin queen ready to emerge in the parent colony and door changing **must cease** to allow her to make her mating flights in peace. Late door changes could result in a queen returning from a mating flight and mistakenly entering a door leading into the artificial swarm, where she might receive a less than welcoming reception. On the other hand, because of the near common hive-smell that is retained by colonies separated by a SB, she might get away with it! But then the beekeeper would be faced with a queen laying in the honey supers!

In Figure 2 you will note that one frame containing brood is shown in the middle of the box containing the artificial swarm. This is a carefully selected frame that contains **no brood young enough to be made into queen cells** – nothing younger than day 6, and older if possible. A frame of all sealed brood is better if you can find one. Bees will not usually abandon brood and this frame is there to prevent them swarming (absconding) in the first few days after the split. Another safety feature is to give the artificial swarm a substantial number of drawn frames. The aim is to get the queen back into lay as quickly as possible as this reduces the chance of renewed swarming. If foundation is used, it should be put to the outside initially. The situation in the artificial swarm can remain `delicate` for up to 3-4 weeks, during which time the colony may decide to produce a new crop of queen cells and have another go a swarming. An explanation for the persistence of the swarming urge will be given in Part 4.

Method II - Original version

Snelgrove discovered this method as the result of an artificial swarming, of the type described above, going wrong. He found that the queens in two hives he had artificially swarmed had managed to squeeze through the queen excluder and rejoin the bees and brood in the box on the SB. Remember that Snelgrove always left the mesh panel on the SB out for 48 hours after the split - and that is how the queens managed to get all the way to the top of the hive. To his great surprise, when he came to inspect them a week later, he found that in both hives all the queen cells had been torn down and that both queens had settled down to lay again. This reveals Snelgrove for what he was; a very observant man. He immediately realised the implications of what he was seeing and that it might form the basis of a method of swam control. So he tried it again, this time deliberately putting the queen and all the brood to the top of the hive on an SB, and, lo and behold, the same thing happened.

So what did he do next? When all the queen cells had been torn down and the queen had started laying again, he found the queen and returned her, on the frame she was on, to the bottom of the hive to rejoin the artificial swarm. They were probably mighty pleased to see her too because, having no means of raising a new queen, they had just about given up hope.

Further experience with the method showed that it had one possible snag because, not uncommonly, the queen-less flying bees at the bottom of the hive discovered that mummy had only moved upstairs to the penthouse apartment and promptly moved up to join her. Initially this produces some rather odd but very obvious behaviour. Bees returning to the entrance at the bottom of the hive, instead of entering, walk up the hive and round to wherever the open door is located. They seem to follow a well-defined route which has obviously been scent marked by the bees. Eventually most of them learn to fly direct from the top of the hive (ignoring the bottom entrance altogether) and the box containing the artificial swarm is virtually abandoned. The return of the flying bees to the parent colony undermines the whole swarm control process; the queen cells are either retained or re-built and the colony resumes its plan to swarm. When he observed this happening, Snelgrove`s solution was to remove the parent colony, on its SB, and place it somewhere else in the apiary – usually on the roof of another hive – where it stayed for a few days. As long as this is done early enough, the artificial swarm loses track of where the old queen is. Any flying bees that have joined the parent colony, come out in their new location but return to the old one where the queen can no longer be found. When the dust has settled, the parent colony can be returned to its original position on top of the artificial swarm. Any bees that have leaned to fly whilst the parent colony is in its temporary location simply join the colony on whose roof they have stood.

When we first tried Method II a few years ago we found that the artificial swarm finding the queen upstairs on the SB happened quite frequently. You had to keep a careful watch on the hive to see this did not happen and, when you saw the signs that they had found her, you had to move the parent colony (and find an extra roof and cover board) as well as the hive lifting and carrying. Basically, it was too much hassle and we reverted to using the more conventional artificial swarm method (described above).

Then we had an idea and asked what would happen if, instead of installing the artificial swarm on all empty combs, you gave them a couple of frames of brood, just to keep them happy? Might not this give them a purpose in life and distract their attention away from finding the old queen? Of course they would make emergency queen cells if brood of a suitable age was present, but this was not necessarily a problem. In fact it could possibly be turned to an advantage! An artificial swarm contains some bees that are still, at least partly, triggered to swarm – which is why the artificial swarm is the unreliable part of the split. Giving them brood from which they can make emergency queen cells might help switch them from swarm to emergency re-queening mode - in which mode swarming is

not usually part of the plan. So we made sure that the two frames given to the artificial swarm had cells containing eggs or young larvae.

This proved to be a highly successful modification to Snelgrove`s original Method II. We have used it many times now and on no occasion has the artificial swarm found the queen upstairs - so that problem was eliminated. The artificial swarm has always made queen cells on the two brood frames and has shown a reduced tendency to swarm again at a later date – but it does not totally solve this problem. Overall, we have found the modified Snelgrove Method II to be more reliable than conventional artificial swarming – and it is also easier to do as you will see!

Snelgrove II – Modified version

The sequence of manipulations is shown in Figure 3:-

The hive is dismantled as if for an artificial swarm; with the brood and supers in two stacks.
A new deep box of combs is placed on the old floor - preferably drawn combs but it can contain some foundation.
Two brood frames complete with nurse bees and containing at least some eggs and young larvae are placed in the centre of the new box. **These frames must be carefully checked to see that the queen is not on them. Any existing queen cells on these frames must also be destroyed.**
A queen excluder is placed on the new box and the supers added.
All the remaining brood (in the original box or boxes) is placed on a SB on top of the hive. This part (the parent colony) contains all but two frames of the brood, all the queen cells and, most importantly, **the queen**. The two missing frames can be replaced with drawn comb or foundation.
The only precaution is that no mature queen cells should be present in the parent colony on the SB. Snelgrove actually recommends `no sealed queen cells` but, as long as they are all newly sealed, all will be well. (Logically, unless the weather has been bad for several days, so that swarming has been delayed, there are unlikely to be any mature queen cells present.) However, if in doubt about the maturity of the queen cells, destroy the sealed ones.
A door on the SB is opened to let the bees in the parent colony fly and existing fliers will return to the bottom of the hive.
After 4-5 days the usual double door change can be done to divert more flying bees to the artificial swarm.
After 7-10 days you enter the second phase in the operation. The parent colony on the SB is examined and all queen cells should have been torn down and the queen should have resumed laying.
The second phase must not be delayed beyond day 11 or there is a possibility that one of the emergency queen cells may have emerged and there will be a virgin queen on the loose in the artificial swarm at the bottom.
Now you have to do a double frame swop; the queen and the frame she is on

and one other frame of brood from the top box are transferred to the bottom box (placed in the middle), and the two frames of brood that were put in the bottom during the initial operation – which will now have queen cells on them – are transferred to the middle of the top box.

The bottom box, now re-united with the old queen, should settle down to re-build – and there is a good chance that it will – and the top of the hive on the SB will select an emerging queen, destroy all others and get the chosen one mated. The method is easier than conventional artificial swarming because the queen does not have to be found during the initial split. She only has **NOT** to be on the two frames that go in the bottom box with the artificial swarm. Finding the queen later on the SB is easier because there is a reduced number of bees and she has also resumed laying and will be much less mobile than in a pre-swarming colony – where queens are always more difficult to find.

If for any reason you miss the 11 day limit for the second phase and find that queen cells have emerged in the bottom box, you are trapped in that situation – but it is not a complete disaster! If there are still sealed queen cells, open at least one or two and let any mature queens walk out into the hive. When you are satisfied that there is a least one healthy virgin queen in the bottom box, destroy all the remaining queen cells The artificial swarm should now settle down to select a queen, get her mated and should not attempt to swarm. Meanwhile, the colony on the SB will be forging ahead under the old queen and has now become the main honey producing unit. It will soon need a queen excluder and some supers. These can be moved up from the lower part of the hive where the honey producing potential is reduced. If you have really blown it, and not done the second phase until day 16 or later, then there is a good chance that the bottom part of the hive has already swarmed – but it will be difficult to tell for sure. There is not much you can do about this but you can be fairly sure that it will not swarm for a second time. Learn the lesson and resolve to do better next time!

In the fourth and final part of this series, I will discuss the strategic use of the various methods of pre-emptive and re-active artificial swarming to maximise honey production. I will also try to give a convincing explanation of how it all works.

Fig. 2

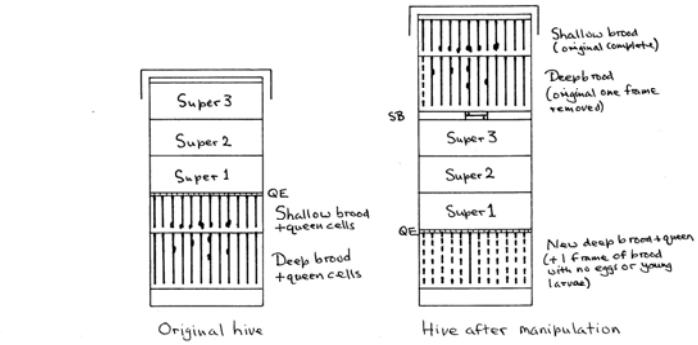
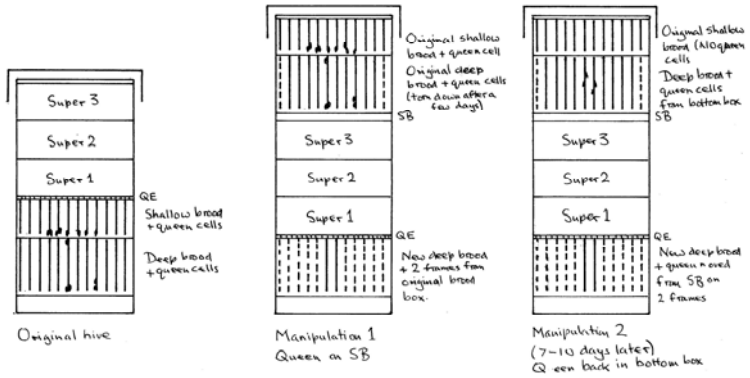

ARTIFICIAL SWARM (PAGDEN TYPE)
USING A SNELGROVE BOARD
Super 3
Super 2
Super 1
QE
Shallow brood +queen cells
Deep brood +queen cells
Original hive
Shallow brood (original complete)
Deep brood (original one frame removed)
SB
Super 3
Super 2
Super 1
QE
New deep brood + queen (+1 frame of brood with no eggs or young larvae)
Hive after manipulation

Fig. 3


SNELGROVE METHOD II
(MODIFIED)
Super 3
Super 2
Super 1
QE
Shallow brood +queen cells
Deep brood +queen cells
Original hive
Original shallow brood + queen cell
Original deep brood + queen cells (torn down after a few days)
SB
Super 3
Super 2
Super 1
QE
New deep brood + 2 frames from original brood box.
Manipulation 1
Queen on SB
Original shallow brood (No queen cells
Deep brood + queen cells from bottom box
SB
Super 3
Super 2
Super 1
QE
New deep brood + queen moved from SB on 2 frames
Manipulation 2
(7–10 days later)
Queen back in bottom box

Am I allergic to bee stings?
Andy Sivell

Andy Sivell is a journalist, copy writer and magazine publisher. He got his first colony and took up beekeeping in 2010. He maintains a blog, Diary of a Nervous Beekeeper, which can be found at www.beekeepingadvice.co.uk

I wasn't quite sure how to approach this post. I guess I'm looking for advice. Most of all I'm probably looking for reassurance. Two years of beekeeping it took me to produce any honey, something I used to joke about through clenched teeth. Oddly, I felt slightly more ashamed of the fact that in two years I also hadn't been stung once. Call myself a beekeeper. That changed three weeks ago. And two weeks ago. And last Sunday. And now, wouldn't you know it, it turns out that I'm probably allergic to bee venom…

I suffered what I believe is called an anaphylactic shock, although you'll have to forgive me for not yet knowing the correct terminology, or for really knowing much beyond what happened to me. I was stung (for the third time) at about 10.30am near the crown of my right foot. It hurt like hell. Nevertheless, I hobbled around for the rest of the day, proudly showing the sting to my kids, and even a bemused visiting Deryck. At six o'clock that evening something really strange happened: within the space of five minutes I began coughing and wheezing. This was followed by my sinuses blocking up. For all the world it was like having a cold, but without any advance warning. At this stage my foot was painful, but not overly swollen. I went to bed and spent an uncomfortable night with a streaming nose, unable to breath except through my mouth.

The following morning my foot was a sight to behold. It looked as if someone had inflated it with a bicycle pump. As the day progressed it got worse. By lunchtime my wife insisted on driving me to the local pharmacy and, when that turned out to be closed, to the nearby doctors' surgery. With my foot now gently fizzing I expected them to tell me to pull myself together and come back in a week's time. Instead I had receptionists dashing in all directions, trying to locate a doctor or nurse. The doctor who saw me didn't pull her punches. Without even examining the bee sting she questioned me closely about my breathing difficulties. Then she dropped the bombshell: time to give up beekeeping.

It's now a week on. With steroids and anti-histamine tablets it took the foot four days to return to normal. I have an appointment to see an allergy specialist. Mrs S has done a little reading up and I've spoken to Paul, a local beekeeper who's also allergic to bee stings. He said it's about taking sensible precautions. He upgraded his bee suit and carries an EpiPen with him at all times. I went to Boots and asked them to show me an EpiPen. It scared the living daylights out of me. It doesn't help that I'm needle-phobic.

I don't want to give up beekeeping but I'd be lying if I didn't confess that I'm a little nervous about continuing. I can't be taking time off work or – as the doctor suggested – dialing 999 every time I get a bee sting. For once this isn't a joke. I'd genuinely be grateful for any advice from other bee-keepers who've faced the same thing.

County Honey Show

8th & 9th September at Barleylands Nr. Billericay

Helpers Wanted for Annual Honey Show

There's just time to prepare your entries. Entry forms and the schedule are on our website. If you would like to help dealing with the visitors to our marquee then just contact chair@ebka.org. This is our biggest public event of the year; it's a fun day out and a great opportunity to promote beekeeping. Looking forward to seeing you there.

The humming of bees is a sound in my speakers!
Norman McDonald

I went to a ‘swarm’ on a balcony in Upminster. The owner of the speaker informed me that the bees started to live there last year when the speaker was working, then they left and have recently returned.
There were many entrances into the ‘colony’ so I covered the loud speaker in a sheet and brought it home. The following morning I opened the front of the speaker to discover no queen, no brood, just a little honey and a few bees. It appeared that the colony was being robbed while on the balcony.