

THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



**Skep making with Braintree Division
Photo Pat Rowland**

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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.

December 2012 and January 2013

- 6 Dec. *Thursday 7.30pm Harlow* at Kings Church Red Willow. Preparation for AGM & Xmas Party – David Tyler.
- 7 Dec. *Friday 8.00pm Romford* Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park RM2 5EL. Christmas Social.
- 14 Dec. *Friday 8.00pm Braintree* Constitutional Club CM7 1TY. Christmas Social.
- 20 Dec. *Thursday 8.00pm Epping Forest* at Chingford Horticultural Hall Larkshall Rd, London E4 6NH. Christmas social.
- 3 Jan. *Thursday 7.30pm Harlow* at Kings Church Red Willow. Divisional AGM.
- 11 Jan. *Friday 8.00pm Romford* Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park RM2 5EL. Divisional AGM
- 17 Jan. *Thursday 8.00pm Epping Forest* at Chingford Horticultural Hall Larkshall Rd, London E4 6NH. Divisional AGM
- 23 Jan. *Wednesday 7.30pm Southend* at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Divisional AGM.
- 24 Jan. *Thursday 7.30pm Colchester* The Arena, Napier Road, Colchester, (The Arena Leisure Centre, Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex. CO2 7SZ). Divisional AGM.
- 25 Jan. *Friday 7.00pm Saffron Walden* at Dunmow Day Centre, Annual Dinner and Divisional AGM.
- 25 Jan. *Friday 8.00pm Braintree* Constitutional Club CM7 1TY. Divisional AGM.

Bee Friendly Wildflower Seeds



We now have our very own Essex Beekeepers' Association packets of bee friendly wildflower seeds. They look fantastic and the price includes a donation to honey bee research. They are intended for sale to the public at events and are available from your divisional secretaries. Of course members can buy them and they will make excellent Christmas stocking fillers!

**County Pheromones
Richard Ridler (Chairman)**

Our annual conference attracted a record number of attendees this year including many new beekeepers. The speakers and the venue were excellent thanks to a huge effort by Harlow division. The conference has become a not to be missed event for many members providing the opportunity to hear excellent speakers without having to travel far. Preparations for the 2013 conference to be hosted by Epping Forest division are well under way; the date is to be 21st September and it sounds as if we will be treated to something rather special. It was very satisfying to see several cups from the national honey show won by our members presented at the conference; it seems we have some new talent in our midst!

**Beekeeping Tips No.21
Protection of the Beekeeper and Visitor
By Geoff Mills**

The BBC programme Countryfile sent out on 21 October 2012 has prompted me to write tips about how much protection from possible stings is sensible. The beekeeper needs to understand a few basic principles. The presenter was stung under the eye on this occasion.

Certainly it is prudent to wear a veil at all times when manipulating colonies or when other persons/beekeepers are taken into the apiary. It is not the sting that leads to a problem, per se, but a sting on the throat could result in swelling that might cause difficulty with breathing and possibly the need for quick hospital treatment. Ultimately a tracheotomy may become necessary and the risk of not wearing a veil cannot be justified.

Do not get in the flight path. That is to say, stand behind the hive and always have a smoker handy when removing a crownboard. The experienced beekeeper may not need to use it.

It is my belief that honeybees associate manipulations of the colony with their owner. I base this on 50 years of observations that honeybees behave differently when a stranger is present. That is to say, they can sense strange/different pheromones. Also they have memories, particularly of rough handling during colony inspections; and these memories can last all of the season from March through to September. Although the bees are from the same hive, the late season bees are not the same ones that experienced the rough manipulations/handling in the early Spring.

Certainly, it is well known that scented hair is an attraction to them and once entangled in it the best way of preventing a sting is to thump the area of the

head in order to kill the bee before it can sting you. This may seem drastic but the bee will die anyway if it stings you. Do not try to remove using your fingers until the bee is dead. Also if a bee is buzzing around you it is best not to wave frantically but to freeze and remain still ... it will usually go away. This requires good nerves and is not easy.

When it comes to colour of your bee suit it is best to choose one on which bees can easily be seen when they are on your suit. Usually this means white suits. The reasons being that you do not want to squash them when getting back into your car and you do not want them indoors. Once their venom sacks are squashed your suit is marked ready for your next hive inspection. They will remain contaminated for several days. Washing the suit before its next use is the safest option. Clean gloves are also necessary to lower the risk of infecting hives. In this respect the plastochrome glove (available from accessory suppliers) is easy to keep clean and gets stung far less than the hide/skin type of glove. Ministry bee inspectors de-contaminate their gloves frequently when moving between apiaries. Gloves are largely necessary to keep your hands free from propolis and non-sticky when you need to pick up the queen for clipping or other reasons.



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National honey Show Report J. McNeill

NATIONAL HONEY SHOW REPORT & RESULTS by J. McNeill

This year we had members from Romford, Harlow, Epping, Southend, Chelmsford & Saffron Walden 11 members in all, could be better from a membership of over 800.

After saying that Essex had 5 awards in the open to the world classes, 5 in the members & 3 in the open classes With quite a bit of silverware coming to Essex, So well done to all who entered. Here are the Essex Results.

J. McNeill

Class 4 = Open to the world - 1st	12 Jars honey as for sale
“ “ 105 = Members	VHC 2 jars soft set honey
“ “ 183 = Essex	HC 2 jars medium honey
“ “ 186 = “ “	2nd 2 jars soft set honey
“ “ 189 = “ “	C 1 jar gift honey
“ “ 194 = “ “	2nd 1 bottle sweet mead
“ “ 242 = London	1st 2 jars soft set honey

M. Barke

Class 13 = Open	1st 2 jars dark honey
“ “ 38 = “ “	1st 1 bottle dry mead
“ “ 40 = “ “	C 1 bottle metheglin or melomel
“ “ 113 = Members	1st 1 bottle dry mead
“ “ 114 = “ “ “	C 1 bottle sweet mead
“ “ 183 = Essex	2nd 2 jars medium honey
“ “ 184 = “ “	3rd 2 jars dark honey
“ “ 189 = “ “	HC 1 jar gift honey
“ “ 193 = “ “	3rd dry mead

T. Gradosielski

Class 102 = Members	VHC 2 jars medium honey
“ “ 103 = “ “ “	2nd 2 jars dark honey
“ “ 183 = Essex	3rd 2 jars medium honey
“ “ 184 = “ “	1st 2 jars dark honey
“ “ 185 = “ “	1st 3 jars of different honeys
“ “ 186 = “ “	1st 2 jars soft set honey
“ “ 189 = “ “	1st 1 jar gift honey

M. Harris

Class 181 = Essex 1st Frame for extraction
" " 182 = " " 3rd 2 jars light honey
" " 183 = " " VHC 2 jars medium honey
" " 184 = " " VHC 2 jars dark honey
" " 185 = " " 2nd 3 jars of different honeys
" " 186 = " " VHC 2 jars soft set honey
" " 190 = " " 2nd cake of beeswax
" " 191 = " " 1st 3 candles

J. French

class 188 = Essex 1st container cut comb

P. Allen

Class 183 = Essex 1st 2 jars medium honey
" " 186 = " " HC 2 jars soft set honey
" " 189 = " " 3rd 1 jar gift honey
" " 241 = London HC 2 jars light or medium honey

E. Fenner

Class 184 = Essex HC 2 jars dark honey
" " 185 = " " VHC 3 jars of different honeys
" " 189 = " " VHC 1 jar gift honey
" " 193 = " " C 1 bottle dry mead

T. Watson

Class 182 = Essex 2nd 2 jars light honey
" " 184 = " " C 2 jars dark honey
" " 185 = " " 3rd 3 jars of different honeys

T. & K. Parrish

Class 3 = Open to the world HC 3 jars gift honey
" " 189 = Essex 2nd 1 jar gift honey

Romford Division

Class 182 = Essex 1st 2 jars light honey
" " 183 = " " C 2 jars medium honey
" " 186 = " " 3rd 2 jars soft set honey

P. Abbott

Class 59 = Open to the world 3rd colour print not close up
" " 60 = " " " " " " 2nd colour print close up
" " 61 = " " " " " " 3rd black & white photo
" " 124 = Kent 1st 2 jars soft set honey

“ “ 128 = “ “
Class 132 = Kent
“ “ 182 = Essex
“ “ 184 = “ “
“ “ 185 = “ “
“ “ 192= “ “

HC 6 1oz blocks of wax
2nd 1 jar gift honey
HC 2 jars light honey
2nd 2 jars dark honey
C 3 jars of different honeys
HC 3 candles

Here is Jim bringing many of the products entered into the National Honey Show by members of EBKA—thank you Jim.



**'How Bees Perceive the World' and
the Re-use of Honey Jars
Chad Colby-Blake, Newsletter Editor, Southend Division**

These articles first appeared in the September newsletter of Southend Division. The first article is a summary of a talk given by Pam Hunter; the second continues the discussion on re-using honey jars.. I thought both were very interesting.—Ed.

Pam Hunter was the speaker at the last meeting. This Master Beekeeper kept us enthralled with her excellent talk on how bees use their armoury of senses to understand their surroundings. Pam was a professional micro-biologist and has kept bees for 25 years. She recommended a couple of books, which after her talk I think a number of attendees will put on their Christmas list: Gould & Gould's, 'The Honey Bee' and 'Form & Function of the Honey Bee' by Lesley Goodman. Throughout Pam's talk she made comparison to Human senses and started by looking at the benefits and pitfalls of having an external skeleton. Reading my notes one thing strikes me, Pam makes a reference to Human skin being a prime mode for humans to sense the world as it is sensitive – to touch and heat etc. as are the hairs to movement - which Pam equates to the bee's antennae. Pam's talk really highlighted the extent to which the Honey bee's body is coated in various 'sensillae' which for creatures that lack skin, must be a necessity given their outer surface is chitinous? Bees have a range of senses that we do not possess such as detection of CO₂, or gravity. Pam, in her thorough scientific yet very accessible way of presenting, split the senses according to whether they activated by 'peg' or 'hair' sensillae – those mechanisms by which the bee takes in data about its environment. In order to save space I shall cover them by 'sense'.

Sight: Pam showed us how the five eyes of the bee work together. I have always presumed that the five eyes had similar functioning, but the three 'ocelli' eyes have a purpose which complements the compound eyes. It seems the ocelli detect the intensity of light, can detect pigmentation and assist the responsiveness of the compound eyes. They do not focus to produce any images. The compound eyes are made up of 4500 facets (7500 for drones – hence the larger eyes). A bee's resolution is rather good, but the focus is not as sharp as Human sight - think of a pixelated image. To a bee the image is 'fuzzy'. The colour range detected by bees is different from ours – they tend not to see infrared/red range and more blue to ultra violet, which explains why blue/violet flowers are favoured by bees. Bees can detect the ultra violet markings on flowers which help guide them to the centre or nectar producing area. Many flowers change colour or 'fade' after successful pollination. It is possible, as bees detect fast movement that, those flowers which sway in the wind use this to advantage to attract bees.

Smell/Olfaction: Honey bees have a much more delicate smell detection than humans. Pam said that it is the smell (of a flower/nectar) which first draws a bee

towards it and can learn smells extremely quickly, which is why the bees use the nazonov gland to attract sisters back to the colony (Pam also suggested that bees would mark good nectar sources with the gland).

Touch: These sensillae are to be found all over the bee's body including the legs and even eyes! The 'hairs' move as it touches something - much in the same way our own hairs move in response to stimulus.

Hearing: Bees do not have ears as we think of it, but do detect vibration very well (which is how our ear operates) and can therefore detect the intensity and the equivalence of pitch of sound.

Gravity: There is a mass of nerves at the junctions of the head & thorax (nervus cervicalis) and thorax & abdomen (nervus periole superior) which allow the bee to determine gravitational pull.

The antennae are covered in a huge number of sensillae of all kinds, and can detect the direction of stimuli. We often see bees cleaning their antennae. This is to clear off the pollen, honey, dirt etc. accumulated during the bee's activities. When you consider the size of pollen grains compared to the sensillae the antennae 'clog up' very easily and need to be cleared so the bee can fly.

Re-use of Honey Jars

Not sure if readers scour the BBKA news as thoroughly as I do (in search of tasty morsels to fill gaps) but in any case a number of us may not reach the penultimate page where 'Your Letters' are disclosed. In September's issue of BBKA News (pg 34) there is a letter on the re-use (or not) of Honey Jars. It seems that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is stating that the re-use of glass jars, no matter how thoroughly cleaned, is not really acceptable. I quote a little from the response printed on page 34 where it seems the FSA state – 'though it can be assumed that originally the jars met these criteria, as they were fit to sell at the retail level, once sold and their constituent food has been consumed, the required chain of documentation which shows they are compliant is broken'. Meaning that once the jars are used and cleaned it is 'impossible to demonstrate' that the re-used jars were compliant unless they were 'knowingly manufactured to be re-used'. Now, I have been advised in the past that re-use of the jars was acceptable, but a definite 'no' to lids. So, this was of interest to me even though I only re-use a small proportion of jars from my total sales. It is noted that there are caveats to this. Firstly, the response states 'only the courts can decide whether in particular circumstances an offence has been committed (under the Food Safety Act)' and Secondly, the response clearly says that 'a commercial honey producer is legally obliged to ensure their jars are fully compliant with legislation'...am I – a hobbyist beekeeper, who sells honey - in this context a 'commercial' honey producer? At the time of writing I have done the barest review, but you can see the Agency's guidance on the re-use of 'food contact materials' at: - <http://www.food.gov.uk/policy-advice/foodcontactmaterials2/>.

I do note under the FAQ's area that when advising on reusing 'food contact materials' the website says:

'always follow the manufacturer's instructions; if these don't say the container can be re-used, use something else that you know can be used safely. Re-use containers and packaging on a like-for-like basis. For example if a container was used for cold food when you bought it, don't put hot food in it when you re-use it '

Perhaps the jury is still out... Do any of you have thoughts on this – or have a deeper knowledge of the regs.?

Honey and Apple Buns

Marlene Harris from Southend Div. sent in this recipe which she found in the Winter 2011 Newsletter of the Pembrokeshire Beekeepers' Association. In her letter Marlene say, 'It would seem to be a "foolproof" recipe as I made them and they turned out just like the photo and tasted delicious. I am unable to reproduce the photo but here is the recipe!

Ingredients (makes 12)

- 2 apples peeled and cut into small pieces;
- 250g/ 9oz self-raising flour;
- 125g/ 4oz sugar;
- 125ml/ 4fl oz clear honey;
- 125ml/ 4fl oz of veg or sunflower oil;
- 2 eggs;
- 60ml/ 2fl oz plain yogurt
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon;
- 2 tsp chopped mixed nuts;
- bun cases.

Method

1. Preheat oven to 200C/ 400F/ gas 6 and line tin with bun cases.
2. Put flour and 1 tsp cinnamon in a bowl.
3. Whisk all other ingredients except apples and nuts in another bowl.
4. Fold the wet ingredients into the flour and cinnamon mix.
5. Add the chopped apples and stir lightly.
6. Spoon the mixture into the bun cases and sprinkle the remaining cinnamon and the chopped nuts over the top of each bun.
7. Bake for about 20 minutes.

By Dee Williams

**The British Beekeepers Association 2012 Honey Survey
Press release from BBKA (30 October 2012)**

- Average annual honey crop per hive down by 72 per cent compared to 2011
- Just eight pounds of honey produced per hive, compared to annual average of 30 pounds
- Unprecedented mid-summer starvation warning issued by the BBKA to keep honey bees alive
- Rain and cold weather cited by 88 per cent of beekeepers as main factors affecting poor honey supplies
- Poor summer may have longer term detrimental impact with new queens unable to produce sufficient brood to see colonies through to next year

Britain's beekeepers have endured a desperately difficult summer with average honey yields down to just eight pounds per hive, compared to a yearly average of 30 pounds, produced over the previous summer.

Nearly nine in ten (88 per cent) of the 2,700 beekeepers who took part in the survey cited rain and cold weather as the main cause of depleted honey supplies this year, conditions which caused the BBKA to issue an unprecedented mid-summer warning to beekeepers to check the stores in their honey bee colonies and to feed them if they were inadequate to avoid starvation.

The poor summer weather may have a longer-term impact on the health of the nation's honey bees as the weather is likely to have hampered the normal process of queen production. Virgin queens mate on the wing on fine, still summer days. If the weather prevents them flying within the timescale required then queens may be poorly mated and be unable to produce sufficient new brood to see colonies through the winter. As well as its annual honey survey, the BBKA surveys its members to monitor winter colony survival levels and will report on this in June next year. Only then will the full impact of this year's unusual weather patterns become apparent.

In terms of regional variations, London beekeepers fared the worst producing just 5.6 pounds of honey per colony compared with 25.8 pounds per colony last year whilst Northern Ireland performed the best but still saw their honey yields down by more than 50 per cent over 2011.

Angela Woods, Secretary of the London Beekeepers Association commented "The results for the London area suggest that it was not just bad weather that was the problem. They may also highlight the lack of forage in the city for many bees. Rather than putting beehives on office roofs, we encourage companies in London who want to help to look at different ways of supporting bees and beekeepers. We need more forage for the bees and better-educated beekeepers. Individuals can help too by becoming an armchair beekeeper and taking up the BBKA's offer to Adopt a Beehive."

In addition to honey yield, the survey explores the general status of beekeeping across the country and revealed this year that the average beekeeper has been beekeeping for eight years, manages six hives apiece and that just over half, 56 per cent, of beekeepers have attended some form of training in the past year.

“This is music to our ears,” says Tim Lovett, Public Affairs Director and past President of the BBKA. “The BBKA has put great emphasis on training and developing better beekeeping skills in recent years and whilst trends in this area are encouraging, we need more resources to put into training, education and bee health research, to continue to support our honey bees and other pollinators. Well trained beekeepers are better equipped to deal with the adverse conditions we have seen this year, for example by knowing to check that their bees always have sufficient stores and supplementing those stores by feeding when necessary. Without training, this year’s situation might have been a lot worse.”

Survey results: Survey based on a total of 2,712 beekeepers in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Of the total number of beekeepers surveyed 91% were members of the BBKA. Respondents were asked to state how many pounds of honey they had taken from their hives by 30 September 2012 including any still on frames but out of the hive waiting to be extracted.

Table 1: Average honey yield per hive 2010 - 2012

Region	2010 lbs per hive	2011 lbs per hive	2012 lbs per hive	% Variance 2011 to 2012
Total	31.2	29.4	8.1	-72
East	34.1	34.7	10.3	-70
London	24.8	25.8	5.6	-78
Midlands	33.2	30.6	9.0	-71
North East	25.9	26.5	8.6	-68
North West	20.7	24.9	6.9	-72
South East	34.2	29.3	7.3	-75
South West	30.8	29.5	7.1	-76
Wales	25.2	31.6	9.8	-69
N Ireland	22.8	34.7	16.4	-53

Table 2: Percentage variance to average 2012

Region	Average lbs of honey per hive 2012	Honey Index	% Variance to average
Total	8.1	100	0
East	10.3	127	27
London	5.6	69	-31
Midlands	9.0	111	11
North East	8.6	106	6
North West	6.9	85	-15
South East	7.3	90	-10
South West	7.1	88	-12
Wales	9.8	121	21
N Ireland	16.4	202	102

Rescuing a Feral Colony of bees

Chris Southall

Over the last few years I have been asked to rescue a number of colonies of bees from houses and other places where they have made a home but are not appreciated. I have evolved a system to do this that I thought I would share.

You will need a bee suit and rubber gloves if desired and:

1. Large plastic storage boxes with tight fitting lids to store and combs with honey.
2. A brood box with frames and at least one drawn comb, solid hive floor and top board.
3. A second brood box with a queen excluder permanently fixed to the bottom – I use a wire excluder as it is more robust. A number of pieces of wood to separate the combs – frame side bars are ideal.
4. A garden sprayer filled with water.
5. A skep or box, bee brush or bundle of grass, a kitchen knife, smoker, bucket of water to wash honey from hands.

The first challenge is to gain access to the combs. In this case the colony was in the hollow wall of a wooden building being used as a toilet block at a fishing lake. The boards were carefully removed from the wall so that they could be reinstated later.

The bees were sprayed with water to reduce the amount of flying. Then the combs were cut out one by one and the bees brushed (with a bundle of long grass or bee brush) onto a board in front of the hive containing a set of frames and comb.

The combs with no brood were put into the plastic boxes and the lids replaced.

The combs with brood were propped up in the second box with the pieces of wood or frame side bars to separate them from each other.

The remaining bees in the wall were sprayed with water and brushed into the skep or box and shaken onto the board in front of the hive.

When most of the bees were captured the boxes were wrapped up and taken to my apiary where the box of brood was placed on top of the brood chamber of bees and frames.

After three or four weeks the bees can be brushed off the combs in the top box in front of the lower box and the top box removed.

When the boards were re-instated on the hut wall a sheet of polythene was used to prevent swarms from moving into the space (smelling nicely of bees!) in the future

I hope this is clear – if you want to talk to me about the process do contact me on chris@ecodiy.org

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**Rescuing a Feral Colony of bees
Chris Southall's article on p.14**

