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## THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



*The bees have found a watering hole on a hot day*

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**Monthly Magazine of the Essex Beekeepers' Association**

[www.ebka.org](http://www.ebka.org)

*Furthering the Craft of Beekeeping in Essex*  
Registered Charity number 1031419

**Issue No. 644**

**August 2018**

## Divisional Meetings around the County

### Meetings in August:

2 Aug	Thursday 7.00pm	Romford	Hive demonstration at the teaching apiary, Thames Chase.
2 Aug	Thursday 8.00pm	Harlow	<b>Honey Show.</b> Kings Church, Red Willow, Harlow CM19 5PA
4 Aug	Saturday 2.30pm	Saffron Walden	<b>Hive Hygiene</b> - Wimbish CB10 2UY
18 Aug	Saturday 2.30pm	Epping Forest	<b>Q's + A's + B's</b> - Wanstead Apiary.
19 Aug	Sunday 3.00pm	Braintree	<b>Apiary meeting and BBQ</b> - Wethersfield RSVP for BBQ. Contact John Barlow 01376 850 756 / 07889 495 377
20 Aug	Monday 7.30pm	Chelmsford	<b>Gardening for Bees</b> - Darren Lerigo. The Link, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB
22 Aug	Wed 7.30pm	Southend	<b>Bee Easy - a social information evening.</b> Come with questions or subjects to discuss. W I Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh SS6 7ED.
22 Aug	Wed 7.30pm	Dengie 100 & Maldon	<b>Apiary Meeeting - Harvesting.</b> Arcadia Apiary, Burnham-on-Crouch
26/27 Aug	Sunday/ Monday	Saffron Walden	<b>Divisional Honey Show</b> at the Countess of Warwick's Show, Little Easton CM6 2JJ

Would each Division ensure that their meeting details - topic, venue and time are notified to the editor at [dsmye@lineone.net](mailto:dsmye@lineone.net) by the 4th of the month so that a comprehensive list is available to all members.

## WHO'S WHO & HOW TO CONTACT THEM

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## EBKA General Secretary

We are still looking for a replacement General Secretary to take over from Michael Webb. His term of office ended at the last AGM and he is at present 'caretaking' the role, but this can't go on for long.

A willing volunteer is needed as soon as possible. If you are interested please contact Michael

(gsecebka@virginmedia.com / 07712 490 511 / 01708 250 606)

to discuss the responsibilities and duties of the role.

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### Meetings in September:

Date	Day	County	Event
1 Sept	Saturday	COUNTY	Annual Honey Show at Orsett Showground, Orsett, Thurrock
6 Sept	Thursday	Romford	The Good, The Bad and the Downright Useless. Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park RM2 5EL
9 Sept	Sunday	Chelmsford	Taster Day - Divisional Apiary at Hylands Park, Chelmsford.
15 Sept	Saturday	Saffron Walden	Taster Session for prospective beginners — Wimbish CB10 2UY
17 Sept	Monday	Chelmsford	Honey Show. The County Hotel, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford.
26 Sept	Wed	Saffron Walden	Labelling, Marketing & Selling Honey - Richard Ridler, Swards End Hall CB10 2LG
30 Sept	Sunday	Braintree	Apiary meeting at Felsted CM6 3ET

The editor would welcome more news and reports of meetings around the county from Divisional members. Most Divisions are publishing a monthly Newsletter, so why not spread the news wider by having it included in *The Essex Beekeeper*?

Send articles, photographs, etc to David Smye at [dsmye@lineone.net](mailto:dsmye@lineone.net) and ...

If you have equipment, bees, nucs, etc for sale, as an EBKA member you can advertise here free of charge and reach many more potential buyers.

**Book NOW**..... . ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018

Date and venue: Saturday 3rd November 2018 10 - 4pm

Chelmsford City Racecourse

Great Leighs, CM3 1QP

Tickets £25

Details on page 8

# 131<sup>st</sup> Annual Honey Show



In the June edition of *The Essex Beekeeper* (and on the EBKA Website) you will have received the Show Schedule and Entry Form for this year's Show at the end of the month.

If you haven't done so already, please take time to go through the Schedule and consider entering classes in what is the EBKA's annual "Blue Ribbon" event. It is a great opportunity to showcase to the public the commitment of our members to producing quality honey and other products relating to our craft.

Judging is to take place on Friday 31 August and all exhibits must be delivered by no later than **12 noon on that day**.

If you are unable to get your entries to the Show, please arrange within your Division for the transportation (and collection) to and from the Show. We are looking for a bumper year of entries of all classes and don't forget the President's Cup is presented to the Division whose members gain the highest number of points in all classes.

The Show Committee would also welcome **volunteers** who help to make the day so special. If you can help, and it would be ideal if we could have volunteers from every Division, please let your divisional secretary know in the first instance. Details of the volunteers will then be passed to Pauline Tidmas, the Show Secretary, who will contact volunteers with details of the day.

Also, Jim McNeill requires some 6 to 8 helpers on Thursday 30 August at 1pm to put out tables and stands. If you are able to help in this vital task of setting up the marquee, please contact him on 01708 765808, mobile 07743 310143  
email: jimandliz44@aol.co.uk

Michael Webb  
Chair of the Show Committee

## ***Things you might not know (or don't want to know) about stings, but I'm going to tell you anyway ....***

A rigorous academic study from a guy (it had to be a guy) rated the pain levels of honey bee stings on different parts of his body. In a very controlled manner he stung himself all over his body and gave marks out of 10 for the pain level of each sting. The 'neutral', middle sting level was a sting to the inner forearm. I'd agree, reasonably painful. Anyway the most painful place recorded was the nostril with a 9/10. The least painful was the skull with 2.5/10.

You have to ask yourself why?

He stung himself in 24 different places – 3 times in each place to average the result. If you're thinking that he'd be desensitised to stings over this time, don't worry. In the 3 months prior to the experiment he was stung 5 times a day to take this into account.

If you want to read the details of this work, visit <https://peerj.com/articles/338/>



If the honeybee sting didn't contain any poison, it's unlikely you'd feel it sting you! This hasn't gone unnoticed by the medical research community who have been modelling hypodermic needles on the shape of stings so they don't hurt so much as they enter the skin, and probably just as importantly, do not flex or bend so they go to where they should do.

A close up view of a honeybee sting shows that it's serrated, making it easier to go in, and being serrated, meaning that once it's in, it's not going to come out. But that's only the half of it. Literally. The sting is actually two serrated halves, each side with independent muscles that push each side of the sting down in turn while the other half anchors it, driving the sting deeper into your skin.

Quite impressive really. The poison starts to be injected from the second the sting is in your skin until it runs out or you scrape it off, so don't hang about. You probably don't want to put it to the test, but the amount of poison needed to kill you is actually quite a number of stings. Apparently 20 stings per Kg of body weight would do it. For me that is about 1,600 stings. Not going to take that risk. Obviously, if you are allergic and susceptible to anaphylaxis then one sting might be enough.

Barry Crabtree - Ipswich & East Suffolk Beekeeping Association - via ebees

Early one morning, Brian supplied a suitable colony of bees, which we installed in the hive, much to the delight of the Museum Staff and other onlookers! After five minutes, they were seen exploring their surroundings. The queen hid from the light for a while, but soon came out to take charge and to lay-up the new comb we had given her, at a rate of one egg every fourteen seconds.

## Conclusion

The time and effort spent in planning and specifying the new obs' hive has paid off handsomely. By any measure, the finished hive is stunning and gives the public a great insight to the interworking of a bee hive. Liaising with the Museum staff, Brian arranged for the new obs' hive to be incorporated into their week-long *'Show Me the Honey'* event held during the schools' Whitsun half term, which resulted in over 1500 children plus parents visiting the hive over five days. The event was ably supported by twelve members of Chelmsford Division.

Our thanks go to the Museum staff for their help and encouragement and, of course, to Touch Carpenters for such a beautiful, new, oak hive.

If anyone would like a copy of the drawings or more details, I would be happy to provide them.

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## Chelmsford's 100 year celebrations continue .....

### An evening at Chelmsford Museum, Oaklands Park to launch the reinstated Observation Hive.

Guests and members were greeted with a glass of champagne and delicious canapés, prepared and served by Pam Hughes and her team.

The Museum was positively buzzing with people intermingling and admiring the new observation hive as well as our Centenary display of beekeeping equipment and information.



Honorary guests for the evening included the Mayor of Chelmsford, the Cabinet Minister for Museums, the President of the Essex Beekeepers' Association and a number of Museum staff and Friends of the Museum. On behalf of Chelmsford Beekeepers, Brian Spencer explained how the new observation hive had been incorporated into the Museum's refurbishment programme.



He took the opportunity to thank Richard Alabone for his work in designing the hive and the Museum staff for providing the opportunity to work closely with the Council and the local community.

A number of speeches followed, in which the membership were thanked for their support during the Museum's recent week-long *'Where's the Honey?'* event and the importance of the observation

hive as an educational tool was reiterated. We also learnt that the original observation hive was installed by a local beekeeper, after Ted Hooper had been called to remove a swarm from Oaklands Park, some fifty years ago.



Jon Beasley - Chelmsford Division

*[more about the Obs' Hive on p10]*



## What is the Native UK Bee ?

Age. They became isolated and adapted to the different conditions they found themselves in. *Apis mellifera mellifera* are native to the whole of Northern Europe north of the Alps from the Atlantic to the Urals, where they evolved in isolation, having been cut off by such natural barriers as mountains, water and ice.

In 1902, some beekeepers in the Isle of Wight started to report colony losses due to a mysterious illness which came to be known as Isle of Wight disease. According to contemporary accounts, not all of which are reliable or without vested interest, for the next twenty years this disease spread through the whole of the UK decimating colonies and leading such a notable beekeeper as Brother Adam to declare that Dark European Honey Bee was virtually extinct in the British Isles.

In order to replenish the Nation's honey bee stocks large numbers of colonies were imported. These were largely but not exclusively, *A m carnica*, the Carniolan honey bee which is native to Slovenia, southern Austria, and parts of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, and *A m lingustica*, the Italian honey bee, which is native to the Italian peninsula. By the 1950s it was generally thought that almost all the honey bees in the UK were hybrids of the various imported species.

From the late 1960s onwards, various initiatives have been launched to re-establish the Dark Bee, but obtaining pure or fairly pure stocks to breed from has proved difficult and wing morphology, a means of identifying Dark Bee characteristics, has proved to be unreliable. However, DNA analyses of honey bees in mainland Britain are showing that in areas without imports of bees, 50% of the bees genes are from the native species.

This is probably not too surprising as native drones will fly and mate in cooler and less clement weather so that, over time, there is a strong natural selection towards the native bee. Also, native type bees are well adapted

It is fairly certain that the Dark European Honey Bee, *Apis mellifera mellifera*, has been native to mainland Britain since before the closing of the Channel Land-bridge, when sea levels rose following the last Ice

poor advertisement for beekeeping.

We generally had to remove the hive two or three times a year to clean the glass, or to replace the queen. Over the years, we have had to supply 2 or 3 new colonies due to queen failures or wax moth. On one occasion, I inadvertently supplied a colony which later had to be destroyed due to AFB, but fortunately the AFB did not appear at the Museum!

### The New Design Obs' Hive

Having decided to specify our own design, we incorporated a number of improvements and changes, which would both modernise the appearance of the hive and make it easier to maintain.

Specifically, the top feeder was covered with a wooden box; ventilation holes and grilles were put in the uprights and the double-glazed glass panes were increased in size to cover the whole of the comb area. It was also decided to change from National to Commercial frames, which dramatically increased the viewing area for the public.

### Manufacture and Installation

Having visited a number of local carpenters, we selected 'Touch Bespoke Joinery' in Rettendon to build our hive. One morning, we took along my sketches and the old hive and, after much discussion, Touch made a few changes and suggestions and produced CAD drawings which we subsequently approved for the build to proceed.

Three weeks later, we collected a perfectly finished bee hive and stand in light European Oak, which was a delight to behold. We were frankly astounded by the quality and care that had been taken by the carpenter. Back at the Museum, a hole was drilled through the exterior wall, sloping at a 15° angle, to take a plastic pipe which then had to be adapted to suit the rectangular entrance of the obs' hive itself. I fitted a portcullis door and made a new entrance with a clear Perspex top to allow the bees to be observed when walking between the hive and the outside wall.



## Chelmsford Museum Gains a New Observation Hive

Richard Alabone — Chelmsford Division

As many of you will be aware, there has been an observation hive in the Chelmsford Museum in Oaklands Park, Chelmsford for at least 50 years or so, although nobody remembers its origin. As part of their major refurbishment programme, the Museum asked Chelmsford Beekeepers for their help in replacing the rather decrepit old hive with a new and improved version. We were especially pleased to help, as this gave us an opportunity to work even more closely with the local Council, which was one of our Division's objectives in this, our Centenary year.

Our first task was to search for a suitable supplier, which we thought would be easy. However, Google soon told us that there were only 2 or 3 suppliers in the UK and none of them could provide a hive that would meet our particular requirements, so we quickly came to the decision to find a local carpenter to make the hive.

At this point, Brian Spencer and I decided to divide the task ahead of us: Brian was to negotiate with the supplier of the hive, provide the bees and to liaise with the Museum/Council staff; whilst I developed the obs' hive drawings and specifications.

### The Old Hive

Many people in Chelmsford and beyond will have fond memories of being taken to see the bees at Oaklands Park Museum as a child. I have looked after the bees during the last 20 years or so and for the last 10 years, Brian Spencer has worked with me to try and maintain a healthy but compact colony at all times.

The original hive was designed to take 14x12 frames and had later been modified to accommodate National frames. To prevent bees from escaping into the Museum, there was a portcullis arrangement on the hive itself and there was also a metal cover to stop bees coming from outside into the Museum at times when the hive was removed.

The hive had a feeder jar on the top, for winter use, and the whole thing was on a rickety stand. Over the years, it had become worse for wear and was a

for survival in our conditions so natural selection will favour their dominance. So, if we stop importing bees, in time, we may get back to something like the lost Dark Bee.

Although the native British Black Bee was said to be extinct in England by about 1920 due to the ravages of the so-called Isle of Wight Disease, it was also said that only through importations from Europe could bees be kept going in England. However, writing forty or so years later, Beowulf Cooper in his book *'The Honeybees of the British Isles'* describes many types of local British bee.

As mentioned a second demise of the local British bee was announced following the arrival of the varroa mite (ironically through imported bees), which has been a scourge of our bees since 1992. We are said once more to be dependent on imports. However, experience suggests the contrary. Beekeepers in several areas have bees in their hives that show characteristics indicative of the native bee.

*Courtesy of Lune Valley Community Beekeepers - via ebees*

### An interesting fact -

A tad short of **67,000** honey jars were delivered in June for you to fill with glorious Essex Honey.

Thanks to Jean Smye for organising this annual cost saving operation (and her helpers).

## Tiptree Foods Competition

**Bees for Development** has been supporting bees and beekeepers world-wide for 25 years. To celebrate they are offering **Birthday Giveaways** every month throughout 2018.

Last month's prize was a hamper - perfect for summer picnics! A beautiful hamper, filled with the most delicious selection of luxury preserves, chutneys and treats, all presented in a smart wicker picnic basket. The hamper was kindly donated by Wilkin & Sons Ltd.

For a chance to win a superb gift in August, simply enter your details at:

[www.beesfordevelopment.org/giveaway/index.html](http://www.beesfordevelopment.org/giveaway/index.html)

**Bees for development** 

## EBKA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018

### **'Bees and Well Being'**

The theme of our conference is the ways in which bees enrich our lives and make a difference to our world. Bees promote biodiversity by providing essential pollination for a wide range of crops. Honey is becoming a powerful new weapon in the battle against hospital-acquired infections. Being around bees can raise a person's self-esteem and the educational benefits are now being recognised.

Let's learn more from our three speakers.

#### **Speakers:**

#### **Bunny Campione, Daws Hall Trust**

*Many of you will know Bunny from the Antiques Roadshow, but you may not be aware that she is a fellow beekeeper.*

#### **Dr Rowena Jenkins, Swansea University Medical School, Department of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases.**

*Rowena is a lecturer in microbiology.*

#### **Chris Newenham, Managing Director, Wilkin & Sons Ltd**

*Chris will be speaking about the importance of bees as pollinators and the collaboration between beekeepers and agriculturists.*

#### Date and venue:

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10 - 4pm

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*Cash:*

**Cash to Braintree Committee members when visiting Divisional meetings**

**(a ticket will be given immediately)**

## **Keep Your Smoker Clean & Hygienic .....**

Smokers get very sooted and can benefit from a regular good clean. The following method was found on the website: [beekeepinglikeagirl.com](http://beekeepinglikeagirl.com) It takes about thirty minutes of active work and between six and ten hours for overnight soaking. You will need:-

Small flathead screwdriver or hive tool, Hot water,  
Distilled white vinegar, A large bucket with handle,  
Twine and tape

### **Step One - Scrape and Chip**

Scrape or chip the hard soot off the inside of the smoker with your hive tool or some other useful implement. It comes off in flakes or small chunks. Keep at it until most of the soot is gone, but don't worry if there is a little bit left. It will come off in the next step – soaking. If your smoker has a perforated removable base plate at the bottom, pop it out, so you can scrape the very bottom of the chamber, too.

### **Step Two - Soak**

First, protect the bellows from accidental water intrusion – cover the bellows' air tube with small pieces of tape. Next, use twine to be able to suspend the smoker in the bucket. The bellows will need to be just above the eventual water level. Pour a cup of white vinegar into the bottom of the bucket. Then fill the bucket with hot water until the smoker is mostly submerged. Check to make sure that water is not touching the bellows' air tube. Don't forget to drop the fire base plate into the water, too. Soak for 6-10 hours.

### **Step Three - Wipe**

After 6-10 hours of soaking, remove the smoker from the bucket. Using a cloth, wipe the smoker clean, both inside and out. You may need your hive tool or screwdriver to knock off some softened thicker chunks of soot. When done, your smoker should be mostly gleaming (and more hygienic), but keep in mind that it won't be perfectly like new. Some soot stains just stick!

What you burn in your smoker also makes a difference, both to the soot and to the smell of the smoke. When smoke is made from typical materials such as wood shavings or pellets, the smell can be unpleasant or like a barbecue. But when the smoke is made from forest-floor pine needles or spicy embers of sage, the smoky aroma is sweet and pleasant like incense. So treat your bees, experiment and add items such as citrus peels from your kitchen to improve the aroma and test how it affects the soot.

*courtesy of Wimbledon BKA - via ebees*