

## Chair Annual Report for AGM 2020



Beekeeping is an enterprise that needs to work closely both with nature and our weather and seasonal conditions. These now, it seems, are changing. Winter 2019/20 has offered the UK extreme wind and flooding, but less snow and ice (at the time of writing at least). In north Essex we have rescued roofs from hives and observed wet woodwork on our traditional hives as well as the bees flying out in what looked like inappropriate weather. Oxalic acid treatment was therefore late and found the bees in very loose clusters. When brood is present, this treatment is much less efficacious and a close eye for signs of varroa is needed in the spring. So, in these times of climate change, all beekeepers need to analyse the microclimate of their apiaries and make decisions about the suitability of their hives and practices looking to the future. Are the days of a cold dry Essex in winter months disappearing?

Reviewing 2019/20, we have had a year of sorting and steadying at County level. Nevertheless, we still have difficulty in recruiting volunteers from our near 1,000 strong community to cover essential roles on the CEC including Treasurer, Education Sec and Members Sec. All members have something they can contribute at some stage in their beekeeping life to County or Division and I urge you to consider what you can do! Paras Shah (Epping Forest) took over as Treasurer this year and has done all the hard work of learning the ropes over the year. Thank you, Paras. It is such a great shame for the CEC that your circumstances make it impossible to attend future meetings.

The nature of the Members Sec position is fluid currently, as we roll out eR2, the BBKA's electronic membership system. Special thanks go to Garth Milford (Saffron Walden) and Jan Tutton (Chelmsford) for working so hard on this project – not least in helping the nine Divisional Members Secretaries to make the transition to online membership of the BBKA/EBKA. This is an ongoing venture, with more to be done to get the most out of the new system. When fully functional and adapted to our liking, it will be really useful, so please Divisions, persevere!

The changes to the Essex Beekeeper magazine came into effect this January. Divisions are now able to choose whether or not, or indeed, how many printings of the magazine to make. The financial saving is redistributed to the divisions to use as they please. Over recent years, the printing of the magazine has been efficiently provided by Ann Cushion of Southend Division and grateful thanks go to Ann for this excellent service. Also, to Michael Elliott (Southend), who reliably distributed the printed copies to the Divisions. Our new magazine Editor, Robert Silver (Maldon), is extending his reporting service, with effect from this January. The eR2 facility will be used so that up to date information in Newsletters will

reach members in addition to the magazine. The county policies are in place with thanks to all trustees, but in particular the Governance sub-committee, Ted Grad (Chair), myself, Paul Wiltshire (Romford) and Vanessa Wilkinson (Saffron Walden), who will continue to review all in rota. These will soon be up on the website. Vanessa also deserves a special mention for co-ordinating the reviewing of the Trustees Handbook – a massive task. This is almost complete and will also go on the website. Tony Rand, (CEC General Sec., Colchester) with the valuable support of John Rhodes (Saffron Walden), has been working very hard on the proposal to convert EBKA into a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). He will be putting forward all the positive aspects to members at the upcoming AGM on 7<sup>th</sup> March. Finally, I'm pleased to report that Essex's proposal at the Annual Delegates' Meeting of BBKA in January 'that the BBKA reapply to be represented at Apimondia, the international conference of beekeepers' was adopted.

The Divisions have enjoyed a good year of beekeeping events and I've been privileged to visit all of you bar one, whom I'm invited to in March. Remember, every Essex member is welcome at all the Divisional meetings. Enthusiasm and new ideas abound!

Education, both for our members and the public is very important to us, indeed it is part of our charitable mandate. The interest in taking up beekeeping as a hobby continues and all of our Divisions provide excellent Beginners' Courses which were extremely well attended in 2019. In order to share ideas and good practice, representatives from every division attended a Train the Trainers Workshop this February. The variety of new members' interests and needs amongst the divisions was apparent and the diverse ways the trainers cater for these different beginners was inspiring. In addition, everyone learnt a few new tricks to teach the craft of beekeeping. Steph Green (Saffron Walden) has completed her first year as Exam Secretary and we have had a good batch of successful BBKA exam candidates this year. Well done to all! The Annual Conference, hosted this year by Saffron Walden Division was really outstanding. The speakers, Will Messenger, Ged Marshall, Dr Jonas Goldman and Prof. Steve Martin were exceptional. It is great to be able to invite some names that wouldn't be possible at Divisional level – the Annual Conference is over and above our usual meetings. However, please don't assume from its name that it is a starchy affair. Every effort is made to find something of interest for everyone. Chelmsford are organising the next conference on 31<sup>st</sup> October – look out for details, hopefully coming soon! The 2019 annual Bee Health Day was hosted by Romford and we were treated to excellent facilities to support the lectures and practical demonstrations. This supremely insightful day provided by our Regional Bee Inspectors is a rare opportunity of seeing brood disease face to face as well as enjoying other health issue updating sessions. Incidentally, our Bee Health Secretaries are still searching for a venue for the annual Bee Health Day in June 2020. To have the day in your corner of Essex means that many more of your Division will be able to attend & benefit. Somewhere in the south east of the County is up for volunteering! You don't need to supply the quality premises which we enjoyed at Romford – a village hall and a training apiary is fine. Many thanks to Jim McNeill (Romford) for organising these sessions over many years. Katy Langley & Salma Attan (Epping Forest) have

taken over this year and expanded the new role of Bee Health Secretary vacated by Ian Nichols. We look forward to the Ted Hooper lecture on 21<sup>st</sup> March, with a strong bee health theme! Also, following the impending threat from the Asian hornet, AHAT (Asian Hornet Action Team) representatives from each Division have been recruited.

Our major interface with the public at County level is the Essex Honey Show. This was held at the Orsett Show again in 2019 and was a very successful event. Thanks to all the committee and especially Michael Webb (Romford) and Pauline Tidmas (Harlow). There were 400 exhibits and the President's Shield for Division with the most points was won by Romford – many congratulations! Despite the weather, necessitating the withdrawal of the live bee demonstrations at the hives, the public flocked to see the other exhibits and ask our beekeepers tricky questions. Please do volunteer next year if you haven't in the past – it's great fun and you don't have to be an expert – many prospective beekeepers like to hear from people who have recently taken up the hobby.

Standing down from her Presidency and Membership Secretary role at this AGM, Pat Allen must have carried out almost every role on the CEC (as well as at Romford). It is the hard work of members like Pat, who enable EBKA not only to survive, but progress and remain relevant for beekeepers and the public. We thank you Pat for your service to the administration at CEC and of course your expertise in beekeeping both in teaching and examining. This sounds as though Pat is leaving Essex! Not the case, but merely handing over the presidency to another with a hard-working past for EBKA. 2019 has been the year for upgrading the president's chain of office so that we have enough bars for a few more presidents in the future!

This Annual report is for our EBKA members. A relevant and compliant report for the Charities Commission will be made after the AGM.

Jane Ridler

CEC Chair, February 2020