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THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



Some of the exhibits at the Essex Show, Barleylands. September 2008

Monthly Magazine of the E.B.K.A

No.526

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**October
2008**

Registered Charity number 1031419

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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Derek Webber

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Penny Learmonth, The Watch House, Watch house Green, Felsted CM6 3EF

Ann Tillbrook, Glen Tanar Lodge, 137 Blenheim Chase, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 3BX

Divisional Contacts

To contact a regional division:

Braintree: Nobby Clark, 01277 220561

Chelmsford: Jean Smye, 07731856361

Colchester: Lydia Geddes, 01206 392226

DH & Maldon: Nan Field, 01621 773297

Southend: David Blackwood, 01702 207078

Harlow: Paul Weeks, 01279 413326

Romford: Pat Allen, 01708 220897

Saffron Walden: Jane Ridler, 01279 718111

Epping Forest: Ted Gradosielski 01992 890986

Essex Beekeeper's Magazine

Editor: Howard Gilbert, Glencairn, Eastside, Boxted, Colchester CO4 5QS

email editor@ebka.org

Advertising, Distribution and Mailing Secretary: Mary Heyes, email advertising@ebka.org
tel. 01702 588009

Web site: Richard Ridler email treasurer@ebka.org tel. 01279 718111

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

Regional Bee Inspectors for EBKA

Epping Forest and Romford Divisions (excluding Brentwood):

Alan Byham email a.byham@csf.gov.uk tel. 01306 611016

All other Divisions:

Andy Wattam email a.wattam@csf.gov.uk tel. 01522 789726

Miss Avey was a Ministry employee who for some of her time acted as Foul Brood Officer. She was widely known and well connected: as some of our local farmers knew her well, she must have taught sessions at Writtle Agricultural College. On her death her beekeeping effects were auctioned and the Miss Avey award set up in her memory as well as a novice class at the National Honey Show.

The following 32 passed the Basic Assessment.

Paul Abbott – Southend, Lynn Brown – Colchester, Kevin Cook – Epping, Ann Cushion – Southend, Elizabeth Davies – Romford, Robert Egger (Miss Avey Award) – Saffron Walden, Sally Freeman – Saffron Walden, Edward Gradosielski (Miss Avey Award) – Epping, Jay Grater – Romford, Janet Hall – Romford, Craig Hiron – Saffron Walden, Robert Hyde – Romford, Jenny Johns – Epping, Jonathan Longstaff – Epping, David Learmonth – Saffron Walden, Malcolm Legg – Saffron Walden, Tiffany Levi – Epping, Peter Madden – Romford, Catherine Miller – Colchester, Trevor Parrish – Saffron Walden, Luke Phipps (Miss Avey Award) – Saffron Walden, Ruth Phipps – Saffron Walden, James Pimblett – Saffron Walden, Jane Ridler – Saffron Walden, Richard Ridler – Saffron Walden, Michael Robertson – Colchester, Sharon Rout – Colchester, Selwyn Runacres – Saffron Walden, James Scobie – Colchester, Audrey Shead – Saffron Walden, Rodney Smart – Colchester, Sarah Vickery – Southend.

General Beekeeping Husbandry Assessment

Marlene Harris - Southend

Module 6: Marlene Harris – Southend, Eileen Marrable – Romford (who also gained her Intermediate Certificate with Credit after previously passing Modules 1, 2, 3 and another module)

Module 7: Peter Durston (with Credit) – Colchester

Module 8: Howard Gilbert (with Credit) – Colchester, Peter Rose (with Credit) – Colchester.

Well done! Will next year be even better?

Margaret Thomas (Essex Examinations Secretary).

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The fumes are heavier than air and will destroy Nosema spores, EFB bacteria and wax moth eggs, and will protect comb against wax moth adults. Remember however that 80% acetic acid is a hazardous substance. To protect yourself, avoid inhaling the fumes, wear goggles and gloves, and wash off any splash with plenty of water. Acetic acid will also eat into metal and concrete. Metal ends should be removed from frames and metal runners covered in Vaseline. Fumigation is not a job to be done on the patio, or in the shed where wire queen excluders are kept.

Winter precautions continued in future articles.

BBKA Assessment and Examinations in Essex in 2008

This year most Divisions have made a special effort to enable their members to improve their knowledge of beekeeping, and to demonstrate their achieve by passing a number of the BBKA examinations.

Saffron Walden arranged three sessions on basic beekeeping, which many from Braintree attended. They then arranged two venues and assessors so that their members could undergo the Basic Assessment. Colchester, Epping, Romford and Southend continued to tutor basic sessions and put forward candidates for assessment.

One member from Southend passed the General Husbandry Assessment, where an assessor visits the candidate in their own apiary to assess their standard of beekeeping and of handling honey products.

Colchester and Southend ran theory classes and a number of candidates sat for Modules 6 (Honeybee behaviour), 7 (Selection and breeding of honeybees), and 8 (Honeybee management and history).

The result was that we had a record number of passes in the Basic assessment and good uptake and passes in the other examinations.

The certificates were issued to successful candidates at the Essex Conference hosted by Colchester at Langham. All candidates were reimbursed £10 for a successful pass: in addition, the top three in the Basic Assessment received the Miss Avey award of £25.



October 2008

Braintree	31 Oct. Friday 8pm in the Constitutional Club Great Square. A talk by Mr P. Beale from Braintree Wildlife & Conservation Management.
Chelmsford	20 Oct. Monday 7.30pm to 9pm at Trinity Hall Methodist Church Rainsford Rd. Chelmsford. A demonstration of the Virtual Hive.
Colchester	25 Oct. Saturday 11am to 4pm Wax Day at Rowan Cottage, Tendring. £4 per person includes homemade soup for lunch and all teas and coffees. Beeswax and wick available to make candles by dipping or using moulds. Pay for materials at cost price. Beginners welcome. Phone Penny Barker to book on 01255 830713.
DH & Maldon	11 Oct. Saturday with Venue and time TBA. Video session and display of Divisional library bee books. Contact Nan Field 01621 773297.
Epping Forest	16 Oct. Thursday 7.30pm at Chingford Horticultural Hall, Larkshall Rd. Chingford. An evening of Microscopy.
Harlow	2 Oct. Thursday 7.45pm at Kings Church, Red Willows.
Romford	18 Oct. Saturday at St. Mark's Church. Honey Show being judged by Oonagh Gabriel. All entries to be delivered between 1.00 to 2.15pm with show beginning at 2.30pm. This to be followed by the Annual Supper from 5.30pm.
Saffron Waldon	29 Oct Wednesday 8pm at Rundle House, Hatfield Broad Oak CM22 7HE. A social evening by kind permission of Jane & Richard Ridler. Bring along your favourite literary 'Bee extracts' to share.
Southend	22 Oct Wednesday 7.30pm at Hawkwell Village Hall. A 'Fun Honey Show', please bring your entries.
National Events	30. Oct Thursday to 1 Nov. Saturday National Honey Show at St George's College, Weybridge, Surrey KT15 2QS. Thursday 2pm to 6pm; Friday 9.30am to 6pm; Saturday 9.30am to 4.45pm.

November 2008

Braintree	28 Nov. <i>Friday</i> 8pm at the Constitutional Club. Great Square Braintree. Open Forum discussion on 'Review of the Year'.
Chelmsford	15 Nov. <i>Saturday</i> 7.30pm to 9pm at Trinity Hall Methodist Church Rainsford Rd. Chelmsford for the Divisional Supper.
Colchester	16 Nov. <i>Sunday</i> Annual Sunday Lunch—more information to follow. 17 Nov. <i>Monday</i> 7.30pm at The Venture Centre, Lawford CO11 2JG. A talk by Willie Robson of Chain Bridge Honey Farm. Berwick-on-Tweed (www.chainbridgehoney.co.uk).
DH & Maldon	8 Nov. <i>Saturday</i> Planning next year's programme of events with a display of Division's library books. RSVP to Nan 01621 773297.
Epping Forest	20 Nov <i>Thursday</i> 7.30pm at Chingford Horticultural Hall, Larkshall Rd., Chingford, London.E.4; the subject 'Making Mead'.
Harlow	6 Nov. <i>Thursday</i> 7.45pm King's Church, Red Willows.
Romford	7 Nov <i>Friday</i> 8pm at Chadwick Hall, Main Rd. Gidea Park; the subject 'Birding in Poland' by Pat Allen.
Saffron Waldon	No details submitted
Southend	26 Nov <i>Wednesday</i> 7.30pm Social evening.

Isolation starvation is the second type: the bees die surrounded by an area of empty comb, seemingly unable to cross over to neighbouring combs or areas of comb that still contain stores. Whether the colony was not strong enough, or the weather was too cold for them to move is debatable, but there is little the beekeeper can do to try to prevent it other than feed enough syrup and on time. So make sure you fed enough or you may need to top up with candy early next year.

For the beginner a useful guide on how much to feed is as follows. Once the honey has been removed, the amount of stored honey left in the brood chamber needs to be evaluated. A full British Standard brood frame contains about 5 pounds of honey, a full Commercial brood frame about 7. Colonies should be wintered with between 40 and 60 pound of stored honey. Too much is better than too little: dead bees do not bring a honey crop next year.

Storing equipment

Once the supers above the brood nest have removed and extracted, they can be returned for cleaning. We generally remove the cleaned supers and stack them in the apiary carefully so that bees (and mice) cannot enter them, with screen boards top and bottom of the stack and roof on top. PDB (para dichloro benzene) crystals were previously used to protect against wax moth infestation. This is no longer legal as it has been detected in honey. Storing supers outdoors in the relative cool gives some protection as wax moth prefer warm dark sheds. Using screen boards at the bottom and top help. Wax moth prefers comb that has had brood in it - the pupal cocoons and pollen provide more nourishment than pure wax. Freezing comb will kill wax moth in all stages, but is hardly a practical solution for most of us, although I have seen a cooled container stacked with spare equipment at a beefarmers establishment.

We have tried stacking supers 'wet', ie storing them after extraction without first returning them to the bees for cleaning. I have found the remnants of honey develop a winey smell, ie the honey ferments, and if stored outdoors the supers are liable to be robbed if there is even the smallest access hole. An advantage of storing them wet is that bees enter them more readily in the spring.

Any spare brood frames should be fumigated with acetic acid. Again make a bee proof stack and place the acid, 100ml or just under ¼ pint at 80% strength, on an absorbent pad (baby's disposable nappy or old absorbent rag) above the top bars of each of the brood chambers or, if the stack contains supers where brood has been reared, above each pair of supers.

... Continued on page 14 ...

TOPICAL TIPS FOR OCTOBER 2008

Bedding Down for Winter

Margaret Thomas

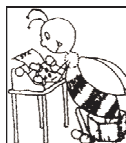
This autumn reminds me of those when we started beekeeping in the 70's. The received wisdom then had it that there was little nectar income in Essex after the end of July. The apparent scarcity of forage had a number of reasons. They included very dry summer weather causing the predominantly clay soil to harden and crack: and intensive farming leaving little space for wild flowers. In long-established suburbia, where gardens are larger than modern gardens and plants are watered regularly, our bees continued to collect nectar into mid August. We removed the honey around mid August and fed the bees fed down by the 9th September. Autumns in those days were more often cold and damp than they have been recently. If feeding was left until after that date, the colder weather would stop the bees taking the syrup and storing it effectively, leading to dysentery. Well, this year is just such a year. And somehow we have to fit in the Apiguard treatment to minimise varroa mites.

Now that we are in October, the bees should have already been fed down and given their first application of Apiguard. Two weeks after the first dose is the time to give the second.

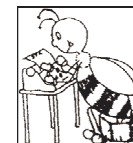
There is no point in using Bayvarol or Apistan as it is almost certain that the mites in Essex are resistant to these synthetic pyrethroids. Apiguard is a thymol based product suspended in a gel. Each dose comes in a tray, which should be placed on the top bars with the gel upwards. The thymol will evaporate and, being denser than air, and will sink through the hive. The gel should not touch comb, so the trays should not be inverted. An eke or frame with the same outside dimensions as the hive and about half an inch high serves to raise the crown board and allows bees access to the gel. The bees will remove the gel over the two week treatment period. The second dose should then be applied and left in place for a further two weeks: the tray and any remains should then be removed. The fumes damage varroa, but not bees, though they do not like it. The second dose should hit those varroa lurking in brood cells during the first treatment. The application is temperature dependant and the temperature should be over 15°C.

Feeding bees

Just a reminder on feeding bees. One of the major causes of winter losses is starvation. This fact was verified by surveys carried out by the BBKA in the 80's. There are two types of starvation. One occurs where there is not enough honey in the hive and the bees are unable to forage to replenish the stores in the winter. This is unforgivable in a managed hive.



Editorial



Harvest time is here again and for some it has been a good season but for others it has not and it is thought that the inconsistent weather may not necessarily be to blame.

For some time now changes have been planned for the magazine, which start this month. Howard Gilbert from Colchester division has joined me and he has updated the layout, whilst I have collated the articles for this issue. We do hope you like and enjoy it.

This is the last magazine that I will be involved with and I would like to thank you all for your support, comments and articles during my time as Editor. Your help has been invaluable and encouraged me to work hard for you. I will still be working with bees but in a much more relaxed way which will be better as I will now have more time for the bees.

Looking forward to seeing you all again in the near future and learning from you. Thank you...Ann Tillbrook

Whilst not strictly part of the editorial, the Essex Show at Barleylands must be commented upon: What a wonderful success this was. Congratulations to all the beekeepers who worked all year towards this professional weekend and then worked so hard throughout it. Essex is very fortunate to have such a dedicated team of people to promote beekeeping, the sale of honey and most of all the care of our bees. The weather came up trumps too on both days.

This year saw the highest number of entrants in the show so far. The public are much more aware of the predicament of bees and more new beekeepers are coming forward due to, not only the work of senior beekeepers but also the increase in the media coverage.



On the left, Jim McNeill, Romford, who has prepared all the entry coded labels and prepared and presented all the entries for the Judge at the show. In the middle Pat Allen, Romford. Chairman of CEC and Secretary of the BBKA. On the Right, Vi Taylor, Braintree, who won the Blue Ribbon of the Show for her cake of beeswax and is the Prize Distributor.

Federation of Irish Beekeepers: Summer School 2008 at Gormanston County Meath. A summary of events sent by David Blackwood

The event was held at a Franciscan boys boarding college. During the six days beekeepers could listen to lectures at advanced, intermediate and preliminary level. There were also workshops from Tuesday to Friday at the same time. Some beekeepers took their examinations and one beekeeper, Tom Prendergust, went through the ordeal of participating in the Lecturer's exam. He was able to choose his own subject, which was 'Nuc production—Why and How?'. He also had to speak for up to 30 minutes. Then the three examiners asked him two question each on his subject. He then prepared for 15 minutes a 10 minute talk on colony Collapse Disorder, which he had not had advanced warning. Again the three examiners asked him two questions each. I was pleased when he was awarded his certificate at the closing ceremony as I thought he deserved it.



The main guest lecturer was Professor Susan W. Cobey of the University of California and her main topics were queen rearing, bee genetics and instrumental insemination. She showed us a DVD, which demonstrated the apparatus used and the method. Dr. Mary Coffey should have given an advanced talk on 'Varroa and its Implications', but pulled out and our Margaret Thomas gave this talk in her place. I believe it was warmly appreciated but I was told very firmly not to attend this lecture and so I attended the lecture, at intermediate level, given by Dr. Lorna Brown on 'Important glands of the Honeybee'.

Another very interesting talk was given by Sam Baird, an optician, and his subject was 'Seeing Bees Better'. The talk was given at advanced level and again as a workshop.

During the course there was a honey show, a honey queen was chosen and a group photograph was taken on the steps in front of the college. A coach tour was also arranged to Knockabbey Castle. We saw a Tulip tree which had been planted in approx. 1650. This huge tree is said to be one of the largest girthed Tulip trees in these islands. It puts the one in Priory Park, Prittlewell to shame, as it is no-where as large.

The Summer Course is being held next year at the same place (and same time of year). I can recommend it very highly as an interesting and informative time where you will make many new friends. And the photo? Present are three of the four Essex contingent: Margaret and Dick Thomas with Clive de Bruyn—the missing member is me, the photographer and author, David Blackwood!

Recipes where honey makes a difference

Simple dressing/quick marinade

1 tbs. honey softened in microwave

2 tsp. mustard, Dijon or wholegrain

1 lemon or lime, juice and zest

Oil of choice, sunflower or olive

*Place honey, mustard, juice and zest in a mixing bowl, you will need to vigorously whisk these together to amalgamate, do not rush this bit.

*Whisk in oil, drop by drop (work those muscles, who needs gym membership!) until you have the consistency that you like.

*If using as a marinade, only a little oil needs to be added.

Note. This sounds a bit weird, but try adding a little water if everything becomes too thick. It really works.

Book of Commemoration.

The EBKA Book of Commemoration has become very out of date. I have volunteered to collate information so that we can bring it up to date and not forget the wonderful Essex members who have contributed to the craft of beekeeping. If you have any records within Divisions, Records and photos of your own, or would like to write about any past member, then please send me your contributions, Either by post or email.

Many thanks.

Penny Learmonth, (Saffron Walden Trustee)

Email: penny.learmonth@mail.ads14less.com

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Tales from the Hive

Beekeepers, when they meet, tend to discuss many aspects of caring for their bees. Also they will generally have an amusing tale to tell concerning events which happened when they visited their hives. This new section will hopefully manage to re-tell some of those tales—the purpose of this section is not to provide handy tips for beekeeping activities. This is a call to all beekeepers: please submit your true-life bee tales to share with the rest of Essex beekeepers! The only requirement is that the tale is one which actually happened to you and is not one you heard from another beekeeper. I will start the ball rolling.

Last winter, Jane (my wife) and I went for a walk in the early afternoon. It was one of those cold and dreary afternoons with temperatures hovering around 3C. Towards the end of our walk I decided to look in on the bees to see that the hives had not been damaged and everything was calm in the hives. The hives are in a gated field not far from our home. As we approached the hives Jane said that she would remain about 30 metres from them while I went and checked. I approached the hives and externally everything was at it should be; I put my ear to the hive to find out if there was any sound of buzzing indicating some activity—I heard nothing. I then went round to the front of the hive to look into the entrance. My face was right up to the entrance, so much so that my nose must have been peeking into the hive.

As I moved my nose from the entrance, without having spotted any signs of life, a bee shot out, ignored my nose and went straight towards the gated entrance of the field. Jane, who was still 30 metres away suddenly let out a shriek—she had been stung by that bee!

There I was with my nose in the entrance being left alone and Jane was attacked while standing 30 yards away. The bees obviously know who is the Daddy!

Please submit your tale to me at editor@ebka.org or by snail mail to the Editor. I was telling Richard Ridler about this new section and he has a tale which happened at the Essex County Show, so it really should be published now!

Standing by our demonstration hive at the Essex Country Show I was talking to a clean shaven man who was very enthusiastic about becoming a beekeeper. We spoke for at least ten minutes during which time a bee walked round around his head exploring every part. Many passers by commented; they both seemed to enjoy the experience! A natural beekeeper?

Local News

Time to Update Our Website

Our website is over ten years old and the time has come to give it a makeover. The importance of the web as a medium for sharing information and communicating continues to grow and is increasingly the first choice for many. If we are to attract younger generations into beekeeping we must present ourselves in the way they expect. Although our website does a good job for us it is laborious to update and rather basic in appearance; it reflects the time at which it was developed.

The CEC has formed a website working group to address our website. We decided to see what technical skills were available within our membership by advertising in the Essex Beekeeper.

As a result of the advert Steve Pointer (Southend) has very kindly volunteered his time and expertise to build us a brand new website based on the latest technology. Steve is an IT professional who took up beekeeping just last year. So far the website working group has chosen the technology to be used and defined the main topics to be covered.

The new site will focus on Beekeeping in Essex, it will not attempt to cover material available elsewhere on the web or to duplicate divisional websites.

Over the next couple of months Steve will build the site and we will define the style of the site and write the content. Hopefully our new website will be launched early in the New Year. I'll provide a progress report in a couple of months time.

Changes to the Magazine

Over the next few issues I will be introducing some changes to the magazine. In this issue there is a new section called 'Tales from the Hive' which I hope will result in many anecdotes being submitted for publishing. I will also be starting a section called 'Bee Legal' which will consider some of the legal issues arising from beekeeping. Hopefully, there will be a regular recipe section and a section touching upon research developments regarding the health of bees.

I would like to expand the Diary section with a greater commentary on what will be happening in each Division. Also, I would like to have a report on some of these events which could be included in the 'Local News' section each month. Any letters to the editor, comments, reports or suggestions can be emailed to me at editor@ebka.org or sent to my address found at the front of the magazine. Howard Gilbert

THE EBKA HONEY SHOW AT THE ESSEX COUNTRY SHOW BARLEYLANDS, SEPTEMBER 2008

This was our second year at Barleylands. The site was the same size as last year: approximately 70 foot by 90, with one 90-foot side running along a tree-lined brook, and the other 3 sides flanked by a model boats marquee, gypsy caravans and stationary engines. Mercifully, fewer working engines this year made for less noise. Our enclosures resembled last year's: a 60 x 40 foot marquee, and our 12'x12' bee screen - with plenty of spectator space on three sides.



The screen enclosed two hives of docile bees, ready to be opened hourly starting at 11am. At appropriate intervals, the public address loudspeakers urged the 30,000 visitors to come and watch.

Two A-frame boards directed visitors to 'the bees': and a large, smart new yellow banner, donated by a member of Southend, adorned the outside of the 60 x 40 foot marquee. Inside, the honey show tables occupied the central area and incorporated the main upright poles. The display was spectacular with 206 entries, and high entries in the 12 jar clear and set classes displaying a great variety of beekeepers own labels. The 'display of flowers' class brightened up the shelved row of jars. There were 17 entries for the fudge class, and the judge tasted them all. How she wasn't sick was a miracle. Around the sides of the marquee, candle rolling run by Roy and Jessie Cropley attracted a large crowd of children. Moving on to a display of old fashioned hives, bumble bee nests, wasp nests and a small section where one could make solitary bee nests by stuffing bamboo canes into short lengths of plastic down pipes. The honey-tasting table was next, with a variety of light, medium, dark and set honey to taste. Assistants manning the table manipulated the honey samples with deft fingers so as to avoid punters spilling honey on the table or dipping the same straw into the next sample. It proved a good opportunity to discuss different honeys and why honey granulates. Those manning the table had no idea of whose honey it was as the labels were obscured. This measure not only prevented helpers from promoting their own honey but also to spare customers the disappointment looking for a specific honey they had tasted only to find jars of it unavailable. As it was, we nearly ran out of honey on Saturday, so beekeepers brought in more on Sunday and some was taken from the 12 jar labelled displays at the end of the day. Recession? What recession? Visitors moving on round reached an observation hive, then the display boards with their professional pictures followed by the second observation hive. As usual these drew a large crowd.

An information table not only gave out information, but also collected contacts for those wishing to start beekeeping and signatures for those wishing to urge the Government to allocate more money to honeybee research. 39 enquires were made for further information about beekeeping and 18 enquired about a beginners course. Finally to the sales stand. We had the usual variety of honey in pound, 12oz and 8oz jars, cut comb, wax blocks, polish, creams, soap, fudge and candles. At the end of the show cakes were sold.

What made the show happen? Everyone who helped set out the tables and the displays, everyone who entered exhibits, and everyone who manned the various tables, observation and outdoor hives during the show. Thanks to everyone. But some need a special mention. Without Roy Hardwicke none of the stands, bee screen, kettles and many other items would have got from storage to the marquee: nor would they have been taken away at the end. Our current storage in an open barn at Great Leighs is not satisfactory: all items had to be washed, and those touching food were taken home to put through a dishwasher. The committee is looking into more suitable storage arrangements. Jim McNeill and Vi Taylor booked in the entries for showing, and Vi made sure we all got our prize money.

The sales table was ably managed by Richard Alebone and Helen Hardwicke and a number of assistants. Richard Ridler made sure we had enough money/change to cope with the sales. Security overnight was provided by Francis Potter, who slept in the marquee. And last but not least the caterers, Liz McNeill, Elizabeth Asmussen, and Pamela Balagot, who kept us all sane by providing a lunch table with the most edible goodies and a constant flow of tea and coffee. All the helpers whom I spoke to had enjoyed the days there and the public seemed to have a good time.



Can next year be even better? Yes it can. We hope to see many more beekeepers there next year, with a new record number of entries on the show bench. Thank you everyone.

Margaret Thomas (Show Chairperson)