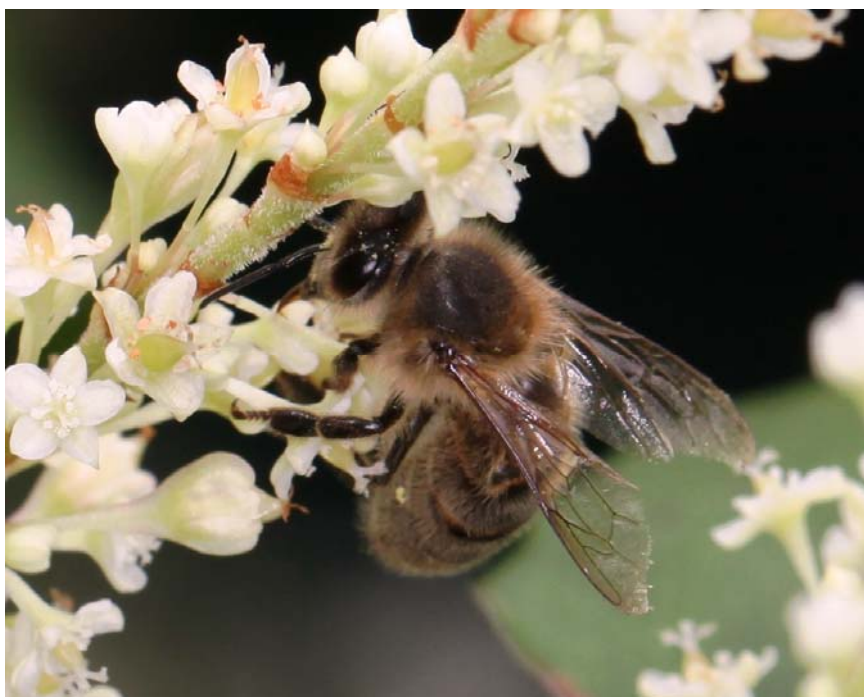


# THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



**'The well worn wings of a willing worker'**  
**Photo by Paul Abbott**

Monthly Magazine of the E.B.K.A

**No. 566**

[www.essexbeekeepers.com](http://www.essexbeekeepers.com)

**February  
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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.*

## February and March 2012

- 2 Feb. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. David Tyler gives a talk on spring management and pollen patties.
- 3 Feb. *Friday 7.15pm* **Saffron Walden** at Thaxted Guildhall CM6 2LA Divisional AGM followed by a Curry Night at the India Villa.
- 3 Feb. *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park RM2 5EL. A talk by Penny Crowder on 'Natural Beekeeping'.
- 3 Feb. *Friday 7.15pm* **Saffron Walden** at Dunmow Day Centre, Gt Dunmow, CM6 1AE. Annual dinner and Divisional AGM.
- 15 Feb. *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Braintree** Microscopy Meetings at Tabor Science College, Panfield Lane, Braintree CM7 5XP. If you need any additional information contact Stuart Mitson on 01376340683.
- 16 Feb. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Epping Forest** at Chingford Horticultural Hall Larkshall Rd, London E4 6NH. Film night (TBA).
- 22 Feb. *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Geoff Mills will be giving a talk on pollen patties and spring feeding.
- 23 Feb. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Colchester** at Langham Community Centre CO4 5PB. An introduction to making honeybee bait hives and solitary bee homes—a talk by Alan Hayden-Case. Derek will also outline Colchester Division's mentoring programme for new beekeepers.
- 25 Feb. *Saturday 8.00pm* **Braintree** at the Constitutional Club CM7 1TY. Annual Dinner.
- 29 Feb. *Wednesday 8.00pm* **Saffron Walden** at Foakes Hall, Great Dunmow CM6 1AE. A talk by Jean Smye on 'Candle Making.'
- 1 Mar. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. A talk by Danny Nicoll on pollen.
- 2 Mar. *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park RM2 5EL. A talk by Jim Buttress on RHS Gardening.
- 3 Mar. *Saturday 2.00pm* **EBKA 132nd AGM** at Room E06, Writtle College, Lordship Road, Chelmsford, CM1 3RP.
- 13 Mar. *Tuesday 6.45pm* **Saffron Walden** at Thaxted Guildhall CM6 2LA. Theory Classes for Beginners begin, with Jane and Richard Ridler followed by discussion Classes for Second Year Beekeepers 8.00—9.15pm.
- 14 Mar. *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Braintree** Microscopy Meetings at Tabor Science College, Panfield Lane, Braintree CM7 5XP. If you need any additional information contact Stuart Mitson on 01376340683.
- 15 Mar. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Epping Forest** at Chingford Horticultural Hall Larkshall Rd, London E4 6NH. A talk on Swarms and swarm control.

- 28 Mar.      *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Stephen Pointer will give a talk on 'What's available for beekeepers on the internet and the best ways to access it.'
- 28 Mar.      *Wednesday 8.00pm* **Saffron Walden** at Thaxted Guildhall CM6 2LA. A talk by Robert Pickford on collecting swarms.

### **County Pheromones Richard Ridler (Chairman)**

Before too long it will be time to collect swarms again. The collection of swarms is of great importance because:

Doing it well creates a favourable impression of beekeepers with the public.

The threat of disease in swarms is ever present and needs controlling.

We have many beginners and for those who can't afford a nucleus a swarm may be their only option.

With the increasing value of bees good swarms have value and some people aim to make money out of selling them.

In Essex we believe that swarm collection is a local issue best managed by our divisions and not something that the county should get involved in. There is a page on our website which enables members of the public who want a bee-keeper to relieve them of a swarm to contact the right people in the division local to them. The BBKA have set up a system on their website which the EBKA is opposed to but attempting to work with. If you are ready and willing to collect swarms then please register your interest through your division which may also put it forward to BBKA. There are websites that offer to provide swarm collection which are not under the auspices of BBKA or EBKA. It should not be necessary for our members to be involved in these as our own website should provide all we need; if it's not doing so I would like to know.

### **Braintree Beekeepers Beginners Course**

We are running a course for beginners course on the following dates and all are on a Tuesday:

6th March                  13th March                  20th March

The course will be run from - The Henry Dixon Hall, Rivenhall End, Witham CM8 3HR at a cost of £30.

If you are interested please contact - Colleen Chamberlain on 01279 876 333 or colleenschambo@btinternet.com

**ESSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION  
132nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Saturday 3rd March 2012  
starting at 2pm**

Venue: Room E06, Writtle College, Lordship Road, Chelmsford, CM1 3RP (*opp Garden Centre*)

**A G E N D A**

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of the 131st AGM & Minutes of the EGM on 24/11/11
- 3 Report from the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee
- 4 General Treasurer's Report & Approval of the 2011 Accounts
- 5 Written reports from other members of the Central Executive Committee
- 6 Election of President
- 7 Election of County Officers
  - Chairman
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
- 8 Notification of the 2012 Divisional Voting Members  
and 2013 Presiding Officer
- 9 Notification of remaining CEC post-holders
  - Advertising Secretary
  - BBKA Delegate
  - Book of Commemoration Secretary
  - Distribution Secretary (*The Essex Beekeeper*)
  - Editor (*The Essex Beekeeper*)
  - Examinations Secretary
  - (FWAG Delegate no longer required as the organisation has ceased)
  - Membership Register Secretary
  - Minutes Secretary
  - NHS Delegate
  - Show Committee Delegate
  - Spray & Disease Committee Delegate
- 10 Confirmation of Accounts Examiner
- 11 Propositions put forward by the Central Executive Committee:
  - 11.1 That the EBKA Rule 9 be amended, to take effect at the end of this AGM, to replace the first paragraph with the following:  
*The Association Year shall end on December 31st and the AGM shall be held in Chelmsford before the following 1st April. The Trustees' Report and consolidated accounts for the CEC and all Divisions shall be presented at the AGM.*  
[The current wording of this paragraph in Rule 9 is as follows: The Association Year shall end on December 31st and the AGM shall be held in

Chelmsford within three months after that date. The CEC report and the Audited accounts shall be presented at the meeting.]

- 11.2 That the EBKA Rule 15 be amended, to take effect at the end of this AGM, to add the following paragraph:

*The consolidated accounts for the CEC and all Divisions shall be independently examined according to the current regulations of the Charity Commission.*

[Currently in Rule 15 there is no mention of how the CEC and divisional accounts are to be checked out, but Charity Commission regulations for an association of the size of EBKA require them to be at least independently examined.]

The changes proposed above will make it clear what must be done with the accounts to comply with Charity law. By aligning our rules to the current regulations of the Charity Commission, it will be not be necessary to amend them again as these regulations change.

- 11.3 The CEC has proposed that the Associate subscription for the **current** subscription year be raised to £10. However, such propositions must be passed by the membership at an AGM (Rule 4). Thus the proposition is that the membership confirm the Trustees' decision that the Associate subscription should be set at £10, with effect from 1st January 2012, i.e. for the current subscription year.

The background to this proposition is that the current subscription no longer covers the cost of this category in some divisions. The subscription has been held at £5 since the inception of this membership category over a decade ago. The full membership subscription has doubled over that period.

- 12 2011 Conference Report: Chairman of Chelmsford Division  
13 2012 Conference Preview: Chairman of Harlow Division  
14 Installation of 2012 Presiding Officer  
& Reading from the Book of Commemoration

\*\*\*

#### **Following the AGM:**

Refreshments, kindly provided by Harlow Division.

\*\*\*

Talk by Will Messenger from Gloucester on the history of beekeeping,  
with special reference to Essex.

**ESSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**  
**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING**  
**held on Thursday 24th November 2011**  
Trinity Methodist Halls, Chelmsford

*These minutes will be considered correct if no objection is raised in writing before Saturday 25th February 2012. Any point challenged will be brought before the next meeting for correction of the record.*

**Presiding Officer:** Tony Edwards (Proxy for Jean Smye, Chelmsford)

**Also present:** Pat Allen (General Secretary), Lee Bartrip (Colchester DVM), Mike Barke (Harlow DVM), Roy Carter (DH&Maldon DVM), Eric Fenner (Chelmsford & Harlow), Uli Gerhardt (General Treasurer), Penny Learmonth (Saffron Walden DVM), Eileen Marrable (Romford), Jim McNeill (Romford), Ian Nicholls (Epping Forest DVM), Richard Ridler (CEC Chairman), Pat Rowland (Braintree DVM).

**Apologies:** Howard Gilbert, Jeremy Huband (Southend DVM), Jane Ridler, Jean Smye (Chelmsford DVM), William Stephens (Romford DVM).

**The business of the meeting was to approve the CEC and Consolidated Accounts of the EBKA for 2010.**

The Accounts were presented as approved by the Auditor. There had been changes because of the way Gift Aid was recorded. The Accounts had been signed off by the Auditor. Richard Ridler proposed that the accounts be accepted, seconded by Pat Allen. Agreed *nem con*.

The CEC Chairman thanked Tony Edwards for preparing the accounts and said that measures were being taken to make Treasurers' lives easier.

It was suggested that Divisional draft accounts could be sent to the General Treasurer as soon as they are ready so he could start the consolidation process.

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## Letter to the Editor

From **Pat Allen, EBKA General Secretary**

Dear Editor

I write in response to the three letters published in the January issue of *The Essex Beekeeper*. The CEC has always tried to do good for the divisions and the membership, such as the generous conference grant, buying/subsidising equipment, and so on. As EBKA membership has grown, so has the workload on officers, especially the treasurers – Divisional and General. So the CEC has looked for ways to simplify the financial procedures, and at a meeting of treasurers last summer it was clear that all divisional treasurers were feeling the strain and supported the principle of simplification. Two decisions by the CEC since then are clearly not supported by some members, and I would like to give my perspective on these issues as we approach the AGM.

### **Associate subscription:**

This subscription has stood at £5 since the category was created in 1995. In some divisions (my own certainly) it no longer covers the cost of this category of membership, and it seems reasonable, after 16 years, to bring it up to date.

When first set the associate subscription was more than the divisional portion of the full subscription, a situation which must have been acceptable at the time. In 2003 the divisional portion of the full sub was increased to £7.50, thus since then it has exceeded the associate sub by half as much again. Although the increase now proposed is 100%, making it again more than the divisional portion of the full sub, it should be noted that over the period since associate inception the full sub has itself doubled. The full sub includes BBKA and EBKA capitation, both of which have increased over the years, and the Trustees chose to leave the divisional portion at £7.50, at least for the time being.

The Trustees accept that a procedural error was made in not putting the proposition to the members at the AGM first. However, that in itself does not make the increase inappropriate and members will be asked at the AGM on Saturday 3rd March to accept the increase.

### **Funding County Life Membership:**

Let me first say that I respect all our Life Members and greatly appreciate their contribution to the EBKA. The decision to fund all life memberships within the divisions was one of the measures to simplify financial transactions and in no way devalues the status of this category of membership.

Under the current arrangements, the sub for a CLM is paid out of central funds, refunding the division its portion, and paying the BBKA capitation. At a working group meeting on this topic it became clear that there can be several variations on the requirements of a CLM, as the member may have given up beekeeping, for example, or moved away. So the 'package' required varies and the member's division is best placed to know what is needed.



E.g.:

- full membership, including BBKA, BDI;
- full membership, honorary BBKA member, BDI;
- still beekeeping but member of another BBKA-affiliated county so no BBKA or BDI needed, associate with division + EBKA magazine;
- still beekeeping but member of another EBKA division so no BBKA or BDI needed, associate with division, no magazine;
- no longer beekeeping, no BBKA or BDI needed, associate with division, no magazine;
- no longer beekeeping, no BDI, but wants BBKA News + EBKA magazine;
- member of another non-BBKA-affiliated county, so BBKA wanted but not necessarily BDI.

If the division funds its CLM then there is no difficulty with the package, because the division will know and can provide what is wanted, can register/de-register the member with BBKA as appropriate, so automatically will pay or not pay capitation as appropriate with no need for fine adjustments by the General Treasurer. The division is in any case responsible for basic BDI, if this is required. So the 'cost' to the division is not necessarily that of a full sub, but the division knows what is needed and can provide the right package. The EBKA rules do not specify how life members should be funded, so this is not automatically a matter that must be decided at an AGM. However, members can always refer the matter back to the CEC via their DVM if they wish.

Maybe having a couple of contentious issues will mean we get a better attendance than usual at the EBKA AGM? Which is a good thing – come and take part and cast your vote.



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634038

**The Yellow peril!**  
**WASPS! WASPS! WASPS!**  
**Peter Davidson, Dengie and Maldon BKA**

I've never known such a year. Following the early warm spring when aphid increase was rapid, so the wasps got going too. The bees suffered from the on-off weather but it did not seem to affect the wasp population. As early as June, in one of my apiaries, there were an unusually large number of wasps to be seen. In all I have lost twelve colonies; full hives, nuclei and newly run-in swarms. This was despite closing any hive seeming to be under attack down to a very small entrance.

The attack came from a mixture of both native wasps and the larger German variety. One hive I did not close up as I had judged it to be too strong to succumb. I was away for a week and on my return I found it completely empty of bees, brood and two supers of honey. On another occasion in late August, I was hiving a medium sized swarm with wasps running in with the bees. Next day unsurprisingly there were only wasps in the nuc-box, the bees having been driven out again.

The final straw came on the 7th DEC. Following the gales of the 5th and 6th I went to check all my bees. It was a glorious day and at one apiary in the shelter of a wood, in full sunlight, there were wasps all over the outside of all the hives. As the bees were clustering and few flying, there were no guard bees at the entrances, so the wasps were going in and out unimpeded. All these wasps were our own endemic specie. I did not feel I should open the hives to see how far the wasps had penetrated but could not see any where I lifted the lids. It only remains to see, when I do the early spring inspection, just exactly how the bees have been affected. I already know that with the long warm autumn the bees have got through a considerable amount of their winter supplies, so I will be feeding with fondant as I carry out the Oxalic treatment in the coming weeks.

Is this increase in wasp attack something extra which we will have to deal with as a result of warmer summers?

**Beekeeping tips No. 12**  
**A Device for easily obtaining the last few jars of Honey from the Settling Tank**  
**By Pollinator**

The photos on the back page show this device in operation on a Thorne's 150 lb model plastic settling tank, although the idea can be applied to other sizes and shapes of settling tanks.

The device consists of two pieces of plywood (or other strong board) each 450 x 400 and 15 mm thick and held together by two hinges, each 40 x 50 mm. The position of the hinges allows the two pieces to be folded together as if they were the cover of a book. The design incorporates a further hinge as often used in gates ... referred to as a Tee hinge (T-hinge) and a pair may be purchased for around a pound from an iron monger (or screwfix.com). The size required is such that its arm may be cut to a length of 130 mm or near. This hinge is attached under the board on which the settling tank rests. The arrangement of the parts is shown in photos on back page.

When the boards are folded a length of right-angled strip is screwed to the long 450 mm hinged edge on the opposite side of the board to which the T-hinge is screwed. This stops the tank sliding off the sloping board once the T-hinge is opened; otherwise the hinge lies flat so that the two boards may lie horizontally when emptying the bulk of the honey. The T-hinge is cut so that the angle between the open boards is approximately 25° when screwed into position.

**The Beemaster talking Beekeeping**  
**Alan Riach**

*This article first appeared in the Scottish Beekeeper. It is reprinted here courtesy of the Editor, Nigel Southworth and with the co-operation of EBees.*

**Why does a large colony seem to make so disproportionately more honey than a smaller colony?**

It is well known that exceptional honey harvests are obtained by colonies with large populations. In fact the ability to gather a surplus increases non-linearly with population – doubling the population more than doubles the ability to gather nectar. This is due to there being a certain fairly fixed number of bees which are required to feed and look after the brood, all remaining bees being available for foraging, drawing comb and processing nectar into honey.

Arranging for the maximum population point to coincide with the honey flows has to be one of the main aims of the beekeeper. This sometimes happens serendipitously, as during the brief July flow(s) this year. Due to the previously very poor summer weather, few of the foragers had become worn out and died and

were available (albeit as old bees) to lend a hand with the July flow.

Some thought must therefore be given to the relationship between queen laying rate, colony population and population growth.

The period from egg laying to emerging worker bee is 21 days. In this consideration we can concentrate on worker population since the quantity of drones is usually small and more or less a sideshow compared to the queen's main task of producing worker bees.

#### Laying rate and Brood population

Because of the 21 day brood period, the average queen laying rate can be obtained by counting the (worker) brood –all stages, eggs, open and sealed brood, and dividing the total brood population by 21 to obtain the average daily laying rate.

If the brood count is e.g. 21000 then the queen's average daily laying rate over the past 21 days will have been 1000 eggs per day. If the brood population was 31500, then the daily laying rate will have been 1500 eggs per day. Laying rate and brood population are inextricably tied together by the 21 day factor. The stabilised maximum brood population is always **Queen average daily laying rate x 21**.

#### Laying rate and Total Colony Population

Extrapolating from laying rate to total colony population is rather less fixed since it depends on the life of the worker. A worker life of 50 days is often assumed for summer bees in the foraging periods. However worker bee life is, like aircraft life, a bit dependant on air miles. In periods of lax, non foraging activity, the life is likely to be extended somewhat.

Staying with the 50 day average life then, the maximum colony population is simply queen average daily laying rate multiplied by 50 e.g. for a queen capable of sustaining a daily laying rate of 1000, the maximum colony population will be  $50 \times 1000 = 50000$  workers – every day a thousand bees are born and a thousand die.

Increasing either the average life time of a worker or the average daily laying rate of the queen will increase the maximum population e.g. 55 day average life and 1200 average daily egg laying will give a maximum population of  $55 \times 1200 = 66000$  workers.

#### Laying rate and Colony Population Build-Up Rate

Let us take a typical springtime scenario.

Assuming that the colony comes through the winter with a population of say 10000 and virtually no brood. The queen then starts laying at say 500 eggs per day and sustains that for say 2 weeks. The brood population is now 7000, the adult population may have dwindled by say 2000 due to losses of winter bees foraging in difficult conditions.

Provided sufficient pollen and stores of honey are still available and that some fresh pollen sources have been found, the laying rate may now increase, say to

1000 per day.

The population progress from start of serious laying will be as follows:

End of week number	Winter bees	Assumed Queen rate of lay per day	Brood Population	New adult population	Total Number of Adults
1	9000	500	3500	0	9000
2	8000	500	7000	0	8000
3	7000	1000	14000	0	7000
4	6000	1000	17500	3500	9500
5	4000	1000	21000	7000	11000
6	1000	1000	21000	14000	15000
7	0	1000	21000	21000	21000
8	0	1000	21000	28000	28000

For interest, if the queen's laying rate had increased in week 5 to say 1500 then by the end of week 8 the population would be 31500 instead of 28000

As long as the colony foraging economics can sustain a high laying rate (1000 per day or higher), the build-up will continue rapidly. This is the advantage of good early spring forage availability and a great advantage of winter sown oil seed rape. At the end of week 8 we may now have an adult population of almost 30000 (winter bees have all died off) and increasing at 7000 per week and a stabilised brood population of 21000 capable of producing 7000 new bees per week.

Now that your head is swimming with numbers, we can say, don't worry about the numbers shown, they're only typical, but they illustrate the method by which a high population can be achieved quite quickly, but all depending on food availability. The Count (from Sesame Street) would have loved all these figures – I wonder if he kept bees?

Bees that were well fed the previous autumn will still have a good reservoir of food available for these quick building spring activities. Of equal importance is a good carry-over of autumn pollen –Himalayan balsam and ivy are very valuable as sources of autumn pollen and please, do always leave the bees with their stores of winter pollen.

If the main sources of nectar in your area are from early summer flowers, then trying to achieve a quick build up in spring is important. If late summer flowers are your main source then the bees will have time for a more leisurely build up.

But remember "Bees make honey" and the more bees the better.

### **Mead Judges and what they really mean ...**

*This article first appeared in the Eke. It is reprinted here courtesy of the Editor, Stuart Ching and with the co-operation of EBees.*

Good presentation	OK, you can polish a bottle – now work on your mead
Condition	Shame about the taste
Thin	Use more honey next time, you tight-fisted ...
Aggressive on the palate	I choked on this one
Peppery	Needed a pint of water afterwards
Slightly over-acid	Burnt a hole in the show bench
Good farewell	Sorry to say goodbye to this one
Good body	Still had parts of bees in it
Cloying	Stuck my lips together
Harsh palate	Stripped the roof off my mouth
Acetic	Best with chips
Full-bodied	Got me excited this one
Well-balanced	I could still stand afterwards
Harmonious assemblage	I want to marry this one
Gorgeous	I get a bit affectionate after tasting all the entries
High alcohol	Try using it as paint stripper
Chemical flavours	Recommend you use it for clearing the drains
Out of class	What part of “dry” don’t you understand?
Infected	So my steward tells me – I didn’t dare taste it!
Medicinal flavours	Reminded me of the cough mixture I had as a child.
Second opinion required	Sent to lab for analysis. Report warned "Your horse has diabetes!".



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**Beekeeping tips No. 12**  
**A Device for easily obtaining the last few jars of Honey**  
**from the Settling Tank**  
**By Pollinator, see page 11**

