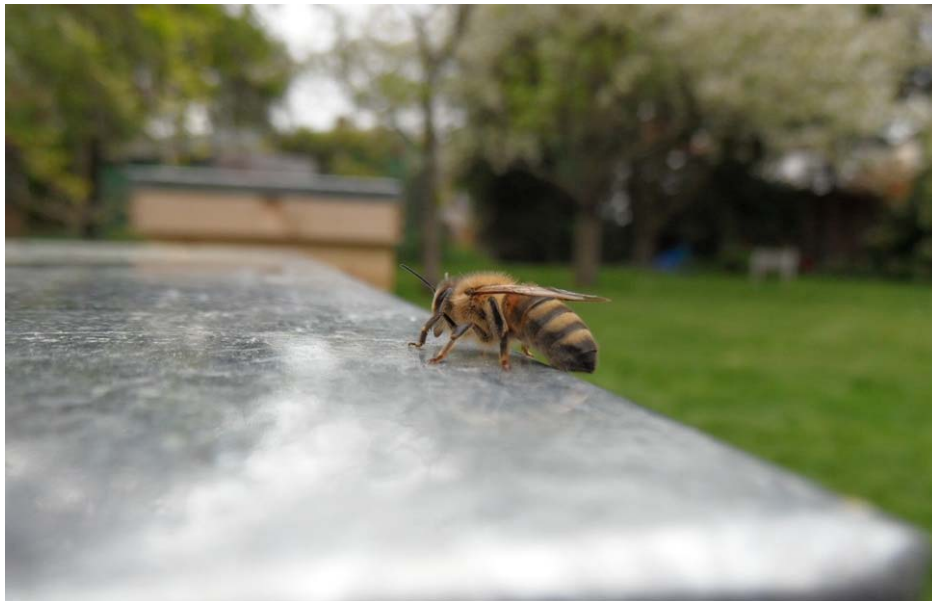


# THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



**Stop press—new worker-bee role: roof inspector!**  
**Photo Khalil Attan**

Monthly Magazine of the E.B.K.A

**No. 559**

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

**July  
2011**

*Registered Charity number 1031419*

Printed by Streamset, 12 Rose Way, Purdeys Industrial Estate, Rochford, Essex SS4 1LY.

## Essex Beekeeper's Association

The Essex Beekeepers' Association is a registered charity whose object is to further the craft of beekeeping in Essex.

### President

Derek Webber

### Trustees

**Chairman:** Richard Ridler, Rundle House, High Street, Hatfield Broad Oak, Bishop's Stortford, Herts. CM22 7HE

Email chair@ebka.org

tel. 01279 718111

**Secretary:** Ms Pat Allen, 8 Frank's Cottages, St Mary's Lane Upminster, Essex RM14 3NU

Email pat.allen@btconnect.com

tel. 01708 220897

**Treasurer:** Uli Gerhard

email treasurer@ebka.org

tel.

### Divisional Trustees

Braintree	Mrs Pat Rowland	prowland45@hotmail.com
Chelmsford	Mrs Jean Smye	jsmye@o2.co.uk
Colchester	Lee Bartrip	l.bartrip@virgin.net
Dengie Hundred & Maldon	Roy Carter	carterroy@talk21.com
Epping Forest	Ian Nichols	ian@iannichols.demon.co.uk
Harlow	Mike Barke	mjbarke@googlemail.com
Romford	William Stephens	billstephens@live.co.uk
Saffron Walden	Mrs. Sarah Jenkins	srhjen@aol.com
Southend	Jeremy Huband	jeremy.huband@clara.co.uk

### Divisional Contacts

To contact a regional division:

Braintree: Colleen Chamberlain, 01279 876333 Chelmsford: Jean Smye, 07731 856361

Colchester: Lydia Geddes, 01206 392226 D.H. & Maldon: Jean Smye, 07731 856361

Southend: Ann Cushion, 07909-965117 Harlow: Keith Naunton, 01279 303471

Romford: Pat Allen, 01708 220897 Saffron Walden: Jane Ridler, 01279 718111

Epping Forest: Paola Munns, 01707 873984

### Essex Beekeeper's Magazine

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

email editor@ebka.org

**Advertising:** Dee Inkersole, email advertising@ebka.org

tel. 01245 422627

**Web site:** Stuart Youngs email webmaster@ebka.org

**Distribution and Mailing Secretary:** Mary Heyes tel. 01702 588009

### Regional Bee Inspector for EBKA

Epping Forest and Romford Divisions (excluding Brentwood):

Alan Byham alan.byham@fera.gsi.gov.uk tel. 01306 611016 or 07775 119447

All other Divisions:

Keith Morgan keith.morgan@fera.gsi.gov.uk tel. 01485 520838 or 07919 004215

*Please ensure that all material for publication is received by the Editor before the 10th of the preceding month to publication.*

## July and August 2011

- 1 July*      *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park. Beeswax and other hive products, a talk by Jean Smye.
- 7 July*      *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. 'To bee or not to bee' - Tony Gunton.
- 9 July*      *Saturday 2.00pm* **Dengie Hundred and Maldon** Mundon Victory Hall. Preparing for Shows: points to watch; the rules; purchase of cheap sugar.
- 9 July*      *Saturday 9.00am-4.00pm* **Colchester** Tendring Show Lawford House Park, Bromley Rd., Lawford, Nr. Manningtree. Help is needed, please ring Penny Barker 01255 830713.
- 9 July*      *Saturday* **Epping Forest** at Chapel Barn, Nazeing. A practical demonstration of honey extraction to division members by Ted Gradosielski. Due to the popularity of this subject and limited space there will be a morning and afternoon session.
- 10 July*      *Sunday 12.00* **Saffron Walden** Annual Barbecue and Apiary Meeting at the home of Robert Pickford, Great Easton CM6 2HD.
- 16 July*      *Saturday 2.00pm* **Dengie Hundred and Maldon** Southminster Village Show. Help needed to man the marquee.
- 18 July*      *Monday 7.30pm* **Chelmsford** Link Hall Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB. Show Preparation Are you wanting to enter the shows but are unsure of what is expected of you and what the judges expect? Then come along to discuss the various classes. Speaker Jean Smye.
- 27 July*      *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Beekeeping Blunders - Come along and relate stories of your beekeeping blunders and let's all learn from each others mistakes! Most deserving or funniest story wins a bottle of wine!
- 31 July*      *Sunday 3.00pm* **Braintree** Apiary meeting at the apiary of Stuart Mitson in Great Leighs. tel. 01376 340683.
- 4 Aug.*      *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. Preparation for feeding and varroa treatment, a talk by David Tyler.
- 5 Aug.*      *Friday 7.00pm* **Colchester** BBQ at the home of Penny and Roger Barker. For details please ring Penny on 01255 830713.
- 6 Aug.*      *Saturday 11.30am* **Romford** Visit to Chafford Gorges.
- 6 Aug.*      *Saturday 2.00pm* **Dengie Hundred and Maldon** Bradwell Village Show. Help needed to man the marquee.
- 13 Aug.*      *Saturday 2.00pm* **Dengie Hundred and Maldon** Mundon Victory Hall. Divisional Honey Show followed by BBQ, courtesy of Bob & Vera Finch, from 5.30pm at Willowgrove, Burnham Road, Mundon CM9 6NT. A very popular social evening under cover in Bob and Vera's lovely garden. Bring your own food and drinks, but please telephone 01621 741 445 if you are coming.

- 13 Aug. *Saturday* **Epping Forest** at Chingford Horticultural Hall. Varroa count and winter preparation and feeding.
- 20 Aug. *Saturday* **Chelmsford** Garden Meeting at The Old Vicarage Good Easter. By kind Invitation of David Lockie. This will be a picnic tea along the lines of the successful event last year. Please contact Jean 07731 856361 for food information and contact David Lockie 01245 231959 if you intend to come.
- 20 Aug. *Saturday 3.00pm* **Colchester** Garden Party Meeting on Mersea Island. Please phone Peter Inson on 01206 382010 for directions.
- 21 Aug. *Sunday 3.00pm* **Braintree** Apiary Meeting at Coney Green. Tel, Pat Rowland for details 01376 326036.
- 24 Aug. *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Divisional Honey Show.
- 27 Aug. *Saturday 2.30pm* **Saffron Walden** Apiary Meeting at the home of Uli Gerhard, Radwinter CB10 2SS. We will discuss 'Winter Feeding and Protection from Pests. Winter feed will be available for collection.

### County Pheromones Richard Ridler (Chairman)

The day to day running of EBKA has become more complex and time consuming because we have more than doubled in size in two years. The time has come to consider improving and simplifying the way we do things to reflect this growth. There are many people who give many hours of their time as officers of EBKA who make it the success it is; we cannot reasonably go on increasing the load on them.

We are going to start with our financial management. We are planning to get all our treasurers together to brainstorm ideas very soon. For example, should we be collecting subscriptions by direct debit, should we have a shared software tool used by all divisions for accounting, should we be using electronic banking? If you are a treasurer I hope you will join in. If you are not a treasurer and you have any ideas or want to help do please tell your treasurer.

This initiative will be led by our new general treasurer, Uli Gerhard, who is very keen make such changes. Our retiring treasurer, Tony Edwards, did much to document and clarify some of the ways we manage our money and this is going to provide a good basis for moving forward.

Finally can I ask you all to make our treasurers' lives easier by filling in your membership forms correctly and on time. It's not fair to expect them to be unpaid progress chasers.

My thanks to all those involved in running the county bee health day which was very well attended and much enjoyed and I hope your bees are all fit and well and enjoying the excellent weather.

### **Father's Handwritten Notes on his Life and Beekeeping III** **Collated by John Gilbert**

*Les Gilbert, who died on Christmas Day 2010 aged 97, left some handwritten notes on his life and beekeeping. His son John has given permission for these to be reprinted in the Essex Beekeeper over the next few months.—Editor*

I have always enjoyed helping beekeepers with problems, funny thing but I would always open someone else's hives rather than my own, maybe it's because I have a good idea what to find in my own hives but not other peoples. Also it is more exciting and a challenge. I got upset one day when a lady phoned me to say her husband had gone into hospital and would I go and look at her bees as they were swarming. When I opened the hives the supers were full of honey. The bees had no more room to store any more honey. I extracted 200 lbs of honey. When her husband came out of hospital I asked how he became interested in bees – "oh", he said "I bought a swarm from the Reverend so and so in the next village". "How much did you pay him" I said, "£5" came the reply. I was very upset to hear this, but on my way home I thought you have got yourself to blame if you had been a member of the beekeepers association you would have been given some advice and a swarm of bees. I was upset more when I realized the vicar was one of our members. Thank goodness he has moved away from Braintree.

I do not inspect my bees every 9 days during a honey flow. In the evening when all the bees are settled down I make a habit of shining a torch in the entrance to see if the bees are down to the floor boards – if the bees completely cover the floor I know the bees need more supers or an inspection is needed. This method saves a lot of lifting supers on and off the hive. I don't believe in disturbing a colony when they are working hard. One hot summer evening when I went near the hives I saw the bees were covering the front of the hive running up and down making a lot of noise. I could not understand what caused this. The same thing happened the next evening, the third evening I crept to the hives and looked over the hedge. The bees were all over the front of the hive and very upset. Then I saw a large hedgehog with his front feet on the hive entrance eating the bees.

One day I collected a swarm and when I arrived home I placed the skep in the shade about 10 yards from the nearest hive in the apiary; this was about 4 o'clock. One hour later about 200 bees had escaped from the skep and flying around. I decided I would leave them until dusk and they would settle on the skep then I could put all of them in an empty hive, but to my surprise when I looked later on all the flying bees had gone. When I looked at the hive 10 yards away about 200 bees were sitting on the landing board fanning, asking to go in the hive. I am sure the bees were aware they would die if they stayed out all night clustered on the skep.

Little bees how clever you are.

It is a well know fact if you keep bees you will always have stray swarms visit

your apiary, therefore if you have empty boxes with combs in them you will catch swarms especially if the boxes are up high such as on the top of the shed. One year I had four swarms enter a pile of empty supers stored out in the open. I always store my supers full of combs outside with sheets of newspaper or cloth dipped in jeyes fluid laid in between each super. I remove the disinfected cloth early march and scrape all the frames and replace bad combs. When I restack the supers I place a wedge between each super to keep combs well aired ready to be put back on the hives. With this method it helps to reduce the number of wax moths, whereas combs stored inside, if not well looked after will get infested with wax moth.

Going back to swarms last year I had 4 brood boxes divided for Nuc hives stored outside. Early June I noticed a large number of bees where visiting these boxes for about 2 weeks. One very hot day as I was working in the apiary a very large swarm settled on a tree above the empty brood boxes. As they were rather high up my wife did not think at my age I should go up after them, so I decided to take her advice and stay on the ground and save an argument. However I could not leave them alone so I decided to keep an eye on them as I was sure they would go into the empty boxes or fly away. 12 o'clock is about the time they move if they have been hanging all night. So at midday I got comfortable on a chair under the tree and waited. I didn't have to stay very long because a hornet arrived, circled round the swarm and within seconds the swarm took to the wing and disappeared. But that's not the end of the story because the next day about 12 o'clock a large swarm came from the same direction. This swarm had departed the previous day and into the empty boxes they decided to go. Now I am sure they were the same swarm that settled the previous day. I believe they were driven away by the hornet before the scout bees could find a new home, so they returned to the boxes they had been visiting the several days before.

The reason why there were so many swarms around me was because a commercial beekeeper who lived some miles away had 14 colonies very near to me, as he lived several miles away from his bees he was unable to do regular inspection. I always got the blame for swarms in the neighbours garden. Now he has moved his bees away I find less swarms around also my bees have more winter stores left over in the spring as there is no robbing going on from his bees.

Some beekeepers condemn WBC hives. When I stopped using WBC I decided to keep a few for other purposes. I find them very useful to store fruit and vegetables in the winter away from the frost. Also WBC supers turned upside down on a wheel barrow make a good extension to carry lawn mowings and hedge cuttings.



**Mr Beesy has 30lb buckets @ £1.50 each**  
**For collection from**  
**11 St James Park, Chelmsford CM1 2JG**  
**Call Richard Alabone 01245 259288**

## How (not) to recycle beeswax foundation—a step-by-step guide.

by Andy Sivell

*Andy Sivell is a journalist, copy writer and magazine publisher. He got his first colony and took up beekeeping in 2010. He maintains a blog, *Diary of a Nervous Beekeeper*, which can be found at [www.beekeepingadvice.co.uk](http://www.beekeepingadvice.co.uk)*

from *Diary of a nervous beekeeper*:

1. Leave frames with mouldy old foundation, stores and insect bodies festering in crate on garage floor.
2. Trip over crate at regular intervals.
3. Chop up wax foundation and put into black bin bag. Leave on garage floor.
4. Trip over bag at regular intervals.
5. Look up price of wax melters sold by beekeeping suppliers. Scoff.
6. Ask wife for large old pan in which to melt foundation.
7. Turn up nose at large old pan offered.
8. Look up price of large new pans sold by Argos and Tesco's. Scoff.
9. Place wanted ad for large old pan on Freecycle. Wait.
- 10....And wait.
11. Accept wife's offer of large old pan.
12. Remove handful of sticky, furry mess that was once foundation from black bin bags.
13. Drip contents over garage floor.
14. Drip contents over utility room floor.
15. Drip contents over kitchen floor.
16. Boil kettle. Pour hot water into pan. Tip waxy mess into pan. Stir.
17. Close kitchen door. Open back door.
18. Open windows. Switch on extractor fan. Turn up extractor fan.
19. Tell curious offspring that you're recycling wax.
20. Tell curious offspring not to make a fuss about the smell.
21. Bribe offspring with chocolate.
22. Add more foundation to pan.



*"and when it looks like this it's about ready to throw away"*

23. Keep stirring.
  24. Turn up heat under pan. Turn down heat under pan. Re-examine contents of bin bag in garage.
  25. Place bin bag in boot of car to take to tip.
  26. Pour contents of pan into large hole in back garden.
- Buy brand new foundation.

### **Beekeeping tips No. 6—Combining by Pollinator**

Having artificially swarmed a colony the time arrives when the beekeeper has to decide whether to retain both colonies or to combine the two. If you do not need to make increase then combining is the option to take. First of all the old queen must be removed, either being killed, given away to another beekeeper or retained for use elsewhere such as a breeding queen.

The combining option requires the placing of a queen excluder, together with a sheet of newspaper under it, on top of the supers that are above the old queen's b.c., and then placing the new queen's b.c. above it. (See Bee Tips no.5; that is to say, place B on top of the supers above A). Make a few slits (not holes) in the newspaper once the queen excluder is in position. This enables the bees in the supers to make contact with those in the top b.c. slowly so that fighting does not occur before the scents of the two boxes have mingled. After a day or two shredded newspaper will appear outside the combined hives; and a week later the two brood chambers can be rationalised into one under the supers. That is to say, up to eleven frames of brood in the remaining brood chamber A. Any surplus brood frames can be added, after shaking off the bees, to other colonies to boost them; making sure there are enough bees in the receiving colony to keep the brood warm.

### **PETER DALBY—PEBADALE APIARIES**

Agent for EH Thorne and Northern Bee Books

**Also Apitherapy Supplies and advice**

Large stocks held; any item to order; competitive prices

**37, Cecil Road, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire. EN8 8TN**

**Tel/fax: 01992 622645**

**Open Mon—Sat (any reasonable time) Telephone before calling. CLOSED SUNDAY.**



## Notes from a Queen-rearing Course

### Kate Miller

Several members of the Colchester Division joined beekeepers (and would-be-beekeepers) from as far afield as Cornwall and the New Forest on a two day Queen Rearing Course led by Clive de Bruyn on 14 and 15 May.

The course was organised by Anne Holden at her beautiful water mill in Assington which is a lovely village off the A134 between Colchester and Sudbury. Simon Cousins has an apiary at the mill, so we were able to make use of his bees to have a go at the practical skills involved in Clive's queen rearing method.



As well as being an expert in his craft, Clive is an inspiring teacher who was able to convince all of us that we had the dexterity to carry out the very delicate task of grafting freshly hatched brood into a handmade queen cup and the bravado to 'bump' a generous 'shake' of bees into a polystyrene mini-nuc without spilling them all over the apiary.

Clive manages 200 colonies (he says that he does not manage colonies, he manages apiaries) and also breeds queens for the commercial market. He told us that he does all of this alone and that 'his bees' never swarm, because he is in charge. This all sounded more than a little daunting to those of us who manage their bees by retrieving them from the hedge at regular intervals, but his explanation of the techniques involved, coupled with his insistence that there are many ways to carry out queen rearing made even the rank novice feel this was achievable.

The weekend was a good mix of theory and practical workshop; after an overview of the topic we participated in making up a swarm box with pollen, uncapped nectar, nurse bees and NO BROOD. This was then closed up with plenty of ventilation and inverted honey jar feeders of syrup and water then left for long enough so that the bees knew they were queenless and would be eager to accept a bar of grafted queen cups.

Meanwhile we went on to learn about how to construct wax queen cups and place them onto a bar for insertion into the swarm box. Clive's method involves fixing the bar of grafted queen cups onto a wooden dummy board that is deep enough so that the queen cups sit half way down the depth of the brood frame, right in the middle of the bees. We all had a go at transferring the smallest possible newly hatched grub from a frame of brood into a queen cup and after a bit of practice we filled up a bar for insertion into our swarm box. We were told that the whole process from taking a frame of brood out of a hive to search out suitable grubs up to placing the bar of grafted cells into the swarm box should be completed within ten minutes to maximise the chance of acceptance of the grafted prospective queens and to minimise the chance of the brood becoming chilled. Needless to say we took a lot longer, but Clive promises us that this in-

credibly fiddly task gets easier with practice. I think he also mentioned good light and reading glasses!

At the end of day one, we were ready to put our bar of cells into the swarm box. Clive explained that he usually does this very gently and in the dark by sliding the lid of the swarm box aside and slipping the grafts in. Done this way, he says he can perform the whole manipulation without the bees really noticing. However, in order for us to see how he was placing the grafts, he demonstrated the 'other' method. The swarm box was banged hard down onto the grass, which dislodged most of the bees into the bottom of the box, he then whipped the lid off and quickly popped the bar of queen grafts into the centre before clapping the lid back on. The bees certainly noticed, but most of them remained in the swarm box, which was the objective. The swarm box is then left for a week and two days by which time there should be sealed queen cells.

On day two we put together mini-nucs which are used to care for the queen from sealed cell up to mating and starting to lay. These are supplied with top bar frames with small strips of wax, some damp sugar and

'enough' bees. The quantity of bees was about the number that you would be able to shake off a well-covered deep frame. Of course it is vital in this operation (or when making up a swarm box) that the resident queen is not inadvertently transferred. Clive achieved this on the course by working from prepared colonies that were on double brood with the queen confined to the lower box by a queen excluder. As the process involves removing a fair number of bees from the colony he prefers to work on very strong colonies although it is possible to combine bees from more than one colony in the same box, if doing this then at least three colonies should be used to minimise the risk of fighting.

Once we had our mini-nucs set up Clive provided us with sealed queen cells that he had prepared earlier one of which was inserted into each mini-nuc. These are then carefully monitored for the period up to emergence and mating as such a small unit can easily run out of food or space.

Clive had brought a selection of developing mini-nucs to Assington for us to inspect and we were able to observe everything from a successfully mated and laying queen, to an abandoned box with just a very few demoralised workers. For our final observation of the weekend we took a peek into our swarm box to find that at least one of our grafted queen cells was showing the first signs of acceptance with the nurse bees drawing the sides out into the familiar queen cell shape.



The theory aspect of day two covered other methods of queen rearing which included some beautiful boxes made by Simon Cousins to a design of Ted Hooper's. Each was the height of a commercial brood box but only half the width and depth. The idea of these being that four can be clustered together under a single hive roof with the entrances orientated in different directions.

All of the theory and hands on learning was punctuated by delicious home cooked food eaten in the lovely kitchen of Assington Mill. One of the highlights of the weekend has to be an incident at lunchtime when Anne asked one of the beekeepers if he would 'help get the chicken out.' He dutifully put on the oven gloves and went towards the Aga, only to realise that he wasn't being asked to play waiter, but to assist in chasing an inquisitive hen away from the lunch table.

The students ranged from a beekeeper of 40 years, to a total novice for whom this was his first hands-on experience with bees, so the fact that all participants came away feeling that the weekend had been both interesting and informative illustrates the expertise of our tutor and the excellence of the course organisation. The course will be repeated next year on 19 and 20 May 2012.

### Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Are there any plans for a members' forum on the website? I'm thinking about a place where ideas / offers / requests could be posted and responded to - so that the membership could communicate better across the Essex area.

Some of the uses that spring to mind are:

Beginners who would like to be put in touch with more experienced beekeepers willing to act as mentors;  
swarm collectors and those dividing their colonies who have 'spare' bees looking for a good home;  
beekeepers with surplus kit that they would like to pass on to another beekeeper;  
would-be beekeepers in search of kit.... and/or bees.

Some of these needs can be (and are) catered for in the monthly magazine, but others would benefit from a more immediate method of two-way communication.

Before anyone says that this is a matter for the individual divisions..... Essex is not the biggest place in the world and the artificial demarcation lines between the divisions would only serve to limit the flow of information.

I see this as being an extension to the magazine which would need: 1) a small amount of web development to enable an interactive forum 2) publicity across the divisions by informing all of the committees and then letting the membership know via the magazine 3) a moderator to keep the peace and maintain the forum.

I know some 'broadcasting' of information has been done by email, but some

members have complained about this. Using the website would mean that only those members who wanted to take part need get involved.

Kate Miller (Colchester Division)

*Editor: What do other members think? Please let me know via email at editor@ebka.org. Kate has offered to be moderator.*

**A Conversation with Willie H Smith (part 1)  
Which appeared in the Scottish Beekeeper February 2011 (courtesy of EBees)**

Willie Smith is recognised as one of Scotland's greatest ever beekeepers. He developed the Smith hive which is still sold today and his reputation as a great innovator lives on. I was delighted to discover the following article first published in the SBA magazine in February 1963, to which Willie Robson, William Selby Robson's son, who runs Chain Bridge Honey farm in Northumberland, as added a valuable and very interesting insight.

William Selby Robson asks a few Vital Questions (From the Scottish Beekeeper, February 1963.)

Mr WS Robson of the East of Scotland College of Agriculture was along in Dundee speaking speaking to the East of Scotland Beekeepers' Association on the subject of Heather Honey Production in the Borders" on Monday, January 21.

On this occasion he was able to add a novel twist into his talk. He had with him a tape recorder which contained a conversation between Mr Willie Smith of Innerleithen and himself.

To start off, Mr Robson gave a resume of what the talk was all about. The talk would reveal Mr Smith's honey producing methods, and how it was that this Scottish bee farmer depended on his heather crop to make a living. He had done so for nearly 40 years.

So, naturally, from the beginning of the season his aim was to have his stocks right at the peak of their strength to take advantage of the heather in August. Mr Smith, of course, obtained a fair amount of clover, but it was the money made at the heather that made his beekeeping worthwhile.

All stocks were wintered on double brood chambers, with the top crate filled with honey. That ensured the bees were never short of stores and would come out strong in the spring.

And a wee note in passing. At one time Mr Smith took off his food chamber before going to the heather, but very often these crates were not properly sealed and when these crates were put on for wintering they frequently caused dysentery in the hives during winter. Now Mr Smith keeps the food chambers on at the heather. That is a point beginners might note. I know lost of keepers worry over this same food chamber.

Back to spring now. When nectar begins to come in Mr Smith puts on a super without the queen excluder. This is to make sure the bees will go right into the super and not clog the brood chamber. As soon as there is brood in the centre combs, the queen is put below and the queen excluder put on.

Three weeks before going to the heather the queen is put in the lower chamber and the queen excluder put on under the second chamber. Two chambers are sent to the heather over the brood chambers.

Now let's hear some of the conversation on the tape recorder.

*Robson* – Mr Smith, what would you consider to be the most important factors in successful beekeeping?

*Smith* – Firstly, one must have a deep interest in the bees themselves. Secondly, a good strain of bee. Thirdly, a good district for honey production. Fourthly, standard equipment of simple pattern.

*Robson* – Can you tell us something about your Smith hive?

*Smith* – I developed this hive from a cottage hive which had 15 and-a-half inch top bars and bottom bee spacing. The original hive had plinths, but after importing Langstroth hives from the USA I saw that there was no need for plinths and I adopted the idea of top bee spacing because one can break the joint and lift off the chamber without dislodging the frames below. The floorboard extends one and-a-half inch in front, and the entrance is three eighths of an inch deep permanently.

*Robson* – You have also designed a number of appliances?

*Smith* – Yes, I designed a cutter for cutting comb honey. It was first used to deal with sections that were not fully sealed. When I found there was a demand for this type of honey I began to produce it in shallow frames and used the wire for cutting the combs into chunks of about half-a-pound in weight. The heather scraper was invented during the war when wax foundation was almost unobtain-



## Box House Beekeeping Supplies

Located in East Bergholt - For the local supply of hives, frames and foundation, tools and other equipment for keeping bees.

[Box House, Gandish Road, East Bergholt, Suffolk CO7 6TP](http://www.box-bees.co.uk)

(Open by arrangement - please email or telephone Paul White to discuss your requirements)  
[www.box-bees.co.uk](http://www.box-bees.co.uk) email: [sales@box-bees.co.uk](mailto:sales@box-bees.co.uk) or telephone 01206 299658 or 07768

634038

able. When the honey was scraped from the mid-rib, the bees quickly built the comb out during the flow.

*Robson* – Could you tell us something of your methods?

*Smith* – Every beekeeper's year commences in the autumn. I tried the double brood chamber system 35 years ago and found it successful. The hives should be protected from the prevailing winds. The site should be open to the south so that the hives get the winter sun. The stocks should have upward ventilation.

*Robson* – You rear a number of queens each year?

*Smith* – Most of my queens are reared by the bees under the supersedure impulse.

*Robson* – How important do you consider your strain of bees to be?

*Smith* – The strain of bee and method have been developed side by side. My aim is to build up very powerful colonies and keep them together so that they will be able to take advantage of the main honey flows as they come along.

The results of bees drifting on the heather were discussed and the theory that strong colonies entice bees to join them was expressed. Three-year-old heather, thought Mr Robson, gave the best results, while heather over five years old was of little use to the bees.

**EBKA Annual Conference 2011**

Book your place now at this  
not-to-be-missed event.

International and prominent speakers

Barleylands Centre, Billericay

October 1<sup>st</sup> 2011

£25 per delegate

Return booking form to Ian Grant

(Details on programme circulated with  
*June Essex Beekeeper*)

**Wanted**

Second hand electric or manual extractor – any condition considered.

Contact Brian 07786 218 701

[www.thorne.co.uk](http://www.thorne.co.uk)



# THORNE

## The Royle Posters

5 brand new plasticised posters

### Swarm Control

Why control swarming?

Reduce the risk of swarming by

Precautions

### Feeding Bees

Spring

Autumn

Winter

Types of feed

### Brood diseases

Recognising brood diseases

Prevention

### Beehives

Longhorns

Modified Subnet

Other hives

### Choosing an Apiary Site

Meeting the needs of the bees

Meeting the beekeeper's needs

Apiary layout

Precautions

**Only £3 each**  
incl. VAT plus p&p

**Set of 5 for £10**

## £.H. THORNE(Beehives)LTD.

BEEHIVE BUSINESS PARK, RAND, NR. WRAGBY, MARKET RASEN, Lincs. LN8 5NJ

TEL: 01673 858555      FAX: 01673 857004

[sales@thorne.co.uk](mailto:sales@thorne.co.uk)      [www.thorne.co.uk](http://www.thorne.co.uk)





These photos were taken in my garden late last year.

I took each picture at roughly 15 minute intervals so it appears the spider was working quite quickly.

When I took the pictures, I do remember thinking, poor girl she is only out shopping!

Photos taken by Khalil Attan

