

THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



The Honey Show at Barleylands. Photo taken by Deryck Johnson

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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.

November and December 2011

- 3 Nov. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. Processing beeswax and products of the hive.
- 4 Nov. *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park. Beekeeping quiz with Quizmaster Jim McNeill.
- 11 Nov. *Friday 7.00pm* **Chelmsford** Divisional Fish and Chip Supper. Please contact Ian Grant on 01277 652855 for tickets.
- 12 Nov. *Saturday 2.00pm* **Dengie Hundred and Maldon** Mundon Victory Hall. My Partner is a beekeeper. A light-hearted afternoon (we hope). What do our partners really think about ... ? Plus mince pies and seasonal treats with a little tipple.
- 17 Nov. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Epping Forest** at Chingford Horticultural Hall Larkshall Rd, London E4 6NH. Presentation by Stuart Baldwin on 'Bees and their Products in Art and Artifact'.
- 17 Nov. *Thursday 7.00pm* **Colchester** at Balkerne Restaurant Colchester Institute Sheepen Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3LL Annual Dinner. For menu and booking please contact Lydia Geddes: 01206 392226, lydia.geddes@btinternet.com.
- 24 Nov. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Colchester** at Langham Community Hall CO4 5PB . TBA
- 25 Nov. *Friday 8.00pm* **Braintree** at the Constitutional Club CM7 1TY. Ted Benton on Bumblebees.
- 25 Nov. *Friday 7.30pm* **Saffron Walden** at The Swan, Thaxted CM6 2PL. Story telling at the pub: Unusual swarm collecting experiences.
- 30 Nov. *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Eileen Marrable is giving a talk on Nosema, followed by a session looking for evidence of the spores in dead bees.
- 1 Dec. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. Preparation for AGM and Christmas party with David Tyler.
- 2 Dec. *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park. Christmas social.
- 12 Dec. *Monday 7.30pm* **Chelmsford** the Link Hall, Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB. An exchange of views. Have you a good idea that you would like to talk about or a beekeeping method that you question? Then come along and air your views. Contact Jean 07731 856361.
- 15 Dec. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Epping Forest** at Chingford Horticultural Hall Larkshall Rd, London E4 6NH. Christmas Social to include short demonstration and talk about the Beehaus.
- 16 Dec. *Friday 8.00pm* **Braintree** at the Constitutional Club CM7 1TY. Christmas gathering and quiz.

Microscopy Classes

Braintree Division winter Microscopy Meetings at Tabor Science College, Panfield Lane, Braintree CM7 5XP. All are held on a Wednesday evening 7.30 – 9.30pm. If you need any additional information contact Stuart Mitson on 01376340683.

Wednesday

November 9th

December 7th

January 11th

February 15th

March 14th

County Pheromones and Honey Show Report Richard Ridler (Chairman)

My favourite event in the beekeeping year is our annual honey show. So when I was asked to write a report about it I just had to say yes. The display of all those entries lined up in the middle of our huge marquee at Barleylands was truly spectacular. Let me pick out some highlights. Whilst Chelmsford must be congratulated for winning the President's cup, Harlow's move into fourth place was a very impressive result for a division which very recently was struggling to survive. It was good to see those who have kept bees for the longest and shortest times winning prizes; Eric Fenner won the trophy for dry mead and Margaret Clay won the trophy for the most points for a novice. Mike Barke's winning wax cake shows that new beekeepers can take prizes for the most difficult of classes. Selwyn Runacres won both the new classes for his metheglin and melomel. And there were entries in the display class for the first time in a decade. To deal with all the entries we had to have two honey judges for the first time in living memory!

My thanks to all those who helped although I think they all enjoyed themselves as much as I did. We've moved from having to twist arms a couple of years ago to now having members queuing up to help. My particular thanks to Vi Taylor for keeping score and allocating trophies, to Jim McNeill for arranging the entries, to Helen Harwicke for overseeing the sales and to Jean Smye and Richard Alabone and their helpers for the catering; but there were many more who I could add to the list...thank you too.

We look forward to next year's show, I'll be making my mead very soon, my first attempt this year won second prize so I'm going for first next year.

**A ruling from the European Court of Justice concerning
honey and genetically modified organisms (GMO)
Howard Gilbert**

The decision by the European Court of Justice (Grand Chamber) in Karl Heinz Bablok and Others v Freistaat Bayern, Case C-442/09, has potentially wide-reaching effects for sellers of honey and those who plant genetically modified crops. The conclusion of the court is that honey and food supplements containing pollen derived from genetically modified organisms (GMO) are foodstuffs produced from GMOs which cannot be marketed without prior authorisation. In other words, honey which contains pollen from a GMO plant cannot be marketed/sold unless it has received prior EU authorisation even though the pollen is itself no longer a GMO as it has lost its ability to reproduce and is totally incapable of transferring genetic material.

The facts of the case

In 1998 Monsanto obtained marketing for the genetically modified MON 810 maize. This contains the gene of a bacterium producing toxins which destroy the larvae of a parasitic butterfly, infestation with which constitutes a danger for the development of the maize plant.

A dispute arose between Mr Bablok, an amateur beekeeper, and Freistaat Bayern (State of Bavaria, Germany) which owns a number of plots of land on which MON 810 maize has been cultivated for research purposes in recent years. In the vicinity of those plots of land, Mr Bablok produces honey both for sale and for his own personal consumption. Up to 2005, he also produced pollen for sale as a foodstuff in the form of a food supplement. In 2005, MON 810 maize DNA and genetically modified proteins were detected in the maize pollen harvested by Mr Bablok in beehives situated 500 metres from the plots of land belonging to Freistaat Bayern. Very small amounts of MON 810 maize DNA were also detected in a number of samples of Mr Bablok's honey.

As he took the view that the presence of residues of genetically modified maize

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made his products unsuitable for marketing and for consumption, Mr Bablok brought legal proceedings against Freistaat Bayern before the German courts, in which four other amateur beekeepers joined.

The dispute progressed all the way to the European Court of Justice. In its judgment,

1) The Court observed, that the pollen in honey may be classified as a GMO only if it is an 'organism' i.e. it is a 'biological entity capable' either of 'replication' or of 'transferring genetic material'. The Court concluded that a substance such as pollen derived from a variety of genetically modified maize, which has lost its ability to reproduce and is totally incapable of transferring the genetic material which it contains, is no longer capable of 'transferring genetic material'.

2) The Court held that, nevertheless, products such as honey and food supplements containing such pollen constitute foodstuffs that contain ingredients produced from GMOs. In that regard, it held that the pollen in issue is 'produced from GMOs' and that it constitutes an 'ingredient' of the honey and pollen-based food supplements. As regards the honey, the Court observed that pollen is not a foreign substance or an impurity, but rather a normal component of honey, with the result that it must indeed be classified as an 'ingredient'. The pollen in question consequently comes within the scope of the regulation and must be subject to authorisation before being placed on the market.

3) The Court observed that the authorisation scheme for foodstuffs containing ingredients produced from GMOs applies irrespective of whether the pollen is introduced intentionally or adventitiously into the honey.

4) The Court held that the authorisation obligation exists irrespective of the proportion of genetically modified material contained in the product in question.

In other words, honey that contains pollen which has been produced from GMOs will need prior authorisation before being marketed/sold. This is a zero tolerance policy based on the Court's decision. Not even the smallest element of such pollen may be present if honey is to be sold as honey rather than 'honey with pollen produced from GMOs present'. Presumably, if authorisation is granted then labelling will have to show that such pollen is present. This leads onto the issue of having honey tested to decide if it contains GMO pollen. The beekeeper will not know with certainty unless his honey has been tested.

The BBKA issued a statement on 26 September giving an update on the ECJ ruling on honey containing pollen from a Genetically Modified Organism. It stated:

'A meeting of the EU Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health was held on 22 September. In order to ensure that beekeepers' interests were represented at that meeting, the BBKA sent two delegates to an earlier meeting held between UK Government bodies and other interested parties to consider the UK's approach.

After the Commission meeting on 22 September, the UK Government representatives gave us the following feedback:

The Commission reported that it is currently analysing the many potential implications of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling and it will review the issues with a wide range of interested parties over the next few weeks. The situation will be discussed again with Member States at the end of October.

The Commission reminded the meeting that the ruling is complex and the implications wide. The consensus was that the ECJ ruling does not reflect the original intention of the legislation and creates inconsistencies between the Honey Directive and other legislation. Ultimately this seems to require changes to the legal text which will require the full EU legislative process to follow its course and consequently take some time.

In the meantime the UK will continue to search for practical and proportionate solutions that will minimise any disruption in the supply of safe and properly labelled products.

The BBKA will continue to monitor the situation and to represent the interests of beekeepers. Any updates will be posted on the BBKA website.'

More Basic Assessment Successes for 2011 Jane Ridler (Education and Exams)

The remainder of the Essex Basic Assessment results are now through from the BBKA – so many congratulations to all the following:-

Catherine Branch	Epping Forest	Oisin Hanrahan	Epping Forest
Christopher Branch	Epping Forest	Michael Keepence	Braintree
Pamela Chambers	Harlow	Wendy Moore	Southend
Jacqueline Clarke	Epping Forest	Tom Shaw	Harlow
Desmond Exworth	Colchester	Audrey Sheehy	Southend
Dan Golding	Southend	Curtis Thompson	Epping Forest

These, along with those published in the September EBK make 24 BA successes this year (with some still in the pipeline for next season). Those of you who were at the Conference on 1st October will know that we have yet to receive the BA certificates from the BBKA so they will all be presented at the AGM in March 2012 by our President, Derek Webber. Finally for this year, special congratulations to Desmond Exworth, Eric Beaumont and Ian Storey for winning the Miss Avey Awards for best results in the Basic Assessments, and to David McHattie and Jane Ridler for winning the Ted Hooper Awards for Module exams. All receive a £25 Northern Bee Book token.

**Beekeeping tips No. 10—Dealing with granulated honey in the comb.
by Pollinator**

At the end of the season you will probably find you have some shallow frames with completely solid combs or some with solid areas. These solid combs then need to be scraped down to the foundation using either a special tool or an old desert spoon. A twisting action of the wrist while holding the spoon or tool is then necessary to scrape out the honey. This needs to be taken out in 3 mm strips at a time, as if it is removed by taking out wider strips it often breaks the foundation, particularly when it is the second side being scraped after the first side is completed. However, if the foundation is broken the bees will repair it next season. The exception to this is if the hole contains part of the wire reinforcing. It will then be rebuilt up to but not including the wire.

Scraping down comb has proved beneficial in the following Spring as it gives the bees a chance to pull wax and make comb ... both of which seem to help reduce swarming.

The picture below shows the tool I have made from stainless steel strip and it can get into the corners of the frame perhaps a little more easily than an old spoon.

The metal is approximately 6mm wide by 1 mm deep and the total length is about 200 mm. The two ends are about 20 mm in length and are araldite-ed into the wooden file handle.



EBKA Trophy and Award Winners 2011

Award	For	Winner	Division
Burt Challenge Cup	Containers of cut comb honey	V M Taylor	Braintree
Cowan Vase	Sections and extractable frame	R Alabone	Chelmsford
Dearman Cup	Twelve Jars of crystallised or soft set honey	J McNeill	Romford
Ford Trophy	Most points in extracted honey classes	E Fenner	Harlow
Horton Cake Cup and Knife	Honey fruit cake	H Hardwicke	Chelmsford
Mallinson Cup	Cake of beeswax and candles	M Harris	Southend
Ongar Cup	Frame of extractable honey	J McNeill	Romford
President's Cup	Division gaining highest total points (ex Wine)	Chelmsford	
Holmes Cup	Exhibitor gaining highest total points (ex wine)	M Harris	Southend
Tidswell Challenge Bowl	Most points in honey classes	M Harris	Southend
Jersey Cup	Best cake of beeswax	M J Barke	Harlow

Award	For	Winner	Division
W.B.C. Cup	Biscuits, sandwich and fudge	M Clay	Chelmsford
Devall Medal	Novice gaining highest total points	M Clay	Chelmsford
BBKA Blue Ribbon	Best exhibit in show	J McNeill	Romford
Thomas Award	Honey and malt loaf	J McNeill	Romford
Essex Chronicle Cup	Twelve jars of clear honey	J McNeill	Romford
Chelmsford Wine Circle Marconi Trophy	Best bottle of sweet mead	J McNeill	Romford
Alf Gunn Jubilee Shield	Best bottle of metheglin	S Runacres	Saffron Walden
Walden Wine Shield	Best bottle of melomel	N T W Vickery	Southend
G A Taylor Mazer	Best bottle of dry mead	E Fenner	Harlow
Archie Horton Award	Most points for candles	J M Ridler	Saffron Walden

A Scottish Beekeeper in France part I

by Kevin Cowle

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.



Kevin Cowle a short biography: I have been keeping bees on a semi-commercial basis in Scotland for over 30 years (former Sec. Eastwood Beekeepers Soc.) but late last year moved permanently to the Pyrenees in the south of France - a big beekeeping area (sold my bees to Enid Brown). Early this spring, unable to give up the bee bug, I bought a couple of stocks and started up again over here. Very different climate, very different bees, very different hives, very

different foraging, but still a lot of similarities and a lot of universal lessons to learn.

Last year, after 31 years of keeping bees in Scotland, I sold all my colonies and beehives. My wife and I had decided to move to the high Pyrenees in the south of France, and despite lengthy negotiations with the French authorities it was quite clear that the bees could not come with us. All I kept back from the fire sale were the veil, smoker, extractor and that little box of invaluable odds and ends that every beekeeper treasures. I already knew that I would have to start beekeeping again no matter what the difficulties. For some people, bees are in your blood.

Our new home is two thousand feet up in the mountains, in a thickly wooded valley interspersed with semi-alpine meadows. Within weeks I had made contact with local beekeepers, and was immediately surprised to find that the technical bee vocabulary we all use is far from universal. No-one knew what hives, swarms, wax, frames or queens were (ruches, essaimes, cire, cadres, reines) , but they all knew what varroa is. In fact I was quite quickly put off beekeeping in France by the talk of 50-60% winter losses and the demonstrations by beekeepers regularly staged outside the local government offices in protest against the widespread use of agricultural pesticides. It seems that in order to combat blue tongue fly disease, cattle farmers use pesticides on all their cattle and on their buildings. And maize crops in the valleys are also treated with something else nasty made by the agro-chemical industry.

Nothing daunted I simultaneously set out to find someone who could sell me bees, someone else to sell me second-hand hives and someone who could give me a decent apiary site. I tracked down a commercial beekeeper with 500 hives who offered to sell me a couple of 5 frame nucs for £90 each. Since the going commercial rate in France is around £200 I jumped at his offer. The site for the

hives came from a local villager who offered me a narrow terrace on a hillside about 5 minutes from the house. Having spent a lot of time advising beginner beekeepers in Scotland about the importance of choosing the right site, I then proceeded to ignore most of it. Granted the site faces south, is protected from cattle, intruders and north winds, but it is only accessible by 4x4 and is on a one in three slope. The upside is that there is limitless forage in the area.

The hives proved the biggest problem. I bought two complete Dadant (or so I thought) hives from a local beekeeper, complete with supers, some frames, integrated feeders and varroa floors, all in superb condition, for £50 each. The first shock was the sheer size of the hives. Dadant hives are simply massive! For someone who has always run Smith hives, it was like changing from a Fiat 500 to a Transit van. Only later did I realise that the handles on the sides of both brood boxes and supers reflect the fact that when full of honey they are simply too heavy for one person to lift. The Dadant is, of course, for use in countries where the weather is perfect, the queens are prolific and the foraging is endless.....like the south of France.

But the biggest problem with these hives lay in the small print. Needing more frames I ordered a couple of packs from Thornes, assembled them but then I discovered to my horror that they were an inch too long for the boxes. This was too much to be able to shorten the lugs, so each frame had to be recut at the joints to fit, likewise the foundation. Only later did I realise that the guy I bought the hives from was a master joiner who made his own hives and frames to his own sizes. They were his Modified Dadant!

So by mid April this year I had two stocks crammed with sealed brood and Italian-looking laying queens on a site already surrounded by acres of flowers and cherry blossom. Daily temperatures were maxing in the high 70s; all was going well and I was already anticipating swarms.

**ESSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING**

Thursday 24th November 2011

7.30pm

Trinity Methodist Church Halls, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford.

To approve the EBKA Accounts for 2010:

There is only one item of business, which is to present the
CEC and Consolidated Accounts for 2010 to the members
for approval.

(The EGM will be followed by the November meeting of the
CEC.)

Three weeks later mother nature threw the kind of googlie that a beekeeper dreads at anytime, least of all in the first week of May – a massive fall of snow. By massive I mean **three feet**, an event so rare it made top story on French TV news. The weight of this incredible wet blanket brought down power lines and smashed whole trees, and completely submerged the hives. As the bees were in full breeding mode I immediately put on 5 litres of light syrup feed. The following week brought bright, cold sunshine, which was fatal for the bees. They came out in their hundreds but were chilled and never made it back to the hive. The sad black dots covering the snowfield in front of the apiary testified to the mass murder.

When things returned to normal I checked the hives and was shocked to find no fresh brood, no sign of a queen, but hatched queen cells. Both colonies must have swarmed just before the snowstorm. I went through the hives at weekly intervals during the rest of May, but no queens appeared. By early June both colonies were showing signs of dwindling and by mid-June one obviously had laying workers, a certain omen. My theory by now was that both queens had gone out on mating flights just after the snow and been lost. At this point I was seriously beginning to question the notion of applying my Scottish beekeeping experience to such a different environment. If things didn't come right I would either abandon beekeeping in France till next year, or plead with a local beekeeper to give me a frame of fresh eggs to produce an emergency queen. The next few weeks would be critical.

....to be continued



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How to send samples of bees for analysis

Howard Gilbert

Following last month's article on testing bees for diseases, I thought it a good idea to publish information on how beekeepers can submit samples of their own bees for analysis. All the information can be found on the Bee Base/ Defra web site as well.

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=117>

If you suspect that there may be something wrong with your bees or there is something you are just not sure about, you may wish to send a sample to the NBU laboratory for diagnosis. Please follow the guidelines below for sending in samples. Hopefully your bees will not have any problems, but if you do find something amiss, we will do all we can to help you.

Suspected Foul brood

There are three different ways of submitting samples for foulbrood diagnosis. Beekeepers should send either a whole brood comb with diseased material or a tube containing diseased larvae. The tubes are available from local associations, ABIs or the NBU, along with guidance on how to use them. However, it is preferable for beekeepers to submit a whole brood comb, with brood of all stages present, in order for an accurate diagnosis to be made. If you decide to submit a tube of suspected diseased larvae, remember to use separate tubes for each colony. If you have confirmed the presence of AFB or EFB using an LFD kit, send the positive kit, the buffer provided as part of the kit and a larval sample to us. When samples are submitted from beekeepers and are positive for disease, you will be contacted by one of the inspection team to arrange a visit. Of course, you can always contact your local inspector directly to arrange a visit if you do see something suspicious.

Adult Bee Disease Diagnosis

The NBU provides an adult bee disease diagnostic service. Samples of adult bees may be examined for acarine, nosema and amoeba. The sample size for this is most important, as 30 bees must be examined in order to complete the diagnosis. Another crucial factor is the condition of the bees when they arrive. Choose bees that are the freshest, submitting newly dead or dying bees if possible. If you are submitting a sample please avoid using plastic containers as this leads to more rapid sample degradation and please do not just put the bees into an envelope - it is difficult to carry out a proper diagnosis on flat bees! The best way to send in samples is in a small sturdy box, well packaged so the bees will not be squashed. As a rough guide, a suitable size is a standard sized matchbox (this will have enough bees in it). Remember to indicate exactly what you want the bees examined for, often we are sent samples without any further explanation as to what to do with them. And please try to include a contact telephone number if you have one, it makes our life a lot easier if there is a problem with your sample.

Suspected Poisoning

Suspected poison honey bee samples are investigated as part of the Wildlife Investigation Scheme. At least 200 bees are required for a full analysis for a poisoning sample, approximately the number that will fit into a 'Cooks' matchbox (the large ones). These need to be securely packaged, not in a plastic bag and preferably not flattened.

Suspected Exotic Pests

We are asking beekeepers to watch out for the Small Hive Beetle and other potential

problems such as *Tropilaelaps* mites; if you think you may have found either of these you **must** contact the NBU immediately. If you do find anything suspicious please do not hesitate to send it into the NBU as it is always better to be safe than sorry. If you send anything in for identification it is wise to kill the pest first, the best method for this is to place it in the freezer for at least two hours. Again the same rules apply for sending in samples, use a suitable sturdy container (cardboard rather than plastic) and provide as much detail as possible about the sample, what you want it to be tested for and where it was found.

Voluntary Samples

If you do wish to send a sample to the laboratory for analysis you can use the submission form. Please follow these simple guidelines for sending in samples. Hopefully your bees will not have any problems, but if you do find something amiss, we will do all we can to help you.

Postage Costs

When sending in samples to the NBU, please keep in mind the recent changes that Royal Mail have made to their delivery charges.

The National Bee Unit offers a range of honey bee disease screening services

1. Standard Adult Bee Disease Diagnosis Cost = £40.00. A sample of 30 bees will be individually screened using standard microscopic techniques for the presence of Acarine, *Nosema* spp and Amoeba. Please send a cheque made payable to: Food & Environment Research Agency.

2. Screening for presence of ***Nosema* spp** - Cost = £10.00 A sample of 30 bees will be tested using standard microscopic techniques for the presence of *Nosema* spp (positive/negative result). Please send a cheque made payable to: Food & Environment Research Agency.

3. Molecular pathogen screening (TaqMan® PCR)

Test A. Viruses include: KBV, DWV, BQCV, SBV, CPV, APV, IAPV, IV

Test B. *Nosema apis* and *Nosema ceranae*

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Samples 1 to 4 = £120* per sample

Samples 5 to 10 = £60* per sample

Samples 11 to 20 = £50* per sample

Each additional sample after this = £30* per sample

*All prices include royalties for using this detection methodology.

Could Our Website be Improved?

It's a couple of years now since our new website came into being. So it's time to review and hopefully improve it in the light of all your views on its usefulness. Whatever you think could be better we want to know. Please

email your suggestions Brian Spencer at brianspenceris@btopenworld.com or call him on 01245 490843



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Photo by Jim McNeill

Decorative displays of honey products, beeswax and mead.

Photo by Deryck Johnson



Deryck Johnson caged, photo by Frances Johnson



Blue Ribbon awarded to Jim McNeill.
Photo taken by Deryck Johnson