

THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



It seems to be a text book example of a queen on drone brood in the centre of the frame. A close-up photo is on the back page. Photos taken by Penny Learmonth.

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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.

October 2010

- 1 Oct *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** TBA.
- 7 Oct. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. This month there are two talks. The first by Eric Fenner on winter protection and the second by Colin Wright on 'Ideas for 2011'.
- 16 Oct. *Saturday 2.30pm* **Romford** at St Mark's Church. Honey Show (Judging) entries to be submitted between 1.00pm-2.15pm). Judge is Geoff Wilcox.
- 16 Oct.. *Saturday 5.30pm* **Romford** Annual Supper starting 6.00pm.
- 16 Oct. *Saturday* **Dengie Hundred, Maldon & District** at Mundon Village Hall, Martin Buckle showing his skill with beeswax, models and how to make wax sheets, really fascinating , not to be missed.
- 18 Oct. *Monday 7.30pm* **Chelmsford** at Link Hall Methodist Church Rainsford Rd. Chelmsford CM1 2XB. Our Regional Bee Inspector will be giving a talk. He will talk to us about the detection and treatment of some of the diseases affecting our bees. In the course of his work he sees a large number of colonies and his breadth of experience and knowledge of bee-keeping will be of interest to beekeepers with all degrees of experience.
- 21 Oct. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Epping Forest** at Chingford Horticultural Society Hall, Larkshall Rd. Chingford E4 6NH. An evening of films on beekeeping topics.
- 23 Oct. *Saturday 9.45am-4.30pm* **Essex Beekeepers' Annual Conference** hosted by **Saffron Walden** at Foakes Hall 47 Stortford Rd. Great Dunmow CM6 1DG.
- 27 Oct. *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Our very own Honey Show.
- 28-30 Oct. **National Honey Show at St. George's College Weybridge Surrey.**
- 28 Oct. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Colchester** at Langham Community Centre. Ian Milligan will be giving a talk on Preparing honey for sale and competitions. Including advice on correct labelling
- 29 Oct. *Friday 8.00pm* **Braintree** at The Constitutional Club, Braintree. A talk by Clive De Bruyn.

November 2010

- 4 Nov. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. This month there are two talks. The first by Roy Cropley on processing beeswax and the second by Colin Wright on 'Ideas for 2011'.
- 5 Nov. *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park. 'Flowers for bees'.
- 18 Nov. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Epping Forest** at Chingford Horticultural Society Hall, Larkshall Rd. Chingford E4 6NH. An evening of candle making.
- 19 Nov. *Friday 7.30pm* **Chelmsford** Great Baddow Millennium Hall. This month we will be having the Divisional Supper on Friday 19th November, where we will be sharing fish and chips (dessert and a glass of wine included) followed by Paul's famous raffle. Tickets priced £13.00 - please make sure to contact Ian Grant 01277 652855 in good time to reserve your place.[Ha ha]
- 21 Nov. *Sunday 12.30pm* **Colchester** at the Crown Hotel, Manningtree. The Annual Lunch is being held at the Crown Hotel. Tickets cost £15. Please phone Derek Webber 01206 271714 to reserve a ticket.
- 23 Nov. *Tuesday 8.00pm* **Saffron Walden** A Social evening at the pub, 'The Cock', Henham, CM22 6AN
- 24 Nov. *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. A beekeeping quiz
- 25 Nov. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Colchester** at Langham Community Centre. Sally Hepher from The Woodland Trust will be giving a talk.
- 26 Nov. *Friday 8.00pm* **Braintree** at The Constitutional Club, Braintree. A talk by Peter Beale on Wildlife and Conservation part 3.

Honey Buckets

**Mr Beesy has 30lb buckets @ £1.30 each
For collection from Chelmsford CM1 2JG**

11 St James Park Call: Richard Alabone 01245 259 288

The Chairman's Corner: County Pheromones

Richard Ridler

A bit more knowledge about beekeeping means you will be able to care for your bees better and hopefully enjoy them more. Annually we have a county conference with this in mind. Autumn, when our bees are tucked up ready for winter, is the traditional time for the conference, this year it's on Saturday 23rd October.

The conference is organised by one of our nine divisions on a rotating basis; so once every nine years it will be the turn of your division (Chelmsford in 2011!). This year it's the responsibility of Saffron Walden Division and the conference will be in Great Dunmow.

The conference is an opportunity to hear speakers who should be a little more special than those who come to divisional meetings. This year we are flying in Dr Peter Neumann from the Swiss Bee Research Centre, he is an internationally renowned speaker and one not to be missed. We also have Ricky Kather whose research at Sheffield University you are part funding through your annual subscription; she will be talking about her research. One of the surprises about beekeeping, which makes it so fascinating, is how much depth and breadth of stuff there is out there to be soaked up. There are so many different areas to potentially learn about, from apitherapy to microscopy and from exhibiting prizewinning honey to making mead. The programme for this year's conference will be pretty diverse, in the afternoon we have the Director of the Essex Wildlife Fund predicting the impact of change on Essex and by implication on our bees.

The conference is a great opportunity to talk to other beekeepers, share successes and failures and learn from each other. We leave plenty of time to do that including a sit down lunch.

This is the 130th anniversary of the founding of EBKA and we plan to use the conference to mark it. We have ordered a birthday cake! The conference is also where we mark the successes of individuals during the year. We give out the prizes awarded at the honey show and the certificates to those who passed BBKA assessments and exams.

I do hope to see you at the conference, particularly all our new beekeepers. If you have not yet sent your £20 for a place then it's not too late. Send it to me (address on inside cover) payable to EBKA Saffron Walden Division.

Also from Richard:

Warning – Bees in Flues Can Kill

All too often swarms end up in chimney flues and become nigh on impossible to remove. If you are asked about bees in chimneys be aware that there is the possibility that they may block the flue forcing deadly gasses back into the house. So don't tell people that leaving bees in chimneys is safe, it might just not be.

National Honey Show

Jim McNeill

National Honey Show – St Georges College, Weybridge, Surrey
28th to 30th October 2010

A bit of history

In 1874 Thomas Cowan and Charles Abbot founded the British Beekeepers Association and in the same year, Abbot (who clearly had a lot of spare time on his hands) was a key person in the development of a honey show at the 'Crystal Palace' in London. Honey shows became regular events there. The Crystal Palace was an amazing building made from cast iron and glass, more than a third of a mile long, over 100 feet high and had a footprint of almost 100,000 square feet. It was originally built in Hyde Park to house the Great Exhibition of 1851. This was one of the first World Fairs, promoting culture and industry. After the exhibition, the whole building was dismantled and moved to Sydenham Hill in south London where it remained until 1936 when it was destroyed by fire.

The National Honey Show we know today began in 1923 when Kent and Surrey BKA's, who had held two joint shows at Crystal Palace in 1921 and 1922, decided to make the show a national event. Unfortunately the 1936 fire destroyed all the show equipment. The organisers had to start from scratch as someone forgot to check the insurance policy and there was no cover! As the show grew, more space was required and in recent times it has moved to a variety of locations in and around London. Every year the show benches are packed with the very best examples of our craft and a walk around them is an instant education. Want to know what chunk honey should look like? Want to see how perfect a block of wax can be? This is the place. Competition is tough. Entries come mainly from UK but many classes are open to the world and the world's best ship in their honey and wax. Anyone who wins an open class can be sure that their work is of the very highest standard.

This year the show will be bigger than ever. The trade stands will all be together in a brightly lit hall and there will be a proper lecture theatre with tiered seating. A full programme of workshops and lectures with world class speakers will run during the show and there will be a wide selection of equipment and books to buy.

If you would like to read more about the National Honey Show and its history have a look at the website www.honeyshow.co.uk.

Jim McNeill adds:

Why not support your county at the National Honey Show this year. There are 243 classes, so you must be able to find a few that you could enter, whether it's honey, cooking, wax, sowing, photography, mead, inventions, story writing, designing a label, model making. Also there is a competition class for schools—does your local school want to enter this class?

I know you are all getting honey ready for the county show so why not put some

aside for the biggest show of them all THE NATIONAL HONEY SHOW. There are about 25 different judges, so if you don't win at county shows you can still win here—so don't be put off.

I will take your entries up and bring them back for you. They need to be packed fairly tightly as there are a few speed humps and pot holes on the journey. Please do not put two jars in a biscuit tin because the rattle will get on my nerves—try and think off me! If you wish to enter exhibits and also going to the Essex Conference hosted by Saffron Walden, you can give your entries to me at the Conference rather than having to deliver your entries to my home.

I will collect any prize money if you cannot get to the show. But I would urge you to visit the event as it is a good day out—there are big money prizes, (a prize card can help with your sales); there are lectures and workshops going on every day (check the show schedule to see what's on). If you need a copy of the show schedule (available in August) please contact Sandra Rickwood: E-mailsrhoneyshow@googlemail.com Or tel. 020 33 55 8716.

Essex has a section of it's own which is funded with your money. It would be nice to see it full. We all know Essex honey is the best (!) and so competing with honey from other parts of the world should ensure we let others realise that Essex honey is best.

When the M25 car park is running it's an easy venue to find, with unlimited free parking. There is a good restaurant which is not too expensive, All the major appliance manufactures are there so you can see all the bits and pieces your bees would like and which would make your life easier. You might even like to buy some fancy jars to help with your sales.

Jim McNeill, National honey show delegate
Ps. if you have any problems just ring me on 01708 765898.

Technical Topics: Breeding the honeybee **Richard Alabone**

Of all animal species in the world, the honey bee is unique in that the multiple mating of queens creates colonies of half sister workers, fathered by drones of dubious parentage but all from the same geographical area.

Too much in-breeding reduces virility; therefore the inevitable cross mating, within the geographical area, is a good thing.

We know that honey bees have remained virtually unchanged for at least 50,000,000 years and this has been achieved by their unique method of avoiding in-breeding which will destroy a good strain in a few generations. *Apis Mellifera* avoids in-breeding by queens flying several miles to be multiple mated, which has resulted in at least 12 identifiable races, that have bred into 12 different geographical areas to best fit the climate of those areas. This gives beekeepers a wealth of breeds to choose from to make crosses, some being dreadful, while others are very satisfactory.

We all know that plant and animal breeders have made dramatic improvements in output by crossing natural breeds, and bee breeding is no different in that respect. Honey yields can be increased by a factor of 10 by careful selection of crosses. The only problem being that in so doing we have now compromised the individuality of all the different breeds due to the bees own method of avoiding inbreeding. But bees will probably survive another 50,000,000 years despite our intervention.

This makes "pure-bred queens" difficult to produce and the best that can be done is to carefully select breeder queens and only mate them with good drones of the same strain. This is known as line breeding. As a result of multiple mating, the control of suitable breeding is a very inexact science, unless horrible instrumental insemination is used.

We buy pure bred yellow Italian queens from Hawaii, where queens are cheap to produce, which would not survive in this country unless pampered by the bee-keeper. This race of *Apis Mellifera* has the hereditary factors best suited to survive in Italy.

A bee more suited to our climate is the Buckfast, sometimes regarded as a pure breed, but is in fact a carefully contrived first cross originally produced by Brother Adam's beekeepers at Buckfast Abby in Devon. It is highly prolific and hard-working because it is a cross of two separate races. This high degree of virility is almost never achieved in bees of a single race because there is always too much inbreeding. . Brother Adam showed that the first cross of two races produced very different offspring, and by the crossing of two line-bred carefully selected strains the desired characteristics could be achieved to give a user-friendly breed capable of much increased honey yield. This was achieved by crossing, the highly selected European bee, bred at Buckfast Abby over many years, with the bee from Carnica in northern Yugoslavia which has a range of important characteristics like, remarkably good temper, calmness on the comb and resistance to brood diseases.

Today we can buy "Buckfast strain" queens raised in this country which are prolific but sometimes very aggressive due to the difficulty of having pure strains to cross. Other bee breeders are more honest and sell them as "user friendly", or as their own breed.

Carniolan bees were once known here as the "best bee" but they have disappeared into our mongrel population in this country, while they are still line-bred in Germany as I read in Brother Adams book "Breeding the Honey Bee". I make no apology for using his title, as this article was based on his book, published by Northern Bee Books.

For me the interesting thing is the fundamental question of what makes a bee what it is, or for that matter what makes me what I am. We know that heredity plays a part in some way, and although scientists in their wisdom have rejected it, the answer is the inheritance of acquired characteristics. This is what formed the distinct bee races within the species. Scientific opinion dictates that it is the

DNA which is the building block of the species, but biology is not able to explain this, with some biologists believing that there must be an information transfer mechanism between members of all species that dictates species form and instinctive behaviour. This mechanism has been given various names, but for me the obvious one is telepathy, which is very occasionally experienced by humans, and is that same mechanism which dictates growth, form and shares instinctive information between the members of every species. DNA is only the key of each species, rather than the complete description, ensuring that only species information is received, but blending with the acquired characteristics of heredity which is recorded in DNA.

I am aware that this all raises more questions than it answers. Some of the answers are on my website: www.Sublimity.org.uk.

BBKA Forum Penny Learmonth

CONNECT WITH THE BBKA or What has the BBKA ever done for me?

Nearly half of our annual EBKA membership fee is 'capitation' to the BBKA. It is money well spent. The most striking benefit is the Third Party Public and Product Liability Insurance. Surely essential in a litigious world?

Six times a year the BBKA News arrives. This is an excellent publication full of information on research, beekeeping advice, world views and news of forthcoming events. You can also contribute to its letter page.

Importantly in these changing and difficult economic and political times, the BBKA represents us at national, European and international levels. It is our voice into political policy and academic research. The BBKA needs to hear what concerns us.

Each year our voice can be heard at the BBKA Forum in October and the Annual Delegates' Meeting in January. We can put forward topics for discussion and form propositions. Propositions are published well ahead of the meetings so they can be discussed countrywide.

I am the BBKA Delegate for Essex BKA this year. If there is a topic you would like to have aired, or views you'd like to be shared, please contact me. Likewise look out for the issues raised by other areas. Essex has a large membership – we could be influential!

Penny Learmonth
The Watch House, Felsted, Essex CM6 3EF
01371 820398
bbkadelegate@ebka.org

SEASONAL VARIATION IN HONEY YIELDS: 4

Ross Gregory

Ross Gregory has written four articles on the seasonal variation in honey yields. These articles first appeared in Honey Bee Times, Journal of the Wiltshire Beekeepers Association. I would like to thank the Editor of Honey Bee Times and EBees for permission to reprint these articles in the Essex Beekeeper.

This is the last in the series of four articles in which I have examined how annual honey yield relates to the weather and sun spot activity. In the first article in this series I wrote about the effect of weather, notably average temperature during April and May, on the date of the first honey harvest. Analysis of my records since 2002 showed that the warmer the average temperature during April and May then the earlier the date of the first honey harvest has been. In the second article in this series I also reported how average temperature during June and July has affected my total honey harvest. Notably, the warmest year since 2002 was 2003 when my harvest was greatest. With respect to my records, over the past 8 years a difference of one degree Centigrade in average temperature during June-July can mean to me a difference of about 600-700 lbs in the quantity of honey harvested. In the third article I showed that average temperature during April-Jul depends on sun spot activity and that sun spot activity follows a cyclic pattern. However, for the past four years (2006-9) average temperatures (April-July) have been warmer than for the trend since 1982. Notably, during the past couple of years the sun spot activity has been passing through a period of relatively low activity.

In Thorne's Beekeepers News, No.62, January 1994 (pages 7-8), the late Fred Portch presented a comparison between mean annual temperature and annual honey yield for 1982-1992, showing a close relationship between temperature and yield. In the following graph I have taken Fred's yields and plotted them against annual average monthly temperature, °C, for April-July. Although there is scatter in Fred's data it does show a distinct trend of greater yield with higher season average temperature, as does my data presented in Part 2 of this series of articles.

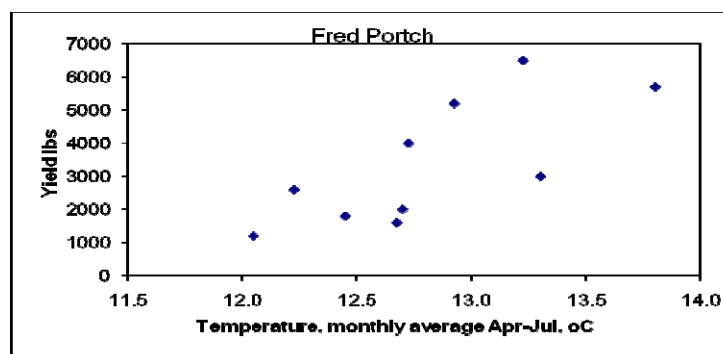


Figure 1: Graph showing how annual honey yield related to average monthly temperature during April-July for Fred Portch's data.

In the second article I showed that my honey yield is associated with temperature, so one might expect yield should also be associated with sun spot activity. The next graph shows this generally to be the case. The same also applies to Fred's data as shown in the subsequent graph.

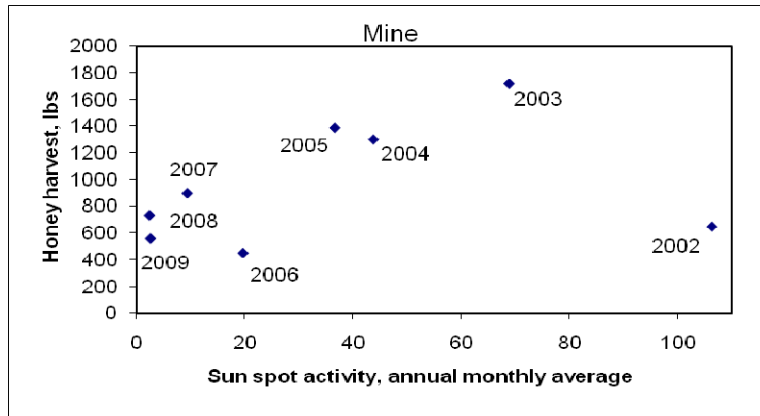
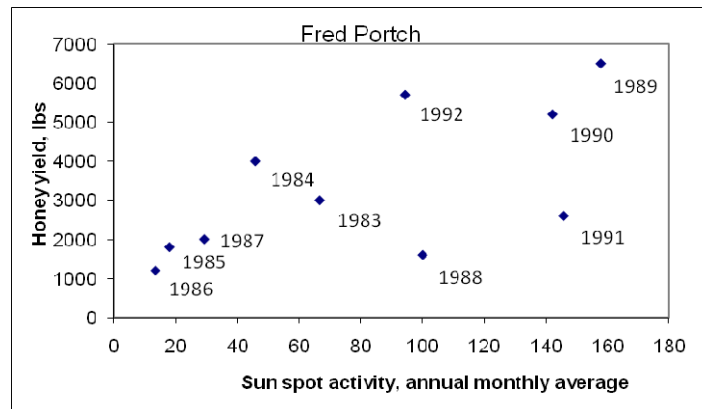


Figure 2: Graph showing how my annual honey harvest has related to annual monthly average sun spot activity during 2002-2009

Figure 3: Graph showing how Fred Portch's annual honey harvest relates to annual monthly average sun spot activity during 1983-1991



What can we conclude from the above and the previous articles? It is clear that the date of the first honey harvest and the weight of the annual harvest depends on the weather, namely temperature, and that the weather is associated with sun spot activity. Additionally, annual honey yield also depends, at least partly, on sun spot activity: the greater the annual sun spot activity then the greater the annual honey yield is likely to be. Therefore, providing sun spot activity continues to follow its cyclic behaviour, we can expect that honey yields generally will increase and reach peak levels during the next 3 to 5 years before declining again. Maximum sun spot activity is predicted to be reached again in June 2013 (<http://solarscience.msfc.nasa.gov/predict.shtml>). Although the poor harvests of the past few years are associated with particularly low sun spot activity, there is also possible indication that our climate during the past four years has been different, being warmer than might be predicted from sun spot activity alone.

A Wasp Trap Roger Barker

We have been inundated with wasps again. The fruit has started to fall because of the lack of water, and numerous varieties of wasps are taking advantage. As you would expect, they are making a nuisance of themselves attacking the hives, one in particular, contained a small colony of bees which preferred the adjacent nuke box. I have now removed several frames from the empty hive and installed two wine bottles, one third filled with a mixture of blackcurrant and orange juice. We have an excellent wasp capture rate.



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Eastern Region Bee Forum Eileen Marrable

Eastern Region Bee Forum, Annual meeting 17 June 2010

Representatives from all the Counties in the Eastern region met with Keith Morgan, Andy Wattam and other seasonal bee inspectors. Giles Budge and Ben Jones from CSL also attended the meeting.

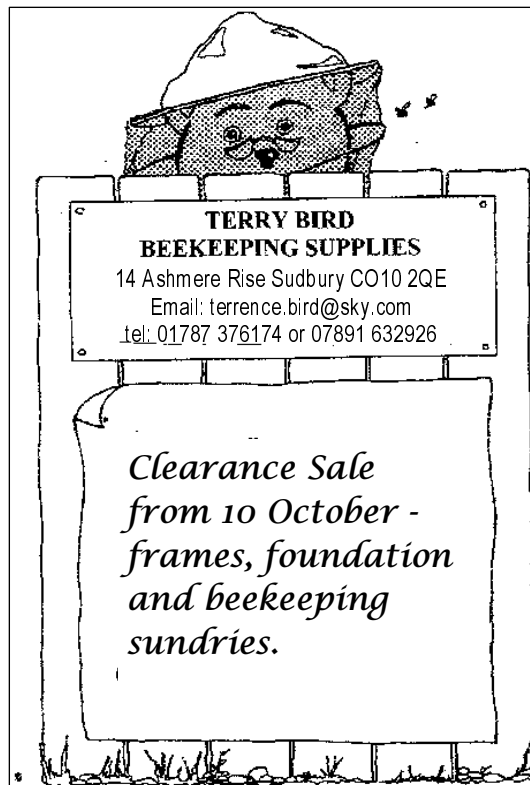
A summary of winter losses suffered by each county was presented. The figures for 2009 can be viewed on Beebase with the figures for 2010 published in due course.

Some County and Divisional Associations were awarded grants from the Co-op and other sources.

Recording of Diseases for last year: the number of AFB cases remained approximately the same as the previous year but many more cases of EFB were recorded. The Eastern Region and East Anglia are perceived as vulnerable to the introduction of exotic pests because of the number of ports and airports in the region. The inspectors have held Exotic Pest inspections in 200 apiaries and conducted Random Apiary surveys during the summer. Contingency plans are in place should there be notification of the presence of an exotic pest. Also a contingency planning exercise has been held in the Essex area during August.

We were given an update on the EARS project by the student conducting the research.

She is investigating how mites are accepted in the colony and how they are able to deceive the host's recognition system. Also a report was given by two Phd students who are conducting research into the various strains of EFB, how it spreads and the importance of environmental factors. Both students are funded by BDI.



Examination Results Jane Ridler

BKA Examination Success in Essex in 2010

Basic Assessment

Garry Furnell	William Stephens
Sean Ferguson	Fraser Bateman
John Rand	Wendy Begley
Mohammed Abderraziq	Lyndon Hughes
Anthony Edwards	Phillip Jude
Suzi Goose	Edward Hampson

Module 2 - Honeybee Products and Forage

Deryck Johnson	Pass
Penelope Learmonth	Pass
Malcolm Legg	Pass
Jane Ridler	Credit
Richard Ridler	Pass

Module 7 – Selection and Breeding of Honeybees

Eileen Marrable	Credit
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The certificates will be presented by the President at the Annual Conference on 23rd October.

Many congratulations to the twelve Essex beekeepers who achieved the Basic Assessment qualification this summer and thanks to all assessors and apiarists who made the assessments possible. I don't think it was too awe-inspiring for the candidates and it's such a good qualification to go for – giving confidence in handling and stimulating study. After all beekeeping does require a good knowledge base. I'm hoping that many of the beginners from a couple of years ago will be applying for the Basic Assessment in 2011.

All the entrants for the module exams in March were successful too, so well done to all. The module exams are written theory papers, but there are also Bee Husbandry qualifications above the Basic Assessment for those who are more practically minded. I'll be writing with more information in future Essex Beekeepers, but meanwhile, if you're interested for next year please email me at jane.ridler@uwclub.net so we can start to think of organising learning support in various corners of the county.



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Penny Comments: I collected this queen in her swarm back in June. Curiously they were on the ground like a giant pat. (*Ed. It looks like the queen's wings had been clipped.*) For a couple of weeks things looked good but then I noticed that the colony had begun to contract and then this was all that was left. There was a queen cell but obviously not a viable queen egg. Queen was killed and the remaining bees united with another colony.