

Chairman's Report

The renewed ban on the use of Neonicotinoids, the promise of government reforms on the stewardship of our priceless asset 'The Land' and an uncertain future post Brexit has made 2017 an eventful year. A mild winter, which was exceptionally dry and an early spring with many crops going over too quickly together with early swarming, was followed by heavy rain and wind in July. We had the confirmed sighting and destruction of Asian Hornet nests again, which suggests it is only a question of time when we have a sighting in Essex.

EBKA members cannot have failed to notice the work that our volunteers, both at Divisional and County levels have done on members' behalf. It is important for members to get involved, otherwise nothing will happen. Our membership remains stable with enthusiastic new members getting involved in the craft. To those members I ask that they also consider helping others at Divisional and County level. The Association needs your support. I thank everyone who has worked on the CEC while I have been Chair and welcome all of those who have stood up and volunteered to fill the vacated posts. Sadly like any community we lose friends and members. Dick Thomas, who passed away in January was a former Chairman of the Association's Central Executive Committee (CEC). He did a huge amount to make the EBKA what it is today.

We have a new County Treasurer, Tom Keeper who is getting to grips with ensuring our financial position remains strong with good reserves. We have reviewed our capitation where, for the past two years, we have absorbed the rise by the BBKA. With Tom's advice we now find we are unable to support this and fees have to be aligned reversing the previous decision by the CEC. This is necessary to allow us to support our charitable objectives.

The navigator of the EBKA has been Michael Webb, the General Secretary who, for the past four years, organized the workload of the CEC and arranged our AGMs. Michael will step down this year as his term of office has come to an end. He has given his time freely and ensured that the CEC considered issues in a fair and balanced way. We appreciate all his work in shaping the CEC and the EBKA. Michael will continue to chair the Show Committee.

Jean Smye, the Editor of the 'Beekeeper', is retiring after five years of dedicated work meticulously producing the monthly magazine, which goes back to the 1930s. It is imperative look towards the future on what platforms we deliver our magazine to show good use of members' fees.

Our Divisions are collectively represented by Divisional Voting Members (DVMs) at the CEC. As Accountable Trustees they perform a very important role in stewardship of the EBKA as laid down by the Charity Commission. We set up a Governance Sub Committee last year to look in depth at our organization. It is important that we can demonstrate good governance

taking account of the new data protection legislation, which comes into force in May. This Sub Committee is led by Ted Gradosieiski with a very skillful and dedicated team. It has been very hard work for these volunteers.

Our education programme continues to make progress with members taking exams. We held countywide Module workshops as well as the Basic examination workshops run by our Master Beekeepers, Jane and Richard Ridler who successfully teach "old dogs new tricks". Well done to all.

We would like to see more members take advantage of all EBKA funded opportunities. The 2017 NBU Bee Health Day at Cooped Hall was a great success with Regional RBI's Keith Morgan and Sandra Gray combining with help from members of Epping Forest Division. We also said our goodbye and thanks to Peter Heath, the SBI retiring after 40 years. Next year we would like to see new faces at this county wide event. It is a unique situation to hear and see the sharp end of disease with real examples.

The Essex Honey Show took on a new horizon with a new site at the Orsett Show. We must thank all those who graciously volunteered their time and energy making it a very memorable day. From the positive response of the public who visited the marquee I believe we are fulfilling our mandate to promote our craft. The 86th National Honey Show at Sandown Park Racecourse produced richly deserved prizes, notably for Mike Barke 'in the big 12 & 24 jar classes'. Jim McNeill, our NHS rep, transports and sets up entries for us; this is a big responsibility making it happen!

Colchester ran the EBKA 2017 Annual Conference. The conference was exceptionally good with thought provoking speakers, an appetizing lunch, presentations of Honey Show cups and examination certificates together with a top quality raffle. Colchester did a great job and must be congratulated for all their hard work. The route around the Divisions continues with the baton for 2018 being passed to Braintree. If your Division is coming up in the next few years start planning now - be involved!

The Ted Hooper Memorial Lecture had its second year with two wonderful speakers, Professor Dave Goulson and local horticulturist, Darren Lerigo. We are looking for volunteers to help run this very popular educational event which we operate at cost. This year the Lecture is taking place at the Lecture Theatre, Writtle College on the 22nd April.

The nine Divisions have undertaken interesting and varied activities over the year, including training, lectures, demonstrations and workshops. This takes a great deal of effort and good humour to organise and implement by willing volunteers. It is this attitude that binds our Association together. If you have not thought about volunteering now is the time to put your hand up and get to know other members in a meaningful way.

Ian Nichols

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