

THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



**Essex Beekeeping Association's 2011 Conference
Derek Webber with speakers Clive de Bruyn & Karsten Munstedt.
Photo by Paul Abbott**

Monthly Magazine of the E.B.K.A

No. 564

www.essexbeekeepers.com

**December
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.

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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.

December 2011 and January 2012

- 1 Dec. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. Preparation for Divisional 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.
- 5 Jan. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. Divisional AGM and winter inspection with David Tyler.
- 13 Jan. *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park. Divisional AGM
- 19 Jan. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Epping Forest** at Chingford Horticultural Hall Larkshall Rd, London E4 6NH. Epping Forest Beekeepers' Association Annual General Meeting.
- 25 Jan. *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Divisional AGM.
- 26 Jan. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Colchester** at Langham Community Centre CO4 5PB . Divisional AGM
- 27 Jan. *Friday 8.00pm* **Braintree** at the Constitutional Club CM7 1TY. Divisional AGM.
- 3 Feb. *Friday 7.15pm* **Saffron Walden** at Dunmow Day Centre, Gt Dunmow, CM6 1A. Annual dinner and Divisional AGM.

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

December 7th

January 11th

February 15th

March 14th

County Pheromones Richard Ridler (Chairman)

The growth in what's come to be known as natural beekeeping is something I hope our association will embrace. In my division I know of two members with top bar hives operating both Warre (vertical style) hives and the more common horizontal type of top bar hive; there may be others. We should be careful not reject those who choose more natural beekeeping without properly understanding it and their reasons for adopting it. The rise of natural beekeeping undoubtedly echoes the growing public sensitivity to environmental issues and my guess is that its following will grow. There are some people in the world of beekeeping with assumptions that removable frame beekeeping is the only way of keeping bees and this can lead to discrimination against natural beekeeping. The syllabus of the basic assessment for example only tests on movable frame hives currently. I hope we all will be open minded, welcome innovation and recognise that the way that we have traditionally taught beekeeping is not the only way.

From the Archives: County Life Membership and the Book of Commemoration

At the AGM 2011 of EBKA it was announced that a new book of commemoration had been designed to mark all the people and events within the EBKA. The Annual Conference is recorded every year as to Presidents, Chairmen and Life Members. The 'in memoriam' section records all the members of the EBKA who have died. The Book is brought to the EBKA AGM and the Conference; it is available to be seen anytime if you would like to contact Penny Learmonth.

Geoff Mills wrote an article in the April 2004 issue of the Essex Beekeeper. Some of those Geoff was writing about have since died. I thought it time for the Book of Commemoration to receive greater publicity. Also I would like to receive further updates as Geoff Mills started in 2004 for County Life Members—Ed.

Below is Geoff's article from April 2004.

The Book of Commemoration (BoC) was presented in February 1950 to Frank Deamer, chairman of EBKA, by Archie Horton, who was chairman of Romford Division, as a permanent tribute to all loyal workers of the Association. Since then the highlights and activities of the Association have been recorded starting with the formation of the Essex Beekeepers' Association in 1880. The Chain of Office and the BoC both record the presidents of the Association.

Our first president was Earl Rosslyn, followed by 17 others (Archie Horton doing two terms). The Chain of Office, donated in 1979 by Kittie Dodd in memory of her late husband, is worn at formal meetings and carries 18 medallions naming presidents.

County Life Membership (CLM) is given by the EBKA to recognise the exceptional work done for the Association by members of longstanding. Divisions also have their Life Memberships which recognises the work done by members for their Divisions. To date (*i.e.* April 2004) there has been 41 CLMs of whom some eight survive. I have had the privilege of knowing and meeting 27 of them.

The contributions made by all CLMs are not recorded in the BoC so it was suggested to me by Les Gilbert of Braintree Division that, perhaps, I could write up what I knew about them. I feel that what I know must be incomplete, so this article is intended to provoke and stir some memories amongst members and life members who might wish to add to mine. I would suggest that this can be done by writing to the editor of The Essex Beekeeper or to me. I hope that subsequently some space could be found in the BoC to record a few of these memories. I

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MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE E.B.K.A.
EBKA website: www.ebka.org
No 472 APRIL 2004
Registered Charity Number 1031419

apologise for any errors you may find in this record.

Going back the furthest shows that **Alf Gunn was elected a CLM in 1960**. Alf was a dedicated member whose memory is made permanent by the trophy that carries his name and is presented to the winner of the dry wine class of flower wines each year. An engraved goblet is also presented to the winner for retention. The cost is taken from the fund set up by his friends. Alf ran the County Honey Show for many years as secretary and had other executive positions making a total of 50 years service to EBKA. He was a member of the Wickham Bishops branch until it was incorporated into Braintree Division. He was over 100 years old when he died.

This brings me to longevity because recently I represented the EBKA at a memorial service held in Mile End Church, Colchester, for John Rogers, another CLM. He died this January in his 100th year. John was known to me as a regular judge at the County Honey Show during my 15 years as Show secretary. His talents were many and he eventually joined Colchester Grammar School as a woodwork teacher. One of his wood-working pupils was there and he was in his 70s! **John's wife was also a CLM.**

Eddie Avey BEM NDB was another CLM and I remember her as always willing to help new members get started with their beekeeping. She kept her bees in the front garden and the postman had to run the gauntlet to deliver her mail. She never used a veil or any protective clothing over her skirt and seemed immune to the numerous stings she got on a number of occasions when dealing with aggressive bees. She was a bee inspector for a number of years. Because of her interest with those starting to keep bees, three awards were set up from a fund donated from her estate. One of these is for members of the Chelmsford Division, another is for the best three beginners in the county each year, decided by the top passes in the Basic Examination. The third award is for exhibitors aged between 12 and 25 in the National Honey Show. Eddie was Organiser of the Pollination Scheme set up by Ted Hyde of Chelmsford Division. Sadly, all of this pollination work has gone... but the Scheme survives (just). Eddie received her BEM for services to the craft of beekeeping.

John Meekey was another CLM and he served the county as treasurer for 25 years. John was in the police force and he did not have any mechanical transport to move his bees about. He had a number of sites in the county and one to the south of London. Not to be daunted he used to move a hive by wheelbarrow and train to as near his destination as possible. In one move he had them on the platform at Stratford, east London, and they escaped from the hive so you can see the sort of problem that confronted him and many other passengers.

Brian and Betty Wheeler were both made CLMs in 1977. Brian was a dentist by profession and Betty did a lot of work for the Red Cross. Brian was interested in breeding bees and is best known for his publication *One Hundred Years of Honey*, celebrating the EBKA's centenary in 1980.

In 1984 the Reverend AD Ost or East Hanningfield was made a CLM, together with **George and Peggy Linsell**. George served as county treasurer and followed Alf Gunn on the Show Committee. George and Peggy still live in Ingatestone.

Before I had joined EBKA, **Clifford (AC) Brown was made a CLM in 1965.**

When I first met Clifford he was a retired teacher and lived near Stansted. He produced a county newsletter for many years on a Gestetner duplicating machine which always seemed to be breaking down, We often saw mice running under the machine when beekeeping meetings were held at his home. I remember typing on those flimsy 'skins' and having to correct errors by using a white erasing paint - a long way from using a word processor. No spell checker or ability to vary fonts.

Geoff & Mrs Gosling were made CLMs in 1968. Goff, as county secretary, was dedicated and professional in his execution of his work for the Association. I met Mrs Gosling only briefly at the first Essex Honey Shows when I became secretary so I must leave it to others to fill out this gap in my knowledge.

Mr & Mrs Herbert Holmes of the Grange, Maylandsea, were made CLMs in 1970. Dengie Hundred was reconstituted as Maldon and District in 1951 and Herbert was secretary and Esther was treasurer. Lucerne was one of the crops in that area and many group meetings were held there with fine teas provided by Esther. In the garden was a mulberry bush which is recorded in the Domesday Book. Herbert produced some very fine honey and in his memory his sons donated a trophy to the County Show which goes to the family or beekeeper with the most points acquired at the Show.

In 1966 Percy Brightman was made a CLM and I first met Percy when I took over his duties of Examinations Officer for the county. He was also a judge and member of the Wax Chandlers' Guild and I remember him for his fine beeswax products. I also learned from him a lot about moulding a one pound block of wax.

JR Dodd was Kittie Dodd's husband and he was made a CLM in 1967; twenty years later Kittie was made a CLM. Kittie, who died recently was made Patron of the Association.

Mr & Mrs Claud Martin were both made CLMs in 1977. Claud is well known to me as an agent for Taylors of Welwyn (taken over by Thome's) when he lived at Little Sir Hughes, Great Baddow. He also was a participant in the Pollination Scheme and was an orchardist by profession.

Ted Hooper NDB MBE and Joy received their County Life Memberships in 1972. Ted is a legend and well known for his several publications, particularly for his Guide to Bees and Honey, first published in 1976 and translated into several languages. Ted was County Beekeeping Instructor at Writtle College and certainly taught me most of my beekeeping. Ted and Joy recently visited the EBKA Conference held at Harlow last year. Ted also has been awarded a MBE for his contribution to beekeeping. He has served on the BBKA Executive and was EBKA president from 1983 until 1998.

Les Gilbert, now in his nineties, has been a CLM since 1989 which recognises his work on the County Executive and at the numerous County Shows. He was chairman of the Show Committee for some 15 years while I was secretary and hence I know how well he has helped to support EBKA, especially at the Shows at Great Leighs. He is especially remembered nationally for his 'Gilbert Louvre', an adjustable entrance block enabling the hive entrance to be reduced to be-

tween one to six bee holes to stop robbing or prevent entry of mice. He is an innovator. He has also put plenty of exhibits into the Show and his name appears on many trophies. He has always been on hand to move items of stored equipment from the Association shed at the Showground to the marquee and back again to the shed after the Show. He has also chaired County Executive meetings.

Sid Barker was made a CLM around 1990 after a lifetime with bees and service to EBKA and in 1999 became EBKA president. Sid has helped tremendously over the years and been a prominent exhibitor at the Great Leighs Show and is well remembered for his beautiful chess set moulded in beeswax. By trade a wood worker, he of course built his own hives. In the Honey Show marquee he would frequently be seen talking to aU ages viewing the observation hives.

FW Claridge was, according to the BoC, a noted queen rearer and importer of Penna queens. He was a producer of bee equipment and a show judge.

Leonard Dix, a founder member of Saffron Walden Division, was made a CLM in 1966. He very successfully showed at county and national levels. He was a highly practical, industrious, ingenious and inventive beekeeper and always ready to give helpful advice.

TW Quarmbly and his wife Marion are only known to me through seeing the name Quarmbly on a number of cups. I understand that they were involved in running the County Honey Show for a number of years. They became CLMs in 1963.

GA Taylor was made a CLM in 1956 and a fund exists to pay for the prime lecture at each year's Conference. Each year the GA Taylor Mazer is awarded for the best dry and sweet meads.

Mrs Eliza Leigh Burt was made a CLM in 1956. She was a founder of Wickham Bishops Division, and her name appears on a cup awarded for the best cut comb.

Dr Castledon was made a CLM for duties associated with Saffron Walden Division.

Other names of CLMs appear in the BoC of whom I have no knowledge, and these are Arbel Mary Aldous, Miss E Gordon, and Mr HC Mills; all made CLMs in 1956. Olive L Clapham was made a CLM in 1959, and W Gould in 1960. Can anyone fill in details of these please?

I apologise if I have made errors or omissions in this resume, and if I have then please write to the editor of The Essex Beekeeper.

Finally, I had the honour to be made a CLM in 1997 after having served on the County Executive Committee for a number of years as Show Secretary, Pollination Organiser, author of the County Handbook and keeper of the county membership register.

Beekeeping tips No. 11—Winter work for the beekeeper by Pollinator

Winter gives us the opportunity to make sure all our equipment is fit for purpose.

Supers and their contents may require attention. Corners of the woodwork, where the hive tool has been inserted often become compressed or worn away and wasps can enter between boxes. Additionally, when clearer boards are placed under these damaged supers they can be robbed out by bees from other hives. Small holes made by woodpeckers can usually be filled with exterior grade Polyfilla. Damaged corners need to be cut away and the woodwork replaced by good timber glued into position, with waterproof glue, and held in position by gimp pins (Similar to those used to nail frames together). Do make sure the heads of the nails are well punched in to be level with the top of the wood so they do not obstruct insertion of the hive tool. A similar technique is required where the woodpecker has damaged the sides at the top or bottom of supers ... woodpeckers find making holes between boxes is the easier way into the hive. Also where the woodwork is thinner, for example in handholds, they often make holes. Colonies usually survive such attacks by woodpeckers but the real damage is that the holes allow access to mice and rats. Once a mouse nest is built inside the hive the bees find it very difficult to co-exist and frequently it spells the demise of the colony.

Super frames, especially those that have been immediately above the queen excluder, can have an excess of pollen in them and when stored for the Winter the pollen deteriorates so that it is of no use to the bees in the following season. It is best scraped out by the beekeeper, as the bees will find it nearly impossible to remove once the frame is back on the hive. Alternatively, if you over winter on a brood and a half you can make sure the frames containing pollen go back on the hive.

Spare floors can be made ready for use in the Spring by scorching with a blowtorch to remove wax and to remove moth grubs that have made a hole in the woodwork. It is desirable to replace the floor on every hive early in the year even if it means replacing the mouseguard.

Periodically check that hives tilt slightly forward so that water cannot collect on the floor but runs out of the entrance or through the gaps at both ends of the entrance block. Ted Hooper always maintained that it was a good idea to invert the entrance block so that the entrance was at the top of the entrance block. The idea was that dead bees could not block the entrance as they were on the floor below the entrance.

A Scottish Beekeeper in France part II **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.

After just three months of beekeeping in France things were starting to go seriously wrong. A freak snowstorm in May had come just as both my new hives had swarmed and the queens gone on their mating flight. Both seemed to have perished in the snow and the colonies were queenless. After four weeks Hive No 1 had a laying worker, the other nothing. All seemed lost.

Throughout the rest of May and the first few weeks of June I checked the colonies regularly, hoping that at least one might come right. During this period the weather improved dramatically and I stood by helplessly watching two amazing crops of forage pass me by. First the valleys were lit up with candles of horse chestnut blossom and then a fortnight later whole hillsides were aglow with thousands of blooming acacia trees. I now witnessed and understood why the local French beekeepers practise small scale migratory honey production. Groups of thirty or forty hives would suddenly appear from nowhere in the forests that were in bloom, then vanish after a fortnight to appear a few weeks later on a new part of the forest where a new crop of honey was waiting to be collected.

Meanwhile, my bees were dwindling and I was actively looking for a local apiculturist who could give me a frame of new laid eggs in order to produce an emergency queen in Hive No 2. Then, to my amazement, eight weeks after it had become queenless, Hive No 2 suddenly had a beautiful, symmetrical, three inch slab of new laid eggs! A quick search revealed a healthy queen, certainly not a 'scrubber', who was quickly marked and left to get on with it. How it had taken two months from swarming to the new queen coming into lay, I have no idea, but I was very relieved. Especially knowing that because the season is so long in the south of France, there should be ample time for the stock to build.

That left the problem of the colony with the laying worker(s). A laying worker is impossible to see and only lays drone eggs. I only know of three ways to get rid of them. The first is to destroy the stock. The second involves taking the bees in their box several hundred yards from the site and scattering every bee on the ground. It is alleged that laying workers will not fly, so the workers return to the hive without the miscreants, still leaving the colony queenless. The third and most surefire method is to unite the misbehaving hive with a queenright colony. The presence of a laying queen completely suppresses the laying worker and the host colony benefits by an injection of foraging bees. Two days after discovering that I had a laying queen in No 2, on Midsummers Day, I used the simple newspaper method to unite it with No 1.

Within three weeks the new queen had laid up seven perfect frames of brood and has continued to keep these filled as the young bees hatch. Despite the fact that the workers must have been very busy keeping up pollen supplies for so

much brood, the foragers still had time to collect nectar. By the end of July I had my first full super of ripe French honey and thirty pounds of very light flavour-some honey were duly extracted and bottled. Clearly there are vast crops of honey to be produced in this area, which for me begs the question what to do with it. The obvious answer is sell it. Every Saturday on the local market in Saint Girons there are three stalls selling nothing but honey and pollen. But the prices seem to me to be extortionate – over £10 a kilo, and not even labelled to legal EU standards! So I am seriously considering offering mine at half that price to our village shop and letting the proprietor undercut the market.

Perhaps because it is so hot, the bees produce prodigious quantities of brace comb and wax and any gap in the hive fills with wild comb. In Scotland I would collect this and put it in my home made solar extractor in the hope that there would be at least a few hot days when the wax would melt. Here the problem is stopping the wax melting – even in the hive. With daytime full sunlight temperatures regularly exceeding 100F hives are painted with a reflective metallic paint to stop the frames melting inside. I built a new solar wax extractor and this can easily work for five or six hours a day.

So it is now August, the sweet chestnut flowering season is over, clover and meadowsweet abound and all the beekeepers are moving their hives back into the valley floors. For the next four weeks the woods and meadows are awash with Himalayan Balsam, a fantastic source of pollen for the end of the season. Though the commercial beekeepers take their hives 4,000 ft up to the heather. Yes, the French Pyrenees do have heather moors. But in an area where beekeeping is so commercialised there is an added risk – I heard of one beekeeper this season who had 50 hives stolen in a single night!

For me the next stage will be preparing to overwinter, with the possibility of splitting my single strong hive. I may gamble on two weaker hives building over a very long, warm autumn and surviving the winter. But that's a story for next year.

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**Annual Conference of the Essex Beekeepers Association
held at Barleylands Centre, Saturday 1st October 2011.
Derek Webber**

The venue was a fitting setting for this important occasion which carried the title Reassessing our Knowledge. The weather was fine and around a hundred people were present to enjoy the excellent choice of speakers.

The lecture hall was filled to capacity and the day started with a lecture from Prof. Dr. Karsten Munstedt who qualified as a doctor in 1992 and specialised in obstetrics and gynaecology. Since 2005 he has been head of department at Justus-Liebig-University, Giessen specialising in research into bee products and their potential use in modern medicine.

We were given much evidence of the results of his and other researcher's work from the many Apitherapeutic Societies worldwide. Royal jelly carried a long list of cures but the Professor pointed out that claims should be supported by results but many claims had not been investigated. Results from some investigations into bee products showed that they carried healing properties absent in modern drugs.

Honey used in medicine was irradiated to kill unwanted organisms but this did not reduce the antibacterial action of the honey. The osmotic effect of honey on bacteria reduces the water content of the organism leading to death. Honey was implanted into wound dressings with good effect. Manuka and forest honey were providing the best results in medical trials but Lime and Acacia honey were very promising. Honey mixed with other chemicals sometimes gave improved results especially with radiation burns. Diabetic ulcers responded quickly to honey treatment. A picture was shown of a patient with breast cancer which had the added problem of producing a serious odour. The odour was removed after



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treatment with honey.

Mention was made of pollen and propolis. The makeup of propolis with its variable nature made it difficult to use in medicine but it was interesting to learn that 5% of German beekeepers were allergic to propolis. Pollen was a useful medicament in treating prostrate problems.

Clive de Bruyn needs no introduction to the vast majority of beekeepers in Essex or indeed the beekeepers of the world. He brought a breath of fresh air to the subject of The Drone Congregation Area. Pictures of his involvement with experiments on a golf course on the Isle of Man were very interesting. This linked in well with Gilbert White's findings whilst on his walks in the Hampshire village of Selborne many years ago. His regular walks in the summer brought him to a place where, every year, he could hear a humming sound coming from high in the air. His recorded works of that time show just how little has been discovered over the years. It is very hard to believe that, with modern technology, more has not been discovered about this peculiar habit of the honey bee. This was Clive at his best.

Gerry Collins' name can be found in many places in the BBKA. He has been on the Exam Board for several years now and has done great things to further the learning side of our beekeeping. He is always active with his camera and this was reflected in his lecture What's Going on in My Hive? He drew the meeting into active participation and they were invited to tell him what his pictures showed. He started at the outside of the hive and went through pretty well every part which could be occupied by bees. There was even a picture of bees removing their Apigard. His time spent with his camera was used very effectively in that final lecture.

Trophies won in the honey show section of the Essex Show, also staged at the Barleylands Centre earlier in the year, were presented and this made a fitting end to a very successful day. Thank you Chelmsford Division for giving us such an enjoyable day.

**Mr Beesy has 30lb buckets @ £1.50 each
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Call Richard Alabone 01245 259288**

Old News Alert

Taken from West Sussex County Council web page first seen in Manchester Bee News September 2011 courtesy of EBees.

Food fraud probe uncovers fake honey

Date: 08 June 2011

Press Release Number: 4458

A fake food fraud probe by West Sussex County Council Trading Standards Service led to officers seizing 1.1 tonnes of counterfeit honey from a London importer.

They went to the importer's premises after discovering the problem at a Worthing retailer, where samples were taken and confirmed to be illegal.

"The tests showed they did not contain any honey at all – just a syrup based substance. This led us to visiting the suppliers, where we found so-called Hasbal Honey with Syrup and so-called Aynoor Honey with Nuts," said Graeme MacPherson, Head of Trading Standards.

"The retail value of the illegal goods totalled £7740. Investigations are ongoing but we would urge the public to look out for these products and notify us".

Pete Bradbury, County Council Cabinet Member for Public Protection, said: "Our Trading Standards Service will continue to crackdown on food fraud in our county because it protects both the consumer and commerce.

"This work highlights the importance of food traceability as officers were able to identify the source of the offending product and remove it quickly from the market.

"We have ensured that consumers get true value for their money and commerce is supported because the sale of fake goods impacts upon legitimate honey producers."

http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/your_council/news/press_office/press_release_archive/2011/june_2011/food_fraud_probe_uncovers_fake.aspx



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More photos from Essex Beekeepers' Conference 2011



Gerry Collins being introduced by Jean Smye. Photo by Paul Abbott.



Karsten Munstedt commencing his talk on apitherapy. The slide shows details of Holistic Apitherapy as opposed to the ordinary scientific based apitherapy. Photo by Geoff Mills