

# The Essex Beekeeper

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Monthly Magazine of the  
Essex Beekeepers' Association  
[www.ebka.org](http://www.ebka.org)

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## Update From Jane Ridler, CEC Chair

I hope you have managed your bees through this very cold and difficult Spring and that (as I write) the swarming season doesn't descend with a vengeance as May warms up. I think it's been particularly difficult for the newer beekeepers, with less than usual in person support (for them) and the worry of starvation (for the bees....). Maybe you've been over-cautious and have ended up with too much sugar in your brood boxes?! This is more likely to happen if you have 12x14 brood boxes like we do.



The CEC for 2021/22 was welcomed at the May meeting. **Vanessa Wilkinson** is our new General Secretary and we have three new voting members for Divisions: Colchester, **Andrew Linley**; Epping Forest, **Simon Nicholson**; and Saffron Walden, **Linda Yeats**. **Dave Garratt** is the new Essex Bee Health Secretary and **Dee Inkersole** will be taking over as the new Editor of The Essex Beekeeper. Good Luck to Dee, who I am sure will take over seamlessly from **Robert Silver**.

We had a successful **County Health & Safety Workshop** by Zoom on 10th April, with representatives from every Division. Thanks go to **Colin Rumble & Ollie Sackett** of Southend Division for helping organise. I hope that all Divisions now have a Health & Safety Officer and/or strategies in place so that all meetings have a risk assessment completed before events.

The **County General Husbandry Course**, theory part, which was held over the winter and included 12 evening sessions over Zoom and was completed at the end of March. Because i am a BBKA General Husbandry Assessor, I know that Essex has the most entries of all the applicants nationally this year, and. And from this course we have another group who are lined up to take the exam in 2022; this is very encouraging! The practical sessions are now underway, with some general apiary sessions to practise the tasks required in the assessment and also some visits to this year's candidates' apiaries. **I would really encourage post-novice beekeepers to consider taking this BBKA qualification.** It's the only one which takes place in your own apiary and it really cements in your mind all the management tasks you need to be a well-rounded beekeeper. This long course has been quite an undertaking and I doubt that the attendance would have held out so well if we had been free to go out and about through the winter.

I'd like to thank **Richard Ridler and Ted Grad**, fellow Gen. Hus. Assessors, **Pat Allen & Deryck Johnson**, highly experienced beekeepers and instructors, and **Steph Green**, Exam Secretary and administrator in chief! All have contributed much time in preparation and delivery. And Good Luck to those taking the assessment over the next few months!

The committee at Maldon 'HQ', have, with support of their AGM applied to change their official name from Dengie Hundred, Maldon and District, to **Maldon and Dengie 100 (M&D)**. This ties in with the common practice of Divisions using their main town as their name, although it was acknowledged that Dengie does have historical importance. All members of EBKA need to be aware of legal matters. The details of lawful labelling requirements for honey for sale need sharing regularly, and personal websites should not state that the EBKA charity endorses them or advertises other retail opportunities in the name of EBKA. Divisional websites are certainly endorsed by EBKA! So, care should be maintained about their content.

At the CEC, we discussed the upcoming **County events**. Although the **Orsett Show has been cancelled for 2021**, it is hoped that with the inspiration of the Honey Show committee, a necessarily different, but nevertheless worthwhile and enjoyable **Honey Show can be organised this September**. The **Annual Conference**, which takes place as winter approaches, is more problematical. Chelmsford committee has deliberated long and hard over this, but understandably, has concluded that an indoor, closely packed lecture event with much catering and social mixing, even with careful distancing, is **too high a risk** one way or another. Whether it goes ahead or has to be cancelled, we are hoping to arrange a **Zoom Ted Hooper Memorial Lecture** around that time, which would not create such difficulties and go some way to bridge the gap into 2022.

Let's hope we can do some useful beekeeping this summer at least!

*Regards, Jane Ridler, Chair, EBKA* 🐝

**Articles appearing in The Essex Beekeeper are not necessarily the views of either Essex Beekeepers' Association or its Editor.**

To ensure inclusion within the diary of county-wide events would divisions provide the editor with details of local meetings by the 4th of the previous month.

Dee Inkersole: [editor@ebka.org](mailto:editor@ebka.org)

## Colossus; Winter Losses

Last year several members participated in the COLOSS survey for Winter Losses in 2019. The organisation has thanked us for this support and for the third time in a number of years they were able to submit a return to the pan European COLOSS Monitoring initiative.

Winter losses were on average 10% for England, which represent moderate losses for the second year in a row.

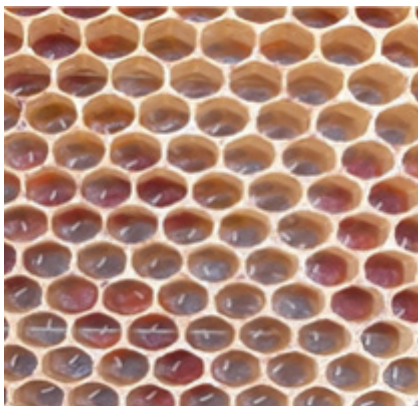
They are again asking for members' help in completing the Spring Hive Losses Survey for this year. COLOSS is inviting all English beekeepers to complete the hive loss survey for 2020 and we can contribute data for our region.

This year's questionnaire can be found by following this link: [www.bee-survey.com/index.php/253937](http://www.bee-survey.com/index.php/253937) For more information follow the links from the COLOSS website: <https://coloss.org/> 🐝

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## Breeding Queens Is The Easiest Thing In The World Of Beekeeping

Go to a hive you have decided to use for breeding your future colonies and supplying eggs. This is normally a strong hive one which you are sure has no diseases particularly varroa but with the characteristics you need in your new queens. Place a comb of foundation in the centre of the brood-nest and feed.



You will normally find that the Queen is attracted to this new frame immediately it is drawn and will fill with eggs. As you are not forcing the queen to lay at a certain time you must check daily. When you see eggs, your time starts from then.

Find your queen and place in a nucleus with an extra comb of bees and food and place a short distance away.



You have now made your parent hive queenless. Take out the new frame and cut in a zigzag line giving about four downwards pointing triangles and replace in the position you took it from.

Close up the frames and close the hive. Feed thin syrup (Try to imitate the same mixture they would be bringing in from the flowers, too thick and they will have to waste time sending out water gatherers to thin it) 25% sugar is good.

On the '4th Day' your eggs will hatch.

The hive now being queenless, the bees will pull out a number of Queen cells on the bottom and side of the zigzags.

You are then in command. The queens will hatch in 11-12 days (16 days from being laid) . These cells

can be cut from the frame using a pair of scissors or a sharp serrated knife and placed immediately in cages two days before hatching. This is important as occasionally a queen will hatch prematurely and will kill the rest in minutes. From the cages you can select the Queens of your choice to lead your hives towards a successful future for you and the bees.



## Queen Breeding Cont'd

The old queen can be returned to this hive after 72 hours and placed under an excluder, where she will continue as if nothing had happened. Or you can re-queen your colony by giving them one of your new queens. If you place new foundation in the bottom brood-chamber you will have prevented them from swarming and you can make some small nucs with the frames in the top box.

It is always an advantage to have a few queens available during the summer and autumn as most beekeepers lose a queen during this time. Try keeping a few mini nucs, they are most interesting and will give you a lot of pleasure.

*Barrie Powell. Ipswich & East Suffolk Beekeepers' Association* 

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# Response To Online Petition Regarding Small Hive Beetle

*Below is the response which confirms that Northern Ireland is a part of the UK but seems to be unaware of their own rules on importation into the UK and ignores forward traffic from N.I to other parts of the UK*

We recognise the serious threat posed by small hive beetle. EU areas affected by this pest are not permitted to export to the UK. Strict controls apply to imports into the UK from other areas.

The Government recognises that some beekeepers are concerned about the new trading arrangements and the risks of exotic pests entering Great Britain, in particular small hive beetle.

Small hive beetle would present a serious threat to our honeybees if it were to arrive in the UK. This invasive pest has only been detected in one part of Europe, namely southern Italy, and exports of bees from the affected region into either Great Britain or Northern Ireland are not permitted.

Imports of honeybees into Northern Ireland and any other part of the UK are only accepted from approved countries and are subject to rules relating to notification and health certification to ensure that imports are free of key pests and diseases.

Movements of honeybee queens, packages and colonies from Northern Ireland to Great Britain remain permitted. There is, and will remain, unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods, including honeybees, to the rest of the UK market.

We continue to work with colleagues in the Devolved Administrations as part of our monitoring of the new trading arrangements.

We recognise the important role played by beekeepers and bee farmers in sustaining honey bee health. We appreciate the level of interest in this issue, and we continue to listen to beekeepers and associations as part of our ongoing work to maintain suitable trading arrangements and effective biosecurity for the UK beekeeping sector.

*Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs* 

## A Tricky Extraction

Early in March I was contacted by a housing officer at Ipswich Borough Council. One of their properties has a feral colony of bees inside an air duct. They need to be removed because the property is being rewired. The tenant says they have been there for years!

I went to inspect the third-floor flat. Sure enough, there's an air-brick on the outside wall and a plywood duct across the bathroom ceiling. Nothing for it but to prise off the panels and see what's underneath. I wasn't going to wreck a council flat, so after some negotiation we agreed that one of their electricians would do the dismantling and I would provide beesuits and gloves. I have a drum-type vacuum cleaner and an electronic speed controller which works well for gently extracting bees without harming them.

Bright and early on Monday morning we got suited up and started work. Jack Foster, the electrician, had to remove the wiring, prise off some wall tiles and split the panels to get access. I'm glad it wasn't my bathroom.

Ten minutes later we had the panels off, and what a sight!



It looked like a very small colony, maybe 5000 bees, but obviously has been much bigger in the past – about a National brood-and-a-half I reckon. The air-brick entrance is to the left and there's a lot of very dark brood comb, with lots of sealed honey in the middle and some empty combs on the right.

So we started removing the middle combs and sucking up the bees. We took out some 20lbs of sealed honey and shared it between the tenant and the electrician. They had never seen comb honey before and were amazed at its flavour. The bees were surprisingly quiet and calm, much to my relief.

We were using a torch to try and spot the queen as we worked our way into the brood nest. I found combs with brood and some eggs so I knew she was there somewhere but couldn't see her. No surprise really, given the cramped working conditions and the very dark bees and comb, to say nothing of the honey dripping on our heads.





Job done and all the bees safely in my vacuum cleaner, we started tidying up. Suddenly I spotted the queen – there



she was wandering across the dust sheet on the floor! I quickly scooped her up into a plastic queen cage and popped her in my pocket. I left the electrician to sort out the mess in the bath-room, and an hour later the bees and queen were safely in a nuc in my garden.

The speed controller lets me run the vacuum just fast enough to suck bees without damaging them. There's half an egg carton in the bottom of the drum so the bees don't get whirled around. Many of them just cling to the corrugated filter. I've used this set-up several times and it works a treat.

*Chris Stephens. Ipswich & East Suffolk Beekeepers' Association*



## EBKA Trustees

**President:** Jean Smye, Hon CLM

(E: [president@ebka.org](mailto:president@ebka.org))

**Chair of CEC** Jane Ridler

E: [chair@ebka.org](mailto:chair@ebka.org)

T: 01799 218023

**Treasurer** Pat Allen

E: [treasurer@ebka.org](mailto:treasurer@ebka.org)

**Secretary** Vanessa Wilkinson

E: [secretary@ebka.org](mailto:secretary@ebka.org)

**Braintree** Bridget Mudd

E: [braintree-trustee@ebka.org](mailto:braintree-trustee@ebka.org)

**Chelmsford** Jan Tutton

E: [chelmsford-trustee@ebka.org](mailto:chelmsford-trustee@ebka.org)

**Maldon & D.H.** Glenn Mayes

E: [maldon-trustee@ebka.org](mailto:maldon-trustee@ebka.org)

**Epping Forest** Simon Nicholson

E: [epping-trustee@ebka.org](mailto:epping-trustee@ebka.org)

**Harlow** Nick Holmes

E: [harlow-trustee@ebka.org](mailto:harlow-trustee@ebka.org)

**Romford** Jim McNeill

E: [romford-trustee@ebka.org](mailto:romford-trustee@ebka.org)

**Saffron Walden** Vanessa Wilkinson

E: [saffron-walden-trustee@ebka.org](mailto:saffron-walden-trustee@ebka.org)

**Southend** Chris Allen

E: [southend-trustee@ebka.org](mailto:southend-trustee@ebka.org)

**EBKA Exams Sec** Steph Green

E: [examsec@ebka.org](mailto:examsec@ebka.org)

## Regional Bee Inspectors

### West Essex

Peter Folge

E: [peter.folge@apha.gov.uk](mailto:peter.folge@apha.gov.uk)

T: 07775-119433

### North Essex

Jonathan Baynes

E: [jonathan.baynes@apha.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.baynes@apha.gov.uk)

T: 07557-157149

### Essex

Ian Nichols

E: [ian.nichols@apha.gov.uk](mailto:ian.nichols@apha.gov.uk)

T: 07557-178416

## The Essex Beekeeper Magazine & Web site

**Editor & Advertising:** Dee Inkersole

E: [editor@ebka.org](mailto:editor@ebka.org)

**Web site:** Nick Holmes

E: [webmaster@ebka.org](mailto:webmaster@ebka.org)

## Divisional Contacts

<b>Braintree</b>	John le Seve	<a href="mailto:braintree-secretary@ebka.org">braintree-secretary@ebka.org</a>
<b>Chelmsford</b>	Fiona Cutting	<a href="mailto:chelmsford-secretary@ebka.org">chelmsford-secretary@ebka.org</a>
<b>Colchester</b>	Morag Chase	<a href="mailto:colchester-secretary@ebka.org">colchester-secretary@ebka.org</a>
<b>Epping Forest</b>	Katy Langley	<a href="mailto:epping-secretary@ebka.org">epping-secretary@ebka.org</a>
<b>Harlow</b>	Carol Sissons	<a href="mailto:harlow-trustee@ebka.org">harlow-trustee@ebka.org</a>
<b>Maldon &amp; D.H.</b>	Sylvina Tate	<a href="mailto:maldon-secretary@ebka.org">maldon-secretary@ebka.org</a>
<b>Romford</b>	Sue Richardson	<a href="mailto:romford-secretary@ebka.org">romford-secretary@ebka.org</a>
<b>Saffron Walden</b>	Vanessa Wilkinson	<a href="mailto:saffron-walden-secretary@ebka.org">saffron-walden-secretary@ebka.org</a>
<b>Southend</b>	Pat Holden	<a href="mailto:southend-secretary@ebka.org">southend-secretary@ebka.org</a>

## Meetings in June and July 2021

Members are more than welcome to attend another Division's Zoom meeting. Just contact the Division and talk to the relevant co-ordinator. Please note that all of these meetings are subject to Government COVID-19 rules that may be in place. Please check with the Division, too, to ensure that the event is running.

### June 2021

**03** | **Romford Division -**  
**Bee Health, what could**  
**possibly go wrong,**  
**20:00 – 22:00**  
*Zoom meeting*

**15** | **Chelmsford Division -**  
**The Life of Wasps**  
**20:00 – 21:00**  
*Zoom Meeting*

### July 2021

**01** | **Romford Division -**  
**Bees for Development**  
**20:00 – 22:00**  
*Zoom meeting*

**20** | **Chelmsford Division -**  
**Auction of equipment,**  
**19:30 – 21:00**  
*Margaretting Village Hall,*  
*Wantz Rd, Margaretting,*  
*Ingatestone CM4 OEP*

*We would be very happy to receive information from other divisions about their activities each month; divisions can add their activities to the calendar in the EBKA website or send them to the editor at [editor@ebka.org](mailto:editor@ebka.org).*

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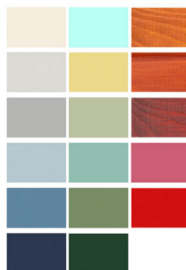
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