The Essex Beekeeper

Issue 683

November 2021

Monthly Magazine of the
Essex Beekeepers' Association
www.ebka.org
Furthering the Craft of Beekeeping in Essex

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In this Issue

Ted Hooper Memorial Lecture

Chronic bee paralysis: An emerging disease of honey bees
Professor Giles Budge, Newcastle University

Saturday 27 November at 2.30 pm on Zoom

Chronic bee paralysis is a serious disease of the honey bee. Giles Budge will provide the historical context, introduce the causative virus, explain the symptoms and highlight the increase in cases across England and Wales.

More details and to book a free ticket on Eventbrite: Click here

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.

Many thanks, Dee Inkersole: editor@ebka.org

Divisional Meetings

Members are more than welcome to attend another Division's meetings. Please contact the Division and talk to the relevant co-ordinator to ensure that there will be room in the hall or apiary since space might be limited due to social distancing, and also to check that the advertised meeting is going ahead.

November 2021

4th: Romford Beekeeper Forum

8;00 pm Chadwick Hall, Gidea Park RM2 5EL

15th: M&D No Details

7:30 for 8:00 pm The OAKhouse, High Street, Maldon CM9 5PR

16th: Chelmsford Making and Drinking Mead with Philippo Negri

7:30pm Margaretting Village Hall, Wantz Rd, Margaretting, Ingatestone CM4 0EP, UK

17th ; Saffron Walden Rational Varroa Control, .

7:30 pm by Zoom

25th: Colchester No Details

7:30 - Langham Community Centre,CO4 5PA

26th: Braintree Top Bar and Warre Hives with Peter Aldridge

7:30 White Notley Village Hall

24th: Southend - AGM and Christmas Quiz

7:30 Zoom Meeting.

27th Ted Hooper Memorial Lecture

Book a free ticket on Eventbrite: Click here

December 2021

3rd: Saffron Walden Film Night

'Honeyland' - a very well reviewd, award winning film, together with popcorn and hotdogs, BYOB.

7:00pm at Village Hall

10th: Braintree - Christmas Social and Craft Activity

2:00pm White Notley Village Hall

14th: Chelmsford - Christmas Cheer!

19:30 – 21:00 Margaretting Village Hall, Wantz Rd, CM4 0EP

18th M&D AGM and Guest Speaker

7:30 for 8:00 pm The OAKhouse, High Street, Maldon CM9 5PR

28th: Colchester No Details

7:30pm - Langham Community Centre,CO4 5PA

Examination Results 2021

Listed below are the results submitted by Steph Green, the Examinations Secretary. There were 25 entrants from 6 Divisions.

I have found it quite amazing that our members are demonstrating their commitment to all that is beekeeping by going down the examination route during the troublesome times of the past few years. You have my heartfelt admiration and congratulations on your achievements. I am also aware that as well as working towards your exams, many of you are actively involved in various divisional roles as well as helping and encouraging our new members. We could not manage without you.

Also, I must not forget those who have helped you along your chosen path. Thank you all.

Jean Smye CLM EBKA President

Name		Exam	Grade
Braintree Division			
Hood	Jessica	Basic Certificate	Credit
Hood	Paul	Basic Certificate	Credit
Chelmsford Division			
Aldridge	Peter	Gen Husbandry	Pass
Cutting	Fiona	Basic Certificate	Distinction
Garratt	Dave	Basic Certificate	Distinction
Meadows	Paul	Basic Certificate	Credit
Colchester Division			
Geddes	Tom	Bee Health	Pass
Payne	Matthew	Basic Certificate	Distinction
Verrier	William	Basic Certificate	Distinction
West	David	Basic Certificate	Distinction
Epping Forest Division			
Balakjian	Tamar	Basic Certificate	Credit
De Asha	Anne	Basic Certificate	Credit
Frank	Mary-Anne	Basic Certificate	Distinction
Haselhurst	Tricia	Basic Certificate	Credit

Name		Exam	Grade
Liddard	Aaron	Basic Certificate	Credit
Nurk	Aili	Basic Certificate	Distinction
Romford Division			
Ellis	Graeme	Basic Certificate	Credit
Hewson	Paul	Basic Certificate	Pass
Wood	Mark	Basic Certificate	Credit
Saffron Walden Division			
Bryning	Vicky	Basic Certificate	Credit
Drane	Rachel	Basic Certificate	Credit
Green	Stephanie	Module 3	Credit
Rusby	Geoffrey	Module 1	Credit
Yates	Linda	Module 1	Pass
Yates	Linda	Intermediate Theory	Credit
Yates	Tony	Module 1	Pass
Yates	Tony	Intermediate Theory	Pass

[You will find information about the various written and practical exams on the Mem}bers' pages of the BBKA website**.]**

Who was Miss Edith Avey, (BEM, NDB, CLM - born 1904)?

Miss Avey kept bees for some 71 years and covered the district on her bicycle, even when working as a Disease officer. I have a copy of a letter where she is justifying her expense for travelling on public transport on the grounds that what she had to carry was too unwieldly for her bicycle.

She has the reputation of being very supportive of those wishing to take up beekeeping and received her BEM (British Empire Medal) for her services to beekeeping and her CLM (County Life Member) for services to the Essex Beekeepers Association, and yet she still found time to study and take the National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB).

Cont'd

Miss Avey (second from right) looking at what must be very quiet bees.

Miss Avey is still spoken of with affection even by those who did not know her except by reputation.
Money was left in her will for three awards for the encouragement of EBKA beekeepers.

1. For the beginner in Chelmsford Division showing the most progress in their first year. The award being a nucleus hive complete with bees and a queen.

2. For the three members in the County obtaining the highest marks in the Basic examination plus a sum of money. In the spirit of the original criteria this award has been slightly modified.

3. An EBKA member under 16 with the best innovation in the Junior section of the National Honey Show. This was amalgamated with another National wards but no longer exists. The nearest would be the current Class 141.

If anyone would like a copy of this photo, please contact me as i have a cocpy of it.

With thanks to Jean Smye

Mystery Deepens About the Evolution of Bees' Social Behaviour

From Entomological Society of America may 26, 2021

The largest-ever analysis of bees' morphological diversity paints complicated picture as to whether complex social behaviour developed once or multiple times in separate evolutionary branches.

A new study has mounted perhaps the most intricate, detailed look ever at the diversity in structure and form of bees, offering new insights in a long- standing debate over how complex social behaviors arose in certain branches of bees' evolutionary tree.

Published May 26, 2021 in Insect Systematics and Diversity, the report is built on an analysis of nearly 300 morphological traits in bees, how those traits vary across numerous species, and what the variations suggest about the evolutionary relations between bee species.The result offers strong evidence that complex social behaviour developed just once in pollen-carrying bees, rather than twice or more, separately, in different evolutionary branches — but researchers say the case is far from closed.

Diego Sasso Porto, Ph.D., has been studying the structure and form, or morphology, of bees for more than a decade, and his latest effort ventures into a long-standing conundrum about bee evolution. Corbiculate bees — those that possess corbiculae, or pollen baskets, on their hind legs — encompass honey bees, stingless bees, bumble bees, and orchid bees. Among them, honey bees and stingless bees are the only groups with highly complex social behaviours, such as forming large colonies with queens, workers, and drones. Bumble bees display less complex sociality, and orchid bees are mostly solitary.

Traditional morphological analyses have long indicated that honey bees and stingless bees are most closely related and that complex social behaviour developed in their common ancestor before the groups diverged. However, in the 1990s, emergent techniques in molecular genetic analysis began to show that stingless bees and bumble bees were the more closely related "sister" groups, which would mean that ***honey bees and stingless bees each developed their complex social behaviour independently, after their ancestral paths diverged.***

With thanks to Somerset BKA for this article via eBees

Skeps

Few pieces of beekeeping equipment conjure up the pleasant aspects of the countryside and country life than a skep. But what is a skep? The term is derived from Old Norse "skeppa" - basket.

Skeps are essentially upturned straw baskets under which bees form their naturally curved honey comb. They are usually formed of coils of dried grass or straw. They were widely used throughout Europe and provided homes in which bees could live and from which honey could be harvested.

Skeps have been used to house bees for some 2000 years. After the Middle Ages, almost all were made of straw. Skeps are simple and cheap to make. There is a single entrance at the bottom of the skep but there is no internal structure provided for the bees so there are a number of disadvantages. Firstly, the well being and development of the colony and bees inside the skep cannot be easily monitored. Secondly, the removal of the honey results in the total destruction of the colony. Historically, beekeepers either had to kill the bees or used smoke to scare and drive them out of the skep

The last known example of wicker skeps found in England, circa 1890.

Later developments for skeps included a small, woven basket at the top of the main skep in which the bees could store honey ; this is the equivalent of today's "super". A small hole enabled bees to pass from the lower part (which now-adays would be called a "brood chamber") to the upper area. If there were several skeps, they were often put in a bee shed to help repel vermin and to keep them dry and longer lasting. To keep mice an other vermin from entering a skep it could be raised on a small, round plinth.

With thanks to Sam Ruth of Derbyshire BKA for this article via eBees

Bad Bees?

A swarm [sic] of bees has killed dozens of endangered African penguins by targeting their eyes. The birds were part of a famous colony of penguins who live near Cape Town, South Africa. Rangers were shocked to find 63 dead penguins close to Simon's Town last week,home to a famous colony of about 3,000 African penguins known as Boulders Penguin Colony. The discovery has puzzled experts, who have described it as a "very rare occurrence,"

The Guardian reported: "After tests, we found bee stings around the penguins' eyes." The foundation's clinical veterinarian, David Roberts, said, according to The Guardian, "There were also dead bees on the scene." Roberts also said that the stings were so small that they could "easily have been missed" and that it took them several attempts to find them, The Times reported: "We checked the other bodies again and found stings still embedded around the eyes in almost all of the birds. We found more than 20 stings in some individuals," he said.

The area is a national park and the honeybees are part of the ecosystem. Scientists are now looking into the possibility that a nearby beehive was disturbed, causing a mass of bees to swarm [sic] and become defensive. Incidents like this are very rare, according to Sanccob*. In the past 20 years, there have only been two occurrences in which penguins suffered from bee stings. African penguins are on the red list of threatened species, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The penguin population has declined by 73% in the past 30 years.

* The Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds

With thanks to Somerset BKA for this article via eBees and Pam Ivey on Unsplash for the photos of the Penguins and Boulder Bay.

Scandal of Feeding Frenzy Death

The title is not referring to a honey show stampede but rather the many bee drowning incidents that I experience when using what are perhaps the most common types of feeder pictured here. They have a central entrance positioned above the cut out in the crown board; the bees climb up the central tube to its top edge then down to the surface of the syrup. They are enclosed by a clear plastic cover that leaves a generous bee space, and the whole reservoir is then covered over (not shown) to keep out unwanted guests that might fancy what is on offer.

These feeders are versatile with lots going for them being relatively cheap, easy to replenish, made in different sizes and being plastic they're simple to clean. The issue I have relates to unnecessary bee deaths (not pictured to avoid upset) caused by over eager bees rushing to be first in the queue, falling into the syrup and then being unable to climb out because the textured surface of the plastic surface gives them insufficient grip. Beekeepers are an ingenious lot and some who like me don't like to see bees die unnecessarily in this way, not to mention having to clean out the bodies, introduce small floating pieces of wood or polystyrene to the feeding space. This generally works ok but they have to be added at the set up stage (a fiddly job when you don't want it) before any feed is added and then they need to be cleaned out later.

Hence my suggestion - bee ladders! These are small strips of off-cut varroa mesh that are bent over and positioned to give the bees a way to climb out and save themselves. Detailed design is not critical and my first efforts shown here are probably over complicated. I'm sure a number of simple bent strips about 20mm wide positioned around the opening would work just as well. They are simple to add and remove and easy to wash with the feeder ready for reuse. Having used them recently

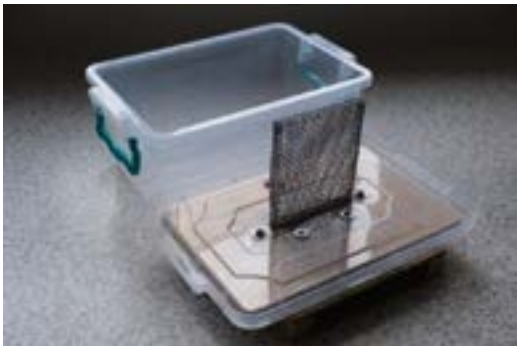
with a 6 litre rectangular feeder with zero bee mortality, if like me you enjoy faffing with this sort of thing, why not give it a try?

Other Feeder Issues

My first two hives were “Cathedral Top Bar Hives”. If you haven’t come across these you might like to google it and you will quickly come to the web site of Corwin Bell, who with friends developed this form of TBH. I love my Cathedral hives but as with all hive designs they solve some drawbacks of existing design while creating others. Perhaps the biggest downside of any TBH design is lack of standardisation because they were originally developed to be easily made using fairly basic tools and scrap material. This means that most feeders that are designed to sit on top of the usual “stack of boxes” hives are difficult or impossible to use on a TBH. There are various ways round the problem but almost all require a degree of DIY. The solutions that are most common have two main drawbacks 1) the feeder size tends to be relatively small which can be ok if you are able to refill them very regularly and 2) Most involve the bees collecting the feed from very low down near the ventilated mesh floor of the hive where at times it is too cold.

One excellent feature of Cathedral TBH design is called the “super highway” which consists of holes through the bars which line up along the length of the hive (see picture) to provide passage ways for the bees to travel in the warmest area. It is essential in the Cathedral hive because the frames surround the top half of the comb and without it the bees would have to travel lower down in the colder areas. I have noticed that this valuable feature is also sometimes applied in standard TBH designs. It seemed to make sense to use the feature when creating a larger feeder accessed by the bees at this warmer level.

Access to the feeder is from the top with the bees able to reach the syrup inside a mesh cage that lets them easily climb in and out and avoid drowning accidents. Filling is carried out through the plugged hole that is most easily seen in the final photo.



The feed container is any size that fits your hive, in this example it holds over 2 litres and was purchased from the local factory shop. The hive shown is a nuke that I made to collect and grow small colonies and because it is filled with just 8 frames it would not have space for the feeder shown to be placed inside it but is included to clarify how the feeder is positioned behind a suitably shaped follower board when used in the full length hive of this type.

In case you are wondering about the slots in the tops of three of the frames they are to allow bees to move vertically (or not if covered over) in a “hybrid hive” that I’m developing that aims to give greater compatibility between TBHs and standard national hive parts.

With thanks to Richard Taylor - Chelmsford BKA

Queen caging update

I reported in the newsletter last month that I was trying out queen caging as a means of varroa control, and perhaps of increasing honey production.

The idea was that by caging the queen for 30 days before the honey harvest the mites can, once the crop has been removed, be treated with Oxalic Acid in the absence of any sealed brood. The technique also purports to increase the honey yield as the foragers have less work to do rearing brood. I tried it on five colonies this summer and thought I'd share the results.

All the queens survived the ordeal, but with two of the colonies being slightly grumpy before I started, I re-queened them without releasing the grumpy queens. That left three colonies where after release I quickly found the brood nest re-established. Two are 2021 queens and have continued to lay since and seem to be going into winter fine so far. The third I released was a 2020 queen who did not fare so well. On release, she laid up every spare cell in the brood box but then was nowhere to be seen. I had supercedure cells and found her curled up dead inside the cage when I came to remove it.

As to increased honey production, I'm not sure I can draw conclusions on a trial of this small scale and without control colonies alongside. However, I can report that the brood boxes were well filled with stores to the extent that I have had to feed very little additional sugar solution to prepare them for winter. The brood boxes were not left honey bound and the queens had plenty of space to start laying again.

One point I had not anticipated was that I had a sixth colony in my apiary to which I was unable to apply the technique due to it deciding to have a go at swarming. This presented a problem in that if it was heavily infested with varroa, these may drift to my newly treated colonies. Although I used another treatment on the two halves of the split, it left me wondering if this had undermined the whole rationale!

I'll leave you to decide if this was a success or not; apart from one loss, it seems to have gone as advertised, and I quite liked having the brood boxes so well provisioned when I removed my honey crop. The question of whether the 2020 queen would have been superseded if I had not caged her will remain unknown, but overall I'd say I might try it again, but this is something to reflect on over the winter perhaps!

With thanks to Paul Moorhouse of Bristol BKA via eBees.H

With Halloween approaching and those with apple trees or neighbours with apple trees or family with apple trees trying desperately to think of new ways to serve apples here's a recipe for you (The recipe says Granny Smiths but I think any eaters would do as well)

Pain Perdu with Roasted Apples

Pain perdu is one of those desserts that can be thrown together at a moment's notice [!]. Here it's served topped with honey-roasted apples, but you can use almost any fruit in season. If you happen to have any leftover brioche [!], use this in place of bread for a luxury version. Pain perdu is always best served as soon as it's assembled, before the bread has time to go soggy.
Serves 4

4 large eggs
275ml milk (or half milk, half cream)
2 tbsp caster sugar
4 tbsp runny honey
Zest of ½ orange, finely grated
1 vanilla pod, split, seeds scraped and reserved
½ tsp ground cinnamon
4 slices white bread
1 tbsp vegetable oil
20g unsalted butter
Icing sugar, for dusting
Handful of toasted almonds (optional)
For the apples
40ml runny honey
20g unsalted butter
Juice of ½ orange
Pinch of ground cinnamon
8 granny smith apples

1 Make the roasted apples first. Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/gas mark 4. Put the honey, butter, orange juice and cinnamon into a small saucepan and heat gently until combined.

2 Place the apples on a baking tray and spoon the honey and orange mixture over them. Roast, basting frequently with the juices for 10-15 minutes, until tender. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the apples to a dish.

3 Pour the honey and orange sauce from the tray into a small saucepan and reduce over a low heat until thickened slightly. Core and quarter the apples, then spoon over the sauce.

4 Lower the oven to 120C/250F/gas mark ½. Next make the pain perdu. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, sugar, 1 tbsp of the honey, the zest, vanilla seeds and cinnamon. Pour the mixture into a deep plate or a shallow dish.
5 In batches as necessary, lay the bread slices into the egg mixture and leave to soak for 2-3 minutes, turning once. Meanwhile, in a non-stick frying pan, heat the oil and

butter until hot. Add the soaked bread slices and fry for around 2-3 minutes, turning once, until golden brown on both sides. Transfer to a plate or baking tray and keep warm in the oven while you fry the rest.

6 To serve, dust the pain perdu with icing sugar. Place on warm plates and top with the roasted apples and sauce. Drizzle with the remaining honey and scatter over a few toasted almonds if you like. Serve at once.

With thanks to The Guardian online; Recipe from Kitchin Suppers by Tom Kitchin (Quadrille).

[Ed. I'm not sure I would want to cook this from scratch in the middle of a meal but I think you could mix the ingredients that the bread is soaked in and to even roast the apples in advance. Then at the last minute heat the apples and fry the soaked bread.]

And Finally .....

Last, but not least, I'd like to say a huge 'thank you' to those who have sent me articles for this magazine. I'm sure thaere are more beekeepers out there with ideas of articles they could write and, now that the girls need a bit less of our time, maybe you might snuggle up to your computer/tablet/phone on one of these dark autumnal evenings and jot down some initial ideas. You might like to write a report on a bee book you have read recently; a report of your division's activity or activities; something you have noticed about your bees; an article you have read elsewhere which would be of interest to others; a website you have found that others, especially our newer members, might find helpful and interesting; maybe an article written for your division's newsletter needs a wider audience?

Maybe you know someone who has something interesting to share? Could you encourage or help them with an article?

Is there someone who would like to write a monthly or bi-monthly article on what to do this month and note observations of anything unusual or atypical?

Please contact me, Dee Inkersole,the editor - editor@ebka.org.

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Black Friday 2021

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