



EssexBeekeepers'Association

Minutes of the 143rd Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Saturday 11 March 2023

Jubilee Hall, New Hall School, Chelmsford CM3 3HS

These minutes will be considered correct if no objection is raised in writing or by email before Tuesday 31st May 2023.

Any point challenged will be brought before the next meeting for amendment/ correction of the record.

Presiding Officer: Simon Nicholson (Epping Division)

Also present: see EBKA Attendance Book

A period of silence was observed to remember our fellow beekeepers who had died during the past year.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Clive de Bruyn (Braintree), Barbara Sharp (Colchester), Graeme Crook (Chelmsford), Jim Parrish (Braintree), Ian Nichols (Epping), Oleksandr Tymofieiev (Epping), Steve Broomhead (Harlow), Deryck Johnson (Saffron Walden), Penny Learmonth (Saffron Walden), David Learmonth ((Saffron Walden), and (Paul Abbott (Southend).

2. Minutes of 142nd AGM

The Minutes of the last AGM were sent to all members via eR2 and available on the EBKA website. No challenges to the accuracy had been received so the Minutes were signed by the Presiding Officer as a true record.

3. Minutes of the EGM held on 8 November 2022

The Minutes of the EGM were sent to members via eR2 and available on the EBKA website. No objections have been raised so the Minutes were signed by the Presiding Officer as a true record.

4. Report of the Chair of the Central Executive Committee (CEC)

The CEC Chair (Jane Ridler) had circulated her full report to members via eR2 and it was also available on the EBKA website. An appropriately modified version will be submitted to the Charity Commission.

The key points of the Chair's report are as follows:

A year of rebuilding took place in 2022. Both County and Divisional meetings encouraged the Association's beekeepers to meet again in person, and the Ted Hooper Lecture, the County Honey Show, the Bee Health Day and the EBKA Officers Day were well attended. However, the AGM and Annual Conference were less well attended. There is an ongoing challenge of how best to involve members in both Divisional and County events.

An impending problem with Asian hornets in Essex was highlighted and vigilance encouraged. Also beware a new strain of EFB which is gaining strength in East Anglia.

Those retiring from the CEC: Jim McNeill, (Romford) and Glenn Mayes (Maldon & Dengie) who had both completed 4 years as trustees; Chris Allen (Southend) Trustee for 3 years; Stephanie Green (Saffron Walden), Exam Secretary for 4 years; and Jane Ridler (Saffron Walden), Chair of CEC for 4.5 years.

The new CEC Chair will be Linda Yeats. Currently the unfilled CEC posts are Examinations Secretary and Editor.

Highlights of the Chair's four and a half years in office were summarised:

- Introduction to eR2
- Transition to a paper-free magazine
- An updated Trustee Handbook (now called the EBKA Handbook of Policies and Protocols)
- Close scrutinising of CIO status for EBKA
- Use of Zoom for meetings
- World Bee Day in 2022, organised by Bees Abroad

EBKA contributes to EARS-sponsored research led by Professor Giles Budge, Newcastle University. His current PhD student, Theodora Rubensaal Commandeur, is coming to the end of her work, which has focussed on honey bees' susceptibility to CBPV. Key factors are age of larvae when infection takes place and nutrition.

Special thanks were given to Nick Holmes, Paul Wiltshire, Jan Tutton, Michael Webb, Pat Allen and Jean Smye, as well as to Graeme Crook and Andy Linley, who have been vital to EBKA communications.

5. General Treasurer's Report & Approval of the 2022 Accounts

The General Treasurer (Pat Allen) stated that her report and the examined accounts were sent to all members using the eR2 system; they were also displayed on-screen.

County events had resumed this year leading to increased costs and a deficit for 2022 for CEC funds. EBKA reserves are very healthy and enabled EBKA to make a significant contribution to Bees Abroad's World Bee Day projects and an increased grant to the EARS Project.

The consolidation process this year was not straightforward as there was a problem with the accounts from one of the Divisions, which delayed the process. However, the Independent Examiner was satisfied that the Accounts are valid.

Other Divisions' accounts were satisfactory and complete; two divisions and the CEC suffered a deficit in the year but overall EBKA showed a surplus. All Divisions' accounts, the Honey Show account, and CEC accounts are in credit.

Bank statements and other documentation are awaited from Harlow Division. The Trustees will be working with the Division to review procedures and develop sound accounting procedures for 2023 and beyond, as recommended by the Independent Examiner.

Divisional Treasurers and Membership Secretaries were warmly thanked for their cooperation throughout the year. After 3 years as General Treasurer, someone will need to step forward to take over next year.

Members were asked to vote to approve the Accounts:

Proposer: Pat Allen

Secunder: Sarah Rumble

Carried *nem con*.

There was a question about insurance of county and divisional trophies. It was agreed further discussion would take place at a later date.

6. Written Reports of other members of the CEC

Written reports were provided by the Examinations Secretary (Steph Green), the Honey Show Secretary (Michael Webb) and the General Secretary (Vanessa Wilkinson). They had been sent to members via eR2 and are available on the EBKA website.

7. Report on EBKA's donation to Bees Abroad by Richard Ridler, Chair of Bees Abroad

To celebrate World Bee Day 2022, EBKA had donated £4500 to Bees Abroad to sponsor beekeeping projects in Africa. Richard Ridler, Chair of Bees Abroad, described the four active projects which had been launched in 2022, and how the funds had been used. The projects in Tanzania, Ghana, Kenya and Sierra Leone were all at a different stage of progress and details were provided.

8. Election of County Officers (Trustees): CEC Chair, General Secretary and General Treasurer

CEC Chair: Linda Yeats

Proposer: Jean Smye

Secunder: Jane Ridler

Linda was elected *nem con*.

General Treasurer: Pat Allen

Proposer: Richard Ridler

Secunder: Tony Yeats

Pat was willing to continue and was re-elected *nem con*:

General Secretary: Vanessa Wilkinson

Proposer: Jan Tutton

Secunder: Sarah Rumble

Vanessa was willing to continue and was re-elected *nem con*:

9. Notification of 2023 Divisional Voting Members and 2024 Presiding Officer

Braintree
Chelmsford
Colchester
Maldon & Dengie 100
Epping Forest
Harlow
Romford
Saffron Walden
Southend

Bridget Mudd
Mike Abel
Andrew Linley
David Mills
Simon Nicholson
Steve Broomhead
Roger Honey
Linda Yeats
Keith Lomax

The name of the 2024 Presiding Officer is not yet available

10. Election of 2023 of County (non Trustee) Appointees

President: Jean Smye Proposer: Jim McNeill Second: Chris Allen
Jean was re-elected *nem con*.

BBKA Delegate: Richard Ridler Proposer: Bridget Mudd Second: Jean Smye
Richard was re-elected *nem con*.

Editor (*The Essex Beekeeper*): no nominations

Education Secretary: Jane Ridler Proposer: Michael Webb Second: Jan Tutton
Jane was willing to stand and elected *nem con*.

Examinations Secretary: no nominations

EBKA Show Secretary: Michael Webb Proposer: Steph Green Second: David Smye
Michael was re-elected *nem con*.

NHS Delegate: Jim McNeill Proposer: Paul Wiltshire Second: Tony Yeats
Jim was re-elected *nem con*.

Bee Health Secretary: Dave Garratt Proposer: Sarah Rumble Second: Andy Linley
Dave was re-elected *nem con*.

11. Notification of CEC Appointees and Co-opted Members

CEC Minutes Secretary Simon Nicholson

Membership Secretary Jan Tutton

Book of Commemoration Secretary Penny Learmonth

Advertising Secretary no nominations

Webmaster Graeme Crook

Addition to Agenda: Announcement of the election of two County Life Members

Jean Smye announced that Jane Ridler and Richard Ridler had been elected County Life Members at a recent meeting of the CEC. They had both served EBKA loyally for many years. Jane has been CEC Chair, member of the Governance Subcommittee, Examinations Secretary, Education Secretary and BBKA assessor for the Basic Assessment and General Husbandry. Richard has been a member of the CEC for 20 years, and in that time has been CEC Chair, General Treasurer, Honey Show Secretary and BBKA ADM Delegate.

12. Confirmation of Accounts Examiner (External Auditor)

The General Treasurer reported that the CEC had used *Versa Accountants* in Upminster to examine the accounts, as last year. She will use this company again for the 2023 accounts.

13. 2022 Conference Report - given by Simon Nicholson

The conference on 13 November was held at Copped Hall, Epping, an 'atmospheric' venue. The speakers were excellent and included Ben Woodcock from the National Honey Monitoring Scheme; Peter Kennedy, University of Exeter, an expert on the Asian Hornet; and Clive de Bruyn, EBKA, who spoke about bees and stress.

Home-cooked hot food was provided and tours of the building were available.

Ticket sales were disappointing and fell slightly short of the number planned. This amounted to a shortfall of £500 for Epping Division. Other costs were covered by ticket sales, the raffle and support by EBKA.

It was thought that holding the event on Remembrance Sunday (although a one minute's silence was observed) and the cost of living crisis contributed to the poor attendance.

14. 2023 Conference Report - given by Sarah Rumble

The Conference in 2023, *Beekeeping in a Changing Climate*, will be hosted by Southend Division, on Saturday 4 November, in the Mount Avenue Banqueting Suite, in Brentwood.

There is a splendid line up of speakers: Professor Robert Pickard on *Climate Change for Bees and their Keepers*; Professor Phil Stevenson, Kew Gardens, title of talk to be confirmed; and Roger Patterson, *Climate Change from a Different Angle*. Ticket prices and catering will be confirmed shortly.

13. Installation of the 2023 Presiding Officer

Sarah Rumble, Chair of Southend, was installed as Presiding Officer.

14. Reading from the Book of Commemoration

Sarah Rumble read from the Book of Commemoration.

The AGM was formally closed.

Break for refreshments kindly provided by Southend Division.

AGM Keynote Address

Following the AGM, there was a presentation by Wally Shaw, Welsh Beekeepers Association, entitled '*The Role of Swarm Control in Beekeeping*'.

Swarming is the process by which a honey bee colony reproduces itself. In Spring, the colony builds up the number of workers, as well as stores, with the aim of swarming as early in the season as possible. Queen cells are normally built in late Spring and, a few days later, a prime swarm and one or two cast swarms appear.

Although this is a natural process, swarm control is recommended. If bees are left to swarm, they can be a public nuisance in urban areas and, by losing a prime swarm, you can lose half of the honey crop. Wally Shaw described pre-emptive swarm control, which can be done before queen cells are present and prevents their production, and re-active swarm control, which can be done to prevent loss of a swarm once queen cells are produced.

Pre-emptive swarm control: Wally advised ensuring that there is space for the queen to lay and for the processing of nectar and storage of honey. Frame management is essential. Replacing brood comb on a 3-year cycle by adding 3-4 frames of new foundation per year is recommended. The maximum number of frames should be available for the queen to lay in. It is recommended that frames containing old pollen are removed and a ceiling of sealed honey is avoided.

Supers should be added when a nectar flow is expected or when a super is full of bees, although too many supers added too early can cause problems with thermoregulation in the hive.

The most effective method of swarm control appears to be splitting the hive. Wally explained that splitting can be done vertically, using a split board, or horizontally with a second hive. Equipment must be ready!

When to split: when the colony is ready to do it for itself, although this relies on the experience and judgement of the beekeeper. An ideal time is normally at the end of the Spring nectar flow and before the main nectar flow.

A possible disadvantage of pre-emptive swarm control is that, although it delays the production of queen cells, it may not be for the whole season. A late-season swarm may occur, but these swarms stand little chance of survival. A late-season mated queen may be more likely to become infected with deformed wing virus, which can lead to early failure of the queen.

Re-active swarm control: About two weeks before queen cells are produced, the workers' behaviour towards the queen changes: vibration signals produced by worker bees increase in frequency, and the queen appears to respond by laying more eggs, resulting in more young bees. Just before queen cells are created, vibration signals cease. Pre-emptive swarm control at this stage appears to 'switch off' the behaviour that leads to swarming.

The point of no return is when queen cells have been produced and queen cups contain larvae in a pool of royal jelly. At this stage, the frequency of vibration signals increases and the queen is fed less and kept on the move, in preparation for flight. Destroying queen cells at this stage only delays swarming so the next step is artificial swarming.

Artificial swarming involves separating the flying bees from the queen cells. Wally recommended and described the 'Snelgrove II modified' method. The details of this can be found in his booklet, entitled *'There are queen cells in my hive – what should I do'*, which is free to download:

<https://wbka.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/wbka-booklet-english-PDF.pdf>

Another booklet *An Apiary Guide to Swarm Control*, is also available as a downloadable pdf on the WBKA web-site (wbka.com/wbka-publications/).

'Swarming biology and control', Wally Shaw, Beecraft 2021, is available from Northern Bee Books.

Despite what it says in some books, Wally's view is that queen cells in the parent colony produced by an artificial swarm (the part that is in a new hive position) do not need to be thinned. The bees will automatically choose the queen they want and will make no attempt to swarm. There is a lot of complex behaviour involved in the way the colony does this and we should assume they know best. The real problem exists with a colony that has already lost the prime swarm. The booklet *'There are queen cells in my hive – what should I do'* describes the key steps.

This was a very timely presentation with invaluable practical advice. Wally Shaw was warmly thanked for travelling from Anglesey to give the keynote address in person.