



EBKA – Colchester Division

April 2022 Members newsletter

Here comes the sun...or maybe not!

March reminded me of the first lock down in 2020 – but without the sense of isolation (although sadly with a very real sense of the ‘unknown’). The sun came out in force with temperatures reaching 16 degrees. It felt like the start of our beekeeping year. However, it’s very easy to assume as the sun is out then our bees are fine, and we can resume weekly inspections. March can be, and was, cold at night and still had some cool days, (not to mention the slightly surreal snow shower that I’m watching out of the window as I edit this newsletter). If your hives are in a sheltered spot, then it may mean that the sun is only on the hives for a short while this time of year, limiting their flying time.



water, which takes time and energy. We all need to be very aware of keeping check on their stores. You should have removed your mouse guards as soon as you could see pollen coming in. However, many of us, including me, keep our roof insulation in all year round. Much like our own houses, we need to insulate against the heat as well as the cold (and also means our bees may hopefully stand more of a chance when we suddenly get bad weather again without time to prepare).

If they are only flying for a few hours a day, then the foraging is pretty low. They need to find pollen, nectar, and

I decided to do a quick first inspection during that amazing patch of March sunshine. There was a lot of activity and pollen being brought into the hives. The sun was shining, with temperatures around 15 degrees. I eagerly went into my shed to collect my hive tool and smoker. My nice clean bee suit had been hung back up in there as well. You may remember last month I mentioned I had found a cosy looking mouse nest in a box at the back of my shed. I was quite convinced that the mouse or mice were not in the shed after I blocked up the hole I found. Well . . .! I picked up my bag I usually take to my apiary. This contains my hive tools, a few spare bits of equipment, a metal pot for collecting bits of wax, and smoker material. As soon as I touched the bag two mice jumped out. I then noticed a hole in the side of the bag and all of my smoker material in tiny pieces. As I was giving the mice a good talking to and pointing my finger with one hand, my other hand went to grab my bee suit. I was then showered by an equal mix of mouse poo and tiny pieces of my bee suit. I then told the mice that I’m going to have some lunch now and when I come back, they had better be gone or I’m calling in the cats!

A peanut butter sandwich, apple, and cup of tea later (whilst ordering a new bee suit online) I can gladly say that the mice had packed their bags in search of a new home. To be fair, they were probably desperate to get out. I then had to clean out the shed all over again.

I did consider patching up my chewed bee suit but had a flash back of my cousins wedding five years ago. I did a bee inspection on the Monday before my cousin’s wedding. No issues and all going well. Lovely colonies.

However, I then realised that a bee had got into my veil, followed by another. When four bees were in there, I decided to put the hive back together, which proved a little tricky with a bee up my nose. I decided to walk round the corner and out of the way and slowly lift off my veil so that the bees could simply fly out. No such luck. As I lifted my veil up the rim trapped a bee which then stung my forehead. This was quickly followed by the other three also joining in the fun. Within minutes the right side of my face had doubled in size and my eye had disappeared under a swollen cheek, my forehead looked like I'd been hit with a hammer, and my neck had swollen out level with my nose. Not a good look for a wedding! Two days later I could just about see enough to drive and needed to go shopping for a dress for my daughter (for the wedding I was dreading). As I was walking around Matalan with dark glasses and trying to hide my face, I became very aware of a woman following me. It turned out she thought I was clearly in a violent relationship and needed a friend to talk to! Needless to say, I didn't show up the bride that weekend. What we do for our bees!

Whilst I talk about first inspections, I am also very aware that I will be discussing swarming next month. With that in mind, thank you to those members who ticked the box to be added to our swarm collection list. Please look out for our club's Swarm collection risk assessment being emailed out shortly.



Planting for bees – club meeting held 24th March

On Thursday 24th March we held our monthly club meeting in the large hall at Langham Community Centre and were lucky to have Marc McHearn from Beth Chatto gardens to present a talk about planting for bees.

It was a very good talk and Marc had lots of fabulous photos of bees on flowers around the 2 hives he looks after at Beth Chatto Gardens in Elmstead Market.

<https://www.bethchatto.co.uk/>



His talk was based on the garden, and he discussed the history of this much-admired award winning garden including when Beth and her husband took over the site in the 1960s. The land consisted of orchards which they decided to remove. They then concentrated on starting the garden by the house and gradually over time moved out to different areas, some dry and some damp, some woodland.

Beth planted according to Ikebana principles; shape, line form, and balance, and the importance of the spaces which are not meant to be filled. The great granddaughter of Beth is now learning to keep bees.

Marc showed plants that were only suitable for certain insects, and explained the importance of picking open



single flowers for honeybees, open in order for them to gain access to the pollen and nectar.

He bought along plants for members to buy, including geranium, macrorrhizum, pulsatilla vulgaris and Symphytum grandiflorum, which are sedums.



Frame building

I have been putting together some new frames and foundation this week in preparation. Also, I was getting fed up with tripping over the box in the kitchen containing my new bee purchases bought in the January sales. I put my frames together at the kitchen table for three reasons. One because although we have a collection of sheds, they are all filled up with “really useful stuff” with no space left for me to work in. Two because I love the smell of the foundation sheets and can smell them every time I walk into the kitchen, and three because it keeps the foundation supple and warm enough to fit into the frames without the risk of them being a bit brittle and breaking. I like frame building, it’s become one of those jobs that signals spring and warmer weather, a bit like seed sowing (which I also do at the kitchen table – yes, I do have a very tolerant family).

When my father-in-law George had to give up beekeeping due to poor health, he handed me all his bee equipment, including his rampin used for putting in the tiny frame nails. It has become one of my most treasured items and makes putting in those nails close to the foundation sheet a simple act instead of getting cross with myself for damaging the foundation with the hammer.



Some of us will be considering a bailey comb change and others will just be replacing a few brood frames. Old dark comb not

only encourages disease but with each layer of wax build-up the cells become smaller. You should have slowly moved out your older brood frames towards the edges of the brood box towards the end of last summer to make it easier this spring to swap them over for fresh frames. Bees tend to ignore foundation in brood boxes if placed at the edges. They need heat to create the wax to draw out the foundation and they tend to work upwards rather than sideways. Therefore, if you have any, place already drawn-out foundation. If you only have new foundation,

then think about placing the frames in a spare brood box above (effectively carrying out the first part of a bailey comb change). If there is not enough to forage, then give your bees sugar syrup to help them along with drawing out those frames before moving them down into your queen right brood box. Your top brood box can then, of course, be replaced with a super. Remember to remove any sugar syrup or fondant if you have now placed a super for collecting honey you intend for human consumption.



Tendring Show – why not enter this year?

You should all by now have received a few emails via er2 membership services about this year’s Tendring Show. There is a wide range of competition entries you may like to consider taking part in, even if you are new to beekeeping. The show committee has also added a new entry, which was also on the show schedule and emailed out about separately – “an illustrated beekeeping journal” in the Arts and Crafts section.

Please get in touch or have a chat at our next club meeting if you are unsure of anything and/or would like some advice or further information.



Honey and mustard glazed sausage tray bake

INGREDIENTS 8-10 sausages of your choice, olive oil, baby new potatoes, carrots, stem broccoli, handful of cherry tomatoes, 1 courgette, 1 onion, 1 red pepper, veg stock cube, salt and pepper, sage and thyme leaves, 200ml water. For the glaze: 3 tablespoons honey, 3 tablespoons of wholegrain mustard.

METHOD In a large roasting tin or dish pour a generous amount of olive oil and place the sausages. Roast in a pre-

heated 180degree oven for 25minutes to give the sausages a nice golden colour. Meanwhile cut the vegetables into equal sizes to ensure they all cook at the same time. Take the tin out of the oven and add all the vegetables, salt and pepper, sage and thyme leaves, stock cube, and the water. Give a good stir. Place back in the oven for another 30 minutes. Mix the honey and wholegrain mustard in a bowl, (after the 30 minutes) take the and tin out of the oven and coat the sausages with the honey and mustard glaze using a pastry brush or similar. Pop back in the oven for a further 10 minutes or until everything has cooked through. This recipe could also be used for chicken, lamb, fish, or pork.

Baked salmon with honey and lemon

INGREDIENTS 4 salmon fillets, 2 lemons, 3 tablespoons honey, 2 tablespoons ponzu, 1 teaspoon grated ginger, squeeze of yuzu.

METHOD Place the salmon fillets in a roasting tin. Thinly slice the lemons and arrange with the salmon. Place the tin into a pre-heated 180degree oven for 15 minutes. Meanwhile mix the remaining ingredients in a bowl. Remove the tin from the oven (after 15 minutes) and coat the salmon fillets with the honey glaze. Return to the oven for a further 5-10 minutes depending on the size of the fillets. Serve with a salad.

Red cabbage with honey

INGREDIENTS 1 medium sized red cabbage, olive oil or similar, 1 small red onion, 2 medium sized eating apples, 150ml water, 2 tablespoons of balsamic or red wine vinegar, 1 tablespoon of honey, pinch of nutmeg, salt and pepper, 1 tablespoon of a chutney of your choice (optional).

METHOD Slice the cabbage. Slice the onion and fry in the olive oil in a casserole dish or large saucepan. Peel and finely chop the apples and add to the onion, and stir. Added the cabbage, water, vinegar and honey, and then season with the nutmeg, salt and pepper. Add your chutney of choice if using and stir everything together.

Cover and cook on a low heat for about 25 minutes. Check and add more water if it looks dry and cook for a further 20 minutes. This dish keeps well for several day and can be reheated.



If you would like to comment or respond to anything mentioned in any of the newsletters, please get in touch. You can either send an email to Sarah at hazelsfarm2015@gmail.com or phone on 07867 640650 or post to Mrs Sarah Curtis, Hazels, Carringtons Road, Great Bromley, Colchester, CO7 7XA.



We hope you and your bees have coped with the snow, gales, and low temperatures experienced over the last couple of days.

Take care.

