

# THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



Signs of Spring, photo taken by Deryck Johnson.

Monthly Magazine of the E.B.K.A

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## 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.*

## April 2010

- 1 April      *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. A talk by Danny Nichol on 'Swarm Control'.
- 9 April      *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park. A talk Jim McNeill and John O'Connell on 'Marketing your Honey'.
- 13 April     *Tuesday 7.45pm* **Saffron Walden** Dunmow Day Centre, Gt. Dunmow CM6 1AE. A 'Mead Masterclass by Richard Alabone.
- 15 Apr      *Thursday 7.30pm* **Epping Forest** at The Chingford Horticultural Society Hall, Larkshall Road, Chingford, E4 6NH. Roy Cropley is going to give us a talk on Beeswax.
- 21 April     *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Chelmsford** Link Hall Rainsford Rd. CM1 2XB Mead Making: if you have ever thought of making mead but never got around to it, this is a meeting for you. Richard Alabone will be talking about the historical background to making mead and Eric Fenner will describe what equipment is needed and how to produce your first bottle of mead.
- 22 April     *Thursday 7.30pm* **Colchester** Langham Community Centre. A talk by Barry Kaufmann-Wright on the 'Role of a Police Wildlife Crime Officer. The talk covers Barry's period with Essex Police in this role. The slides illustrate numerous cases and problems regularly encountered and includes current legislation and its associated issues.
- 24 April     *Saturday 2.00pm* **Maldon and DH** at Blue Boar Hotel, Silver Street, Maldon. Dealing with swarms: the signs and prevention.
- 25 April     *Sunday 10.30am to 4.00pm* **Braintree** Matt Wallis at Wood Farm, Moreton Road, Moreton. Phone 01277 890007 for further details.
- 28 April     *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** A talk by Terry Clare on how to organise a breeding programme for the average beekeeper.

*A comment from Deryck Johnson regarding the photo on the front cover:*

Just in case members have been reading the Module 2 syllabus too closely which list crocus as purely pollen bearing, F.N. Howes, in 'Plants and Beekeeping' says.....

Nectar may also be obtained by the honeybee in some instances, but as a rule the flowers are worked only for pollen. It has been stated that some of the yellow flowered varieties are best for nectar, but this requires confirmation. The nectar is secreted at the base of the flower and as the long narrow flower-tube is almost completely filled by the style and hairs it requires a proboscis of fair length, longer than that of the honeybee, to reach it. However, if nectar accumulates and rises sufficiently in the tube the honeybee may be able to reach it by making great efforts.

These two bees were almost standing on their heads trying to burrow through to the corm so great were their efforts.

## May 2010

- 6 May*      *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. A talk by Roy Cropley on 'Honey and Pollen in the Hive'.
- 7 May*      *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park. A talk on Integrated Pest Management.
- 8 May*      *Saturday* **Epping Forest** An Apiary Meeting is planned. Apiary Hygiene will be the focus of the meeting. Venue and time will be confirmed.
- 15 May*     *Saturday 2.30pm* **Colchester**. Apiary meeting to be held at the Apiary of Peter Inson. Telephone 01206 382010 for more details.
- 16 May*     *Sunday All Day* **Braintree** Young Farmers Show at Boyton Hall, Roxwell, Celmsford CM1 4LN.
- 17 May*     *Monday 6.30pm* **Chelmsford** Hyde Hall, Rettendon, Chelmsford CM3 8AT. 'How Does Your Garden Grow?' We are very pleased to invite you to a private tour lead by Ian Le Gros, the Curator of the beautiful RHS gardens at Hyde Hall. In the event of inclement weather we will be given a presentation in the Events Barn. Numbers are strictly limited so please contact Jean (07731 856 361) by 10th May to confirm your place.
- 20 May*     *Thursday* **Romford** A Disease Inspection Tour led by South East RBI Alan Byham. Further details to follow.
- 22 May*     *Saturday 2.00pm* **Maldon and DH** at venue to be announced: Recognising diseases with the Regional Bee Inspector.
- 22 May*     *Saturday 2.30pm* **Saffron Walden** Apiary Meeting on the subject of 'Building Nuclei' with Robert Pickford at Les Ridgewell's Apiary, Gt Bardfield.
- 26 May*     *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** A talk by Pam Hunter, 'Is Nature always Nice?'

## Behind the Veil with Roger Barker (Colchester Division)

### How was your interest in beekeeping kindled?

I'm sure we all have images in our minds, going back to our wonderful childhood. One of mine is being detailed to collect all the moorhens eggs from the vicarage garden, because the adult birds attacked the vicar's



vegetables. One benefit of having access to this garden was exploration. It was a haven for all kinds of life, one of the strangest was the bee colonies living in woven domed containers. On one occasion I was in the garden and an old man in strange clothing was opening up the 'Skeps', removing the honey comb and then burning them. Horrified at the death of so many bees, my interest in beekeeping was not off to a good start. Later, on a visit to a farm, I came across what I now know to be a WBC hive. Wanting to know how it worked and there being no one to ask, I looked inside. Twenty years it took to get over that experience, so, when Penny came home and

said that she had learned that eating local honey was good for overcoming hay fever, I was quite receptive to the idea of keeping bees. Both Penny and I had been introduced to George Edwards, a local beekeeper, tall, quiet and a very pleasant gentleman. First, he loaned us a beehive which we had in our garden for a couple of months. Our neighbour said he was allergic to bees and on several occasions when he complained about 'the bees', we were able to show an empty hive. He never knew that eventually we put bees in there. George did a good job teaching me about bees, but perhaps I was not as good at learning. I remember some of his comments and generally they are good to follow:-

Bees know best.

The only thing you can be certain of is that they are going to be unpredictable.

People bang, thump and do things quickly but it is not my way.

Unfortunately he is no longer with us and I do miss him.

### What were the formative influences on your beekeeping?

My beekeeping is a hobby, I used to get enough honey to keep family and friends supplied, but over the last three years it has been difficult to keep the bees alive through the year. This year all four of my colonies have made it through the winter! But what of my formative influences. Apart from my mentor, there are two people who influence my beekeeping, both are what I shall describe as bee farmers. They can produce much more honey and wax than I can, and as a consequence, Penny and another local farmer buy honey and wax from them, and turn them into products for sale at farmers markets. As I keep my bees close to Ian's, he likes me to

keep to the same pest control regimes as himself. Percy has taught me a lot about managing bees and the tricks you can do to persuade them to do what you want. Anyway, they are friends who will help if you need it and I think that generally sums up the beekeepers associations.

#### **How did things develop from your first hive?**

There was very little activity in our front garden so our first positioning of the bees was on the north side of a high hedge. For safety's sake it was the best place, but for the bees it was wrong! It was too damp. The single hive was moved to the bottom of the garden near the chickens. The site had a high hedge to the north and east and the bees loved it. As I grew more confident I collected swarms, this meant that the number of colonies fluctuated throughout the year.

My girls would not mow the grass anywhere near the hives! One thing that happened to me was a spinal injury that meant that I was not able to lift a full super, to cope with this I had to take out frames, one at a time, and transfer them to either another super in the back of a vehicle, or take each frame to the partially open back door and pass it to Penny to process. As we make wax products, we have never centrifuged our frames. The entire honeycomb is scraped off the foundation. This process maximizes 'our' production of wax but at a cost to the honey production.

#### **What keeps you beekeeping?**

Beekeeping has become part of our country life. It is part of the philosophy of sourcing food locally, eating wild food, healthy food. We have lived like this all of our lives and intend to continue as long as we can. (We don't suffer from allergies)

#### **What have been the high points of your beekeeping career?**

I believe the highpoints are related to the people I meet, the places I go and the things I learn. For example, I once took a colony from the loft of a medieval barn, the comb was nearly 3 feet by 2 feet but I did not find a Queen. The property was fumigated to allow builders to do essential restoration without the interference of stinging insects. When they stripped off the cladding, they found that the colony occupied the entire interior of one wall of the barn. I had merely removed a small overspill. On a Housing estate in Corby, I removed a wasp nest from a loft. On this estate the houses had wooden fences outside, each finished in a colour preferred by the owner. The wasp nest was made from wood fibers taken from all these fences giving the nest a candy strip effect. Being bombarded with questions from primary school children, seeing their enthusiasm to learn about bees and beekeeping, is very rewarding, they are the future of beekeeping.

#### **Has anything gone wrong with your beekeeping?**

Yes! Most of my mistakes were made as a novice. One particular incident and the worst, comes to mind. I lost control during a routine inspection. My smoker went

out and as I was not experienced, I panicked. A bee got inside my vale and attempting to kill it, let in several more bees that stung my face many times, unable to see clearly, I fell into the pond, but managed to get out only to pass out on our hallway floor. Suddenly, I'm sitting on a chair with our GP sticking a needle in one arm and Penny with one in the other and discussing the implications of putting me to bed, stinking of pond water. I mention this with the hope it may save another novice from the same fate.

### **What do you consider to be your beekeeping legacy?**

I would like to think that my grandchildren will take up beekeeping and that people who have asked questions or asked for help would have a sympathetic outlook on bees and wildlife in general.

### **What about the future of beekeeping?**

I'll amend that to say the future of the bee. As a personal view, I believe that the problems honey bees, and for that matter all insects are having, are man induced. The bees have survived for many more years than man has existed and I believe that mankind is very arrogant to think that the bees need us or our treatments. **We need bees for our survival, bees do not need us!**

## **Feral Bees in Distress! Norma Nairne (Southend-on-Sea Division)**

I help look after Ian Brown's bees at Sunnybrook Farm, Stock, with Colin Gray, Colleen Chamberlain and Tracey Law – all under Nobby Clarke's keen eye.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> February Ian phoned me to say that three colonies of bees had been found in an outhouse that builders were demolishing in Stock village and was I interested in collecting them? Goodness! That put the cat amongst the pigeons as I had never done anything like that before. Very nervously I said "Yes". Then it was a mad scramble to get my suit and everything in the car. I needed to be back home about 1.15pm to run my husband to the pub for his very liquid lunch with friend.

I met up with Ian at the farm to collect 2 brood boxes, dummy boards etc. plus a carry strap. We drove to the site, Ian in his car, me in mine. The main house had 9 bedrooms, a ballroom and grounds of 9.5 acres- bought for £2.1 million- wow!! This included an organic orchard. Mistake no.1- Ian began to drive over the broken bricks that the builders had put down but realised that they might puncture his tyres so rapidly reversed. I chose to park on the concrete as I would not have been flavoured of the month with my poor husband if I punctured the tyres. Mistake no.2 – I had forgotten to bring my wellies and stepped straight out of the car into a huge deep mud bath. Essex having had oodles of snow and rain, obviously hadn't penetrated my thick skull!

The builders had already been stung so they were not too happy-they were very keen

to get rid of these three colonies a.s.a.p. to enable them to get on with their job. The bees had made their home in between the ceiling joists which were now exposed to the elements. It was a grotty day with lots of drizzle and very cold. On top of this the builders said that gypsies/travellers had been helping themselves to anything of value and on their last visit had set fire to the main house so smoke was billowing around.

I now had to climb a very old ladder to get to the bees. When the foreman stepped on the first rung of the ladder it snapped and his foot hit the ground with rather more force than he liked. There was a silence as we all looked at him and he pulled a face ... eventually he moved his foot and it was ok. Some Bright Spark (not me) suggested we upend the ladder! Up the ladder I went and then walked along the scaffolding planks which were covered with grit and mud (after all builders are not known for being house proud). The builders and Ian followed behind me carrying the hives. I could see the poor bees clustered together bravely trying to keep warm, hopefully the queen was in the middle. The three colonies were dotted about the floor space. Grasping my hive tool I stuck my hand inside the nearest cluster of bees between the joists. As quickly as possible I cut out the comb plus bees and installed them as best as I could inside the empty brood box which by now was on the scaffolding boards behind me. The colonies were really, really cosy in the floor space with lots of honey so they had done a good job all on their own. (Sort of makes nonsense of us?). I closed the hive up and tied a strap round it. Then we had the job of lowering the hive down from the scaffolding. Ian, brave soul, as he doesn't like being stung, stood at the bottom of the ladder whilst one of the builders did the lowering. I'm a puny thing I'm afraid where strength is concerned. We repeated this procedure for the other two colonies.

We got them back to the farm and installed them in the Apiary (I know this is not good, as we didn't know if they harboured disease, but believe me we didn't have any choice) Thank goodness I made it back home in time for my husband and his drink date—but he was rather amused that the bees came first !!! Next I phoned Nobby who said we had to string the combs inside empty frames as soon as possible. This was done at the farm two days later with the help of Colin, Tracey and Nobby- a really messy job as we ended up with hands covered with honey. We did all this inside one of Ian's sheds to try to keep the bees as warm as possible. Fondant was then put over the frames.

Since then the weather has been awful so we haven't risked a look inside the hives. Cross your fingers these very plucky bees survive eh? I did put in a request to the house-owner's Dad that if he wanted bees in his orchard when the house is built I was interested. All very exciting for one relatively new beekeeper !!!!! Hopefully I will know the right way to do it next time, if there is a next time !

## FOR SALE

15 sound colonies on National frames, £65  
each. Should be available early April.

Ring 07885 257108

## **Yet another Beginner's Tale!** **Bob Andrews (Maldon & Dengie)**

I got the bug sometime in late 2008 when the BBC and other media were reporting the plight of the Honey Bee, and so, being interested in nature along with supporting the wife's interest in gardening I posed the question "how do you feel about me getting a beehive for the garden?", well I can't print the response but along with the stereotypical answer of "I got stung once and I am allergic...etc", the answer was along the lines of " you can take a (polite) funny walk."

So in the interest of not chasing a lost cause, I basically put it to the back of my mind but kept a healthy interest in all the media attention, which the missus obviously noticed, because lo-and-behold one of the "Tree" gifts at Christmas was a book " Bee keeping for beginners".

Well I thought! Chance your arm, so foot well and truly placed in the door, I forced it wide open, enrolled in a theory & practical course at Chelmsford and joined the Maldon & Dengie branch.

The only issue to overcome now, was where do I put a hive once I get one? Fortunately I have room next to a workshop at the end of the garden and a quick word with surrounding neighbours to get a thumbs-up and all was clear in my mind..... sorted!

Now I found the course really varied and interesting; I quickly realised that although there is no single correct way of working with bees there is a common purpose to always have the bee's best interest foremost in everything that is carried out through the various keepers' techniques and the equipment they use.

Having progressed through the courses, and I must say they were something I really looked forward to every Monday eve, I went about getting set up myself, albeit a bit late in the year (June 09). So with recommendations from those that have years of experience and with some (little) knowledge of the different types of hives I had seen and discussed at meetings, I bit the bullet and ordered my "kit" and what I thought would be all I needed for the time being. Basically I decided upon a Commercial brood box, 2 national supers (all frames & foundation) , suit, smoker, gloves, hive tool and a couple of other "minor" bits.

Now, I went into this because of my interest in the bees themselves (as I still am) and never really gave the honey side much thought, more of a "well I know there will be some, but I'll deal with that later".

Having got my first nuc, I would visit the end of my garden every day after work and come the weekends, soon as I got up I would sit in my dressing gown with a cuppa just watching, fascinated by the little critters going about their business whilst keeping a watchful eye on regular checkups and making sure I kept a log of everything going on.

Well it wasn't long (Sept) before I realised that not only was the colony building exponentially, the honey was building up fast and I really wasn't prepared for it (no spare supers or frames to put on), I ordered some jars and fortunately borrowed

the necessary equipment from a helpful neighbour (about 500 yds away) who also keeps bees and I managed to get 1 supers worth of honey about 19lb in all. I was pleased as punch, as well as leaving another supers worth for the bees to go through the winter. So in a matter of about 11-12 weeks they had grown and created about 38lb ish of honey; boy was I happy, so were the neighbours, work-mates and family who benefitted from the first "Family Honey". My Dad would have been proud, bless his cotton socks!

Anyway part of the reason for me putting pen to paper so to speak, is just as a "heads up" to newcomers, because this bit about "spares required" and "be prepared" and "consider the additional equipment costs" wasn't readily apparent at the course meetings I attended (at least not to me).

So if you are thinking of getting into working with bees (you don't actually keep bees after all) or have in fact just got into the very first stages of getting your "kit", be aware that there is a fair sized element of planning and "additional" costs involved in preparation for the honey gathering process, for the equipment required and the "spare" frames & foundation you will need along with the de capping knife, jars, labels, extractors (if you can't beg or borrow one) etc, all this and not forgetting other bits like disease prevention/cure/control cost etc.

So just be aware of the potential financial cost to yourself for a "complete" set up. In hindsight I would have bought my equipment over a longer period to ease the pocket a bit, and maybe ordered my hive earlier then added other bits and pieces before I actually got a nuc, but hey, hindsight is a great thing eh? Without exception, every single person who I have encountered related to keeping bees has been more than willing and helpful to guide, advise or lend equipment when needed (thanks to all—you know who you are!).

It is still early days for me (not a full year yet) and I am very much still learning and looking forward to my second hive getting up and running (home made this one!) just as soon as I can this year. But the really good news is .....I now have my own extractor courtesy of the missus for my birthday and Christmas (for the next 5 years mind you!) AND the biggest surprise of all, when my nearest and dearest has had the girls over for lunch in the garden she has actually gone to my hive, lifted the lid to reveal the Perspex covered colony and showed with pride our little honey factory with no fear of being stung, now is that an achievement or what?

So I hope this gives a little insight and maybe is helpful to the wannabees and new starters of just few of the things to consider, just a bit better than I did!

Roll on summer 2010!

*Special thanks to Jean & Dave Smye and Keith & Ann Williams, much appreciated support.*

## **Technical Topics: All about Propolis**

### **Richard Alabone (Mr Beesy)**

We tend to regard propolis as a nuisance, which of course it is, but at the same time it's very important in the hive and there are some fascinating things to find out about it.

It comes from the resin extruded by trees to deter insects and moulds on tree wounds and buds, so bees use it because of its antibiotic properties. It's also used to seal hive gaps in order to keep out unwanted insects and to generally glue things together.

But how do bees collect it? With difficulty is the answer. They manipulate it with their mouthparts on the tree in the first place and then contrive to store it on their leg pollen baskets. Back in the hive it has to come off, but only with the help from other bees. Sometimes this ungluing process can be seen on the alighting board with bees tugging the sticky glue off another's pollen basket with their mandibles. Though not having seen this myself, I read about it in the ABC-XYZ of bee culture.

The best propolis is used to seal gaps around the brood nest, to keep out ants etc., so we see it in the area of brood frames and queen excluder, damaging gloves and making life generally awkward for the beekeeper. We can collect it in quantity on a plastic screen, rather like a queen excluder, where the gaps become filled with good propolis. If we take it away and freeze it the propolis is easily removed by bending the screen and it's used for various purposes. By mixing with surgical spirit, then decanting off the wax and dirt, it produces a tincture, for use on wounds or is even used internally.

It's generally removed by the beekeeper from mating surfaces in hives, between boxes for example, with the hive tool but a paint scraper for even broken glass works better. Some bees stick pillars of wax and propolis to support frames from the floor, while others attempt to seal the top porter escape hole, or even an over large entrance.

Its antibiotic properties are used by bees to sterilise their honey and brood containers. In some way they spread a thin layer on the inside of the cells. Whether this is thinned by bees somehow, or whether a thin propolis is collected, from plants perhaps, we don't seem to know. But in any case we can see it on super frames as a brown colouration and very old super comb becomes black and heavy with propolis reducing the space for honey after many years. Its use on comb is to prevent honey fermentation and imparts antibiotic properties to the honey itself, which has been used to seal our wounds for hundreds of years. It's the antifungal and anti-inflammatory properties that we don't fully understand, both in the honey and propolis. It has even been chewed by some people.

Difficult things to clean are gloves, glass quilts and the gauze in contact feeders. Alcohol in the form of meths works well.

Frame design gives us a bee space, to aid frame removal, but most frame designs ignore the problem of bee glue. Our standard Hoffman frames have 28 inches of

the glue while the Manley super frames have 52 inches. To remove the first frame from a box of Manley's, can prove almost impossible where bee glue has flowed between the frame spacers. It is extraordinary that beekeepers persist in using these highly unsuitable frames, but having said that, their design is still better than the SN 1 or SN 4. Modesty prevents me mentioning a frame designed to reduce propolis to a minimum by only having point contacts.

Finally, one interesting use of the bee glue is by violin makers. I once supplied a relative who was a violin maker in Saffron Walden. It's used in the varnish, and also the special glue, but the proportion used is up to the violin technician. I believe the use of a propolis tincture to prepare the wood for gluing is important. The way Stradivarius used it has long been a mystery, but clearly he did something very special, and it is said that the secret of the Strad was in the way he used the propolis.

### Footnote about Bee Bole Nobby Clark (Braintree Division)

Some of our newer members, and perhaps some of the older members as well, may be wondering how I found the bee boles pictured on the cover of the February issue. That photograph was taken a few years ago when I was the County Secretary and arose out of an approach from the International Bee Research Association asking if the bee boles at Tilty still existed and if so could they have an up-to-date picture. Derek Webber, our current President and C.E.C. Chairman at that time, was interested and we met at Tilty. As a matter of interest, we learned from the lady in the house that the site was threatened by a proposed new runway at Stansted Airport but I learned later that it had been given a reprieve.



was threatened by a proposed new runway at Stansted Airport but I learned later that it had been given a reprieve.

The IBRA is based in Cardiff but the person who maintains the Register of Bee Boles and other Beekeeping Structures is Ms P. Walker (Curator) of 33 Kingsway, Gerard's Cross, Bucks. SL9 8NX (email: [walker@jaffna.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:walker@jaffna.wanadoo.co.uk)) and she likes to hear of any historical bee structures. The information required is the address, grid reference, name of person who visited the structure and date, number of recesses, shape, distance apart, shape of back of recesses - flat, rounded or arched, measurements/ height, breadth and depth, height of shelves above ground now and originally, if known, wall and shelf construction material, whether base and/or lintel extend to form a sill (with measurements), direction faced, date of structure - certainly or probably, evidence to prove this, state of repair, local name for structure and any other information eg when last used, references

in documents etc and a rough plan showing wall in relation to house or garden with north indicated.

From this it is obvious one needs to have a tape measure, camera, compass (or use boy scout method to determine north) and a notebook.

Interestingly, after investigating the Tilty structure, Eileen Marrable of Romford Division told me of possible bee boles at the remains of North Ockendon Hall close to one of her apiary sites. I photographed and reported these but there was doubt whether these were, in fact, bee boles because they faced north. However, this example prompted me to use the local reference library and how interesting that was. History showed the number of hives that used to be located at North Ockendon and at South Ockendon where, in the local church there is, apparently, a memorial to a De Bruyn from times past.

### Letter to the Editor

I would like to thank Jean Smye for all the hard work she did with the help of David her husband organizing the buying of jars for the county, plus the timing, so members would not get stuck on the narrow track getting to the barn. On a nice summer day it's quite nice out there but to spend 3 days in nearly sub zero temperatures as they did that is commitment. I heard the order was in the region of £14,000.00 so it was no small task. While still on my soap-box I think all the divisional & county committees do a lot more than the members realise, so do try & lend a hand & offer to help out when asked it is for your benefit as well.

Jim McNeill

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## The charms of honey based alcohol—a dire warning

I found we had twelve bottles of mead stored away in the back of a cupboard. The contents of six of the bottles was sickly sweet, and the contents of the other six was sour and vinegary so it was decided that the mead should be poured away down the sink.

I withdrew the cork from one bottle of the sweet mead and poured it down the sink apart from one glass, and did the same with the other bottle of vinegary stuff. I found mixing the contents of the two glasses made very palatable mead, which I promptly drank. Then I withdrew the cork from the second bottle of the sweet mead and poured it down the sink, apart from one glass and I did the same with a third bottle of vinegary stuff apart from one glass which I mixed and drank.

I pulled the bottle from the cork of the next; I drank one sink of it and threw the rest down the glass. I pulled the sink out of the next glass and poured the cork down the bottle and drank the glass. I pulled the next cork from my throat and missed the contents and poured and poured the sink down the bottle. I then corked the sink with the glass, bottled the drink and drank the pour.

When I had every thing emptied, I steadied the house with one hand and counted the bottles, corks, glasses and sinks with the other which came to twenty seven. To be sure I counted them again and they came to seventy two and as the house came by I counted them again and finally had all the houses, bottles and corks and glasses and sinks counted except one house and one bottle.... which I drank.

*Pam Willis, From the Petersfield Beekeeper, August 2006, via Shropshire Beekeepers Association Newsletter courtesy of BEES.*



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More signs of Spring, photos taken by Pat Allen

