

THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



A 5 star bee hotel for solitary bees at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris.
Photo taken by Nicolas J. Vereecken, used with permission.

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.

March and April 2011

- 2 Mar. *Wednesday 7.30pm Colchester* "New to Beekeeping" social evening (experienced beekeepers also welcome) at The Wooden Fender (public house), Colchester Road, Ardleigh, Colchester. CO7 7PA.
- 3 Mar. *Thursday 7.30pm Harlow* at Kings Church Red Willow. Spring preparation and management with Pat Allen.
- 4 Mar. *Friday 8.00pm Romford* Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park. Swarm Control with speaker Alan Byham.
- 5 Mar. *Saturday 2.00pm Essex Beekeepers 131st Annual General Meeting* at Room EO6 of Writtle College Lordship Road, Chelmsford CM1 3RR.
- 9 Mar. *Wednesday 7.30pm –9.30 Braintree* Microscopy classes at Tabor College Panfield La Braintree CM7 5XP. Telephone Stuart Mirson if you need further details: 01376 340683.
- 12 Mar. *Saturday 2.00pm Dengie Hundred and Maldon* Mundon Victory Hall, Mundon Village. 'Why we do it, How to do it, Can it go wrong? The views and experience of three beekeepers.
- 17 Mar. *Thursday 7.30pm Epping Forest* Chingford Horticultural Society, Larkshall Rd., Chingford E4 6NH. Swarm Control—a talk, demonstration by Ted Gradosielski.
- 19 Mar. *Saturday BBKA Module Exams.*
- 21 Mar. *Monday 7.30pm Chelmsford* Link Hall Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB. Oil Seed Rape We love it and hate it. If it makes you despair then come along, you might find the answer. Speaker Richard Alabone.
- 23 Mar. *Wednesday 7.30pm Southend* at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Jim McNeill will give a talk on spring preparation.
- 24 Mar. *Thursday 7.30pm Colchester* at Langham Community Centre. A talk by Adrian Knowles, from Essex Wildlife Trust and a Senior Ecologist, EECOS. His talk will be on the diversity of solitary bees (there are approx 150 species in Essex), their life histories, role in the countryside, their conservation and what the general public can do to help.
- 25 Mar. *Friday 8.00pm Braintree* at The Constitutional Club, Braintree. Indoor Meeting
- 1 Apr. *Friday 8.00pm Romford* Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park. 'Things you were not taught on a Beginners' Course' Led by Norman McDonald.
- 7 Apr. *Thursday 7.30pm Harlow* at Kings Church Red Willow. A talk by Chris Chilver on queen rearing, replacing and increasing colonies.
- 9 Apr. *Saturday 2.00pm Dengie Hundred and Maldon* at the Blue Boar pub Silver St. Maldon. What insurance cover do we have—third party or otherwise—what and who is covered? How to look for Small Hive Beetle.

Cont. p.4

- 9 & 10 Apr. *Saturday and Sunday All day* **Saffron Walden** at Great Easton Primary School CM6 2DR. Candle Making Workshops with Clive De Bruyn. A limit of 20 participants per day.
- 17 Apr. *Sunday 2.00pm* **Braintree** Apiary meeting - John Barlow with bee inspector Peter Heath . Telephone 01371 850756 for details.
- 18 Apr. *Monday 7.30pm* **Chelmsford** Link Hall Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB. Swarm Control and Insurance. When we collect swarms what exactly does our insurance cover us for? DO YOU KNOW? Speaker Derek Webber.
- 19 Apr. *Tuesday 7.30pm* **Saffron Walden** Thaxted Guildhall CM6 2LA. Preparing for the Basic Assessment 1, 'Theory—Syllabus and Techniques with Jane Ridler.
- 21 Apr. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Epping Forest** Chingford Horticultural Society, Larkshall Rd., Chingford E4 6NH. Microscope evening, testing for Nosema with Roy Cropley.
- 27 Apr. *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. BBKA exams and modules—Syllabus and Techniques with Jane Ridler.

County Pheromones Richard Ridler (Chairman)

During the early part of every year our divisional and county treasurers have to finalise our accounts for the past year and report on the outcome to members. The growth in our membership has led to more work for our treasurers, in my division the number of transactions in our accounts has increased fourfold in a decade. I hope you will take time to read the county treasurer's report which is with this magazine. It's the first time we have produced such a document. We hope that by giving you the chance to find out more about the workings of EBKA more of you might be tempted to participate in the management and operation of our association. If the report raises questions then please air them. Like all organisations we must adapt and change if we are to thrive. Please let your divisional committees know what you want of them, they in turn will influence the direction of the county. I hope to visit most divisions during the year to listen to directly to our members and find out what they think about EBKA.

Advance Notice

BEE HEALTH DAY 7TH JUNE 2011.

Hosted by Saffron Walden division

Day to include presentations and a practical session with the regional and seasonal inspectors.

Further details in the April magazine.

County Treasurer's Report for 2010
Anthony Edwards (County Treasurer, EBKA)

I am pleased to report on my year as County Treasurer which proved to be a little more enlightening than I had anticipated. I would recommend to all members that at some point in their beekeeping life they try and be involved in their Division's Committee or a CEC activity, it will widen your beekeeping horizons.

This year the CEC has agreed to trial the wide distribution of an abridged version of the accounts attached to this month's copy of the magazine so that you have a preview before the AGM. In the supplement is a brief narrative detailing how your subscription is managed. I hope this may tempt you to attend the County AGM on the 5th March where you can receive a full copy of the accounts and raise issue on the activities of the CEC.

The 2010 Accounts reflect the increasing size of membership with both income and expenditure over 20% higher than in 2009. Of the income over which the CEC exercises control (i.e. after passing on BBKA capitation and donations) only 40% came from members subscriptions. We were fortunate to receive a substantial Grant from Essex County Council which enabled the CEC, on a "matched" funding basis with the Divisions, to centrally acquire mobile observation hives at a discount price from Thorne, the Beginners version of the Course in a Case (also at a discount to the current price) and new Display Boards primarily used for public events.

Last year saw a successful County Honey Show and Bee Husbandry Day both conducted at no cost to the wider membership. The year also saw the start of an Enterprise operation supplying a range of merchandise to members and contributing to central funds. A vote of thanks is due to the Honey Show Committee, Eileen Marrable (co-ordinator of the Bee Husbandry Day) and Penny Learmonth leading the Enterprise operation. Unfortunately a substantial increase in the world price of cotton is forcing up the price of our polo shirts and fleece jackets.

In conclusion I hope I might see you at the AGM, the last opportunity to purchase an EBKA polo shirt at the 2010 price and the opportunity to hear the newly appointed BBKA Operations Director/General Secretary. My thanks to the Divisional Treasurers for their support, prompt payments and timely copies of their Divisional Accounts.

A passing thought - your capitation payment to EBKA is less than the value of two jars of honey.

Wanted
Second-hand Commercial or National Hives in reasonable condition,
preferably complete, but anything considered.
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e-mail: brown.jeloc1@gmail.com Tel: 01376 564954

Examination/ Education Secretary's Report for 2010
Jane Ridler

Education and Examination have played a significant role at EBKA in 2010. This is not surprising, since the massive expansion of the Association continues with most Divisions having again run teaching and training classes for sizeable groups of enthusiastic beginners. BBKA offered a 'Training for Trainers' day in Peterborough in November which was attended by representatives from almost all divisions. Information and technique can now be disseminated to all trainers of beginners from these key people. A meeting was held in December in Chelmsford of these reps and other main providers of training from the divisions. Encouragingly, it was apparent that Essex already offers a consistent approach to beginners in terms of theory courses, practical training and costs. Nevertheless, reps were able to take back a few extra ideas to their divisions. Essex beginners are receiving well constructed and carefully delivered courses, so well done to all providers who have risen to the occasion over the past couple of years.

We now have a Coordinator for Exams and Assessments in each division (please see article on Basic Assessment in the February edition of EBK for names). So, people have a local contact to guide them when considering taking one of the BBKA qualifications.

Exam successes in 2010 include Ted Grad from Epping Forest, who has been awarded the General Husbandry Certificate and 13 candidates the Basic Assessment Certificate. Suzi Goose won the Miss Avey prize for the highest scorer in Essex for this award. Certificates and badges were presented at the Annual Conference in October. There were only slightly more candidates for these practical assessments in 2010 compared with 2009, but more are to be expected in 2011 with the increase in novice beekeepers. Because of the dearth of assessors in the county, there will be set assessment days for the Basic Assessment during the season to make optimum use of them. Thank you to all our assessors who give their time for this valuable service to beekeeping. Theory examination successes were achieved by all 6 candidates who were entered for Module exams in 2010. Congratulations to all and it is hoped that members all consider suitable levels of beekeeping qualification in the 2011 season.

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Beekeeping Tips No. 2

By Pollinator

At this time of the year (February/March), and when daytime temperatures come up above 10°C the bees will be flying and collecting pollen to feed the new brood and also to collect water to breakdown stores that have gone solid in the frames (for example ivy nectar does this) and bees can easily starve if they cannot get out of the hive to collect water. This long frosty Winter will not have helped. As soon as the bees come out of the Winter cluster they will be consuming around 2 kg of stores per week depending on colony size and a queen capable of laying well. If there are good days after the beginning of February, when the temperature is such that they are flying, then this is the time to do your first inspections to check what stores remain. You can inspect before, at a lower temperature, as bees can cope with the cold. They do not like a damp hive. Take off the crown board and limit the inspection to seeing how many seams of bees are there and to check the number of frames of food on both sides of the brood nest. Around six seams of bees should be seen between the top bars. Don't stop to find the queen or to look at the brood pattern; this can be done quickly once the temperature gets above 10°C. If the colony requires food at this time of the year it must be placed directly in contact with the top bars between which you have seen the seams of bees. This can take the form of candy or simply a one-kilogram bag of sugar, soaked in water, in which you have made a few holes in the paper on its underside. Slide the food into position, as this is less likely to squash any bees. You will need a frame of wood (an eke) to raise the crown board over the candy or sugar bag (An empty super will do). Renew as necessary until they are self-sufficient in stores. If you had a super of stores above the brood chamber then you can put this above the eke or under the brood chamber. Remove the eke as soon as a honey flow starts otherwise you will get comb drawn in the space!

Above 10°C it is not necessary to find the queen so long as you can see eggs that the queen has laid. If the colony does not have eggs and young larvae then the queen must be found and killed. On the other hand she may just have disappeared. If you are fortunate enough to have an over-wintered nucleus then you can combine the de-queened colony with it. The alternative is to combine it with any other colony and it will boost that colony. Ordinary flour or icing sugar sprinkled over the bees of both colonies will ensure there is no chance of fighting ... they will be too busy cleaning themselves and by the time they have finished the colony odours will have mingled. Do not interleave the frames of the two colonies but simply put the two sets of frames together. Make sure there are sufficient stores.

What does help early in the season is to feed pollen patties or pollen substitute patties, the latter for those beekeepers that have not trapped pollen from foraging bees in the previous season. Soya flour is substituted for pollen in the recipe. 8 oz (270 g) of pollen or de-fatted Soya flour is mixed dry with 2 oz (65 g) of yeast and then honey (creamed) or thick sugar syrup is added to make a mix that can be rolled out with the normal rolling pin (cook's permission is desirable

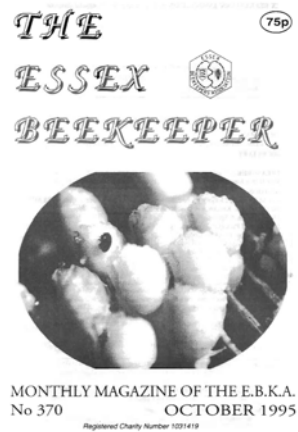
as also is the use of the Kenwood electric mixer plus its dough hook and stainless steel basin). Cut the resulting dough into 5 pieces and roll them flat between two sheets of plastic to form a pancake. I save plastic envelopes that magazines arrive in through the post. The plastic prevents the pancakes drying out, and when put in contact with the top bars containing the seams of bees, then one sheet is removed in order that the bees have direct contact with the patty. I also find that it is a good diagnostic tool insomuch as a colony that does not use its patty needs to be inspected to see why. Ted Hooper said that patties were still a good idea even when pollen was being brought into the hive in early Spring. Other beekeepers have found that they are a good idea at any time there is a pollen shortage. Bakers' yeast can be purchased in the bakery department of supermarkets (e.g. S***y) for around 95p for a one-kilogram block. If you have a local brewery you can possibly get a bucket of yeast for a jar of honey!

**From the Archives—October and November 1995
The Real Cost of a New Hive**

I thought an article from 1995 discussing the cost of hives would be interesting—only when I was reading the November 1995 issue did I realise this prompted a vigorous response. I have reprinted both articles. In a third and new article, Richard Alabone has directed his attention to other new material being used to make hives in 2011.

A recent exercise to work out the total price of a National hive revealed that - amazingly -we pay over £200! Most of us buy odd bits as needed and close our eyes to the real price of a complete hive. On looking in the various catalogues, some firms offer a 'complete' hive consisting of just a brood box with floor and roof, etc, while others have either one or two supers included which obscures the price of a truly complete hive.

Here I have taken as a minimum requirement, three supers along with frames, foundation, varroa floor, wire excluder, crown board and roof, and then compared the total prices from various manufacturers. Thorne's price, for a cedar wood hive in the flat, will be £200.29 making use of their 'complete' deal. Buying the bits separately would cost somewhat more and if you cannot get to one of their agents, post and packing will be an extra £10. The same hive from Steele and Brodie would be £256.20 (post free) but from Exeter Bee Supplies £202.45 (post free). Incidentally, EBS normally supply a 6-inch roof and frame types of your choice, whereas the Thorne package gives a 4-inch roof with dreadful DN1 and SN1 frames. However all of these prices do not include other essentials like a dummy board and stand.



Should we be using deal instead of cedar? An equivalent hive from D Cottrill in deal would be £135.28 plus £19.74 postage, total £155.02. Steele and Brodie's price for deal is £185.90 post free - more expensive perhaps than one might expect. Clearly the use of a cheaper wood does not make a significant difference and might not be considered worthwhile for the roof and brood box, but supers could well be deal (given some protection).

A popular alternative is DIY. Wood does not normally come cheap but it is amazing what beekeepers can do with pallets, packing crates, or old bits of fencing. When it comes to drawings these are, generally speaking, hard to find. A formal request for the BBKA to work towards standardisation of the equipment we use, was blocked at the Annual Delegates Meeting last March by a major manufacturer - I wonder why! Andy Stoddart of Chelmsford has a set of drawings and is preparing to make them generally available.

Personally I feel that our hive designs leave much to be desired. They use expensive materials which are increasingly difficult to obtain, and involve complicated machining operations, which conveniently deter the average DIY hive-maker. Note that most foreign hives are far simpler in design. Why doesn't someone come up with a hive of cheap modern materials which does not need complicated machining? It must come. I am anxious to see details of the new Rational hive from Apex Enterprises, which I believe fulfils both of these requirements.

Richard Alabone

**The REAL cost of a new hive ... a manufacturer replies:
(or ... The cost of a REAL hive).**

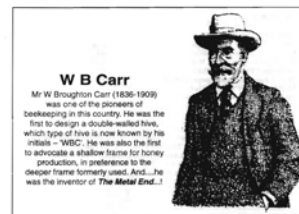
Here was the reply from Paul Smith, Managing Director of E.H.Thorne, which appeared in the November 1995 issue .

I feel I must write in response to the article in the October issue entitled The REAL cost of a new hive'.

All the large manufacturers of beekeeping equipment are running a business, we have all the usual overheads and must generate at least a small profit to reinvest back into new machinery. There will certainly never be large share options or telephone number salaries in beekeeping!

Compared with many hobbies, beekeeping is inexpensive - tennis rackets can cost £200, cameras can be thousands of pounds, fishing rods hundreds, model aeroplanes hundreds, and as for golf!! We have yet to see an angling magazine that bemoans the price of rods and suggests an 8' bamboo cane and some baler twine will be just as efficient.

The feature criticised DN I and SN I frames and we



W B Carr
Mr W Broughton Carr (1836-1909) was one of the pioneers of beekeeping in this country. He was the first to design a double-walled hive, which type of hive is now known by the initials - 'WBC'. He was also the first to advocate a shallow frame for honey production, in preference to the deeper frame formerly used. And... he was the inventor of 'The Metal Grid'.

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agree with the author that they are not as efficient as Hoffman frames. However this frame is still by far the most popular in current use simple to assemble and inexpensive.

Cedar is a very expensive timber, the top grades costing well over £500 per cubic metre. There are however lower grades of cedar which can be considerably cheaper than pine. We do offer much lower prices on hives and hive parts -see the fantastic prices in our Winter Sale and our Open Days at Wragby and Windsor.

I attend the ADM as a representative of the Appliance Manufacturer Association, and this year gave our collective views on the proposition to re-introduce British Standards for beekeeping. I was also able to tell delegates the views of the B.S.I. This proposition was put to the vote and was lost. The Association has no vote on any subject.

Manufacturers will continue to make hives in the designs requested by customers -WBC, top bee space, Nationals, etc. The National hive design was developed within the BBKA and William Broughton Carr was not a manufacturer!

My view is that timber will continue to be the predominant base material. Wood is environmentally friendly when produced from sustainable forests. Cedar has natural oils that deter insects; timber breathes, and DIY persons can make their own hive parts without too much difficulty. Plastics, in general, are expensive and difficult to work with.

Finally we would like to advise your readers that 'Apex Enterprises' went into liquidation in June. We purchased their stock and did not find any evidence of the new so-called 'Rational' hive. Incidentally, much of their stock has been sold at our Open Days but be sure to look at the January 'Beekeepers News' for very special offers on plastic frame corners, obscure feeders and honey jar lids as well as our usual frames, hive parts and other accessories.

An Update on Hives Richard Alabone (Mr Beesy)

Our editor, Howard, decided to reprint the above articles from October and November 1995 Essex Beekeeper. He asked me to comment on what's happened to hive prices and design in the last 15 years. Prices haven't gone up by as much as you might think. The Thorne price has only gone up by 33% to £267 for a slightly better complete hive in the flat with 2 supers, but the delivery has almost doubled, and other manufacturers have increased similarly. Some have gone out of business, to be replaced, in the last few years, by many more new hive builders, making hives in cedar wood, deal or polystyrene. Thorne provides SN1 frames with their complete hive. Rather than being rude about the SN1 frames, perhaps I should have said, in theory and practice they hold 29% less than an SN5, are more difficult to uncap and encourage brace comb. A pity it's the most popular frame. Most other suppliers provide a choice of frames and a

deeper roof, but be careful comparing hive prices as the number of supers provided may vary.

When it comes to buying hives in the flat, there can be a problem in that the parts don't fit, so the beekeeper has to resort to chisels, or a big hammer. It's best to ask around, rather than put up with poor manufacturing. Chelmsford Division provide on their web site links to beekeeping equipment (www.Chelmsfordbees.co.uk click: Top links). You will see Caddon cedar wood National hive at £102, less frames, and even a WBC for £158. Also see Fragile Planet who do a plywood National for £55.00, without frames, I've just bought one and its fine but will not last nearly as long as a cedar hive.

Some beekeepers will always make their own frames and hives, and are increasingly using plywood. I've made them in 9 mm ply for some years with the brood box sometimes clad in foam polystyrene ceiling tiles. A friend of mine has made WBC hives of ply, and you can even buy a cheap ply WBC from Fragile Planet. I'm proud of my 20 year old WBC super creates, made with 4 wooden rails and the rest from hardboard. They are rather wobbly and not necessarily bee-tight, but are fine in a WBC.

But what has really interested me is this:- a National hive made of polystyrene, from Modern Beekeeping, made in Denmark.



Apparently most major suppliers in Denmark and Germany don't even offer wooden hives anymore; the reason being that polystyrene is so much better and cheaper. It's only now that their British National is available here: see the Chelmsfordbees website: Modern Beekeeping.

I've had a polystyrene Langstroth hive for about 10 years, which was made for the tropics, but its fine here, except that you have to be careful with your hive tool. The Danish hives are OK at -35° C, with hard plastic where you have to use a hive tool and are expected to last for 30 years. They come with a varroa floor and tray, but without frames: for £60.00. Beat that, for the best type of hive available. Supers are extra at £15 or so. There are other National hives on the web, at twice the price, and without the hive tool protection. One, Bee Farmer in Finland, has 3000 Langstroth hives. I have ordered a National hive to try it out and will let you know what it's like.

Bee Base, a Survey and my Test Results **Howard Gilbert**

Last year I took part in a survey organised by the National Bee Unit (FERA) whose purpose was to identify pests or pathogens present in certain beekeepers' colonies. Peter Heath, our local bee inspector, arranged a visit to my apiary. He arrived on 23 September 2010. As part of my annual beekeeper duties, I had finished varroa treatment, using Apiguard, and had fed the bees for winter. As we inspected my three colonies, the first notable feature was that they were all jam packed with stores; I think that provisions from blossoming ivy had increased their stores far beyond what I had provided. As we went through the colonies, we discussed how they had performed; Peter Heath did not see any signs of EFB or AFB. Through the year one of the colonies had not performed as well as the other two. In this colony varroa were still present even after treatment, and some bees were suffering from deformed wing virus. I have never used oxalic acid (through choice) but Peter Heath suggested that I should think about using this form of treatment on this colony to see what results might be achieved.

For the survey, Peter Heath took a sample of 60 bees for analysis. The test results would be made available on my BeeBase Records page. The pests or pathogens to be tested for in the samples were: Kashmir bee virus, Black queen cell virus, Chronic bee paralysis, Deformed wing virus, Sac brood virus, Acute bee paralysis, Apis iridescence virus, Israeli acute paralysis virus. Nosema apis, Nosema ceranae and Acarine were only tested for on adult bees. However my results are still pending. I contacted BeeBase and asked when they expect to publish the results as I wanted to publish them in the Essex Beekeeper. The reply was as follows:

"First, please accept my apologies for the results not being on your page of the BeeBase website. We have experienced some delays with the testing, mainly because of malfunctioning robots, and it will be a few more months before your results will start to appear. As soon as I know your results they will also appear on your BeeBase webpage. We anticipate finishing all the testing at the end of August. I am happy to provide you with some summary information for your county.

Whilst I cannot give you your personal results, I can provide you with some interesting information from samples collected in the first year of this large project. The survey began on 01/06/2009 and is due to run until 31/05/2011. Data collection and statistical analyses are obviously not yet completed, but we can give you some indications from the first year:

- The prevalence of AFB (24 in 10,000) and EFB (11 in 10,000) in the honey bee population across England and Wales appears lower than previously thought.
- The inspection programme run by the NBU inspectorate detected significantly more AFB and EFB than the random inspection programme, indicating

risk based inspections are efficient at finding disease (i.e. the bee inspectors are going to the correct places!).

- N. apis and N. ceranae both have a wide geographical distribution across England and Wales and were detected at half the apiary locations surveyed. Both organisms were found in the Essex area.
- So far the bee inspectors have collected nearly 4000 samples from across England and Wales.”

I am looking forward to obtaining my results and to see the conclusions that derive from an analysis of the complete sample collection.

Book of Commemoration Penny Learmonth

The new book of commemoration has been designed to mark all the people and events within the EBKA. The Annual Conference is recorded every year so to the Presidents, Chairmen and Life Members. The 'in memoriam' section records all the members of the EBKA who have died. I keep an eye out for any obituaries that are in the Beekeeper and enter the person concerned. However I suspect that there are members who don't appear in the magazine but who should be recorded.

Please send me, and continue to send me, the names of any beekeepers who have died in recent years and I will have them entered. I am happy to have the same names from several sources rather than not have them at all.

The Book is brought to the EBKA AGM and the Conference and is available to be seen anytime if you would like to contact me.

Penny Learmonth penny.learmonth@mail.adsl4less.com

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Delegate Report from BBKA ADM 15 January 2011 Penny Learmonth

There have been excellent reports on the Annual Delegates' Meeting in both the Beecraft Magazine and the BBKA News for February. I will just highlight a few main points of interest:

The capitation fee to the BBKA will rise by £1 pa from October this year – the first rise since 2008/9.

The BBKA will cease to endorse any pesticides as soon as contractual obligations have been completed. They will maintain communication with the Agro-chemical industry as it is in the honeybees' interest to do so.

The BBKA is developing a new website and it is hoped that this will be up and

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Two species of solitary bees.

Can you identify them?

Come to a talk arranged by Colchester Division on 24 March about solitary bees.

