

# THE ESSEX BEEKEEPER



*Ammophila sabulosa*, a species of solitary wasp, taking provisions to her nest.

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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.*

## September and October 2011

- 1 Sep. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. Education and Apiary management, a talk by Jane Ridler.
- 2 Sep. *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park. Preparing Honey for Show and Sale, led by Jim McNeill.
- 3 Sep. *Saturday 2.00pm* **Dengie Hundred and Maldon** Mundon Victory Hall. Legal requirements. What should we charge? Honey tastings of supermarket and members' honey.
- 6 Sep. *Tuesday 7.30pm* **Saffron Walden** Beginner's theory part 4, Review of first season's experience with Richard and Jane Ridler.
- 10 & 11 Sep. *Saturday and Sunday All day* **County Honey Show at Barleylands** Help needed from Divisional members for this County event as part of the Barleylands Country Show. Free entry to show for helpers. See advert on page 5.
- 17 Sep. *Saturday 10.30am* **Epping Forest** at Chingford Horticultural Hall. Epping Forest Divisional Honey Show.
- 18 Sep. *Sunday 3.00pm* **Braintree** Apiary Meeting Geoff & Alison Brewer Felstead. Telephone for details 01371 822043.
- 19 Sep. *Monday 7.30pm* **Chelmsford** Link Hall Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB. Small Hive beetle and Exotic Pests. Have you ever seen a small hive beetle caged and fed by bees? This fascinating powerpoint presentation will be given by Mike Brown Head of the Bee Unit at York.
- 20 Sep. *Tuesday 7.30pm* **Saffron Walden** at SW County High School CB11 4UH. Microscopy class on Pollen Analysis with Eileen Marrable. Numbers limited to 12 persons. Please bring your own samples.
- 22 Sep. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Colchester** Langham Community Centre. Contributions of cakes welcome. A review of Tendring Show with information on preparing entries for honey and wax classes. Also there will be honey recipes both new and as featured in the show schedule this year. Recipes and presentation for Tendring Show.
- 28 Sep. *Wednesday 7.30pm* **Southend** at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Divisional Honey Show.
- 1 Oct. *Saturday 9.00am-4.30pm* **EBKA Annual Conference** at Barleylands Centre Bille-ricay Essex CM11 2UD.
- 6 Oct. *Thursday 7.30pm* **Harlow** at Kings Church Red Willow. Winter Protection & 2012 Program with David Tyler.
- 7 Oct. *Friday 8.00pm* **Romford** Chadwick Hall, Main Road, Gidea Park. 'To bee or not to bee', a talk by Tony Gunton.
- 8 Oct. *Saturday 2.00pm* **Dengie Hundred and Maldon** Mundon Victory Hall. 'Well it works for me'. An exchange of ideas on most beekeeping subjects.

- 15 Oct. *Saturday 2.30pm Romford* at St Mary's Church. Honey Show, judged by Geoff Mills. Entries must be submitted between 1.00 and 2.00pm.  
*Saturday 5.30pm Romford* Annual Supper.
- 17 Oct. *Monday 7.30pm Chelmsford* Link Hall Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford CM1 2XB. Richard Ridler Chair of the CEC will talk about the work of EBKA and BBKA..
- 20 Oct. *Thursday 7.30pm Epping Forest* at Chingford Horticultural Hall. To be confirmed.
- 23 Oct. *Sunday 2.00pm Saffron Walden* at the home of Jane and Richard Ridler Hatfield Broad Oak CM22 7HE. 'Making and Selling Honey and Beeswax Soap— Demonstration'
- 26 Oct. *Wednesday 7.30pm Southend* at Women's Institute Hall, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh. Quiz night.
- 27 Oct. *Thursday 7.30pm Colchester* at Langham Community Centre. A Bee Inspector will give a talk.
- 27-29 Oct. **National Honey Show** held at St George's College Weybridge, Surrey KT15 2QS
- 28 Oct.. *Friday 8.00pm Braintree* at the Constitutional Club. To be confirmed.

### **County Pheromones Richard Ridler (Chairman)**

It's time I said a bit about what is discussed and agreed at the meetings of the CEC. The CEC (Central Executive Committee) comprises a number of trustees (one from each division) who are responsible for the sound management of EBKA along with a treasurer and secretary who are also trustees and also a number of non-voting members. The CEC meets every other month.

The July meeting considered a number of proposals to simplify our financial management. Our membership has now increased to around 800 which is straining our resources and necessitates new approaches. We are going to adopt electronic payment of bills, persuade BDI to accept computer produced receipts rather than hand written ones and develop a common computer based computer system for all our accounting. We are also going to investigate the possibility of collecting subscriptions by direct debit.

The honey show committee reported that preparations for the county honey show are well advanced; we look forward to even more entries from you all than last year.

The exams secretary reported that the numbers taking the basic assessment have doubled since last year and that there will be three Miss Avey Awards given at the conference for these getting the highest scores.

Chelmsford division reported that they are fully prepared for the county conference on 30th September and asked that you do not leave buying tickets until the last moment.

## Abandoned in France : 'A Tale of Two Hives' part II by Cassandra Elliott

*The following article has been sent by Cassandra Elliott, former County Secretary of the EBKA who left the UK for France a few years ago. Now beekeeping in Normandy, the saying 'Once a beekeeper, always a beekeeper' certainly rings true for Cassandra as she shares with us the second part of her recent discovery.*

A few weeks had passed when the call came in; the owner of the land on which the remaining beehive had been left was concerned. Having seen the condition of the first hive coupled with the fact that the colony within had died, they were worried that the remaining bees weren't faring too well. If they were left in the same conditions they too might not make it, so would I take this hive and see what I could do for it?

So late one evening my husband and I suited up in readiness and drove over to the field where the second hive was situated. The owner looked a bit taken aback to see our bee suits. And even more surprised to find out that we going to put the beehive in the car with us for the journey home.

We didn't have much light left in the day, and the hive really was a tricky one to get to so we had to make haste. We discovered we couldn't park the car in the field as there was no vehicle entrance, and that somehow we had to scale a 4ft barbed wire fence that was situated halfway between the car and the hive. The closest we could get the car to the hive was a distance of over 100 meters so we made our way on foot. The light was already fading fast as one of us lit the smoker whilst the other tried to make some sort of pathway through to the hive. A few bees headed home for the day, proof that it was still occupied, but it was late and not much was happening around the hive entrance.

I was in danger more than once of ripping my bee suit on the overgrown tree branches and thorns as we tried to untangle the wrecked fence from around the hive. A mass of twisted branches, tall grass, nettles and other various weeds obstructed the way so I gave the bees a little smoke just to let them know some-

### County Honey Show

**10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> September at Barleylands Nr. Billericay**

Just a few days to go! The schedule and entry forms are on our website. There's still just time to prepare your entries. There are several classes reserved just for novices. Our huge marquee is just one of very many forming the Essex Country Show. Even if you don't enter something into the show do come along and be impressed. This is our biggest public event of the year and it's a fun day out. Looking forward to seeing you there. For more information contact your divisional honey show representative or [chair@ebka.org](mailto:chair@ebka.org).

thing unusual was happening whilst we cleared a route and started to dig out the hive from beneath it's layer of water filled tyres and composted leaves. I then sealed the entrance and we started to lift. The hive had been there so long it had practically glued itself onto it's stand which in turn was bogged down in the ground and knotted up with weeds, but with a bit of strength we managed to free it and start to lift it forward and over the broken fence.

I had brought various bits of kit with me in order that we could move the bees, including a travel screen and a roof which we had made based on the Voirnot Hive, so we placed the hive down so I could lift the metal sheet which had been the hive roof (and protection from the elements for the three mouse nests lurking beneath) to take a look at what I would find this time. Sure enough, this hive also contained the now familiar slab of polystyrene and several layers of firmly attached fabric that served as a crown board.

Unfortunately the roof space was also home to a very large colony of Red Ants that were none too pleased at having their abode disrupted. There were thousands of them - in the crannies of the wood, in and under the fabric and dashing about over the outside of the hive. I brushed them off as best I could and got on with the job of securing the hive for the journey. None of the items I had brought with me would fit this hive, which I could now see was actually nothing like the Voirnot in appearance or size. I'd even brought a Commercial Roof with me, which was far too small for this oblong hive. I took a closer look at the fabric. It was firmly sealed by the bees, so I decided it best to travel them as they were. We tightly fastened a couple of hive straps and then placed a travel net over the hive and started the walk back. We had to pause to regain our strength a few times as we made our way across the field and towards the car. En route I noticed the hive was heavier on one side - and the thing felt like it was made out of oak - it was a brood and a half deep and there was no way we could lift it over the 4ft fence. So I went and had a chat with the owner and arranged to carry the hive up the field, through the garden of the house and out to the car. Quite a trek.

It was pitch black by the time we got the hive in the car and as we lifted this poor little colony into the rear of the vehicle I pressed my ear against the wood. Silence. I put a second travel net over the hive, we bid our goodbyes and started the journey homeward. All the way back there wasn't so much as a buzz or the sound of any fanning and not a single bee escaped through the, lets face it, well rotted fabric 'crown board'. Upon arrival at our apiary we placed the hive in it's new home, unsealed the entrance and put a temporary roof on the hive just to serve it overnight. Then we retired for the evening, leaving the hive in the darkness of the orchard, eager to see what the morning would bring.

The following morning was a beautiful sunny day so after breakfast we went down to the orchard with our young daughter to see how it had fared. We were pleased to see that bees were already flying, and although not a large number of bees were in evidence, the colony was busy bringing in pollen. We sat on the grass nearby and watched for a while, explaining to our daughter what they were doing, and why they had been brought here. Then I took a few hive measurements and set about trying to work out exactly how we would help this colony.

This hive was very odd. Oblong, so it was clear to see that nothing I had would fit. And also now we could see the hive in daylight I noticed it had been painted in three colours, green to the left, white to the right, with a little patch of brown right in the centre of the entrance. All of the bees were flying out of the (white) right hand side so I laid down on the grass to the front side of the hive and took a look in the entrance. The hive entrance had been split into two, no, THREE parts. Down the centre of their doorway was a little wooden tunnel, as indicated by the area of brown paint. And as with the previous hive, at the rear I found a sliding door with a viewing window under (a Frères-Gatineau window).

Keen to take a look under the fabric we made our way back to the house and made a crown board and roof to fit the hive. If the first hive was anything to go by I had a good idea of what to find inside - old comb, little room to lay eggs and even less room to put down stores. Having the same ventilation problems as the first hive I suspected Chalk Brood too, so later that morning my husband and I made our way back to the hive and took a look inside. I peeled back some of the fabric to reveal - no bees. This was the green side of the hive, and it was empty of all but a few inquisitive wanderers. I tried to lift a couple of frames but as before, they had been nailed down. I looked down into the hive and unlike the first hive I had taken from the field, this time I could see sidebars underneath. I peeled back the fabric further and I came to about four frames of really nicely behaved bees. Again I couldn't lift out the frames as most had been nailed down, and the few that hadn't been nailed in appeared to be holding comb in a rather 'wild' state, meaning that any frames of comb I tried to lift and inspect were in danger of tearing apart and squashing bees. Movement of the comb might also result in damaging the queen. Bearing in mind this hive had the same beekeeper as the previous hive, there was also a good chance that the comb had the two bamboo sticks crossed through them too. This needed a bit of thought. The last thing I wanted to do was accidentally kill the queen or destroy any of the comb. None of my foundation or frames fitted this hive and I didn't want to use the shook swarm method to transfer them as I reckoned they needed every egg and every baby in every cell possible in order to survive. Combine this with the fact that the whole hive was so firmly nailed together, I truly believed that doing a shook swarm meant I was in danger of harming this weak colony. What to do?

I'd be very interested to know what you guys out there would have done (I wish my mentor Derek Webber could have seen it); perhaps you might think my decision a rather odd one. The first thing I did was put some anti-varroa strips in. Yes it was a little late in the season, but I figured after all those years of being of left unattended, that was the first port of call.

Then I went back to the workshop and we made a 'conversion' crown board to fit the oblong hive, in the centre of which we cut a large hole an inch or so smaller than a Commercial super. We took the board back up to the apiary, removed the pieces of old fabric and placed the board on the hive. On top of this we put a drawn Commercial super with a Commercial crown board (with proper ventilation mesh) and a decent roof, again with vents. Now the hive could expand and breathe.

And that's exactly what it did.

The good news: As I write this in July the hive has been 'in situ' for a couple of months. Shortly after they arrived we gave the bees a sugar feed as we had a hot dry spell, and it made a world of difference to them. They have grown into a large, quiet, well-mannered colony. Although they ignored the super at first, once they had built up their numbers it didn't take them long to fill it with honey (the queen showed no interest in laying up there). So now they have stores.

The thing that gave me the most trouble was the nest of Red Ants. They were firmly embedded in the woodwork of the hive and kept on moving up into the roof space, laying eggs on the crown board and in the crevices of the roof itself. I had to swap out and gently torch each roof about five times before the nest was eradicated.

The not-quite-to-plan (but not unexpected) news: Because I couldn't get into the hive to check the frames they swarmed - straight into one of my lure hives. So one has become two.

And what of the hive itself? Well, more research tells me that this time what I have discovered is a double Warré Hive (developed by Abbé Émile Warré 1867-1951). Instead of the Warré quilt, two hives are built side by side of identical height, and each fitted with a crown board (or in this case, piece of fabric). In a normal Warré Hive this is fitted with a slot covered with a piece of queen excluder and linked by a tunnel fitted with a viewing window. The hive is covered with a normal roof. My hive is clearly an adaptation! The idea behind the hive is that the workers but not the queens can move freely between the hives, with an end result of three honey harvests for the beekeeper.

I'll never know how successful the original beekeeper was with these two hives. Intensive beekeeping and double build hives are not for me, so I've decided that now the colony is healthy, next spring I will remove a couple of the frames from the less used side of the hive, lift those nails and slide the frames apart. Tricky, as I've still not been able to examine the partition or the tunnel to see how it has been constructed, but now I am a bit more familiar with the hive I think I/they will do ok. I will then do a shook swarm into a Commercial box when the colony is at it's smallest (they arrived far too late and in too saddened a state for me to risk that first time around), I'll get them onto some fresh comb and take it from there.

I'm very intrigued to find out what the little tunnel is all about and exactly how it works. Why does it have it's own entrance? Maybe next spring the Editor of this mag might print an update to let you all know what I found inside...

Until next time?

**Essex Conference 2011**  
**Have you booked your place? Closing date 25 September.**  
**'This is one not to miss'. If you have mislaid the programme contact**  
**Jean Smye - 07731 856 361**

## Beekeeping tips No. 8—Wasps and other Predators by Pollinator

Depending on the type of Spring weather the first wasps may be seen around spare equipment and in the apiary from May onwards. They are seasonal pests as far as the beekeeper is concerned. Both the common wasp (*vespula vulgaris*) and the hornet (*vespula crabro*) will attempt to rob colonies and both often get inside the brood chambers after passing the guard bees. It takes several honeybees to keep a common wasp out of the hive and even more to keep out a hornet. The first common wasps to be seen in the Spring are the queens, which are much larger than their offspring, but both have the same markings of yellow and black bands and therefore are easily distinguishable from the honeybee. The hornet, on the other hand, is a tawny yellow with pale brown antennae and at least 2.5 cm long. Once the latter are inside the brood chamber they will happily carry on robbing whilst the beekeeper handles the frame! The common wasp will attack the beekeeper on occasions but the hornet is rather docile towards humans.

In recent years other types of wasps have been seen in this part of the southern UK. These tend to build nests in bushes whereas the common wasp often builds its nests in lofts of buildings. However, they will build a nest at the base (at ground level) of an external chimneystack or in the base of a tree. So long as there are no naked flames in the vicinity they can be killed by pouring some petrol (about half a cupful) into a funnel pushed into the entrance to the nest. Immediately close the entrance with some earth and let the fumes kill the bees and larvae in the nest. DO NOT IGNITE. Hornets will build a nest in the corner of a barn or outbuilding as well as in disused house chimneys and often just under the chimney pot. If called upon to destroy a nest in a loft then do wear thicker protection than you have for inspecting honeybee colonies. That is to say, thicker gloves and maybe an old mackintosh over your bee suit. In a loft I would use a normal wasp aerosol spray. If you cannot get to the nest because it is near the soffitt then a wasp killing powder is a good idea, as they will take it into the nest from where they enter the roof. This will kill anything in the nest.

Before wasp attacks get severe it is useful to make up a few jam or honey jars containing some sugar syrup. About 3 cm in the bottom is adequate. Cover with a lid made from clear polythene sheet (the type that enclose magazines posted to you, so save some) and puncture it in the middle with a pencil size hole. String or a rubber band will secure the cover. You will discover that bees do not go down into daylight (They instead go up your trouser leg into darkness!), but wasps will. Once the first wasp goes into the jar it drowns and then ferments. They cannot find their way out. Within minutes you will find your first wasp in the trap. No honeybees will find their way into the jar. Place the jars adjacent to the hives being attacked and on the stands.

The most important step the beekeeper can take to give the bees a fighting chance to defend their colony is to use a restricted entrance all year round. That is to say, use an entrance only 8 cm wide. In other words keep your entrance

blocks in all year. An alternative was to use the Gilbert louvre that was a design so that the entrance could be restricted down to just one small circular hole, or perhaps five or six such holes depending on the severity of the attacks. It is a misconception that the removal of entrance blocks give better ventilation. I have seen, in Australia, hives suffer complete meltdown when entrance blocks have been removed because the bees cannot control the ventilation. Honey and wax runs out of the entrance under air temperatures of 40°C to 50°C. With a narrow entrance the bees have complete control of the hive ventilation.

Another pest commonly found inside and outside hives is the ant. Usually they do not seem to do any harm but I suspect they take honey to feed their own colonies. My approach to this problem is to put a ring of ant powder around the legs of the stands that the hives are on. This only works until the rain (what's that?) washes it away. As this places the powder 60 cm from the hive floor the bees do not come into contact with it.

Other predators are the large and small wax moths and the former leaves tell tale trails across the sealed surfaces of the honeybee brood. The corner of the hive tool may be used to lift up this trail cover and then the wax moth grub can be picked out and destroyed. Tapping on the wooden frame with the hive tool often encourages the moth grub to emerge. If they are not controlled by the bees or beekeeper then they bore holes into the frames and this is often at the join between the lugs and the vertical sidebars. This weakens the frame and lugs break off, particularly if you are holding the lugs and shaking bees off for the purpose of finding queen cells. For this reason I would recommend always picking up the frames using fingers just inside the top of the vertical wooden bars. This is helpful also if the queen is under the lug as it stops you squashing her if you fingers are not there, but on the top bars themselves.



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**2011 BBKA Examinations and Assessments**  
**Jane Ridler, Exam/Education Secretary**

The 2011 season has gone pretty well for Essex; indeed, at the time of writing we are still in the thick of Basic Assessments. I would say, however, that with our rapidly expanded membership, an increase of interest to an even greater level could be expected. So look to 2012 if you waivered this year!

**Module Exams**

The following Essex candidates were successful in the Module exams this March:

**Module 1,** Honeybee Management

Tony Edwards	Chelmsford
Malcolm Legg ( <i>Credit</i> )	Saffron Walden

**Module 5,** Honeybee Biology

David McHattie ( <i>Distinction</i> )	Dengie Hundred & Maldon
Jane Ridler ( <i>Distinction</i> )	Saffron Walden
Richard Ridler	Saffron Walden

**Module 6,** Honeybee Behaviour

Craig Hirons	Saffron Walden
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Well done to those who have passed and please don't give up if you didn't make it this time – these exams have a high pass mark and need a lot of revision as well as developing a particular exam technique! Modules have become so popular nationally that the BBKA will be offering two dates from 2012. Along with the penultimate Saturday in March (when Modules 1, 2, 5 and 7 will be offered) candidates will be able to take other Modules the second Saturday in November (Modules 1, 3, 6 and 8).

In order to promote the entry for Module exams, and to acknowledge high level success, the CEC trustees have voted to give a similar award to the Miss Avey

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awards for the Basic Assessment. These awards will be named in memory of our distinguished Essex Master Beekeeper, Ted Hooper.

### **Basic Assessment**

28 people have applied to take the Basic Assessment this season. This is more than twice as many as 2010. I'd like to thank our assessors, Pat Allen and Derek Webber (and now also Ted Grad) who give their time and expertise free of charge.

Because the conference is being held at the very beginning of October this year, there may well be some candidates whose certificates don't arrive in time – but we'll acknowledge all published successes in any case. Also, there is a chance that not all the results of the BAs will be available from the BBKA, so the Miss Avey awards for the highest marks in the BA may not have been decided by October 1st. I have results for those who were assessed in May, June and early July. The following were successful (100% success rate so far):

David Alcock	Braintree	Gordon Dougan	Saffron Walden
Fiona Adedotun	Colchester	Uli Gerhard	Saffron Walden
Lee Bartrip	Colchester	Miranda Lambert	Colchester
Eric Beaumont	Epping Forest	Sarah Jenkins	Saffron Walden
Olivia Burren	Epping Forest	Deborah Orme	Colchester
Morag Chase	Colchester	Ian Storey	Saffron Walden

Congratulations to you all – including those who have heard your results after this article was sent to press. I'll publish your names when all have been received.

This year we have two members, Ted Gradosielski and Danny Nicoll who have attended the BBKA course for becoming basic assessors, after having gained their General Husbandry Certificate. Congratulations to both. It will be a great asset to have more basic assessors, and as mentioned, Ted has already started assessing this season.

### **Tendring Show Report Tom Dormant**

I generally visit and much look forward to the Tendring Show as do many people local to the Kirby / Frinton area. However, this year's visit was to be a little special as I was to be involved with the EBKA Colchester Division stand selling honey, cakes and any other work as directed; I had received my roster and entry ticket through the post and was to meet Penny and Roger Barker at the ground for around 7am to help prepare the tents. Being still very much a novice, the Barker's have been very helpful to me both practically and with advice, so this would be an excellent opportunity for me to look and listen to experienced beekeepers dealing with the visitors' questions. A few weeks ago, during a visit to the opticians where my wife works, Penny mentioned the cake recipes enclosed

in the previous month's magazine, yes, and before you know it, we were entering cakes, and honey in the novice class; it appears that wives/husbands of beekeepers are inevitably drawn in.

It was clear on our arrival just how much organisation and work had already taken place, and whilst there was still plenty to do there were a good number of willing hands available. By 9am both the tents were completed and looked excellent, one decorative and sales orientated, one informative and educational and all bee related. In the sales tent there was a fine selection of cakes, honey and wax products on sale, small individual mixed displays, and all the entrant submissions awaiting the judge's attention. Greeting people coming into the tent there was also a honey sampling station and candle making table. Whilst working on the honey stall it became clear that the tasting station was definitely having the desired result with many customers seeking more information on their chosen variety and very often making a purchase. Just working on the honey sales with Gill Tansley was an education, I soon realised how little I knew about honey as listening to her answering questions was most informative to me as well! I too was then able to answer most queries as I found that a good number of the questions were repetitive; it might be good to produce a comprehensive honey information sheet, (this is where the proposed "forum" may be useful), so that a couple of notices could be strategically posted next to the stall. I feel many people would happily take the time to seek their own answers rather than wait in the queue. However, about one customer in every four that I spoke with asked the same question and received a negative response, "have you any honey on the comb for sale?" No information sheet could answer this question but could at least explain why from the bee's point of view. When my daughter and grandchildren arrived at the stall it was clear that the candle making was also proving a great success as they were eager to show grandpa their efforts which are easy to make for all age groups and look great. It was also pleasing to see youngsters happy to spend their pocket money on one of the excellent wax items of all shapes and sizes that were priced within their reach. I then moved off to my next spell on the cake stand and met Sarah Magee whose sales skills clearly relegated me to collecting the money and clearing away the empty cake stands! The quality and variety of the cakes was excellent, all being to the specified recipes and made with Essex honey from the members' hives. Just after lunch they were completely out and I am sure could have sold considerably more. I would be tempted to say come on ladies let's increase output for next year but I know that a best seller, the most excellent Cherry Topped Squares, were made by Sarah's husband Martin, so clearly we all need to get baking.

Having completed my allotted tasks I went to have a look round the rest of the show. Although the weather had been kind to us and it had drawn a good number of people out, I am sure the numbers must be well down on previous years, sadly a sign of the times. However, I must say the bee tents appeared to me to be very popular and well attended, even though it was very busy one minute and quiet the next. I think there were also some regulars missing from the show, I particularly wanted to see the pigs and local basket weaving, both of which were not represented but have been there in the past.

I spent the last couple of hours in the business end which was most interesting. The glass sided sectional hive and the bumble bee nest were fascinating and drew many interested customers who found them equally so, and most importantly, a good number of these were children and young people. I was able to listen in when the experienced beekeepers were sharing their knowledge and read the excellent information sheets that filled all available wall space, these being on all aspects of bees, their enemies, the environment, and of course keeping them. Whilst the advice I felt happy to give as a novice was very limited, it was most pleasing how many people were interested in my experiences thus far. Just as things had gone quiet and it was getting near that time to start clearing up, the rain came and brought in a flurry of late comers.

Many hands make light work and a good number of people were still there to help clear everything away and load up the trailers and cars. I do understand that unfortunately takings were down but from my point of view it was a great success and I thoroughly enjoyed myself and will hopefully repeat it next year (if invited!). I would like to thank all those involved who helped make it such a good day for beekeeping and my wife and I. It is always difficult for a newcomer to compliment those responsible for fear of offending others not mentioned, however, I feel safe to acknowledge the considerable amount of organisation and work Penny and Roger Barker had clearly put in and to Lydia Geddes who always keeps me informed. Finally, to round off an excellent day, it was really encouraging for me to get a first and second prize for my two sets of honey entered in the novice class. There were a limited number of entrants but it was good just the same. Also, my wife June's Honey Cake got a first and her Cherry Topped Squares a second, obviously the first for these went to Martin Magee, that's why they sold so well!

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The Hive—as described in 'A Tale of Two Hives'.  
See p.5

*Ammophila sabulosa*, a species of solitary wasp, at the entrance to her nest.

