



# Forest Beekeeper

The monthly newsletter of the Epping Forest Beekeepers

December 2011

[www.eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk)

## Bees in Art and Artefacts

We were lucky enough to have a return visit from Stuart Baldwin, a genuine polymath who combines a background in pharmacy with a strong interest in art and fossils – and anything to do with bees! Stuart brought a small sample of his eclectic collection of bee-related curios, with items ranging

from horse-brasses to magic lantern slides, jewellery, paperweights and china models. The evening began with a series of slides showing how bees and beehives have been represented in art through the years from cave-paintings and Egyptian hieroglyphs, to the Renaissance and up to the present day, including several pictures featuring Cupid as a honey-thief. The familiar shape of the skep is represented in many places and the bee was often used as a the symbol of diligence and industry.



Members gather round the collection, left, while Stuart sings the praises of his honey badger, right.

Pictures by Ted Gradosielski



The talk also covered the representation in art of wax and propolis – apparently used by Stradivarius to polish his famous violins – and modern items such as cigarette cards and advertisements. Stuart accompanied his pictures with a very amusing commentary, and the evening ended with a chance for the audience to take a closer look at the display of different items. The piece de resistance was undoubtedly Stuart's magnificent stuffed honey badger, fortunately not a creature which British beekeepers have to worry about. This was a really entertaining evening with something of interest to everyone, and it was a great finish to our 2011 series of meetings. ☘

## Honey Survey

According to the BBKA Honey Survey, yields were down by around 8% this year, with the average amount collected for each hive now at 29lbs, from 32lbs last year. The very early spring caused an unusually long 'June gap', and this was followed by cold weather in July and a drought in some parts of the UK. Apparently London beekeepers reported the largest decreases in annual honey production, partly due to the very low rainfall which affected tree blossom production. You can read the full report at [www.bbka.org.uk](http://www.bbka.org.uk) ☘

## Christmas Social

As usual, our final meeting of this year on Thursday 15th December will be the Christmas Social. Held as usual at the Chingford Horticultural Hall in Larkshall Road, it's a chance to meet up and chat with old friends and for our newest recruits it's an opportunity to get to know some of the Division members a little better.

You can buy your ticket for the Christmas Social now for £3.00, but if you wait and pay on the door on 15<sup>th</sup> December it will be £5.00. This bargain price includes the buffet, a free drink & a raffle prize, possibly the best deal you will get all year! For more details or to book please contact Helen on 0208 523 5770 or Paola on 0777 3291153

## Chair's Corner

This is my last Chairs Corner before I stand down as Chair at the AGM which will be held in January. I would like to thank everyone in the Division for being so supportive during my three years as Chair. Please come to the AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> January to vote for the new Committee. Your vote is your choice and your chance to have a say in the development of the Division.

Finally I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

Helen Chadwick ☘



## Next meeting – Christmas Social, Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December

Our final meeting of this year will be at Chingford Horticultural Hall, Larkshall Road, Chingford E4 6NH for our Christmas Social. Tickets are available now for £3, or on the door for £5, and that includes food, drink and a raffle prize. It's a good opportunity for some of our newest members to get to know the division. At the time of publishing this newsletter, more than half the tickets have been sold so don't delay – contact Helen Chadwick on 0208 523 5770 if you'd like to book a place. ☘

## Did you know:

Amateur beekeepers produce two-thirds of the UK's total honey crop. Only one fifth of the honey consumed in the UK is produced here.

For each beehive, the value of the contribution to agriculture through pollination is four times the value of the honey received by the beekeeper.

One third of the food we eat requires pollination.

There has been a 40% increase in the number of amateur beekeepers registered with the BBKA in the last two years. ☘

## Membership renewal

You should by now have received your renewal form, either by email or post. Please return it as soon as possible to maintain your bee disease insurance for next year, and so that you can go on receiving newsletters. ☘

## Tips from the Bee Man

If all is going well, December is one month when you shouldn't have to worry too much about your bees. Keep an eye out for rodent or woodpecker damage, especially in out-apiaries. If you think your hives may be at risk, wrap them in chicken-wire to prevent attack. Mouse guards should be in place on your hives, but mice can also make inroads into any frames you may have in storage in garages or outbuildings, so it's wise to check on them occasionally and take appropriate precautions. ☘

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