



# Forest Beekeeper

The monthly newsletter of the Epping Forest Beekeepers

July 2013

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

## Willow Cottage

The meeting at Willow Cottage was very well attended with about 50 people present. The speaker was Richard Ridler, Chairman of EBKA, talking about bee keeping in Uganda and how amazingly different it was. Unfortunately the rain was rather heavy on the plastic sheet roofing we were sitting under and Richard had to shout to be heard! Richard and his wife Jane spent a couple of weeks in Uganda helping beekeepers and

advising on bee products, marketing and equipment. They failed to get a solar wax extractor to work there, it was hot but not enough sunlight, too hazy. Most customers there saw the honey mainly as having medicinal properties. The African honey bee *Apis mellifera scutellata* was not too aggressive but is more defensive than our bees. They store less honey than UK bees due to a much more even temperature in the tropics, they only need enough to survive the dry season. Richard and Jane intend to go back to Uganda next winter after a break of two years. The refreshments were very well provided by the members and we must record our thanks to all those that helped, especially Sheila Morrissey and of course Christine Williams for, yet again, allowing us to use the lovely surrounds of Willow Cottage. ☘



## Colony losses

Did you lose your bees this winter? Don't feel bad if you did, because you are not alone. The BBKA has released figures which indicate colony losses of 33.8% on average – the worst winter losses since the survey began. The problem began last year with lack of forage, leading to underdeveloped colonies and the weather conditions meant that many queens were poorly mated. These factors combined with a cold winter meant that some colonies were just unable to survive, whilst others got through the winter but starved in the wet, cold spring. Conditions seem to have been worst in the South West, with losses of up to 50% reported; here in the South East losses were 32%, compared to around 19% last year. Isolation starvation, where the bees have stores but are unable to move from the cluster to access them, was commonly reported. You can read full details of the survey on the BBKA website.

Following last year's poor honey harvest with yields down by 72%, it would not be surprising if many who took up beekeeping in the last few years now feel like giving up altogether. For those of us who have stuck with it however, 2013 looks like being a better year and public interest in bee health and the importance of maintaining bee numbers has certainly increased recently. ☘



## Chair's Corner

I hope to see as many of you as possible at the summer social on 20<sup>th</sup> July. As well as an interesting talk from one of the local Bee Inspectors this is a good chance to meet other Division members and chat about bee and non-bee related subjects. Children are welcome, so do come along if you can – details will be emailed to members in the next couple of weeks and we're hoping to see lots of you there. ☘

**Ted Gradosielski**

## Next meeting – Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July – Wanstead Apiary

After the success of last year's 'BeeBO' we're going to hold another one, only with better weather (we hope!). There will be a talk by Keith Morgan, Bee Inspector, at 2.30 pm followed by the social event including food and drink at 4.00 pm. Members are welcome to attend either or both events, and to bring a guest. There will be a small charge for the social, so please look out for an email shortly with further details. ☘

## BBKA Membership

If you've received your BBKA annual membership renewal, you may have noticed that the card reads '12/13' when in fact it covers 2013-14. There was a printing error but the BBKA have promised that the card will still be valid for any applicable discounts. ☘

## Essex Conference

No apologies for reminding you again about this important event on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September at the Greenacres burial park in North Weald – tickets can be booked via the website (although you'll have to print off the form and post it in the traditional way) which is at <http://eppingforestbeekeepers.co.uk/conference/> and with some excellent speakers and lunch included, the price of £25 is good value. Please do come along and support your Division, we only host this event once every ten years so let's make it a real success! Speakers include Clive de Bruyn, Professor Nigel Dunnett, Dave Goulson and Dr Alison Houghton. Places are limited, so book up soon to make sure you don't miss out. ☘

## Tips from the Bee Man

We'd expect swarms to be a rare occurrence by now, but everything this year is later than usual so keep making weekly inspections. Ensure your bees have enough space, and add supers to cope with the expected nectar flow in warm weather – it's surprising how quickly bees can fill them up in just a few sunny days. ☘

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