

BETALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

FIERY OUTCOME FOR EFB OUTBREAK

FB must be high on the list of
"worst things that can happen"
for beekeepers. You all know
about the recent outbreak in
our branch apiary, so I want to
share the surprisingly positive
experience of dealing with the destruction of two
colonies, the shook swarming of 12 colonies,
burning of the bees and frames (including super
frames) and disinfecting ALL our equipment. This
is the stuff no one tells you.

The NBU Seasonal Bee Inspectors, Colleen and Ben, coordinated a magnificent response to this task. Steve had the unenviable task of killing the two infected colonies (pint of petrol). Stuart (Hole, yes, that is really his name) led Barry, Chris and Andy in creating a truly magnificent hole 1m X 1m X 1m. We were ready to go!

On the day, Colleen and Ben directed us: Maggie and Chris did shook swarms, I did scraping of popolis/wax, Colleen and Ben flamed ALL the kit and Alistair (Walker) cast the brood frames/bees into the fiery pit. It went like clockwork, principally because Steve's shed organisation and kit storage is so brilliant. What this doesn't tell you is the vast amount we all learnt from the experience:

- Inspect every single cell- then look again (the Bee Inspectors spotted two more infected colonies).
- Barrier hygiene includes scrubbing your



smoker bellows clean of propolis.

- Make sure your Beebase entry is up to date.
 The NBU lets you know if your apiary is in danger IF you have ticked the box to get emails.
- Wooden equipment is brilliantly easy to disinfect with flame (see below)
- Polynucs are a complete pain to disinfect in a wheelie bin- that's a lot of bleach solution.
- It really IS worth quarantining swarms-lest they bring in EFB to your apiary.
- Do not screw on runners and castellations they all need to come off to disinfect (use little nails or pins).
- If you shake 12 hives, all the bees fly out and deposit infected poo on your car. I could hardly see to drive home (Revenge?).

We learnt a lot more than this, of course, because the teamwork meant we had time to talk to our Bee Inspectors- and their expertise is invaluable. We are sad about the loss of two colonies, but we have every hope that the day of great teamwork will pay off and in six weeks time the Bee Inspector will be back to lift the standstill order (as has now happened at the BBKA apiary). There is work to be done-Steve and Maggie will feed the shook swarms, fill in the Bee Disease Insurance claim and keep everyone out of the apiary for six weeks. But we are looking forward to our newly disinfected kit, lovely new wax in the shook swarms and putting our new hygiene expertise into practice. We have contributed to stopping the spread of EFB, this year, and we want to share what we have learnt so that members can face the worst...

Now, I have a couple of smokers to scrub.....
Our bee inspector is Colleen Reichling and her mobile number is: 07990 138898 (colleen. reichling@apha.gov.uk). She has asked us to suggest that if you have concerns about your colonies you should send her photos of cells you think might be affected by text or whatsapp, so that she can see them when she is out and about and contact you quickly.

Jane Medwell, Branch chair





TOP TIPS FOR HIVE CLEANING

hen our NBU Seasonal Bee Inspectors, Colleen and Ben, came to assist with EFB in our branch apiary recently, we asked them for some top cleaning tips.

HOW BROWN IS BROWN ENOUGH WHEN FLAMING WOODEN HIVE PARTS?

We asked our bee inspector to scorch a brand new cover board to show us a minimum scorch. If there is propolis or wax on the kit, scrape it off and "boil" any remaining propolis or wax to ensure all pathogen is destroyed. When flaming brood boxes and supers, remove runners and castellations to ensure you get all the

HOW DO I CLEAN PLASTIC OR POLY EQUIPMENT TO THE SAME STANDARD AS FLAMING WOOD?

There are two jobs- removing wax and killing bacteria. Getting most of the wax or propolis off requires scraping or putting into a hot liquid (but not too hot,or it will deform the plastic). Killing pathogens requires immersion in a 0.5% sodium hypochlorite solution for 20 minutes. In practice this means you are looking for bleach which is 5% hypochloride (look at the label) diluted one litre of bleach to five litres of water. A wheelie bin is a good container if you have queen excluders and nucs. The solution does not need to be hot.

Important: Eye protectors and fire-resistant gloves are a must for either job. You don't want heat or chemical burns!

Jane Medwell



propolis out.





BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH

- Do a full brood disease inspection- looking JUST for brood disease by shaking each comb. If you SUSPECT EFB, send photos to the bee inspector.
- Maintain regular hive inspections.
- Enjoy the blackberry flower flow.
- Make sure you are still supering as space pressures can still cause swarms.
- Re-queen or unite where swarm control has left you with small colonies.
- A demaree might be good swarm control to keep the foraging force together this month.
- If the wasps start at the end of the month, close down entrances as small as possible.
- You may be extracting this month.
- Check your BeeBase registration and ensure you have ticked the box to get email alerts. They don't send junk mail- just email alerts about disease and jobs.

ane Medwell

WORKING "PARTY"

ork at our Dale -house Lane Apiary

on the re-alignment of the road has proceeded apace. The lower meadow has, virtually, all been excavated for a flood attenuation lake with the bank coming to within a whisker of our field shelter and composting



loo. On the top meadow, the line of the new road has been marked out and an exclusion zone delineated around the oak trees that are to be protected retained. The contractor is being extremely co-operative over granting us access to the cabin which we still use for storage. Of course, it has nothing to do with the honey with which he is being plied.

With our portacabin showing signs of its exposure to the elements it is in need of some TLC. We want to take advantage of the absence of bees to clean and repaint the outside steel cladding and intend establishing a working party – with the emphasis on the "party" – in August to do this. As you can imagine, the more people we can recruit to help, the lighter the workload will be. Materials will be supplied but we will be asking people to bring drills / angle grinders etc. The planned dates will be 14th,15th 21st 22nd and 28th 29th of August. These have been deliberately chosen so as to not disrupt any of the ongoing construction works.

In return, the contractors have agreed to help us out both in terms of making the site as free from machinery as possible, by cordoning off an area for us to work safely and also to pressure wash the cabin down. We know, from past experience, that a few hours of slapping paint about can be quite a sociable activity so, please, make a note of these dates in your diary. We will be reaching out to you a couple of weeks beforehand for volunteers to come along and make this happen.

Mick Smith





....."Where's that scout bee? We said find us a home in a Pooh Bear hive!!!!"

SOME MISSED CALL!

"Who's dropped a mobile phone?" A cry that went unanswered among the gang who were putting up our marquee in readiness for the Kings Hill Show. A clue to its owner was found inside the case in the form of a JLR business card. Then someone remembered a phone being lost at the Avon Dassett Country Fayre back in 2019. A few moments later the owner actually turned up to help and was re-united with his phone. It had fallen into the bag containing the marquees' side sheets, which had remained undisturbed during the lockdown. COVID has a lot to answer for!

HONEY SHOW

The National Honey Show is Back! This year it is being held from 21st -23rd October at Sandown Park Racecourse where there will be its usual fantastic displays of honey, wax, and all hive products along with excellent lectures and workshops. A great place to visit; better still, enter your own honey and wax.

TRAINING VIDEOS

As well as being Warwick and Leamington Members you are also a member of Warwickshire BKA and they have just put up some useful new training videos. Just go to the members page, enter the password Varroa and there are videos about doing a hive inspection, making up a frame and other topics. The county lectures are here, too. It is well worth a look.

CO-OP NEWS

Although we're currently enjoying long summer days, the Co-op Sub committee is thinking ahead to autumn feeding and is arranging a bulk delivery of ambrosia syrup. We'll let you know when this is available. We've already purchased plenty of buckets for all the beautiful honey that you're all anticipating!

Wax foundation and disposable gloves are still available, as are glass jars for that scrummy honey. Just head over to the members' area of the website to order yours.

We're making enquiries about varroa treatments and fondant, and we'll have these products available later in the year.

(BUMBLE) BEES IN A BOX

"We've got this 'ere cardboard box what says Bees. Feed upon receipt. It's been delivered to the address on the label but we have no one here of the name it is addressed to. Can you come and take it away?".

This was the message our Hon Sec received when bravely answering the phone during the height of the swarm season. "This is one for our swarm co-ordinator" he thought, so, selflessly, he passed the details on. Chris Price was at work but his hurried conversation with the caller didn't shed much further light on the situation. He did, however, get an address and passed it on to me to investigate. So, equally intrigued, off I went, complete with my swarm collecting kit to find out more.

The address turned out to be the depot of the refuse collection contractor for Warwick and, sure enough, there on the step to the offices was a cardboard box which was buzzing. I had never heard of bees being parcelled up in this way, but then, what do I know? So, into the boot with it and back home to open it up. Gingerly, and in full bee suit witnessed by two other beekeepers, I opened the box to find an inner box with a leaflet on top. Guess What?

They were Bumble Bees!

Apparently, this company parcels up bumble bees in cardboard hives with a sachet of syrup and sends them out to customers to place in their gardens. Contacting the supplier, it transpired that you could buy one of these for only £80. Enquiring about the identity of the recipient, the guy at the company, somewhat resignedly, said that this occurrence was not uncommon. Organisations often purchase them as prizes for competitions and the winner often either forgets about them or gives a false address rather than refuse an unwanted prize. "We don't want them back. You can keep them" was his parting remark.

The story ends well, however, as one of the witnesses to the opening volunteered to take them for his garden where, by all accounts, they have settled in and are competing with his honey bees for forage. You learn something new everyday!

Bernard Brown





BOOKS TO TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

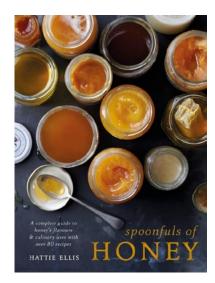


hat a lovely book of yummy recipes! These are organised into sections for Breakfast and Brunch, Lunch and Supper, Snacks, Sides and Sauces, Teatime Baking, Puddings and Preserves, Sweets and Drinks. And let's face it, the recipes would

be just fine and delicious in their own right BUT this book gives you so much more! An introductory section about honey – well-written and interesting including how to buy and store it. A further

section towards
the end of the book
entitled Around the
World in 90 Pots, is a
fascinating glossarystyle section with
a full description of
different honeys.
The photography is
superb and will have
you drooling!

Try before you buy.
We are all looking
forward to face-toface meetings soon,
when you will be able
to access the Branch
Library once more. This



is just one of the new books which you could borrow. Just think of the yummy treats you could make.

Jane Ford WLBK Librarian

AVAILABLE OUT APIARIES

ncluded with the newly updated "Available Out-Apiaries" page on the website are five new sites now assessed for suitability within the last month.

The first is in a private garden in Kenilworth for which one of the two vacancies has already been taken. Another is on a farm in Budbrooke, again a two occupancy opportunity with one taken. Then there is with another farm-based opportunity in Broadwell. A fourth has been offered in a wildflower meadow between Lighthorne and Moreton Morrell and the fifth in a small paddock at Pinley Green near Hatton.

Anybody wanting further details of these or of any other of the available out apiaries should contact Bernard Brown at bernardBrown@outlook.com
Bernard Brown

JITESH PATEL — CHAIR ELECT

ontinuing our series on the newly elected officers to our County
Executive Committee, we turn our attention this month to the
post of Chair-elect and to Jitesh Patel, its most recent incumbent.
Jitesh is starting what will be a four year commitment, first
as chair-elect, then as Chairman for two years and finally as
Immediate past Chairman for his final year. A member of Sutton
Coldfield Branch, Jitesh has, for several years, been involved with the County in
various ways as we see in his self-penned profile below.

"I've been a beekeeper for 12/13 years. I joined the Sutton Coldfield branch 2008. I keep between 5 – 8 colonies depending on the time of year. I am a keen beekeeper and, though a fan of honey, I enjoy the other aspects of beekeeping. The relationship between plants and bees, the smells and feelings you get when in a hive and the social aspects of being a beekeeper.

I have been writing for the Warwickshire Magazine for at least five years and been on the Warwickshire Education committee for a similar number of years. When possible, I do volunteer to help out at the local association and have also



helped out at the BBKA events like BBC Countryfile Live events held at Blenheim Palace and at the RHS Chatsworth shows.

I've done a number of modules, I've not completed all 7 yet mind, and some of your members may have seen me helping out on various courses and education days that Warwickshire Beekeepers have organised.

I look forward to meeting you."

ARTICLES FOR SALE

• Steam wax extractor for Sale Little Used and in good condition

£45

Contact Bernard Brown: bernardbrown@outlook.com

 Bee Suit – Maisemore, Lemon Yellow Size: Large. Round Veil Laundered and in good condition

£50

Contact Bernard Brown: bernardbrown@outlook.com

 Hive with Bees – standard national; complete with stand, mesh floor, brood box and 2 supers with frames, Queen excluder, Crown board and pitched roof.

Bees are Queen right, mild temper and vigour. Average honey producers.

£200

Contact Dean Wood: d24wood@gmail.com

• Four frame manual honey extractor (similar to the above), three years old; clean; settling tank with honey gate, two stage stainless steel strainer and an uncapping fork.

Contact Dean Wood: d24wood@gmail.com

• 14 x 12 nuc complete with queen, brood and super.

Last year's Queen - unmarked.

£150

Contact Paul Stephenson: paulstephenson1961@msn.com

 Camouflage pattern bee suit with fencingstyle veil.

Large size. Worn once.

£70

Contact Sarah Goulding: sarahgoulding@gmail.com

• Payne's poly nuc with super and feeder unused with one layer painted prepared with masonry paint

£45

Contact Sarah Goulding: sarahgoulding@gmail.com

FORAGE OF THE MONTH: LUPIN

t is said that bees swarm when the lupins flower. Well, it has certainly been quite a year for both! The swarm collecting team has never been so busy and the lupins have been magnificent. This photo is of just one plant which I grew from seed about three years ago and which this year produced sixty flower heads! The bees had quite a feast.

Lupins, a genus from the legume family, are mostly herbaceous perennials and come in a variety of wonderful colours. Due to the pea-like flowers, they are often nicknamed Bluebonnets or Quaker Bonnets. The seeds are contained in small pods which set along the length of the stems. Like other legumes, they can fix nitrogen in the roots and hence are used in agriculture as a green manure. It also means

that they are tolerant of poor-quality soils. Interestingly, the name lupin is apparently 14th Century in origin, deriving from the Latin lupinus meaning "wolfish" as it was thought that the plant exhausted the soil i.e., wolfed it down. Quite the opposite of what is understood today.

Increasingly, lupins are grown commercially for their seeds



as an alternative to soya beans. Currently the market is mainly for animal feed with only small amounts being used for human consumption. However, research is indicating that lupin seeds may well be superior to soya. They are high in fibre, low in fat and are gluten free, so who knows, in a few years time we may all be growing lupins in the vegetable patch!

Maggie Curley

NEW BEEKS HAVE THEIR SAY

ew beekeepers spent a weekend at the Kings Hill Nurseries apiary in May, doing their Introduction to Beekeeping (ITB) course. This was a change in format. Previously, new beekeepers had six weeks' evening sessions in February and March. But due to COVID restrictions, this year two weekend sessions were run with 19 people in each session.

Maggie Curley did a superb job managing both the revised format and COVID restrictions resulting in a very successful event. A particularly successful feature was the grouping of attendees in 'bubbles' of 5 seated in an arc with an experienced beekeeper in each group. This helped to establish a rapport between the members of the bubble, encouraging both conversation between them and questions of the experienced beekeeper.

Out of the 38 new beekeepers who did the course, WLBK has welcomed 12 new members to the branch – nearly a third of the participants.

Participants liked the following aspects of the training: small groups with an experienced beekeeper; having just 20 participants per weekend; lot of practical content; meeting the

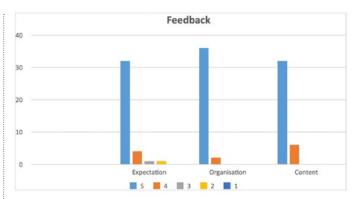


Chart showing participant feedback of the ITB course

bees; weekend course; friendliness; and the conservatory and outside space at Kings Hill Nurseries for use at break times.

There's always room for improvement. Comments to think about for next time suggested that we need to streamline the content so information isn't repeated and moves smoothly from one speaker to the next. More videos would be welcomed and less to read on the slides!

Suzanne Bennett Jane Medwell

SHARE YOUR BEE BLUNDERS

e have all made them. Those incidences where a misreading of a situation or a temporary aberration has unintended consequences which we regret. This is the first in a series of articles from which, hopefully, others will learn or at each have a giggle. If you have made a blunder which you would

least have a giggle. If you have made a blunder which you would be happy to share with us, please contact Bernard Brown on bernardnbrown@outlook.com. Don't be shy. Anonymity will be observed if requested.

I'll start the ball rolling...

My blunder is very recent and involves an observation hive. When we were unable to arrange a colony from the training apiary to populate the observation hive for the Kings Hill Nurseries Spring Fayre back in May, time was so short that there was no alternative but to use one of our own colonies. We just happened to have a nuc, with a marked queen which we had decided needed urgent hiving. It was bursting at the seams and we were actually planning to do this a couple of days before the Show. So that plan was put on hold. Surely a couple of days longer in the nuc wouldn't hurt? The queen was found and introduced into the observation chamber which was plonked on top of this nuc and off we went.

During the show the observation hive proved as popular as usual and after an indifferent start, weather wise, the sun came out giving a reminder of what May should be like. We noticed the bees getting a little agitated — usually a sign of overheating — so we trickled some water in. A little while later, they became agitated again so a little more water was added. Remember that this was a very full colony with brood and stores on all 5 frames which, we

reckoned would be generating lot of heat and so we continued to dribble water into the hive. We also moved the hive into the shade and applied the shutters during lulls in the visitors. Towards the middle of the afternoon, we suddenly noticed a build-up of bees on the queen excluder. This grew as time as went on with the bees nearest the ventilation holes in the observation hive frantically waving their antennae and moving around in the slowly reducing space on top of the mass of bees. They were clearly trying to tell us something but what?

Upon returning the hive to our apiary at the end of the show discovered a decidedly soggy mass of bees on the queen excluder and an even greater mass of bees on the mesh floor of the underlying nuc. To put an end to this tortuous tale, the bees had drowned and the colony was doomed. I should have mentioned earlier that this was our best colony with a stunning future of honey and brood production ahead of it. Was I in trouble? My wife Jane and I keep bees together - none of this "his and hers" arrangement. We share the colonies so, as the architect of this disaster, you bet I was in trouble. Suffice to say, I am still making amends!

With a mesh floor, one may have thought that drainage would not be a problem, but we reckon that the huge number of bees in the nuc prevented the percolation of excess water down and through the mesh floor, saturating the bees with that which was retained – a situation that got worse as floor and queen excluder became progressively blocked.

So, the lesson to be learned is, firstly, that when populating an observation hive, limit the number of bees added to the nuc box - perhaps to two or three frames with the rest as foundation. Secondly, all may not be what it appears to be. Those bees were "Not waving, but Dying"..... to quote the Stevie Smith poem.

Bernard Brown

MICROSCOPY VIA ZOOM

icroscopy via Zoom has progressed this month to doing a 'live' dissection using high resolution USB 'microscope cameras'.
These have been used to demonstrate the delicate techniques (and steady hands!) needed for a general abdominal dissection

and for the manipulation of bee parts for making slides.

Dissection of subjects as small as bees requires a practised 'light hand' using fine and sharp instruments to 'tease' the way around structures rather than to take a chain saw approach! Examining bees under the microscope reveals a fascinating world of miniaturised structures that enable bees to go about their daily business.

In our monthly Zoom meetings we have examined some of these and drawn comparisons with our larger 'macro' world. So in a bee you will find the equivalent of Velcro, a pressure syringe delivery system (no prizes for guessing what that one is) and

an air conditioning system! The image on the right is of the 'hamuli' of the rear wings that allow them to attach (like 'Velcro'!) to the front wing to enable a larger stable wing area. These detach when the bee enters



the hive and reduce the surface area making it easier for it to manoeuvre between the combs. Interestingly almost exactly the same mechanism operates in the feathers of birds.

After 30 years of beekeeping and over 50 years of microscopy the fascination continues....!

Barry Meatyard

HOW TO DO: FULL BROOD DISEASE INSPECTION

eebase here shows us 35 diagnosed cases of EFB in Warwickshire, making it a bumper year. So this is a brief step by step reminder about doing a brood inspection. The most important thing to remember is that this is a BROOD inspection. It is not inspection for deformed wing virus, CBPV or other things afflicting adult bees- look for these another time. Focus on the brood. Make sure you know the characteristics of healthy brood and the signs of brood disease. The NBU publication Foulbrood Disease of Honeybees is excellent. The two photos from it (right) show you how to hold combs when looking into cells.

Wearing protective clothing, light the smoker, remove the hive roof and place it on the ground by the hive. Place any supers on the upturned roof (cover to prevent robbing), remove the queen excluder and examine the underside for the queen (return her to the colony). If you have double broods, examine the bottom box first (put the top one on a stand or empty super).

Examining each comb in the brood box: Remove the outside comb (if there is no brood on it) and lean it against a front corner of the hive, giving you room to work. You need to be able to see the brood- so remove the bees using a sharp downward shake. Hold each comb by the lugs within the brood chamber, give it a sharp shake- or sudden "stop".

Examine each brood comb looking closely at both sealed and unsealed brood. Start at a fixed point on the comb and look round the comb in a decreasing spiral. Look for abnormalities like as discoloured larvae, sunken cuppings or perforated cappings. You should also look at the brood pattern, and if it is unusual or spotty, look closely individual cells.

Look for EFB scales by rocking the comb from side to side a bit to catch the light. Look for discoloured or melted larvae in open cells. If you see strange larvae, use tweezers or a matchstick to take out the larva and put it on your glove to examine it. EFB larvae might have a very visible gut. Sacbrood will be more liquid. (Dispose of the remains in the smoker)

Look for AFB scales by holding the combs towards the light and scanning the bottom walls of any open cells. Look inside any sealed cells with abnormal looking cappings after opening the cell with a corner of the hive tool. Probe these with a match or cocktail stick. (Dispose of the used matchstick in the smoker).

Examine each brood comb; then reassemble the hive, avoiding crushing bees. You may see some chalkbrood, sacbrood or baldbrood (or even the fabled stonebrood) and want to look up these disease and consider whether to take action.

However, if you suspect EFB or AFB may be present, take photos of the suspicious cells and send to the local Bee Inspector by text or whatapp. Notification is statutory- not a choice- and you should not try to treat or destroy combs yourself.

Our bee inspector is Colleen Reichling and her mobile number is: 07990 138898 (colleen.reichling@apha.gov.uk) - she will





instruct you on further actions like putting a voluntary standstill on your apiary. Make sure you wash your beesuit, dispose of your gloves and clean all equipment in the apiary.

Jane Medwell

SWARM COLLECTING TIPS

ith the peak of swarming season now behind us you may like to try a technique that has kindly been sent to me by Mike Townsend.

Mike says he lightly sprays the swarm with water which causes the bees to form into a nice tight bunch.

The bees' natural behaviour is to line up the same way with their wings slightly open, neatly lined up like roof tiles to shed the water as they would do in the natural world when bees nest in the open and protect themselves during a downpour.

This encourages them to stay together as a bunch when shaken into

the skep.

Sometimes, he will lightly spray the bees again to keep them down in the skep minimising the number flying back to their original swarm location. It also means if the swarm is wrapped in a sheet to be taken away they are unlikely to overheat while travelling in a hot car to their new home.

When collecting a swarm take time to assess the risks involved and only collect swarms that are safe to do so. Please also abide by the government advice on 'social distancing'.

Chris Price

Swarm Co-ordinator

HINTS & TIPS

- When to add another super is always a bit of a mystery at this time of the year. The general idea is to add another when the last one is between half and two thirds capped. The reason behind not waiting for the last one to be full is that nectar has a greater volume than honey so needs about four times the storage space whilst the bees evaporate the water to convert it into honey.
- In July, it is important to not give them too much space, otherwise you will end up with a lot of partially capped frames. These may have too high a water content to extract and jar as they are prone to fermenting.
- It is a good idea to go through the supers. Any fully capped can be removed for extraction or moved to the outside. The partially filled/ capped frames can then be moved to the centre and hopefully the bees will concentrate on filling these. The bees work on a chimney pattern and will tend to go straight up and only work to the sides if that space is needed.

......AND GET READY FOR THE HONEY SHOW ON 25 $^{\rm TH}$ SEPTEMBER 2021 AT KINGS HILL FAYRE....

- When cutting comb make a cardboard template and cut to size using a small very sharp knife. As you lift the cut comb out shine a light behind to enable the wire to be pulled out carefully, if necessary. Remember to put the best side up!
- Put cut comb in the freezer to prevent granulation.(Remember to defrost it before the Honey Show!)



HELEN ESSEX

If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to Helen on h.essex@virgin.net

The editor of Bee Talk is Tanya Weaver.
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