

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



Newsletter July 2015

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

Next meeting - July 12th-Out apiary, Stanmer

Usual start time of 1.30pm beginners and 2.00pm general. Heather McNiven will be leading the meeting. Don't forget your cup/mug and something to eat.

Last meeting - June 14th Out apiary, Grass roots

"Managing the honey flow, supering and swarm aftercare" was the theme of this meeting.

Amanda started the meeting making up frames and soon went on to the apiary. Attendees spent a few minutes pulling weeds which have become a bit of a nuisance on the site.

Very soon time was spent opening colonies and as usual beginner beekeepers gained much knowledge from their visit and Amandas' expertise.

Heather and Hilary looked after the tea session. Much thanks to all three stalwart supporters of our activities.



Philip Else had brought along a curiosity. He had a Queen and several workers in a glasses case. In the pic far left Philips gleans a little comb and feed the "nuc in a case". Did the Q manage to mate? Answer keenly awaited.

Amanda advises

So July at last; the month of reckoning. Have our labours of the preceding year paid off? Have we kept our colonies healthy and in one piece so they will bring in a surplus of honey? All we can do then is pray for good flying weather.

I have a feeling the honey flow (where there is one) started early this year, and I saw blackberry in flower in mid June. I have not seen signs of swarming in my colonies for several weeks now and hope the risk is reducing. I shall space out my inspections to up to 10 days, without any risk of losing them because all my queens are clipped. It makes so much easier. Some people object to clipping on ethical grounds, but it does mean less disturbance for the colony with fewer inspections. Another good reason to space out inspections is that some of my colonies have 6 supers on and it is hard work! Two or three of these are full of brood though. As soon as a reasonable number of frames are capped I shall start extracting and putting the frames back on the colonies they came from so I don't have to make the colonies any higher than they already are; I am already needing a stepladder for some of them.

This month I shall order my jars and varroa treatment so I have everything ready to start treatment in early August. Winter planning starts now if not before. I generally take off all the honey supers by the end of the first week in August leaving any further honey they collect for their winter stores. Research suggests they winter better on their own honey. In early July the adult population is at its greatest so do make sure they have enough room to cluster when you remove the supers. The queen will reduce laying now and you may notice a reduction in the brood area, this is quite normal. Continue to check the brood for any signs of disease and if the brood looks dark and has not been replaced so far this year, it is worth putting a clean brood box of foundation on instead of a super while the flow is on, to get a rapidly drawn out box of brood frames. Any honey in it can be extracted and then either store it for shaking them in to in the spring or leave it on top of the old brood box, with some stores in (no queen excluder of course) for them to winter on and by spring they will probably have moved up into it and you can remove the old empty brood.

Regarding swarms, if your colony swarmed then the above - about extracting etc - is largely irrelevant as there are probably not enough bees to gather any surplus. If you carried out an artificial swarm, or collected a swarm, you are likely to find they supersede the queen they have towards the end of summer so look out for one or two large queen cells and leave them to hatch and replace their queen naturally. If more than 2 cells then you have the difficult decision whether they are swarming or superseding as swarms have been known in late summer!

There were a huge number of swarms around in May and June. If you lost a swarm then you need to refresh your swarm prevention and control techniques. Swarms can cause a lot of stress to neighbours and worse if they

go into chimneys or into buildings, I collected two this year which were investigating a chimney and a wooden house wall respectively, quick application of smoke by the householder lighting his fire and myself smoking the wall heavily averted a potential problem and I ended up with

the bees, although I did have to spend about 2 hours individually removing those which had gone through the wall into the house and bathroom frightening the family. Then there was the one I collected on a rainy day and the masking tape on the box came unstuck in the car and they filled the car, I tried to hive them in the car – a novelty – but they were too distressed trying to get out, but as soon as I moved the hive just outside the car and opened all the doors they were able to fly round and orientate and went into the hive in record time, see picture. I then had to spend the rest of the afternoon cleaning up the bee poo they had liberally coated my car interior with! I moved them at dusk and only had two or three investigating the car the next day. Swarms have also caused a lot of unwanted work to those prepared to go out and collect them. If a person allowed their colony to swarm then they should be prepared to be sent out to collect another one to help the community. I think a lot of problems could be avoided if people clipped their queens, thinned any queen cells to one after an artificial swarm AND remembered to check again 4 days after thinning as the bees frequently make more, emergency cells, which if left will result in multiple casts emerging, I have heard it many times this year. Swarm control is the most challenging thing for beginners but it is important they read up and ask for help before the swarm season so they are prepared with what to do. Otherwise it is not fair on society or the bees, as if not collected, most of the swarms will not make through the winter. Of course, these swarms may be from non members.

An article in a recent BBKA news from a chap who did not treat but relied on swarms seemed to suggest swarms are usually healthy and varroa free. Well many are, they leave dirty old comb behind and only phoretic varroa come with them. I notice he did not say what happened to his old colonies which sent out swarms or what his neighbours thought of him. However, swarms can carry disease; two I collected this year had Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (dead outside and trembling bees up the front) and I was obliged to kill them. I have also heard of swarms carrying EFB. Swarms may be from a large healthy colony as reproduction, or they could be from an ailing colony deserting a sinking ship. Be warned! Quarantine if you can. I wish more people would cull sickly colonies long before they die anyway and in so doing remove the susceptible drones and genes from the population or we will never develop



healthier bees. Moan over!

Honey bees are not the only clever bees, look at some short videos of a solitary bee building her nest in a snail shell which she first moves and then camouflages with vegetation, all on her own. <http://www.bwars.com/index.php?q=bee/megachilidae/osmia-bicolor>

Such an industrious little bee! I was delighted to see a Hairy Footed Flower Bee last month in my garden, and a tiny bee not much bigger than an ant with a white face, probably a *Hylaeus* sp. There is a whole new world out there to admire and encourage.

Vespa velutina Asian hornet

Last month I published information about the Asian hornet. It appears I gave erroneous information, which was spotted by Jonathan Coote. Below I am pleased to include Jonathan's comments.

I have just received the latest and, as usual, excellent B+L newsletter in which there is a small but useful piece about the Asian Hornet. However there are couple of important points which may need to be corrected.

Firstly it states that the Asian Hornet *Vespa velutina* is larger than the European Hornet *Vespa crabro*; actually the reverse is true, the Asian Hornet being rather smaller and less robustly built 'The AH is smaller than our native European hornet' (see NBU website).



I observed in France that *V. velutina* has the habit, if challenged by the larger *V. crabro* of retiring quickly to the nest and returning with reinforcements which are hostile, forcing the more powerful *V. crabro* to retire hastily.

I also found that human interference produces the same effect, so care is needed in approaching AH individuals if seen. Prof Steve Martin, Salford University, who studied the AH in its original habitat says that when attacking humans *V. velutina* tends to go for the face area and if provoked can actually spray venom even through the veil of a bee suit into the eyes.

Secondly, if anyone thinks they have seen *V. velutina* they should not report it to BBKA as suggested

(BBKA has no structure for responding), but the NBU recommend that finders should report this urgently and directly to CEH (Centre for the Environment and Hydrology) by email via alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

There is also a facility for reporting by using the form on the CEH website http://www.brc.ac.uk/risc/alert.php?species=asian_hornet. In addition to information about the date and place of discovery, a sample (dead) or photo would always be most helpful.

If a suspicious hornet is seen, most probably a queen or worker feeding on fallen fruit in the autumn, cautiously but quickly dropping a transparent plastic jar over it while it is feeding will cause it to fly up into the jar. The lid should be placed quickly on the underside before the hornet drops down again, being careful to ensure others are not nearby. A sample hornet can be killed by placing the jar in a freezer overnight.

As I may have mentioned to you I provided several samples in this way and live ones too, to the Orne office of the French Natural Environment Agency having been the first to discover and trap *V. velutina* in the Orne Department of France in September 2012.

Photo: European Hornet, Barcombe – Bob Curtis

Please note it will save you time and committee members aggravation if when you loan equipment

you obtain a contact telephone number, address or email of the person borrowing.

Bee buddies - Pat Clowser

New members often express the wish to have someone with more experience help them through their early stages of beekeeping.

If you have kept bees for some time you may remember the uncertainties from your time as a beginner.

I would like to have a list of members who could help out as a bee buddy and could then match the newer members with someone local to them.

Please contact me Patricia_clowser@hotmail.com
Phone 01273 700404

Apiary sites

Apiary site in Hurstpierpoint of 60 acres of Downland field full of clover etc.

Apiary site in 3/4 acres of garden on outskirts of Wivelsfield

For more information please contact Hilary Osman 01273 813045 or secretary@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

Brighton Cafe Scientifique - Dave Sang

On Wed 15 July we have a talk about urban wildlife by Linda Birkin from the Goulson lab at Sussex University. Your members would be welcome to attend

(it's free but we take a collection to cover expenses). Details are at: <http://www.meetup.com/Brighton-Cafe-Scientifique/events/222134373/> (copy and paste).

Don't panic - wherever bees are keep calm & collect



1 It's likely that these bees are ready to swarm. If you put them in a nuc you will still have them.
Photo: Pat Clowser



2 Bees in a car. How did they come to be in there (see Amandas Advice)? A nuc was placed in the car and the bees readily took refuge. You can clearly see Nasanov fanning (tails in the air and wings fanning pheromone). Once bees entering the nuc, it's placed outside car enticing the remnant bees. Patience required to collect all and free car of bees. Photos: Amanda Millar



3 These tinkers were in a roof space but had eaten through the fibreboard, about 8" diameter, to descend below the ceiling with fresh comb. Needed to pull off more board to access them - better than taking roof tiles off. Got most out, tidying up tomorrow.
Photos: Heather McNiven

Divisional Diary 2015

Outdoor meetings This year we will be holding meetings on Saturdays and Sundays. Unless otherwise stated a 1.30 start with beginners in mind will be followed by a general meeting at 2pm. All meetings advertised will be weather permitting.

Programme

Out apiary meetings

April 19th–Stanmer 1.30 Beginners 2pm General

May 23 – Barcombe Swarm control

June 14 Grassroots– managing the honey flow and supering, swarm aftercare

June 28 Microscopy workshop – at Bob Curtis’s

July 12 Stanmer

August 15 Barcombe

September 6 Grassroots – Winter preparation

September 13 BBQ at Heather McNiven’s

Dates for your diary

June 11-13 South of England Show

July 5 Brighton Cafe Scientifique. qv P2 for details

October 29-31 National Honey Show, St Georges College, Weybridge

The Brighton and Lewes Division of the SBKA cannot accept any responsibility for loss, injury or damage sustained by persons in consequence of their participation in activities arranged.

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Heather McNiven

National Honey Show Representative

Vacant

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Contributions to our newsletter

Contributions to the newsletter (max 900 words) can be sent preferably by email to the editor see Officer panel above for details Photos etc. for the website should be emailed to our webmaster, see panel above.

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