

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



Newsletter February 2016

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

Next meeting - February 17th, 8mm of Nothing, Bob Smith

Bob Smith has kept bees for around 40 years, currently managing around 10 colonies in 14x12 WBC's. After a career in Pharmaceuticals R&D as an analytical chemist, he then enjoyed 6 years as a Seasonal Bee Inspector in Kent and became involved with beekeeper education at all levels. Current interest

include microscopy, botany, pollen and foraging behaviour.

The "8mm of nothing" covers the importance of bee space, correct frame spacing and smooth colony handling.

Last meeting - 20th January, Using Nucs - David Rudland



This was an interesting talk highlighting the variety of uses for Nucs. Beekeepers should note that there are two definitions for the word "Nuc", namely the box itself and the bees themselves, the latter not necessarily found in a nuc box. (David failed to mention bombs but we won't go there – Ed). Only our National size was considered but there is no reason why other variations should be excluded.

An interesting feature of David's boxes was the use of a separate mesh floor, so a mini hive of 5 frames. This allowed more boxes to be placed on top if required, it is

also useful when uniting nuc to standard colony using the newspaper method.

Should you wish your bees to make new comb a nuc is ideal if placed above the brood box (with suitable blanking to reduce access at the sides) as it provides a warmer environment for wax making.

Nucs can also be used to keep a queen as insurance against Q loss. He suggested that brood frames can be removed to other colonies to keep nuc viable. A word of caution here, always check there is no disease on the frame being moved and that all bees are removed from the frame.

A significant point is that these 5 frame nucs are much easier to handle than 10/11 frame colonies as they are much lighter, worth considering if you have a problem with lifting. One box above another equals a conventional hive.

All in all a very informative evening giving room for much thought and experimentation.

As ever the evening concluded with lovely refreshments overseen by Connie and Heather.

AGM - 20th January

Our annual general meeting was held before our guest speaker David Rudland gave his talk (see above). Reports were given by the various apiary managers, swarm co-ordinator and treasurer. All were well received by the members present.

Our finances are sound and the membership steady. There was some confusion re membership renewal which has altered from previous years to be more in line with BBKA and Beecraft. Chairman Bob Curtis thanked

all who contributed to the smooth running of the division.

Pat Clowser has stood down as apiary manager at Stanmer.

Elections took place and all committee members were duly re-elected. We are pleased to announce that Ian White has joined the committee.

It has been confirmed that we have a new apiary at Peacehaven, something that has been under discussion for some time; Sue Taylor will be apiary manager.

Achievers - Basic success

Members Anne Asher, Judith New, Connie Sturt and Ian White, all achieved their Basic in Beekeeping after attending Heather's tuition classes. Well done all!

Heather already has a list of would be achievers and welcomes beekeepers who wish to improve their knowledge and ability. To find out more contact Heather at a meeting or see contact details in officers panel on back page.

Photos show Connie and Ian receiving their certificates and badges at the AGM



Bee inspector change - the announcement



Following the recent promotion of Regional Bee Inspector Nigel Semmence to the Post of Contingency Planning and Science Officer at the National Bee Unit, and the movement of Regional Bee Inspector Julian Parker to take over managerial responsibility for the Southern England Region I am pleased to announce that Diane Steele has

been appointed as the new Regional Bee Inspector for the South Eastern England Region which is comprised of Greater London, Kent, Surrey, East Sussex and West Sussex. (Buckinghamshire has now been moved back to its previous place within Southern Region).

Many beekeepers in the South East of England will know Diane, as she has worked for the last seven years as a Seasonal Bee Inspector for the National Bee Unit in East and West Sussex and also at times in Surrey. She lives in Middleton On Sea near Bognor Regis and in addition to Beekeeping enjoys Travelling, Yoga and Gardening and is also a keen photographer.

Bargain corner - Helena Lewis

What do all these items have in common?

Well apart from being bee related they were cheap or free (given to me)

Starting on the left and going clockwise:

1. New Camouflage Mosquito Hat with Head Net Mesh Fishing Beekeeping Hat only £1.22 each (inc p&p) from Amazon online shop - very useful as an extra hood They come from China so take about 2 weeks so best to order several at that price
2. 1 kg soda crystals only £1 from Pound shop in Worthing (and others no doubt *ed*)
3. Large jar of look alike Vaseline only £1 from Pound shop in Worthing
4. Loo roll inner tube - free and good as smoker fuel so start collecting now
5. Solar flying bee which moves in sunshine on windowsill to annoy me!
6. Hand knitted finger bee puppet - useless but fun!
7. Bee drinks coaster - useful when drowning sorrows after bee mishaps!

These last 3 items were given to me by my "bee custodians" as holiday mementoes so let's hope they do not go away much this year!



Amanda advises

With cold weather there is nothing we can or should do to the bees. They will be in a tight cluster and unable to move, so here is hoping we all took the opportunity while it was warm to check they had sufficient stores near the cluster and get the varroa count down. The queen will be laying in earnest now so if it is very cold they would probably appreciate some extra insulation over the crownboard if not already there. One more month to go before the beekeeping all kicks off again, so there are those frames to make up, spares to purchase and remaining equipment to clean and tidy.... Also get yourself ready for heavy lifting with some gentle back exercises

An interesting item in the West Sussex BKA newsletter recently by Jim Norfolk got me following up references and I learned that the optimal humidity for the hatching and normal development of bee eggs is 90 to 95% RH. Also humidity of between 79 and 85% leads to only 2% of varroa mites producing offspring, whereas at humidities between 59 and 68%, 53% of mother varroa successfully reproduced. We all know that warm air can hold more moisture, it seems logical, therefore, that if bees live in cavities which are well insulated, ie have a low thermal conductance, then they will more easily maintain a suitable temperature, will not have to cluster so tightly, will be able to maintain a higher humidity, will not be troubled by varroa so much, will not have to go outside so often in adverse weather conditions to collect water and will be able to move to access stores on adjacent frames. Sounds like the answer to most of their problems - can it really be that easy? Is it possible my worries about a very mild humid December may have been groundless and the bees were possibly quite happy inside so long as the rain did not get in? It comes down to insulation apparently. The thermal conductivity of hollow trees is the lowest (to the tune of 4-7 times lower than standard hives), ie the best insulated, then a skep covered in straw and dung, then Paynes poly nucs seemed to be well insulated but for some reason the full size poly Nationals were not so good. Top bar and Warré performed poorly and cedar Nationals worst of all!

The water content/absorbency of the material also affected the outcome. Damp or water-permeable materials are not so good; increasing thermal conductivity and heat loss. Hollow trees are usually lined by waterproof propolis by the bees, poly hives are

also not very absorbent, pine and cedar hives are fairly absorbent until they become well used and acquire a layer of propolis and wax, especially if sterilized with heat. I guess hives dunked or treated with hot paraffin wax are also going to be waterproof.

Having been told in the past that painting cedar hives is not a good idea as they need to 'breathe' I wonder if we should rethink? Of course we have to consider the protection from the rain outside, which we had so much of in December, but also the moisture from inside. I have put 3" slabs of celotex insulation on the outside of my nucs this winter (there was no room to put it on the inside) and 1" on the crown boards of all my hives. Maybe I should also consider putting thin slabs on the inside of my brood boxes next year where there is room, to help them keep the temperature and humidity up.

Of course we should not be confusing between humidity in hives and wet hives. What they do not want is cold walls with water condensing on them and running down. Worst of all is a cold crown board where condensation drips on the cluster. Insulation on the top and sides would reduce the cold surface and minimize this condensation risk. It would be worth checking that the undersides of the roofs are dry. I find driving rain sometimes penetrates into the corners where the metal is folded over. When I build them or if I find a secondhand roof is damp I take the metal lid off and squeeze silicone sealer in the corners of the metal lid and then put them back. The 'wooden' board under the metal is so often chipboard now and absorbs water and distorts. I varnish both sides and edges of this part on a new flat pack hive roof before construction. It prevents distortion and makes it easier to wipe off any honey drips which may get on it, and now I realize, will also improve its insulation properties. I am also assuming holes or gaps at corners of boxes are repaired as soon as they are noticed, to prevent rain getting in. If anyone is interested in the references, let me know.



Bees practise safe sex - Gerald Legg

23 January 2016: 7

For the queen bee, mating is a once-in-a-lifetime-event. to ensure safety along with success, the males' seminal fluid has been found to contain proteins that can kill spores of the sexually transmitted fungal pathogen *Nosema apis*.

Divisional Diary 2015/16

Indoor meetings 7.15 for 7.30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, (October to March) at St. Thomas's church hall, Lewes unless otherwise stated. Members are invited to arrive early and assist in putting out chairs. Admittance £1 which will include tea/coffee, cake/biscuits Non-members are welcome.

Programme

Indoor meetings

October 21st – Candle making– Celia Rudland

November 18th – Preparing honey for show– Mollie Bonard

December 16th – Dave Cushman and his website - Roger Patterson

January 20th – AGM – Using Nucs – David Rudland

February 17th – 8mm of Nothing– Bob Smith

March 16th – Blossom to Honey Jar– John Hendrie

Dates for your diary

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

November 28 SBKA Annual convention

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.

Officers of the Division

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Heather McNiven "Knowlands Farm"

Sue Taylor "Big Park"

County Representatives

Pat Clowser, Bob Curtis

Education coordinator

Heather McNiven

National Honey Show Representative

Vacant

Committee Members

Sue Taylor, Gerald Legg, Heather McNiven, Mary King,

Ian White

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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