

# Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



## Newsletter March 2016

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION  
[www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk)

### Next meeting - Blossom to Honey Jar, John Hendrie

#### March 16th

John Hendrie will consider how nectar is produced by plants, the different types of nectar and how it is changed to honey.

Methods of removal of honey; processing and bottling

for sale will be discussed. Legal aspects of honey composition and requirements of premises will also be addressed.

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



Everyone at the meeting was spaced out by Bob's dynamic talk about the bees observance of space in the hive: hence the title 8mm of Nothing i.e. space. The first thing most beekeepers learn is the need to observe this vital requirement of bees. Hence metal or plastic spacers, castellation or Hoffman.

Examples of wild comb were shown to emphasise the skill bees have in building comb. The dimensions are always 35mm from centre to centre with an 8mm gap. The 8mm is critical as it allows bees to pass each other as they work the comb, this critically only applies in the brood box. Hoffman is the spacer of choice, in a standard brood box this allows 12 frames plus a dummy board (other spacing methods usually allow 11 frames not therefore

35mm centres). With this in mind it's not good practice to mix different types of space in the same box as this will give unequal centres.

Bob stressed the need to observe 8mm at ends of frames plus 8mm bottom (or top space). If you find lots of brace comb or propolis were you don't want it this will be caused by excess spacing.

Top bars come in two widths and the wider DN2 are recommended to avoid inter frame brace comb.

A little time at the end of the talk was devoted to handling the bees, in particular to types of glove. The thick leather mostly offered to beginners (they prevent stings) are useless as there is no "feel" with them. Blue nitrile (long cuffs if available) are the choice with an overglove of latex to avoid stings. Did you ever wonder why colonies seem aggressive when working through several colonies? This can be caused by transference of hive pheromones (each colony has its own) so washing gloves and tools between hives in washing soda solution is the answer.

Washing bee suits between inspections is very beneficial for the same reason as washing gloves - no perfumed conditioners etc, these are a no no as are other perfumes were bees are concerned.

A most informative evening well rounded off by Heather and helpers with the teas and coffee.

### Reminder SBKA AGM - 5th March, Ringmer village hall

The 2016 Annual General Meeting will be hosted by Brighton and Lewes Division 2016 - the venue is Ringmer Village Hall, Lewes Road, Ringmer BN8 5QH [next to the Anchor Inn]. Parking is available at the Hall, additional free parking behind the shops in Springett Av.

Trade stands Mantel Farm and Ben and Maggy Pratt will be open at 1.30. Meeting starts at 2.30.

After the formal business, there will be a lecture by Chris Park - entitled 'The Honey Island and Baskets of

Bees'. Covering British mythology, folklore, storytelling, archaeology, poetry, skep beekeeping in an exploration of the heritage of honey and honey drinks within the British Isles: 'The Honey Island'.

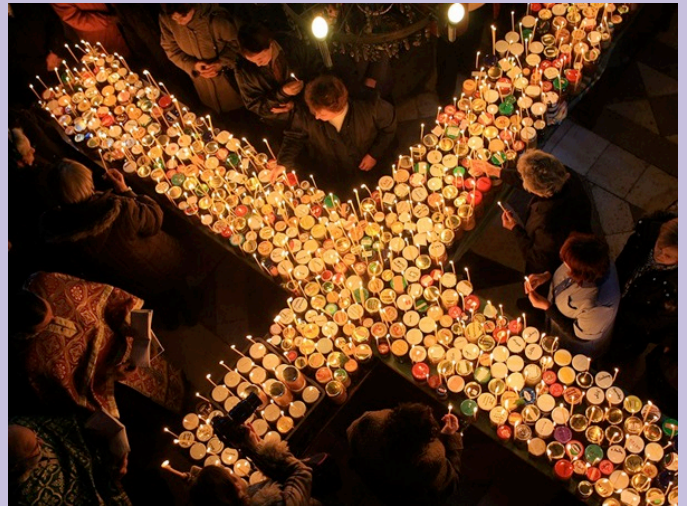
Be warned, there will be a large horn containing Metheglin...

There will be refreshments after the meeting. Why not come along for the afternoon.

## St. Haralambos - WHO? read on - sent in by Helena Lewes

In only one church in one city, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria and only on the day of St. Haralambos, 10th February, Bulgarian Orthodoxy celebrate the Day of the beekeeper and their patron St. Haralambos, because he was the person who discovered the miraculous benefits of honey. Many Christians bring their own named jars of honey with candles attached and lit, to arrange them in a holy cross because they believe this brings health and good harvest to beekeepers and their families. After the ritual, they eat a spoon from their jars every morning until the end of the year as they believe that honey is illuminated and has magical healing power.

There are reports of “funny honey” i.e. where the bees have collected hallucinogenic nectar, could this have been the start of the custom? *Ed*



## Whether wheather bees - from our NS reader Gerald Legg

**Bees work harder ahead of rainy days**  
*New Scientist 6 February 2016*

**B**usy bees get busier if the next day will be rainy. So found Xu-Jiang He and colleagues at Jiangzxi Agricultural University in Nanchang, China, who attached radio-frequency identification tags to 300 worker honeybees from three hives.

The bees spent more time out of the hive foraging, and stopped work later, on days when the following

day proved to be rainy rather than sunny. They may be responding to cues such as changes in humidity, temperature and air pressure that precede rainstorms.

“Honeybees may attempt to collect more food before rainy days as a food shortage prevention,” his team writes.

## Moulds and bees - more from Gerald



**T**his is taken from an article about the work of Paul Stamets published in *NewScientist* (13th February 2016, 28-29). Paul had had a bad stutter. He became fascinated by mushrooms ever since he ate a bag of magic mushrooms which contain the psychoactive compound psilocybin, and his stutter vanished. It has recently been discovered that psilocybin stimulates neurogenesis – it helps build neurons. He believes that is what happened to him: that it helped to remap

a neuronal pathway in his brain. As a mycologist Paul founded a and directs research on fungi in Kamilche Point, Washington and has pioneered studies on the uses of mushrooms.

So what of bees? He believes that mushrooms can offer protection to animals. Bracket fungi immunologically protect, and connect, the animals of forest lands – from bees to birds, bats, bears, pigs and people. For example, he was growing mushrooms on a compost of wood chips, and was surprised to see that bees had pushed the wood chips aside and were sucking on the branching, vegetative part of the fungi, called the mycelium. It turns out that bees and maybe other organisms use certain anti-fungal compounds found in decomposing wood to detoxify themselves. Without the fungi, the bees can no longer rid themselves of fungicides, herbicides and other poisons, so they get sick.

His company, Fungi Perfecti, has now developed ‘myco-honey’ using extracts derived from mycelia. When bees eat it, their viral counts plummet, they live longer and the colony increases its survival capacity.

## Amanda advises

*“And rapidly backwards and forwards the early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers; they call it the easing of Spring.”*

Poem by Henry Reed; Naming of parts.

This month beekeeping starts again in earnest; we may soon be able to take our first full inspections. I see from my notes that last year I went round all the colonies checking the brood between 9th and 12th March. The long range forecast for this March sounds as though it will be cold and unsettled, so it will be unlikely I will be inspecting before middle of March by which time I hope we may reach my preferred 14 degrees. I am reasonably confident mine are all ok though as I have lifted the crown board when it was warmer a few weeks ago to check stores, and watched them on sunny days in mid Feb and all were taking in pollen. Except one that is, there were none flying and on investigation I found they were all dead round drone brood. Their queen must have failed early in winter and dwindled down to an unsustainable size. Oddly it was the only one I had not been treating with icing sugar as it had low varroa, and I had not disturbed it for a few months. The ones I have been bothering with icing sugar this winter seem to be thriving. Because of the dusting I know some have debris and dead bees on their floors which is preventing the icing sugar falling through in the middle so my first inspection will include replacement of their floors with clean ones. It is also an opportunity to remove dark brood comb which has neither brood nor stores on before the brood expands, make sure they have a clean drawn frame in place to expand into.

Keep an eye on the colonies and inspect any which are not flying when the others are, by lifting the crownboard. If dead, seal them up and remove for cleaning as soon as possible. You don't want the other colonies robbing the stores and picking up disease and homeless varroa. Try to ascertain why the colony died. Queen problems, disease, starvation are the most likely. Some we can prevent, others like queen mating we are at the mercy of the weather.

From your records of last year you should already have some earmarked for a Bailey comb change or shook swarm depending upon the size of the colony you find. Now is the time to put foundation in the frames ready, so it is fresh and sweet smelling to encourage the bees to build on. However there is no point in putting on boxes of foundation until it is warm enough for them to make wax. The ambient temperature in the hive needs to be 33 - 36 deg which means they will build directly over the area of brood from which the heat rises. All colonies should have brood now but only large colonies will be able to produce enough brood and rising heat

to produce wax in cool weather. I leave my insulation on the crown board until well into April to help them. To make 1lb of wax (a full brood box?) they will need between 6 and 8 lb of honey. It is best if there is a nectar flow if you want them to draw out wax, but you can get them going by giving them a dilute feed of 1:1 syrup if nothing is around.

Keep an eye on the stores. More colonies die at the end of winter and early spring because they are working trying to rear brood and using more at this time. If they do not have stores immediately adjacent to the cluster, move a frame of stores from the outer frames in next to the cluster and scrape the cappings with an uncapping fork as they are sometimes reluctant to uncap their sealed stores.

It is also time to get a super ready for each colony, preferably one which came off that same colony last year to minimize disease spread, and brush up on your preferred swarm control method. When the weather does improve everything will go with a bang and we may wish we had everything ready earlier.

Another important thing to do soon is check for the varroa levels if you have not already done so. If you get more than 2 a day natural drop (leave insert in for at least 4 days for accuracy) or more than 15 -20 after an icing sugar test, you have time to do a varroa treatment of your choice before the honey supers need to go on in April.

It is important to put up hornet traps as soon as possible (see Beebase website for instructions); Queens come out early, even in late February if warm and it is important to trap any Asian Hornet queens before they start making nests. We should be getting into the habit of using these traps, in case or when, the Asian hornet reaches our shores.

It is a bit late to think about doing module exams in March but if you are thinking about taking the first module in November it needs quite a bit of preparation and worth thinking about it now. I found module one improved my knowledge, technique and confidence, so give it some thought.

Finally, I look forward to seeing you at the County AGM at Ringmer on 5th March, which Brighton and Lewes is hosting.

See front page for details *Ed*





# 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

April 16th Saturday–Out apiary @ Grassroots. 1.30pm begginers, 2pm all

May 7th Microscopy @ Bob Curtis's–details TBA

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

### President

Lionel Reuben

### Chairman

Bob Curtis

Curtis Photography, Woodside, Falmer Rd, Brighton BN2

6LA T: 01273 303311 E: [poshpix@me.com](mailto:poshpix@me.com)

### Vice-Chairman/Treasurer/Membership Secretary

Pat Clowser, 5 Wivelsfield Road, Saltdean, BN2 8FP

T: 01273 700404 E: [Patricia\\_clowser@hotmail.com](mailto:Patricia_clowser@hotmail.com)

### Secretary

Hilary Osman, Holly Tree Cottage, Norlington Lane,

Ringmer, BN8 5SH T: 01273 813045

E: [secretary@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:secretary@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk)

### Meetings Secretary

Mary King

### Swarm coordination

Heather McNiven T: 07999 987097

E: [heathermcniven@btinternet.com](mailto:heathermcniven@btinternet.com)

### Webmaster

Gerald Legg, E: [gerald@chelifer.com](mailto:gerald@chelifer.com)

### Newsletter editor

Lionel Reuben, Whincroft, Station Rd, Nth Chailey, BN8

4HG T: 01825 723453; E: [lionel.r@talktalk.net](mailto:lionel.r@talktalk.net)

### Librarian

Vicky Dunster (non-committee)

### Out-Apiary Managers

TBA, "Stanmer"

Amanda Millar, "Burgess Hill"

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.

### Regional Bee Inspector:

Diane Steele, T: 01243 582612

Mob: 07775 119452 E: [diane.steele@apha.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:diane.steele@apha.gsi.gov.uk)