

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



Newsletter June 2016

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

Next meeting - Out apiary, June 19th, Heather's apiary

Sunday June 19th, Heather will be opening hives and answering questions on supering up as well as beekeeping hints and tips of a seasonal nature. The venue is Stonecroft, Lower Station Road, Newick, BN8 4HU. Look for the purple hedge with a white hive outside – park in front of bungalow as room permits, then sensibly in road. 1.30 for beginners.

Last meeting - May 21st, Barcombe

Despite a sunny morning the weather turned showery for our second out apiary meet. The meeting went ahead despite the inclement weather.

As promised Heather had a swarm with which she demonstrated “running the bees” into the hive. See picture. She then went to a hive in which she had recently introduced a large swarm, so large that



it required brood and a half to safely house it. On inspection it proved to be doing extremely well and had some frames of exhibition standard brood. Beginners were able to handle a frame from the colony.

Swarm control was discussed, very apposite for the time of the year. Unfortunately there was persistent very light rain throughout the afternoon but this did not dampen an interesting session. At the end of the proceedings all the bees had run into their new home, no doubt encouraged by the damp weather.

All present then adjourned to the barn where Ben Pratt had set up a stall of beekeeping equipment.

Hilary had prepared tea and lovely cakes were for all

to enjoy along with the usual discussions.

Thanks to Heather and Hilary for making this a lovely event.



Top Beekeeping in the rain. Shades of Gene Kelly?
Bottom Tea in the barn

Twixt the turrets - Anne Eves

I met David Porter today (david.porter@claytontunnel.com) who lives in the beautiful cottage between the turrets of Clayton Railway Tunnel, between Pyecombe & Hurstpierpoint. His is a perfect situation for bees as he has lots of wild flowers & he would be willing to house a beehive or two if a beekeeper would maintain them for him in return for some honey. As it's such a pretty place

which he does open to the public now & then. It's very cold in the winter, the best option might be WBC hives if anyone would run them for him.

National hives would do just as well. Please communicate with David directly but let me know of any developments. Ed

Festival of Bees, 2016 - Ian White

The Great British Bake off came to Lewes & Brighton Beekeepers this month, where they yet again provided and served refreshments at the 2016 Sussex Festival of Beekeeping. They had stiff competition from East Grinstead Beekeepers, who were serving exceptional Hot Dogs. Highweald Beekeepers had a very extensive plant sale where you could buy lots of bee friendly plants

There were the usual trade stands if you felt that you did not have just enough stuff already, with Paynes,

Mantel Farm and Bee and Maggi Pratt servicing that need.

Having sated the urge to shop and had one more slice of cake Dave Goulson, from Sussex University, presented a very thought provoking lecture entitled 'Bees, pesticides and politics'. Where he discussed the findings from his and others studies into the use of neonicotinoid insecticides. He suggested that there was some evidence that neonicotinoids have an effect on honey bees and other pollinators; however, the biggest

factors were the changes to our farming practices and the loss of habitat. What was more surprising was the research that indicated that the majority of the chemical used in seed dressing was left in the soil to leach into the field margin plants and trees. These residues were found in higher concentrations in these field margin plants than in the treated plant. There was also an implication these chemical residues were filtering into ground water supplies.

The afternoon concluded with the Auction and sale of second hand equipment.

All in all, yet another successful and entertaining festival



L to R: Judith New, Sue Taylor, Hilary Osman, Norman Dickenson, Chris Hogarth, Pat Clowser. Photograph: Ian White

Peacehaven out-apiary

The division now has an out-apiary in Peacehaven. The first member to place hives on the site is Ryan Norman who has kindly sent photographs. As you can see this is a very exposed site by the coast. The photos clearly shows that whips have been planted on the perimeter to give shelter, this of course will not be effective for some time but does promise resident members in the area protection for the future. At the moment Sue Taylor is the co-ordinator for the site until arrangements are made for an apiary manager.



Amanda advises



Wonder if your bees are trying to make up for lost time? At the beginning of May mine were keeping me busy adding supers to make sure they were not congested, as they seemed to expand relatively quickly from the slow start. It did not work entirely as a swarm prevention method though as several started making queen cells. The larger colonies did seem to be bringing in quite a bit of nectar in the warm period we had in the middle of May, since then it has been more changeable and they have slowed, and once again I will not have enough for a spring honey crop. Here's hoping that it will pick up again.

Remember that nectar takes up three times the space of honey and they need space to spread it out to dehydrate it as well as provide space for the growing population to rest in at night and when it rains. If nothing else it is an opportunity to get some foundation nicely drawn so put supers on in advance of their needing them. Do remove the queen excluder though if foundation is put directly over the brood until they start to draw it out as an excluder can act as a barrier. The weather is warm now so no need to worry about the empty space above them, in fact if the weather should become hot, it is good for them to have a space above for the heat to rise into so they do not risk over-heating. Leave an empty box between the crownboard and roof if it is very hot, or shade the metal roof with something.

If your colony has not been expanding rapidly then I am afraid you have to consider that they have a disease, sometimes the symptoms are not particularly obvious, especially if they are good at clearing away the casualties. The population fails to grow, but often with more holes than desirable in the brood. Looking really closely at the brood or for evidence on the floor or outside the entrance usually reveals signs. The three at Grassroots are still disappointing, now showing signs of Sacbrood as well as a few Chalkbrood and one or two DWV, in spite of working hard to keep the varroa low. One has lost its queen and the queen larva replacement also died. So I have merged it onto the slightly bigger one showing the same symptoms. They will then be big enough to shook swarm onto clean comb and hopefully that will help rescue them. A shook swarm is a useful method if they are big enough, to get them off contaminated comb (Chalkbrood spores can linger for decades) but do remember to put a queen excluder between floor and brood box to keep them until settled. Fortunately I have some sterilised clean drawn comb to speed up their establishment.

I have tried several methods of swarm control once they show developing queen cells, to try to dissuade them from swarming in an effort to save space and equipment, but have come to the conclusion that (apart from removing the queen) the only really successful method is a proper artificial swarm. Once done you can stop worrying about them for a while and if done straight away they have often mated, and you can merge in time for the honey flow, with a new young queen and clean comb and brood/varroa break into the bargain. When doing an artificial swarm don't forget to leave a queen

excluder between floor and brood box of the artificial swarm part, for a week. Both of my artificial swarms tried to swarm 2-3 days later; still being in swarm mode. Having initially forgotten to do this I was glad the queens were clipped as I found the queen in the grass and popped her back, putting queen excluders under them. They both tried to go again the next day. Also don't forget to go back into the old part of the colony 4 or 5 days later to remove any subsequent emergency queen cells they may have made, leaving just your original marked queen cell, otherwise they will send out casts and you will lose a lot of bees. Knowing that the cell is capped for 8 days before hatching, I like to check normally on day 9 or 10 that she has hatched. Later than this and the bees have often modified the old cell and it is more difficult to tell what happened. Go straight to the marked frame, with as little disturbance as possible, usually early or late in the day when the virgin is unlikely to be on her mating flight. This is to check it hatched normally, i.e. the cell will have a circular hole at the thinned, browner end. If the cell did not hatch, eg due to black queen cell virus then you have a chance to repair the damage by merging back with the artificial swarm part or giving them a frame of eggs from another colony. If the brood in the colony all hatches out and there is no queen there will be no pheromones preventing workers from laying, then they can become drone laying workers within a week, so if the colony is not monitored for a month while the queen cell is supposed to be hatching and mating it can be too late to rescue them by then if the queen cell failed.

When doing artificial swarms or shook swarms, the brood break means any varroa will be on the bees so do an icing sugar dust to really knock those mites down.

Oilseed rape flowers are over this month so remove any surplus, but many varieties are relatively nectar free so it is just an inconvenience which causes what there is to set.

Latest Research Those of you who attended Dave Goulson's excellent talk at the Bee festival in May will know that neonics build up more in the adjacent wild flowers than the crop its self. So it is good news that ministers have rejected the proposal to permit emergency use of neonics on oil seed rape. I also understand that the OSR crop was up 7% during the ban, so how necessary are neonics anyway?

In an 11-nation project by COLOSS it is suggested that local bees may be better adapted to "their" strains of viruses as local bee strains survived much longer. Also local bees were found to be more gentle and better honey producers. Another argument against importing foreign queens or even from the next county perhaps.

Finally, it is confirmed that bees can count up to 4!

Other bees of Sussex - Amanda Millar

Spare a thought for all the other bees. At the end of April I went on a two day bee identification course arranged by the Sussex Wildlife Trust as they need more bee recorders in order to conserve them properly. Between the Solitary and Bumble bees there are nearly 300 species, some not too difficult to identify, others require the microscope to see, for example, the colour of the inner tibial spine or the relative width of the gena. We spent the first day peering down microscopes trying to key out the features to the species. The second day, fortunately not too bad weather, if a bit cool. First we had to determine the sex. The males have 13 antennal segments and the females 12 – try counting them with a hand lens in the field! There are quite a few bees which cuckoo on others, we saw several bumblebee cuckoos at Seaford Head. Others are very specific as to the plants they visit; many of us have already seen the Ivy bee, others are generalists. I was pleased to see the relatively large, easy to identify, wonderfully named, Hairy Footed Flower Bee, both male and female. We also saw lots of mining bees, one was the very attractive White Bellied Mining Bee, *Andrena gravida*, which is a Red Data Book 1 species, only previously found at Tunbridge Wells, even our course leader Steven Falk who has just published *The Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland* had not seen it alive before. All in all a very interesting weekend, with promise of many hours puzzling through an identification key to come.



Andrena gravida, White Bellied Mining Bee – extremely rare!



Female Hairy Footed Flower Bee, *Anthophora plumipes*



Above and left–Male *Anthophora plumipes* with the long hairs on the middle legs. The photographer was urged to hurry as it was biting the finger



Hay fever and honey - Editor

An appropriately named Mr Bacon from the Brighton based magazine "Taste" requested information via our website as to the claims often made as to the validity of local honey as a preventative against hay fever. There are many cures claimed for the wonder substance honey and this is just one of them.

Members who attended the evening lecture on pollen may recall the speaker dismissing the notion. As he told us hay fever is an allergy caused by airbourne pollen, therefore there is no substantiation for local honey as a cure: bees do not deal with airbourne pollen.

There is a long standing claim for the anti-bacterial effects of honey when used on open wounds. In general honey was used successfully in the past as a poultice. The reason for it's efficacy is that honey is a hygroscopic substance (i.e. it attracts water). When applied to a wound it promotes a drying of the area, bacteria cannot survive in the dry so the effect is a cure.

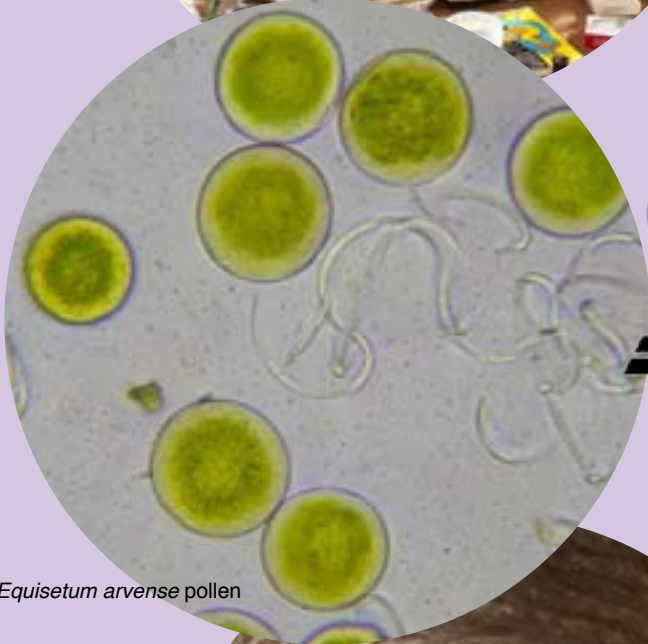
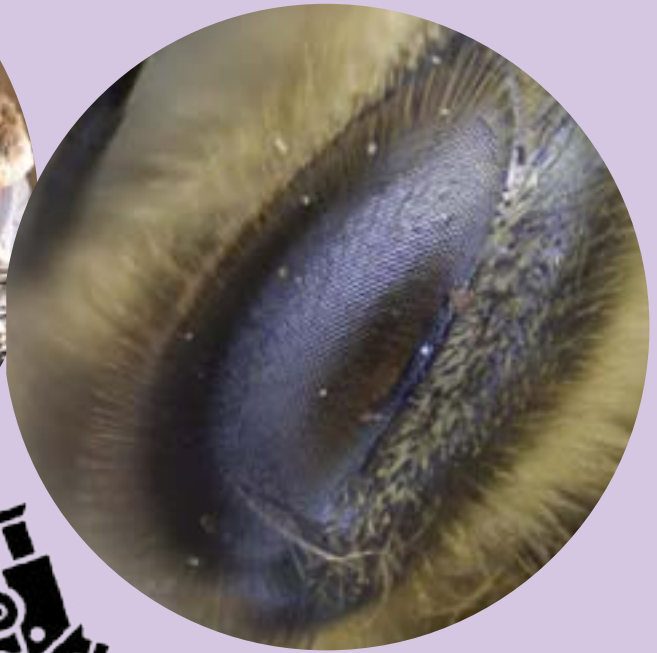
Do you have any interesting cure/debunking remedies/nonsense, I will be glad to include them in future newsletters.

Under the microscope - Bob Curtis

At the Microscope workshop afternoon meeting on Sat. 7th May we managed to fit a lot into a short period, everyone had a chance to experiment with a microscope and look at several samples. We tried several ways to diagnose Nosema, but did not conclusively find any, although some of the bees examined had enlarged and darker guts, we could not see the rice shaped spores of Nosema. Pollen was examined (see shot of Mare's/Horse Tail pollen/spores as collected from Grassroots) also had a look at a bee's eye with it's hairs. I had found a proto wasp nest in one of the hive earlier in the day, so we had a close look at that as well as parts of bumblebee. The wasp eggs are of interest as they are considerably larger than bee eggs.



Staked Bee Eye



Equisetum arvense pollen



Wasp Nest Stack

Divisional Diary 2016

Outdoor meetings Meetings are 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. Location maps are on the website in the members section.

Programme

Out apiary meetings

April Saturday 23rd – Grassroots (revised date)

May Saturday 21st – Barcombe

June Sunday 19th – Heather McNiven's home apiary Newick, supering up

June Saturday 2nd – Stanmer – looking for disease

July Sunday 17th – Bob Curtis's, Woodingdean, different hive types

August Sunday 7th – Peacehaven, setting up a new apiary

August Saturday 21st – Grassroots

September Saturday 10th – Barcombe

Dates for your diary

6th August Rottingdean Fair

September 21st, First winter meet

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

Vice-Chairman/Treasurer/Membership Secretary

Pat Clowser, 5 Wivelsfield Road, Saltdean, BN2 8FP
T: 01273 700404 E: patricia.blbees@hotmail.com

Secretary

Hilary Osman, Holly Tree Cottage, Norlington Lane,
Ringmer, BN8 5SH T: 01273 813045
E: secretary@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

Meetings Secretary

Mary King

Swarm coordination

Heather McNiven T: 07999 987097
E: heathermcniven@btinternet.com

Webmaster

Gerald Legg, E: gerald@chelifer.com

Newsletter editor

Lionel Reuben, Whincroft, Station Rd, Nth Chailey, BN8
4HG T: 01825 723453; E: lionel.r@talktalk.net

Librarian

Vicky Dunster (non-committee)

Out-Apiary Managers

Ian White, "Stanmer"

Amanda Millar, "Burgess Hill"

Heather McNiven "Knowlands Farm"

Sue Taylor "Big Park"

County Representatives

Bob Curtis, Ian White

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