

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



Newsletter July 2016

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

Next meeting - Out apiary, July 2nd, Stanmer

Saturday July 2nd, We will be looking for disease in the hive. As usual 1.30 for beginners.

Last meeting - June 18th, Newick

The rain stayed away, the bees were behaving (mostly). Just what was needed to demo to all the new bee keepers who attended. They were able to handle frames of bees that just continued to quietly explore the cells. Reassuring for them with their first encounter, and brood was seen.

When a second hive was opened that was thought to be possibly queenless, they experienced a more frisky hive, and saw the difference in temperaments. Brood was seen, so a discussion resulted in possibilities of reasons for the behaviour. The weather, hunger, genetic problems. Lots of questions ensued over a cuppa and cake, and then a quick demo AGAIN of artificial swarm control as Heather is still getting frantic phone calls asking for advice when queen cells seen.

So, a big welcome to the new people who joined us. As a Division of Sussex bee-keepers we are keen to assist and support 'newbees'.

Thanks to Hil and Sue for the refreshments, and apologies to the neighbours for 20 cars in the road...but they are all supportive of the bees, so will understand. Thank you Heather for hosting at your house.

Photo Hilary Osman



For sale bee suit- Michael Daniels

The item is a white polyester cotton full bee suit with circular veil (removable). Size 5xl. Worn twice and washed once. I am six feet tall and a 52 inch chest and it is just a bit too small but might be good for someone.

Comes complete with a spare, brand new fencing veil. All for £20. Anyone interested or would like more information my number is 07914 900 131 and I live in Peacehaven.

Amanda advises

I was disappointed by the weather in June as I watched much of the honey which had come in during May/early June get eaten away by the hungry bees, so no spring crop again. I have been obliged to do quite a bit of feeding of my swarms, artificial swarms, nucs and Apidea. When they get really hungry and have used up most of their stores they become less active and stop feeding the larvae and even use the larvae as a food source. So if you go into a recently hungry colony you are likely to see capped brood but little or no larvae, but still some eggs. They will also stop feeding drones, so you might find them on the floor or outside the entrance. When they go beyond this stage, they will stop producing brood, start dying or may abscond as someone else has already experienced this year. I am not sure of the survival value of absconding unless they intend to join another colony with food stores as they would otherwise be unable to build new comb and would die very quickly. Let's hope you all noticed their needs before it got to this stage. In the books this is often called the June Gap, however, there have been flowers around me and Brambles were in flower by mid June and also Knapweed and Lime so I blame the weather mostly for keeping the bees indoors. I would not be surprised if we break another record for the wettest June.

The weather has also affected my queen rearing; the queen cells produced seem to have been smaller and fewer than I would expect and virgins are taking ages to mate. Queens prefer to fly in sunny weather over 20°C with winds less than 10mph. As soon as they are laying I try to find them to mark and clip them to prevent losing them to swarms next year.

I am hoping that by the time you read this the weather will have improved and we can again think about making sure they have enough supers to process the nectar and store the honey in. The main honey flow round me seems to start by the last week in June and continues into early August but I like to take my supers off by the first few days of August so they can over winter with some honey and I can get on with the varroa treatment. During July as soon as the supers are heavy and mostly capped I take them off to save me a lot of heavy lifting. They can be extracted, and put back on the hives they came off in the evening to avoid too much excitement in the apiary which can lead to robbing. We still need to be vigilant of swarm preparations, as it would be disaster to lose half your foragers at this stage but it is to be hoped few colonies are seriously thinking about swarming now. Swarms and the swarm part of an artificial swarm often supersede in the summer so still look out for queen cells and if supersedure (1-3 cells) then the cells can be thinned to the best and cross your fingers it was supersedure and not a late swarm! If you were lucky enough in the awful weather, to get the virgins in artificial swarms mated you should merge the two parts together as soon as possible to make large colonies which produce the most honey. Keep the cleanest brood comb and the best/youngest queen of the two.

Although reports of swarms for collection have been fewer this year, 9 of the 16 full sized colonies I am looking after have made swarm preparations. The results of this swarm control has been mixed and in one case rather curious. Three worked



well with two pairs of colonies with good mated queens which I need to merge before end of June and the third I removed the queen to an Apidea as insurance and both doing well. One lost the virgin so remained as a single colony. Four managed to send out casts in spite of thinning the day of the artificial swarm and returning 4 days later to thin again. Looking at the dates, in one I could have missed some queen cells on one frame although they were pretty obvious and I did look hard, the other three must have made more queen cells using two or three day old larvae to make queen cells after my inspection. From now on I will return twice at 4 day intervals to check on artificial swarms. In one of these the newly mated queen is making queens cells 7 days after starting to lay! Crazy animals! But the oddest one I found this morning (21st June). On 8th June I removed the queen and thinned the queen cells to one, 6 days later I thinned them again to the marked one, 4 days after that I checked again; still the one cell about to hatch. Three days later I checked to see if she had hatched properly; still not hatched although a bee was vibrating the cell (this dance usually means 'hurry up') so I am assuming she was still in there, BUT, and here is the odd bit, there were half a dozen fresh swarm cells with eggs, up to middle sized larvae and lots of royal jelly. There is no queen in there nor has been for 13 days, there is still a lot of capped worker brood which is supposed to inhibit worker laying, but the cells had every appearance of being treated as normal fertilised eggs and well developed larvae. Have some of our bees become parthenogenic like the Cape honey bee? If anyone else has documented anything like this I would be interested to hear.

Paralysis virus. Apparently there is a lot of paralysis virus around again this year, I noted the beginnings of it in one of my colonies and culled them end of June. It seems to be very infectious. If you see a cup or more of dead bees outside the entrance, some crawling, perhaps some on the floor and an unusual number clinging round the entrance just jiggling then suspect the worst. I saw very few of the black shiny symptoms on the bees themselves. Keeping hives a good distance from each other will reduce the spread and pay close attention to hygiene, I always disinfect gloves and hive tool between each colony and do not swap supers between hives unless sterilized and heat treated.

Jobs this month include supering in good time, get ready for removing all honey supers by end of first week

of August. It is also time to put up wasp traps, they are already making their presence felt, and don't assume swarming is over yet, after all the messing about in June I am not going to assume anything is normal. We must also think about winter configuration, assessing which ones to keep, merge, requeen etc.

To finish with a round up of recent research: although it has been known for many years that bees can detect electric fields around flowers for navigation and detecting recent visits by other bees indicating nectar depletion etc, it has recently been discovered that they use sensitive hairs to detect it.

Colonies in small hives have been found to swarm more often (this we know already), have lower varroa infestation rates, less disease, and higher survival compared to colonies in large hives. These results

indicate that the smaller nest cavities and more frequent swarming of wild colonies contribute to their persistence without mite treatments.

Trials are being undertaken on the use of a fungus (mycotoxin) which could be used to treat varroa. In the paper I read, it appeared to have an efficacy of between 30% and 70%, requiring 3 dustings of the spores and supposedly a 'low' worker mortality. Statistically this worker mortality may have been insignificant, but was still 4 times the mortality of the control hives. I wonder if they have researched the effects of the dust on us breathing it in, or on other harmless mites and spiders nearby? I think I will stick to icing sugar dusting, I can lick it off if it blows over me.

Here is hoping for better weather in July and a good honey crop.

Rottingdean fair - 6th August 2016

Do you have a few jars of honey to spare? Would you like Brighton and Lewes to sell it for you?

If the answer is yes then please get in touch with, Hilary on osmans.home@btinternet.com

This year we are giving the option for Brighton and Lewes members to sell their honey on our stall, we can take a maximum of 20lbs per member. This gives us the chance to show the range of honey available in just our small area. To give the public a chance to choose

the right honey for them we also require a tasting jar, preferably half pound.

As always all jars must be labelled correctly and filled in a hygienic environment (sorry for the reminder but we have to give it).

10% of the honey sales will be donated to Brighton and Lewes funds



South Of England Show - Heather McNiven

B&L were represented in the Honey tent, with the observation hive being a great point of interest to old and young alike. The weather always looked a little suspect but the rain held off until the final afternoon when the bees became a huge attraction as they were under cover. Open hives behind a transparent protective screen proved to be a great educational time to the audiences that gathered hourly. But these bees did not produce the huge swarm that flew in and settled

near the North entrance gate – to the consternation of the officials on duty. Fortunately I had my bee suit in the car, and after a short time, and unravelling them from the roll of netting, they were boxed, brought home and given to a fellow bee keeper.

Heather does not state that during the show she was still active as swarm manager. It's fortunate she was at the show to collect the swarm and not off in some other direction collecting a swarm elsewhere! Ed.

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

July 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.

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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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