

# Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



## Newsletter September 2016

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

### Next meetings - Sept 10th Barcombe, 21st First indoor

Heather will be leading the last of the seasons out apiary meetings and will be discussing the preparations for a healthy winter. Normal times apply. First indoor meet, see programme back page for details.

**Members are reminded that suit, glove and boot hygiene is very important (fresh laundered suit, clean boots and gloves before and after apiary visits). There is a case of EFB not far from Barcombe!**

### Meeting - Peacehaven Sunday 7th August

The weather approaching the coast near Peacehaven was misty (in Yorkshire known as a "roke") but was clear and dull for the meet, with a SW breeze but not cold. The site is approached by a three minute walk from the cafe car park.



As the breeze is a feature of the south coast whips have planted and a temporary bamboo screen erected to windward.

One of the outstanding features is the presence of some Polish hives (imported from Poland by our Polish member). These are constructed from pine T&G with a layer of exp poly between. Each box holds ten frames (approx the size of BS frames) but were not fitted with spacers(?).

Each component box has a locating raised section



with a corresponding recess in the box above. Good for

location but requires care when positioning to avoid squashing bees.

A BS colony was opened to demo verroa checking. The inspection board had been left in position for some time and consequentially was covered in debris and housing both large and small wax moth. Boards should only remain in situ for verroa drop to be established.

The verroa check was made using the equipment shown in pic below. Essentially this is a plastic container with a mesh lid. Approx 100 ml of bees are collected in the pot, the lid is then placed and two desert spoons of icing sugar is added through the lid. The bees are shaken gently to ensure covering with the sugar dust, left for ten minutes then the container inverted and gently shaken over water to see how many dislodged mites fall out. on this occasion very few mites were noted suggesting further investigation required.



Opening another hive produced a small group of cells with bald brood, possibly another wax moth attack. An interesting and instructive afternoon. followed by tea provided by Connie and the now usual discussion session.

**Librarian wanted - see page 3**

## Amanda advises

I am always looking for interesting data on diseases and pests even though inevitably a greater proportion of the data is from Europe or USA rather than from the UK. In research I have seen, both from France and USA, the highest levels of mites in colonies are found in September and October. I monitor my bees regularly and I find the same, even though I usually treat in August and I suspect they invade from infested colonies nearby, either through absconding collapsing colonies or robbing out weak or dead colonies. There are, sadly, still bee owners who leave their hives open after the colonies have died.

It is possible that in August you tested for mite levels as soon as you removed your supers and the levels were low, as I found with several of mine, especially swarms collected earlier in the summer and those which had a lengthy brood break while waiting for weather to permit queen mating flights. It seems pointless subjecting them to unpleasant treatment at that time, however if you did not treat (and remember September is when the winter bees are being produced) then I urge you to monitor again in September as mites frequently invade from elsewhere at this time. Waiting until December to do oxalic will not prevent a lot of damage being done to the bees in the meantime by mite-spread viruses. There are several options for treatment such as MAQS or icing sugar.

This summer has been topsy turvy again. The nectar flow started late and when I looked in the first week of August intending to remove my supers, I found no capped honey, just open cells with nectar in. There was a short heatwave forecast in the second week so I thought I would leave it until after that, and then a cool day or two following would enable them to finish processing it and I could remove the supers. Fine in theory but both my bee suits went unserviceable and I missed doing anything for over a week while I was ordering a new veil and zips. With alternating storms and heatwaves as I write this only one apiary out of my four has been cleared of supers. Nothing was capped though and they had runny nectar, so the supers are stacked in a small room with a dehumidifier on full, before I risk extracting. If all the rest are the same it is going to be a very tedious business for a relatively small honey harvest. This means I am going to be too late for the full Apiguard treatment so will have to use a different treatment, concentrating initially on the few really large colonies which did not have a brood break. I checked one smaller colony which did have a brood break and was delighted to find not a single mite dropped, so I have a bit of flexibility still for many of them. Also because of the little heat waves we have had with temperatures over 25°C, I would have been unable to use Apiguard or other thymol based treatment anyway. I am hoping the larger ones will not need feeding too much either, as I shall not take off all the supers if it is uncapped, it will be so much work dehydrating it all, but somehow must persuade them to take it down into one super. If you put supers over a crownboard with open

holes, as you would put wet supers back on for them to lick dry, they may be persuaded to take it down.

I hope all this messing around with supers will be completed by the time you read this but I will be surprised if all the dehydrating and extracting is done by then. So September jobs for me are finishing all the things that should have been done in August; checking and treating for mites, extracting and getting the supers licked dry and treating them with acetic acid. I must replenish the wasp trap bait, I find it gets a bit tired and smelly after a few weeks and does not work. All the colonies will need checking for stores, I have needed to feed some swarms and nuclei already. Robbing will be a high risk in September so reduce entrances and avoid spillage when feeding. Requeening and merging will be easier this month too, but not if you have Apiguard or other treatments on, in fact I tend to leave them pretty well alone when Apiguard is on, but as I mentioned above, I don't think I shall be using much if any of that treatment this year.

Any honey with around 19% or more moisture will ferment. Although technically you can sell honey with up to 20% moisture, I do not, as customers are not usually happy when they see bubbles rising. So unless your frames were 80% or so capped, I recommend you borrow a refractometer and test the moisture content before bottling or selling. If it is high then it is a case of eat it quickly or get the mead recipes out.

There has been some more research published on the adverse effects of Neonics. They exposed drones to the levels seen in fields, of two neonicotinoids; thiamethoxam and clothianidin, and found that they had on average 39% less living sperm compared with unexposed bees. "Any influence on sperm quality may have profound consequences for the fitness of the queen, as well as the entire colony," said the researchers. This week a new study of the distribution of 62 species of solitary bee over 18 years demonstrated that neonics have caused a 30% population extinction on those species which regularly visited Oil Seed Rape, since neonics started to be used commercially on OSR seed in 2002.

The link below supports what I said in my notes about invading varroa, and emphasises the importance of treating colonies at the same time, and vigilance in case a neighbouring beekeeper has not treated. Varroa Mites - a community problem, is found at:

<http://beekeep.info/a-treatise-on-modern-honey-bee-management/managing-diseases-and-pests/varroa-short-history/varroa-mites-a-community-problem/>



## Meeting - Grassroots, Burgess Hill 21st August

We were lucky with the weather, which was overcast, but not raining until we had left. Amanda opened several hives and explained how the hives were performing. One from a swarm was doing OK but would need feeding very soon, (many hives seem to be running out of stores, so it's worth a check) and there were signs of Sac brood. Amanda shook icing sugar onto each hive inspected to monitor the mite drop and all were quite low. Is this the trend this year, as my hives

and ones we checked at Peacehaven also seemed low in mite, feedback please. Quite a few bees could be spotted with bright red pollen, probably from Ragwort (OK for pollen, but not the most desirable source for nectar, as the honey does not taste good) and patches of grey on some bees indicating balsam. A toad was spotted ambling under a hive and was relocated nearer the stream, another indicator of a healthy environment.  
*Bob Curtis*



The weather withheld its extremes for this meeting and we were able to look in three, discussing the different hive types (polystyrene, National, Commercial) and methods of removing supers and when. Varroa treatment alternatives were also discussed, given that it has been too hot at times for the thymol treatments and the late season. Also how to deal with the uncapped,

high moisture honey recently removed from the apiary. One swarm of two months ago was filling a brood box but we found a few Chalkbrood mummies and a couple of sacbrood in it. Food stores and feeding were also discussed. Thanks to those putting in the tea.

*Amanda Millar*

Below: Sugar dusting



## Librarian wanted

Our division is in need of a new Librarian. We would like to thank Vicky and Dusty for their many years in carrying out the role, but they have decided not to continue due to other commitments.

What is involved:

1. Bring the Library books to the winter meetings.
2. To look after the books, which are in plastic boxes and quite easily transported.
3. Keep a check of who has borrowed what and remind

- those who forget to bring them back.
4. Be a member of the committee if they wish, but it is not essential.

If you are interested please contact Hilary Osman (contact details on back page).

# Rottingdean Village Fair

It was a beautiful hot sunny summer day, just right for a Summer fair but exhausting for those manning the stand. As usual we were a great success, with crowds of customers for our local honey, fudge, candles, wax polish and conserves. The display hive, manned by Peter Moll was busy all day with young and old alike marvelling at the bees and spotting the Queen. So many people have very little idea of how a hive works and how

big the Queen actually is. We even had a chap visit the stand who studies fungi growing on insects, we might hear from him again later.

So next year put the first Saturday in August in your diary and come and help, especially if you have honey from near Rottingdean. Many thanks to Hilary for organising the day, also Ian, and Peter for all their efforts.

# National Honey Show

The National Honey Show will be held at Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher, KT10 9AJ from Thursday 27th to Saturday 29th October. It gives you the chance to listen to international speakers, see honey & wax displayed to the highest level and get some bargains in the trade show, all for just £10 for a day ticket or £15

full membership and children under 16 are Free. Why not try entering some honey, wax or photographs, and we have a special section for Sussex honey, usually with few entrants, so there is a good chance of a prize or Cup. This link for entry forms <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/download-schedule.php>

# From the New Scientist - Gerald Legg

NewScientist 6 August 2016. Pesticides kill off honeybee sperm

Male bees have been taking contraceptives – inadvertently. It could be a factor in the alarming decline in bee populations across North America and Europe over the past 15 years. Neonicotinoid pesticides, neurotoxins used in agriculture that kill many types of insects, also cut honeybees' live sperm count by

almost 40 per cent, found Lars Straub of the Institute of Bee Health at the University of Bern, Switzerland, and his colleagues. However, we can't yet be sure if this is the main reason behind the major decline in bee populations, he says, because many factors are probably playing a part.

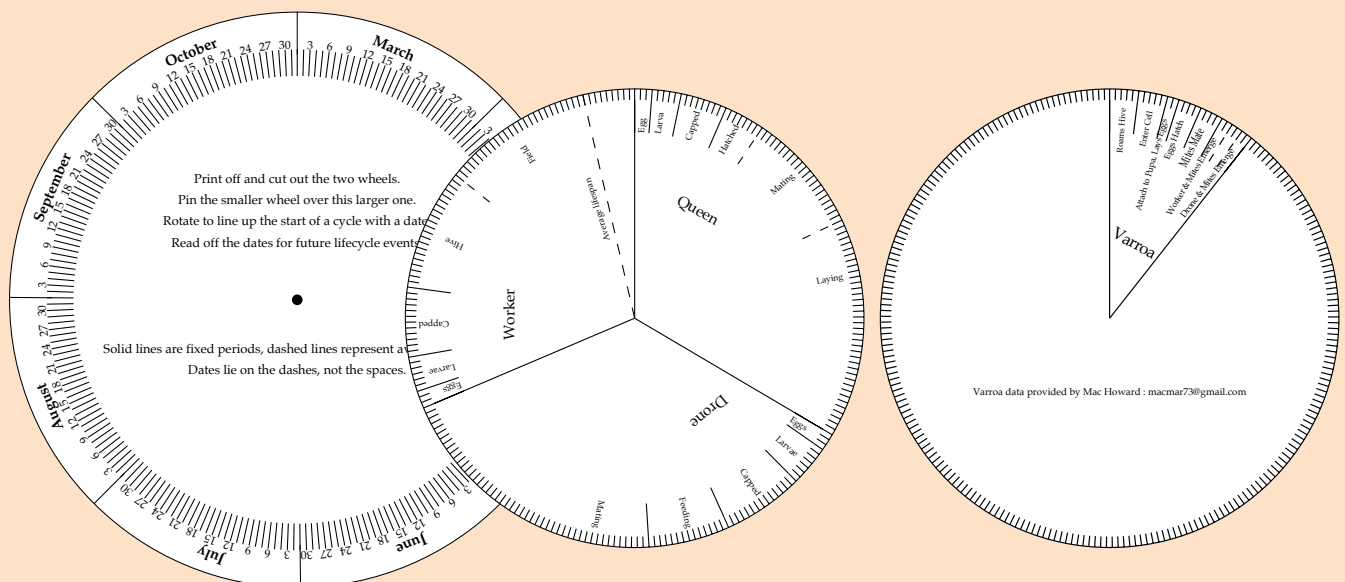
# Honey bee life cycle wheel

A handy device for new (and not so new) beekeepers is available as a free download from this website: [www.edinburghbeekeepers.org.uk/downloads/lifecycle\\_wheel\\_v4.pdf](http://www.edinburghbeekeepers.org.uk/downloads/lifecycle_wheel_v4.pdf).

Print both sheets, cut them to size, and then laminate

if you wish to protect from the elements.

A third wheel gives information about the life cycle of Varroa mites.



# 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.

## Out apiary meetings

**September Saturday 10th – Barcombe**

**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. Non-members are welcome.

## Programme

### Indoor meetings

**21st September–Andy Willis– Purifying and maximising your wax crop**

19th October–Practical evening

16th November– Elizabeth and David Ready–Soap-making

18th January–AGM– Honey Show with Harold Clout

15th February–Bee disease–Amanda Millar

15th March–Bob Smith– Shook Swarm and non chemical varroa control

**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.blbees@hotmail.com](mailto:patricia.blbees@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

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](mailto:diane.steele@apha.gsi.gov.uk)