

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



Newsletter October 2016

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

Next meetings - Oct 19th indoor meeting, Practical evening

How do I do that? How do I assemble it?

If you have any problems with equipment etc come along to this meeting, see practical demonstrations and ask about your specific difficulties. Experienced members will hope to answer your queries on the spot.

Indoor meeting - 21st September



For the first of our winter meetings we welcomed Andy Willis to enlighten us on "Wax Purification _ The Andy Method".

Andy started keeping bees 25 years ago when he was an estate gardener in Lincolnshire. He had no knowledge of beekeeping at the time but was quite close to Thornes who at that time only employed beekeepers or ex beekeepers and was therefore able to pick brains in order to manage the estate bees.

He soon realised that there was a precious substance that only bees make called wax. So began a journey into

wax and it's uses. Over the period of time he has refined his method of refining wax and has been a successful exhibitor at national level, winning many medals and cups.

The talk was interesting to both those setting out on the road to using wax and those casually involved. Being both humorous and informative the talk was well received and promoted many questions from the floor.

Thanks to Heather who stood in to make the after speaker refreshments.

Last of the season

24th September saw the last of the seasons out apiary meetings, this at Barcombe. The original meeting two weeks previous had been cancelled due to bad weather conditions. Today was a warm sunny afternoon agreeable to both bees and their keepers.

Heather explained the basics of preparing the colony for winter. Using a WBC hive placing a partially capped super below the brood box was demonstrated. A syrup feed was given to help the build up of stores.

A troublesome (bad tempered) hive was opened to test if the nature of the bees had changed. The bee behaviour had not improved – Heather said she would remove the Q and unite the colony with a suitable good tempered colony at a later date.

An interesting afternoon in the apiary followed by tea in the barn administered by Connie.



Items for sale - Bob Curtis

One of the Professors at Sussex University is clearing out his store and we have been offered first opportunity to buy the items. We just need to get together an offer for as many items as we want, so now is your chance to bid on whatever takes your fancy. I don't think we are looking at a lot of money, perhaps a few pound for a super or under £15 for a hive, so have a look and contact me if you are interested.

So please bid for National item below:
20 roofs, some deep, some shallow
20 plywood brood boxes (good to bad condition)
20 plywood supers (average condition)
20 Varroa floors (good to bad condition)
5 Observation hives (all looks nearly new)

Bob Curtis contact details on back page.

LASI Integrated Varroa Management workshop - Sue Taylor

The workshop gave a good mix of lectures, practical demos and Q & A...all crammed into one afternoon. We were given clear advise based on peer review

research plus an update on varroa management. The findings are that oxalic acid sublimation about the second week of December and a week later after removal of any half grown larvae and all capped brood gave statistically proven the best control method. There is now an oxalic acid product that is permitted for UK use. No further treatment should be necessary for at least 12 months.



- 1 Dr Hassan Al Toufailia took his Masters & PhD degrees at LASI studying honey bees. His PhD was on the control of honey bee diseases including the use of hygienic behaviour to control varroa and deformed wing virus. He is the chief research technician for LASI Queen Bees.
- 2 Another use for a honey double sieve: checking the numbers of varroa washed off a set volume of bees.
- 3 A varroa mite scaled up to its equivalent size on a human.
- 4 Lectures in the bee lab at Sussex university LASI department by Dr Karin Alton who for the past six years has been doing both research and outreach and is in charge of LASI's programme of workshops including those on hygienic behaviour. There were addresses by both Professor Francis Ratnieks and Mr. Norman Carreck.

Photos: Bob Curtis

Amanda advises

October is sometimes thought of as the beginning of the next bee season and it is certainly time to think to next year. You should now have the records of how well your colonies performed and how healthy they are, and you can choose which ones you wish to propagate from next year. The final selection being; how well they got through the winter. This hinges a lot on what we do for them now, so feeding, insulation, security and low varroa are of great importance.

Try to get all your feeding done as soon as possible. If you over feed they will store it in the brood area and may restrict the laying area the queen can use. So I go through every frame (usually in the second half of September) and assess how much they have to the nearest pound based on a full super frame holding about 2.2lbs, a full brood frame holding 5lbs, an inch depth across the full frame both sides is about 3/4 lb. With experience you can gauge how much is in a super knowing that a completely full super is 25lbs. Then I feed what they need according to the size of colony, to last them through till March using the strongest possible solution of sugar ie 2:1. Remember that a pound of dry sugar is actually worth about 1.2lbs of honey equivalent when made up as syrup. Or use the invert sugar syrup available from local bee supplies, which the bees really like and saves them effort as it is already partly converted. With our increasingly mild winters it is possible a large colony on brood and a half will only need 40-45lb honey equivalent total, and a small colony 30lbs and a nuc 15lbs, which is 3 full brood frames.

My winter check list includes a final check for a laying queen with healthy brood, usually at the end of September or first few days of October, I don't usually disturb the brood area again until March unless there is a problem; a note of the colony size (for comparison in winter and early spring which could indicate a health problem if much less). I note when feeding is finished and feeders removed, cleaned and stored and then I do a final mite count in October. There is still time to do some icing sugar dusting if high. I am experiencing the usual increased mite drop as I write this at the end of September. As soon as the weather becomes cooler and the feeders have been removed, I put insulation over the crownboards, this is particularly important for smaller colonies, nucs and Apidea as they may not have the bee numbers to keep themselves warm enough to rear brood. Celotex insulation around the sides of nucs seemed to help mine come through the winter strongly, or if a small colony in a full size box, an insulated dummy frame is a good idea.

By now the entrances should have a mouse guard on. Because they sometimes have trouble getting dead bees through the holes I would remove the entrance block before fixing the mouse guard. Many of my hives have entrances 5.5mm high now which keeps out mice and Asian hornets so I don't need metal mouse guards. I was saddened to hear yesterday, 21st September that the first Asian Hornets have been found in Gloucestershire. All we can do is be very vigilant and report if any found, be sure to put up hornet traps

especially in autumn and early spring, as any queen hornets will be attracted to sweet substances before and after hibernating. If you have woodpecker trouble get your netting ready to put on. I also have straps round all my out-apiary hives as some locations suffer from winds and one has blown over before now but being strapped it was easy to put back on the stand in one piece and they did not suffer much.

If you have not done so already, now is the time to plant lots of spring bulbs such as specie crocus and snowdrops which provide early, much needed, fresh pollen to help with brood rearing. Order seeds which will benefit pollinators, eg Verbena (eg bonariensis), borage, phacelia, scabious, lavender and whatever else that grows well on your soil.

Research

It has been found that the number of different pesticides within a colony—regardless of dose—closely correlates with colony death. The results also suggest that some fungicides, often regarded as safe for bees, correlate with high rates of colony deaths.

In another study, the research examined the effects of imidacloprid, a neonicotinoid. Queen bees in colonies that were fed imidacloprid-laced syrup laid substantially fewer eggs – between one-third and two-thirds as many, depending on the dose of imidacloprid – than queens in unexposed colonies. Colonies that consumed the imidacloprid also featured larger proportions of empty cells. About 10 percent of cells in the unexposed colonies were vacant, compared with 24, 31, and 48 percent of the 20, 50 and 100 ppb treated colonies, respectively. The finding suggests poor brood health in the exposed colonies. The researchers further found that exposed colonies collected and stored far less pollen, which they convert into “bee bread” that provides crucial protein for recently hatched larvae. While more than four percent of the cells in unexposed hives contained pollen, less than one percent of cells in even the 10 ppb treated colonies did. Imidacloprid has greater effect on smaller colonies.

I had always read that bees cannot store water, but according to new research by the bee behaviour expert Thomas Seeley, in hot weather they can store some in the brood area and there are some ‘water-bottle’ bees which hold water in their abdomens.

I am sure the Beebase wasp monitoring trap works well but it does sound complicated and I am concerned the sugar syrup they recommend may attract too many bees, I found several easy alternatives on the web, just make sure you don't use a bait likely to attract bees. This one (next page) seemed really simple and of no apparent interest to bees, I will have to see if it works.



...from previous page.



On the subject of hornets

Here is a link to a fascinating BBC item regarding hornets *not* of the Asian kind.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p048lwx9>

More hornets

If you want to find out more about this potential hazard and go to <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?sectionid=47> download the pdf, Asian Hornet in list.

Asian Hornet Alert! Report sightings of this species to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Species Description

Scientific name: *Vespa velutina*
AKA: Yellow-legged Hornet
Native to: Asia
Habitat: Nests usually high in trees and man made structures, sometimes closer to the ground; hunts honey bees, other insects and also feeds on fruit and flowers.

Not easily confused with any other species. Dark brown or black velvety body. Characteristically dark abdomen and yellow tipped legs. Smaller than the native European Hornet.

Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. In 2016 the first UK sighting was confirmed in Gloucestershire. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, or in/on untreated timber. The possibility that it could fly across the Channel has not been ruled out.

A highly aggressive predator of native insects. Poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators.

Do not disturb an active nest. Members of the public who suspect they have found an Asian Hornet should send a photo to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

Key ID Features

Asian Hornet Queen Queens up to 30 mm; workers up to 25 mm long

Entirely dark brown or black velvety body, bordered with a fine yellow band

Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends

Asian Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4th abdominal segment.

Asian hornet "hawking" for honey bee prey

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>

Possible hive site

A garden in Plumpton Green has been offered as a possible site for a hive or two, contact Hilary Osman (details in Officers panel, back page) for further details.

Divisional Diary 2016

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.

For your diary

National Honey Show. 27–29th October, Sandown Racecourse, Esher

(see article P4)

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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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