

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



Newsletter

February 2017

Editor: Norman Dickinson

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

Next meeting - Bee disease with Amanda Millar, Feb 15th

Amanda has a wealth of experience in bee keeping and will be giving a comprehensive talk on recognising bee disease and what we can do about it. This is a must for all beekeepers no matter how much experience one has.

B+L Division AGM Jan 18th

The turnout of members attending this year's AGM was excellent with a good number of new members present. The Chairman's report highlighted a fairly gloomy year with respect to honey yield, which was reflected in the various out apiary reports. It was noted that the Division has now lost the use of the Stanmer apiary site.

Bob Curtis indicated that he would not be standing for re-election as Chairman and with only one nominee for the vacant post, Ian White was duly elected as the new Chairman. Pat Clowser, Vice-Chairman/Treasurer/Membership Secretary and Hilary Osman, Secretary, both re-stood and were duly elected. Lionel Reuben stood down as newsletter editor but remains as President, and Norman Dickinson has elected to take on the vacant position. Heather McNiven stood down as swarm coordinator and this post together with the vacant librarian post needs to be filled. Any member interested in these vacancies should contact a member of the Committee for details.

The Committee, on behalf of the membership would like to thank both Bob Curtis and Lionel Reuben for the hard work and commitment that they have given over the years, it has been very much appreciated.



Our new Chairman Ian with Bob alongside at the AGM

Too cold to fly?

At 6°C most bees are tucked up and keeping warm in the hive. Not so with Amanda's bees, she tells me that they were flying last Sunday, were working her *Viburnum bodnantense* and taking pollen back, what a splendid looking specimen it is



Frost rimmed *Viburnum tinus* - Amanda Millar

B+L Honey Show 2017

The B+L Honey Show was held with the AGM with 58 entries from 13 members. Staging took place before the AGM started which gave Harold Clout the opportunity to judge all of the entries backstage whilst the AGM was in progress. We would very much like to thank Harold for giving up his time to judge the entries. The entries were all to a high standard, which Harold said made judging very difficult.

Results for the B+L Honey Show 2017

Class		1st	2nd	3rd	VHC	HC	C	Entry
1	One 11b Jar Clear honey	Amanda Miller	Philip Else	Hilary Osman	Bob Curtis	Sue Taylor	Judith New	11
2	One 11b Jar Naturally set honey	Ian White	Amanda Miller	Hilary Osman	Amanda Miller	Connie Sturt		5
3	Two 11b Jars of similar honey	Amanda Miller	Ian White	Amanda Miller	Sue Taylor	?	Hilary Osman	8
4	One Rolled candle	Judith New	Hilary Osman	Hilary Osman				3
5	One Moulded candle	Hilary Osman	Sue Taylor	Judith New	Hilary Osman	Heather McNiven		5
6	One 1oz block of wax	Heather McNiven	Sue Taylor	Amanda Miller	Philip Else	Sue Taylor	Judith New	9
7	One Honey Cake.	Ian White	Heather McNiven	Elizabeth Burton	Sue Taylor	Bob Curtis	Judith New	6
8	Six Honey Biscuits.	Ian White	Sue Taylor	Judith New	Bob Curtis			4
9	A bee related photograph.	Hilary Osman	Judith New	Sue Taylor	Philip Else	Judith New	Sue Taylor	7



Amanda advises

February is the month when I make sure I have sufficient brood and super boxes ready with frames and foundation. I know I have a couple of shook swarms to do (but not until late March or early April when it is warmer) but the first or second inspections in early March are an opportunity to remove any dark empty frames in the brood box and replace them with clean foundation. Swarms have been recorded in March in the past so I will have a brood box ready and waiting along with the rest of my swarm kit. March is such a busy month for many reasons that it is good to know I already have plenty of supers of drawn comb ready to put back on their respective colonies when needed, but I must check there is one ready for each colony; I have a few new colonies which were swarms or nuclei last year which will need a new super of foundation making up. Be vigilant for queen wasps and hornets. Warm spells will bring them out in February looking for sweetness and they are attracted to traps, so get the traps up. When I was counting the mites on my inserts in the first week in January at 10 degrees after icing sugar dusting, I heard a deep buzz and a large queen wasp plopped onto the sticky insert and started to feed. She got short shrift from my pencil I am sorry to say. But we now must be vigilant for queen Asian hornets from the two outbreaks in the UK last year. *See panel on next page and NBU instructions accompanying this newsletter for constructing an Asian Hornet trap. Ed*

Check the varroa status in all the colonies, the levels in some of my colonies were persistent this winter in spite of dusting and oxalic as a last resort on three at the beginning of January. I think they must have had significant quantities of brood all winter as it was mild at times and the varroa are continuing to breed and are protected from my dusting in the sealed brood. But putting the insert in for a week recently I was relieved to see most were one a day or less. . Three inserts were clear of mites and debris but had mouse droppings so I shall have to do those again; blocking the gap at the back with something to keep the blighters out. The debris scatter gave me a good idea as to the size, location and activity of the colonies. From the brown cappings crumbs, most seem to have been busy uncapping stores although one had rather sparse debris, which I shall have to keep an eye on. It has been cold recently, but bright and I was dismayed to see a couple of colonies were flying in 5 deg C. If they touched down anywhere but the hive entrance they

would have chilled and died. Looking at the entrances, two have a few streaks of dysentery; not that normal orange stuff but some brown spots. I shall have to think hard about these and decide whether a shook swarm or cull is more appropriate. It will depend how big they are at the first proper inspection. With this long spell of cold, the ground has not thawed and all my snowdrops and crocuses, which were making so much growth, have now been arrested for the moment.

Continue to monitor the hive entrance and make sure it is not blocked with dead bees, especially after this cold spell when they have not been able to do much housekeeping. We are now coming into the period most likely for them to start running out of stores, so keep hefting regularly and if not very heavy it would be worth looking inside briefly to check that smaller colonies are not becoming isolated from their stores. I now have fondant on my three nuclei and an apidea and the wild colony I rescued in late October. If any are found dead, seal them up immediately for cleaning and sterilizing when convenient; try to work out why they died, take photos of the brood frames to show to more experienced beekeepers if you are not sure.

Research - In January, US researchers found that a pesticide enhancer (Sylgard 309) used extensively on almonds, grapes and top fruit in bloom, increases the susceptibility of bee larvae to Black Queen Cell Virus. Colonies used to pollinate almonds commonly have dead or dying brood afterwards.

A new strain of a bacterium has been found in the upper Mid West of US which is linked to winter mortality of colonies. *Serratia marcescens* strain *sicaria* was found in 48% of colonies and of the colonies which died 73% had the bacterium present. They have also confirmed that this is the first bacterium known to be transmitted by the varroa mite.

The US has had its first bumblebee go extinct and several solitary bees are endangered. Given their poor record on the environment I am surprised it is only the first one. Sad though.



Vespa velutina (Asian Hornet)

Following the sightings of *Vespa velutina* last September in Gloucestershire (and its subsequent destruction) and in Somerset last October, it is almost certain that there will be further incursions into the UK this year. *V. velutina* is most likely to be seen close to bee hives, therefore bee keepers should be alert. *V. velutina* could be active from February to November in suburban areas in the south of England and Wales, or around major ports. Any sightings should be sent with a photograph, if possible, and details of the location to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk. Under no circumstances should you disturb or provoke an active hornets' nest. Their sting is known to kill humans.

Asian
Hornet
abdomen



Native
Hornet
abdomen



Details of the NBU Asian Hornet monitoring trap are included with this newsletter email

Editors Comment

The annual B+L AGM has come and gone with a number of changes to the Committee make-up. Bob Curtis stood down as Chairman and has been replaced by Ian White. Bob has done an excellent job as Chairman over the past few years steering the Division in a calm way to where we find ourselves today and for that we thank him.

Heather McNiven, who was our swarm coordinator last year has also decided to stand down for this year. The swarm coordinator is often the public face of the Division and has to try and explain to members of the public, who call to say that they have a swarm of bees in their area, that this may not necessarily be the case, and trying to get the caller to describe the "bees" can be very difficult. This is even more so should the caller be describing a bumble bee or a wasp, where it has to be explained that in the case of a bumble bee they should just leave it alone, and in the case of a wasp nest that they should call the Local Authority pest control.

Lionel Reuben indicated his intention to stand down as

the Divisions long standing newsletter Editor, and as there were no takers, I put myself forward as the new Editor, thinking that it should not be too difficult to put together and edit a newsletter. How wrong could I be! Back in 2005 I started a new construction project, the Client being the London Borough of Southwark. Part of the brief was to compile a 15 minute weekly video diary and my initial response was that this should reasonably easy to do. Wrong answer. Try doing a weekly video diary at home and you will quickly understand that it is not that easy.

This newsletter is my first issue as Editor and I know that I have big boots to fill. It has become very apparent that, like compiling the video diary mentioned earlier, it is not as simple as one initially thought. The Editor is very much dependant on members providing articles and photographs in a timely manner for inclusion in each edition, as well as trawling through various bee related (and others) for interesting information to pass on to the members, so please keep those contributions coming.

Vacancies

A couple of vacancies have arisen in the Division and are in need of filling.

A key post is that of Swarm Coordinator, which was admirably carried out last year by Heather McNiven. Without a swarm coordinator there is always the potential that members will miss out on getting swarms this year if the position is not filled. This can be a joint effort if one or more members wish to split the coordination effort.

Vicky Dunster stood down as the B+L librarian last year and has as yet remained unfilled. The new librarian will look after the Divisions books, issue copies to members and see their safe return and bring them to the winter meetings. There is the added bonus that the librarian will get the opportunity to read them all.

Any member interested in applying for one of the above posts should contact a committee member. See rear panel.

Divisional Diary 2016/7

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

For your diary

4th March - SBKA AGM hosted by the Eastbourne & District Division. Full details on the SBKA website

20th March - Sussex Festival of Bees, Heathfield Community College

7th to 9th April - BBKA Spring Convention. Full details on the BBKA website

25th November - Sussex Beekeepers' Association Annual Convention, Uckfield Civic Centre

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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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

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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