

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Newsletter



May 2017

Editor: Norman Dickinson

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

Next out apiary meeting on 14th May in Woodingdean with Bob Curtis

Bob will demonstrate splitting of a hive and swarm control. Location details noted in the Members Section on the B&L website

Congratulations Ken Stevens NDB on your 100th Birthday

On ~~Wednesday~~ 2nd of May 1917, Britain had been at war with Germany for almost 3 years, the British River Class destroyer Derwent was sunk by a mine near Le Harve, with the loss of 262 men and officers. There was one other significant event on that Wednesday, 2nd May 1917, Ken Stevens was born.

Ken started to keep bees in the 1930's and "posted" his first hive via British Railways from Weymouth in Dorset to West Sutton in what was then Surrey now the London Borough of Sutton. During WWII Ken served as an RAF pilot and amongst others, saw action in Malta and India. Post war he continued as a pilot and would later fly for the UK flag carrier, BA. Ken was forced to give up commercial flying as a result of organophosphate poisoning, which he used to kill woodworm, fortunately the use of these compounds are now strictly controlled.

After Ken left the RAF he concentrated on his beekeeping, particularly in gaining qualifications, which culminated in 1960

with him gaining the highest beekeeping qualification recognised in the UK, the National Diploma in Beekeeping (N.D.B.). To date, there have only been 90 Diplomas awarded since the N.D.B. was formed in 1954.

Ken is very enthusiastic about his bee keeping and has authored a couple of books as well as writing regularly for the BBJ, now incorporated into the BBKA News newsletter published monthly and issued to all BBKA members. Ken very rarely uses gloves or veil when handling his bees and consumes all of the honey produced from the three Langstroth hives that he currently has, although he does now need assistance when manipulating them, and who would not at his age!

Ken, on behalf of all member of the Brighton and Lewes Beekeepers, we wish you a very happy 100th birthday, and may you have many more to come.



The first of our summer out apiary meeting was held at Grassroots with a very good turnout of over 21 new beekeepers in attendance.

The first colony inspected was healthy and all had the opportunity to inspect the brood frames for eggs, larvae and capped brood. The queen was found and most saw her. Amanda is a great advocate of dusting with icing sugar as part of her varroa control, and was demonstrated on the day. 30 minutes after dusting Amanda registered a varroa drop of 40 mites, which whilst better than the last time, the colony will require more dusting.

The next colony opened up had brood in all stages and full super, however there was evidence of moderate chalkbrood, which whilst not good news for the colony it did give the opportunity for the new beekeepers to actually identify chalkbrood in the hive. This hive was also dusted and registered a drop of 35 mites, which was a drop against 88 mites registered last week.

The third colony was massive with brood in 5 shallow boxes, and without disturbing them, it was split into two colonies, one with 3 national supers and the other with 2 commercial supers and gave a commercial brood of foundation for space as all the flying bees from the 3 nationals will go to them. In a few days they will be inspected for queen cells

and these will be harvested and reared in Apidea as such a good healthy colony. One half dropped 162 mites and the other 75 mites after dusting, but with so much brood the varroa have been able to multiply too.

The final colony when opened up was very sick, suffering with chalkbrood, sacbrood, "K" wing and paralysis virus, noting that there were dead bees both on the floor and on the ground outside the colony. As there was no hope for this colony Amanda demonstrated how to cull it by shaking all of the bees into a bucket of water and detergent. Amanda will need to be in attendance until all foraging bees return in order to also cull these. All frames will have the wax removed and destroyed then the frames will be boiled in a soda solution to kill any spores etc. The remainder of the hive will be scorched using a gas blow lamp to sterilise the components. It is also most important that all hive tools, cover cloths, gloves, suit and boots be likewise cleaned to prevent the possibility of cross contamination.

As is usual for out apiary meetings, refreshments, cakes etc were on hand and we thank Connie for this. There was also the opportunity for discussion over what had been demonstrated and other matters, beekeeping or not.



Checking for Queen Cells



Culling bees into water & detergent



Splitting a large colony



Tea Time!

Amanda advises

Although it has been often bright and sunny these last few weeks it has not really been warm enough for full inspections. Sometimes I have had to restrict inspections to lifting the super (on the brood and a half colonies of which most of mine are) to check for visible queen cells underneath and lifting the lid to see if they need space, and crossing my fingers that they have not hidden cells anywhere else. After the promising start to April when my colonies made great growth and were collecting nectar, I had to put on supers to all of them but now they seem to have stopped expanding and, from the water gathering going on, are eating their newly collected stores. So if this cold spell continues we will need to check they do not go hungry as they have a lot more mouths to feed now. In spite of the cold, one of mine has made queen cells with larvae and an artificial swarm was carried out this morning (22nd April), and two others have eggs in queen cells so will need regular monitoring. Decide which method of artificial swarm you are going to use and have equipment ready in case you see swarm cells. I have tried a variety of methods to stop them swarming, eg taking off a nuc, giving more space, etc but often this only delays them and increases the work, the only really certain way is a proper artificial swarm such as the modified Pagden which can be found on the information sheet page of the Brighton and Lewes Beekeepers' website. Once done, you should not need to worry about swarming for a month or so. So a slow start to the swarming season, but May will see many more swarms. May is also a good month to do shook swarms as it should be warm enough for them to draw new wax, with some careful feeding. May used to be a promising month with hope of a spring crop but with climate change the 'June Gap' may be early again so watch their store levels. They will probably still need supers though to accommodate their increasing populations, and don't forget to monitor the increasing varroa load.

Update on feral colony rescued in October of last year: The mite count has stayed very low with this colony but it did suffer from paralysis virus over winter and quite a few dead piled up on the floor. It reached a low point at the end of March of 3 seams and thankfully has now increased to 4. It will be a slow increase because of the low numbers.

When I last looked there were not many eggs although the brood looked healthy and there was no sign of virus. I saw the queen but they have decided to supersede her as there was a sealed queen cell too. So unless she continues to lay while her daughter is mating progress will be slow. I shall monitor their performance and do not expect to be rearing queens from them this year. They are clearly not the 'survivor' colony I had hoped for.

CCD has not been seen for 5 years in the US according to van Engelsdorp; the man who first named the problem. A well known master beekeeper in the US believes the problem was caused by four factors, which came together in 2006, but are still around today so could cause a similar problem in the future.

These are:

Viral disease mediated by varroa, Poor honey bee nutrition, Big background levels of pesticide and a Shallow gene pool created by mass produced queens.

Some of these are American problems (mass produced queens and massive monoculture), but viruses and pesticides are a big problem everywhere.



BeeBase

BeeBase have this week notified all registered beekeepers of an outbreak of EFB in the Brighton / Lewes area. These notifications will be made to all beekeepers who have registered the location of their hives with BeeBase and where those hives fall within a pre-determined radius of a notifiable or serious disease or viral outbreak, or if the Asian Hornet has been identified as being found in the area.

It is most important that all beekeepers register their hive with BeeBase in order to receive such notifications, please visit the website at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com> and register.

FOR SALE

National Hive complete with floor, brood box, 2 supers, crown board and roof and comes with good tempered bees. Best and sensible offers please.

Contact Jean Harris on 01273 556008



Feral Colony. Photo by Amanda Millar



Bee Jacket with B&L Logo. Photo by Norman Dickinson

A Promise of CAKES REQUIRED + help on stall

**For FESTIVAL OF BEES
At Heathfield
SATURDAY 20th MAY**



Please inform

Hilary osmans.home@btinternet.com 01273 813045

of your intention to donate or help on the stall. Thank you

Divisional Diary 2016/7

Outdoor meetings: Meetings are on Saturdays and Sundays. Unless otherwise, stated a 1.30pm start for beginners will be followed by a general meeting at 2.30pm. All meetings advertised will be weather permitting. Location maps are on the website in the member's section.

Summer Programme

Out apiary meetings

~~Sat 22nd April: Grassroots – Comb change and bee selection with Amanda Millar~~

Sun 14th May: Woodside, Woodingdean - Hive Splits / Swarm Control with Bob Curtis

Sun 4th June: Newick – Queen rearing / Apideas with Heather McNiven

Sat 17th June: Preston Park – Housing a swarm and top bar hives with Philip Else

Sun 2nd July: Cooksbridge – Queen rearing with Ian White

Sat 15th July: Barcombe – Taking supers off with Heather McNiven

Sun 16th July: The Big Park – Topic to be advised with Sue Taylor

Sun 10th Sept: Grassroots – Preparing hives for winter with Amanda Millar

For your diary

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

Sat 20th May - Sussex Festival of Bees, Heathfield Community College.

8th to 10th June - South of England Show, 50th anniversary of this great show.

Sat 5th August - Rottingdean Fair.

Sun 3rd Sept – Social BBQ at Heather McNiven's.

26th to 28th Oct - 86th National Honey Show, Sandown Park Racecourse, KT10 9AJ.

Sat 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

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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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