

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Newsletter



June 2017

Editor: Norman Dickinson

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

Next out apiary meeting on 4th June in Newick

Queen rearing / Apideas with Heather McNiven

Sussex Beekeepers Association Festival of Bees, 20th May at Heathfield

The annual Sussex Beekeepers Association Festival of Bees was again held at Heathfield Community College on Saturday, 20th May 2017. This was well attended by both beekeepers and non-beekeepers alike, partly due to an extensive advertising campaign. In addition to the various Trade stands that normally attend, there were stands representing the National Bee Unit, The Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Blackbee Forge and bee cosmetics by David and Elizabeth Ready, amongst others. Bob Smith gave an excellent lecture on "Really Getting to Grips with Swarm Control" with Jonathan Coote giving his usual live bee demonstration out in the grounds. Inside the venue there were two demonstration hives and the next generation of beekeepers were catered for with the Children's Corner along the hallway.

As has become the norm, Brighton and Lewes provided a large selection of cakes and liquid refreshment (of the non-

alcoholic type) all of which were sold out by mid-afternoon. Other SBKA divisions provided sandwiches and hot dogs. The Main Event was of course the auction where various items of beekeeping equipment were auctioned off as well as a number of live bees (in nucs and not loose!)

A reporter from ITV Meridian News was there to report the event, interviewing several beekeepers and covering a variety of topics. The report can be viewed by following this link <http://www.itv.com/news/meridian/update/2017-05-20/beekeepers-try-to-take-the-sting-out-of-falling-numbers-of-vital-wildlife/>

Our thanks must go to the SBKA Committee for organising an excellent event together with the various SBKA Division members (and family) who were involved both on the day and beforehand, to make this Festival a huge success. It must be remembered that all involved are volunteers who give up their spare time and for this we thank them.



Last Meeting 14th May with Bob Curtis - Hive splitting & swarm control

Hot, sunny and nice calm bees, just the sort of day to enjoy beekeeping. There was a good turnout of 20 or so enthusiastic members both new and experienced. We moved a colony from a Maisemore polynuc into a brood box, to which a super was added the following day. The colony came from a prime swarm collected on 23rd April and put onto wax foundation and now has 10 frames of brood. A second caste collected on 28th April was on a 6 frame Nuc and eggs were visible, this Nuc is also used as an incubator for collected queen cells which were kept in queen cages, of the six cages incubated on three eventually hatched. We then moved onto to do a shook swarm. This hive had a lot of old comb, chalk brood and bald brood, and lots of queen cells, so the aim was to start with a fresh slate and nice clean comb. A clean floor and brood box with new frames of foundation was moved into the position of the original hive, with a queen excluder between brood and floor. The old frames were then shaken off into a four frame

gap in the middle of the brood, each frame was checked for the queen, but she was not seen. The hive had an almost full super, this was left on, it will be checked in a few days to see if it needs feeding. The following week no wax had been drawn and the bees were in the super, so I remove the super and put on a contact feeder, two days later they were still clustered under the roof, so I suspect the Queen was killed in the shaking off process or she had just swarmed. I will introduce a mated Queen and see what happens.

We also went through how to fill and use an Apidea and showed several which were in the process of being mated. Checking a few days later most had mated Queens, but one Queen had disappeared, so she was replaced by a newly hatched Queen.

Report by Bob Curtis



Amanda advises

After a topsy-turvy spring I can hardly believe that the main honey flow could start in a couple of weeks. I have already seen buds on the blackberry and this hot weather, after rain, will bring them on. There is little likelihood of a June Gap this year now unless it becomes very dry.

With monitoring mites, queen cells, ensuring they have plenty of space and raising queens from my best colonies there will be little free time for me this month. Remember to leave off the queen excluder if putting foundation immediately above as it can act as a barrier to expansion. Return it when they have drawn out a frame or two, making sure your queen is below. This week I have been busy rescuing tree bumblebees in bird boxes from people who cannot be persuaded to leave them, and collecting swarms. One Bumblebee box required 5 visits, as I discovered that, unlike honeybees, bumbles are quite happy spending a warm night away from the nest, requiring another box to be put in place to catch the strays. I also found that modern boxes can be poorly made with holes on the floor so had a car full of angry bumbles. The second collection went more smoothly and on both I persuaded the home owner to shut them up at 10pm and leave them at their front door so I did not have to be without my glass of wine with dinner and could collect at my leisure next morning! Both seem to have established and are busy flying.

My next adventure, was a swarm in a postbox set into a wall; a des res indeed and a first for me. The postman was there to meet us with the key, but for some reason no one had left any letters in this usually popular letterbox! They had been there for several days and had started to build comb with a few eggs and many were out foraging. They were scooped out and shovelled into a box and the postbox was smoked heavily to drive out any remaining. The entrance and keyhole were then taped over. Two and a half hours later they were still returning from foraging although it was clear from the Nasanov fanning that we had the queen. So we cut our losses, took the box away and I decided to return later for the stragglers. At 7.30am next morning, after a night of rain, the stragglers were in a surprisingly large, tight cluster and easily filled an ice cream tub. Leaving about 4 which I could not catch (remind me to take a net next time). They went to join the rest in their new hive. Meanwhile the few hundred which had escaped at my friend's while we had lunch on the day before had also clustered and were duly collected and also re-joined their mum in the hive. I fed them the following day. They were very docile bees throughout and with a mated queen should soon settle down. Someone (I hope!) must be kicking themselves that they let them swarm away. I hope I don't get called out to the small casts which will probably come out in a week's time because the queen cells were not thinned. Please check for queen cells and act appropriately; while it is fun watching bees gather all morning, I can ill spare the time and it is less fun driving from Hurstpierpoint to Edburton

twice, to Newick twice, to Ditching three times in two days to get them all settled. I checked them today, five days later, and found and marked the laying queen who had a couple of frames of eggs, and were occupying 5 or 6 seams. (See photos of the swarm collection elsewhere. Ed).



Don't forget that if you collect a swarm, it is a perfect time to knock off the phoretic varroa mites by your preferred method, before they have sealed brood in the colony. My preferred method is icing sugar (as most of you know by now!). My new swarm only dropped 7 mites so they are off to a good start.

My feral colony rescued last October has successfully superseded their old queen and I saw the new one who is laying well with lots of eggs and larvae. She must have mated on one of the two possible days which were warm enough in the otherwise mostly cold weeks before, and she did not drop any mites today. That's both supercedure's and two of my three artificial swarms with mated queens now. This week we are having a heatwave, it appears, and I hope the queens in all my Apidea will mate too.

Research Item:

The Neonic pesticide thiamethoxam has been demonstrated to cause bees to have impaired flying ability.

Varroa bombs. Research by van Engelsdorp finds that the mite ridden bees from 'no-treatment' neighbouring beekeepers who allow their colonies to collapse or collapsing feral colonies, can be found in colonies up to 2-3 km radius. This and the robbing out of these dying colonies by our stronger colonies can result in 'varroa bombs' resulting in massive varroa spikes in a few days which can be fatal to our colonies. All my apiaries were 'bombed' last October, having kept the mites low all summer and early autumn. I think I was also bombed in the Burgess Hill Divisional apiary this spring too as they have all had a spike and a single icing sugar treatment on the queenless half of a split dropped 880 mites! I have removed over 2500 mites from that colony in the last few weeks. My request is; for goodness sake monitor and treat your colonies before they collapse. If they are dying or going to collapse; kill them to prevent the time bomb from harming your neighbouring beekeepers' bees.

Photo Corner



Amanda collecting the "post box" swarm and hiving them. See "Amanda Advises" on Page 3



*One of Amanda's honey bee stealing nectar from a hole in the side of a comfrey flower together with a Cuckoo bumblebee *Bombus rupestris**



Connie Sturt has sent these photos of a swarm collection from the Caffyns Volkswagen Brighton forecourt

New Regional Bee Inspector

The new Regional Bee Inspector for the South East Region, which includes East and West Sussex, is Sandra Grey. Sandra can be contacted by email at sandra.grey@apha.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone on 07775 119430.

Diane Steele is the Seasonable Bee Inspector for our region and can be contacted by email at diane.steele@apha.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone on 07775 119452.

These details can also be found on the back page of the monthly newsletters.

The "Flow Hive" Experience by Colleen Leatherdale

In recent years, like many other people, I had become aware of the plight of the hard working honey bee. Watching the little ladies hard at work in the flower beds of my garden I happened to mention to my husband Bob that I wouldn't mind keeping bees.

On my next birthday I received a gift voucher for a beekeeping course! Crikey, this looks serious I thought nervously as I looked through the itinerary.

The course started in the Spring, a mixed group of people, all with a common enthusiasm for the honey bee in one way or another and a team of knowledgeable and enthusiastic beekeepers to tutor us. The weeks went by and we learnt about the anatomy of the bees, their biology, beehives and equipment and enjoyed fun practical sessions putting together hives from kits and making up frames. The course continued on taking us through the various stages of bee husbandry through the year. After each session my husband would ask how things were going and he too began to take a firm interest in the humble honey bee as we became aware of just how truly amazing bees really are. By May it became apparent that if we wanted to have bees this year we had better get onto locating some and also get a hive in which they could live.

Whilst researching hives, Bob came across information and videos about a new fangled, 'state of the art' in honey collection "**Flow Hive**"

He convinced me that as we were starting from scratch then this would really be worth a try. Next thing I know he had ordered the Flow Hive and although it was designed in Australia, it would arrive from America. From then on things kept arriving through the post for me, Beesuit, Bee videos, gloves, books etc. Bob had really gone into this bee lark!! Bees, it appeared, were much harder to come by. All the major suppliers had already sold out as orders had been placed the previous year! After much searching we managed to find a gentleman beekeeper who was retiring and selling his Langstroth hives and bees. This was great news for us as the Langstroth hives were apparently compatible with the dimensions of a Flow Hive. When we went to collect our hive, it transpired that the gentleman had three for sale, so true to form, in for a penny, in for a pound, Bob bought all three!! Needless to say, we were very nervous novices driving home with three hives full of bees in our little van.

The course continued on, bonding over our love of bees and helped no doubt by the regular occurrence of homemade cakes and tea which had become a staple on the course.

A 'bee Safari' was held where we spent a day visiting each others apiaries and learnt a huge amount under the expert tutorage of Keith and Malcolm.

The time had come to collect honey and that day the course was hosted by Bob and myself, as to be honest, we really wanted some help!! (Also I had heard that honey

extraction could be the cause of many a divorce between couples) so safety in numbers!

We had honey in the standard Langstroth hive and also in our Flow Hive. It was a good opportunity to do a "compare and contrast"

On the day Keith and Malcolm arrived in a transit van carrying the equipment needed for honey collection. Out came the enormous honey spinner which was carried by two people into the kitchen, then the uncapping tray, buckets, sieves uncapping forks and a heat gun!! The kitchen floor was duly covered in newspaper and the work surfaces covered in cling film to protect from the inevitable sticky mess. The various bits and bobs of equipment placed ready for the procedure. The Langstroth super, which had been cleared of bees 48 hours prior using the portabee escape, was brought to the house. Care was taken not to be followed by any bees and all doors and windows were closed for fear of the bees finding out we had stolen their honey coming to wreak revenge on us! We started by uncapping the honey in the frames, trying different methods, large knife, uncapping fork and then Keith brought out his heat gun. For a moment I thought I was in luck and he was going to help with some decorating that needed doing, but then he fired the heat gun at the wax capping and we all watched in amazement as it melted away exposing the glorious honey.

After the somewhat messy business of uncapping, the frames were placed into the honey spinner. Three of us steadied the spinner as one of our team reinacted a gym workout as he spun the frames round and round. Golden threads of honey were thrown out against the walls of the spinner and we all watched in amazement. The frames were then rotated and spun again. Round and round went the frames and hotter and hotter we got as we spun, until an amount of honey gathered like golden treasure in the bottom of spinner. At the foot of the spinner was placed a honey bucket with a double sieve. The spinner was opened and the honey began to flow silently through the sieve into the honey bucket. With the excitement and chatter of the group, it was a short while before someone noticed that the cap on the honey bucket was left slightly open and honey was oozing out onto the newspaper covering the floor. We felt a little foolish as this is exactly what Keith had told us to be careful of and not do!! This had been hot work and it was getting quite steamy in the kitchen with all these bodies so we opened the door to let in some fresh air. Oh my goodness, major panic when a bee flew in. Visions of us being attacked by a swarm angry bees coming to retrieve their honey filled our heads as we quickly closed the doors. Regrettably the bee was dispatched to a better place, but it was a case of her or us!! Finally, with honey in the bucket, a successful honey extraction was deemed to have been obtained from the Langstroth hive.

Next to the Flow hive. Are you bringing the super down to the kitchen? asked one of the group. "No" said Bob as he gathered together his equipment to extract the honey from

The "Flow Hive" Experience continued

the Flow Hive. He took with him a one litre jug, a small square of cling film and the lever to operate the Flow Hive mechanism. Leaving the Flow Hive in situ we removed the window on the back of the hive which exposed the cartridges containing the honey. Next a small plastic tube about 3" long was inserted into the bottom of cartridge and a jug placed underneath the tube then cling film was wrapped around the tube and over the jug to cover any exposed areas. The flow hive lever was inserted and twisted. This process broke the seal on the honey stores and gradually a slow and steady flow of clear golden honey travelled down the tube and into the jug. The bees, totally oblivious to what was happening carried on their business going in the hive at the front whilst we extracted the honey from behind. After about 30 minutes the jug was full with the most clear and beautiful honey. This was from one cartridge of the flow hive, leaving 5 more to be taken at another opportunity. The plastic tube was removed and the

back of the hive replaced again. We returned to the house and poured the honey straight into the jars. The only thing to wash up was the jug and the 3" plastic tube.

Meanwhile in the garden the team were washing out the honey spinner, the uncapping tray, the bucket and the sieves.

Heathers face said it all when her jaw dropped open and said "well, that's just blown normal honey extraction out of the water, I mean, WHY WOULD YOU!!??"

Each method delivered a wonderful end product by equally diverse methods but we are left thinking. The Flow hive is initially an expensive outlay but ultimately saves time and effort and doesn't disturb the bees. Also in the long run you are not paying out for the expensive equipment required for the honey extraction in the traditional way. So for a "newbee" starting out, would the cost difference in the end really be that different?

Topical Tips courtesy of Malcolm Wilkie High Weald Division of the SBKA

Here are a few ideas for anyone who has just started keeping bees or has only been keeping bees for one or two years. It will help you plan for the season ahead. Perhaps also a reminder for those of you who have kept bees for a longer time.

Essential

Apiguard (a type of thymol gel) to treat colonies in August for varroa

An eke for each colony (to apply the Apiguard). If you are good with your hands you can make one yourself

Super frames and wax foundation (in the hope your bees will make you some honey) Make up the frames but don't add wax until you are ready. Keep the wax indoors in a dry but cool place but not near a heat source. Under a spare room bed is ideal.

A contact feeder. Everyone should have one. This is the feeder with the fine mesh covering a central hole. To use you need to have an empty super placed on top of the crown board.

2 Queen clips. Make sure the spring works really well. If in doubt ask Helen or Keith

A spare hive tool. As brightly coloured as possible

What would be good

A polystyrene nucleus box. Size i.e. ordinary national, deep national, commercial, WBC. The owner of a nucleus box can get themselves out of so much trouble. Every new beekeeper should have one. They are not that expensive

A plastic rapid feeder for each colony. Never buy wooden; they leak and that causes robbing. Make sure the feeder you are buying is the right size for your hives!

What I would be cautious about buying

Bad quality equipment in any of the auctions

A honey extractor in an auction that does not work. Why do they allow them to go into the sale?

A colony of bees without a Queen. How can beekeepers allow a beginner to waste their money in this way?

A colony of bees on the wrong sized frames for the hive type you have purchased. Only a strong colony can be shook swarmed.

If you are thinking about buying bees at least check on the Internet what price a colony or nucleus usually is going for. Don't pay a lot more than you need to pay. Don't get carried away by the fact the bees are being auctioned.

As far as equipment to make increase is concerned, far better to wait until October and get the equipment at the national honey show, or wait until one of the autumn sales and buy the equipment at a fraction of the price at that moment (unless you have a strong colony and will have to divide it to stop swarming). But a nucleus box would get you out of this difficulty. Remember most beginners who manage to buy a whole colony at this time of year lose most of them in a swarm about a week after they have bought them. Your choice, but not having the possibility of dividing a colony will get you into trouble. Beginners you are warned.

Beginners meetings at Barcombe Apiary 7th & 14th May

Brighton & Lewes have for the first time started to run beginners only days at Barcombe Apiary, where the intention is to show new beekeepers how to inspect a hive and what to look for plus also to demonstrate to them the making up of brood and super boxes together with the frames.

A group of eight beginners attended the 7th May session with a group of six attending on 21st May. There is a further beginners afternoon scheduled for 28th May.

Our thanks go to Heather for demonstrating the hive inspections, Bob Curtis and Ian White for demonstrating the making up of hive component parts and Mary King for providing light refreshments.



Bee Sunday at Linklater Pavilion, Lewes. Report by Hilary Osman

Brighton and Lewes Beekeepers were invited to the LINKLATER PAVILION in Lewes, and having lived in this area for some 30 years I didn't know what this was. It was built in 2010 just a stone throw away from the centre of Lewes and a local nature reserve on the edge of the railway land. It covers about 40 hectares and regularly holds meetings - an example of nature and people working together.

So, Heather and I turned up on a glorious sunny day with an observation hive, local honey and candles. There were other tables including bumble bee information, wild flowers which are loved by bees and a table to build an insect home.

The biggest draw of course was the observation hive and Heather spoke and drew in the crowd of visitors informing them the wonders of a honey bee. If they were not keen on the bee beforehand they seemed to, after they had left our table that afternoon.

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 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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