

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Newsletter



September 2017

Editor: Norman Dickinson

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

Next out apiary meeting

Sun 10th September - Preparing hives for winter with Amanda Millar @ Grassroots

Rottingdean Fair 5th August. Report by Norman Dickinson

As in previous years, Brighton and Lewes manned a stall at the annual Rottingdean Fair in the picturesque Kipling Gardens, which is adjacent to Rudyard Kipling's home, where we had a prime position close to the entrance to the garden. Whilst primarily an education function, we also had lots of local honey and products of the hive for sale and did a very brisk business. All of the honey on sale also had taster pots available for the public to try and it was surprising how many people said that it tasted much better than that sold in supermarkets, and so it should be!

The demonstration hive proved, as usual with these events, to be extremely popular, with some people spending over five minutes just watching the bees and trying to find the Queen with her identifying yellow dot. There were the usual comments with some worried that the bees might escape and the reassurances given by us that they were perfectly safe.

We had a number of enquiries from potential members, who were also directed to our web page where details of our winter meetings in Lewes are available. Hopefully, we shall see some of these at our meetings. The weather generally stayed very pleasant throughout the day, that is until we were about to pack up when it absolutely bucketed down, so everything was packed up under the gazebo until finally the rain subsided enough to clear site.

Thanks must go to Bob Curtis, Ian White, Pat Clowser, Sue Taylor and Judith New for manning the stand and promoting B&L.



Photo by Bob
Curtis

Amanda advises

How quickly the seasons turn; it is now damp and cloudy and some leaves are turning brown; bee populations are reducing brood although still active in the warmth. All seem to be in robbing mode and as soon as I open my honey shed door or garage where my licked supers are stored they are in there sniffing around. I am careful to cover the frames with cover cloths when opening hives and when I do icing sugar treatments I stuff a cloth at the back to prevent the wasps and robbers messing up the insert drop. Be especially careful not to drop any wax or syrup on the ground. If you start feeding, do the first one in the evening and try to do them all at the same time to minimise the excitement it causes. I must put my wasp traps up.

I had several frames of stores with honey/syrup which I removed in the spring before putting on the honey supers. Unfortunately, last month the wax moth found them so I decided rather than give them back whole to the colonies they came off, (which did not have suitable frames to remove to make space in any case) I would scratch the cappings and put them over an open crownboard for them to clean up and take the stores down, they made short work of them, less feeding for me to do. Bees and wasps could smell it though and lots clustered round the top super, fortunately well away from the entrance until it got dark, (the colony was on a brood and a half plus a super of honey). All my entrances are 5.5mm high and less than 10cm long so I think they can all defend themselves from other bees but having seen a hornet hovering in front of a hive today, so many wasps and with unsettled weather and reduced traffic, I will probably put a bit of sponge in to reduce them to 5cm.

In September the varroa treatment should be completed and feeding, if necessary, completed by the end of the month. It is best to use full strength syrup (2:1) in rapid feeders, to top up to the amount they need for winter, 30-50lb depending on colony size, having thoroughly assessed how much they already have. Over-feeding will cause them to fill the space the queen needs for laying. Most of my colonies have fairly heavy supers, except swarms and nucs. My angry colony was as good as gold the next time I looked they must have heard me threatening to requeen them, so I did not have to. My four year old queen has been superseded without any reduction in brood. Perfect! The feral swarm I collected last October has built up well, is now on three supers, (the rescued comb was a better size for shallow frames) but has collected no surplus honey and will need feeding, but looks very healthy and is dropping virtually no mites. But two other colonies have been messing around losing their queens, replacing introduced queens, queen cells failing, virgins not laying or lost on mating flight and now have no brood. When I looked yesterday one had become drone laying workers so threw them out on the ground but today they were still clustering on the hive stand so had to drown them and the other I will

merge with a queenright apidea this week before it goes the same way. So a bit of a mixed year but generally I am happy with the results; lots of honey, no virus outbreaks, queens mated well and the quality of my stock is improving through selection, and most are reasonably good tempered, given that it is a compromise between health and temper, and I seem to have ended up with more colonies than I started with – again!



I shall put on the insulation I use over the crownboard shortly and will give them all a final health inspection. Currently my colonies are low in mites; those which had brood breaks in the summer benefitting from a few dusting sessions then, two or three needed about three weeks of dusting and only the four largest intact colonies, required Apiguard. They seem so distressed with Apiguard, clustering at the entrance - see photos with and without Apiguard - that I only gave it to those dropping more than about 150 at the first assessment dust in August. The ones with Apiguard dropped about 1000 mites in the first week, (twice that for one at the divisional apiary), it is easier than dusting but in addition to their visible distress, I cannot rescue any of the stores for cooking at any future point.

I was pleased to have got all my supers off before the bulk of the Ragwort came into flower, there seems to be a lot round me at the moment. The ones with bright orange pollen have probably been visiting Ragwort. It makes unpleasant honey but the bees don't seem to mind.

I trust you all got a decent honey crop, better than the last two years. I must now check though all the supers, clean off excess propolis, and put them a few at a time in an old deepfreeze as I spotted some wretched wax moth flying in my garage this week. Then they will be stored in a beeproof stack, checked every month that there is no sign of wax moth. I have several supers of foundation which they did not draw in the end, so will probably stack with acetic acid for a week and after ventilating, wrap in polythene to keep fresh for next year.

Something else we can do early this month to help the bees is to plant a load of crocus bulbs and look round the garden to see what is in flower to encourage for next year, to provide a bit of late pollen. I have wild scabious, borage, Verbena bonariensis and echinacea still in flower, the sedum and asters will be in flower before long. Pruning back my salvias and nepeta should produce a second flush of flower.



Brighton & Lewes stand at the Rottingdean Fair

Photos by Bob Curtis



Photos by Amanda Millar

As referred to in Amanda Advises

Pesticides could wipe out bumblebee populations, study shows

A controversial pesticide can potentially wipe out common bumblebee populations by preventing the formation of new colonies, research has shown.

The neonicotinoid chemical thiamethoxam dramatically reduces egg-laying by queen bumblebees, say scientists.

Predictions based on a mathematical model suggest this could result in the total collapse of local populations of the wild bees.

Lead researcher Professor Nigel Raine, from the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, said: “Bumblebee queens that were exposed to the neonicotinoid were 26% less likely to lay eggs to start a colony.

“A reduction this big in the ability of queens to start new colonies significantly increases the chances that wild populations could go extinct.”

In 2013 a two-year temporary ban on the use of neonicotinoids on flowering crops was imposed throughout the European Union due to claims the nicotine-related chemicals can harm pollinators. Currently the ban remains in place while it is under review.

Environmental campaigners want to see a permanent ban extended to all crops, while farmers have warned this could lead to crop losses and a return to older, more harmful pesticides.

One argument against the pro-ban lobby has been that most neonicotinoid research has focused on honeybees and ignored the important contribution to crop pollination made by wild bees, including bumblebees.

The new study exposed *bombus terrestris* bumblebee queens to thiamethoxam in spring, when the insects emerge from hibernation and prepare to lay their first eggs.

Roughly half of a population of 300 bees were fed syrup laced with the pesticide at levels similar to those found in wild pollen and nectar.

Egg-laying behaviour and death rates were observed for 10 weeks.

The research, published in the journal *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, showed that queens exposed to the pesticide laid 26% fewer eggs than those that were not exposed.

A mathematical model was then used to predict what such a rate of decline might mean in the real world.

The effect on population dynamics “dramatically increased” the chances of local extinction, the scientists found.

Prof Raine said: “When a queen is going to set up a colony, she will secrete wax and form it into containers for nectar and pollen.

“She will then begin to lay her eggs and sit on them like a bird ... these spring queens represent the next generation of bumblebee colonies. This study shows that neonicotinoids could be having a devastating effect on wild bumblebee populations.

“We urgently need to know more about how pesticides could be affecting other species to make informed decisions about the risks associated with using these chemicals.”

Press Association - Reproduced from the Guardian Newspaper August 2017



Photo: Nic Hamilton
Photographic / Alamy

A queen bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*) is covered in pollen as it emerges from a crocus flower.

Snippets of Information

A timely reminder...

The Brighton & Lewes Bee-keepers summer “get together” is a BBQ hosted by Heather McNiven at her home - Stonecroft, Lower Station Road, Newick, East Sussex.BN8 4HU

No hives opened but much bee talk, questions, answers and discussions will be on the menu also.

We are meeting 12-4, eating at 1pm and you are welcome to bring those long suffering partners who have helped you through out the year, children too.

Please can you acknowledge this by emailing Heather by telling her whether you are coming – or not, so she can estimate food required. Please reply to heathermcniven@btinternet.com

Also, if coming, please say if veggie...

If wet, then we will be indoors, no problem.

The National Bee Unit (NBU) has added an autumn management checklist on their website to help beekeepers to successfully over winter your colonies. This information can be found on the front page of their website in the “Recent NBU News” section and can be viewed at <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/News/news.cfm#190> Those who have reregistered with the NBU will already have received an automated email with this information, just another reason to register with the NBU.

Georgie Keate Article in 29th August 2017 edition of The Times newspaper.

Britain’s honeybee population will be decimated as a result of the “inevitable” arrival of Asian hornets by the summer’s end, conservationists warn.

The predatory species, which can wipe out 50 bees a day, is thought to have been introduced to Europe when several arrived in Bordeaux in boxes of pottery from China in 2004. Despite efforts to eradicate them, the hornets spread into Spain and Portugal.

Asian hornets were not sighted in Britain until last September in Gloucestershire, prompting the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to set up a three-mile surveillance zone. Although that nest was believed to have been contained, the Scottish government confirmed the discovery of a hornet in March before a second nest was found on Jersey in July. Islanders filmed the hornets attacking honeybees this month.

Conservationists now believe that nothing can stop the spread and said the government must act swiftly.

“It is going to be pretty disastrous for our honeybees,” Dave Goulson, professor of biology at the University of Sussex, said. “The concern about the Asian hornet is that its preferred prey is the honeybee. They actively seek out hives. When they’ve found one, they gather with other hornets and attack en masse.”

Professor Goulson said that the hornets’ arrival was “inevitable” towards the end of the summer. He said that a third of all crop pollination in the UK was done by honeybees. “They are essential to crop production in this country and the result could be fairly catastrophic.”

A quarter of all crops, including corn and barley, are pollinated by wind, but bees pollinate the rest, including fruit and vegetables.

Defra classed the discovery of Asian hornets in Gloucester last year as a civil emergency that posed “a serious threat to UK native bee colonies”.

The insects are slightly smaller than native hornets and pose no risk to humans beyond their sting.

Paul de Zylva, a Friends of the Earth campaigner, said: “Our wild bumble and solitary bees and colonies of managed honeybees are already under pressure from the loss of habitats and exposure to pesticides. The last thing they need is to be preyed on by an invasive species.”

A Defra spokesman said the department had staff “ready to go” and encouraged people to report sightings of any hornet they believed to be Asian.

SBKA Annual Convention

The annual Sussex Beekeepers Association Annual Convention will once again be held at the Uckfield Civic Centre on Saturday, 25th November 2017. This year we have six excellent speakers covering a wide range of subjects, some of which are bound to be of interest. The confirmed programme is as follows: -

9:00am	Registration and coffee	
9:30am	Dr John Feltwell	Dealing with the Asian Hornet
10:30am	Break	
10:50am	Roger Patterson	My Simple Approach to Bee Improvement
11:50am	Mike Williams	The Bee Sting and its effect on Humans
1:00pm	Lunch	
2:00pm	Nikki Gammans	Gardening for Bees and other Insect Pollinators
3:00pm	Break	
3:20pm	Bob Smith	Managing the Workers
4:30pm	Close	

Please note that timings may be subject to change.

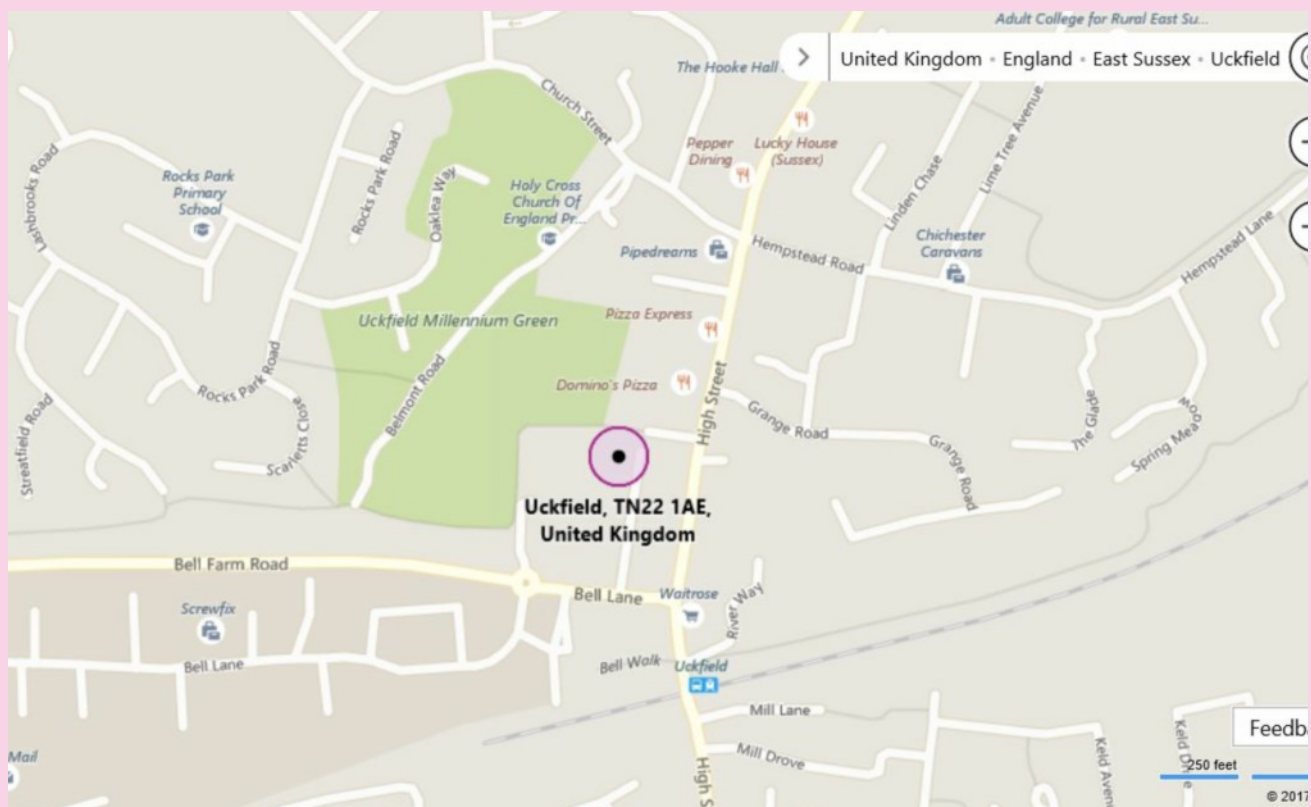
The cost of attending the Convention is £25 and includes a Buffet Lunch.

If you wish to book please telephone the SBKA Treasurer on 01424 838302 or email info@sbkaconvention.org.uk with the subject line Convention Booking. Please include your name, email address and postal address. If you have any special dietary requirements please include this as well. The Treasurer will email you with payment details. Payment is accepted via PayPal, BACS and cheque's.

In previous years, Northern Books have been present selling a wide range of titles covering just about everything to do with bees together with other interesting subjects, however we have not yet received confirmation that they will be attending this year. An announcement will be made in a later edition of this newsletter once confirmation is received.

The Civic Centre is located in Bellfarm Lane, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 1AE and there is ample car parking available, just ensure that you park in the upper long stay parking area.

Link to Uckfield Civic Centre - <http://www.uckfieldciviccentre.com>



Divisional Diary 2016/7

Out Apiary 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

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

Winter Programme

Indoor meetings

Wed 27th September: The Inspector Calls with David Rudland

Wed 18th October: The Asian Hornet with John Feltwell

Wed 15th November: Mead Making with Steve Gibson

Wed 17th Jan 2018: AGM followed by a quiz with Amanda and the B&L Annual Honey Show

Wed 21st Feb: The Effect of Bee Stings on Humans with Mike Williams

Wed 21st March: Skep Beekeeping with Chris Parks

For your diary

~~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.

Officers of the Division

President

Lionel Reuben

Chairman

Ian White

E: landa.pinehill@yahoo.co.uk

Vice-Chairman/Treasurer/Membership Secretary

Pat Clowser, 5 Wivelsfield Road, Saltdean, BN2 8FP

T: 01273 700404 E: patricia.blbees@hotmail.com

Secretary

Hilary Osman, Holly Tree Cottage, Norlington Lane,

Ringmer, BN8 5SH T: 01273 813045

E: secretary@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

Meetings Secretary

Mary King

Swarm coordination

Ian White

Webmaster

Gerald Legg, E: gerald@chelifer.com

Newsletter editor

Norman Dickinson, 34 Abergavenny Rd, Lewes, BN7 1SN

T: 07792 296422 E: editor.blbees@outlook.com

Librarian

Vacant

Out-Apiary Managers

Amanda Millar: - "Burgess Hill"

Heather McNiven: - "Knowlands Farm"

Sue Taylor: - "Big Park"

County Representatives

Bob Curtis, Ian White

Education coordinator

Amanda Millar

National Honey Show Representative

Norman Dickinson

Committee Members

Sue Taylor, Gerald Legg, Heather McNiven, Mary King

Contributions to our newsletter

Contributions, including photos, to the newsletter (max 900 words) can be sent, preferably by email, to the editor see panel above for details. Photos etc. for the website should be emailed to our webmaster, see panel above.

Regional Bee Inspector - Sandra Grey, Mobile: 07775 119430, email: sandra.grey@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Seasonal Bee Inspector - Diane Steele, Mobile: 07775 119452, email: diane.steele@apha.gsi.gov.uk