

# Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Newsletter



December 2017

Editor: Norman Dickinson

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

[www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk)

## Next winter meeting

**Wednesday 17th January 2018 - B&L AGM followed by Honey Show and Quiz**

## Winter meeting 15th Nov - Mead Making with Steve Gibson

Steve gave a most interesting and informative talk on the making of mead which was followed by a demonstration of the steps involved to make the mead. It was interesting to note that Steve only started beekeeping so that he could get plenty of cheap honey to support his hobby, as honey was considered very expensive to buy. The making of mead is probably around 8000 yrs old and was likely to have been discovered accidentally. There are several different types of mead including metheglin made with herbs and spices, melomel made with fruit and plain mead with no added ingredients. Steve described the equipment and ingredients needed to make mead and the key item is the demijohn complete with fermenting airlock, which allows the carbon dioxide produced during fermentation to escape without letting unwanted bacteria to enter the demijohn. A funnel is a must together with a siphon tube to "rack" off the mead at different stages. Not quite as important but of benefit is a hydrometer and glass/plastic cylinder used to measure the specific gravity (SG) which gives a fair assessment of the fermentation process. Sterilisation powder/liquid is a must and is required to sterilise the equipment before proceeding. Other ingredients include water, yeast and honey and can also use spices, herbs or fruit to enhance the flavour, brewers choice! Steve gave a demonstration of the various steps detailing how the mead was made, and whilst the mead was drinkable after 3 months, the longer you left it the better it would get. The talk ended with a tasting session of different meads that Steve had made, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



**The committee  
wishes all Brighton  
and Lewes members  
a very  
Merry Christmas  
and a Happy  
New Year**



## SBKA 2018 Spring Meeting and AGM

The SBKA 2018 Spring Meeting and AGM is being hosted by the High Weald Division on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2018 and will be held in the Broad Oak (Heathfield) Village Hall, TN21 8SS. High Weald are in the process of finalising the speakers and will be publishing full details in due course.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS NO  
MEETING SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER SO  
WE WILL SEE YOU ON 17<sup>th</sup> JANUARY FOR  
THE AGM, B&L HONEY SHOW AND  
AMANDA'S QUIZ.**

## B&L Annual Honey Show, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018

The annual B&L Honey Show will be taking place on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018 as part of the AGM evening. Now is the time to consider what you intend to enter, be it Jar(s) of honey, candles, wax, cake, biscuits or any bee related photograph. A full schedule together with an entry form is attached to the newsletter covering email.

### In the January 2018 edition

A report on the 2017 Sussex Beekeepers Association Autumn Convention held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2017 at the Uckfield Community Centre.

Contributions, both text or photos to the Editor on [editor.blbees@outlook.com](mailto:editor.blbees@outlook.com) greatly appreciated and should be sent before 20<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

### Essential Information

To ensure that your bees will not starve over winter, B&L are offering bulk purchase of Fondant, where £12.75p will buy you 12.5kg of this essential emergency winter feed. All requests should be made to Pat Clowser whose details are on the back page of the newsletter.

Whilst Heather McNiven would still like to resign the role of Barcombe Apiary Manager she has agreed to stay on for the time being, therefore we now seek an Assistant Apiary Manager to help Heather to run the apiary. This position is ideal for someone to “extract” knowledge from Heather to further their beekeeping skills and would ultimately lead them to taking over the apiary. Applicants should in the first instance contact Pat Clowser or Ian White for details.

Our last winter meeting on 21st March 2018 will be a talk by Chris Parks on Skep Beekeeping. For those who attended the SBKA 2016 AGM at Ringmer Village Hall will recall a most fascinating talk on the history of beekeeping in Britain and the ultimate when he passed round a huge animal horn of his own brewed mead. This talk on skep beekeeping will be one not to be missed. B&L invite members from other Divisions and Associations for which there will be a £1 admission fee. The meeting will be held at St.Thomas's Church Hall, 23 Cliffe High St., Lewes, BN7 2AH commencing 7:30pm

### Amanda's Wood Chip Appeal for B&L Grassroots Apiary

I am trying to replace the rotted wood chips at the Grassroots apiary with fresh ones to combat the growing number of nettles etc. If anyone could save a couple of sacks of chipping's when you do your pruning this winter I would be delighted. As I must first remove the existing stuff with its nettle, marestail and bindweed roots, a bit at a time, I am not quite ready for a trailer load yet but if anyone is able to leave sacks in the corner outside the gate I will use them as and when I make space. The gate is now padlocked so you will not be able to leave them inside the apiary. Contact Amanda on [amanda.millar.rf3@btinternet.com](mailto:amanda.millar.rf3@btinternet.com), or ring on 01273 833258 if you think you will have some available.

### B&L Membership Renewal

The B&L membership renewal is due on the 1st January 2018 and a copy of the renewal form is attached to the covering email for this newsletter. Completed form and subscription should be sent to Pat Clowser, full details are on the form. Please note that there is an additional tick box this year to confirm members registration on BeeBase, if you have not previously registered then please do so now.

## Amanda advises

There is little to do in December except checking that the hives have not blown over, or been damaged by woodpeckers, damp or vandalism and that the entrances are not blocked by dead bees. Put the insert in mid month for a week (or do an icing sugar dust to get a more accurate and rapid assessment) in order to assess the mite drop and decide whether oxalic acid treatment is necessary at the end of the month. Sussex University believe that if any sealed brood is removed just before doing an oxalic treatment, this will last for a full year. Do take appropriate personal safety measures and read thoroughly the dosage etc to prevent harm to yourselves and the bees.

On one colony at the Divisional apiary and one at home I found the icing sugar was not coming through well and discovered some dead bees on the mesh floor. These colonies had a lot of mites last month so this is probably a sign of varroa-induced viruses and are a warning that they may not make it through the winter. It has been quite mild at times though and pollen is still going in at the end of November.

Equipment can be cleaned, I still have a load of frames to scrape and boil up to sterilise. Mead and candles can be made, also any stored comb should be checked to nip any young wax moth larvae before it does too much damage. I shall be looking at my records to decide which colonies performed best this year and might be used for queen rearing next year.

As explained previously, I tried out an Apishield floor manufactured by Vita Bee Health this autumn and now have the results. This floor is primarily designed to trap Asian hornets but also wasps, robber bees and wax moth. It is intended to be in place from August to November. Instead of replacing the current floor (as otherwise I would have been unable to carry out icing sugar dusting), the Apishield floor was placed under the normal floor as suggested in a recent BBKA news. It was put in place on 31st August and removed 25th October, after about 8 weeks. From the second week in September the colony was unusually angry. There was a large build up of debris on and in the drawer which probably encouraged wax moth, of which I found at least 8 as larvae and pupae. There were also well over 100 varroa (some alive) in the draw debris and inside the drawer there were 465 dead worker bees and 1 dead drone, and 375 dead wasps, mostly Common wasps but some German, one or two were queen wasps but it was rather difficult to tell as they had all shrunk and decayed to varying degrees. I did blame their awful temper on the smell of dead and dying bees and wasps so close to them but unfortunately their temper has not improve much

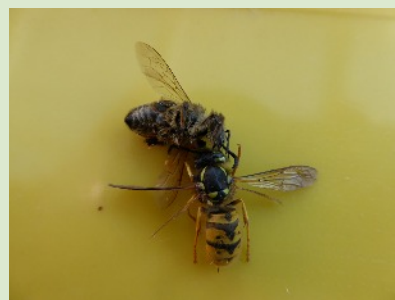
since it was removed about 4 weeks ago. Other aspects of the Apishield are that it is quite a complicated design in rather thin plywood and 8 weeks worth of debris took a bit of removing. I shall have to blow torch it rather carefully because of the plastic traps in the sides. It remains to be seen how effective it is against Hornets but I was disturbed by the number of bees killed. I am glad they only recommend one per apiary. I am not sure whether I shall use it next year, unless we get more Asian Hornet sightings.



The mild weather has seen a lot of lovely butterflies around and sunning themselves on my hives, see picture. But the wasps are also still around.



Outside the entrance of my apidea I found a dead bee and dead wasp locked together with the bee's jaws around the antenna of the wasp. Presumably the bee managed to sting the wasp. I wonder how many bees the wasp stung to death with its unbarbed sting before it was killed, there are not that many bees in an Apidea anyway. See picture.



### In the news

Michael Gove, not particularly noted for pro-environmental policy, has said the UK will back a total ban on Neonicotinoid pesticides in fields across Europe. Let us hope he keeps his word, and follows this through to an actual lasting ban. I have already reported on the research showing how garden centre plants are poisonous with pesticides. I read with horror today that bulbs are also drenched with neonics, so all those I planted this autumn may poison my bees, oh grief!

Have a Happy Christmas!



# 86th National Honey Show Report by Norman Dickinson

The 86<sup>th</sup> National Honey Show took place from 26<sup>th</sup> October to 28<sup>th</sup> October 2017 inclusive at Sandown Park racecourse near Esher in Surrey and was well supported with 1,863 entries from 237 exhibitors, and we are pleased to announce that Brighton & Lewes member Bob Curtis was awarded 1<sup>st</sup> place in Class 98: Black and white Print and 3<sup>rd</sup> place in Class 96: Colour Print, not close up. Many congratulations Bob.

This was the second year that the show has been held at Sandown Park and it is relatively easy to get to both by public transport and private car. Parking was clearly signposted and as long as one entered Portsmouth Road into the satnav as opposed to the venue post code this takes you to the main car park in front of the venue.

The Show was officially opened on Thursday afternoon by Tracey Rusbridge, the Regional Business Development Executive at the Jockey Club, who were one of the official sponsors of the Show, together with the Rev Francis Capener, the National Honey Show President. I was unable to attend on Saturday for the Prize Awards Ceremony but can report that His Excellency Orville London, High Commissioner for the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago presented the cups and trophies, following which the show closed at approximately 4.30pm.

Having reported on the opening and closing parts of the Show, the most important thing was the bit in the middle, the actual show itself. Throughout all three days of the Show a full schedule of lectures and workshops was available, most of which were booked in advance of the Show. In addition to the main lecture programme there were four lectures on the Saturday for beginners and less experienced beekeepers together with a series of six Bee Craft research lectures presented by a number of Universities. There were 34 different workshops spread over the 3 days, ranging from microscopy through Making Honey Beer and Mead Making and other products of the hive to Swarm Control, Honey Bee Health Certification, Bee Disease Identification and Queen Rearing. The Honey Show 2017 lectures are all available to view on the National Honey Show YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiOtlebcpY0Zqma0H5wLYQ>, which you will need to subscribe to. Videos from previous years lectures are also available and are free to view.

A large area was set aside for the Trade Hall where over 40 Trade Stands covering all aspects of bee keeping were in attendance, most of which had discounted prices for those purchasing at the Show. Not all trade stands though were selling goods, as there was the likes of the NBU, Bee Farmers Association, BIBBA and the Woodland Trust, to name but a few, giving out help and advice.

The Jockey Club Food Hall dispensed hot food, snacks and hot & cold drinks all day. Some said that the food prices were a touch on the high side, I had large cod, chips and mushy peas with a medium coffee for £11.00, and whilst I would agree that the prices were high, the quantity and quality of the food was very good and most importantly, was hot.

The judging of the Show entries was in full swing when I arrived around mid-Thursday morning and as to be expected, the show hall remained closed to visitors until the judging was complete, which was actually about 30 minutes after the formal opening of the Show. This gave me the opportunity to take a turn round the Trade Stands and then have a bite of lunch before attending the Opening Ceremony.

On entering the show hall, one was struck by the sheer number of entries and the diversity of the entries in each class. Who could imagine the range of types and colour of honey, from almost a crystal-clear honey to a dark almost black treacle coloured honey. The Sussex Class photo clearly (pardon the pun) demonstrates the spread of colours. One of the most impressive entries was Class 1, which called for 24 jars of honey of one, two, three or four kinds in equal numbers, which takes great skill to prepare and stage the honey. The other really impressive displays were in Class 16, where multiple “products of the hive” were displayed several tiers high up to a maximum height of 1.5M.

There was a very large entry in the various wax classes where there were rolled and moulded candles, wax sculptures, moulded wax works and figurines and there was even a bunch of wax flowers. Included were the blocks of wax ranging from one piece 454g in weight down to six 28g blocks. Other classes included frames of capped comb and cut comb, mead and metheglin, honey beers and honey vinegar, photographic and microscopy which also included DVD/Videos and essays, design, confectionary, junior classes and gift classes.

A number of SBKA Divisional members managed to get awards and a special mention must go to Becky Champion of Hastings and Rother for her two first places and a 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

Full list of awards for SBKA Divisional members as follows:-

<b>Class</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Class Description</b>	<b>SBKA Division</b>
96	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Bob Curtis	Colour Print, not close up.	Brighton & Lewes
98	1 <sup>st</sup>	Bob Curtis	Black and white Print	Brighton & Lewes
129	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Denise Cloutt	Tray Bake (gift)	Hastings & Rother
241	1 <sup>st</sup>	Becky Champion	Two Jars Light Honey	Hastings & Rother
242	1 <sup>st</sup>	Samantha Dennis	Two Jars Medium Honey	Hastings & Rother
242	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Graham Burgess	Two Jars Medium Honey	Hastings & Rother
244	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ben Pratt	Two Jars Naturally Crystallised Honey	Eastbourne
247	1 <sup>st</sup>	Becky Champion	One Frame of Honey suitable for extracting	Hastings & Rother
248	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Becky Champion	One Jar Clear Honey	Hastings & Rother
250	1 <sup>st</sup>	Samantha Dennis	Six 28g (1oz blocks) Beeswax	Hastings & Rother
252	1 <sup>st</sup>	Fern Burgess	Two Jars Honey (novice)	Hastings & Rother
252	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Graham Burgess	Two Jars Honey (novice)	Hastings & Rother
252	VHC	Malcolm Wilkie	Two Jars Honey (novice)	High Weald
252	HC	Harold Cloutt	Two Jars Honey (novice)	Hastings & Rother

VHC – Very Highly Commended

HC – Highly Commended

The Sussex Cups were awarded to the following SBKA Members:-

Lady Denman Cup - Becky Champion

Crawley Cup - Samantha Dennis

Berry Cup - Fern Burgess

Apologies for anyone in the SBKA who was awarded a placing and not mentioned above.

The Full Result by Class List can be found at <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/files/2017/Awards-By-Class-NHS2017.pdf> with the Cup Awards List at <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/files/2017/Award-List-Cups-NHS2017.pdf>

A series of photographs taken by the official Show photographer are available on Dropbox at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms1uirdzxp3sfe2/AACXoEQWYOSyInUB0xXKOoMga?dl=0>

Here's looking forward to the 87<sup>th</sup> National Honey Show to be held at Sandown Park on 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018. Further information will be available of the National Honey Show website <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/>, so watch that space.



Opening Ceremony by Tracey Rushbridge



Class 1 winning entry

**Photos by Norman Dickinson**



# National Honey Show - Photos by Norman Dickinson



Sussex  
Sponsored  
Classes

Class 96  
Colour  
Print  
(not close  
up)



Just one  
display of  
honey!





**Winner Class 16 - Decorative Exhibit**



**Winner Class 53 - Display of Beeswax Flowers**



**Winner Class 54 - Display of Beeswax, minimum 6 pieces**

## Spiders use UV trickery to hunt bees - Gerald Legg

**S**ome spiders are ambush hunters, but they neither use webs nor rely purely on the element of surprise. They reflect ultraviolet light, making the flowers where they live more appealing to the bees they prey on.

Felipe Gawryszewski at the Federal University of Goiás in Brazil and his team collected and studied individuals from 68 species of crab spider found in Australia, Europe and Malaysia. They discovered that multiple species had evolved a flower-based hunting strategy.

What's more, flower-dwelling crab spiders reflected more UV light than non-flower-dwellers. This appears to be effective, because we already know bees are more likely to visit flowers with UV - reflecting spiders perched on them.

It is not clear why bees are lured in, but one possibility is that they mistake the spiders for 'floral guides' – naturally bright spots on flowers that guide pollinators to land on them.

It is also possible that bees prefer certain colour patterns and that spiders are tapping into this, says Gawryszewski.

NewScientist 15 July 2017

## Bee Improvement for All - Report by Hilary Osman

'Bee Improvement for All' on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November held at Bucks Green, West Sussex.

On a cold Sunday morning we drove to Bucks Green outside of Horsham. Plenty of parking which was good, because they were expecting over 115 beekeepers who had signed up to attend the one day course. The hall was lovely and warm, which was encouraging as I have been to many a cold village hall.

Roger Patterson would be running the talks and known to many of us from previous winter meetings. He would like all of us to critically look at our bees and general beekeeping husbandry, and from this to improve and be productive of our own queens. This was shown by simple management techniques, observing the bees that we have, experience gained from when we first started and what the bees are telling us.

He spoke of the difference between swarm cells, supersedure cells, emergency cells and how these can be used efficiently and effectively.

We all need to plan, be critical , cull queens, but keep things SIMPLE. A bargain day out for £10





# Divisional Diary 2017/8

**Indoor Meetings:** 7:15 for 7:30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, October to March at Cliffe church hall, Lewes, unless otherwise stated. Members are invited to arrive early and assist in putting out chairs. Non-members are always welcome.

## Summer Programme

**Our summer programme of out apiary meetings will resume in the Spring of 2018**

## 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.

Sat 3rd March 2018 - Sussex Beekeepers' Association Spring Meeting and AGM, Broad Oak Village Hall.

Sat 19th May 2018 - Sussex Beekeeper Association Festival of Bees, Heathfield Community College.

**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

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Vacant

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Heather McNiven: - "Knowlands Farm"

### County Representatives

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### Education coordinator

Amanda Millar

### National Honey Show Representative

Norman Dickinson

### Committee Members

Sue Taylor, Gerald Legg, Heather McNiven, Mary King

## Contributions to your 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.

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