

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Newsletter



Volume 2 - February 2018

Editor: Norman Dickinson

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

Next winter meeting - Wednesday, 21st February 2018

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Mike Williams is unable to give his talk on the effect of bee stings on humans. Amanda has agreed to step in and will give a talk about Gardening for Pollinators, which I am certain will be most informative.

B&L 2018 AGM and Quiz Night - Report and photos by Norman Dickinson

The B&L AGM was well attended with 34 members attending. Ian White opened the meeting with the Chairman's annual report, which was a fairly up-lifting assessment of the past 12 months together with a vision of where he sees the division going in the future. Next on the agenda was the Treasurers Report given by Pat Clowser. She explained that there was a change to the way the accounts were being presented that would be in line with correct accounting principles and advised that Mr Cameron White had been overseeing the accounts for the past two years. A key decision taken by the Committee was that we would be offering members savings through the bulk buying of suitable items, i.e. honey jars, hive parts etc. The accounts did show a loss of £1,113.10p for 2017 as a result of passing benefits back to the membership. Amanda's report for Grassroots apiary indicated a reasonably successful year with four colonies on site with a 70lb honey crop bettering last year. Two training days were well attended with volunteers clearing weeds etc prior to one of the meetings. Help is still required for on-going grounds maintenance. One of the two bee tuition days is nearly fully booked, the other day has no taker so far with no interest from members wishing to take the Basic Exam or any of the Modules. The Big Park apiary in Peacehaven has been forced to close due to complaints of bee stings etc. over social media. A new local site is being investigated and looks promising. Heather McNiven manages the Barcombe site and was going to relinquish the role as it was getting too much for her, fortunately, Connie Sturt has offered to assist so Heather will continue. 2017 was a relatively quiet year with four Nationals and two WBC's jogging along. Honey yield was 80lb, not huge but sufficient for sales at local events that B&L attend. The final Agenda Item was the re-election of the existing Committee Members plus approval of a new member, Dominic Zambito. With there being no Any Other Business the AGM was brought to a close.

Whilst the Honey Show was being judged, Amanda presented an excellent quiz on all things bee related.



This was a fun activity albeit with a serious back-drop. Many of us scored very badly so we do need to re-read and re-learn about our bees, especially viruses, diseases and other things that can go wrong. Congratulations to Gerald Legg who managed to accumulate 22½ points.



B&L 2018 Honey Show Presentations Photos by Norman



Top Left: Bob Curtis receiving the Dickson Cup

Top Right: Trevor Hollingdale receiving the Novice Bowl

Left: Gerald Legg receiving the Honey Cake Salver
Congratulations to all three members.

B&L 2018 Annual Honey Show Report by Bob Curtis

This years B&L Honey Show, alongside the AGM and Amanda's Quiz had 53 entries from 10 members. Harold Cloutt again did a sterling job judging the honey, wax and baking and Bob Curtis judged the photographs. The number of entries was slightly lower than last year, but the standard was still very high, as can be seen from the results below. There were three trophies awarded:

The Dickson Cup for the highest number of points gained was awarded to Bob Curtis,
The Novice Bowl for the most points gained by a new B&L member to Trevor Hollingdale,
The Cake Salver for the best Honey cake to Gerald Legg.

Class	Description	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	VHC	HC	C
1	One 1lb Jar Clear honey	Bob Curtis	Ben Castle	Ben Castle	Gerald Legg	Trevor Hollingdale	
2	One 1lb Jar Naturally set honey	Sue Taylor	—	Hilary Osman			
3	Two 1lb Jars of similar honey	Trevor Hollingdale	Sue Taylor	Bob Curtis	Hilary Osman		
4	One Rolled Candle	Hilary Osman	Hilary Osman	Gerald Legg			
5	One Moulded Candle	Trevor Hollingdale	Trevor Hollingdale	Bob Curtis	Judith New	Hilary Osman	Sue Taylor
6	One 1oz block of wax	Bob Curtis	Trevor Hollingdale	Hilary Osman	Judith New	Sue Taylor	Hilary Osman
7	One Honey Cake	Gerald Legg	Judith New	Bob Curtis			
8	Six Honey Biscuits	Sue Taylor	Bob Curtis	Judith New			
9	A Bee related photograph	Hilary Osman	Amanda Miller	Sue Taylor	Judith New	Amanda Miller	Sue Taylor

Honey Show Photos by Bob Curtis



Amanda advises

Only a month to go before beekeeping starts again; time to make sure all our equipment is clean, there are some supers and frames ready to put on and some brood boxes and frames ready for the shook swarms and frame replacement which I always have to do on a few in the spring. You can leave putting the foundation in until the beginning of March to keep it fresh and fragrant. It will also be worth putting the insert in for a week at some point to see if they need a quick varroa treatment in March before the supers go on. Keep hefting the hives; the queens will be laying more now and the stores consumption will go up. If necessary use fondant until March when it will be warm enough for syrup, but don't over feed or they will just move it all into your new supers as the brood area expands.

On bright days check that all the colonies are flying, if not then you should investigate and bring indoors for cleaning if dead. One of mine which had the worst varroa bomb from elsewhere, in November died at the end of December. In spite of dusting throughout November and December and getting the mites down to single figures the virus damage was done and there were dead brood, nibbled cappings and dysentery. I may have to consider a quicker treatment such as MAQS next year instead of the slower, labour intensive but gentler icing sugar. The rest are all active and even my apidea on two storey's seems very vigorous. Apidea are normally untreatable, but last autumn I removed the polystyrene floor and sat them on some open mesh floor with a block at the back. (See picture taken 22nd January) This meant I was able to dust them and remove varroa, also they had some ventilation. In some winters they have become damp inside in warm humid winters and died.

So this month is a rush for me, getting the last of my recycled frames boiled, getting the garden weeded (weather permitting) ready for all the bee flowers I will want to plant, preparing for bee courses and bat care courses starting in Feb, that I hardly have time to stop and admire my snowdrops and crocus, some violets, celandines and hellebores all waiting for a bit of decent weather for the bees to be all over them. The *Viburnum tinus* and *V. bodnantense* still have white and pink flowers on respectively. I have seen a lot of bees out gathering water to dilute their stores, rummaging deep in the grass after rain. (See picture)



News and research

This has been a bit mixed this month. In early January a quarter of honey sampled in the UK still showed neonics contamination after a two year partial ban of these persistent chemicals. The residues were correlated with the area of oil seed rape grown nearby. This was down from half of

honeys contaminated a year or two ago. However, 88% of rivers have bee found to be contaminated by neonics, this is bad for freshwater life and all that depends upon it. It will continue to wash from contaminated farmland for years to come. Other research shows that neonics and poor nutrition act synergistically to kill 50% more bees than expected from the individual effects. Pesticides reduce their blood sugar levels. There is still a chance that neonics will be banned when the EU finally gets round to voting, supposed to be end of January but I have not heard anything yet. However, I think the ban we had did not include cereal crops so it will still be in the soil.

Gove is promising that the current unfair land and farming subsidies will be replaced with rewards for supporting the environment (but may not be in time to save our farmland birds which are still declining fast). May is talking about reducing plastics. I am fed up with words and want to see action!

Thornes, I see, are now selling Apivar, since it has been registered in the UK. For those unaware, Apivar has long been used in the US and France but not allowed in the UK. The active ingredient is an organophosphate, for goodness sake! There have been a number of human deaths from inhalation, skin contact and oral intake as low as 0.3g can kill us. It should not be used as a flea treatment on cats because of its toxicity. There appears to be a very high correlation between DMPF (dimethylphenyl formamide a breakdown product) and nosema levels, also treatment with Amitraz frequently led to supersedure of queens in one study, possibly because up to half the queens sperm becomes unviable.

There are also reports of varroa developing resistance in as little as three seasons in some places. It's residues and derivatives have been found in wax, pollen and bees, but apparently Amitraz does not survive long in honey - all well and good for US commercial Beekeepers - but the breakdown product DMPF, about which there is little or no toxicity data, is stable in honey for over 45 days. Amitraz acts synergistically with neonics making them 20 times more toxic to bees, with DMPF an even more effective synergistic. According to Scientific Beekeeping, one of its side effects may be to turn off the bee's immune system to other agricultural chemicals (see Amitraz: Red flags or red herrings? On Scientific Beekeeping website). While the big manufacturers are bound to promote it, I sincerely hope that none of us is mad enough to use it. It is a serious backward step to the health of our bees and environment.

The good news is that Thornes mention in passing that a new organic varroa treatment is under registration in Europe and will soon be available in UK, but they do not go into details.



A couple of snippets from Gerald Legg

Smell of death leads bees to remove corpses

Bring out your dead! Honeybees pick up dead or diseased nestmates and drag them out of the hive. Removing corpses protects against infection, which can spread like wildfire in densely packed hives.

"The honeybees work together to fight off disease," Says Allison McAfee at the University of British Columbia, Canada. But not all hives revoke their corpses. McAfee and her colleagues have been figuring out why this is. In a 2017 study, they discovered two pheromones, called oleic acid and beta-ocimene, which are only released by dead bee larvae. When they wafted these 'death pheromones' over honeybees, nerve cells in the antennae of corpse-removing bees were more active than those of other bees. This suggested that corpse removing bees were better able to smell the pheromones. Now the team has added the pheromones to healthy larvae. As expected, worker bees removed dosed individuals from the nest, and bees from corpse -removing colonies removed more larvae than those from other nests. The corpse-removing bees' ability to smell death could be down to two proteins on their antennae, OBP16 and OBP18. These are largely absent from bees that don't remove corpses. "These proteins grab onto the odour molecules, transport them to the neurons and stimulate them, leading to a sense of smell." Says McAfee. The research could allow us to selectively breed bees that make the two proteins, and hence remove their dead. Corpse-free hives are better at fighting off infections. In another 2017 study, the team selectively bred bees to express 13 proteins linked to corpse removal, including OBP16 and OBP18. After three generations, the colonies removed more of their dead, and were more resistant to several diseases.

NewScientist, 13th January 2018

A surprising number of animals exhibit handedness – bees included

It is the brain's infrastructure that appears to be largely responsible for handedness. A 2009 paper in Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B notes; 'Lateralisation of brain and behaviour refers to the fact that the hemispheres of the brain differentially control behaviour ... At the behavioural level, it is often expressed in side biases for motor output, perception and information processing.' Many animals show a slight tendency toward right-sidedness but much less than human 9:1 ratio. These include chimps, horses, some marsupials. In 2001 it was found that foraging bumblebees display handedness and tend to rotate in the same direction on successive inflorescence's, i.e. bumblebees exhibit a sidedness when they land on flowers. Now a study has found that honeybees show handedness when they had to fly an obstacle course, 'Obstacle Traversal and Route choice in Flying Honeybees: evidence for Individual Handedness.' The study showed that about 45 percent of the bees under test had a side preference, split evenly between right and left. The distribution of sidedness may help a colony fly efficiently through dense foliage – that some members insist on using smaller gaps could put an upper size limit on the group using the larger space. Thus keeping them from bumbling.

Bee Sides (abstract)

Steve Mirsky

Scientific American, February 2018

B&L 2018 Membership Renewal - FINAL REMINDER

The B&L 2018 membership renewal was due at the end of December and a copy of the renewal form was attached to the covering email for the January 2018 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.

This is a final reminder so if you wish to remain a member of the B&L, together with all of the benefits membership brings, including insurance cover and receiving this newsletter, then please renew now.

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: Gardening for Pollinators with Amanda Millar (Late change to programme)

Wed 21st March: Skep Beekeeping with Chris Parks

For your diary

6th to 28th Oct - 86th National Honey Show, Sandown Park Racecourse, KT10 9AJ.

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

Sat 24th February 2018 - WSBKA Annual Convention, Lodge Hill Centre, Watersfield, West Sussex.

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

8th April & 29th April - B&L Tuition days in Hurstpierpoint aimed at new beekeepers (and others!)

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.

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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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