

# Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Newsletter



Volume 8 - August 2018

Editor: Norman Dickinson

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION  
[www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk)

## Next apiary meeting Sunday 29th July at Grassroots

Amanda will be looking at methods of clearing bees from supers prior to removal, discussion of varroa treatment options and looking at the new Flow Hive super on one colony. **IMPORTANT** - We are unable to park near the apiary this time, please park in the layby on London Road, on the other side of the road to the lane leading to the apiary and walk down the lane to the apiary. If you have compromised mobility we may have one space for a car at the apiary, please ring Amanda on 01273 833258 to book it.

## Railway Land Festival - report by Norman Dickinson

**B**righton & Lewes were again invited to take a stand at the Railway Land Festival which was held on Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> July. At last years event, our pitch was in an open field about 150m from the main Pavilion and with a scorching hot day it was not pleasant for either the members manning the stand or for the bees in the observation hive. This year we were given a pitch against the main Pavilion which kept both us and the bees in shade.



**T**he new gazebo is larger than it's predecessor which means that we can set up using two tables and keeps the observation hive in a prominent and safe location. It also means that we can display more of our wares.

**T**he Festival officially opened at 11 o'clock, and whilst interest was slow to begin with it soon picked up and as is usual at these events, the observation hive proved to be most popular. However, Hilary

did bring along some "uncontained" bees which somehow had stuck to the underside of the hive. As can be expected it did "concern" a few people that there were loose bees flying, however most were trying to get in through the top ventilation holes and spectacularly a few bees did demonstrate the "wobble dance" much to the amusement of the visitors, most of whom had never experienced seeing the wobble dance. Throughout the 5-6 hours that we were in attendance we did not have a single person getting stung, so these were either well behaved bees or calm because of the hot weather. May have been different if the weather was stormy! All in all it was a most successful day, both from a sales perspective and the general interest from the public. Here's hoping that our next attendance at the Rottingdean Fayre on Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> August is as successful as this event was.



## Amanda advises

**W**e are being warned to be vigilant against the Asian hornet. But apparently they are going to use tiny electronic trackers to help find the nest; that should save some manpower and time locating nests.

**R**eassuring to know from recent research too, that when raising emergency queens, they tend to choose a larva based on its nutritional status, ie a well fed larva rather than a deprived one. There was no indication that they selected a related larva (sister) as was previously thought.

But on this subject, one very useful technique for checking for the presence - or rather absence of - a queen and preventing drone laying workers is to put a frame with eggs/young larvae from a healthy colony in as soon as the brood in the colony in question has all hatched out but there is still no sign of eggs from your virgin-in-waiting. Without queen or brood for a week can lead to drone laying workers. Brood emits a pheromone which prevents workers' ovaries developing and laying. Also if they do not have a queen of some sort in there, then by giving them a frame of brood, they have the material to create a new queen, providing the bees are young enough to produce Royal jelly. Up to now, this has been foolproof for me and prevented many a loss of colony when the virgin from an artificial swarm, for example, has been lost on her mating flight. But in July I put a frame of young brood in a brood-less colony and was surprised to find 6 days later all the brood had been removed and in its place some nectar although they were not short of space overall. I immediately put another frame of brood in, again laid by their earlier queen mum, as I did not want to lose this large, good colony and a few days later they had made queen cells on it. I heard recently that another beekeeper had experienced this clearing out of brood from a frame given to a brood-less colony. Why have they done this I wonder?

**I** noticed round me by mid July that all the Blackberry flowers, which I believe produce the bulk of my main crop, were over. This did not surprise me as it started to flower very early this year. There is some ragwort in flower, which produces unpleasant honey and wax of lurid yellow. I also noticed a stand of Rosebay Willowherb in flower at the same time, on my way to my out apiary. It is supposed to be a good bee plant, it might be just within reach of some of my bees I hope, as the flow seems to have dried up and little progress was made on the supers when I looked on the 18th July. I have taken off a super of honey from each of my production colonies and anticipate taking off the rest at the end of the month by which time I hope it will be capped. It should be good quality this year as being so hot and dry with low humidity; they should have been able to lower the water content well. So far mine has been mostly in the order of 17-17.5%. Unfortunately the dry conditions which although allowing the bees to fly every day and queens to mate well, will probably have dried up the nectar from the drought-stressed plants. I saw a satellite image showing England all brown. I pray for a thunder-

storm! Make sure the bees have access to some water nearby. Mine are visiting my watered pot plants instead of the (dark coloured) birdbath they used to use but where the water may now be too hot in the sun. I have also put a white sheet over the two hives in the sun at midday, the rest get shade then thankfully.



**S**o jobs coming up, get all the spare supers off ASAP, extracted, returned for licking and final removal. When turning wet supers for licking putting an open crownboard between them and the rest of the colony will usually prevent the bees leaving nectar or honey in them, but they should consolidate it below instead. Something I foolishly forgot to do in my hurry after extracting the first supers, now I must wait a further week (with crownboards in place this time to encourage them to take it down!) before removing them for cleaning and storage. Check the varroa drop and get your chosen treatment ready, but do beware of the temperature. Many treatments (Api-guard, Apilifevar, possible formic acid, check the labels) have an upper limit, commonly 25 degrees, and near this temperature the fumes may aggravate the bees and drive them out, possibly losing the queen in the disturbance. August is looking as though it may be warmer than usual, so I will probably bide my time and get the mites down with icing sugar which is not temp dependent, until it cools down.

**T**he wasps are making their presence felt now, and it may be easier to spot nests as they are very active. I found one down a vole hole in the ground last week and treated it, see picture, but there still seem to be some round the hives. If you felt like using an Apishield floor (one per apiary, and I used it under their normal floor) August is the time, after your supers are off, but I tried it last year and it caught more bees (465) than wasps (375) and was a breeding ground for wax moth, so I will probably not use it this year, but will bring to show at the 29<sup>th</sup> July Apiary meeting.





# Bait Hives - Blue better than Brown (maybe!) by Tony Robinson

For those that have not tried using bait hives and want to, the article *Bait Hives for Honey Bees*

<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/2653> by Cornell University is a must read. The article describes many of the attributes that make a bait hive attractive.

However, one attribute that is not discussed is the colour. I made two identical bait hives over the winter. One Brown, and one Blue. I believe most people use brown so that

the bait hive is not as obvious to human eye and maybe resembles a tree.

Blue is a colour that Internet discussi

ons suggest is very attractive to bees, so as the objective is to attract bees it seemed sensible to paint the bait hive in a colour that would win the scout bees attention.

I placed the two bait hives about 30m apart. The blue bait hive had a favourable position on a shed roof. The brown hive had a less favourable position in my vegetable plot. Placing both hives on the shed roof would have weakened the experiment somewhat as if the brown hive captured a swarm, it could be argued that they were initially attracted by its blue neighbour or vice versa.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> May the blue trap on shed roof captured a swarm. The week before both blue and brown had significant scout bee



interest. But blue won on the day. I hived the swarm about a week later when they were bringing in lots of pollen. I then reset both bait hives, this time switching the locations of the brown and blue bait hives. Brown now had

the favoured position.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> June, another swarm arrived. This swarm had also chosen Blue over Brown. One season, one garden, and only two swarms does not provide anything worthy of proof. But maybe blue is the colour!

If nothing else, I hope to encourage those that have not tried to use a bait hive to try next year. The cost of failure is low, and if you are lucky the sight and sound of an arriving swarm which is swallowed

whole by your bait hive like a genie returning to its bottle is fascinating.

For those that are interested, the bait hives contained 8 national frames of new foundation and was scented with Lemongrass oil.

Good luck!



# Thousands of bees filled our garden sent in by Lionel Ruben

A couple have described the "educational if scary" moment thousands of bees filled their garden early on Saturday morning.

Brian and Kathryn Yates from Liverpool told the BBC they are feeling fine but shocked after the incident.

Beekeeper Dave Woods, who arrived to help the couple, explained that the insects were looking for a new home.

"During a heatwave, bees multiply more and often outgrow their hives", Mr Woods said.

## 'Something out of a horror movie'

Mr and Mrs Yates were hanging washing out to dry in their garden at around 09:00 BST when they "heard a noise like a machine".

"I thought if it were insects it would be like something out of a horror movie," said Mr Yates.

"I looked up and to my horror there was a large swirling black cloud about twenty feet off the ground in the corner of the garden moving towards me."



Mr Yates said that, for around an hour, thousands of bees filled his garden, forcing his cat into hiding.

"A neighbour told me that near our road lived a man who had a hive and that the bees had probably come from there," Mr Yates added.

The hive owner was on holiday, the neighbour said, but that his son-in law - who was also a beekeeper - was on his way.

When Mr Yates checked his garden later that day the insects had begun to settle - but, shortly before the beekeeper arrived, a group of them took off, and rose to the top of some conifer trees before swarming again.

The beekeeper put a box in an adjacent garden and shook a clump of bees clinging to a conifer branch into the hive.

Mr Yates said: "This must have included the queen bee because the other bees then began to move into the hive.

"We are very happy they have been contained and have found a new home."





Mr Yates added that he had planned to use his hose on the insects, but was told that was the "worst thing" he could have done.

"In such hot weather, and with high pollen levels, hives produce more and more bees," said Mr Woods.

"The hives become too small. So they leave to find a new hive. They fill up with honey before they move.

"They leave behind a new queen bee in their



old hive. This new queen has been laid by the old queen."



Article and video available at

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-44670092>

Photos by Brian Yates and Dave Woods

## Bees Love Blue as suggested by Tony Robinson

Researchers at Oregon State University have learned that a specific wavelength range of blue fluorescent light set bees abuzz.

The research is important because bees have a nearly \$15 billion dollar impact on the U.S. economy – almost 100 commercial crops would vanish without bees to transfer the pollen grains needed for reproduction.

"The blue fluorescence just triggered a crazy response in the bees, told them they must go to it," said the study's corresponding author, Oksana Ostroverkhova. "It's not just their vision, it's something behavioral that drives them."

The findings are a powerful tool for assessing and manipulating bee populations – such as, for example, if a farmer needed to attract large numbers of bees for a couple of weeks to get his or her crop pollinated.

Read more at Oregon State University <http://today.oregonstate.edu/news/bees-love-blue-fluorescent-light-and-not-just-any-wavelength-will-do>

Article from Environmental News Network, 25<sup>th</sup> July



## Wagging robot natters with bees - offered by Gerald Legg

Robots are talking with bees. A robotic bee can tell real bees the best places to forage, and at least some of the time they seem to get the message.

Bees communicate via the so-called waggle dance, where the dancer wiggles its body while moving in a figure of eight. The orientation and the length of the movements tell other bees the direction and distance of a food source. RoboBee can mimic this dance.

RoboBee is made of a cylindrical piece of sponge with plastic wings and is attached to the end of a rod that controls its movements. Though it doesn't look much like a bee, it is so dark inside the hive that visuals aren't everything.

On some days, the robot worked perfectly and on others the bees ignored it, says Tim Landgraf, who developed RoboBee with colleagues at the Free University of Berlin in Germany.

From the New Scientist, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2018

# Solar Heated Stand by Tony Robinson

Many activities undertaken by the colony early in the season benefit from a little warmth. Although early spring can be cold it is often sunny, and I thought it sensible to capture some



of this free energy. I have been experimenting this year with a solar heated stand. I used a solar furnace to capture available energy from the sun and warm the hive through the open mesh floor. The

solar furnace contains several metal pipes recovered from an old cricket net which have been painted black to maximise the heat collected. An air current cycles air within the stand, warm air rises up along the pipes, descends through the stand as it cools and rises up along the pipes again. Each cycle captures more energy. The whole contraption points due south to make the most of available sunshine.

The net effect is that the air within the stand is typically ten degrees warmer than the outside temperature. This warm air rises through the open mesh floor, and out through



the inner cover much like a chimney. The additional heat allows the colony to support a larger brood nest than it could with its own heat, and build-up is rapid indeed. Wax generation is also significantly aided, with boxes of foundation fully utilised in days. This hive was at full strength before surrounding colonies, was split in April, and with little competition yielded 28kg of spring honey, with none collected from neighbouring unheated hives. Inspections could be undertaken on much colder days than is normally possible if sunny. I



encountered no drawbacks at all. My primary concern during this experiment was that I did not cook my bees. When the ambient temperature exceeds 20 degrees, I simply

cover the glass with a sheet of rubber which is too heavy to be blown away. When covered in this fashion the hive stand is a few degrees warmer than ambient. At the end of the season I intend to move the hive to a conventional stand where cooler winter temperatures are beneficial.

All in all, I consider the experiment a success, and would encourage others to have a go.

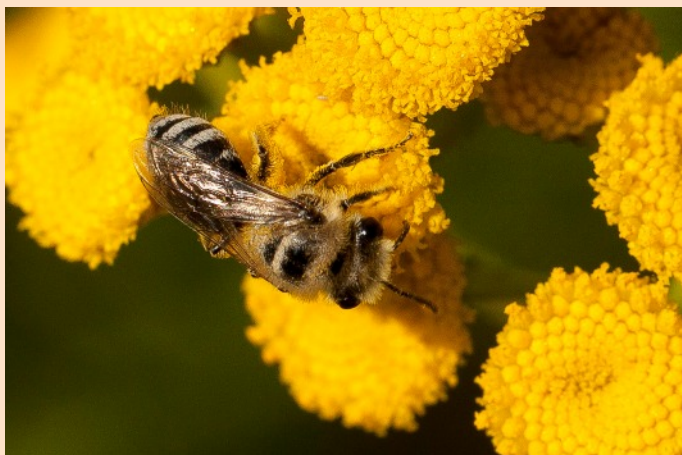


# Photo Corner



Just a reminder to our members not to waste the first rinsing's after the cappings have drained of honey - my first batch from last week is already bubbling away. I mix 1 litre apple juice, 1 litre grape juice and 1 litre of rinsing's, it usually starts as Specific Gravity of 1.11. Plus various acids, tannin and wine yeast to make cymment. Adding herbs and spices, orange peel etc. makes a lovely Methyglin.

Thanks Amanda for this tip and photo



Bob Curtis has sent in pictures of 2 solitary bees above covered in pollen together with a solitary wasp below entering it's nest. So many bees at the entrance of the poly hive one has to wonder how they manage to get in or out.



# Divisional Diary 2017/8

**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

14th April @ Barecombe with Heather McNiven.  
29th April @ Cooksbridge with Ian White.  
6th May @ Grassroots with Amanda Millar.  
12th May @ Barecombe with Heather McNiven.  
26th May @ Bob Curtis ASpiary  
3rd June @ Grassroots with Amanda Millar.  
9th July @ Barecombe  
29th July @ Grassroots with Amanda Millar.  
2nd Sept @ Newick, annual BBQ with Heather McNiven

## For your diary

8th April – B&L Tuition days in Hurstpierpoint aimed at new beekeepers FULLY BOOKED. The Tuition day scheduled for 29th April has unfortunately been cancelled due to insufficient numbers.  
21st April – West Sussex BKA Convention – please see details in newsletter  
Sat 19th May 2018 – Sussex Beekeeper Association Festival of Bees, Heathfield Community College.  
7th to 9th June – South of England Show @ Ardingly Showground Details at <http://www.seas.org.uk>  
30th June – B&L stand at the Saltdean Fayre.  
4th August – B&L stand at the Rottingdean Fayre.  
23rd Sept – Westdean Green Community Event, help required, contact Judith at [newapiary@hotmail.com](mailto:newapiary@hotmail.com)

**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](mailto: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](mailto:patricia.blbees@hotmail.com)

### Secretary

Hilary Osman, Holly Tree Cottage, Norlington Lane,

Ringmer, BN8 5SH T: 01273 813045

E: [secretary@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:secretary@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk)

### Meetings Secretary

Mary King

### Swarm coordination

Ian White

### Webmaster

Gerald Legg, E: [gerald@chelifer.com](mailto:gerald@chelifer.com)

### Newsletter editor

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

T: 07792 296422 E: [editor.blbees@outlook.com](mailto:editor.blbees@outlook.com)

### Librarian

Vacant

### Out-Apiary Managers

Amanda Millar: - "Grassroots"

Heather McNiven: - "Knowlands Farm"

### County Representatives

Bob Curtis, Ian White

### Education coordinator

Amanda Millar

### National Honey Show Representative

Norman Dickinson

### Committee Members

Lionel Reuben, Ian White, Pat Clowser, Hilary Osman,  
Norman Dickinson, Sue Taylor, Gerald Legg, Heather  
McNiven, Mary King, Dominic Zambito

## 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.

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

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