

# Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Newsletter



Volume 11 – November 2019

Editor: Norman Dickinson

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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

## Winter Meeting held on 16th October

The second meeting of the winter season was a talk by Mike Cullen entitled “Beekeeping My Way” which opened with Frank Sinatra singing “My Way”

It was interesting to note that instead of presenting a “traditional” style talk, Mike instead presented a series of Basic Principles that he has adopted over the years, however he stressed that beekeepers should adapt the various principles that he would be presenting to the particular style of beekeeping most suited to each individual. He further stressed that not all of the principles that he was presenting would and should not be taken in isolation.

The opening principles were in his opinion key to a successful colony / apiary, these were to

- Improve your stock.
- Raise you own Queens.
- At first inspection of the year clear all clogged-up brood frames, possibly with a Shook Swarm.
- Ensure fresh water is available.
- Always clip & mark Q's
- Bank spare Q's in a Nuc.
- Don't rush to collect swarms.

Once all of the basic principals had been discussed, Mike went on to explain how he deals with honey collection, and sterilisation. One useful tip was to put wet supers back on in the new year and not after the honey had been spun out. Ensure that the wet supers are stored in the freezer for a few days to kill of any wax moth larvae, and scorch the super box if you cannot fit

it in the freezer, then store until required.

Other key advise was

- Don't tolerate testy bees.
- Don't treat chalk brood, destroy the frame.
- Always plan your Apiary visits & what to do.
- Get supers on quickly in the new year, don't worry about over Supering.
- Save liquid from steaming brood boxes, add vinegar and use in hornet trap as bait.
- Incorporate shook swarming into normal husbandry.
- Use coloured 'fridge magnets on metal roof to indicate state of each colony.

Mike has made available a copy of the presentation, Please contact Pat Clowser if you require a copy.

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### Forthcoming winter meetings:

- See rear panel

### In next months edition:

- Amanda Advises
- Asian Hornet Action Team
- More photos from the National Honey Show
- Contributions from our members

## To bee the best with numbers try a stick and carrot method

New Scientist 13 October 2019 Submitted by Gerald Legg

Honeybees may be better at counting when penalised for errors compared with when simply rewarded for correct answers. We already had some evidence suggesting bees can count to four. But it turns out they may be capable of understanding larger numbers. To investigate, Scarlett Howard at the University of Toulouse, France, and her team trained bees to enter a chamber from

where they could see two channels with images, one with an image of four shapes and the other showing one to 10 shapes. The bees were then split into two groups. The first were trained to pick the image with four shapes, getting sweet sucrose for choosing that and bitter tasting quinine for the other image. The second group got sucrose for the four-shape image, but weren't penalised for

choosing the other image. The team then tested whether the bees could identify images of four-shapes compared with five, six, seven or eight shapes. Only bees conditioned with both reward and penalty could pick the four-shape image at a level higher than would be expected by chance. This also suggests they can group numbers beyond four.

**Don't forget the  
Sussex BKA  
Convention on 2nd  
November. Go to  
<https://sussexbeeorguk.wordpress.com/convention/>  
for Details**

## Asian Hornet Action Team Report by Manek Dubash

With winter just around the corner, we must hope that the chances of encountering an Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) during the rest of the year will be slim.

That said, early October saw two new sightings near Christchurch in Dorset, and two nests destroyed – more here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asian-hornet-uk-sightings-in-2018>. You may also recall that, in September, an Asian hornet was also sighted in Ashford, Kent, although no more has been heard about that. It may have been a stray single insect, or it might be that no-one has yet spotted the

nest.

As this is likely to be the last column of the year, given that *V. velutina* activity will pretty much cease until the spring, here's some good news.

In Portugal, which was invaded from the France cohort of the insects, Portugal News reports that the Portuguese Ministry of Agriculture says its plan for surveillance and control of the Asian hornet "is effective," adding that by June 2019 more than 5,600 nests had been destroyed, as many as the total in 2018, and that in the last three years, 14,000 nests have

been destroyed. Support from the Portuguese government included an online database, money for nest destruction, and training for those locating and destroying nests.

So the spread can be countered but vigilance needs to be maintained. All UK sightings have so far been by alert members of the public so, to help with identification, we have small ID cards for your wallet or purse, as well as an Asian hornet app for both Android and Apple phones. Please avail yourself of both – the cards will be available at our meetings.

We can prevail!

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## Margret Wilson's Positive Thinking—October 2019

September was the month of Apimondia, this time in Montreal, Canada a lovely location> The city was clean, airy and the traffic so quiet it seemed a miracle, no speeding vehicles everything nice and calm, a pleasure to be there.

There were talks and lectures daily, in fact sometimes we were spoilt for choice. The best speaker was of course Tom Seeley, with the arena holding over 5000 seated members plus those standing at the back of hall.

His talk was on the Darwinian Theory, which is leave the bees alone do not treat for Varroa, the bees will learn to cope with the pest. He did give statistics, a loss at first then a good recovery. I guess it is up to us, which way we go but nature is a wonderful thing and I am sure that evolution would prove this to be the case, long before mankind took an interest.

The countries who attended were well represented, we could taste honeys from all parts of the world and their taste was certainly unique, had I been blindfolded, I would not have guessed some were honey at all, their taste was so different.

It was good to see that BB Wear won a prize for the most innovative item, their new bee suit which is impervious to stings from bees and Asian hornets and is ventilated so that the beekeeper does not get over heated on sunny days. It looks good and you can see the depth of the aero fabrics, it is ventilated so much that it would be easy to wear even on the hottest day.

Now, back to home territory whilst we were in Canada we received verification that we are now a CIO. (Charity Incorporated Organisation) this was timely, just before the end of our financial year which is great, but it also means that the accounts department are really pushed to get all the new bank accounts opened and all the stock transferred and the leases reassigned. I wish them luck with all they are having to face to get this in order before our year end.

The BBKA attends two major public shows each year and we know that there are other public shows across the country, some where they are organised by local associations and some

where there is no representative from the BBKA. In those areas would any of the local associations wish to be involved in showing how important our bees are to the world? We would welcome any application for assistance, these have to be for public shows, not just honey shows, as they are already attended by mainly beekeepers. What we want to do is to get through to the public in general the importance of bees and the need to control pesticides which are killing our pollinators. Would your association want to get involved, perhaps with the Gardeners World events or similar shows, I know that Tatton Park is covered very well by Cheshire and they win prizes each year for their displays, they do a marvellous job on their own account. I believe that Bath have a similar show which they cover to a high level would you like some help to do the same? I would welcome your call if this is something you would like to get involved in, please use my email address [margaret.wilson@bbka.org](mailto:margaret.wilson@bbka.org).

*This is a regular update from the BBKA which I will attempt to include in future newsletters. Ed.*

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## Another Apiary Site Available

Viridor are offering placement for beehives should anyone want to expand or have a place for bees, BN8 6JX a large closed landfill site off the A26 near Beddington. Details as usual from Hilary on 07713 532285

## Amanda advises...

This month is a quiet month for me, most things are done, although very shortly I shall strap the hives up and put anti-woodpecker chicken wire round them and check all entrances are mouse proof. In spite of the rain we have had it has been fairly mild and the bees very active between showers, bringing in loads of pollen. As soon as the temperature drops to about 12 degrees C the bees will go into a cluster and become less active. Then we must check that the entrances are clear regularly.

I have been dusting mine, weather permitting, against the usual varroa 'Bomb' which hits them in October. The levels at home have not been excessive and not getting any worse but at the divisional apiary the drop has been creeping up relentlessly and this week one topped 400 mites after a single dusting, gloom! They are also bad

tempered and heavy to lift so I think I shall go on to Oxalic Acid vapourisation soon. It is supposed to be 95% effective on the phoretic mites on the adult bees (icing sugar between 30-50% effective, neither effective against mites in the brood), but as I don't intend opening them to remove all the brood I shall need to treat 4-5 times at 5 day intervals. But at least they will not be able to take their anger out on me and I will not have to lift heavy supers.

All the heavy rain we have had recently offers the opportunity to check the roofs are waterproof and the crownboards are dry while it is still mild enough to change them. I did find one badly constructed second-hand roof at the divisional apiary, (nails through the top of the metal instead of the side!) which was letting in water, which I have changed and shall not use again

unless I give it a new metal top. When I make them up I put a squirt of silicone sealer in the corners of the metal tops before fitting to prevent water ingress.

A nice activity at this time of year is make things with the wax you have carefully collected all year. After fine filtering the wax through a jelly bag, today I am making 1oz blocks of pure cappings wax and next week will make some candles from the rescued wax. Hope to see you at the Convention on 2<sup>nd</sup> November at Uckfield.



Left. Recently made wax blocks

Right. Nightlight kit, using a children's silicone lined bun tin

Photos submitted by Amanda



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## The elephant in the garden

New Scientist 13 October 2019 submitted by Gerald Legg and Manek Dubash (separately)

Note: The main article covered deforestation and population growth forcing elephants in conflict with people in Asia. The extract, *Plan bee* is an aside to this particular problem which also occurs in Africa.

### Plan Bee

In Kenya, folklore suggest elephants are terrified of bees. Lucy King, a zoologist at the university of Oxford, spent the best part of a decade exploring the scientific validity of that belief. "It turns out that, like most decent folklore, there's a lot of truth in it," she says. Merely the sound of bees sends elephants running – a finding that could help reduce human-elephant conflict. King has since designed elephant-detering beehive fences. With 15 beehives

and 15 dummy hives strung along a 300-metre wire, the fences are elevated so that people and cattle can pass safely beneath. But if an elephant tries to push through, the wire swings triggering a flurry of buzzing wings and stings. King's studies suggest the bees are an effective deterrent. The fences reduce crop raids by 80 per cent, on average, which explains why they have now been installed at 62 sites in 20 countries. King is currently experimenting with introducing the concept in Sri

Lank, where human=elephant conflict is particularly intense. She found that Indian bees are more placid than African ones, reducing the effectiveness of the fences. But beehive fencing could still be a worthy investment for Sri Lankan farmers, who would enjoy a reduction in elephant raids, ensure their crops are well pollinated and get honey to sell. As Kings says, "This is the only fences that, once you build it, makes money for you."



# European Honey Buzzards prey on invasive hornets

Bird Guides – 18th October 2019 – submitted by Tony Robinson

A new study has for the first time documented the predation on the nests of Asian Hornet by European Honey Buzzards, opening up questions as to whether the raptor could act as a biocontrol agent for the invasive wasp.

Asian Hornet is listed among the 100 most invasive alien species and is spreading, seemingly at an unstoppable rate, across Western Europe. It first appeared in Europe when it was introduced in France in 2004 and has since expanded rapidly. The presence of this wasp creates social alarm because it is a threat to native biodiversity, to human economic activities (especially due to it preying on Western Honey Bees, which are vital for pollinating and honey production) and to human health.

A number of birds are known to predate on Asian Hornet in its native range, notably Crested Honey Buzzard, but prior to this research being published, only a few species had been reported as taking individual adult wasps

(European Bee-eater) or attacking abandoned nests (Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Magpie and Great Tit).

In August 2018, fragments of an Asian Hornet nest (identified by its unusually large larval cells) were observed and collected from a European Honey Buzzard nest with nestlings for the first time. This significant finding, which took place near Barcelona in Catalonia, Spain, represents the first unambiguous case of predation of an Asian Hornet nest during the active breeding period of the wasp. Asian Hornet is extremely aggressive and venomous, and the researchers considered it remarkable that European Honey Buzzard was able to exploit the active wasp nests.

European Honey Buzzards typically do not forage beyond 10 km of an active nest site. Impressively, the researchers found that, assuming their data on Asian Hornet range was accurate, the adult honey

buzzards started using the wasp to provide for their offspring in the first year that it appeared within foraging range of a honey buzzard nest.

The researchers speculate that the Asian Hornet larvae could therefore theoretically become an important food source for European Honey Buzzard, given the number of wasp larvae is peaking during late summer – coinciding with the mid-June to September period in which honey buzzards require the most food to a) feed their young and b) gain fuel prior to autumn migration.

Additionally, this raptor could be considered as a potential biocontrol agent, because it is possibly the only European bird species capable of destroying active Asian Hornet nests during its reproduction season. This, however, is speculative, given the small observed sample size, although the evidence certainly suggests that the presence of European Honey Buzzard may be a positive in mitigating the invasive wasp's spread.



*(A) Picture of the European Honey Buzzard nest interior at the moment of the collection (2 August 2018). Nest remains of Vespididae are visible and the one of the Asian Hornet (with larger cells) is marked with a red circle.*



*B) The three Asian Hornet nest fragments analysed in the lab (scale bar represents 1 cm).*

1 cm

# 88th National Honey Show at Sandown Park 24th to 26th October 2019

Report by Norman Dickinson

The 88th National Honey Show took place on 24th to 26th October 2019 at Sandown Park Racecourse in Esher, Surrey.

The event was unfortunately marred by the death of our President, Margaret Davies. Margaret held the offices of Judges Referee and Director and was only elected to the position of President at last years AGM. She recently attended Apimondia as one of 11 UK judges in Canada and judged a Show in Northern Ireland before contracting pneumonia with complications. She died shortly afterwards. Our commiserations go to her family, and I met with her daughter and Granddaughter when they attended the Show on Thursday.

As in 2018, there were record entries with 2100 exhibits entered into nearly 250 different classes. There were three new classes for this year, Class 78 : Braggot, Class 104: Branch Newsletter and Class 56: Two Beeswax Wraps, where a cut half of an apple was wrapped on Wednesday and opened during judging on Thursday morning to determine how effective the wrap was. All wraps were to made from beeswax only with no additional

oils/resins permitted. Hilary Osman, our resident wrap maker entered and received a Very Highly Commended award, even though she normally uses oils in her wraps.

The Trade Hall was populated with over 60 different trade stands covering a multitude of different beekeeping items beekeeping information services. Most traders were offering discounts for goods purchased at the Show with some taking advance orders to be collected during the three days of the Show. It is inevitable that with the increase in trade stands additional space may need to be found in future years.

There were a total of 22 lectures given over the three days, including four lectures in the Solario Suite for beginners, where our own Sussex BKA sponsored the lecture "Observations from outside the hive" given by Irene Power.

There were 31 different workshops that took place throughout the period of the Show, including "BBKA Exam Techniques" given by Margaret Murdin and a number of "hands on" workshops such as skep making and mead making. All

workshops were fully booked well in advance of the Show, however there were a few dropouts meaning some attendees were able to attend.

A decision was taken at the beginning of the year to introduce barcoding of the Members badges so that members can be tracked into both the Show Hall and Trade Hall. As the new Membership Secretary, I shall be analysing the data from the barcode scanners over the next couple of weeks. It is hoped that by recording the flows we can improve the Show experience in the future. There is every likelihood that next year we will barcode the day visitor wristbands and track members and visitors into the various lectures, where it is hoped that by having an accurate count of visitors to the lectures we may be able to provide lectures that people want.

Three members of Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers entered exhibits this year, Manek Dubash, Hillary Osman and Sue Taylor and it is with pleasure that I can tell you that ten awards were received between them together with two cups. Congratulations one and all.

Next years Show will be 22nd to 24th October 2020

The full list of awards for Brighton & Lewes members is as follows: -

<u>Class</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Class Description</u>
56	VHC	Hillary Osman	Two beeswax wraps
135	C	Hillary Osman	Two jars of Honey Marmalade
242	C	Sue Taylor	Two jars of Medium Honey
244	2nd	Sue Taylor	Two jars of Naturally Crystallised Honey
245	3rd	Sue Taylor	Two jars of Soft Set Honey
247	2nd	Sue Taylor	One frame of honey suitable for extraction
248	1st	Sue Taylor	One jar of Clear Honey
249	3rd	Sue Taylor	One Plain Moulded Piece of Wax
250	1st	Sue Taylor	Six 28g (1oz blocks) of Wax
251	1st and P.J.Cup	Sue Taylor	One Bottle of Mead or Metheglin
	Lady Denman Cup	Sue Taylor	Most number of points in Sussex Classes 241 to 250 incl.

VHC — Very Highly Commended

C — Commended

Full results by Class List can be found at <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/files/2019/Results-NHS-2019.pdf>



## Photos from the National Honey Show taken by Bob Curtis



## B&L Divisional Diary 2019 / 2020

### Indoor meetings:

Meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month, October to March at Cliffe church hall, Lewes, unless otherwise stated. Members are invited at 7.00pm to assist with setting out chairs etc. ready for a 7.15pm start. Non-members are always welcome.

### Winter programme:

~~18th September: Bee Disease with David Rudland.~~

~~16th October: A Year Beekeeping My Way with Mike Cullen.~~

20th November: Hive to Honey Jar with Christine Stevens.

15th January 2020: Spring Preparation with Christine Stevens. (TBC)

19th February: AGM + Honey & Mead Show + Mini-Auction.

18th March: Swarming—Prevention and Control with Amanda Millar.

### Dates for your diary:

~~15th September: Westdean Fair~~

~~24th to 26th October: National Honey Show, Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher, Surrey.~~

2nd November: SBKA Annual Convention at the Luxford Centre Uckfield.

25th April 2020: Bee Disease Day, Ringmer

## Officers of the Division

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“Hove”: Mary King

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Bob Curtis

National Honey Show Representative:  
Norman Dickinson

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.

## Contributions to your newsletter

Contributions for the newsletter, including photos can be sent, preferably by email, to the editor. Please refer to panel above for details. Please limit to a maximum of 900 words. Copy to be sent no later than the 12th of the month preceding the month of publication. Photos etc. for the website should be emailed to our Gerald Legg

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

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QR Link to B&L Website



The co-operative membership  
Community Fund

