

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



Newsletter

Volume 11 – November 2020

Editor: Norman Dickinson

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

From your Editor

www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

Welcome to what may be my last edition of the B&L Newsletter as I have decided to stand down as Editor and pass the reins to Manek Dubash. As an ex journalist, Manek is eminently qualified to put this publication together and I wish him good fortune. I say "what may be my last edition" as all depends on Manek being able to install the same software package that I currently use.

With all of the upheaval over the past couple of months I have been very busy as Acting Chair and Membership Secretary with a plethora of things that needed to be done. Things are now settling down somewhat but as I write this column I am still heavily involved as Membership Secretary to the National Honey Show with the organisation of the on-line Show to be held in October.

I have made it clear to the B&L Committee that I am prepared to stand as Membership Secretary and Chair at the forthcoming AGM in February 2021 but have

also made it known that I would prefer to stand down as Chair at the AGM in 2022 to let someone else take over.

The more observant of you may have noticed that the post of B&L President listed on the back page of the October edition was vacant. Amanda had previously indicated that she wished to step down as President at the 2021 AGM, but has decided to relinquish the Presidency earlier. We thank Amanda for all of the help and assistance that she has given to probably every single B&L member, myself included all those years ago when I attended the taster day ran by Amanda and Heather in Burgess Hill. From all of us at B&L a big thank you and we wish you well for the future in all that you do.

I also have some good news to announce in that we welcome three new members onto the B&L Committee. Carol Isted has agreed to be seconded onto the Committee as has Graham Bubloz who will take over as Administrator

(with Manek) for the B&L Facebook Group after I stand down having initially set-up the Group. Ian White has also agreed to come back onto the Committee having left it a couple of years ago and he will take on the role of Piddinghoe Apiary Manager. Sue Taylor has also agreed to be Ian's assistant as and when required. To all I say a big welcome.

As I write this column, the on-line National Honey Show is in full swing with over 3,000 registrations made. As this is the first time that the Honey Show has been made an all virtual show there have been the inevitable hiccups along the way, but all of the feedback that I have received as Membership Secretary for the Show has been positive.

This is not the last that you will hear from me as I intend to pen a regular Chairman's Report for future editions, so, as I sign off, I wish Manek well for the future as our new Editor. Over to you Manek!

In this issue:

News from the Committee	2
Items for Sale	2
Pollination: The enduring relationship between plant and pollinator	2
Asian Hornet Team Report	3
Urban Beekeeping becoming an unsustainable hobby	3
Neighbour upset by thieving bees	4
Seasonal Hints and Tips	4
BBKA Bee Basic Exam, two B&L members experience of taking the exam	5
Canadian Beekeeping	6
Photo Corner	7 & 8
Officers of the Division	9
Divisional diary	9
Regional and Seasonal Bee Inspectors	9

Forthcoming winter meetings:

- See rear panel

In next months edition:

- Asian Hornet Action Team
- Contributions from our members

BBKA couple of snippets from Gerald Legg

Bees trained to prefer sunflowers

NewScientist 26 September 2020

Honeybees that have been coached to prefer feeding from sunflowers have boosted seed production on Argentinian farms by 60 percent. being given sugar with a sunflower-like scent encourages the

bees to seek out and feed from similar flowers in their environment.

[I wonder if this idea could be extended to other crops/plants? GLJ]

Probability helps bees find food

NewScientist 12 Sept 2020

Honeybees can calculate the probability of artificial flowers providing nectar, but use the information in an unusual way. They don't always visit the flower with the highest probability of nectar. Instead, if a flower has a two-thirds likelihood of paying off, the bees visit it two-thirds of the time.

As we have not met up this year it was thought that perhaps you would like to know what we have been discussing. Meetings are normally held every 6 to 8 weeks, but during Covid these have been monthly Zoom meetings. As you can imagine we have been discussing the future of Brighton and Lewes and vacant posts to be filled on the Committee, however we have had some offers to help. But we encourage you to think: Do you have something however small, which you feel could help our members, or ideas for the Committee? Contact me.

With the lack of apiary meetings

this year, we feel it is even more important to try and get more members to take their bee basic exam. If you are interested please contact me, and also to read the previous entrants reports within this month's newsletter. *Page 5 Ed*

The website is still attracting probable new members, with many enquiries on how to start beekeeping. So would you be prepared to mentor a new member who could shadow you to see what beekeeping is all about. Again please contact me.

The bee disease day which was planned for this past April,

MAYBE on hold AGAIN for next year. This depends if the bee inspectors are prepared to run this for us. Did you book a place for this course? Please inform us if you did, and how you paid for it BACS payment or cheque.

The AGM in February looks like this will be on Zoom, with voting taking place prior to the event. All papers will be sent out at least four weeks beforehand.

Hilary Osman
Secretary Brighton and Lewes
Beekeepers
secretary@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk 07713532285

Second hand kit for sale

Lionel Reuben has put up for sale two complete hives each consisting of mesh floor, brood box, queen excluder, two supers, crown board, rhomboid, eke, winter insulation and roof. Each hive is being offered for sale at £75 each. Lionel can be contacted either via email: lionel.r@talktalk.net or phone 01825723453



Pollination: The Enduring Relationship between Plant and Pollinator

By Timothy Walker ISBN: 9780691203751 Hardback Oct 2020 £29.99

Reviewed by Gerald Legg

This a lovely illustrated book that examines the amazing world of pollination. The latest discoveries help to explain the astonishing, varied and complex relationships plants have with their pollinators. The numerous tactics plants deploy to encourage, exploit and trick insects as well as their use of other creatures, wind and water, to carry pollen between individual flowers. Every tactic you can think of is cunningly used by plants: colour, scent, shape, reward and includes trickery including the offer of sex. The importance of pollination in ecology,

evolution and agriculture, and why habitat management, species recovery programs and other conservation measures are ever more critical particularly in the light of the recent findings that 41 per cent of the World's plants are at risk of extinction.

See also https://www.nhbs.com/pollination-the-enduring-relationship-between-plant-and-pollinator-book?bkfno=251466&ad_id=3656&utm_source=NHBS+News+%26+Updates&utm_campaign=2d937f2f23-entomology+october+2020+10+09+2020&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9dd4930fe0-2d937f2f23-58968093&mc_cid=2d937f2f23&mc_eid=dec8c8a9b8

Asian Hornet Team Report by Manek Dubash

With little err, make that nothing, to report on the Asian hornet front here in the UK over the last month, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the AH Team for their vigilance and willingness to act as the front line in our area against this potentially disastrous insect. The team consists of Tony Birkbeck, Trevor Hollingdale and Terry Massie.

The AHT's core job is to help the public identify the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*). The team is not expected to suit up and go to destroy nests; not only could that be highly painful if not lethal, it's DEFRA's job. They have experts for that.

Rather, if a member of the public has trapped an insect that might be a V. Velutina, a team member can go and take a look if necessary, or examine a photo. Once identified, the easiest way to alert the authorities is via the

Asian Hornet app, available for both Apple and Android phones. It enables you to send a photo and location of the insect.

If you are not on the team and would like to help, please let me know.

Channel Island fighters

Meanwhile, the AHT on Jersey continues to do a sterling job of trapping and tracking. They've fighting a continuous tide of hornets which have shown that they can spread across the water between the island and France: on the Jersey AHT's Facebook page, a member three weeks ago reported seeing a European hornet on a buoy.

And here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAVLsP5CAJs&feature=youtu.be> you will find a short explanation from France of where the nests of V. Velutina can be found. To save

your French if it's not up to it – the answer is everywhere.

Below is just one example of a nest



That's it – enjoy your break from the weekly inspection!

Urban beekeeping becoming an 'unsustainable' hobby that is doing more harm than good, scientists say

Too many hives across London are increasing competition for nectar, crowding out wild pollinators, warns Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew

By Madeleine Cuff The i, September 30, 2020 12:01 am

Submitted by Dominic Zambito

Cities overcrowded with hives can also lead to diseases spreading from hived bees to wild populations. Apiaries in London have recently been battling a bacterial infection, known as *European Foulbrood*, which starves the larvae in a hive of nutrition.

"Beekeeping in cities is now becoming so popular it's actually becoming unsustainable," warned Professor Phil Stevenson, a scientist at Kew Gardens. "There's insufficient nectar and pollen available to support the numbers of hives, let alone the wild species we have... honeybees are now outcompeting these other species for food they all need."

A trendy hobby

London's bee population has tripled in the last decade to around 5,600 registered hives,

with London now thought to have the densest bee population of any city in Europe. While the problem over hive overcrowding is best documented in London, Paris and Berlin are facing similar problems.

Pam Hunter of the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) admitted the popularity of urban beekeeping was causing some problems. "Unfortunately among a lot of city dwellers beekeeping has become a trendy 'green' option with many wanting to put hives on roofs but often without sufficient understanding of the requirements of the bees," she told i.

However, she said some of the forage shortages can be combated by installing large planters in city centres, to provide more food for roaming pollinators.

"In Newcastle, a group of researchers funded by BBKA have put large planters containing a range of plants to attract pollinators (including honey bees) in the city centre," she said. "These have been proved to be effective and indicate a possible way of improving forage in a highly urbanised area, making it more attractive to insects and also to humans!"

Kew Gardens called for campaigners to avoid issuing oversimplified conservation messages. Rather than focus on flagship animals to save, conservation groups should work harder to help the public understand how plants and animals interact and depend on each other, it said.

Neighbour upset by thieving bees in Witney considers legal claim over 'stolen nectar' from their garden

article sent in by Chrissie Hogarth

Zachary Saifurrahman advised the beleaguered local to 'find a bee, capture it and take it to court', but added that they were uncertain whether a barrister would take on the case

A resident of an Oxfordshire town has asked for expert advice ahead of a "legal battle" that may follow a gang of bees "stealing nectar" from their garden.

In a post on Facebook, the anonymous person from Witney, 12 miles from Oxford, asked if any fellow residents had a working knowledge of "bee laws". They wrote: "Everyday I see my neighbour's bees flying around my garden stealing the nectar from my flowers, then the bees go back to my neighbour's hives and create honey. My neighbour then harvests said honey and sells it with good profits.

"Now, I have never received even one jar of this honey for

compensation while my neighbour's bees continue to trespass and steal my nectar.

"I was once stung as a child so I'm fully aware of how dangerous bees can be. The way I see it, this is the equivalent of a neighbour's dog coming into my garden, stealing tools and taking them back to my neighbour so he can sell them for profit.

"Do I have grounds to sue? What type of things should I be documenting to prepare for a legal battle?"

Several Witney residents offered advice in response to the query, but much of it did not seem to take the enquiry seriously.

Zachary Saifurrahman advised the beleaguered local to "find a

bee, capture it and take it to court", but added that they were uncertain whether a barrister would take on the case.

The 1990 Environmental Protection Act does state that "any animal kept in such a place or manner as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance" may constitute a statutory nuisance, meaning that in extreme cases an authority may restrict or shut down a beekeeper's activities.

Maybe the owner of the bees should make a counter-claim against the neighbour as their bees were increasing pollination rates in that neighbour's garden.
Ed

Seasonal Hints and Tips

In October the bees have been bringing in pollen and nectar from Ivy. This has been their last main forage of the year. Hopefully, they will have combined this nectar with the syrup you have already fed them. Ivy nectar on its own can reduce to a very solid state, and the bees will need access to water through the winter to be able to ingest it. A very cold winter may reduce their water supply, as they remain in the hive, clustered, not collecting.

Heft (lift) the hive to check the weight. It should feel nearly nailed down to the ground. Details can be found on-line about weighing if you want to be very accurate, but I just lift both sides to get a feel for my colony. None of mine ever died of starvation!. Be aware that they may have stores to one side so, yes, lift both sides. If light then fondant feed is indicated. Place over the top of the cover board opening. I always leave a block of fondant on anyway from Dec onwards. Insurance. Please don't presume a big

heavy colony is necessarily safe. Many bees need more food!

Time to clean that equipment before storing over winter. If you can pop frames into a freezer for a few days it will kill wax moth larvae and eggs. Run a hot flame over corners of empty supers to kill any eggs. Then store supers in a cold place (outside is fine) and if you have spare cover boards use them to separate these supers. (cover holes!) Wax moth is a devastating nuisance to your equipment. They will trash it!

If you have polyhives, then may I recommend Cillit Bang Bleach and Hygiene. *I assume other brands are available.* Ed. I have no financial interest here but it melts propolis wonderfully!

End of October/November ...and also temperature dictated ...when those nights may get down to 5°C. Time to pop on those mouse guards. I remove the entrance totally before applying. This lessens the chance of blocked entrances with natural bee death in the hive. Bees cannot drag bodies through the holes to

extricate. Mice can get through 8mm+ and will nest in a hive.

Too late now for any varroa treatment that relies on a good outside temperature. (Apiguard etc). Pop that inspection board under the floor and look after 3 days. Count the varroa. Consult this link to check <https://www.mitecalculator.com/> I use an Oxalic vaporisation in December when there is no brood hopefully - (again weather dependent!), but if there is a heavy drop according to calculations then an earlier treatment must be initiated. Also it is an inspection board only- please remove and leave out after you have counted.

Please ensure that ALL Queen excluders are removed going into winter.

And don't forget, B&L are always on hand to advise, not forgetting that you can post requests for help on the B&L closed Facebook Group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/721334118647166>

After a couple of seasons of beekeeping, my Mentor asked when I was going to take the BBKA Bee Basic assessment. To be honest, I had not given it a thought as I had not heard too much about it so my mentor downloaded the syllabus from the BBKA website and handed it to me.

Looking at the syllabus I thought, "I knew a fair amount of this, life cycle of the Queen, life cycle of a worker bee, but the life cycle of a drone? I was too not sure on that one."

As I continued to read down the syllabus I came across some items that I was familiar with. Forage for example. I knew the spring trees and blackberry in July but what were the bees foraging on in between?

Then it became a downward slope. I had a little knowledge of disease as sadly, I had already come across CBPV but knew very little about AFB, EFB or anything else, and so it went on. It became apparent that I had some knowledge but, unfortunately, not enough. So to have any chance of passing the Bee Basic Exam I now had the winter of 2018 to study before taking the exam in 2019.

On the day of my assessment, the weather was perfect for opening and inspecting a hive, which should give calm bees. Smoker successfully lit, it was time to open a hive with the assessor. Once the hive was opened, all nerves disappeared. The bees are the focus and I imagine all beekeepers love watching them, seeing wall to wall brood, the arc of stores, the smell of a healthy hive.

Questions about what was seen were asked and answered. It was a good experience to have with an incredibly knowledgeable beekeeper next to you.

Inspection over and hive closed it was time for a few more questions and to make up a frame. It was at that time a bee, unhappy with the inspection, flew into my hair and after what seemed an age of high-pitched buzzing came the inevitable sting...Ouch! The hazards of beekeeping!

It was all worth it in the end, I have a sound knowledge in the basics of beekeeping and an attractive certificate to prove it.

Shirley Light

Driving through the pretty East Sussex countryside to Heather's house, the question 'Why am I doing this?' kept flitting through my mind as nerves gathered apace. Noble thoughts of helping to preserve the species *Apis Mellifera* and looking after 'my girls' came back in answer, coupled with a myriad of facts about hives and bees. Arriving at Heather's house and the calming influence of her kitchen and hospitality, helped me steady my nerves for the moment – the BBKA Basic Assessment (Hive driving licence). Having met Pam my assessor, who was equally calming, it was soon time to 'move off' in requisite attire and muttering dire warnings to my smoker under my breath to stay alight for the next hour! Once at the chosen hive, it wasn't quite 'mirror, indicate, manoeuvre', but how about 'smoke, hive tool, lift a frame'!? And like the advance road driving test,

telling the attentive Pam what I was looking at...uncapped brood, patchy capped brood, some eggs, pollen stores and capped stores, and all the time looking out for road (hive) hazards – queen cells and brood disease. Not only were there these potential hazards, but there was real road rage to contend with (a feisty colony), aggressive road users (wasps) and rain (hazardous driving conditions). It rapidly became obvious this colony was not happy, so a 'three point turn' to manoeuvre this hive out of trouble was called for – yes, you guessed it – I duly collected a sample of bees from a frame. Knowing what was causing the feistiness was then down to Pam and her skills with the microscope and disease detection at a later time. Having closed the hive, we sort shelter from the rain shower under Heather's garden awning for the next phase of the test – the oral part. Not sure what equates to hills starts, and knowledge of stopping distances in hive terms, but Pam's questions about the life cycle of the worker honey bee and specific questions about bee diseases were some questions that we covered. But my final piece de resistance was the 'emergency stop' – putting together a frame of foundation per BBKA instructions. A true masterpiece, or so I thought! Luckily, as we had sat the assessment late in the season, the results were soon published and I am very pleased to say I passed! So, I am now deemed competent to begin my bee-keeping career and drive my hives with my 'hive licence' and badge (!) to hand!

Mary King

Canadian Beekeeping

As the National Honey Show Membership Secretary I received an email from Mr Peter Hurrel, a Canadian beekeeper who included photos of a medal received by a Mr W.Thompson of Ontario, Canada who won 1st Prize for the Honey Dominions Class at the 1926 National Show of Bees & Honey held at the Crystal Palace in South London. This show was the precursor to the National Honey Show as we now know it.

We (The National Honey Show) are investigating this medal to try and get more information to pass back to Peter who sent this to me.

As an aside, Peter also sent some photos of a vulture sitting on one of his hives together with electric fencing around his apiary in an attempt to keep the skunks out. Just some of the things that we do not need to worry about here in the UK.





Here are a couple of spectacular photographs with the bumble on the left absolutely covered in pollen as it forages on an Echinacea in Glen Patrick's garden.

The photo (below) is my absolute favourite. It shows a Hummingbird Hawk moth extending its proboscis to take in the nectar in a garden in Woodhurst, Cambs. Thank you to Debbie Pain who took the photo, and for sending this to Heather McNiven.

This is almost the perfect wildlife photo.





Some photos of Giant Hornets at Barcombe Mills, taken by Becky Griffiths. Evidently Becky thought they were Asian Hornets, which is why she sent them to Manek.