

# Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Newsletter



Volume 4 – April 2019

Editor: Norman Dickinson

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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

## March B&L meeting – Small Scale Queen Rearing in my Backyard - Mike Cullen

Report and photos by Norman Dickinson

The last winter meeting of the season was extremely well attended to hear Master Beekeeper Mike Cullen giving a talk on small scale queen rearing. Mike opened by asking Why produce Queens? Reasons given were control over their traits, quality of Q's and they can be banked as insurance if a hive becomes queenless.

He went on to say that most books on queen rearing assumed that the beekeeper would have well stocked hives, fine if you are a commercial beekeeper. Adapting ideas raised by Vince Cook in

his book Queen Rearing Simplified, Peacock Press, Mike now uses 3 or 4 6 frame commercial poly nucs stacked upon each other.

Mike has made most of the kit that he uses and demonstrated it's use. There are a number of photos in Photo Corner that show this. His main adaption is the creation of queen cups where he uses the tip of a dowel dipped in wax to create the cups. These are then mounted onto a cork to make ease of grafting later much easier.

Timing is of the essence, you will aim to have the

virgin Q's ready for mating mid-May so the process will commence mid/end April.

Ideally, use fresh comb for harvesting the larvae which will have just hatched. Mike explained what the various stages and hive configurations were needed but stated categorically that the unhatched Q cells must be transferred to the Queenless nucs no later than 12 preferably 10 days after grafting. Mike colour codes his colonies from red (bad) to green (best) based on their traits.

### In this issue:

Asian Hornet Action Team (AHAT)	2
Brighton & Lewes Miscellany	2
Amanda Advises	3
SBKA Bee Market	4
Smart Honeybees	4
Worlds Biggest Bee	5
Report on Sussex Beekeepers Association 2019 AGM	6
Photo Corner	7
Officers of the Division	8
Divisional diary	8
Regional and Seasonal Bee Inspectors	8

## Manuka honey producer charged in landmark case

RadioNZ (RNZ) 31st January 2019 and submitted by Pat Clowser

Court action has been filed against an Auckland honey producer whose products were pulled from the market in 2016. It is the first such prosecution ever filed against a producer of Manuka Honey.

The manufacturer - Evergreen Life Ltd - and its manager will face charges at North Shore District Court on 14 February. Manuka Honey is lauded for its health benefits -

due partly to an omega acid called DHA and an antacid known as MGO. Manuka Honey producers often rate their product by the amount of MGO contained within it. But Evergreen Life has been accused of adding synthetic versions of these compounds to its product.

In 2016, 18 honey lines manufactured by the company were ordered from the market by food safety officials. In a court sequel, 71 charges alleging

adulteration have been filed against the company. The most serious carries maximum penalties of five years' imprisonment or a \$500,000 fine. The Ministry for Primary Industries said little about the case because it's now before the courts. Attempts to get a response from Evergreen Life were unsuccessful. There was no reply from its Albany office. In addition, few records have been filed to the Companies Office, and RNZ understands the owners left the country some time ago.



### Forthcoming winter meetings:

- No further winter meeting until October 2019

### Forthcoming summer out-apiary meetings:

- See rear panel

### In next months edition:

- Amanda Advises
- Asian Hornet Action Team
- Bees pass their maths exam with flying colours
- Eclipse didn't get the bees buzzing

## Asian Hornet Action Team Report by Manek Dubash

Welcome to spring!

First, the good news: at the time of writing in mid-late March, there have been no reported sightings of Asian hornets (*Vespa velutina*) on the UK mainland – but they are definitely alive and well on Jersey, just a few miles away, where sightings have already been made. And sightings were made in Cornwall and Yorkshire last autumn. So this doesn't mean they're not here: it's likely they've just not yet been spotted.

The watchword for April, then, is vigilance, as they will start to make inroads into our bees soon. When they do, we need to report them quickly.

It may seem like pushing water uphill, but an analysis of how *V. velutina* spread in France, where they were introduced accidentally, showed that containment is possible if intelligence about the presence of nests is acted upon quickly.

So our main task, apart from vigilance around our hives, is to help the public both identify a suspect insect, and to obtain a specimen and photograph. These should be sent in to this email

address – [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk) – or the Asian Hornet Watch app – which, again, you should have installed on your smartphone. Please, also inform me.

We're doing our bit to raise awareness too, with a news story from our press release, sent to all media outlets in East and West Sussex, appearing in the Sussex Express on 5 March, and hopefully more to come in the monthly magazines. The Sussex Express story appears here: <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/sussex-beekeepers-brace-for-killer-asian-hornet-invasion-1-8833655>

What can you do?

By now, I'd hope everyone has a non-killing trap installed in their apiary. Finally, it helps if you register on BeeBase, and ensure that your contact and apiary details are up to date. If an email address is included, this will ensure you can receive alerts from the National Bee Unit when Asian hornets are sighted in our area.

As always, if you need more information or you identify a hornet, or if you want to join the AHAT, please contact me. My dedicated phone number is 07762

312592, email [blbka.ahat@gmail.com](mailto:blbka.ahat@gmail.com).

And finally...

An excellent film about the Asian hornet, its spread, its impact and how, in Italy, action is being taken to counter it (with thanks to Sue Taylor for the link):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_qP7L4CG6so&fbclid=IwAR3I8XkDpeNCCOrVzVGEekhgynZV\\_3CEs11wD5u53sKvTYY66x\\_eCoFF7KU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qP7L4CG6so&fbclid=IwAR3I8XkDpeNCCOrVzVGEekhgynZV_3CEs11wD5u53sKvTYY66x_eCoFF7KU)



Manek displaying his AH trap at the last winter meeting

## Brighton & Lewes Miscellany

### Beekeeping Courses

Amanda will be running a number of weekend Introductory two-day comprehensive beekeeping courses at Mantel Farm. Further details on the Mantel Farm website <https://mantelfarmshop.co.uk> and follow links to Training Courses and Events then to Beekeeping Courses.

### B&L Library

Members are reminded that even though the winter meetings are now over, library books are still available from Dominic Zambito at

[librarian.blbees@outlook.com](mailto:librarian.blbees@outlook.com)

### Apiary Site on Offer

A site suitable for an apiary has been offered in Streat, on a 6 acre garden which is often open in the National Garden Scheme. The site being offered is actually a field and is not in the garden.

All enquiries should be sent to Hilary Osman at

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

### Artificial Swarm Control

Amanda has provided this link for a very good description of using a nucleus as part of swarm control and is an expanded version, including picture, of the Information Sheet on the B&L Website

<https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftheapiarist.org%2Fthe-nucleus-method%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C4eeca43c0014295a12408d6aee06ecf%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636888676280060884&data=J6V9UDUvdx3FTJSXvVPYNauh%2BGLj3b9hkkzRh%2BLbZGU%3D&reserved=0>

## Amanda advises...

I hope all your colonies came through winter in a healthy condition. It was so mild in mid-February I was able to check thoroughly all my colonies. Sadly, I found that although they all looked very healthy, three had lost their queens. One had no brood at all and it was successfully merged with an adjacent colony, but the other two were already drone laying workers, leaving no option but to cull them.

I changed all the floors, it only takes seconds and can be done even in weather too cold to open. Many were very clean indicating healthy and/or hygienic bees. One floor, which had some dead on it was also clogged with damp icing sugar - the main drawback of dusting in winter. Now I can use oxalic acid vapourisation (OAV) this stickiness should be a thing of the past. Incidentally I should be very interested to know if anyone else who did OA vapourisation had queen loss. It does happen over winter, but I was a little surprised to have 13% queen loss dating from a week or two after the treatment. I have just put all my inserts in for a week to confirm that I don't have to do any Varroa treatment before the supers go on, I hope.

All mine over-winter on 2 or 3 boxes, mostly shallow and at my February inspection I found they had all moved up into the cleaner boxes leaving the oldest darkest box at the bottom; empty of bees, stores and brood which I was able to remove with ease. So I am wading through a tall pile of boxes of frames to clean and sterilise them. If you do not have this opportunity, at the first or second inspection while they are smallish, remove any dark empty comb at the edges and replace with drawn or foundation without disturbing the brood area. There is plenty of fresh pollen going in now so they will ignore frames of old pollen stored from last year. These pollen-clogged frames can restrict the area the queen needs to lay in so move them to the

edges or remove completely. In future inspections, try to work dark old comb to the edges for removal later or this time next year.

The weather has given us several opportunities to visually check there are enough stores, as their brood rearing accelerates. Hefting is a bit unreliable, one I had thought was light on hefting, turned out to have over half a super full on inspection in February. It is mild enough now (in Sussex) to use syrup (1:1 strength for use, not storage) but only if they need it otherwise they will try to move the surplus into the supers we will be adding shortly. They are sometimes reluctant to uncapped sealed stores so scratching the capping's on some frames will make them use it (or move it) enabling the brood area to expand. Before I add supers I remove any full combs of winter stores to the deepfreeze, labelled as to the colony, to return to that colony in the autumn, to prevent contamination of the honey with any syrup from winter stores.

We need to keep any eye open for swarm preparations now. My colonies seem to be larger than this time last year, whether due to the good weather last summer and generally benign winter or the efficient removal of varroa by the OAV vapourisation; or more likely a combination. When I checked on them in late February none had drone brood (apart from the two drone laying worker ones) but when I briefly checked three on 18th March all had either flying drones or some sealed drone brood. I would not be surprised if we have reports of swarms very shortly so I at least will need to start my weekly inspections, weather permitting. They do not consider swarming until drones are on the wing because of the longer development and maturing time for drones, but once present, be vigilant! I came across some research suggesting that careful hygienic testing on colonies and selecting the best for queen rearing can

show significant improvements in just three years.

Hygienic behaviour can help reduce Chalkbrood, Sacbrood and other things. To get improvement it is essential to keep adequate records of other important characteristics too, such as temper, swarminess, whether they supersede, honey crop etc. To test for hygienic behaviour use either the pin test or card removal, or section freezing (see my notes in 2018, or email me for more details) as pouring liquid nitrogen is not safe or practical for hobby Beekeepers. However, someone recently pointed out to me that there are some wart treatments using a presumably safe, simple liquid nitrogen applicator. Food for thought, not necessarily a recommendation!

*Water pipe freezing kits are a good source for an alternative to liquid nitrogen, available from all good plumbers merchants. Editor*

Hygienic testing only takes 24 hours to tell. April is the time for starting queen rearing, why not try hygienic testing beforehand and queen rearing from your best? (see my Easy Queen Rearing pdf on the B&L website).

Another very important thing to do if you have not already done is to get the hornet monitoring traps up (ideally in late Feb), to attract the queens. I am using the non lethal ones this spring which trap but do not kill and I am checking and releasing any other insects daily, they have mostly been flies so far but did get one honey bee in. I am going to test different baits, starting with apple juice then proprietary baits and will let you know the results. Now the early March cold spell is behind us, I have already seen queen wasps on the wing, flying in my greenhouse, I shall try to thin them too as I had four nests start in my garden last year - too many!





## SBKA Annual Bee Market



Come and see us at the

# BEE MARKET

**Heathfield Community College**  
**Old Heathfield TN21 8RJ**  
**Saturday 18 May 2019 - 10am to 5pm**

Bees, plants and honey on sale    Trade stands  
Equipment auction    Live bee show  
Free parking    Hot and cold food  
Workshops    Children's corner    Mead-making  
Great gardening ideas    Talk on bee health

**Everyone welcome - Admission £1**  
A Sussex Beekeepers' Association event

### Sussex Beekeepers' Association Bee Market



## Learn all about the fascinating world of bees!

To create their delicious product, bees operate one of the most complex yet slickest production techniques in the whole of nature.

Enter their wonderful world to see how these fascinating insects pollinate our crops and provide us with fine pure honey and beeswax. This is a great day out for adults and

children alike, with auctions of bees and equipment, bee-handling demonstrations, a special bee workshop for children and expert lectures.

Free parking, hot and cold food on sale along with plants, honey and trade stands with great ideas for your garden. Entry is just £1 per person. Bring the family!

### Where to find us on Saturday 18 May



Heathfield    A265    Burwash

North arrow pointing up.

Map labels: School Hill, Portland Sq, Auction Lots, Parking, Old Heathfield Road, Battle.

## Five smart things honeybees can do

These insects' brains may be tiny, but they're better with numbers than many human children and they are past masters at communicating life skills

### Crunch numbers

Last week, Australian scientists announced that honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) can learn to add and subtract. Fourteen bees were put through 100 training exercises in a maze – and got the correct answer between 64% and 72% of the time. “It is not that every bee could do this [spontaneously], but we could teach them to do it,” said Dr Adrian Dyer, co-author of the research.

### Solve tasks

In 2017, researchers from Queen Mary University of London demonstrated that bees can learn to gain a reward and then show others to do the same. The bees were taught by a decoy bee to move a small ball to a particular location – and some of them even

managed to solve the task more efficiently by shortening the distance.

### Give directions

Karl von Frisch was awarded the 1973 Nobel prize for decoding the “waggle dance” performed by bees to inform hive-mates about the location of pollen sources. On returning to the hive, a bee vibrates its wings in such a way as to relay information about the location of food in relation to the position of the sun.

### Understand zero

Honeybees were the first insect species to be observed to have a concept of zero, a numerical notion that human children find difficult to learn. Researchers from RMIT University in

Melbourne last year showed that bees conceive zero as a number but they were unclear why had this mathematical skill.

### Share decisions

Bees have also developed a sense of democracy. When looking for a location for a new home for, say, 10,000 bees, 300 older bees form a “senate” and fly off looking for options. They use the waggle dance described above to communicate the potential locations, the number of dance repetitions indicating the quality of the site.

*Ian Tucker*

*Guardian 10 Feb 2019*

*Submitted by Dominic Zambito*

# World's biggest bee found alive Article submitted by Lionel Reuben and Tony Robinson

The world's biggest bee has been re-discovered, after decades thought lost to science.

The giant bee - which is as long as an adult's thumb - was found on a little-explored Indonesian island.

After days of searching, wildlife experts found a single live female, which they photographed and filmed.

Known as Wallace's giant bee, the insect is named after the British naturalist and explorer Alfred Russel Wallace, who described it in 1858.

Scientists found several specimens in 1981 on three Indonesia islands. It has not been seen alive since, although there was a report last year of two bee specimens being offered for sale online.

In January, a team followed in Wallace's footsteps on a journey through Indonesia in an attempt to find and photograph the bee.

"It was absolutely breathtaking to see this 'flying bulldog' of an insect that we weren't sure existed anymore, to have real proof right there in front of us in the wild," said natural history photographer, Clay Bolt, who took the first photos and video of the species alive.

"To actually see how beautiful and big the species is in life, to hear the sound of its giant wings thrumming as it flew past my head, was just incredible."

The discovery, in the Indonesian islands known as the North Moluccas, raises hopes that the region's forests still harbour one of the rarest and most sought after insects in the world.

There are currently no legal protections around its trade.

Trip member and bee expert Eli Wyman, an entomologist at Princeton University, said he hoped the rediscovery would spark research towards a deeper understanding of the life history of the bee and inform any future efforts to protect it from extinction.

Wallace's giant bee is currently listed as vulnerable to extinction, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

However, the international trade of this species is currently not restricted by the Convention on

International Trade in Endangered Species.

Environmental group, Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC), which has launched a worldwide hunt for "lost species", supported the trip to find the bee.

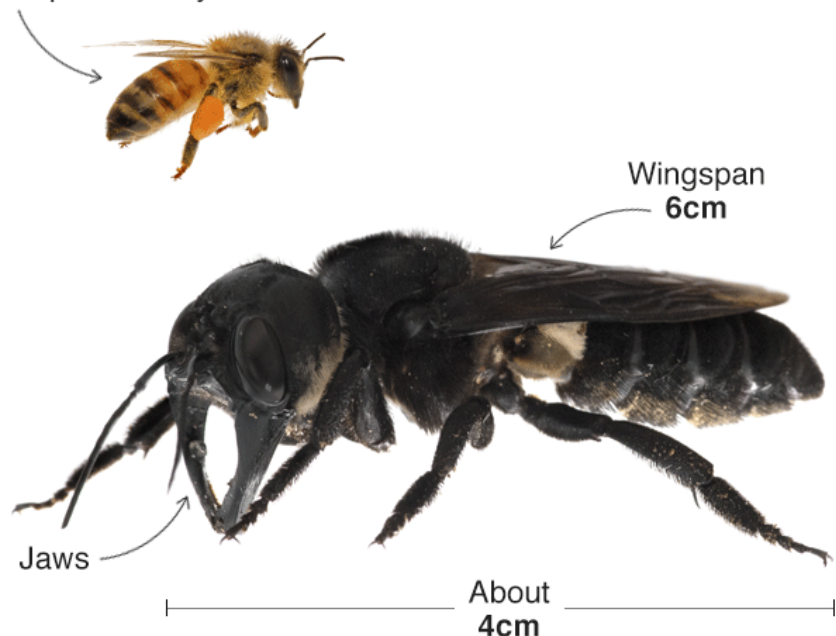
"By making the bee a world-famous flagship for conservation, we are confident that the species has a brighter future than if we just let it quietly be collected into oblivion," said Robin Moore.

## Wallace's giant bee (*Megachile pluto*)

- With an estimated wingspan of two-and-a-half inches (6 cm), Wallace's giant bee is the world's largest bee
- The female makes her nest in termite mounds, using her large jaw to collect sticky tree resin to line the nest and protect it from invading termites
- The species depends on primary lowland forest for resin and the nests of tree-dwelling termites
- Wallace, who co-developed the theory of evolution with Charles Darwin, described the bee as, "a large black wasp-like insect, with immense jaws like a stag-

## The giant bee is much larger than a honeybee

European honeybee



Source: University of Georgia. Image: PA

BBC





# Sussex Beekeepers Association 2019 Annual General Meeting

The Sussex Beekeepers Association held their 2019 Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 2nd March at the Peredur Centre, West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead, RH19 4NF.

With an attendance of over 49 members, the meeting commenced at 14:30hrs with our Chairman Pat Clowser welcoming the members from across the Association, then accepted a number of apologies from members unable to attend. She also thanked the East Grinstead Division for hosting this years AGM.

Unfortunately there was no hard copy of last years AGM Minutes available so they were displayed on screen for all to review and



## SBKA Officers of the Division

were accepted with no objections.

Pat gave a brief update of the previous beekeeping year including mention of the Bee Market where the footfall was down as a result of some “external events” but nevertheless was still considered a success. Similarly, the SBKA Convention in November was well attended with a number of interesting speakers.

Pat gave thanks to all Divisions who now had Asian Hornet Action Teams (AHAT’s) in place ready to combat the AH threat which had already been discovered across the County border in Kent. Pam Hunter interjected and gave an update from a BBKA/FERA perspective.

The next Item of Business was the

presentation of the Hon. Treasurers Report by Harold Cloutt where it was mentioned that the Bee Market made a small financial loss of £144.58p, almost certainly due to the reduced footfall noted in the Chairman’s Report. Overall, the Account is in good order and was accepted by the Members.

Representatives from each of the five Divisions proceeded to give a summary of the past year’s performance within their respective Division, and most agreed that it had been a reasonably successful year.

At this point in the proceedings the Chairman, Hon. General Secretary, Hon Treasurer and Accounts Examiner are elected. This being the completion of the 3rd year in office for Pat Clowser as Chairman, a new chairman would normally be elected, however no agreed candidate was put forward by the Executive Committee for the role, therefore it was confirmed that Pat should stand for a further year, following which a new Chairman would be elected. Traditionally, the outgoing Chairman then assumes the role of President, so Amanda, our outgoing President presented the Seal of Office to Pat. Liz Twyford and Harold Cloutt were re-elected unopposed as Hon. General Secretary and Hon. Treasurer, respectively. The existing Accounts Examiner was also re-elected unopposed.

With no Any Other Business, Hastings and Rother were announced as hosts for the 2020 SBKA AGM, to be held on Sunday, 7th March 2020 at the Robertsbridge Village Hall.

Finally, Liz announced the names of those members who had gained certificates for the Basic exam this year, then announced the names of the winners of the cups arising

from the National Honey Show.

This concluded the business of the AGM.

Following the formal business of the AGM, Paul Vagg gave a talk titled “Beekeeping and Disability—From Hobbyist Beekeeping to Social Enterprise”. This was an interesting talk on how people with disabilities were able to keep and manipulate honey bee colonies within London.

He described the obstacles that had been presented to him as a potential beekeeper and the steps taken to overcome them.

Paul has created an organisation selling all manner of Products of the Hive with all profits that are generated going to charitable causes, some of which were on sale at the Venue.



## Paul Vagg giving his presentation

*Report and photos by Norman Dickinson*

## Photo corner



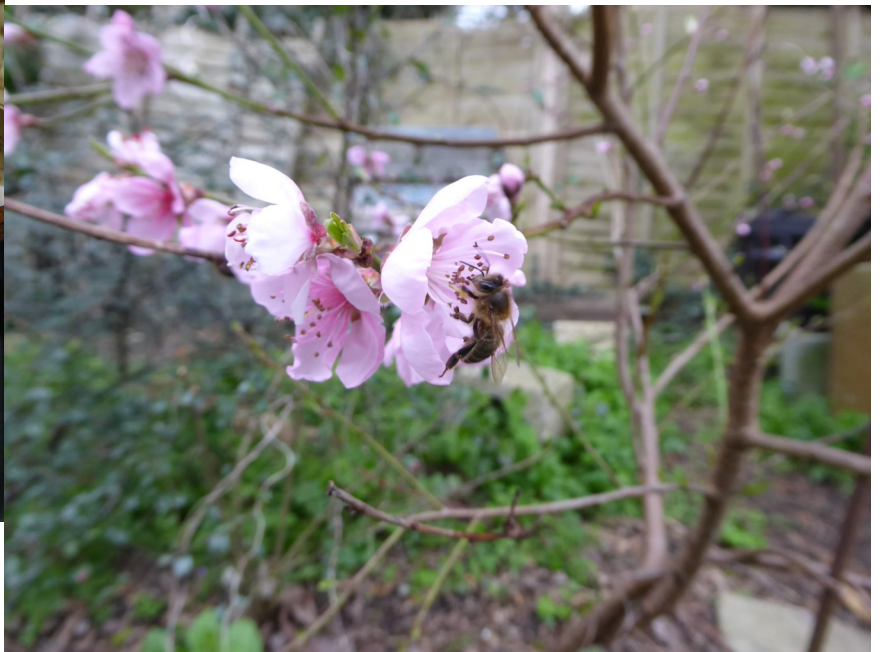
Rack of corks screwed in place ready for wax cups to be affixed



Mike demonstrating his frame of cups



"Hair curler" queen cages in storage tray



Bees on peach blossom, sent in by Amanda Millar



## B&L Divisional Diary 2018 / 2019

### Outdoor meetings:

Meetings are held on Saturdays or Sundays as noted below, between April and September. Unless otherwise stated all meetings will start at 1:30pm and are subject to weather permitting. Location maps are on the website in the member's section.

### Summer programme:

Sun 31st March: Grassroots - Working party.

Sun 7th April: Barcombe - Spring cleaning in the apiary.

Sat 13th April: Hove - Setting up an apiary.

Sun 28th April Cooksbridge - Building supers & frames.

Sat 11th May: Barcombe - Swarm control.

Sun 19th May: Newick - Queen rearing.

Sat 1st June: Hove - What do I see in my hive?

Sun 23rd June: Grassroots - Supering

Sat 6th July: Hove - TBA

Sun 21st July: Grassroots - Harvesting Honey

Sun 1st Sept: Grassroots - Winter Preparations

Sun 1st Sept: Newick - B&L annual BBQ

### Dates for your diary:

~~2nd March: SBKA AGM and Spring Meeting,  
Peredur Centre, East Grinstead, RH19 4NF~~

12th April to 14th April: BBKA Spring Convention,  
Harper Adams University, TF10 8NB.

27th April: WSBKA Annual Bee Market and Auction,  
Brinsbury College, Pulborough.

18th May: SBKA Annual Bee Market in Heathfield.

## Officers of the Division

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"Knowlands Farm": Heather McNiven  
"Hove": Mary King

SBKA County Representative:  
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

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QR Link to B&L Website

