

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Newsletter



Volume 3 – March 2020

Editor: Norman Dickinson

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

From your Editor

This is be a final reminder that The Sussex Beekeepers Association AGM will take place on 7th March 2020 commencing 1.30pm at the Luxford Centre, Library Way, Uckfield, TN22 1AR. Following the AGM, we have two speakers, Celia Davies talking on The honey bee inside out and Christine Stevens on Selling honey and beyond the doorstep. Both of these speakers have always presented very interesting and informative talks and I do not expect this to differ on this occasion and we look forward to meeting you all there.

The annual Sussex Beekeepers Association Bee Market will be held at the Heathfield Community College in Heathfield on Saturday, 16th May 2020. Brighton and Lewes Beekeepers will again be manning the cake and drinks stall and ask that if any member

can provide either cake for the stall or time (even for a couple of hours) to man the stall then please contact Hilary Osman, details on back page. This years speaker is Bob Smith where the subject is Queen Rearing. Bob always delivers interesting and informative lectures so well worth coming just to hear Bob. There will be the usual array of trade and other stands culminating in the auction in the afternoon.

Those members who have signed up to the BeeBase website will have received the NBU Winter Update. For those members who have not signed up, the NBU advice is to keep a check on stores by hefting the hive and if fondant is on, check quickly that they are taking it in. Following the recent storms check that the hives are secure and that there is no damage from woodpeckers and that mice are not in residence. If Varroa treatment was not applied

in Autumn, it is not too late to treat with Oxalic Acid products whilst there is no brood present, but only use authorised treatments where a full list can be found [here](#). The final item of advice from the NBU is to check for damp, which is one of the biggest risk to our bees in winter. The bees can survive the cold but damp will take it's toll so it may be prudent to move the hives elsewhere if damp may accumulate at the present location.

The BBKA Spring Convention will take place at the Harper Adams University on 3rd, 4th & 5th April 2020 where there will be 20+ Lectures and 50+ Workshops and Seminars covering a wide mix of topics. There is also a Bumper Trade Show on the Saturday. Full details are available on the BBKA website at <https://www.bbka.org.uk/Event/bbka-spring-conv>

AGM, Honey Show and Auction

B&L's AGM was held on Wednesday, 19th February 2020 with a very good turnout, over 40 members attending. The Minutes of the 2019 AGM were accepted as a true record by the Members and was signed off.

During 2019 the B&L Committee completely re-wrote the B&L Constitution, a copy of which had been

previously circulated to the Membership. This was voted on and approved by the attending members and is now in force. Should any member require another copy then please contact a Committee Member.

The next order of business was the Treasurers report, which showed that financially, we were in a good condition. A loss of

£2,472.65p was shown for year end, however it was explained that there was expenditure made in 2019 that will not be recoverable until 2020 so the loss will not be as great as reported, and should actually boost the 2020 account. The accounts were then approved by a show of hands. Thanks go to Pat

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- Contributions from our members

Asian Hornet Action Team Report by Manek Dubash

After a brief winter break, it's time, unfortunately, to start thinking about Asian hornets. Specifically, our job, as beekeepers and those in the Asian Hornet Action Team, is to trap or spot, identify and inform. I'll go into a bit of detail about that below.

But first, the big picture. The threat of the Asian hornet – *Vespa velutina* – is greater this year than last. They are expanding: the latest sighting has come from Hamburg, on a similar latitude to Manchester. So they are extremely adaptable, having been found in habitats as diverse as cold, high mountain tops and warm urban parks. And the queens are already starting emerge on Jersey....

BBKA AHAT conference summary

Much of this information came from an excellent BBKA-organised Asian hornet conference in February, where researchers presented their latest findings. For example, Prof Stephen Martin from the University of Salford reported that *V. velutina*'s natural enemies mostly emerge only later in the season, which is good from the predator's point of view as it doesn't kill its food source entirely. We on the other hand will find *V. velutina* most vulnerable at the early stages of the year, when the queen is hibernating and then when building her primary nest. Practical experience of the hornet came from Galicia and the Channel Islands. Xesús Feás, of the Academy of Veterinary Sciences in Galicia, said that they've found embryo

nests everywhere, even in beehives, but also underground and on electricity pylons. Timber workers have been seriously injured by hornets when cutting trees containing nests. Xesús also said that he is working a species-specific velucide, so there's hope on the horizon...

We heard too from Jersey's AHAT co-ordinator who detailed the work he's been doing to counter the insect. He said that in 2019, they found 30 queens in April, the same in May and workers in June. Primary nests were found from 12 April onwards, and the firsts secondary nest on 16 July. From then onwards, they found and destroyed plenty of nests, with the last one found on 23 December. He added that 30% of the primary nests transitioned into secondary nests without relocation – which was unexpected. Those secondaries need to be removed properly or the hornets go and make another. Most secondaries were found in trees but not all – some were found on in the ground, some in walls; they are highly adaptable.

Sandra Gray and Belinda Philipson from the National Bee Unit updated us on the last year's sightings and actions taken, and what to do if you spot an Asian hornet: she said the NBU needed a photo and a sample – use the Bee Watch app. The NBU will then send an alert to beekeepers in the area, update BeeBase, and investigate the back story. Local authorities will be informed. Line of sight and triangulation with bait stations

will be performed, and a forward operating base set up. Nests will be killed in the evening, removed next morning, and followed up by monitoring.

Practical matters

With spring upon us, now is when Asian hornet queens (*Vespa velutina*) will start emerging from hibernation. All it takes is five days at 12 degrees or higher and out they come. And we know from experience that if they're not here already, they will arrive on transporters such as lorries, or can be lofted across the Channel on the wind. We are in the front line. The first thing a new queen does is hunt for a sugary source of food and some wood she can chew to build an embryonic nest, into which she can lay eggs she fertilised the previous autumn. When those eggs hatch and reach a critical mass, the colony will build the secondary nest, which can contain around 6,000 hornets. So we need to start building and installing those non-lethal traps now, using either jam or fruit bait, or Trappit, which is said to be extremely effective. As announced at the last meeting, we'll be ordering some for members, so please let our membership secretary Pat Clowser know if you want some.

I'm suspecting that 2020 is set to be a busy year: it's case of hoping for the best but planning for the worst....

A book suggestion from Gerald Legg

Honeybee Hotel: The Waldorf Astoria's Rooftop Garden and the Heart of NYC by Leslie Day

John Hopkins University Press

ISBN 978-1-421-2624-2

£16.99

Who would have thought it? Twenty floors above the frenetic New York streets is a garden sitting on the world-famous

Waldorf Astoria. Here is a story about the history of the hotel and an amazing collaboration between gardeners, chefs, hoteliers and beekeepers. Mixed in with this narrative is dash of honeybee biology, the hotel's passion for food and cooking and an account of the creation of a resource that bound a community together – by the bees whose biology is explained in clear and simple terms. Honey recipes are also

included from main dishes to cocktails. Unfortunately, as this book came to press (2019) the hotel was bought by the Chinese government who want to make major changes that may put the future of the roof-top alliance at risk.

Maybe one for the B&L Library.
Ed

Amanda advises...

March will be the start of bee activities this year, with what could be the most important and eagerly awaited first inspection of the year. We also need to get ready for swarming, queen rearing and nectar flow, which will not be far away, I hope. I keep their insulation on for a few more months, as the old winter bees will all be dying off this month and as the brood increases, cold spells could lead to chilled brood as the nurse bees are stretched at this time. The mouse guards and woodpecker netting could be removed now. Frames can be made up with foundation so it is fresh and ready for brood expansion, nectar storage or artificial swarms when needed. We must also put our Asian Hornet non-kill monitoring traps up as soon as possible.

I don't know when the weather will be suitable to check our colonies; not as early as last year certainly, but we must still heft them for stores, probably more die of starvation in March than any other month as their requirement increases. Go easy on the fondant though, by mid March it will probably be warm enough to give them syrup – but only if they need it, see more about this below. Mine have been stuck indoors quite a bit this month but as soon as the sun comes out they rush out frantically orientating and collecting pollen, I feel sorry for them battling against the strong winds which will definitely have reduced their pollen collection and probably chilled quite a few to death. It will be interesting to see if the bee season gets going later this year as a result.

As soon as the temperature reaches 14°C or possibly 12°C providing the sun is shining and there is no wind, I shall be

in there inspecting that they are OK. The first inspection will be short and I will use cover cloths to keep the warmth in and probably will not need smoke. This first inspection is to check that they are alive, that they have enough stores within reach, and that they have normal, healthy worker brood of all stages and not drone and a quick assessment of the state of the comb. If the weather is warm enough for a longer inspection, otherwise at the second one, things to look for (in no particular order) are eg the state of the floor. I usually carry a clean one around with me to replace any with debris or dead on, which may be an indication of some disease and should be noted. It's quicker and easier on the bees than trying to clean in situ. While the colony is small it is an opportunity to find, mark and clip a queen which has superseded an old one last autumn; this happens more often than people realise. Also very important while they are small, remove any old, dark comb with no brood or stores on and replace with foundation or better still clean drawn comb at the side of the cluster, however, this early in the year always leave the colony in contact with stores on one side of the cluster in case it turns cold. If all the combs are dark it might be better to do a Shook Swarm, or Bailey change if the colony is small, but towards the end of the month when it is warmer. They will also need food coming in to make wax so either make use of a nectar flow or feed small amounts of 1:1 syrup.

Even if I cannot inspect yet I shall put an insert in this week for several days to see if they have increased the active seams, check varroa load etc as it is nearly 7 weeks since I

last checked. If you see no activity from a colony when others are active, a quick lift of the



crownboard will confirm if they are dead in which case seal them up and remove for recycling and sterilization after trying to ascertain why they died.

In March we shall need to give them more space for the expanding brood, we can replace tatty brood comb and frames clogged with last year's old pollen which they will no longer be using now the fresh pollen is coming in. In this way we can provide them with a full brood box of useable frames. A large colony may need a super to expand their brood into. Before adding supers for nectar storage, as soon as the nectar flow starts, make sure they do not have many frames with stores if you fed them syrup last autumn. They will move this up into the supers and contaminate the honey crop. I label these sealed frames and store in the deepfreeze to return to them in the autumn. This is also why we need to be very careful how much we feed them at this time of year – only what they need.

I hope all your hives remained upright during the recent storms. With all the rain the ground is very soft and there have been reports of trees falling over, indeed one of my apple trees did just that. So do check your hive stands are still stable; some of my slabs have been undermined by moles and they do not have the support they once had. Add in wet ground and all the wind we have been having and there is the potential for tilting or collapse.

(Continued from page 1)

for all of the hard work she has put in as both Treasurer and Membership Secretary.

Heather then delivered the Chairman's Report giving an upbeat account of the Division. She also made particular reference and gave appreciation for all of the hard work put in by each of the B&L Committee Members, which is not always apparent to the general membership.

The Out Apiary Managers next proceeded to give a report on the apiaries that each manages and it is currently looking encouraging. Pat Clowser will be managing the new apiary which is at Deans Farm in Piddinghoe, located on the C7 about 2 miles north of Newhaven. This apiary will be set up over the next couple of months, subject to the weather, and having seen the location, this should be an excellent site with adequate parking available.

Finally, an expression of thanks was given to Mary King, who will be moving out of the area and leaving B&L. Mary has been a long serving member of the Committee and organised many of the speakers for

our winter meetings. Mary, we thank you for all that you have done and wish you well for the future.

The annual Honey Show also took place and by having all entries in prior to the AGM judging could take place in the background. We were pleased to welcome Harold Cloutt from the Hastings and Rother Division who judged most of the exhibits, with Bob Curtis judging the Photographic Class and Steve Gibson judging the Mead Class. Thanks also go to Philip Else acting as Steward to the judges.

Total entries this year were down slightly from 78 in 2019 to 60 this year but certainly up on 2018 (56) and 2017 (58) and thanks go to all members who put exhibits in.

Congratulations go to Sue Taylor for winning the Dixon Hurst Cup for the most points across all classes, and for the second year in succession. Judith New came second with Shirley Light third.

Shirley also won the Novice Cup with Judith winning the Honey Cake Salver. Well done to all. Full results are as listed below.

As a change from the previous format of the AGM and Honey Show, it was decided to hold an auction in lieu of a quiz whilst the Show judging was being concluded.

We had a total of 25 Lots on the night with most actually being sold. Yes, we did have a couple of hiccups in the background, but overall most felt that it was a success and should be repeated next year. A couple of the items that did not sell were of high value and may not have been appropriate for our small auction, still, they can always be put up for auction at the SBKA Bee Market in May. Our thanks go to all who bided and especially to those who won and got a bargain!

We also had a sales table where a multitude of items were available to buy following the auction.

The final order of business for the evening was the presentation of the trophies to the B&L Honey Show winners, which was made by our Chair, Heather McNiven.

Tea, coffee, cake and biscuits were provided for refreshments and thanks go to Shirley Light for doing this.

2020 Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Honey Show RESULTS

Class	Description	1st (5 pts)	2nd (3 pts)	3rd (2 pts)	VHC	HC
1	One 1lb Jar Clear honey	Bob Curtis	Shirley Light	Sue Taylor	Hilary Osman	Ben Castle
2	One 1lb Jar Naturally Crystallised honey	Ben Castle	Phil Else	Sue Taylor	Bob Curtis	-
3	Two 1lb Jars of similar honey	Phil Else	Shirley Light	Sue Taylor	-	-
4	One Rolled candle	Sue Taylor	Hilary Osman	Judith New	-	-
5	One Moulded candle	Sue Taylor	Trevor Hollingdale	Hilary Osman	Judith New	-
6	<i>One 1oz block of wax</i>	Judith New	Sue Taylor	Heather McNiven	-	-
7	One Honey Cake.	Judith New	Sue Taylor	Peter Tyrrell	-	-
8	Six Honey Biscuits.	Sue Taylor	Judith New	Shirley Light	-	-
9	A bee related photograph	Shirley Light	Not Awarded	Sue Taylor	Hilary Osman	-
10	A Bottle of Mead	Sue Taylor	Sue Taylor	Heather McNiven	-	-
Cups & Highest Scores		Winners 2020	Winners 2019	Winners 2018	Winners 2017	
Dixon Hurst Cup. 1st Highest Points		Sue Taylor	Sue Taylor	Bob Curtis	Hilary Osman	
2nd Highest Points		Judith New	Bob Curtis			
3rd Highest Points		Shirley Light	Hilary Osman			
Novice Cup		Shirley Light	Judith New	Trevor Hollingdale	Sue Taylor	
Honey Cake Salver		Judith New	Bob Curtis	Gerald Legg	Ian White	

Out apiary visits and further experience From Amanda Millar, B&L Education

This year we have decided to change the format of out apiary visits to cater more for those existing beekeepers who wish to improve their techniques, we will also be starting at 2pm as the previous earlier time may have put some from coming if they had any distance to travel. In recent years we have had quite a few new beekeepers and now they have got used to handling bees it is time they progressed to better swarm control, techniques for comb change, queen rearing and increase etc.

These topics will need the time available to cover them fully and because we don't wish to overwhelm complete beginners who may not yet have any bees, but we hope will still attend, I would like to make the following suggestions

in preparation for the apiary visits – homework!

Firstly all new beekeepers should read a good bee book which will cover the basics, equipment and basic bee biology, there are many on the market, some OK, some are only fit to line my dustbin. The best I personally would recommend is Haynes Bee Manual by Claire and Adrian Waring. The text is concise and informative, with excellent illustrations and abundant diagrams. The next option is a well-designed bee course. Heather, our Chair, is offering some full day theory and practical courses in the week beginning 26th March and may have some spaces, contact her if you are interested. I am running more theoretical two day courses but still with some practical, at Mantel Farm,

Catsfield, during the year. Bookings and details are on their website. If there is a need, I could be available at say 1.30pm before the Grassroots meeting on 19th April, if there is any new beekeeper who does not yet have their own bees but would like to look for example at the hive parts, light a smoker etc. and ask questions. If anyone would like this they must contact me beforehand, (amanda.millar.rf3@btinternet.com) otherwise the meeting will start as planned at 2pm. Those with bees will know and understand the weather limitations (the last few months will have drummed that in!) so we cannot guarantee that we can open beehives on the planned days for courses, or out apiary visits but we are always happy to chat and answer questions.

BBC Two's Mastermind Quiz Series 18

We have received an enquiry via the website for the following, anyone interested should contact Ayrton McGurgan.

Hi, I hope you can assist...

I am currently casting for the next series of BBC Two's Quiz show

Mastermind and I was hoping you could circulate a flyer among your

friends and colleagues, and share via social media. I can send on

response to this email.

Auditions are currently underway so please email me

ASAP at:

mastermind.hth@hattrick.com for an application form (it takes just 10

minutes to complete).

The deadline for applications is Monday 25th May although we will be

starting auditions in the next few weeks so would encourage you to

complete the application sooner rather than later.

Entry is open to all UK residents (including Channel Islands and the

Isle of Man) who are aged 18 or over.

Hat Trick & Hindsight Productions are committed to making programmes

as diverse as possible.

Many thanks indeed for your assistance!

Ayrton

Ayrton McGurgan

Casting Researcher

Mastermind

E: AyrtonM.HTH@hattrick.com

T: 0207 184 5782

Important information from Amanda

If you are thinking of doing shook swarm or brood break for comb change and varroa management then you should watch this lecture from the 2019 National Honey Show. The timing is critical. Ralph Buchler's other talks are also very interesting but this one particularly so.

<https://youtu.be/tuJlgzcQWAg>

South of England Show, Ardingly.

BEES AND HONEY 2020

It may seem a long way off, but I want to let you know the latest news from Bees & Honey at the South of England Show.



Firstly, the show dates, so that you can get them into your diary are: Thursday 11th, Friday 12th, Saturday 13th June 2020.

There will be a few changes this

year. Most obviously, Bees & Honey is returning to having its own marquee and our location will be much closer to the centre of the show. The new style of marquee should mean less problems with heat, cold, wind and rain!

We are also very excited that we have managed to secure Sue Carter and Bill Fisher as judges for our honey show. So here is a first appeal, please start thinking now about your entries as we need to put on a really good show. Could you offer to bring show entries for others in your division or association to Ardingly? Daisy Day, who you will recognise as one of our regular demonstrators, will be our Show Secretary this year. You can download the schedule and an entry form here:

<https://www.seas.org.uk/info/competing/competing-south-england-show/bees-honey/>

We'd also like to have your honey to sell on our sales table so that we can demonstrate to the public the wonderful local variety available.

I've attached a leaflet that you could share with beekeeping colleagues to encourage them to get

involved. One side has information about the content of the show, the other is specifically targeted at youth groups. If you could use printed copies, let me know. Don't forget that our show is also a great opportunity for you to promote your own division or association, so we are happy to have your publicity materials on display.

I do hope we will see you at the South of England Show this year, and if you'd like volunteer to become even more closely involved with the team organising the event, do let me know!

I'll be in touch as usual during April to ask you to sign up for stewarding, but if you'd like to commit now that would of course be very welcome.

With best wishes for 2020



China's Beekeepers Feel the Sting of COVID-19 Epidemic sent by Manek Dubash

The novel coronavirus that had killed over 2,100 people in China as of Thursday is also gradually claiming another victim: China's beekeeping industry.

In a notice Feb. 15, the country's top beekeeping body, the Apicultural Science Association of China, mourned the death of a beekeeper who reportedly killed himself after all of his bees died of starvation in the southern Yunnan province, as local travel restrictions had made it impossible to buy feed for the colony or relocate it to an area where they could feed naturally.

To control the spread of the coronavirus, regions across China have imposed strict restrictions on the movement of vehicles and people, including sealing off roads and implementing approval systems for interregional transportation. Some "hardcore"

containment measures have also include shutting down public spaces and barring residents from leaving their homes, sometimes literally.

But the epidemic prevention measures have also stopped many beekeepers — including the late Liu Decheng — from moving their colonies to new nectar sources to keep them nourished, according to the apicultural association.

"The bees are chasing flowers and honey," Wang Jianmei, the association's deputy general secretary, told Sixth Tone. "Many flowers in Yunnan are gone now, so he (Liu) had to move the bees to other areas — otherwise they were going to starve."

With the flowers near his colony not yielding sufficient nectar and many of his bees poisoned with pesticide, Liu was unable to keep his 100 or so beehives nourished after attempts to buy feed and relocate them were

thwarted by local virus containment measures, Wang said.

China's central government has implored local authorities not to impose extreme controls on transportation channels in the name of epidemic containment. Since Feb. 15, bees and other "life necessities" including feed ingredients, poultry, livestock, and aquatic products have been eligible for a special green transport channel, according to an official guideline. China has over 9 million managed bee colonies, making it the world's largest beekeeping industry. In 2018, the country exported 542,500 tons of honey.

According to Wang, even after the green channel policy came into effect, some villages and townships were still taking hardline positions on people's movements, presenting potential headaches for beekeepers attempting to carry on an already-precarious tradition.

Photo Corner



**Top, middle and bottom left:
Photos from the AGM and
Honey Show.**

**Bottom right: Feral colony
near Heathfield that have
been there for a couple of
year under the eaves that
face east**



B&L Divisional Diary 2020

Indoor meetings:

Meetings are held on the 3rd 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:

~~15th January 2020: Spring Preparation with Christine Stevens.~~

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

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

Dates for your diary:

7th March: Sussex BKA AGM, Luxford Centre.
3rd, 4th & 5th April: SBKA Spring Convention.
25th April 2020: Bee Disease Day, Ringmer.
16th May: Sussex BKA Bee Market, Heathfield.
11th, 12th & 13th June: South of England Show.

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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

Seasonal Bee Inspector: Diane Steele Mobile: 07775 119452 email: diane.steele@apha.gsi.gov.uk

QR Link to B&L Website



The co-operative membership
Community Fund

