

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers

Newsletter



Volume 9 – September 2020

Editor: Norman Dickinson

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

From your Editor

www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

I have to report that with immediate effect, Heather McNiven has decided to stand down as Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Chair and to relinquish her position on the B&L Committee. This decision has been taken for a number of reasons including stress and concern for her health. She has also decided to leave Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers for the same reasons. We thank Heather for all of the hard work that she has put into the Division over the many years that she has been involved and wish her and husband Ron well for the future and trust that her health improves. I believe that I speak for all members when I say that she will be missed and that we are sorry to see you go. In the interim, I have agreed to act as Chair for Brighton and Lewes Beekeepers and we will be looking for candidates to stand for the position of Chair at the 2021 B&L AGM.

I also have to report that Sue Taylor has made the

decision to hand over the position of Swarm Coordinator to others and will also stand down from the B&L Committee. Sue has done excellent work as Swarm Coordinator, as I am sure that those members who had swarms passed onto them from Sue will testify.

With Heather leaving B&L, this had left a vacancy for a manager at the Barcombe out-apiary. I am pleased to announce that Tony Birkbeck has agreed to take on this role. Tony does have experience of the apiary as he had been helping Heather in the past with the running of the site, mainly the heavy work which Heather had been finding difficult. With the cancellation of all out-apiary meetings this year due to Covid-19 you will all get the chance to meet with Tony in 2021, when hopefully restrictions will have been eased sufficiently to allow the out-apiary meetings to take place. Obviously, this will apply to all B&L apiaries. We wish Tony well in his new role as the

Barcombe Apiary Manager.

Details of all changes to the Committee and other positions mentioned above can be found on the back page of this newsletter.

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, the Committee were discussing the option of setting up a B&L Facebook Group. I can now report that a B&L Group has been set up on Facebook and that currently we have 38 active members in that Group. Our Membership Secretary has sent an email out to all members advising how you can join the Group using the link <https://www.facebook.com/groups/721334118647166>. Please note that this is a closed group only available to B&L Members so when you request to join the Group there will be a delay before access is granted whilst the applicants membership status is checked.

Honey better treatment for coughs and colds than antibiotics, study claims

Research suggests honey also more effective than many over-the-counter medicines

Honey may be better than conventional treatments for coughs, blocked noses and sore throats, researchers have said. The substance is cheap, readily available, and has virtually no side-effects.

Doctors can recommend it as a suitable alternative to antibiotics, which are often prescribed for such infections, even though they are not effective, scientists from the University of Oxford said.

Upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs) affect the nose, throat, voice box and the large air passages (bronchi) that lead from

the windpipe to the lungs.

There is evidence for honey being used in children – although the NHS warns against giving it to the under-ones because of the danger of botulism – and it has long been used as a home remedy to treat coughs and colds. But the

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Forthcoming winter meetings:

- *See rear panel*

In next months edition:

- *Amanda Advises*
- *Asian Hornet Action Team*
- *Contributions from our members*

Amanda advises...

So, the end of another bee year and the start of the new. How was 2020 for you? For my part I had my third largest honey crop, but the more extreme weather definitely made beekeeping more challenging, a foretaste of what climate change will bring. Queen mating was somewhat hit and miss; I had a queen emerge at about the same time as the first storm of autumn started battering England. And my very last one will emerge mid week, so I hope we get some decent weather at the end of August for them to mate. I know there are drones still in my colonies and on the plus side the swallows should have migrated by now so will not be a threat. Many colonies supersede at about this time so the weather now will determine whether we have well mated queens or drone laying queens by spring.

Stormy, wet or windy weather puts beekeeping activity on hold, both from the inspection/treatment side but also not a single bee is on the wing. While they are all indoors, they are eating their stores, but the colonies are still quite large. I urge you to heft the hives (lift each side to assess the weight and hence stores available) if you have not been routinely keeping an eye on their food stores. I was a little surprised to get a warning from the NBU about food stores or rather lack of them, but have also heard that other beekeepers' colonies are short of food. This happens when people who run a conventional brood and supers; take all the honey supers off. A single National brood is barely big enough for a colony to fill with the brood it wants and I find they frequently do not have stores in the lower brood areas. Stores should have been checked and prior to the honey removal and mite treatment, which we normally carry out before feeding. We have become complacent with weeks or months of hot dry weather. Outside the few weeks of the real nectar flow in June/July, if we are lucky there may only be enough to keep them ticking over and we should have planned for the inevitable storms and days of rain such as we are getting as I

write.

For my part I had lots of supers on and inevitable when taking the final honey off, I found many frames which were not fully capped, also when returning the wet supers which I took off earlier in July, some colonies decided to put more nectar in even though I had returned them over an open crown. It is all too much effort to deal with so I have left some with a couple of extra supers part full, and fully expect from the weight of some not to have to feed at all in September, saving more time and effort. I like to leave them with at least 50% of their own honey but it depends how much they eat in this unsettled weather now. I shall shortly do my full stores check, assessing what they have to the nearest couple of pounds and then feed only what they need, of the strongest sugar solution (2:1 of water). Based on the colony size they should have between 20lb (4 seam nuc) and 50lb (double brood) to last until spring. I have already returned the frames of winter stores I had removed in the spring before adding the honey supers, which were stored in the deepfreeze.

Be aware of them at all times, both in terms of food, and mite levels. Mite treatment should be completed by the time you read this, to get rid of the mite build up after a summer of brood rearing. Do keep monitoring though and be aware of the potentially lethal influx of mites starting early October from neglected or 'treatment free' colonies up to 1km away which die around this time. But more about that next month. My last thorough inspection some time in September includes a full disease inspection of the brood (shaking the bees off the frame to see the brood), assessment of the frame colour and condition in order to plan for a spring frame change if necessary, and a note of the size of the cluster area for comparison with next spring and sometimes in the winter if the opportunity arises. I can then get a feel of their health. If they have disease now eg Deformed wing virus, very patchy brood etc, there is little

one can do, having already treated for varroa, certainly not merge it with others. Accept it will probably dwindle over winter and die.



I like to scrape the excess wax and propolis off my supers and frames before storing them away for the winter. I am putting them in the freezer for a week to kill wax moth stages. I also go through the frames and recycle any in bad condition. I used foundation strips this year and initially when extracting, some of those not fully drawn out and attached to the bottom bars, blew out in the extractor, until I remembered the tip of putting three elastic bands round the frame to give it support while extracting. After that I had no blow-outs. But the bees will still rebuild blowouts if some comb remains in the frame. I have got some mead bubbling away; using the rinsing from the cappings, or use honey of high moisture content or cooking honey. I like to add some grapejuice but could only find red grape, courtesy Covid I presume, so looks a bit different. I am sure it will taste just as good!



One use for your capping's rinsing's. Ed

Asian Hornet Report by Manek Dubash

It's Asian Hornet Week! From 7-13 September, the BBKA is asking everyone to be extra-vigilant in looking out for this invasive species. As they point out, *Vespa velutina* could decimate our pollinators including our honey bees, it is important to have everyone actively looking for it.

That's because hornets are well known for their attacks on other hymenopteran species, especially honey bees. Studies by Muller et al. (2010, 2013) in France demonstrate that *V. velutina* preys on a range of insects and the carcasses of mammals and birds.

The prey spectrum consisted of 59% hymenopteran species [of which bees (Apidae) represented over 35%], 32% dipterans, and 9% others (orders Hemiptera, Orthoptera, Lepidoptera, Mecoptera, Trichoptera, Coleoptera, Heteroptera,

Neuroptera, Dermaptera, and Blattaria).

There's more info to refresh your mind about what the beast gets up to here: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageId=370>

What to do next

Set your traps! Autumn is the time for trapping, as wasps and hornets lose their sources of floral nectar and find hives full of honey very attractive. The BBKA is asking beekeepers to put an hour aside every day to watch for hornets hawking their hives during Asian Hornet Week.

To raise general awareness, this link will take you to a poster which you could print or have printed, and distribute to local shops, garden centres etc.: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1t9rkFjmsMBHii7isdOU82W_iBJU1mVuU/view

Keep an eye on the local media during the Asian Hornet Week, as we'll be sending press releases out to drum up more awareness. There will doubtless be sensationalist over-egging of the pudding, so feel free to contact any news outlet that gets it wrong. Some media organisations seem particularly fond of confusing the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) with the Giant Asian hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*), which is currently invading the US.

I hope this season has been a good and fruitful one.



evidence for its effectiveness for a range of upper respiratory tract symptoms in adults has not been systematically reviewed.

To address this, the scientists looked at research databases for relevant studies comparing honey and preparations that included it as an ingredient with usual care – mostly antihistamines, expectorants, cough suppressants and painkillers. They found 14 suitable clinical trials, involving 1,761 participants of varying ages.

Data analysis of the studies indicated that honey was more effective than usual care for improving symptoms, especially the frequency and severity of coughing. Two of the studies showed that symptoms lasted one to two days less among those treated with honey.

However, the researchers, Hibatullah Abuelgasim, of the Oxford University Medical School, and Charlotte Albury and Joseph Lee, of the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, noted that honey is a complex substance and not a uniform product. They also pointed out that only two of the studies involved a placebo, saying more such studies need to be done

before definitive conclusions can be reached.

Writing in the journal *BMJ Evidence Based Medicine*, the authors said: "Upper respiratory tract infections are the most frequent reason for antibiotic prescription. Since the majority of URTIs are viral, antibiotic prescription is both ineffective and inappropriate."

The researchers suggest honey might therefore provide an alternative when doctors want to prescribe something to safely treat upper respiratory tract symptoms.

They conclude: "Honey is a frequently used lay remedy that is well known to patients. It is also cheap, easy to access, and has limited harms. When clinicians wish to prescribe for URTI, we would recommend honey as an alternative to antibiotics.



Writing in the journal *BMJ Evidence Based Medicine*, researchers said they would recommend honey as an alternative to antibiotics. Photograph: Getty Images

"Honey is more effective and less harmful than usual care alternatives and avoids causing harm through antimicrobial resistance."

"Honey should not be given to children under one."

Reproduced from The Guardian website, 19th August 2020 and suggested by Amanda Millar.

Hilarious moment idiot beekeeper plants his naked bum onto a BEE HIVE for a NZ\$1,000 (£500) bet

Crazy Kiwi keeper Jamie Grainger, 27, lasted a full 30 seconds sitting on the angry hive before dashing off in pain.

Jamie Grainger was dared to take a stinging seat in rural Matamata, New Zealand for a mad bet.

He was challenged to sit for half a minute in the bees for NZ\$1,000 (£500) — after another pal barely lasted 19 seconds.

Eye-watering footage shows the 27-year-old debagging and plonking his bare bum into the angry hive.

Winching in pain, Jamie clamped his manhood before dashing off when he reached the 30 second mark.

He said: "It wasn't pleasant but it was certainly amusing. As you can imagine your a*** swells up.

"It was just a spur of the moment thing and he offered me a thousand bucks – I was like 'well a thousand bucks', that sounds good.

"When my partner Lauren found out we both had a bit of a laugh.

"And when she found out I'd got a thousand bucks she said to me,

'Well that could pay for the wedding!' But she was just cracking up."

Jamie dubbed his pal Aurel Braguta, who put him up to the dare, as "an arrogant b*****" who has form with gross bets.

"He once gave me 500 bucks to eat a slug", he said.

And he insisted their beehive antics were not cruel to the buzzing critters.

"Naturally when bees sting you they die. But it's near the end of the season and a lot die off anyway", Jamie insisted.

"There is no harm in what we do – we care about the bees and the job is important to us."

Dad-of-two Aurel was keen to stress that even though the video was a "laugh", it should not be tried at home.

Aurel said: "It was just for a bit of a laugh really.

"As a team we are prepared to do pretty much anything – it's not insane or crazy at all.

"Although, he was quite badly stung when he got up. I think it was quite painful for him.

"Your butt may swell and you

can't go to the toilet afterwards."

And he confirmed that the lads are always up for stomach-churning tasks.

"We always do weird challenges", Aurel said. "We do all kinds of things – like eating slugs. Once we even ate pig's testicles for a laugh.

"We were out fishing once and Shaun caught a big fish.

"He just asked me to eat its eyes. He said if I ate its eyes I could have the whole fish – so I did it.

"There are things they won't do, though. Like, for example, we once challenged each other to eat a dead rat and the boys just said no.

"They're a great team and we're a professional company who work with bees on a daily basis. It's about challenging yourself and facing your fears.

"You shouldn't do this if you're not used to bees and working with them on a regular basis."

Article by Neal Baker published on the Sun Website 31st August 2017 and suggested by Tony Robinson



Jamie was left with a red-raw bum after being stung dozens of times
Credit: Mercury Press



Jamie said the pain was intense as dozens of bees stung his bare bum
Credit: Mercury Press

Photo Corner



Swarm on the prow of a boat. Thanks to Sue Taylor for this.



Bee on Agapanthus, submitted by Tony Robinson



Bees struggling with the heat, submitted by Tony Robinson



Amanda's Bees also struggling with the heat.

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.

Summer & Winter programme:

All currently cancelled until at least the end of 2020.

Dates for your diary:

There are currently no events planned due to the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic.

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 by the Division.

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Norman Dickinson

Contributions to your newsletter and website

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 Gerald Legg our webmaster, see panel above.

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QR Link to B&L Website

