

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers

Newsletter



Volume 10 – October 2020

Editor: Norman Dickinson

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

From your Editor

www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

It is with regret that I inform you that Pat Clowser has recently relinquished her roles as B&L Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Committee Member.

Over the years that Pat has held these roles she has done a significant amount of work on behalf of the membership, including the procurement of jars, fondant, frame parts and foundation, amongst other items, for sale to the members at a reduced rate over beekeeping suppliers rates. She has also acted as a funnel for communicating events, special offers and the like to the membership. I am sure that I speak on behalf of the members when I say "Thank you Pat for all of your past work and that we wish you well for the future"

It will be obvious when looking at the back page of this publication that the B&L Committee is now sadly very depleted and we appeal to the membership for new

candidates to be seconded onto the Committee. Anyone who is interested in becoming a Committee Member should send me an email at editor.blbees@outlook.com We will also be looking for a suitable person to take over the running of the new B&L Apiary at Piddinghoe. Currently there are no bees located there so this could be an opportunity to setup the perfect apiary.

For those of us who harvest, extract, bottle and sell our honey, it is most important to recognise that when dealing with food for human consumption we are all duty bound to ensure that our products are treated with the utmost respect and that our facilities (including personal hygiene) meet the highest standards as required by law. To this end we are advising all members who handle foodstuffs to take a Level 2 Food Safety and Hygiene Course. These courses are available online and cost in the region of £20 + VAT. Whichever

course provider you decide to use, please ensure that they have the required accreditations and approvals.

In the absence of any winter meetings at present, you may be interested in the following: BIBBA are holding a series of Webinars, details at <https://bibba.com/webinars-3/>

Eventbrite also have plenty of lectures, details of which can be found at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/d/online/beekeeping/>

The National Honey Show will be presenting a series of lectures and workshops over the period 22nd to 24th October and will be open to all. Keep a look out on their website for details on how to register for these events. There will also be a dashboard to other activities over the 3 days. Details at <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/>

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Forthcoming winter meetings:

- See rear panel

In next months edition:

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

An Inspector Calls

Hilary Osman's experience with the local bee inspector.

There I was in the middle of the Solent on our boat and frankly feeling a bit queasy. A phone call from a number I didn't recognise, but thinking that it might take my mind off the sea for a while I answered it. 'Hello, am I speaking to Hilary Osman? My name is Diane Steele the local bee inspector for East and West Sussex'. Suddenly I

was all ears, what was the problem with my hives..... 'I would like to visit some of your apiaries if you still have bees on them, as there is an outbreak, of AFB within 5km of your hives'. My reply was of course to help and assist to prevent further spreading of this disease. I had checked my colonies the week before, I hadn't seen or smelt

anything suspicious but you can never take anything for granted.

Once home it was straight onto BeeBase to see if there were any further reports, having had an email the week previous to inform me that AFB was in the area. Another apiary was highlighted,

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Amanda advises...

I have seen a few European hornets around, cruising up and down my flowerbeds looking for unwary insects, but more on my apples and having picked all the good ones I have left the damaged ones in the hope the hornets and wasps stay there and leave my bees alone. I have also had a hornet-mimic hoverfly try for several minutes to get into a nuc but the bees shooed it off. This nuc, on which I have already reduced the entrance to 1" using sponge, has had a dozen or so bees clustering round this reduced entrance and when anything passes they sit up and wave their front legs. Excellent guards; essential for small colonies which are more easily damaged by wasps. It is worth further reducing entrances if the wasps are bothering them.

August was a bad month for mating queens. In September I had to throw out a colony which was queenless. I expected to throw another out when I did its final inspection having found grumpy bees and no brood whatsoever. I found the old remains of a hatched supersedure cell. Mine usually have perfect supersedure (when a replacement queen is produced and lays alongside her queen Mum, sometimes until the spring), so given the weather in August and no brood in this one I feared that the new queen had been lost and the old one already deceased possibly because of injury or illness. However, as I was too busy to do anything about them for a few days, I gave them a frame of open brood to make sure. Last week, I was delighted to find eggs and saw a fat unmarked queen, so they had had an imperfect supersedure (old queen is lost before the new one takes over, sometimes resulting in a brood break), which is much more risky. However, I was not yet in the clear because if she had waited too long because of bad weather, they may have been unfertilized eggs and drone brood, but today I found several frames with solid slabs of worker brood from edge to edge, so all is well.

I also noticed the smell of ivy nectar being processed on 21st Sept and the bees were busy and

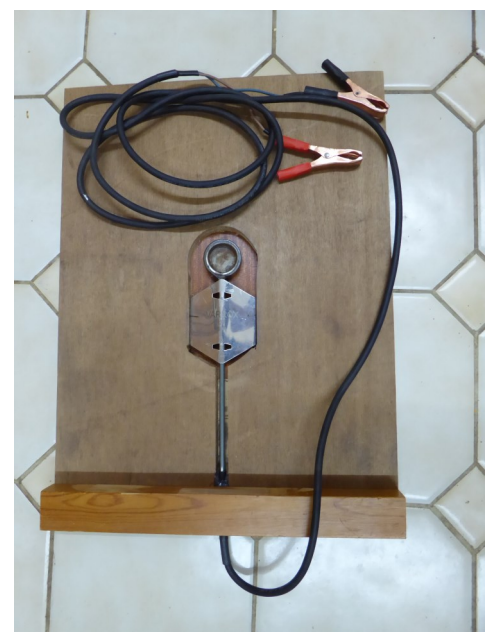
relatively content in the 24°C, probably the last really decent day, as it is going to be 10°C less for the rest of the week. This is the last chance of a bit of surplus nectar gathering; from the ivy. The warmth will be good but the soil is so dry that I doubt whether there will be much unless we have some rain soon. The bees are still visiting a variety of flowers in my garden and bringing lots of pollen in; *Verbena bonariensis*, *Aster*, *Sedum*, lots of wild *Scabious*, *Caryopteris* and prairie flowers like *Echinacea* and *Rudbeckia*.

October is a month of tidying loose ends, cleaning feeders and other equipment, planting next year's bee bulbs. Insulation, straps and mouseguards can go on later this month (having removed the entrance block to avoid blockage of the few holes by dead bees) unless you have 5.5mm high entrances as I have, which mice cannot get through. I will be monitoring the mite levels carefully in the second half of October in anticipation of a varroa influx from failing colonies elsewhere. Having been dusting the few colonies which were dropping more than 2 per day, I noticed the drop after dusting was declining through September but this week at the end of September it seems to be on the increase again reflecting the start of an influx of mites. So I expect to do my Oxalic Acid Vapourisation (OAV) starting end of October depending upon the trend in mite drop. I don't want to start too soon as the influx occurs over several weeks. Because there will be brood in the colonies, I will need to do several treatments to catch the mites as they hatch out with the brood. Last autumn I treated all my colonies with OAV and have been very pleased with their health and low mites all year.

I use a home made wooden board (see photo. Ed) with the heat wand fitted into it, inserted under the mesh floor after blocking the entrance with foam. The board was made to fit my narrowest floors and I use a strip of thin ply to slide over the gap left in wider floors. A towel is wedged into the rear gap before connecting to the battery and in this way hardly

any vapour escapes so it is safer for me. The bees are not in contact with the hot dispenser and don't get their feet burnt.

The amount of Oxalic Acid (Apibioxal) is related to the volume of the hive not the number of bees, so I use 2g for the equivalent of a standard brood box, and 2.1-2.2g for a brood and a super, for a double brood equivalent, which several of mine have this year, I shall use 2.3g. This is all set up and heated for 2.5 mins, then it is left sealed up to cool until 10 mins have passed. Remove the OAV board and replace with the insert, blocked at the back by a cloth, do not release the bees for a further 15 mins. I only do this if the ambient temperature is over 6°C otherwise they will be too tightly clustered and it seems it is best not to do it when there is a lot of flying either. The mite drop, often highest on the second day, continues for 3-4 days then tails off, if more than 50-100 drop over this time then I repeat OAV on the 5th day. My colonies varied between 2 and 5 treatments required last year. This treatment is fine for wooden hives but not recommended for polystyrene ones as the wand gets to 400°C!



Asian Hornet Report by Manek Dubash

We didn't get away with it.

Although I, and I'm sure many others thought the British Isles might manage to escape an invasion by Asian hornets this year, a nest made by *Vespa velutina* was found and destroyed near Gosport, Hants, on 11 September 2020.

I first heard about it on the UK Beekeepers' Facebook page. A hornet was spotted on a bunch of grapes by (I believe) a vigilant member of the public, from where it was eventually traced to its nest at the top of an apple tree – there's an image of it on the BBKA's Facebook page. DEFRA was informed, the nest was killed (probably using CO₂) and a tree surgeon then cut it down.

This is the first confirmed UK sighting since October 2019, when two related nests were detected and destroyed near Christchurch, Dorset. DNA tests on those nests and two others found in 2019 have shown that the queens all came from France.

How did it get here?

Local beekeepers have speculated,

probably correctly, that the founding hornet queen came over on a ferry, since the Southampton ferry from France is close by.

Since the Covid-19 lockdown ended and the movement of people increased, with it – just as predicted – came an increase in the risk of exactly this happening. It's just possible that this will be the only nest discovered this year, although we cannot afford to be complacent.

It does though seem likely that next year will prove to be much busier both for DEFRA and its team of hornet nest destroyers, and for us. As beekeepers on the south coast, we are on the front line. You don't need me to tell you that the odds are high of a *V. velutina* queen hiding on a lorry or freeloading on some fruit bought at a French market.

It's not a question of whether but when.

On the bright side, the public are alerted and are our eyes and ears. We must encourage people to load up the Asian Hornet app on their phones, as it helps both identification and with the

reporting of sightings. So let's keep writing to correct editors who publish stories and pictures that confuse the Giant Asian hornet (the one that's invading the US) with the Asian hornet.

And at this end of the year, the hornets will be looking for sugary foods, which gives us a better idea of where to look.

We can stem this tide if we stay alert.

It is appropriate to include this YouTube link sent in by Tony Robinson showing an Asian Hornet in Portugal "processing" a Honey Bee. The video was provided by the UK Animal & Plant Health Agency. Ed

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4DRki97wzg&feature=youtu.be>



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OH GAUD, (*typical Hilary speak!* Ed) I thought, better get over and check them all again. With washing soda solution, clean gloves, boots and suit off I went to examine my hives.

Later that morning I met up with another member of Brighton and Lewes, and mentioned my recent phone call. 'I had one too, she is coming on Tuesday.' That was it my maps were out to try and find where the infection was. So Tony lives at Park Farm, Maresfield, and my highlighted apiaries, were all on the other side of Uckfield, and no problem highlighted at my Blackboys apiary. So drawing a circle, it has to be Uckfield, Framfield or Buxted where the outbreak is. Roll on Thursday for Diane to arrive.....

The rain was pouring down when I awoke, so half expecting a call from Diane to re schedule, but no call. I met her as agreed and off to the first hive. She asked me if I

thought everything was Ok with the colonies, and when I last checked them. Diane had obviously looked at my apiaries and thought that I have several small apiaries with 2-4 colonies on each rather than one large apiary. All clear, here, so onto the next apiary. Good news that was clear too. On to the final one, and Diane saw I had an Asian Hornet trap. I will look at that too if I may. Be my guest I stated. Lots of wasps, hornets and a few flies were the outcome from that. She asked what I used as a bait? I replied normally Trappit but as I have run out, now using sugared water. The last two colonies checked and all clear. What a sigh of relief, and although you think that there is not a problem, an expert eye is always good to give a clean bill of health. Tony received good news too, all clear and Tickety boo.

Diane asked me if I had seen small hive beetle. I had but a while ago. A specimen was duly brought out for me to see. 'Do you squash wax moth grubs,? well you really need

to squeeze these and they pop' Something new I learnt today. I was also asked about Asian hornets, and if I had seen the leaflets describing them. I informed her that we had as a division been handing them out to garden centres and camping shops.

So in short: Get registered with BeeBase. It costs nothing and emails are sent to you if there is a problem to your hives nearby. The Bee Inspector can help you with advice. Be over insured with your colonies, rather than under insured. A summer nuc could cost you, if you are not insured with equipment needing to be destroyed.

Tony was also completely clear, all good and colonies in 'top notch' condition. Great to have an expert eye, but what a worry getting to this point. So always think there may be a problem.

Events and Competitions

BIBBA News for September 2020

View Full Details of Season Three Webinars

<https://bibba.com/webinars-3/>

Nine more webinars covering the National Bee Improvement Programme

Guest Presenters Norman Carrick and Grace McCormack

22nd Sept "The National Bee Improvement Programme - Outline" Jo Widdicombe

29th Sept "More details of the National Bee Improvement Programme and Participation" Jo Widdicombe

6th Oct "Global pandemics, bee imports and native bees" Norman Carrick

13th Oct "My 50 years experiences of imported bees affecting local stock" Peter Jenkins

20th Oct "Resilient Honeybees" Grace McCormack

27th Oct "Where we are, how we got here and how we can move on....." Roger Patterson

3rd Nov "Some Fresh Ideas for Teaching and Learning" Roger Patterson

10th Nov "Bees and queens for everyone" Roger Patterson

17th Nov "Answering Your Questions" All Speakers

BBKA PHOTO COMPETITION

We are looking for the best photo of a wasp, hornet (European or Asian), nest or gadget to protect your bees. Thorne Beekeeping Equipment have kindly donated a £100 voucher for the winner.

Photos should be of good quality resolution as entries may be used on the website, social media or BBKA (with credit).

Enter by sending your photo in to Julie.Horbury@bbka.org.uk with the subject Photo Competition

Deadline **30th September** 2020. The winner will be announced in BBKANews, on the BBKA WEBSITE during last week of October.

Photo Corner

**Bee on Aster, submitted
by Amanda Millar**



**Verbena bonariensis, popular
with bees and this Brown Argus,
submitted by Amanda Millar**



**Native hornet mimics hoverfly Volucella
inanis, resting after trying to enter a hive,
submitted by Amanda Millar**



**Bee sucking moisture from duckweed,
submitted by Tony Robinson**

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 live events planned for the rest of the year due to the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic.

There are links to on-line events on in the Editorial on Page 1 and a search on-line will reveal more.

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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"Knowlands Farm": Tony Birkbeck
"Hove": Judith New
"Piddinghoe": Vacant

SBKA County Representative:
Bob Curtis

National Honey Show Representative:
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

