

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

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EDITORIAL



Entries at our 2019 Honey Show

Hot news: B&L's Honey Show, to be held at the AGM in February, is back, with new Classes and a new way to submit photos.

This year has not been the best for honey, so we've added a couple of non-honey classes: a honey label design and any confectionery—but not biscuits or cake—you make with honey.

Points are awarded in each class and the person who gains the most points will be awarded the Dixon Hurst Cup, so the more classes you enter the better your chance. Also, there is the Novice Cup for the most points gained by a member who has not won anything in a previous Honey Show.

Photography

Photographs will be dealt with differently this year, as we are going completely digital. Photographs will need to be submitted by email a week before the AGM

and will be projected on the evening. We hope it will be a better way to show off your photos.

Schedule for Classes

- Class 1: One 1lb Jar Clear honey.
- Class 2: One 1lb Jar Naturally Crystallised honey.
- Class 3: Two 1lb Jars of similar honey.
- Class 4: One Honey Jar Label of your own design on an empty 1lb jar.
- Class 5: One Moulded candle.
- Class 6: One 1oz block of wax.
- Class 7: One Honey Cake. Next month's newsletter will contain the recipe to be used.
- Class 8: Six Honey Biscuits. Your own recipe to be provided with biscuits.
- Class 9: Four items of Confectionery containing Honey (sweets, fudge, etc.)
- Class 10: A bee-related photograph (JPG: Max file size 4MB).
- Class 11: A close-up shot of a bee (JPG: Max file size 4MB).

Please have a go, you still have some time to make, bake and edit before February, so we expect a good turnout.

The Entry Form and Rules will be sent out after Christmas and with the AGM pack.

Finally, a quick note to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Manek Dubash, Editor

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2021

EVENTS

- Bee chats in the pub and indoor meetings.
- See [back page](#) for details

NEXT MONTH

- AGM
- Winter tips
- Your contributions
- Committee news
- News updates

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS AND STORIES

Do you have interesting photos or video links you'd like to share? Or an insight from your beekeeping that would enhance the hobby for others? Do you have skills that could be useful to other members? Anything else you'd like to see in this newsletter?

Ideas and contributions welcome; all contact details are on the [back page](#).

ONLINE

brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk



QR link to our website

Seasonal tips for December

Last month the editor asked me for a picture of my home-made steam cleaner, which I promptly forgot about. But to make it up to him and let you all see my Heath Robinson creation, see the picture below. The plastic trays can be a bit elusive, but I have found them recently at Goldcliff Garden Centre in Ringmer.



Visit your hives

December is a very quiet month in the apiary, but you still need visit your bees on a regular basis, especially if they are not at the bottom of your garden. The checks are not very intrusive, so some can be done when the weather is not at its best.

Such as: are they still upright after a storm or investigation by a passing badger? If you use mouse guards, check to make sure they are not blocked by dead bees. Do they have enough feed? Does the hive feel lighter than the last time you hefted it? Not sure, put some fondant on anyway.

When putting fondant on make sure it's placed directly on the top bars of the hive over the main brood cluster, and not above the crown board. We all know that as the temperature drops, the bees cluster more and will not — cannot—move very far to find more stores. To stop the fondant oozing down between the bars, I put a plastic queen excluder between the bars and the fondant.

I have assumed that you will be able to get baker's fondant, but our Chair has suggested it may be a little hard to come by the year. In that case, please find a recipe I have in a book I used when I first started beekeeping: *Beekeeping for Beginners*. Andrew Richards. Northern Bee Books 1991.

ISBN 0-907908-61-6. It's an old book, I didn't start beekeeping then.

Fondant recipe: ingredients

White granulated sugar	3lb/1.36kg
Boiling water	½ pt/284ml
Salt	Pinch (optional)
Cream of Tartar	Pinch (optional)

Why the optional ingredients?

Apparently, bees prefer slightly salty water, and the sugar is inverted when you boil it with cream of tartar, which saves the bees inverting it themselves.

Method

- Put the sugar in the pan. Add the boiling water and stir, the mixture will be thick. Continue to stir while heating until the mixture becomes thin. Do not allow the sugar to burn as this will produce a toxic candy.
- Add the salt and cream of tartar and allow to simmer for 20 minutes.
- Grease/oil/clingfilm the containers you are going to cast the candy in.
- After it has simmered for 20 minutes let it cool but continue stirring (you don't want it to set into a lump in the pan). When it starts to thicken, pour into the oiled containers.
- Note: when pouring the candy, it will start to set quicker as the volume reduces.
- When set the candy should be soft enough to mark with your nail but hard enough to tip out of the container and handle.

Jude New also posted a YouTube link on [our Facebook page](#) showing another version—there are many recipes out there. If all else fails, dip a bag of sugar in water, wait until it sets and use that.

Varroa treatment

December is a good time to think about an oxalic acid (OA) treatment to knock back any varroa mites still active in your colony. This can be done either by making up a sugar solution containing the requisite amount of OA and dribbling the solution over the seams of bees in each brood box if they are on a brood-and-a-half or double brood. There may be a bit of maths required to

accommodate the treatment of a 14x12 brood box, but the process is reasonably self-explanatory.

Or you could use vaporisation/sublimation to apply the OA, using kit such as the GasVap.



GasVap kit from [Bridge Cottage Bees](#)

Vaporisation and sublimation in this context mean the same thing and is the method where the OA crystals are inserted inside the hive and heated to produce a vapour. This vapour can be created by using an electrically heated wand or gas heated vaporiser (using your blowtorch) filled with crystals.

The best result from both methods is achieved when the colony is broodless. How do you know when they're broodless? Unless you inspect on a regular basis you'll never know.

In the trials carried out at Sussex University a few years ago, they overcame this problem by uncapping any sealed brood before they applied the OA treatment. You may not want to go to all that trouble and accept that you may have missed a few mites. But make sure the open mesh floor (OMF) is sealed with the varroa board to maximise the effects.

Just a few cautionary words when using OA; first of all and most importantly OA is toxic to us so avoid breathing in the vapour by using a

(Continued on page 4)

B&L holds its first face-to-face meeting since—when?



B&L held its first real, face-to-face meeting in almost two years on Friday 19 November. It shouldn't be such a big deal but it felt like we were passing a milestone.

Long-term B&L member and current webmaster Gerald Legg gave us a fascinating talk, and those who had passed their BBKA Basic Assessment earlier in the year received their certificates (see photos below).

Gerald talked about his youth and how he acquired his lifelong need to find out how stuff works.

He peppered his talk with anecdotes, including the time caterpillars got loose in his dad's car. He inherited grandfather's lathe, enabling a lifelong love of making and fixing things—especially Land Rovers.

After obtaining a degree studying pseudoscorpions, he spent time in Sierra Leone. There, he got involved with the tropical rainforest and the creatures who lived there, most of them unknown.

Political unrest prompted a return to the UK, where he became staff biologist at Brighton's Booth Museum of Natural History, a post he held for decades.

Gerald talked about naturalist and collector Edward Thomas Booth—who

founded the museum in 1874—and his collection of stuffed animals. The museum now has one of UK's best insect fossils, Gerald informed us.

As both a beekeeper and scientist, Gerald was there when the UK's first varroa was detected. While he did once curate dozens of colonies, he's managed to whittle it down to a more manageable half a dozen.

Certificates

Before Gerald's talk, chairman Norman Dickinson presented the unprecedented number of nine successful candidates with their official BBKA certificates and badges.

Afterwards, thanks to Shirley Light, tea was taken. It felt good to be back.

Manek Dubash



Chairman Norman Dickinson (the chap with the fluorescent orange braces) presents BBKA Basic Assessment certificates and badges to the nine successful candidates. From top left to bottom right they are: Suzie Brockbank, Graham Bubloz, Ben Castle, Manek Dubash, Nigel Kermode, Julie Lawrence, Moira Mayne, Jeff Rodrigues, and Barbara Summerfield. Photos: Bob Curtis.

Report: The National Honey Show 2021



The 90th National Honey Show was held from 21-23 October 2021 at Sandown Park Racecourse, and the general

consensus was that it was great to be back after the virtual 2020 show.

All members' badges and day visitor wristbands had been sent out in the post so there were no long queues at the one desk required.

We checked those who had left badges or wristbands at home against the database and issued them with replacements. A few day visitors —just 158—bought wristbands on the day, compared with 1,136 sold over the three show days in 2019.

Streaming lectures

For the first time, and based on our experiences in 2020 with a virtual

show, we were able to stream our lectures over the Internet.

All Honey Show members were able to log into the live stream and we also sold over 110 tickets to non-members who were then provided with a login in order to view the lectures. This is something that we will most probably be considering for 2022.

In previous years, we could always expect a goodly number of foreign visitors as we have a large number of members in Europe, North America, Africa, Australasia and Asia. Alas, Covid restrictions prevented travel.

Exhibits, lectures and stands

The number of exhibits staged was slightly lower than in 2019, with 1,500 entries from 186 entrants. This was to be expected as there were no foreign entries permitted due to Covid, with the Irish contingent especially greatly missed as they always entered into

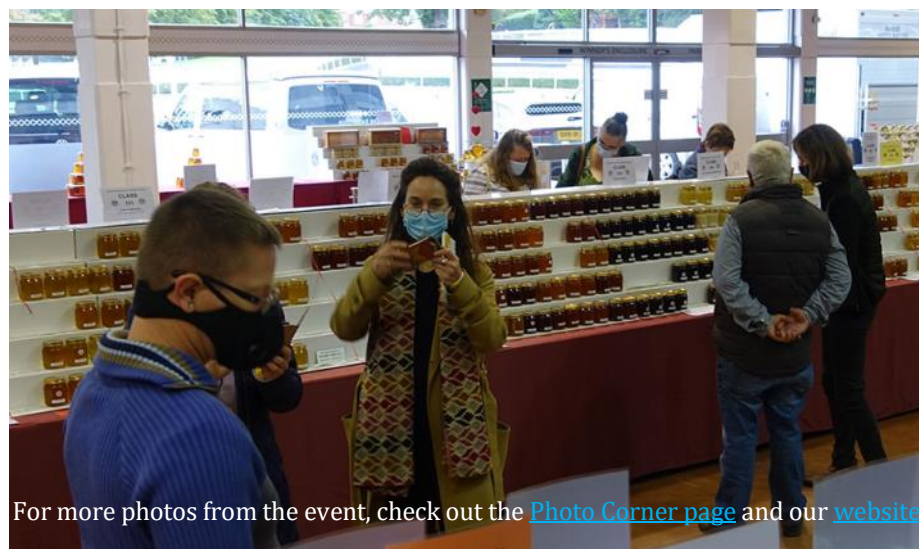
many of the classes. We also missed European exhibitors who could be guaranteed to enter some excellent exhibits. A number of Classes were taken out of the Schedule for 2021, these being the Classes for overseas members, however we look forward to welcoming them in 2022.

As expected, trader numbers were also down against 2019, with 40 stands in the trading hall but those that were there reported good sales figures.

There was a full programme of 21 lectures and 25 workshops with some of the lectures scheduled to be available on-line in 2022.

Overall, it was felt that even with a reduced footfall the event was successful, with planning scheduled to start in January 2022 for the October 2022 Show.

Norman Dickinson, Membership Secretary, The National Honey Show



For more photos from the event, check out the [Photo Corner page](#) and our [website](#)

Seasonal tips for December (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

fitted half mask with an filter suitable for organic gases and vapours. Do not use substances from wholesaler/s, only use Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VDM) approved medicines such as Api-Bioxal. Only make up the solution as and when you need it.

Record-keeping

If you keep records, spend some time going over the last year's activities; that's what they are for. They will help you to decide on whether to manage you hives differently next year. You may want to increase the number of colonies; or rear more queens; or select the best honey producers. As

ever the possibilities are endless so take some time to think about it.

And lastly, whatever you decide next year make sure you have all the kit required and start building it now!

Have a very merry Christmas and a successful New Year!

The Veiled Beekeeper



Norman Dickinson
Chairman

Words from the Chair

We were pleased to hold our first face-to-face meeting since lockdown, with over 33 members attending to hear our own Gerald Legg give a most interesting and informative talk on natural history, particularly insect life. I was happy to present BBKA Basic Assessment Certificates to the eight members who gained a Credit, but especially to Sue Brockbank who gained a Distinction. Well done and congratulations to one and all. Photos and a report on the meeting and candidates [here](#).

Planning for the Bee Disease Day next year has now been finalised, so expect to receive an email with all of the details early in the New Year.

Membership fees

Membership renewal forms for 2022 were sent out a few weeks ago and unfortunately we had to raise the Full Membership subscription by £2 and the Partner Membership subscription by £1, both as a result of the BBKA increasing the capitation and effective from 1 October 2021. B&L and SBKA subscription fees remain unchanged, as do BDI insurance costs.

Our preferred method of payment is via BACS but we have now taken the plunge and invested in a credit/debit card reader so you may pay your membership fee using your card when attending our live winter meetings, as indeed some of our members did at the meeting.

Upcoming events

The Sussex BKA Exec Committee met on 22 November via Zoom, where Pam Hunter gave us an assessment of some of the proposals put forward for the next BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM) scheduled to take place on 15 January 2022. This is so that we could mandate Liz Twyford, SBKA Delegate to the ADM, as to how she should vote on behalf of the SBKA. There is also a vacancy on the Board of Trustees and Pam was able to guide us as to who Liz should vote for.

Planning is also well underway for the Bee Market on Saturday 21 May 2022 at the Heathfield Community College.

B&L will be hosting the SBKA AGM on Saturday 5 March 2022 at the Luxford Centre in Uckfield. SBKA Chair Harold Cloutt announced that the Autumn Convention this year made a small profit; we normally either break even or make a small loss.

Apologies

Finally, I would like to apologise for the absence of a Chairman's Report in the last newsletter. This might appear strange for a retiree but I really had no time available.

With a change in the distribution of Honey Show members' badges and day visitor wristbands everything had to go out via the postal system; I probably assembled over 1,200 mail items. The local sorting office was amused to say the least.

Report: Sussex BKA Convention

Saturday 30 October was a wet and blustery as I set off with my bee buddies to attend my first Bee Convention, held in the pretty village of Robertsbridge.

Some 20 people were present while others dialled in remotely. Attendance was lower than expected but it was impressive to see that technology allowed others to participate via Zoom. Covid has had some positive benefits!

The speakers were really interesting and also very funny at times. I picked up lots of interesting facts from both the presentations and my fellow beekeepers during the breaks.

A presentation by Shona Blair on medicinal honey was particularly interesting. This covered the antimicrobial benefits that honey has—not only manuka! And of course the benefits of a tablespoon of honey a day.

Christine Stevens gave a great talk on getting ready for spring, and Bailey comb exchange, which I will be attempting next year.

The Buckfast Abbey talk was very entertaining, addressing many unproven statements. I particularly liked 'Nasty bees make more honey'. Not necessarily true, as maybe we tend to leave them to get on with their job.

Celia Davis gave the final talk on nucs and to put them to greater use. Again I will be experimenting with this.

Along with the interesting talks, we were treated to tea and biscuits at every break, plus ample delicious food and further cakes at lunch time.

All in all it was a great day, topped off by being blessed with sunshine on the way home—which was lucky for the man from Uckfield who cycled all the way to Robertsbridge in the morning. Now that is one committed beekeeper.

Lana Trundle

From our apiaries: Barcombe & Grassroots

Barcombe



Barcombe's bees tucked up for the winter.
Photo: Tony Birkbeck

The bees are now tucked up after a very tough year. I began with six colonies, ended with six, had a tough call with varroa, had all scheduled meetings cancelled due to the rubbish weather, had the all-clear from the Bee Inspector after EFB was reported in the area. But zero honey crop.

I don't like moaning about the weather, but its been one of the worse springs/summers I can remember and no wonder the bees struggled. It seems a common problem that most

beekeepers have reported this year. So very little to report now. The bees have finished their autumn varroa treatment, been fed and already have fondant on—see you at the start of the new season!

Here's a picture (left) of them all wrapped in roofing membrane to keep the damp away—apart from the hive in the corner that wouldn't let me anywhere near them!

Tony Birkbeck, Apiary Manager

Grassroots

Work progressed to clear up our Grassroots apiary on 20 November. Tough job, well done all! Top left photo, L to R: Jude New, Graham Bubloz, Felicity Alder, José Reina. The children are Fi and (standing up) Carlotta. Photos: Graham Bubloz



B&L vacancies: volunteers required

Two key members of our Committee will be resigning as of the next AGM in February 2022. Volunteers are required.

Chairman

Norman Dickinson, who took over the Chair last year and has steered us smoothly through troubled waters, said he would only do so for a year.

Secretary

Hilary Osman, a Committee stalwart has done a sterling job as Secretary, managing correspondence, assembling the minutes and

agenda, and lots besides for the last seven years, but she now wants and deserves to spend more time with her bees.

So B&L will be looking for two key officers from February 2022. If you would like to know more about what the jobs entail, see Hilary's column in the July issue.

Mentors

Helping new beekeepers is what we're all about. We still have members who need mentors, which can be done over the phone.

Please let Hilary know if you can help (details on [back page](#)).

B&L's new honey label

We have a new honey jar label.

For some months—make that years—the B&L committee has been looking at producing a new label for the produce of our apiaries. The money raised goes to support the running of the Division, and especially the costs of the B&L apiaries themselves.

It was an agenda item when I first joined the committee three years ago. But now we think we've nailed it.



What do you think? This is a crop from a bigger picture on our Facebook page.

Adam wants your honey

If you have a honey surplus, Adam Strawson of Acre Honey will buy it from you at 'above market price'.

Adam has helped B&L in the past, for example by supplying syrup and fondant at a bulk discount which we have then passed on to members.

If you're interested, please contact Adam either [by email](#) or on 01273 974120.

acrecr

B&L Facebook group

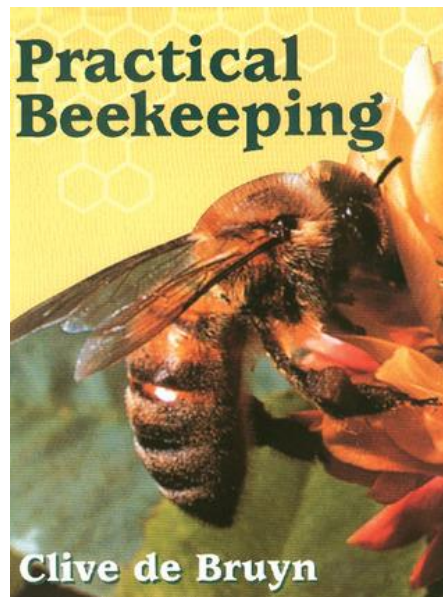
Hygienic behaviour by honey bees can kill them rather than varroa. If you think this is counter-intuitive, you may not be alone. So why not join the discussion on our Facebook page...?

If you have thoughts about this or any topic, you'd like to help and to offer advice or you need advice, please jump in! The water's warm and the atmosphere friendly.

Group membership is now nearly 90-strong—well over half our 165+ members are here.

To join, log into Facebook and search for **B&L Beekeeping Division**, or follow [this link](#). Members only admitted.

Book of the Month



This month's book is Practical Beekeeping by Clive de Bruyn, published in 1997.

It's again a guide to beekeeping but in much more depth than Haynes manual and covers all aspects of beekeeping.

Clive has kept bees for years and the book is full of really useful information gathered by trial and error—as well as scientific stuff but not in so much detail that non-scientists (like me) switch off. I have also attended one of Clive's talks

It's full of really useful information gathered by trial and error

at a bee convention and it was by far the best talk of the day.

Each chapter deals with a particular topic and with lots of extra information you might not have known before. It's written to be interesting but never dry. I particularly like this: "I find it easier to manage bees in retrospect—I always know what I should have done at the end of the year."

I know just what he means.

We have two copies in the library. Just a returnable £5 deposit to pay. My contact details are on the [back page](#).

Barbara Summerfield, Librarian

B&L meetings & Bee Chats



Wednesday 15 December 2021, 19.00.

Our last meeting this year features The Apiarist, aka David Evans, via Zoom. David, whose [popular beekeeping blog](#) is well worth a read, will be talking about Bee Houses. David is based in a remote area of western Scotland, has worked

with bees for about ten years and is involved in research into DWV at St. Andrews University.

A link will be sent to members shortly before the meeting.

Following that, we have a face-to-face meeting on Friday 21 January at Cliffe Hall, featuring a talk by entomologist Martin Jenner on solitary wasps, bees and bumbles.

Bee Chats

The final Bee Chat of 2021 will be at Ye Olde Black Horse, Rottingdean, on Wednesday 8 December at 19.00. Enjoy!

A Scottish Beekeeper's Year



Wednesday 1 December 2022, 19.00

Speaker: Ann Chilcott.

A Scottish Beekeeper's Year will show some of the challenges and joys of keeping bees where geography and unreliable weather largely shape the outcomes.

Ann Chilcott is a retired public health nurse with a diploma in nurse education. She has been keeping bees for 17 years in the Scottish Highlands and holds the Scottish Expert Beemaster certificate and an HNC in Countryside Management.

Ann combines these skills in her self-appointed, mostly voluntary, role of honey bee health champion and beekeeping educator. She takes every opportunity to learn from other beekeepers and has traveled widely visiting beekeepers and giving presentations overseas.

Register [here](#).

FreeBEES—Bait hives for pleasure and profit



Wednesday 1 December 2022, 19.00

Speaker: Prof. David Evans

This topical and exciting talk will help beekeepers of all levels to better understand the theory and practice of swarms and bait hives.

David will give a brief overview of honey bee colony reproduction, then explore the role of scout bees in identifying a new nest site, the process of swarming, bivouacking and relocation to the chosen location.

You will learn how to set up bait hives, including the choice of box, its' location and contents. David will cover scientific studies and apply the findings to practical beekeeping.

You will find out about the contents of bait hives including how to build and use foundationless frames, which offer particular benefits for bait hives.

The talk closes with a discussion of what you can expect to observe when scout bees find and favour your bait hive, and the things you need to do having attracted a swarm – these include moving it somewhere else and managing the Varroa that also arrive with the swarm.

Register [here](#).

Waxing lyrical



Thursday 2 December 2021, 19:00

Speaker: Joyce Nisbet

Joyce is a Master Beekeeper, a BBKA Honey Judge, Trustee and chairs the BBKA Spring Convention Committee.

Joyce's wax preparation skills improved after she saw high-quality wax exhibits in Honey Shows.

Joyce's talk will pass on suggestions for cleaning beeswax, plus techniques to produce beeswax candles, flowers and other models, whether for display or as Christmas gifts.

Register [here](#).

Brood factories



Wednesday 15 December 2021, 19:00

Speaker: Mike Palmer

Please note that this event clashes with B&L's event with Prof David Evans.

If you're considering queen rearing, this could be a inspirational talk. In 1998, when Mike first attempted to begin wintering nucleus colonies, his main

concern was where to get the bees and brood?

He says that first year was easy. He had an apiary of 13 colonies that needed to be moved. In July, he broke down those colonies into 40 nucleus colonies, buying in the necessary queens from a California breeder. All 40 nuclei came through the Vermont winter (ie very cold!). Was he convinced? Absolutely.

Then he thought: why not keep the best over-wintered nucleus colonies and use them as source for brood and bees?

Ten years later, Mike has more than a hundred of these "Brood Factories". They have become the foundation of his sustainable apiary just as the wintering nucleus colonies have become the building blocks.

His presentation will highlight set up, use, and management of brood factories.

Register [here](#).

The National Honey Show: in pictures



A huge range of exhibits, trade stands, wonderful wax creations and more were on show at the event. To see all these photos and more uncropped and in full size, please head over to our [website](#). Photos: Bob Curtis

B&L Divisional Diary

Winter meetings 2021/22

Date	Format	Topic	Speaker
Wed 8 December	Live	Bee Chat @ Ye Olde Black Horse, Rottingdean, 19.00	-
Wed 15 December	Zoom	Bee houses	David Evans (The Apiarist)
Fri 18 February	Live *	AGM / Honey Show / Auction	
Wed 16 March	Zoom	Dance like no-one's watching	Lynne Ingram
Fri 22 April	Live *	Getting ready for the new year + The Bee People trade stand	Ben & Maggi Pratt
31 May	Live	Bee Disease Day	Laughton

* Meetings held at Cliffe Hall, Cliffe High Street, Lewes BN7 2AH.

Deadlines

Please send all contributions for the newsletter, **including photos**, to the Editor (details on right). Max. length: 700 words.

Copy deadline: 18th of the month before the publication date (except December: 11th). Email photos etc. for the website to Webmaster Gerald Legg (details on right).

Publication date: 25th of the month (except December: 18th).

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Disclaimer

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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The co-operative membership
Community Fund

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