

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
including Honey Show & Auction
Friday 18 February, 7.15pm, Cliffe Hall, Lewes

A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

CONTENTS

Seasonal hints & tips 2

- Hefting, feeding and thinking

News from the Division 3

- Words from the Chair
- Bee News: drunk bees; screaming bees
- From our apiaries: Barcombe & Grassroots
- Education update

Noticeboard 5

- AGM / Honey Show / Auction

- Book of the Month

- Erratum

Events 6

- B&L meetings in January
- The how and why of swarming
- What is it about wax?
- My garden of a thousand bees

Meetings and contacts 7

EDITORIAL

I'm not going to mention New Year resolutions—oops, I just did!—but have you considered doing a course in 2022?

Microscopy courses

The BBKA informs us that there are still places on two microscopy courses: the **BBKA Microscopy Beginners** course on 26 February, cost £75.00; and the **BBKA Microscopy Intermediate Weekend** on 26 and 27 February, cost £175.

Both are hands-on courses. For Beginners, the BBKA provides all the equipment. Intermediates need to bring their own equipment, although some will be available if requested.

The Beginner course is one day, either Saturday or Sunday, and is split into two half-day sessions: the morning covers honey bee dissections and the afternoon pollen analysis.

Attendees will gain an appreciation of why microscopy is relevant to beekeeping, the scope of the topic, an understanding of the equipment and skills required to become an amateur microscopist.

The Intermediate course covers all the practical aspects of the BBKA Microscopy Assessment whilst working on aspects of honey bee anatomy and pollen samples.

The lead tutor for the course is Sean Stephenson, who has been running similar events for Bucks BKA over the last 5 years.

Please direct questions to [Sean](#), or [contact the BBKA](#).

Bee Handling and Management

This course is aimed at beekeepers with three or more years' experience. You can brush up your basic skills and learn new ones, with opportunities to discuss techniques, practice manipulations, gain a fuller understanding of the principles involved, and talk bees. Topics will include queen rearing, the uses of a nucleus, swarm control, disease and apiary hygiene, microscopy, handling skills, dealing with aggressive colonies, and reading bees.

It will equip beekeepers with the knowledge to improve their stock, and there will be evening lectures and discussions. The price includes accommodation, meals and refreshments. Dates and cost: 25-29 April, £695.00.

Queen rearing

This course is suitable for those that want to learn more about queen rearing. Dates and cost: Saturday 23 April 2022, £75.00.

How to book

Learn more and [book any/all of the courses here](#). If Covid or other circumstances result in a course being cancelled, you will receive a full refund.

Manek Dubash, Editor

NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2022

EVENTS

- AGM and more indoor meetings.
- See [back page](#) for details

NEXT MONTH

- AGM
- Late 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 could 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 January

January is quiet, but just keep your bees on the right side of starvation. The National Bee Unit usually issues its reminder to check for sufficient food for the bees this month.

Hefting is important. In early winter, the hive should be nearly too heavy to lift with one hand but by now it should be feeling lighter. Is it too light? If in doubt, replace the pack of fondant directly on top of the brood frames above the cluster, ensuring the bees are directly below.



Keep your fondant moist with clingfilm, or put it in a take-away meal container

Keeping them warm

Wrap clingfilm over any exposed sides of the fondant block to keep it moist. There is also a case for putting insulation over the fondant and below the crown board. Put foam insulation, such as a 25mm or 50mm block of Ecotherm under the roof to keep the heat in. Cut the block so it just fits and wrap the edges in duct tape. This keeps it from shedding particles and helps it survive installation year after year.

Try installing a transparent glass/plastic quilt (a posh name for crown board). This allows you to check on the bees without releasing the heat they work so hard to generate. It's not a good idea to open the brood box at this time of year but to see the bees clustering is quite fascinating.

Non-beekeepers ask me if bees hibernate. To which I reply: no, they behave like penguins in the Antarctic. The cluster centre can be between 18-32°C with an outside temperature of 9-14°C. The bees generate heat by flexing their flight muscles and the cooler ones

work their way into the centre and swap places with the warmer bees.

However, if the temperature of bees on the outside of the cluster falls below 9°C, they can start to die and fall off. If this happens in any great numbers, it could alter the mass of the cluster and start a cascade event that could see the colony dying out completely.

With daytime temperatures at 10°C or lower, the bees will only be taking cleansing flights on still, sunny days. They can store faecal matter for up to six weeks, so it's not a good idea to hang your washing out on these days.

Varroa treatment

Varroa treatment, if not already carried out, should be a top priority. The mites are uniquely vulnerable at this time of year as there's little or no brood for them to breed in.

Now is a good time to put the hives where they provide the best aspect for the bees and your management, not just the first clear space you found last summer. With the temperature so low you can move your bees without applying the 'three feet or three miles' rule because by the time the bees re-emerge in the spring their internal compass will have reset.

Apiary management

Get the strimmer and hedge cutter out and carry out ground maintenance around your hives, especially if you have an out-apiary and you're fed up with wading through hip-high brambles. If we get snow, you'll need to keep hive entrances clear so the bees can conduct cleansing flights and dispose of the dead bodies. Dead bees being disposed of are, within reason, a good sign, as it shows that



Using a [GasVap](#) reduces the varroa load.

housekeeping activity is going on and the colony is alive and well.

A hefty windstorm should prompt a quick trip to the apiary to check that the hives are still upright and on their stands. Strapping or concrete blocks should be used if they're in an exposed location. If I don't see the odd bee flying when I visit the apiary, I tend to tap the hive and put my ear against the side of the hive to check that I can still hear the buzz; I find it incredibly reassuring.

It's also a good time to look for new



Overtaken beehive! The boxes were slightly misshapen, but the bees were fine.

apiary sites; with all the leaves off the trees and bushes you can see those unused corners of fields and gardens. Or if you've already identified a site, start setting it up now: don't wait until the start of the season or when there are swarms starting to emerge.

In summary

- Heft hives and feed if required
- Carry out oxalic acid treatment.
- Make a plan for next season. Expansion; queen rearing; honey production.
- Order any tools and equipment you will need to carry out the plan
- Clean and repair spare boxes, frames, floors, roofs, and crown boards.
- Make up frames ready to insert foundation later in the spring
- Clear new and existing apiary sites
- Make new [hive stands](#).
- Make sure sites are secure against both people and livestock
- Look forward to a better season!

The Veiled Beekeeper



Norman Dickinson
Chairman

Words from the Chair

As mentioned in last month's report, planning for the Bee Disease Day next year has now been finalised and you will have already received an email advertising the event. As I write this, we have nearly 30 B&L members who have pre-booked. As for we did for the (cancelled) 2020 event we will be opening up the event to members of the other four SBKA Divisions.

We shall announce this at the 2022 Sussex BKA AGM, which for 2022 is being organised by B&L and will be held on 5 March at the Luxford Centre in Uckfield.

Those who attended the recent Zoom talk on 15 December were treated to a most interesting talk on Bee Houses by The Apiarist, aka David Evans. For those who are not familiar with his blog I would suggest going to [his website](#) where you will find loads of useful information.

It is encouraging to note that membership renewals are in full swing with 44 members who have renewed so far plus six new members; I look forward to many more of

you renewing in the new year. 2021 was a record year for membership with over 160 members in total, whether we will achieve that next year remains to be seen.

Money, money, money

Financially, it has been a very lean year, with no events where products of the hive could be sold, so I hope this will improve in 2022.

We have been able to provide at discounted prices frame parts and foundation, syrup, jars together with a limited supply of fondant. As Membership Secretary and Treasurer, I will be providing both membership and financial reports ahead of our AGM in February which will include a copy of the accounts for 2021.

This report is somewhat of an anomaly in that while it is the first one for the new year, you are likely to be reading it in December (with your feet up) and so on that basis, all it leaves me to do is to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and profitable beekeeping New Year.

Bee news

Drunk bees get the boot

Honey bees are partial to a tippie: they will happily imbibe fermented nectar, fruit, sugar etc.

Not so good for the bees though. Like us they have accidents (flying) and find it hard to find their way home to the hive. Once home, they are not welcome and will be refused entry, attacked and even dismembered.

It is thought that drunk bees are a threat of the colony hence the harsh treatment.



Honey bees make alarm screams

A frenzied alarm signal produced by a species of Asian honey bee when giant hornets attack has been discovered. It was identified by Heather Mattila at Wellesley College, MA, USA, and her team after recording nearly 30,000 Asian honeybee (*Apis cerana*) signals as their hives were attacked by a species of giant hornet (*Vespa soror*) or a smaller hornet (*Vespa velutina*), both deadly predators.

The team found that the bees produce harsh, irregular noises that change rapidly in frequency when giant hornets arrive at the hive. The scream-like signals rally more bees to the hive entrance, where they place animal dung to deter the hornets.

The bees buzz their wings to make the signals, which have acoustic properties similar to alarm shrieks made by primates and birds, says Mattila. These sounds can convey



Giant hornets attack a honey bee hive in Vietnam. Photo: Heather Mattila/Wellesley College

particular types of threat to other bees in the colony, which 'hear' the calls through vibrations in their legs, supporting predator-specific defences.

"I found it really disturbing. When you analyse the recordings, part of you is scared for the bees, and part of you is so excited for how unusual these sounds were," says Mattila.

New Scientist

From our apiaries: Barcombe & Grassroots

Graham Bubloz and I have been sprucing Grassroots, with a select few: new members Jose and Felicity have joined us; Jose has trimmed the hedging. The rest of us have been cutting back and removing the weed mat that has grown on top of the weed suppressant. It is almost finished and has provided us with a lot more space for open hive meetings and storage space for Apidea and Poly nucs. Chipped wood bark is arriving to cover the exposed weed suppressant sheet, so another working party will be needed to spread that around the hives and stop the weeds from growing back.

Jude New, Apiary manager



Education: BBKA Basic Assessment course & Module 6 group progress

Starting on June 11 2022, there will be meetings for a limited number of members, on four consecutive Saturdays. Half of the day will be at an apiary either Hove or Grassroots and half a day theory at The Barn, Westdene Green, Dene Vale, Brighton BN1 5ED, followed by an assessment at the beginning of July 2022. This is a practical assessment, some reading and talking in the lead up and no written exam at the end.

Requirements and process

If you have been keeping bees for at least a year, aged from 18 or over, a local friendly Master Beekeeper will coach and assess your skill at the end of the four-day course.

He/she will then award a grade which becomes a BBKA official certificate presented to you at one of our winter meetings by our Division Secretary.

You may be surprised what snippets you learn, the information you pick up informally while drinking a coffee, or you may already feel confident in your beekeeping skill. This could be the next step you have been looking for.

We will meet to work through the nationally recognised syllabus

provided by BBKA. We will provide talks from experienced B&L members. These will cover topics such as the life cycle of the honey bee, planting for the best pollen and nectar sources, the beekeeping year, 'reading the comb,' looking at disease and deciding what options are available to control, what we see.

We will 'kit up' in clean bee suits/ jackets and Wellingtons, light a smoker, open hives and handle bees at one of our out apiaries either at Hove or Grassroots, which is on the borders of Hassocks and Burgess Hill.

What they said last time

Last season's course members said that they enjoyed spending time with like-minded people, and could talk about bees, equipment and processes without getting that 'glazed-over look'. Some said that they were satisfied that they could load and light a smoker, which would burn for a whole hive inspection, while others said they felt better equipped to identify disease in their colony.

Should you take the course?

Some out-apiary sites require beekeepers to show their competency,

by producing a BBKA Basic Assessment Certificate. Whatever the goal this four-day course will boost your confidence in your bee keeping and provide you with a gateway to further study with the BBKA, of your favourite insect, the honey bee! Afterwards you can join a module study group to maintain that warm fuzzy bee feeling!

For information on any of the training or assessment courses please contact me.

Module 6 group progress

The four members taking the BBKA Module 6 (Bee Behaviour) course have submitted their first test paper for marking by the online tutor.

Their next meeting will be on 17 January to talk about paper 2.

It is not too late to join. There is a share of the cost of the online tutor to pay immediately and if you would like to enter for the exam in November 2022 the decision needs to be made by the end of January 2022 and a registration fee paid for the exam; this payable to the BBKA. Please contact me for more information—all contact details are on the back page.

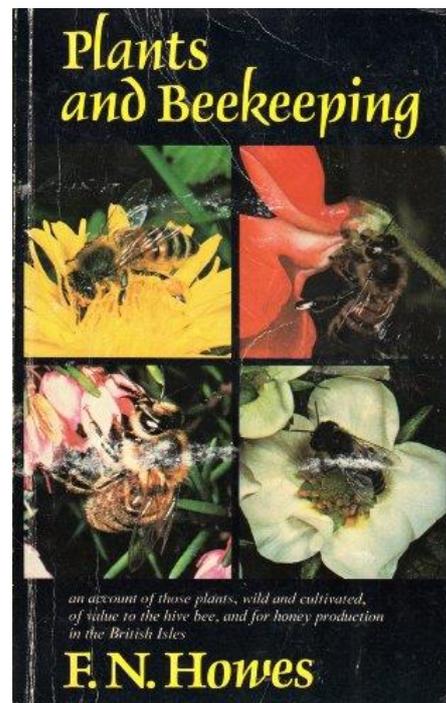
Jude New, Training Co-ordinator



**Honey Show +
Annual General
Meeting of
Brighton and
Lewes
Beekeepers**

Fri 18 February

Book of the Month



This month's book, *Plants and Beekeeping*, was first published in 1945 and reissued in 1979. It is as relevant today as when it was first written, detailing those plants of particular benefit to the honey bee.

A few things give its age away, like comments about the numbers of insects stuck to your windscreen after a car journey—that doesn't happen much any more—but on the whole, it's a valuable book if you want to know which are the best flowers, trees and shrubs to have near your apiary.

It starts with explaining very clearly the role of pollen and nectar and where they are found in the plant and continues with an extensive section on different plants.

I have always been passionate about plants and wild flowers in particular but if you are not sure about some of the names, read it in conjunction with an Ident guide or Google. There are some I have added to my wish list for when I win the lottery and can plant my own apiary like the Japanese Lime which Dr Howes says "hum with bees year after year".

Just a returnable £5 deposit to pay. My contact details are on the back page.

Barbara Summerfield, Librarian

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 know more about what the jobs entail, see Hilary's column in the July 2021 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](#)).

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 supplies discounted syrup and fondant which we have passed on. Contact Adam [here](#) or 01273 974120.

B&L Facebook group

If you need help, want to keep up to date with events, to learn from other beekeepers, or would like to offer advice, please jump in! The water's warm and the atmosphere friendly. And most of the members are here.

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

Members only admitted.

Erratum

I got it wrong last month (December 2021) when I described Harold Cloutt as Chairman of Sussex Beekeepers Association. He is in fact Treasurer of SBKA. My apologies to Harold.

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Annual General Meeting

Friday 18 February 2022, Cliffe Hall, 19.30

The Annual General Meeting is the most important meeting of the year and, if you can make it, it may be the first you've attended for over a year. Welcome!

As well as conducting the necessary business of electing officers and committee members, the AGM will include as usual our Honey Show and equipment auction.

We hope to see you there!

Queen rearing & bee improvement



Friday 21 January 2022, Cliffe Hall, 19.30.

Before the AGM, we have another physical meeting, featuring a talk by well-known local beekeeper Roger Patterson on queen rearing and bee improvement.

This is a topic close to our

hearts at the moment, since in 2021 we set up a queen rearing and bee improvement group, spearheaded by Training Co-ordinator Jude New.

So if you had thoughts about or wondered if you could get into queen rearing, check out Roger's talk.

And training co-ordinator Jude New is still looking to recruit new members to her queen rearing group... Her contact details are on [the back page](#).

Bee Chats

None planned at present—but watch this space!

The honeybee swarm: reproduction at the colony level

Wednesday 12 January 2022, 19.00, online



Most people are aware of reproduction at the individual honey bee level: queens produce the other bees in the nest. Yet colonies also reproduce: that's what swarming is.

Bee scientist Dr. Jamie Ellis will discuss bee behaviour before and during swarms and place this within the larger context of a colony's biology.

Jamie is the Gahan Endowed Professor of Entomology in the Department of Entomology and Nematology at the Uni. of Florida. Jamie and team run 30+ research projects in the fields of honey bee husbandry, conservation and ecology, and integrated crop pollination.

He and his team at the University of Florida also host an informative and fun podcast [Two Bees in a Podcast](#).

Register [here](#).

Wax production & replacing old comb

Tuesday 18 January 2022, 19.30, online



This talk by Master Beekeeper Marin Anastasov covers the process of wax secretion by the honey bee, the nutrients bees need for its production, and some of its properties that make it perfect for storage of honey and brood rearing. We will also discover how much and what nutrients the bees require to

produce wax, as well as some of the important physical and chemical properties of beeswax.

As beekeepers, we need to ensure we replace the comb in our colonies on regular basis and we will also look at the different techniques for replacing comb, methods of melting wax, management of wax moth and comb sterilisation.

Marin started beekeeping in his teens and developed his skills while studying for his BSc in Animal Science in Bulgaria. He then completed an MSc in Organic Farming at Aberdeen University. He is passionate about sustainable food production and his entire working career has been in organic food and farming.

He now manages 30 colonies in Gloucestershire, and is an assessor for the Basic, General Husbandry and Advanced Husbandry certificates.

Register [here](#).

My garden of a thousand bees

Wednesday 26 January 2022, 19.00, online



How an award winning wildlife film maker spent the pandemic filming the wild bees in his small urban garden in Bristol.

Wildlife film maker Martin Dohrn has spent a decade studying the wild bees in his

garden. But it wasn't until the first lockdown of the pandemic that he felt confident enough to actually make a film about them. Martin set out to try and record the most interesting behaviour he could find in his tiny urban garden.

Despite these ten years of observations, Martin was astounded over and over again by what he filmed, and by how the bees reacted to being watched. He became quite bee-obsessed and even developed relationships with individual bees.

Of the sixty or so species in Martin's garden, he managed to find a place in the film for about thirty of them. From the largest bumble bee queens to the tiny scissor bees, Martin recorded fascinating differences in behavior that set the many species apart.

The film 'My Garden of a Thousand bees' has so far aired only on PBS in the United States but Martin is in discussions to show the documentary on our screens in 2022.

Register [here](#).

MEETINGS AND CONTACTS

B&L Divisional Diary

Winter / spring meetings & events 2022

| Date | Format | Topic | Speaker |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|---------------------|
| Friday 21 January | Live * | Queen rearing & bee improvement | Roger Patterson |
| Friday 18 February | Live * | AGM / Honey Show / Auction | |
| Wednesday 16 March | Zoom | Dance like no-one's watching | Lynne Ingram |
| Friday 22 April | Live * | Getting ready for the new year + The Bee People trade stand | Ben and Maggi Pratt |
| Saturday 21 May | Live | Bee Market at Heathfield College | |
| Tuesday 31 May | Live | Bee Disease Day at Laughton | Bee inspectors |

* 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.

National Bee Unit inspectors

Regional Bee Inspector: Sandra Gray

M: 07775 119430

E: sandra.gray@apha.gov.uk

Seasonal Bee Inspector: Diane Steele

M: 07775 119452

E: diane.steele@apha.gov.uk

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.

grassroots
grants

Managed by the Community Development Foundation
Funded by the Office of the Third Sector

The **co-operative membership** &
Community Fund

Officers & contacts

President: Vacant

Chairman: Norman Dickinson

E: chair.blbees@outlook.com

M: 07792 296422

Hon Secretary: Hilary Osman

Holly Tree Cottage, Norlington Ln, Ringmer BN8 5SH

E: secretary@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

T: 01273 813045

Treasurer: Norman Dickinson

34 Abergavenny Road, Lewes BN7 1SN

E: memsec.blbees@outlook.com

M: 07792 296422

Membership Secretary: Norman Dickinson

(Details above)

Meetings Secretary: Bob Curtis

Librarian: Barbara Summerfield

E: psummerfield99@ntlworld.com

Swarm Co-ordinator: Ian White

E: swarms@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

M: 07999 987097

Webmaster: Gerald Legg

E: gerald@chelifer.com

Newsletter Editor: Manek Dubash

E: editor@mailforce.net

M: 07788 923557

Training Co-ordinator: Jude New

E: newapiary@hotmail.com

Asian Hornet Team Co-ordinator: Manek Dubash

E: blbka.ahat@gmail.com

M: 07762 312592

Apiary Managers

- **Barcombe:** Tony Birkbeck

- **Grassroots:** Jude New

- **Hove:** Jude New

- **Isfield:** Ian White

B&L Facebook Group

Group Administrator: Graham Bubloz

E: graham@bubloz.plus.com

M: 07758 866278

Sussex BKA County Representative: Vacant

National Honey Show Rep: Norman Dickinson