

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

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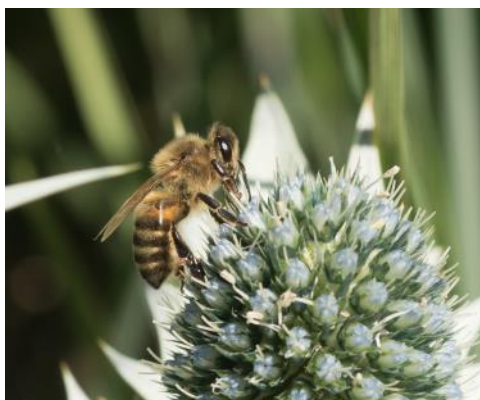
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EDITORIAL



Honey bee on sea holly (*eryngium*). Photo: MD

This is the big one: the month that for most—not all, note—beekeepers makes all the hassle and work during the rest of the year worthwhile. Yes, it's harvest time!

If you haven't already pulled your supers off your hive(s), you soon will. Because if you don't, the declining availability of forage as the month draws on will force the bees to start making inroads into their (sorry—your) honey.

So let me take this opportunity to wish you a very successful harvest, after which you can sit back and enjoy the fruits of your labours—and of the girls, of course. That's after you've applied all the varroa treatments, ensured there's enough stores for the approaching winter, added more feed, put your wasp traps up, closed up the entrances, etc. etc.

Then you can start to put your feet up...

We're launching new courses

One of the reasons I took up beekeeping was the opportunity to learn more about these fascinating creatures. There's so much to discover too. You can go at your own pace of course, or simply learn by watching, all perfectly valid ways of finding out more about our charges.

But, to my mind, it's hard to beat a well-run, structured course that allows you to find out more about bees, their behaviour, biology and how to look after them. It's the combination of science and the application of practical skills that I find most rewarding. And I know I'm not alone.

So if you fancy delving into bee husbandry, I'd urge you to join our Bee Management (BBKA Module 1) course, run by our excellent Training Co-ordinator [Jude New](#). More details [on page 3](#).

And that leads neatly into a round of applause for the seven candidates from B&L who took the BBKA Basic Assessment this year. All passed with a Credit (70% or more). Well done all—and massive credit to Jude too for all her hard work.

When I did my Basic, it equipped me with a sharper set of mental tools for my beekeeping, allowing me to approach tasks which I was—frankly—too scared to do before. So don't hesitate—be a better beekeeper!

PS: Short newsletter this month as I've been on holiday.

Manek Dubash, Editor

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2022

EVENTS

- Meetings and more
- See [back page](#) for details

NEXT MONTH

- Tips for autumn
- Your contributions
- News updates
- New events
- Asian hornet update

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

 [B&L website](#)
 [Facebook](#)



QR link to our website

Seasonal tips for August: harvest time

August is harvest month. It's also time to think about winter preparations.

I wasn't going to get a crop this June, having started the year without any bees. The couple of swarms I picked up in May may produce enough for me to crop in late August or early September. The bees I manage in Hove were very slow to build up in the spring but over the last six weeks have been working overtime and I took off 31kg (57lb) from two supers, with another two to harvest in the next week.

How to remove super frames

There's a variety of methods of removing full frames, the simplest being to shake or brush the bees off. The frame is then placed in an empty box, covered to stop the bees repopulating it. The drawback is that it takes a while and you end up with a lot of annoyed bees flying around you.

More convenient is using a [clearer board](#). Porter bee escapes fit into the holes in the crown board (get them the right way round) and several maze-type escapes are available from your friendly neighbourhood retailer. I tend to prefer rhombus escapes pinned under a crown board.

Ensure you have enough space for the cleared bees to go into by clearing into a part used super or eke. Do not try and clear bees out of the supers directly into the brood box, they just won't fit.

You can use a chemical repellent sprinkled over a cloth placed above the supers. Replace the lid and after several minutes the bees have been driven out and you can remove them.

Taking the honey

When taking the harvest, ensure all honey in the frames is capped or, if



Rhombus bee escape

uncapped, that it has a water content below 20%. Above this level, honey is likely to ferment once harvested and stored. It's easy to measure the water content with a refractometer (see pic).



Cheap and available on eBay

To use, put a small sample of honey on the inspection plate, flip the cover over the sample and hold it up to the light. Looking down the eyepiece allows you to read off the moisture content. If properly calibrated, this gives a very accurate result.

If you don't want to buy a device, try the shake method. Hold a frame of unsealed honey upside down and shake it. If honey drips out, it's unripe and you need to return it to the hive.

However, if you are keen to take as much as you can and can't wait for it to be ripen, then you can put the frames in a warm, bee-proof room and use a dehumidifier to reduce the water content. After a number of days, the water content should be at the required level.

To feed or not to feed

If you have maximised your harvest, be prepared to feed your bees with syrup in the late summer and early autumn, and supplement it later in the year with fondant.

If you want to leave some honey on, the hive will need about 20-25Kg of stores to see the bees through the winter, which is about a full super and all the stores in the brood box.

Varroa monitoring

Once the honey has been taken off, that is the time to thoroughly check the brood for disease and mite levels. Only treat if the bees need it. Use the [National Bee Unit guide on Managing Varroa](#) and look for Integrated Pest Management to check when to treat.

In round numbers, if your daily average mite drop is above 10, then

you need to treat immediately. [Several treatments](#) are available to us but be aware that some treatments need to go on before it gets too cold.

Supersedure

You may also experience queen supersedure at this time of year. Supersedure/emergency queen cells are generally drawn on the face of the brood comb, unlike swarm cells that are usually on the bottom edge.

Do not knock them down.

There is still a chance that the new queen can still be mated before the weather cools and the drones disappear. As the old queen starts to fail, the workers develop several replacements but, instead of swarming, the original queen and her daughter may continue share the hive and to lay on the same comb until eventually, at a later inspection, you notice an unmarked queen.

Inspections

The good news is that there's no real need to inspect weekly, as there is very little chance of your bees swarming so late in the season. I start to wind down my visits to fortnightly, then monthly until March, when the brood starts to expand and the whole circus begins again.

Hope you have a good harvest!

The Veiled Beekeeper



Honey. Photo: Manek Dubash



Graham Bubloz
Chairman

Words from the Chair

We are fortunate that Jeff Rodrigues and Julie Lawrence have agreed to take on the management of the new B&L apiary at Telscombe. They'll be looking for some help to get the site established over the next few months—so please consider giving them your support if you can.

In addition, Jude New is going to be looking after just one out-apiary (as well as the training portfolio) and consequently we have new managers José and Felicity who will be taking over the Hove apiary in the autumn/winter.

By the way, Jude has some existing, additional training planned for the near future, so keep an eye on the newsletters and website for details, once they are finalised.

Few swarms in 2022?

From conversations with Ian White, our Swarm Co-ordinator, he tells me that the swarm phone has been unusually quiet so far this year. Anecdotally, this seems to be a common phenomenon within the whole country. I wonder if anyone knows why?

By the time you read this, the Rottingdean Village Fair will be just around the corner: it

takes place on Saturday 6 August. Please come along and show your support to our team on the Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers stall.

Honey harvest and winter events

It looks like 2022 will be a bumper year in terms of honey yield and I hope that you're one of the successful ones.

In another month or so, on Wednesday 14 September, we plan to resume our winter meetings. Please note that we have a NEW VENUE: Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Eastgate Street, Lewes, BN7 2LR.

Coming next month—on 24th and 25th September—a new event takes place at the [South of England Agricultural Autumn Show](#) which combines a Horse Trials and Honey show. We have been asked to get involved, so if you can produce some honey or products of the hive—there is a number of categories to enter—please complete the form at the bottom of the link and get involved.

The organisers are also seeking stewards to assist. If you can help, please [contact me](#).

Call for candidates: BBKA Module 1—Honey Bee Management course 2023

Want to improve your beekeeping? The best way is to take (and hopefully pass) a BBKA course. Here in B&L, we are lucky to enjoy the enthusiastic services of Training Co-ordinator Jude New, a professional educationalist, who will guide you through the syllabus. Those who have undergone her tuition can testify as to its effectiveness.

Any member of the Brighton and Lewes Division who has passed their Basic Assessment is eligible to take the BBKA Module 1 Honey Bee Management exam.

Topics

- The management of a colony throughout the year: spring, summer and preparation for winter, including the underlying principles of the required activities.
- Methods of swarm control used in small-scale beekeeping enterprises including those developed by J.W. Pagden, L.E. Snelgrove and G.W. Demaree.
- The methods of making nuclei and the uses to which nuclei can be put.
- The signs of a bad-tempered colony.
- The signs of queenlessness and a method of confirming the condition.

Schedules and fees

The syllabus will be delivered over 10 fortnightly sessions on Thursdays from 19.00-21.00 on the following dates: 6 October, 20 October, 3 November, 17 November, 1 December, and 15 December. There will be a break for Christmas and an option of revision exam practice sessions from 26 January, 9 February, 23 February, 9 March 2023. This will be followed by the examination in March 2023, or you can defer it until November 2023.

The training sessions, depending on the size of the group, will be on Thursday evenings either at a member's home or at The Barn at Westdene Green, Brighton.

There will be a course fee to cover room hire costs if applicable, refreshments and stationery costs. This is payable to B&L plus there's a registration fee payable to BBKA for the exam.

If you are interested in the course, but not the exam, you are also welcome to join.

How to apply

For more information and to join, please contact Jude New. Her contact details are on [the back page](#).



Manek Dubash
Asian Hornet
Team Co-ordinator

Asian hornet latest



Asian hornet (*V. velutina*). Photograph: Aidan O'Hanlon, National Museum of Ireland

Like wasps, Asian hornet queens hibernate over winter. And again like wasps, hornet workers have a need to bring protein to the developing brood. And we're approaching the peak time of year. In September, the hornet (*Vespa velutina*) starts making sexuals, males and females, who mate.

While the males die and the mated queens hide away, the workers are predating on whatever they can find, and that often means

honey bees. For them, *Apis mellifera mellifera* is easy prey because they've evolved no defences against *V. velutina*. There's a [YouTube video](#) by Richard Noel, an English beekeeper in France, where he shows (about 22 minutes in) how the Asian hornet hawks in front of the hive, just waiting to pick off incoming foragers. Once captured in its ferocious jaws, the bee is helpless. Its thorax, containing juicy muscles, is separated from the abdomen and head, and whisked off to the nest to feed to the larvae.

On Jersey, where the insect is close to becoming endemic, a vigilant Asian Hornet Team has traced, tracked and destroyed well over 50 nests so far in 2022, up from 10 this time last year.

It can be countered by trapping (as Richard Noel's video shows) but we have to hope that it doesn't get that far here on the British mainland.

From our apiaries

Barcombe



Not a lot to report this month from Barcombe, partly because the bees are behaving well and concentrating on the honey flow but mainly because, in the middle of the beekeeping season, I decided to disappear for a couple of weeks driving a small open-top sports car round the Alps!

I can report however that all hives are thriving with good queens. Hive number 5 and the split that we did at the Apiary Day back in May are a bit grumpy, so I have noted in my records that they are top of my list of re-queening activities for next year.

I have managed to extract 72lb of honey so far which has been jarred and

will be sold for the Division at Rottingdean Fair at the beginning of August.

Each hive still has supers in place so I'll wait until it's capped before I start varroa treatments and the beginning of winter preparations; can it really be that time of year already?

Tony Birkbeck, Apiary Manager



Swarm co-ordinator's report for 2022: not enough swarms

Assuming everything went to plan I was going to ask those volunteering to collect bees to donate every other swarm they collected to someone on the list. That didn't work out.

I'm sorry to say that, now we are in August, if you were on the swarm list and have not been contacted about a swarm, you are probably not to get one this year. The year started very slowly and failed to pick up. Based on previous experience, I was expecting at least double the number of calls I actually received.

May

My first swarm call this year was on 5 May—and it flew away before it could be caught. The second call on that day was from some tree surgeons who had found a nest in a tree they were going to fell. Because I thought this was a specialist job, I called David Guy, our resident expert. Overall, the whole of May was quite cool but I received 31 calls, 18 were for swarms of bees, of which 13 were caught and re-homed either with the collector or a new beekeeper without bees; two of these swarms later absconded.

June

I hoped this month would get warmer and busier. Well, one out of two wasn't bad. I received 29 calls this month, the first on the 6th, the next on the 13th; 19



Catching a swarm



Lovely prime swarm

were for swarms of bees, of which 10 were caught and re-homed either with the collector or a new beekeeper without bees. Two of these swarms were from colonies that had been donated in May to new beekeepers and had subsequently swarmed again.

July

As I write this report on 26 July, things haven't got any better, with just 11 calls so far this month. Seven were for swarms of bees, of which none were caught. At least two were for the remains of swarms. The main body had already departed, those out scouting or foraging were left behind.

Two were for swarms in Alfriston (passed to Eastbourne BKD). And for the second time, a call from one of our members who hadn't quite mastered their swarm management technique.

Of the calls that were collected swarms, 12 were in Brighton & Hove and five were in Lewes.

Of the calls that weren't swarms, top of the list again this year, with 14, goes to bumble bees/solitary bees, with two colonies relocated.

Others of interest

A call from an irate resident in Brighton about a neighbour keeping bees in their garden. It would appear that the bees were nearer to him in his garden than they were to the beekeeper's in theirs.

A report of bees in a bush for a number of weeks. On investigation it was found that it was a flowering bush, and the bees were only attracted to the blossoms.

A woman phoned and said there were bees clustered on the rear window of her car. When I got there, yes there were bees, but she told me she had driven from work, across Brighton, the evening before with the bees blocking the rear windscreen.

I'd like to thank the ~~academy my~~ parents all the of the collectors who were happy to go out and collect swarms at the drop of a hat even if they weren't successful every time or were sent on wild goose chases for bees in allotments or in builder's yards.

My thanks go especially to Adrien Parker and Susi Miller for their sterling efforts.

Finally, if you have limited space or only want to keep a few hives, next spring, I can arrange for you to pass on your surplus split/s to those new beekeepers wanting bees.

Swarm policy

It may be pertinent to remind all beekeepers, when it comes to swarms it's 'finders keepers'.

Once your bees have swarmed, they are wild bees, and they become the property of the person collecting them.

Ian White, Swarm Co-ordinator



Walking the swarm into a hive

Diane Steele inspects

Our last out-apiary meeting of 2022, to be held on 4 September at the Hove apiary, will be attended by Diane Steele, the Seasonal Bee Inspector.

As you may know if you've spoken to her, Diane is a highly knowledgeable and personable individual who has inspected many of our members' hives. She also spoke at the Bee Disease Day that we held at the Laughton Parish Hall.

So if you'd like to ask her any questions or simply watch her perform a professional inspection, please come along.

New apiary managers

Welcome to Jeff Rodrigues and Julie Lawrence who between them have decided to take on the management of B&L's new apiary.

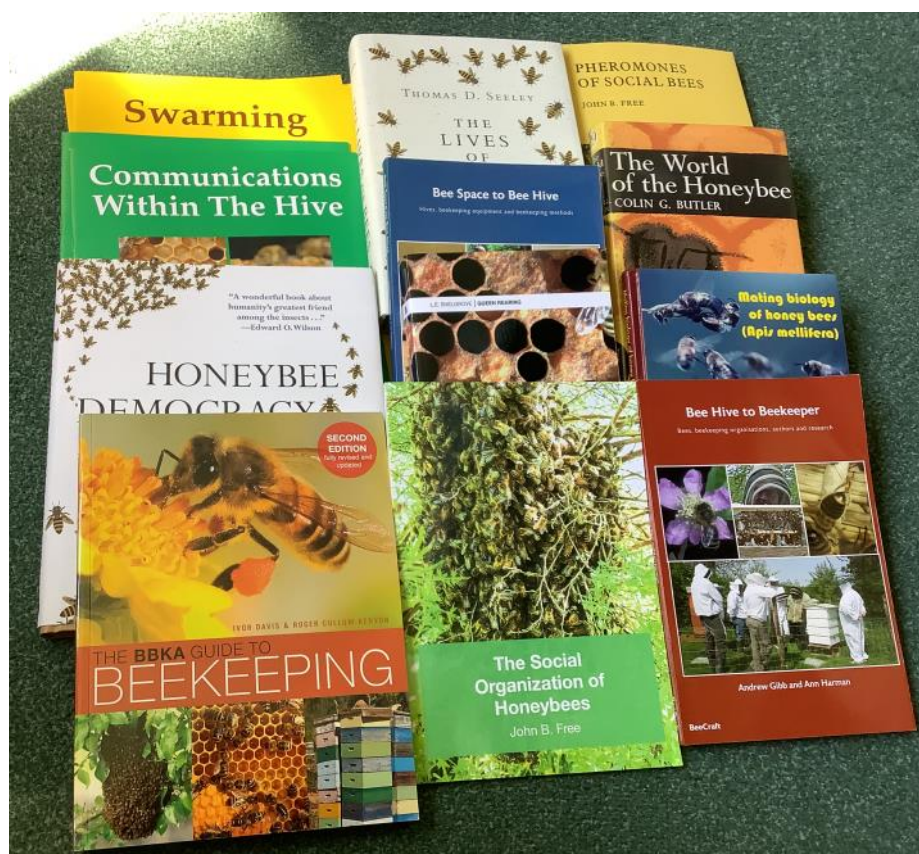
The new apiary will open in 2023, and is sited near Telscombe, giving members of the Division located around the eastern edge of Brighton easier, local access to one of our apiaries.

The site is quite tucked away and was set up largely by last year's Chairman, Norman Dickinson, who has been in patient and lengthy contact with the landowner—the council.

News snippets

- **Blois:** Fancy a bee-themed visit to France? Lewes is twinned with Blois, an attractive town on the Loire in France, and just a few hours' drive from Dieppe. The committee is considering setting up a visit with beekeepers in Blois but we'd like to gauge interest. If that sounds like something you'd like to do, please contact Graham Bubloz, whose details are on [the back page](#).
- **Honey sales:** we are considering setting up a honey sales database with the aim of helping you sell your honey. More details later.
- **Syrup and fondant:** B&L has a small stock of syrup and fondant, bought at bulk prices. If you'd like to buy some, contact Membership Secretary / Treasurer Norman Dickinson (see [back page](#)).
- **Facebook:** B&L's Facebook group is now well over 100+ strong—over two-thirds of the membership. There's plenty of comments every day, with everyone learning off each other. I don't think anyone expected it to be so successful. Keep it up!
- **Bee Buzz:** a WhatsApp group for newbees: it's a roaring success with loads of help. Do join—contact [Jude New](#) for details.
- **First aid kits:** B&L cannot for safety reasons supply medicines—such as anti-histamine and epipens—at our apiaries. If you think you may need such supplies, please bring your own. We do have on-site first-aid kits for minor injuries and the like.

Recent additions to the Library: free for you to borrow



To borrow any of these books, or any one of the collection in our Library, please contact Librarian [Barbara Summerfield](#). Go on, take one to the beach this summer!

My recommendation? *Honeybee Democracy* by Tom Seeley: it provides

insight into his fascinating, original research into how honey bees make and communicate collective decisions, especially where to rehouse themselves once they've swarmed.

Manek Dubash, Editor

Apiary sites on offer

Looking for an apiary site? We have received three offers of land for bees:

- Ten acres of wild flower meadow in a quiet, rural setting near Uckfield.
- St Peter & St James Hospice, near Wivelsfield would like bees in its large garden, fields and woodland area.
- Kittyhawk Farm in Laughton Please contact Chairman Graham Bubloz for details (see [back page](#)).



B&L spring / summer events 2022

Date	Topic
Wednesday 24 August	Bee Chat, The Signalman, 76-78 Ditchling Rise, Brighton BN1 4QQ, UK

Out-apiary meetings

Date	Apiary	Leader	Topic
31 July	Isfield	Ian White	Honey management & winter preparations
3 Sept	Isfield	Ian White	Winter preparation/oxalic acid
4 Sept	Hove	Jude New	Winter preparation/oxalic acid. NB: Seasonal Bee Inspector Diane Steele will be in attendance

*Outdoor meeting timings may change as circumstances/ weather dictate.
Please pre-book for Hove only: contact Graham [here](#).*

Deadlines

Please send all contributions for the newsletter, **including photos**, to the Editor (details on right). Max. length: 500 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.

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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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