

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

CONTENTS

Seasonal hints & tips 2

- Harvesting and treating

News from the Division 4

- Words from the Chair
- Asian hornet latest
- Call for candidates: BBKA Module 1
- Asian hornets: a beekeeper's nightmare

- Where did my bees go? Time to find out

Noticeboard..... 7

- First winter meeting at our new venue: B&L experts answered your questions
- B&L sells out at Westdene Fair

Photo Corner 8

Meetings and contacts 9

EDITORIAL



B&L's experts take questions from members at our September meeting. Photo: Graham Bubloz

It's your turn to speak. At October's committee meeting, we discussed which topics would be interesting to talk about at our general meetings.

So we decided to ask you. Do you have something you'd like to give a quick, five-minute talk about? Or a bit longer if you like. If so, please get in touch with someone on the committee.

Bulk purchase discounts

We also talked about what we can do to help reduce the costs of beekeeping through bulk purchasing, allowing B&L to sell discounted equipment to members—especially welcome with inflation where it

is right now. This is something we've been doing on a kind-of *ad hoc* basis for years.

But now committee member and apiary manager Tony Birkbeck has taken this on as a project. While there are limits on what is worth buying in this way—it boils down mainly to the types of item we buy lots of, such as jars, frames and foundation—we're planning to offer equipment to members at significantly discounted prices on a regular basis. Should be soon, as we approach the winter frame-building season. Watch this space for details.

Christmas dinner

Ah yes, the C word. We're planning a Christmas meal for the whole membership in a pub somewhere central, such as Hassocks, where we can find space for however many people sign up for it. Target date: 13 December.

Please tell us what you think and if you know of a good venue that's easy to get to both by car and public transport. And expect to hear from us in the next few weeks with more details.

Manek Dubash, Editor

Norman Dickinson



If you were at the last meeting, you will have heard that Norman, B&L stalwart, Treasurer and Membership Secretary was taken seriously ill. I'm delighted to report that he is on the road to recovery. We wish him well and offer our best hopes for a speedy return to full health.

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2022

EVENTS

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

NEXT MONTH

- Tips for autumn/winter
- 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 October: winter is coming

Medication

Not yours, but the bees'. Last month I provided a link to all of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) approved varroa treatments. All summer treatments should now be done.

The Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2013 sets out legal text on the manufacture, authorisation, marketing, distribution and post-authorisation surveillance of veterinary medicines. Our bees are classed as a food-producing animal and therefore beekeepers, especially those who sell their honey via a third party, must comply with these regulations. The most important of these is the keeping of a medicine record card.

The regulations say: "Beekeepers must keep documentation containing details of veterinary medicinal products administered in colonies for at least five years, irrespective of whether or not the colony concerned is no longer in that keeper's possession or has died during that period." A standard form is available [here](#).

It goes on to say that the use of generic substances such as oxalic acid or self-made thymol solutions should not be used. If traces are found during routine honey sampling, which the Bee Inspector may take when visiting you during a routine EFB inspection, beekeepers are liable for prosecution. It is also important to note that some products available on beekeeping manufacturers' websites are not registered medicinal products and



Approved medicines only, please



Cleaning: use cold/tepid water first, then hot water with soda

although available, should not be administered to a colony.

Cleaning your kit

For those of you that had a honey harvest and used your centrifuge and settling tanks, it's time to make sure they are clean and dry for storage until next year. I find that when washing any equipment that has come into contact with honey it is best to clean it initially with cold or tepid water to remove any wax particles. If you use hot water, it is likely to melt the wax which will then be smeared all over the inside of the spinner and or settling tank. Only after this has been done, do I use hot water with some soda to clean and remove any propolis followed by a final hot wash and then dry.

For drawn brood comb it's best to freeze it for about 48 hours before it is stored, to kill off any wax moth. If not, wax moth larvae will hatch over the winter and feed on the nutrient rich cocoons in the comb. It's best to burn any that still have dead bee larvae in. You don't want to reinfect a new colony with whatever caused the issue in the first place. Wax that is black should be removed, disposed of and the frame cleaned.

The colony has been in the hive for at least five or six months and has had time to stick everything down with propolis or wax or both. This could be the ideal time to change all of the hive components for clean, well-repaired items.

Let's face it, the concept behind most of our hives is the movable frame; there's a clue in the name. If we can't do that because of the detritus that's built up over the summer, we might as well go back to using skeps.

Diseases & wax moths

Combs and boxes can also be sterilised to destroy the spores of chalkbrood, wax moth, and *Nosema spp.* disease of adult bees by using the evaporation fumes from acetic acid.

There is no evidence that this treatment is effective against AFB or EFB.

Acetic acid is available from chemical suppliers and online. Begin treatment by stacking the brood and/or super boxes containing combs to be sterilised on solid surface such as a board or solid hive floor. Note that acetic acid is corrosive and will attack metal and concrete. It is also important to block off hive entrances, as acetic acid fumes are heavier than air and will travel from the top to the base of the stack, leaking out of any gaps or holes at the bottom.

Place a non-metallic dish (saucer or similar container) on the top of the frames of the top box. Very carefully, put 80 per cent acetic acid into the dish,

(Continued on page 3)



Sad drones ejected from the hive in autumn

Seasonal tips for October (continued)

(Continued from page 2)

allowing 120 ml acetic acid/box—so 600 ml would therefore treat five boxes.

Then place an empty hive box on top of the stack. Close off the empty box on the top of the stack with a hive cover. Seal joints between the boxes with wide adhesive tape to stop fumes escaping. Leave the stack for about one week. When treatment is complete, the dishes of acid must be removed with caution and boxes should be thoroughly aired (at least two days) before they can be re-used. When using this system you must wear suitable protective clothing, protect your eyes and use rubber gloves. More details on the National Bee Unit website [here](#).

Winter preparation

Now is the time to take stock of the colonies you have and to assess whether they will make it through the winter.

One of the first checks concerns feeding: do they have enough food to see them through? The average approximate weight of stores should be about that of a full super. In reality and as a good rule of thumb, when you try to lift or 'heft' one side of the hive, it should feel like it is fixed to the floor. Remember to remove the queen excluder between the brood and super.

Now the weather is turning cooler, all drones should have been ejected. If there are still a significant number still in the hive, it could signal that the queen is failing in some way and should be replaced sooner than later. It's unlikely that you have spare mated queens at this time of year so think about uniting it with a nice strong colony. The same goes for any colony that is too small (bees covering four or fewer frames).

Keeping pests at bay

Next, look at the hive itself. Reduce the size of the entrance to help the bees defend against robbing wasps or other honeybees. Make sure it is bee and weather tight. Those small gaps between the boxes or around the roof that were not much of a problem in the

summer can be a magnet for unwelcome guests.

With regard to the entrance block, some suggest the hole should be at the top under the brood box not down next to the mesh. As any build-up of dead bees will not block the entrance and stop the bees flying on sunny still days.

Guard against other pests such as mice and Green Woodpeckers. Mice can wreak all sorts of havoc in a hive if left unchecked but can be dealt with by



Green woodpecker

fitting a mouse guard or reducing the size of the entrance. They may have very supple bodies but the one thing they can't manipulate is their skulls, so if you reduce the entrance to about 9mm in depth, it should keep the blighters out.

In some areas, Green Woodpeckers have learnt that beehives are a good source of food later in the year. Woodpeckers do as much damage inside the hive as mice, with the added bonus of a hole drilled through from



Chicken wire mesh: woodpecker deterrent

the outside. To protect the hive, place wire chicken mesh loosely round the outside of the hive to stop them being able to reach the hive and peck at the wood (see pic below). Or, wrap the sides of the hive in plastic to prevent them being able to perch on the hive. This also makes the hive more weather-proof.

Ventilation

Check there is good ventilation to stop the build up of condensation. We know it's the wet that gets our girls not the cold. Now that most hives are on open mesh floors there is plenty of air coming in at the bottom, so don't worry about the size of the entrance block. You can cover the holes in the crown board with a flat piece of ply but spacing it off the board with a couple of matchsticks to maintain a through draught. Some argue that bees in the wild live in tree trunks that have no such through draught, and that we should aim to replicate that scenario. Your choice.

Whichever option you select, you should insulate the inside of the roof, remembering to keep the vents free.

And finally, make sure the hive stand is sturdy and the hive won't fall over in the next storm. And breathe.

Winter is coming

Now you're onto monthly maintenance visits, it's time to think about what's next. For you, there's winter meetings, honey shows both locally and nationally to attend; and of course how to improve your beekeeping.

Consider joining one of B&L's training courses: [see page 5 for details](#).

For the bees, planning which queens to mate from to breed that elusive 'gentle colony' and not those maniacs you've had to deal with all year. There is even a plus to the maniacs. They've helped in reducing my reaction to being stung so I don't look like John Merrick after each visit.

Roll on next season.

This production of the Veiled Beekeeper was brought to you in association with [Loratidine](#).



Graham Bubloz
Chairman

Words from the Chair

Please help B&L!

We really *do* need a secretary to help keep us running smoothly. Could you please consider helping? Please contact me if you might be able to help.

Meeting up

In September, we held our first winter meeting. This went well – with a Question & Answer session featuring a panel of experts. It was an important meeting because it was the first one held at our new venue (Eastgate Baptiste Church Hall) in Lewes. It looks like it will serve our purposes just fine. If you haven't yet come along to one of these meetings, please make the effort to come along to the next ones. For October, we have Bob Smith from the Central Beekeepers who is giving a talk at Lewes entitled: "Your bees have died: what happened, what to do?"

Incidentally, we do also occasionally have ad-hoc gatherings at a pub once a month – usually on a Wednesday evening – but never

coinciding with a winter meeting. This seems a great way for people to have a chat in a very informal atmosphere. If you'd like to join in – please keep an eye open on our Facebook Group for the next one.

Honey sales

During September, we were represented at the Westdene Village Fair which took place very close to where I live. We ended up with a profit of £316.50, which was excellent for five hours' activity. If you would like to get involved with future outdoor events, please contact anyone on the committee.

Elsewhere, you will be reading about the proposed training that is being organised. Hopefully, the advanced training will be of interest to our more seasoned beekeepers.

We really are trying to provide something for everyone, so if you have any suggestions or ideas, please share them with someone on the committee.



Manek Dubash
Asian Hornet
Team Co-ordinator

Asian hornet latest

The exasperation. That's what comes through when watching the [latest YouTube video](#) from Brittany-based beekeeper Richard Noel.

His multi-apiary commercial beekeeping operation is threatened by Asian hornets which, at this time of year, are at their peak and descend *en masse* on his hives. His traps—one per hive—fill with hornets every day. And he's by no means alone.

Much like wasps, around now the Asian hornet sexuals—queens and drones—are being produced. They will mate, the drones will die and the queens will then fly off to hibernate over winter.

That leaves the workers. Normally rewarded with sugar by the larvae which get fed protein—such as honey bees—the workers' food sources are diminishing as the numbers of larvae decline.

So they are hungry and become increasingly desperate for food. They want sugar for themselves but they are still attacking the hives of honey bees as the production of new queens ramps up.

As the [Invasive Species Compendium](#) (CABI) notes:

"The attempts by hornets to attack honey bee colonies are numerous and frequent, particularly at the end of the season (September to December) when the production of new queens makes high demands on hornet workers ([Mollet and Torre 2006](#))."

Research of the food inside an Asian hornet nest showed that up 87 percent of their food source was honey bees.

Each nest can contain up to 1,000 workers and once one finds a food source, they will quickly recruit others to it. Which gives you an idea of the size of the problem that beekeepers in places such as France and Jersey are facing.

And once established, hornet nest numbers can increase quickly. This from CABI: "In France, extremely high densities of nests have been reported: 8 nests per km² in mixed land usage to 23 nests per km² in an urban area ([Franklin et al., 2017](#))."

Is this our future?

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



Relaxed venue for learning: The Barn at Westdene, in Brighton

Want to improve your beekeeping? The best way is to take 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. And there's always cake and coffee...

Any B&L member who has passed their Basic Assessment is eligible to take the [BBKA Module 1 Honey Bee Management](#) exam—or even just take the course but not the 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 JW Pagden, LE Snelgrove and GW 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

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 12 January

2023; 9 February; 23 February; and 9 March.

This will be followed by the examination in March 2023, or you can defer it until November 2023.

Training will take place on Thursday evenings, either at a member's home or at the venue (below), depending on the size of the group.

Venue

The Barn, Westdene Green, Dene Vale, Brighton BN1 5ED

Fees

A course fee, payable to B&L, will be levied to cover the costs of room hire, refreshments and stationery. There's also a registration fee for the exam, payable to BBKA.

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

How to apply

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

Bee-reaved: where did my bees go? Time to find out

In December last year we were going away for a few weeks and I wanted to be sure that the bees had enough food, so was preparing to put some fondant in the hives. We had two hives at the time. We removed the roof of the first hive which had been quite well propolised into place.

Hmm. It seemed quiet. Unusually so. Some bees had been out and about the previous week when the sun had been shining directly onto the hives so we would have expected some buzzing. When we lifted the crown board and looked into the super that had been left on the hive, full of capped honey, there was no sign of bees.

We lifted off the super and, to our dismay, there were no bees. Not even dead bees. The hive had been completely abandoned. It was so strange. There had been no sign of

trouble. The hive had been treated for varroa (Apiguard). There was no bad smell or any other sign of disease. Food stores had been left virtually intact and there was no indication of mouse damage or incursion by any predator.

Then we went to the second hive and lifted the roof. Total silence. Exactly the same thing had happened, apart from the fact that there were about eight dead bees on the hive floor. Where had they gone? It was the middle of December for goodness sake!! Most of all, though, I was genuinely grieving for the lost bees.

I decided to take a year off bee-keeping but have been observing bee activity in my own suburban garden, planted mainly with pollinator-attracting plants. In Spring and early Summer I saw lots of different types of bumble bees, hover flies, butterflies

and moths but was surprised by the massive reduction in honey bees.

Bees travel a long way to forage so I wouldn't have expected the loss of my own hives to have had such a marked effect on other honey bee visitors to our garden. When the lavender bloomed they made a welcome return, though not in the numbers seen in previous years.

I have been keeping bees for more than 15 years but feel that now is a good time to learn more about them. I've previously done the BBKA Certificate of Proficiency in Apiculture (Basic Assessment) and am about to embark on Module 1, organised by Jude New of the Brighton & Lewes Beekeeping Association. Maybe see you there?

Anne Asha

My experience with Asian hornets: the beekeeper's nightmare

I have been going to France to the same area for the past 30 years. My schoolgirl French is no better, because they always reply in English! I was staying in a gîte in the beautiful wine growing area of Beaujolais, Bourgogne and Mâconnais area (south of Macon, north of Lyon).

I have been looking for the dreaded Asian hornet the past couple of years knowing it was in the area, but nothing seen. But this year, quite by chance while talking to an elderly English couple outside their gîte, along flew an insect like a flying cigarette butt.

OMG, heart racing as I followed it onto the neighbouring grape vines around their garden. This was an Asian hornet. Wide yellow band on the abdomen, yellow legs, smaller than a familiar European hornet, and the majority of it black.

Sweaty hands

I needed to get a photograph but trying to find my phone and enter my ID code was impossible. So the following day, I went to the vines. There were plenty of hornets and wasps eating the dessert grapes, but then I saw it again. So with suddenly a racing heart and sweaty hands I managed to get a couple of photos and a short video.

I spoke to Jean-Michel (J-M), the owner. His elderly mother was a beekeeper, but last year she lost her colonies of bees, and at 94 decided maybe it was time to give up her hobby. So J-M has been around bees all his life, and with his second income of producing wine, has lived with wasps and hornets too.



The nest embedded into an earthy bank.



Asian hornets munching away on dessert grapes

He said Asian hornets have been around for three years, but that they are now much more common. There is no help available to control them. You have to sort out the problem yourself should you find a nest.

And this is probably why France is in the situation that it is with them. He also said that their sting is very much more painful than a [European] hornet's.

Beautiful nest

My next holiday ambition: would I be able to find their nest? They appeared to be flying in the same direction, so a walk that way was taken. That evening having a glass of wine (I was on holiday after all) with my Dutch friend and I mentioned the Asian hornets.

"I know where their nest is," she said, "I will show you tomorrow."

True to her word she did. I had walked past it the day earlier but looking higher up in the trees, and so missed the low buzzing sound as they came and went.

The nest was beautiful, and I stood just a few feet away and watched, mesmerised, for some time. They didn't appear aggressive but I didn't want to get any closer with no protection on. I informed J-M where it was, and yes it was not too high and able to get to it with a ladder. He informed me that he would go when all was dark to dispose of it with the aid of a large plastic bag!

I left early the following morning so I have no idea if it was collected or if he was stung.

Luckily, in the UK we have the assistance of Defra to help with the removal of this non-native species.

But I now know what I am looking for, I will be able to spot one quite easily and I don't think my heart will be racing quite so much or my hands so sweaty. [Phew! Ed].

Words and photos by Hilary Osman

The videos from which these images were extracted are on YouTube: [here](#) and [here](#).

First winter meeting and first at the new venue



Our first meeting of winter 2022/23 in the new venue at Eastgate Baptist Church Hall

Eastgate Baptist Church Hall in Lewes was the location of our first winter meeting of 2022 on Wednesday 14 September. A brand venue and a brand new format too, with around 30 members attending.

Chairman Graham Bubloz first sadly reported the ill-health of our Membership Secretary and Treasurer Norman Dickinson, and the availability

of a card that members could sign to wish him well.

Expert talks

The rest of the evening was occupied by five-minute talks from expert members (in alphabetical order): Manek Dubash on Asian hornets, Jude New on both varroa treatments and on training and education, Hilary Osman

on WBC hives, and Ian White on equipment cleaning.

After tea and biscuits (thank you again Shirley Light), the panel resumed their seats to be quizzed by members. Almost all the questions related to varroa treatments, with the inevitable discussions around when and how much to treat.

After a surprisingly quick meeting—or maybe it just felt that way—the meeting broke up into individual conversations, and finished about 21.00. It was very pleasant to be back.

PS: Since the meeting, I'm delighted to report that Norman is on the road to recovery.

**Words by Manek Dubash
Photos by Graham Bubloz**



B&L sets up stall at Westdene Fair



This open green space in Brighton played host to the Westdene Fair on Saturday 11 September, with B&L in attendance. Graham, Hilary and Jude managed the stand (left) and ensured that B&L's coffers were replenished, thanks to sales of honey from our apiaries, while dynamo Hilary sold large amounts of hive-related produce. Photos: Mim and Graham

Happy summer bees



Happy bees (though I'm not so sure about those sunken cappings. MD.). Here's to a fruitful next season. Photographer unknown.



B&L events 2022/23

Winter meetings 2022

Please note the **NEW VENUE** for meetings. See below

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
19 Oct	Bob Smith	Your bees have died: what happened, what to do?
16 Nov	TBA	
13 Dec	Everyone	All-members' Christmas dinner (provisional date)
14 Dec	Lynne Ingram	The truth about honey (Zoom only)

All winter in-person meetings will now be held at our **NEW VENUE**: Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Eastgate Street, Lewes BN7 2LR. It's opposite Waitrose, with a parking bay outside for loading/unloading.

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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