

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers

A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
& Honey Show
Wednesday 15 February, 7.15pm,
Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Eastgate Street, Lewes



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EDITORIAL



Typical cheap supermarket honey, price: £1.50.
NB: Tesco is not the only culprit.

Two big issues this month—or rather, one of them is next month. But anyway.

First is a [petition](#) that I'd hope everyone will feel comfortable signing. Also publicised by the BBKA, it's aimed at persuading the government to ensure that honey labels accurately reflect the country of origin. At the moment, cheap honey in particular is renowned for its vague descriptions such as 'Product of EU and non-EU countries'. This tells you nothing.

While I doubt that we as beekeepers are likely to shell for honey either at all or for stuff that's clearly not honey: at the price it sells for in supermarkets, around £1.50-£2 a 454g jar, it can't be. We know how much it costs to produce and, even if you're a big

commercial operator, there's less than zero profit on the price a supermarket will pay you for which retails at that sub-profit price.

Instead, such a product is highly likely to be adulterated, probably with syrups designed to evade the relatively simple tests that UK food inspectors will perform.

So the product description doesn't concur with the contents. That's wrong.

See [page 4 for more](#).

AGM & Honey Show

On 15 February, we'll be holding the Annual General Meeting. All the details are on [page 2](#), but the essential thing is that we need to decide who our officers and committee members are for the next year.

We also need a Secretary: it's been a *sits vac* situation for a year now. If you'd like to help, please let someone on the committee know. Nomination forms are on their way.

Just as importantly, and just perhaps more fun, is the Honey Show. This is your opportunity to show off your skills as a beekeeper, confectioner, photographer or wax-monger.

There are 11 entry classes so there's plenty of scope. And if you've not won anything before, there's a special prize should you win a class this time.

So please come along. I mean, what else are you going to do on a cold Wednesday evening in February? See you there.

Manek Dubash, Editor

NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2023

EVENTS

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

NEXT MONTH

- AGM edition
- Seasonal hints & tips
- News updates
- Latest 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

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Division Annual General Meeting & Honey Show

Date and time

**Wednesday 15 February 2023,
Eastgate Church Hall, Lewes, 19.15**

The Annual General Meeting is the most important meeting of the year. All members welcome!

AGM: elections

All current officers are standing again this year, but we still have a vacancy for the Secretary's post. This will have been vacant for 12 months come the AGM. It is a crucial but not onerous role, so please consider helping out.

Rules

- Any member can stand
- Nominees must have a proposer and seconder, and should sign the form to signify that they are willing to stand
- All nomination forms must be returned to [Chairman Graham Bubloz](#)

- Deadline for nominations: **Wednesday 8 February 2023**
- Forms will be emailed to all members before the deadline

Honey Show

The Honey Show runs concurrently with the AGM.

Just how good is your wax, honey, photography and/or honey confectionery? Here's your chance to pit your skills against those of other members of the Division; the rules and classes are set out below. Essentially, ensure that your entries are in by 8 February 2023.

Note that there's a special prize if you've never won anything before. Winners will be judged and announced at the Show, together with suitable fanfare and applause!

Photographs (jpg format only please, max size 4MB) need to be submitted by

email and will be projected on the evening.

We hope it will be a better way to show off your photos and give those without fancy printers an incentive to compete.

Points mean prizes

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 chances.

Novice Cup

The Novice Cup is awarded for the most points gained by a member who has not won anything before. The Honey Cake Salver trophy is awarded for the best Honey Cake.

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

Brighton and Lewes Division Honey Show Rules

Wednesday 15th February 2023

Judges: Gerald Legg assisted by Jude New for Classes 1 – 9, Gerald Legg for Class 10 & 11

-00 How about taking part in some of the classes? Awards & Cups to be won. 00-

You need to:

- Send your **Entry Form** and **Photographs** by email by [Wednesday 8 February 2023](#) for free entry to all classes to Bob Curtis; poshpix@me.com
- Bring your entries for Classes 1 - 9 to the meeting on [Wednesday 15 February 2023](#) at 7pm. On the night entry fee is £1.00 per class.
- Photographs for Classes 10 & 11 must be submitted digitally to poshpix@me.com
- **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. As per the recipe below/overleaf.
 - **Class 8.** Six Honey Biscuits. **Your own recipe to be provided with biscuits.**
 - **Class 9.** A wax wrap
 - **Class 10.** A bee related photograph (Max file size 4mb jpeg).
 - **Class 11.** A close-up shot of a bee (Max file size 4mb jpeg).

Points are awarded for each class. The member with the most points across classes 1 to 10 will be awarded the Dixon Hurst Cup.

1st prize – 5 points

2nd prize – 3 points

3rd prize – 2 points

The Novice with the Highest Points will be awarded the Novice Tray. Awarded to the person with the most points who has not won a first place in a previous B&L Honey Show.

The Best Honey Cake will win the Honey Salver

RULES:

- All classes are only for members of Brighton and Lewes Beekeeping Division.
- No entry fee for classes with Entry Forms received by the Sunday prior to the AGM, otherwise £1.00 per class.
- **Classes 1 – 3, 5 - 6 & Classes 9 - 11:** maximum of two entries, only your highest score will go towards the Dixon Hurst Cup.
- **Class 4:** One Honey Jar Label of your own design on an empty 1lb jar.
- **Classes 5 & 6:** The Wax must come from your own apiary.
- **Classes 7 & 8:** maximum one entry
- **Honey:** must be from the member's apiary.
- **Jars:** must be unlabelled, 1lb glass jars with gold lid (except for class 4).
- **Cakes and biscuits:** to be presented on a plate and covered with cling film. (The Honey used should be from the member's own apiary or locally produced honey.)
- **Classes 10 & 11.** Photographs must be submitted in digital format preferably jpeg at a max file size 4mb (Larger files will be accepted if they can be sent by email). All entries remain the copyright of the author. Entries may be used in the B&L Newsletters and website and will be credited to the author.

Recipe for Class 7

Honey Fruit Cake – made to recipe below:

50g Honey,
2 eggs,
150g SR Flour,
60g Demerara sugar,
200g butter or margarine,
200g mixed fruit,
1 tablespoon milk.

Method:

Put honey, sugar and milk together in a warm place and leave until honey is dissolved. Beat in remainder of ingredients.

Bake in cool oven for about 1¼ hours at 150°C, Gas Mark 2 (this time and temperature is only a guide).

Size of round tin to be used should not exceed 7½" diameter.

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 are few or no occupied brood cells 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 compasses 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.



The boxes were upside down and badly warped, but the bees were fine.

It's also a good time to look for new 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



Graham Bubloz
Chairman

Words from the Chair

I hope that you had a good Christmas and New Year.

We have a wonderful, unique selection of talks coming up in the next three months. Please take a look at the events page on the [B&L website](#). I think that I can honestly say that there is something of interest for any beekeeper.

Christmas bash

There were 27 of us that gathered for a Christmas meal at The Friars Oak pub at Hassocks on 13 December. It was a lovely evening, and my thanks go to Jude New for organising the meal and a raffle that raised £85 which was subsequently donated via Adrien Parker to the [Emmaus Charity](#), where Adrien is helping them look after their bees. We were also kept entertained for the evening with a bee quiz that Julie, Jeff and Manek [*only tangentially. MD*] kindly organised.

Coming up

Our AGM takes place next month on 15 February. Please try and come along to support us, check out (or enter the Honey Show and help decide who's going to be running B&L in 2023.

We're trialling combining our talks with other divisions of the Sussex Beekeepers Association. Initially, invitations are being

shared with the High Weald BKA. We are holding some meetings as a 'hybrid'—so for example we'll have an audience in the Eastgate Hall plus we'll be streaming the meeting to a wider audience using the Zoom video-conferencing facility.

It sounds a little complicated—but honestly, it's dead easy. Look out for the email from me with the reminder of the meeting and either come along to the meeting or click on the link in the email.

Winter reading

Barbara Summerfield is our Librarian. She holds a large number of books on our behalf and is located in Patcham, Brighton. She has until now been bringing three large crates of books to meetings, but I agreed with her that she need not bring the entire library along to every meeting at Lewes. So, if you'd like to borrow a book, please see the [website](#) for Barbara's contact details.

Help needed—please!

Finally, we're still without a secretary for the Brighton & Lewes group. I'd be grateful if you could please consider offering your services—it's not at all onerous—and if you're unsure what it involves, contact me (see [the last page of this newsletter](#) for contact details) and I'll happily talk it through with you.



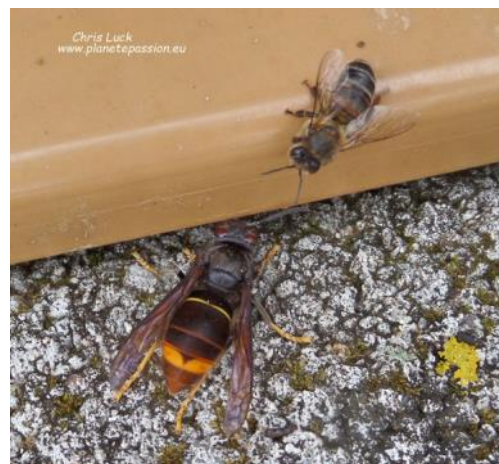
Manek Dubash
Asian Hornet
Team Co-ordinator

Asian hornet latest

With most insect life—our bees aside, of course—more than decimated by the freezing snap we experienced in early-mid December, the risk of encountering an Asian hornet is, for the moment, miniscule.

The queens will have hibernated somewhere they hope they will survive the winter without being either frozen to death or eaten by spiders or other predators. Some 99.9 percent of them won't make it through the winter as a consequence of both that and of a lack of food. Much the same is true for wasps.

Come spring, the queens will be hungry, looking for food and preparing to build a primary nest. We'll need to be ready if they make it to the British mainland.



Asian hornet queens are attracted to honey.
Photo: Chris Luck



B&L talk on adulterated honey: ‘terrifying’

It defrauds the public and takes bread from the mouths of beekeepers around the world

Is honey always what it seems?

‘Honey is the natural sweet substance produced by honey bees from the nectar of plants or from the secretions of living parts of plants or excretions of plant-sucking insects on the living parts of plants, which the bees collect, transform by combining with specific substances of their own, deposit, dehydrate, store and leave in the honey comb to ripen and mature.’

There is one official, rather verbose but precise definition of what honey is—as we all know. But this is all too often not what the public gets when they buy a jar of honey.

Adulteration global galore

Honey has become the most adulterated foodstuff globally. And there’s a plentiful supply of the stuff.

For example, the supermarket products selling for around £1.50 to £2 cannot possibly be pure honey: the costs of bottling, labelling, and transport alone mean that there’s little margin left for the product, especially once you factor in the retail markup.

This was the essence of Lynne Ingram’s fascinating talk on 14 December—described by one member as ‘terrifying’. It was our first hybrid meeting: we live-streamed the meeting out to the membership, while Lynne spoke to those physically present over an incoming Zoom link.

Lynne is a Master Beekeeper and chair of the Honey Adulteration Network UK, a group which “aims to advance awareness of honey adulteration in the interests of the public, beekeepers and the environment”.



Boiled down to its essentials, the problem is that UK food standards testing—which is limited and sparsely applied—cannot detect adulterated honey. This is because the syrups used, mainly in China, to bulk up the so-called honey are designed to enable adulterated honey to pass those tests.

In fact, as Lynne described, this so-called honey does not even conform to that official description from the outset.

How it works

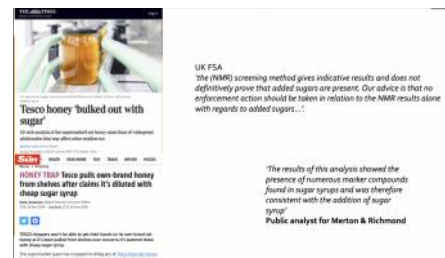
China, the biggest exporter of the stuff, makes way more honey than it has bee hives capable of producing, and so is the biggest source of adulterated honey, which is then exported globally.

The bee farmers feed syrup during the honey flow. They extract unripe nectar daily and dehydrate it in factories. Resins are then applied to remove residues and lighten the colour. Then smart syrups are added to bulk it up. All this goes to mask the origin of the honey—see box below.

According to the labs at [Mérieux NutriSciences](#), there has been an 800 percent increase in honey fraud since the Covid-19 pandemic, the biggest leap of any foodstuff fraud. So the honey market is undermined by cheap imports. And the UK was (and presumably still is) by far the biggest importer of honey in the EU between 2001-2018.

Fraud

So not only are consumers buying stuff that does not conform to what’s on the label, genuine commercial beekeepers are struggling to make a living, not just in the UK but globally, many in



Honey adulteration in the news. This slide from Lynne Ingram’s excellent presentation, screen grab by Gerald Legg

developing nations and who have few other ways of making a living.

Lynne gave us some examples in the USA, Canada and Australia where huge proportions of imported honey had been adulterated, detectable only by far more sophisticated tests, such as NMR—see box for details—than are deployed by UK food standards inspectors.

And tests done in the Philippines using nuclear DNA techniques found that 76 local honey brands were adulterated, 94 percent of which contained 78 percent C4 syrup. In other words, the stuff people are buying is barely honey at all.

What can we do?

The [Honey Adulteration Network](#) has launched a petition to raise the issue of honey fraud at governmental level, calling for honey labels to reflect the origin of honey.

Please sign: the petition is [here](#), and there’s a QR code above to make it easier. Just scan it with your phone and the web page will appear.

Manek Dubash

UK testing methodologies

Honey is mainly tested for the presence of exogenous sugars from C4 derived plants such as sugar cane, and C3 sugars from beet sugar. Specialised syrups are routinely added to honey specifically to evade detection for these sugars.

Other techniques such as Elemental Analysis Isotope Ratio mass Spectrometry can detect C4 sugars, while nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) can detect over 40 unnatural substances. Combined with these, LC-High Resolution Mass Spectrometry enables higher resolution detection.

New books available to borrow from the B&L Library

We have four new books available in the B&L Library, three of them by Wally Shaw, beekeeper and ecologist from Somerset BKA, who has penned a couple of excellent and highly comprehensive guides to swarm control. They include the one featured below but also [Swarming: Biology and Control](#).

Feeding bees and food safety

There is little reliable guidance for beekeepers on the food production side, which is quite surprising, a gap that **Food Safety for Beekeepers** aims to fill. The author, Andy Pedley, was an Environmental Health Officer for 46 years and has been a beekeeper for 30.

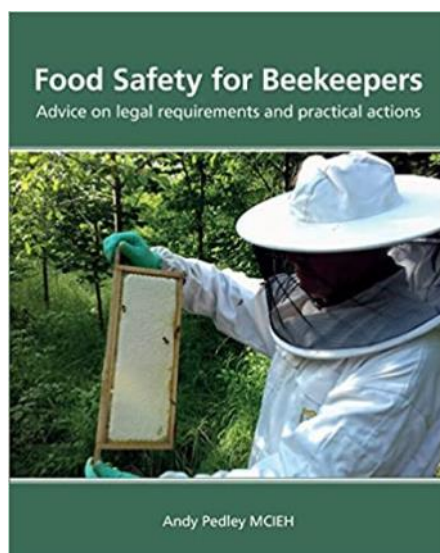
Commercial bee farmers with many hives produce significant quantities of honey and related products in commercial quantities. However, most beekeepers are hobbyists with a few hives and limited sales, many have a number of hives—although it's surprisingly easy to progress from a couple of hives to several to many.

Yet a common misrepresentation is that you don't need to register as a food business if premises are used for fewer than five days in five consecutive weeks: this is based on the Food

Premises (Registration) Regulations 1991.

However, these were superseded by Retained Regulation (EC) 852/2004, which contained no such exemption; there's full information in the relevant paragraph in the book.

Wally Shaw's **Feeding Bees** booklet offers advice on what materials can safely be used to feed bees, at what times of year feeding may be required and how to assess their needs. Also discussed is the means of delivery; the types of feeder that can be used and their pros and cons.



These two are probably the most useful at this time of the year.

Swarm control & queen cells

Queen cells presage swarming, and this is when many beekeepers panic.

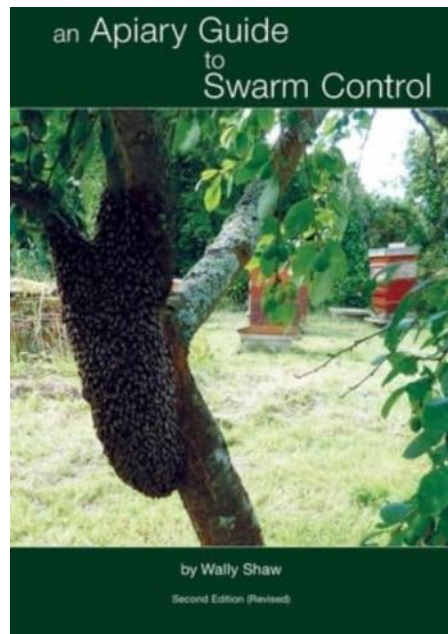
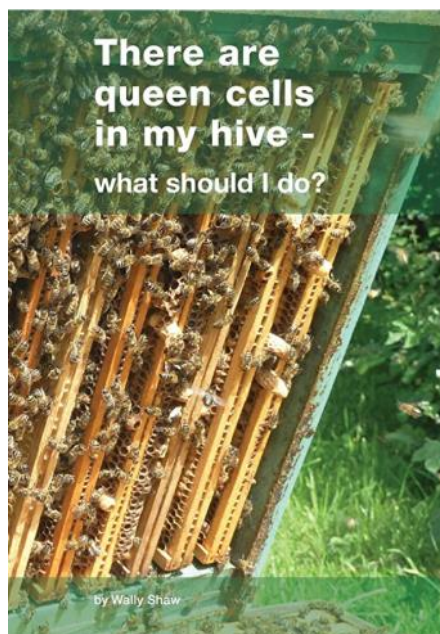
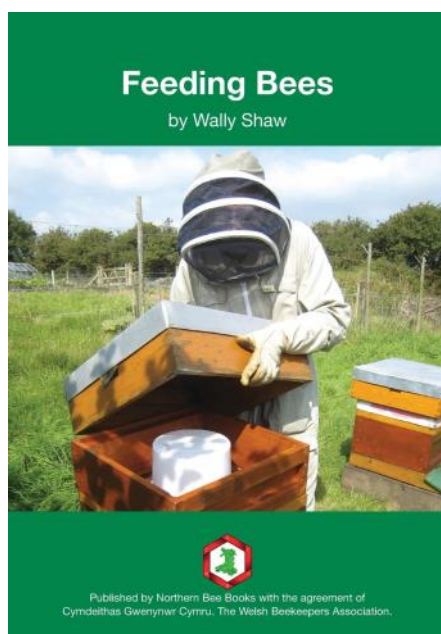
However, the beekeeper needs to understand that swarming is simply reproduction. All the complex, integrated behaviour that occurs within a honey bee colony has evolved simply to improve its chance of successful reproduction.

Most beekeepers' primary interest is just one aspect of this behaviour, namely the collection of nectar and the storage of honey. In order to produce the maximum amount of harvestable honey, the beekeeper seeks to create large colonies but also to prevent them from achieving their natural destiny through swarming—so there is an inherent conflict involved. The only way of addressing this is through swarm control.

Wally Shaw explains what to do in **An Apiary Guide to Swarm Control** and **There are queen cells in my hive**.

These books are available from the B&L Library for anyone to borrow—and can also be downloaded for free.

Jude New



Bees experience memory loss when exposed to herbicides and pesticides



Buff-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*).
Photo by Ed Brown Wildlife/Alamy

Bumblebees exposed to glyphosate, the world’s most popular type of weedkiller, found it harder to learn and remember colours linked to rewards—which could undermine their ability to locate food for the colony.

Marjo Helander at the University of Turku in Finland and her colleagues investigated how glyphosate, in this case in herbicide Roundup Gold, affected buff-tailed bumblebees (*Bombus terrestris*, pictured above) in colour-based learning and memory tests.

Over five rounds, bees chose between different-coloured artificial flowers, five containing a sugar reward and five a bad-tasting quinine solution. Unexposed bees got better at finding the reward in each round. But in bees exposed to the herbicide, learning fell to effectively zero after three rounds. In a memory test two days later, unexposed bees performed near the level they had in the fifth round of training. Meanwhile, bees exposed to the weedkiller seemed to choose colours at random, suggesting they had retained nothing.

“Pollinators rely heavily on their visual system to be successful in their complex foraging environment”, says Helander. “If this success is diminished, it will ultimately decrease the number of pollinators and thus their ability to pollinate flowering plants. That would be detrimental to both pollinator and plant populations.”

Recent research has found that bumblebees exposed to glyphosate can struggle to effectively [maintain required temperatures within their colonies](#). Another study demonstrated



Marjo Helander, Researcher, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Turku University

that they show [no avoidance of flowers treated with the chemical](#) while foraging, leading to residues in the pollen they collect.

The new research used lower doses than much of the previous work looking at glyphosate’s effects, representing a more realistic test of how bees might be affected in a real-world context using a small amount of a commercial product.

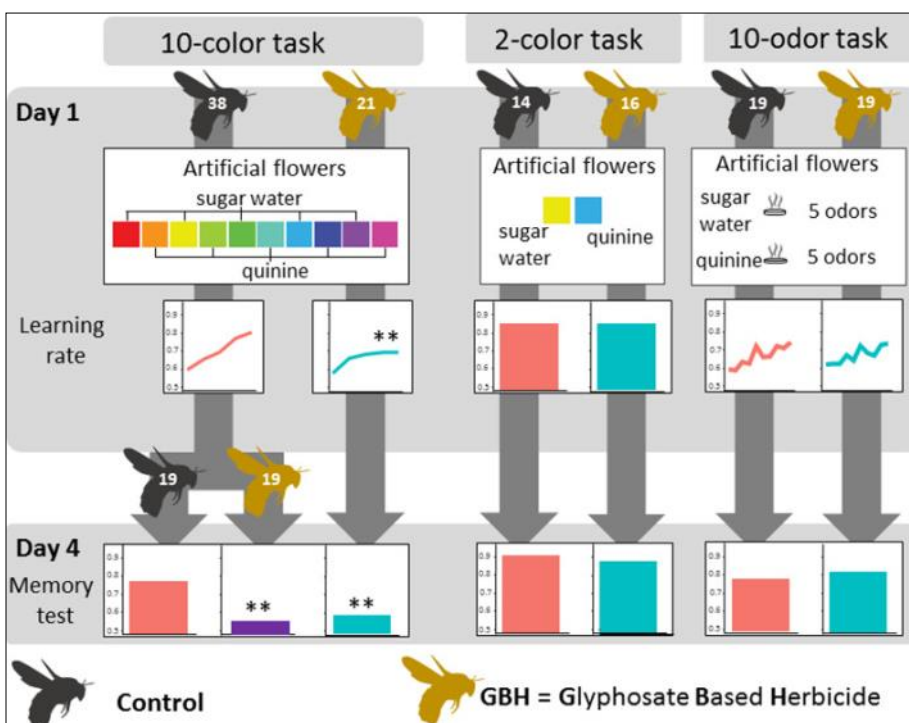
Commercial formulations include other chemicals to enhance the product’s impact, says Helander, and these may be even more toxic than glyphosate itself.

“Herbicides can indirectly harm bees by removing flowers from the environment,” says [Harry Siviter](#) at the University of Texas at Austin. “This new research demonstrates that glyphosate can impair bumblebee learning and memory, adding to a growing body of evidence showing that the herbicide can also have direct negative effects on pollinators.”

Gary Hartley, *New Scientist*

Postscript

B&L member and scientist Gerald Legg adds: Although this experiment used bumblebees, it would seem logical that honey bees would also be affected, So it is not just pesticides that damage insects, herbicides do it too.



Bumblebees exposed to the glyphosate herbicide clearly did worse in memory tests than those not exposed



B&L events 2023

Winter meetings

All winter in-person meetings start at 7.15 for a 7.30pm prompt start, at Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Eastgate Street, Lewes BN7 2LR. Links for online meetings—marked Zoom—will be sent out before the meeting. Zoom+physical meetings will consist of a remote speaker on video at the hall, and the meeting broadcast online to members, linked as above.

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
18 Jan	Anund Helgesen	Hints and tips from a Norwegian beekeeper (Zoom+physical)
15 Feb	-	AGM & Honey Show
15 Mar	Malcolm Wilkie	How to handle and produce queens
19 Apr	Nigel Kermod	The social side of beekeeping

Out-apiary meetings TBA

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.

National Bee Unit inspectors

Regional Bee Inspector: Dan Etheridge

M: 07979 119376

E: dan.etheridge@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.



Managed by the Community Development Foundation
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Officers & contacts

President: Vacant

Chairman: Graham Bubloz

E: chair@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

M: 07758 866278

Hon Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer/Membership Secretary:

Norman Dickinson

34 Abergavenny Road, Lewes BN7 1SN

E: memsec.blbees@outlook.com

M: 07792 296422

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:** Felicity Alder & Jose Reina

- **Isfield:** Ian White

B&L Facebook Group

Group Administrator: Graham Bubloz

E: graham.bubloz@gmail.com

M: 07758 866278

Sussex BKA County Representative: Vacant

National Honey Show Rep: Norman Dickinson