

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

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EDITORIAL



Gerald Legg judges honey while Bob Curtis (background) checks the scores on the doors.
Photo: Manek Dubash

AGM and Honey Show

It was a good turnout for a chilly Wednesday evening, with some 33 members in attendance.

We've a [full report with plenty of photos on pages 5-9](#) but, to spare you the tension of waiting, I can report that all current committee members and officers were re-elected unanimously.

In addition, after a year of pleading for someone to fill the vacancy, Chairman Graham and the rest of the committee were delighted to hear after the AGM that not one but two delightful people volunteered to become the B&L Secretary. More on this later.

The Honey Show attracted a lot of interest with plenty of entries, giving Show organiser Bob Curtis cause for some stress-related hair-pulling as he endeavoured—and succeeded—in organising all the entries, the anxious competitors, the judging, the point-scoring and finally, awarding the prizes.

An excellent job well done. And well done too to all competitors for putting in the effort.

Oops!

In the January issue, we featured some books by Wally Shaw and described him as being from Somerset BKA. This was incorrect: he's from Anglesey, in Wales of course. Thanks to Pam Hunter for the correction and my apologies to Wally.

Manek Dubash, Editor

BOOK NOW!



Spring 2023
Convention

Friday 21 - Saturday 22 - Sunday 23 April 2023

Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Lectures, Workshops and Seminars covering a wide range of practical and scientific topics, directed at all levels of experience, presented by leading experts

Bumper Trade Show Saturday 22nd

Speakers and Tutors include: Randy Oliver (virtually), Samuel Ramsey (virtually), Marin Anastasov, Martin Bencsik, Shirley & Richard Bond, Giles Budge, Stephen Case-Green, Julie Coleman, Michael Collier, Lynfa Davies, Stephen Fleming, Mike Garratt, Fani Hatjina, John Hendrie, Luke & Suzie Hutchinson, Lynne Ingram, Angela Kirk, Stephen Martin, Jane Medwell, Jenny Morgan, Chris Park, Tom Pope, Sara Robb, Anne Rowberry, Debbie Smith, Victoria Soroker, Sean Stephenson, Oliver StJohn, Jane Stout, Jim & Val Vivian-Griffiths, Alison Wakeman and more.....

For further information, and to book from 30th January see the Spring Convention pages of www.bbka.org.uk

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2023

EVENTS

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

NEXT MONTH

- 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

Seasonal tips for March



I hope your bees survived February chills and well done on keeping your bees going so far. Spring is on the way!

As the days lengthen and the temperature rises, the queen will start to increase her laying rate, building a new foraging force for the approaching spring. The fondant you have been using, a source of carbohydrate, that the bees have been using to maintain the hive temperature, will need to be supplemented with a source of protein to help with the development of the new brood.

In the absence of stored pollen in the hive you can use pollen patties either home-made or shop bought. They can be either substitutes (without pollen) or supplements (with pollen).

See the box-out below for a pollen recipe I found.

And there's another one [on Beebase](#). Or you can use a fondant mixed with pollen such a Candipolline Gold (other brands are available).



Choose a sunny day for your first inspection

On warmer, still days, later on in the month when the temperature is getting

towards about 12°C you can do a limited examination of the hive to see how things are going. Does the queen have enough spare space to lay new brood? If not, move a frame of empty drawn comb nearer the centre of the brood to help her along.

Feeding and varroa

Check if they need feeding. If the cluster is low down on the comb and there is plenty of sealed stores—good. If they are clustered on the top of the frames and there is little sign of stores, then feed.



Use a contact feeder (see image above) filled with thick syrup. Sugar and water mixed in the ratio of 2:1 or commercial syrup. Caution: do not feed too much as the bees will store it and reduce the space available for the queen to lay.

Check the varroa drop rate. If you're not sure what it should be, go to the Beebase website to check their calculator or leaflet.

When treating your bees, it's necessary to keep a record of any approved medicines that you've given or going to give to your bees. Approved means, those approved by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). Current legislation, requires that you keep a record of the purchase,



use and disposal of these medicines. Records should be kept for a minimum of five years. Again a [helpful leaflet is available to download from BeeBase](#).

Now may also be the opportunity to change the floor and get rid of all the debris that has accumulated of the winter. Remember not to drop litter in the apiary, put it in bucket and dispose of it in the dustbin at home or in your garden burner. When the weather is warm enough, I will change all of the hive components, from floor to roof, except for the brood frames.

Later in the month when there is little fear of freezing, you may think about stimulation feeding. This where you use a thin syrup (1:1) to simulate a nectar flow. However, if you start feeding you will need to continue until natural sources of pollen and nectar become available. A strong colony can use up to 2kg of stores during this period.

An example: in my apiary there is a large willow tree and that comes into flower in late April/early May. It takes six weeks from egg to flying forager so, if the cluster is small when you start feeding, they may not be able to



If you can see this many varroa, it's too many

[Homemade Pollen Substitute Recipe Patties](#) [pdf]

Ingredients

Fat-free soy flour (226g/8oz)

Granulated sugar (340g/12oz)

Brewer's yeast (28g/1oz)

Sugar syrup (340g/12oz) at 2:1 or your honey

Method

You can also use ordinary soy flour. Add water as needed to mix.

(Continued on page 3)

Seasonal tips for March (cont.)



Willow in flower

maintain the correct temperature for rearing the new brood if you stop.

Planning ahead

It's also time to think about what you want to do with your bees this year. Replacing or rebuilding your stock of bees and how you'll go about it. You could pick the biggest and best hive that you have identified from your [hive records](#).

Keeping records, no matter the size of your operation, will make your life easier. I still struggle to write everything down, even now after all the years I've been keeping bees. When I first started with just one hive, it was easy to remember everything I saw and did. However, as the number of hives increased, and the manipulations got more involved it all became a little confusing. Several types of record cards are available, including paper-based or



New bees: a nuc?



Splitting the hive

computer-based ones, and cards can be designed by yourself; as long as they meet your needs, they will be fine.

New bees: where to get them

But back to that nice healthy colony: are you going to split it into three or four new nuclei/uses, letting the bees develop new queens in the process?

You could wait until swarms become available and go and collect them. This has some element of risk as they may be carrying some disease and unless you have somewhere to quarantine them, you don't want them mixing freely with your bees (does this sound familiar?).

Whatever you're planning to do with them also think whether you have enough equipment to carry out this adventurous programme of bee husbandry.

Or you could think about buying them. If you do buy them, make sure it's from a known dealer or that they have an inspection certificate from the Bee Inspector. There is a guide on the [BBKA website](#).

The nuc/hive should have a combination of adult and flying bees,



New bees: a big fat swarm?

brood in all stages of development over 3-8 frames with this year's or last year's marked queen.

The colony needs to be in the position to be able to start to expand immediately. The frames should be constructed properly and be new, or last season's, at the least. There should be enough stores in the box to last about two weeks, as the bees may not be able to fly due to bad weather. If at all possible, buy bees that have been bred locally; they are used to the climate.

Transport

If you are new to beekeeping, remember to secure the box for the journey home. You don't want to stop suddenly and then have a car full of bees. Make sure the box is out of the sun and there's enough ventilation, so they don't overheat.



Overturned lorry contained 16-20m bees

Writing this has whetted my appetite and now I can't wait to go and see my bees!

Another veiled beekeeper



Make sure you have enough equipment



Graham Bubloz
Chairman

Words from the Chair

We held our Annual Honey Show and Annual General Meeting on 15 February. I hope that if you came along that you enjoyed both – although I do understand that an AGM can be a little dry.

Events for you

Looking forward, you should consider attending the Sussex Beekeepers Association [AGM](#) at 2pm on 4 March at The Luxford Centre, Library Way, Uckfield, TN22 1AR. The speaker is David Robinson, topic: Planting for Pollinators. I went to the event last year and it was an excellent afternoon.

A few days prior to this, on Wednesday 1 March, we are holding an informal “bee chat” evening at a local pub. This time we are meeting at 7.30pm at The Signalman, 76 Ditchling Rise, Brighton, BN1 4QQ. Hopefully, I’ll see you there.

At our next monthly meeting at 7.30pm on 15th March, at the Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, we have Malcolm Wilkie speaking on queen rearing. Malcolm is from our near

neighbours at High Weald BKA and will be explaining how to introduce mated queens and how to raise queens from docile colonies. It will be an interesting lecture.

Bulk buys

I am grateful to Tony Birkbeck for managing the bulk purchase of various glass jars. He ended up ordering three full pallets of jars on our mutual behalf. If you haven’t already collected them, please do so fairly quickly so that Tony can start to claim his garage back.

Looking forward to spring

We are all hoping that we won’t have a repeat of previous years’ weather patterns—with an extended cold spell in March and I do hope that your bees have made it through the winter so far and that you are looking forward to a fruitful spring.

We have two members taking the Module 1 exam in March and so the best of luck to them.



Manek Dubash
Asian Hornet
Team Co-ordinator

Report: 2023 Asian Hornet Conference

A useful and interesting update of the latest research into the invasive Asian hornet summarises the BBKA’s annual Asian Hornet Conference, held virtually on 4 February.

We heard from a range of voices, many of them on the front line of the battle against the insects that have colonised France and are threatening to complete their annexation of the Iberian peninsula.

Andrew Durham, a beekeeper based in France, gave a real-world explanation of what the hornet does and how defences have evolved into best practices.

The right equipment helps, whether it be the electric harp—an electrified fence that bees fly through but hornets don’t—or a muselière—a sort of wire muzzle around the hive entrance. But growing grass around the hive, screening off hive sides and undersides during predation periods also help remove lurking places and incentives for hornets.

We also heard from Nigel Semmence of the National Bee Unit and their work behind the scenes, and from a number of academics

and researchers working with the [Atlantic Positive Project](#).

This umbrella organisation brings together strands of research from places such as universities, beekeeping associations and research centres in regions around the Atlantic coast. Xulio Rodriguez, Maria Shantal Rodriguez and Anna Diuguez Anton detailed the analysis work they have undertaken to understand the insect, its habits and feeding patterns with the aim of finding ways of countering it.

We heard from Ana Isabel Garcia Arias about the millions of euros spent fighting the hornet, and from Peter Kennedy about how to track and trace them to their nests.

And finally, the Jersey government’s Alistair Christie talked us through the island’s efforts to mop up the tsunami of hornets that arrived last year.

The good news? Some beekeepers in la France profonde have reported their colonies under predation for years are starting to show defensive behaviour.

2023 AGM & Honey Show: full report

AGM report

The 2023 Annual general Meeting of the Brighton & Lewes Division was held on Wednesday 15 February. It started promptly at 7.30pm and, after apologies and acceptance of the minutes, the meeting moved to accept the Treasurer's Report following one question from the floor.

Chairman's report

Chairman Graham Bubloz then summarised the year's events, noting the growth in membership and improvement in the Division's finances. He highlighted the key events of the year, including the hosting of the Sussex BKA AGM in February and the highly successful Bee Disease Day in

May. We sold a lot of honey at two fairs we attended, and in the autumn, moved our regular venue for meetings to a new hall close to the centre of Lewes. We are continuing to replace ageing equipment at our four out-apiaries. The shocking news of the year concerned our Treasurer and Membership Secretary Norman Dickinson, who suffered a heart attack in September but has recovered well and is thankfully back in the saddle.

Other reports

B&L's officers delivered their reports, with Jude New's extensive education report a particular highlight. It's clear that the efforts B&L and Jude in particular are putting in is having a

great effect and proving to make B&L an attractive place for new beekeepers.

The elections were uneventful, with all committee members re-elected—the full list is [on the back page](#).

BBKA Basic Assessment

Graham then handed out the awards in the form of certificates and badges to those assiduous members who passed their BBKA Basic Assessment in 2022.

These were:

- Tony Birkbeck
- Peter Dollimore
- Anna Forrest (in her absence)
- Joy Garnsey
- Adrien Parker
- José Reina
- Lisa White (in her absence)

- **Basic Assessment awards** Right: Adrien Parker, Joy Garnsey, Tony Birkbeck, Peter Dollimore.
- Below: Joy Garnsey (with Graham).
- Bottom row: Peter Dollimore, Tony Birkbeck, José Reina, Adrien Parker (all with Graham).



2023 Honey Show

Full results table and awards photos. Congratulations to all the winners. Report is on next page.

RESULTS FOR THE BRIGHTON & LEWES HONEY SHOW 2023							
Class	Description	1st (5 pts)	2nd (3 pts)	3rd (2 pts)	2023 Total Entries	2022 Total Entries	2020 Total Entries
1	One 1lb Jar Clear honey	Ian White	Ian White	Nigel Kermode	13	9	9
2	1lb Naturally Crystallised honey	Barbara Summerfield	Nigel Kermode	Nigel Kermode	7	2	6
3	Two 1lb Jars of similar honey	Toni Birkbeck	Rachel Ramaker	Bob Curtis	11	4	8
4	Honey Label	Joy Gurnsey	Bob Curtis	Rachel Ramaker	5	3	-
5	One Moulded candle	Hilary Osman	Bob Curtis	Toni Birkbeck	11	5	6
6	One 1oz block of wax	Bob Curtis	Toni Birkbeck	Hilary Osman	6	2	6
7	One Honey Cake.	Ian White	Hilary Osman	Gerald Legg	6	5	9
8	Six Honey Biscuits.	Rachel Ramaker	Joy Gurnsey	Heidi Burgess	6	5	6
9	A Wax Wrap	Hilary Osman	Toni Birkbeck	Toni Birkbeck	7	1	-
10	A bee related photograph	Rachel Ramaker	Henry Foster	Rachel Ramaker	9	5	4
11	Close-up of a Bee	Manek Dubash	Bob Curtis	Camilla Barnard	7	7	-
					88	48	54

Cups & Highest Scores		Points
Dixon Hurst Cup: 1 st Highest Points	Bob Curtis	16
2nd Highest Points Joint	Hilary Osman & Rachel Ramaker	15
3rd Highest Points	Toni Birkbeck	13
Novice Cup	Rachel Ramaker	15
Honey Cake Salver	Ian White	

Winners 2022	Winners 2020
Bob Curtis	Sue Taylor
Hilary Osman	Judith New
Nigel Kermode	Shirley Light
Nigel Kermode	Shirley Light
Bob Curtis	Judith New



Top: Dixon Hurst Cup winner: Bob Curtis
Above: Honey Cake Salver winner: Ian White



2023 Honey Show

A great show with a record number of entrants and close competitions in many categories/classes

Honey Show report

Firstly, I would like to thank all those who entered this year, giving us a record 88 exhibits from 17 people. The competition was hot for the top places with four people in very close contention for the cups. I must apologise to Toni Birkbeck and Rachel

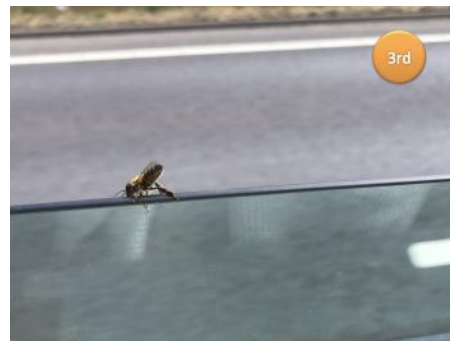
Ramaker for my errors in addition, resulting in the wrong person being awarded on the night, hopefully it is all sorted out now.

The new hall worked well for the layout of exhibits, with plenty of space for people to move around, but it did prove a bit chaotic at times. Finally, a

very special thank you to our judges Gerald Legg and Jude New, without whose expertise the show would not have happened, and to our trainee steward Nigel, who got thrown in at the deep end.

Bob Curtis, Honey Show Organiser

Class 10—Photography: A bee-related image—prize-winners



1st prize (left): Start them young, by Rachel Ramaker.

2nd prize (above, top): Montage, by Henry Foster.

3rd prize (above): Bee transport life in the fast lane, by Rachel Ramaker.

More from this class on the next page

2023 Honey Show

Class 10—Photography: A Bee-related image—other entrants



Bee-related image—other entrants (*clockwise from top left*): Bye-bye bee, by Camilla Barnard; Bees fanning in front of the hive, by Manek Dubash; Honeysuckling, by Camilla Barnard; Teaching in the rain, by Hilary Osman; Asian hornet in France, by Hilary Osman; Honeysuckling, by Camilla Barnard; June swarm after new home, by Bob Curtis.

- Images in Class 11—Close-up of a Bee—are on the next page

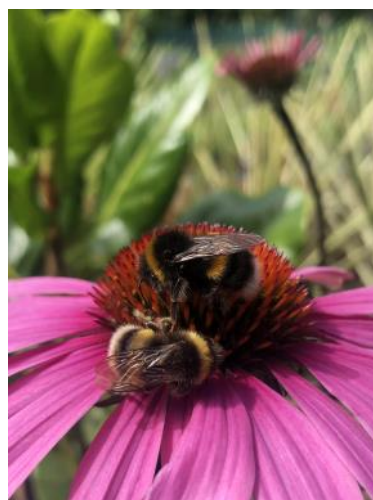
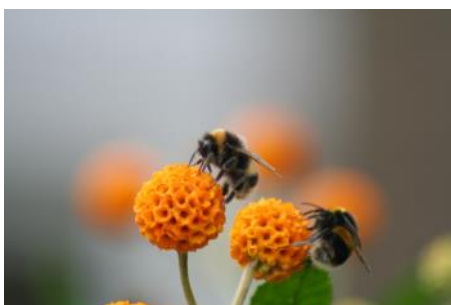
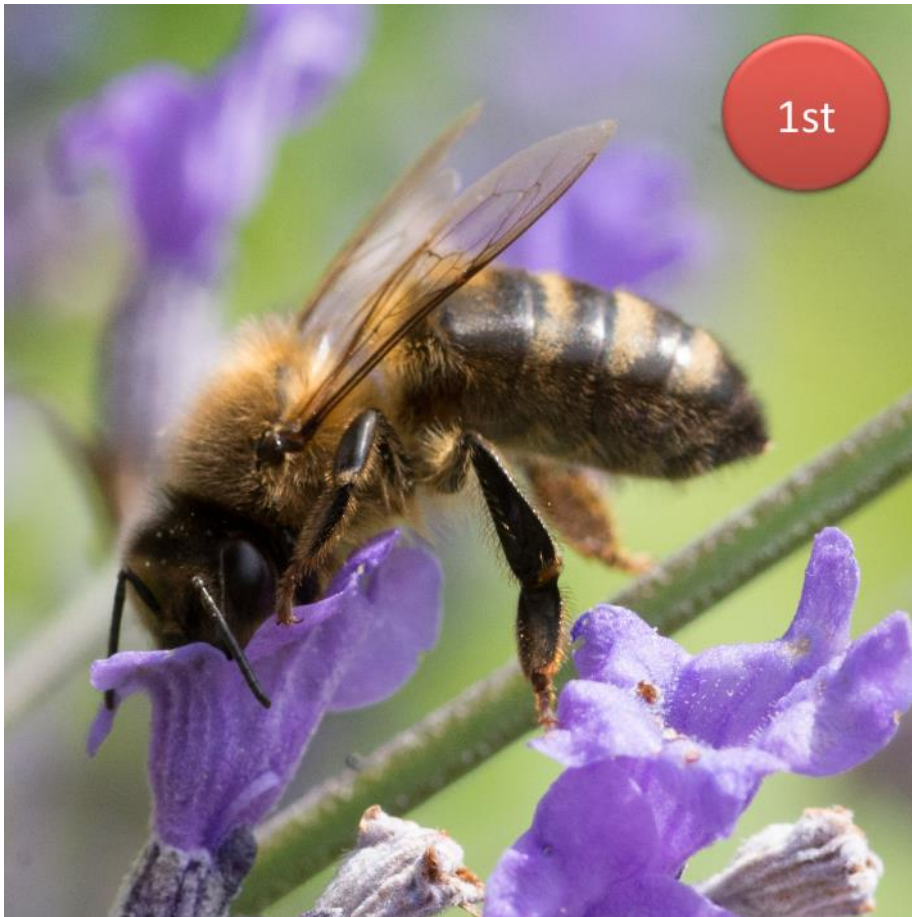
2023 AGM: more pictures from the meeting



Far left: Gerald Legg judges honey. *Middle:* Jude New delivers her annual training report. *Above:* A big thank you to Shirley Light for her sterling efforts with the tea and cakes.

2023 Honey Show

Class 11—Photography: Close-up of a bee



1st prize: Bee on a flower, by Manek Dubash; **2nd prize:** Bumblebee point of view (perhaps), by Bob Curtis; **3rd prize:** Southern Cuckoo by Camilla Barnard.

Other entrants: Sun-drenched bee, by Ross Eager; Bumblebees (2), by Rachel Ramaker; Common Carder on clover, by Camilla Barnard

Training: Introduction Day report

We hosted our largest ever Introduction Day on 18 February 2023. Sixteen new members, some brand new without bees, and some who have been keeping bees for a few months came along.

There were four sessions in the morning providing a picture of beekeeping locally and nationally. Members heard two other presentations, first about the cost of beekeeping equipment, while the other took us through a year of beekeeping,

including visits to the apiary, swarm collection and honey extraction. Attendees were encouraged to purchase honey provided by beekeepers from Brighton and Lewes.

Workshops

After coffee, cake and lunch workshops to taste different honeys, comparing them to supermarket honey, they made rolled candles, took part in a quiz and made brood frames.

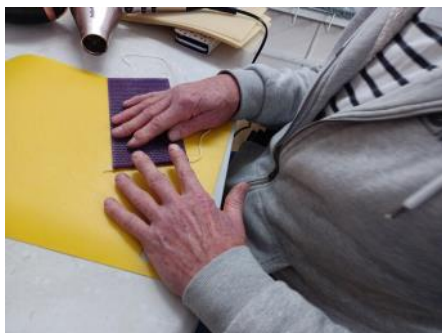
Manek and Adrien took lots of pictures as members took part in workshops—see pictures below.

Next steps

The next course at The Barn is for beginner beekeepers, some of whom will have attended this Introduction Day on 18 February.

Jude New, Training Co-ordinator

Photos from the B&L Introduction Day, by Graham Bubloz & Manek Dubash





B&L events 2023

Winter meetings

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

Date	Speaker	Topic
15 Mar	Malcolm Wilkie	How to handle and produce queens
19 Apr	Nigel Kermode	The social side of beekeeping

Spring/summer meetings

Date	Location	Topic
29 Apr	Barcombe (Tony B.)	Swarm control, collection and hiving
30 Apr	Grassroots (Jude N.)	Swarm control, collection and hiving
13 May	Isfield (Ian W.)	Swarm control, collection and hiving

Bee Chats

Wednesday 5 April, 7.30pm, [Half Moon, Plumpton](#)

Wednesday 10 May, 7.30pm, [The Dorset, Lewes](#)

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.



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



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