

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

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EDITORIAL



Asian hornet dismembering a honey bee.

The phony war is over: Asian hornets have arrived, in force, with 24 nests discovered so far this year, at least one of them in our area, namely Newhaven.

Two live stream videos have been organised by the BBKA to discuss the situation and what to do about it. Please earmark 6 & 7 September in your diary: we need to be on max alert right now, and we need the public to be vigilant too, a strategy that has worked well on Jersey.

Varroa: should we treat?

I recall saying to someone who suggested that I not treat for varroa: if only I could.

In July, we explained that many beekeepers are not treating. Finding ways of doing so is imperative as none of us wants to put poisons into our hives, given the hassle and expense of it all, never mind the stress it adds to our bees.

However, it turns out that those who have been most successful at both not treating and keeping their colonies alive have many, many hives—certainly more than most. Well into double figures.

With many hives, it becomes much easier (in a way) to try different methods of dealing with varroa. But for those of us with just a handful, it's not really possible. You can't afford to lose half your hives as a consequence of experimentation if you only have two or three, let alone one.

So sadly, I had to disagree with the individual concerned regarding varroa treatment. But if you have a better idea, I'd be glad to hear it.

Apologies

I must have had a brainstorm last month (August issue) because after *getting away with it* for almost three years, I have three apologies to make.

First, to Tony Birkbeck, because I published the wrong apiary report from Barcombe. The correct one is in this month's issue.

Hilary Osman and Shirley Light are due an apology for not running their feature on building a DIY solar wax melter. Also in this issue.

And finally to Bob Curtis and to everyone for getting the date of the first winter meeting wrong: it's Wednesday 20 September, NOT 26th. Phew!

Manek Dubash, Editor

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

September: end of the season

So you've taken the honey off—and I hope you had as good a harvest as I did this year—now is the time to thoroughly check the brood for disease and mite levels in your hives. Only treat your bees if they need it. Use the [National Bee Unit Guide on Managing Varroa](#) and go to the chapter on Integrated Pest Management for advice. If your daily average mite drop is above 10, then you need to treat immediately. [Several treatments](#) are available to us, but some need to be applied before the temperature drops too far.

As you can see from the picture below, this colony was a bit upset when I put Apiguard on.

You will also want to protect the stores, so it's a good idea to reduce the hive entrance size to help the bees guard against wasps and other bees robbing, especially for a smaller colony.

Winter feeding

So what constitutes a small colony? It's been suggested that anything with fewer than five frames of bees is in danger of failing during the winter.

There could be a number of reasons for this, but the primary one is that there isn't enough mass in the cluster to protect against heat loss unless you take extra precautions to conserve heat inside the hive.

There are many solutions to protecting bees in colder environments, one being to unite them with or into larger colonies using the newspaper method.

Your records will show you which colony to choose and which queen to cull (yes, a bit of regicide, but sometimes bee husbandry calls for it). The resulting colony will have a better

chance of survival, a better developed queen and more stores to see them through the winter.

How and how much to feed

When the last of the ivy has flowered there will be little chance for your bees to collect more forage for the winter and they will have to rely on their stores for five to seven months. Lower temperatures also limit the ability of the cluster to move to new stores. So having stores readily available, close to the cluster is essential.

You will need anywhere between 18-27kg of stores, depending on the location of your bees and the external temperature. A National super frame holds about 2.5kg of stores.

Counter-intuitively, the warmer it is, the more food the bees will need to survive the winter. This is because the cluster will be looser, and the bees will be able to move to new areas of stores within the hive easily.

If you think there will not be enough stores for the winter, either because they've eaten it already or you've taken it all, you will need to feed additional 2:1 thick syrup (1kg of sugar to 630ml of water to be precise) or commercial invert syrup to make up the shortfall.

How much is enough? In my opinion, keep feeding them until they stop taking it down. However, if you want to be a little more measured and you're making it yourself, then 1kg of sugar will make 1.25kg of stored syrup once the bees have processed it. So, if you think the shortfall is 10kg then divide 10kg by 1.25kg to give you the resulting 8kg of sugar you will need to make your syrup ($10/1.25=8$). Be sure if you are making enough; the bees can empty a 10-litre feeder in a couple of days.

At the end of the process and, as a rule of thumb, the hive will feel like it is fixed to the ground if you try and lift it.

Feeder types

You can use a contact feeder where the lid bucket has a fine mesh outlet. When full and the lid is in place, the bucket is inverted over one of the holes in the crown board. An eke is put over the

inverted bucket and the hive cover replaced. Or you can use a rapid feeder, usually 75-100mm deep open trays with an entrance at the bottom (below). These may require an eke or if they are big enough, can act as the crown board and the hive lid placed directly on top of them.

There are no practical differences between them: the important thing is to add all the winter feed in one go. [Dave Cushman's website](#) has more details.

When feeding, and to avoid any unnecessary excitement, try not to spill any syrup; make sure your feeder is bee/wasp proof from the outside and try to feed later on in the day when there is little foraging activity.

Nadiring your supers

If you have left your bees a super of their own honey for the winter, the next question is whether to leave it above or below the brood. I favour the latter option, known as nadiring. Remove the queen excluder beforehand.

My reasons for nadiring are that bees always move upwards where it's warmer. So, as the brood nest shrinks there will be space for the bees to store honey in the brood comb and towards the top of the frames. As the weather gets colder, the bees will move up into the region filled with stores.

Remove the super very early in the spring, or the super will end up with brood in it as the brood area expands.

Enjoy your harvest and think about entering the National Honey Show—contact Norman for details; you'll be surprised at what you can do with honey and other hive products.

The Veiled Beekeeper



English rapid feeder



Apiguard reaction. Photo: Ian White



Graham Bubloz
Chairman

Words from the Chair

There have been some significant events over the past month.

First the bad news: Asian hornets have arrived in our area. To avoid repetition, please see below for details and what to do.

Now, onto more pleasant matters: Tony and Toni Birkbeck hosted a weekend in August devoted to demonstrating how to extract honey. From the photos that were shared, it seems to have been very popular, and so many members gained some valuable experience. A full report follows next month.

Unfortunately, the weather put the kybosh on some of the planned out-apiary meetings which is a real shame, but we did manage to get the Hove Apiary opened up a couple of times, with new managers José and Felicity running things.

We attended the ever-popular Rottingdean Summer Fair too. Storm Antoni spoilt the plans there—but the organisers did a great job in moving the whole event indoors with less than 24 hours' notice. No doubt you'll read more about this elsewhere in this edition.

Jude New has been training new beekeepers during the summer—and I am sure that we are all very grateful for the time and effort that Jude devotes to the education courses that she runs.

Events

From September, our programme moves indoors. Please join us at the first meeting at the Eastgate Church Hall, in Lewes, where we have a panel ready to offer some beekeeping tips and to take your questions.

Jude New is looking at running some craft workshops in the late autumn / early winter months. Please look out for details—and to see how you can contribute.

The South of England Honey show takes place 23 and 24 September at Ardingly. There's always a need for volunteers at these events. Please consider helping out by emailing the organisers.

Finally, our next casual "Bee Chat" evening is on 6 September 2023 at The Swan Inn, Falmer.

I look forward to seeing you there.



Manek Dubash
Asian Hornet
Team Co-ordinator

Asian Hornet report: urgent update

Graham Bubloz writes: On 8 August, we learned that Asian Hornets had arrived on our doorstep: we received a creditable report, with multiple sightings at the same location in the Newhaven area.

Our own Regional Bee Inspectors Diane Steele and Daniel Morgan have been on site, and four hornets were seen and marked by them. The nest was located and destroyed.

I spoke to the person who reported it to both me and to Manek but, more importantly, they reported the sighting via the Asian Hornet Watch app and they have been extremely vigilant and helpful in moving the search forward.

Please download the app.

To raise awareness amongst our beekeeping community, I have contacted the BBKA to try and obtain some pressure to inform APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency) to target the ports around the country and also I have alerted our local divisional neighbours. I have also attempted

(but failed) to obtain permission to erect posters at Newhaven Port Authority and on the Ferries.

So, we need to raise awareness locally – and I call upon every member to print out and put up posters in local noticeboard and libraries etc. and to publicise the same message by putting something on your local Facebook group.

Manek Dubash writes: Yes, everyone must download the Asian Hornet Watch app—it's the best way to quickly identify and report a sighting.

It's clear that a hornet queen must have arrived via the ferry and, unseen, established a nest. Worse, in Kent there have been multiple sighting and nest discoveries, all centred around the ports of Folkestone and Dover. Total for 2023 so far is 24 nests.

The public are our eyes: please do as Graham suggests and publicise the message. It has worked on Jersey: it must work here too before it's too late.

Two live-stream videos about the Asian hornet issue will take place on 6 & 7 September. Please attend.

From our apiaries: Barcombe, Grassroots, Hove & Isfield

Barcombe



Barcombe apiary. Photo: Tony Birkbeck

This report was wrongly omitted from last month's issue. Oops!

I'm a great believer in clipping queens and this year I have seen the advantages. One of my colonies at my Hadlow Down apiary was swarming when I arrived for a full inspection and I chased them down the field where they clustered on a tree branch, intending to collect them later.

I inspected the hive they came out from and while inspecting, they all flew back to me and straight back into the hive—the queen who was clipped was obviously on her own in the field somewhere but it meant I had saved my bees who are now obeying a nice brand new queen.

You may have seen the brilliant photo that Alex took—published in the July newsletter—of the swarm that re-established itself underneath the hive that it came from (see below).

This is another success story from queen clipping: instead of flying away and being lost forever, the existing queen obviously fell out of the hive and

crawled up the hive stand and established herself with her swarm underneath the floor, while the colony inside raised a new queen. It must have been confusing for the bees as the pheromones obviously mixed but they all seemed quite happy.

The swarmed colony was removed and shaken into a new hive on new frames and slowly moved to a new location in the apiary. I'm pleased to report that it's doing very well and the old clipped queen is left to fight another day.

Queen rearing

This has been a huge success this year with lots of queens being raised via the Nicot system and selected from the colonies that are better natured.

The very angry hives 5 and 3—the daughter of hive 5—have been re-queened successfully. These colonies are still very annoyed when they are disturbed but I guess it will be until the old bees are replaced by the new queen's genes.

All the Apideas produced good queens and when these have been used in the apiary the Apideas have produced more queens. I also understand all but one queen cell taken by members of the queen rearing group mated successfully and are now heading up various colonies around the area.

If you are interested in queen rearing and bee improvement then why not be part of the 2024 group? We will be using the Nicot system again which means you don't need to worry about grafting. Let us know!

Other news

All the other colonies are doing ok at Barcombe, though the honey crop is definitely down from last year, and I'm wondering if that has a lot to do with the oilseed rape the bees found in the spring, which stirred them into a frenzy—especially when it finished. The summer crop is very slow and not being capped very quickly.

Tony Birkbeck, Apiary Manager

Manek Dubash adds: Mid-August, I topped up the feeders and gave the Barcombe colonies a second dose of Apiguard while Tony was on holiday in France, sunning himself. All the bees were very calm, so the re-queening has definitely worked.

Grassroots



New bench in clearing created by cutting back nettles and sitting on spare slabs to prevent the table soaking up damp.

Photos in this report: Jude New

At the end of July there were still three Apidea at Grassroots waiting for the queens to be mated or to establish so that they could be moved on to their own nucleus. I have been carrying out regular inspections because, although the urge to swarm has now become less urgent, the weather has not been kind to the bees.

When the queen rearing group was using the apiary for grafting, we needed to make space for holding the frames of brood in the right light to graft into the Nicot cups. Following on from there we have now installed a bench beside the shed. We can use that bench for temporary storage of equipment awaiting storage in the shed or to be removed off-site. I have also used the table to fill feeders with syrup to feed the bees.

The apiary has been used since the beginning of May for queen rearing, so the colonies were using their stores as



From our apiaries: Barcombe, Grassroots, Hove & Isfield

Grassroots (cont.)



Hive with wasp block fitted. Gaps filled with sponge to make it wasp tight.

fast as it was being collected. At each inspection I was checking that there were enough stores in each hive, one or two deep frames mostly full of nectar, to last the bees at least a week until the next inspection.

I began to see wasps around some of the hives in mid-July and posted pictures of the measures I was taking, unsurprisingly these colonies were 'buzzy' when opened. I put two wasp traps into the apiary and collected a jar full of wasps within two or three days. I used a can of cider between the two traps which worked well – the second



Wasp trap hanging from the hedge with cider bait.

time I charged the traps, I had to take a bottle opener with me—for the cider.

At the beginning of August, Grassroots honey was ready for sale at Rottingdean Summer Fair, the wet supers were returned to the hives for the bees to lick dry. Then the cappings were put over the hives in an open jumbo feeder. The bees licked both the supers and cappings dry within 24 hours, in fact you can see that they started building more comb in the jumbo feeder.



Cappings after 24 hours over the hive for the bees to lick dry

One hive had honey ready for extraction despite having been re-queened twice at the beginning of the season. Any honey which hasn't been sold will be up for sale at the South of England Show in September.

I have been feeding the bees because the nectar flow appears to have slowed



2:1 solution



Jumbo feeder.

or maybe stopped. I have used a 2:1 solution (below) because the bees need to store the solution while the colonies are being treated with Apiguard, over the next four weeks.

I didn't put thymol crystals into the mixture, it didn't have time to develop a mould and I haven't made any syrup to be stored because I will be assessing how much I need to make at the end of August. Then the bees shouldn't need any more feeding until after Christmas.

The Apidea that had to be removed from the apiary because of the amount of attention they were receiving from wasps are now incorporated into a nucleus which is being treated with Apiguard and will be returned to the apiary shortly.

The final open apiary meeting at Grassroots was planned for 26 August—weather permitting—just this issue was going to print.

If you came along, you would have been able to try out the bench and view demonstrations of how to prepare your hives for winter.

This will include assessing the stores on the deep frames and in the supers so that winter feeding of the colonies can be calculated; the use of Apiguard at the apiary; an alcohol wash to estimate mite population; and assessment of strength of the colonies, where necessary merging.

Jude New, Apiary Manager

From our apiaries: Barcombe, Grassroots, Hove & Isfield

Hove



Last month, our report left you with a cliffhanger: would the fifth colony successfully create a queen and would she get mated?

Further to that report, we can confirm that one queen emerged even though we thought it was unsuccessful. Maybe she took a week's holiday but eventually, she started laying and all is well.

Other than that, things have been quiet at Hove this past month. All four colonies are doing well, and we've added additional supers to three of them to give the bees extra room to

build up their stores when the sun is out.

We're planning to treat for varroa this week to give them the best chance of surviving the winter.

We had three visitors to our out apiary meeting this month, two of whom are new to bee-keeping, so it was nice for them to handle some frames and spend time in the lovely apiary setting we have.

**Felicity Alder & José Reina,
Apiary Managers**

B&L cashes in at Rottingdean Fair—but who sold out?



B&L team at Rottingdean: smiles all round.
Photo: Graham Bubloz

Early in July I gave our Chairman, Graham, a call and asked him whether could bring some of my honey to the August Rottingdean Fair. Graham was his usual helpful self, but then also asked if I would like to lead the B&L presence at the event as I was 'local'.

It was only later when Manek asked me to write this article that I realised I had been stitched up! *[As if?—Ed.]*

Joking apart, I was more than happy to help our committee, though it turned out to be more of a challenge than any of us were expecting...

As I soon realised, we have a very well-tested system for outside events. So, 'leading' really consisted of liaising between the Rottingdean Fair Committee and co-ordinating the set up between our members who look after gazebos, tables and all the other paraphernalia needed for the event.

A few calls with Hilary, Ian and Norman and we had a plan. Perhaps the

most contentious issue was the price list, but eventually even that was locked. The Fair organising committee had decided on a theme of 'Crowning Glory' so I immediately started work on a beekeeping hat.

And then the forecast for Saturday was of heavy rain all day and winds over 40 mph. No gazebo was going to survive that!

On Thursday evening, the organising committee decided to move the outside Fair to three indoor locations within Rottingdean village. I was both impressed we had found three locations at very short notice, but concerned how we would manage with the limited space. On Friday all we knew is that we would be 'somewhere' in the Whiteway Centre.

As it turned out, Saturday was a great example of everyone pulling together to make the best of a difficult situation. With all being helpful and flexible, we negotiated a little more space early in the day and set up our display.

It looked very impressive indeed with a range of honeys and beekeeping products from across Sussex. Our concerns that nobody would come to the event due to the appalling weather were completely dispelled after opening, with a steady stream of customers and enquiries at our stand throughout the day.

For those of you interested in selling any honey products, the advice I was given before by some of the more experienced members was that local honey would sell best. And of course, my Rottingdean honey sold very well indeed. Manek even wanted me to entitle this article '*Nigel sells out!*'. All I can say is that there was a lot of friendly banter among the B&L team, mostly at my expense!

In summary, the Rottingdean Fair was a triumph in the face of adversity. After packing up after a very full and busy day, we all reflected over a beer.

The Fair committee deserves much credit for making timely, flexible decisions and for finding a highly creative alternative. B&L's takings on the day were slightly below previous years, but were still substantial and moreover we promoted B&L to the general public.

We received a number of enquiries from potential new members while also informing others on the importance of bees within our environment. Finally, my personal thanks must go out to all those in the team photo for helping me, giving me lots of advice and making Saturday such a fun day out!

Nigel Kermode

[More photos overleaf]

B&L cashes in at Rottingdean Fair—but who sold out? (cont.)

Photos from Rottingdean Fair. Look for the biggest grin...



Top left: Rottingdean honey was the top favourite. Nigel sold out! **Top right:** a display of the rest of the group's wares, from members' apiaries and B&L out-apiaries. **Bottom:** some of the team enjoying a cup of coffee. Nigel looks pleased...

Making a solar wax extractor cheap and easy

Following on from the wax foundation cleaning course, we have managed to source some polystyrene boxes for free so that you can make your own small solar wax extractor, thanks to the Ringmer Pet Shop.

To avoid re-inventing the wheel there are many clips on YouTube, but basically all you need to do is:

- Cut a hole in the top of your box, and cover with a piece of glass that fits over the hole.
- Place an aluminium baking tray in the base of the container.
- Fix some small wire mesh (as in the base of your hive) cutting diagonal corners so that the wire can be folded back onto each other, and then place a piece of old sheeting over the top of this.
- Your old dirty wax can then be placed on top of this, and place the box in the sun.
- To make this even more effective you could paint the outside of your box black and line the box with baking foil, holding in place with drawing pins.

If you would like a polystyrene box, we still have some left. Please contact Hilary on 07713 532285.

Words by Hilary Osman

Photos by Shirley Light



Top left: Take your poly box.

Top middle: Put in a liner to support your filter. I use a salad drawer from an old fridge.

Top right: Add a container for your extracted wax. A little water in it makes it easier to remove the wax.

Middle right: Attach a filter to your liner—I've used old sheeting.

Above: Add wax to be extracted.

Above right: Place glass on box, add sun.

Right: Here's one I made earlier! Extracted wax.



South of England Show says: come and sell your honey

This message is from the Show's organisers:

This year the South of England Show is being held on 23rd and 24th September, at the SoE Showground, Ardingly, West Sussex, RH17 6TL as part of the Autumn Show & international Horse Trials.

The Regional Honey Show represents a great opportunity to Associations, their members and individual beekeepers to either rehearse for, or maybe 'recycle' entries from, Local or

County shows... and to certainly practise entry preparation skills for the National Honey Show at the end of October.



We also provide the opportunity for Associations to display promotional information about their membership, Taster Day and Training opportunities. There will also be the opportunity for beekeepers to provide honey to be sold from our Honey sales Stall during the show... always a popular stall and a big draw for the visiting public.

[Here's a downloadable form](#) to guide you as to how to proceed.

Richard Bradfield, SOES

Jamie's Farm needs your help



We are a working farm situated near Lewes, a charity working with young people helping to equip them to thrive during their secondary school years and beyond.

While the young people are with us, they have opportunities to farm, work with horses, chop wood, cook and grow produce. We would love to add beekeeping to their experience.

Unwanted equipment

In the first instance we are putting out feelers for any unwanted equipment

that people may be happy to donate or to sell.

We will be starting this project from scratch so the list of what we need is long!

Our other farms across the country already successfully have hives and produce honey, these are managed by a team of volunteers.

Can you come and help?

This is our second plea. Would you be interested in working alongside us at our beautiful farm? We would ideally

be looking for an experienced beekeeper with experience working with young people to facilitate sessions with one or two young people at a time, one morning a week.

We are a friendly team, and we are already lucky to have a loyal and happy bunch of volunteers who regularly work with us.

If you think this would be of interest to you and have any further questions, please do get in touch.

Jessie@jamiesfarm.org.uk



B&L events 2023-24

Winter meetings

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
Wed 20 Sep		Q&A & mini-talks
Wed 18 Oct	Daisy Day	Symbiotic relationship of bees and flowers
Wed 15 Nov	Alex Smith	How to make a bee video
Wed 20 Dec *	Dan Basterfield	Managing Apideas
Wed 17 Jan	TBD	
Wed 21 Feb		AGM & Honey Show

* Zoom call. All other meetings to take place at Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Eastgate Street, Lewes BN7 2LR, starting at 7pm.

Bee Chats

Wed 13 September 2023, Swan Inn, Falmer BN1 9PD, from 6.30pm.

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

Thomas Bickerdike

E: Thomas.Bickerdike@apha.gov.uk

M: 07775 119464

Seasonal Bee Inspectors

Daniel Morgan

E: daniel.morgan@apha.gov.uk

M: 07500 954390

Diane Steele

E: diane.steele@apha.gov.uk

M: 07775 119452

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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Officers and contacts

President: Vacant

Chairman: Graham Bubloz

E: chair@brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk

M: 07758 866278

Hon Secretary: Matt Budgen

E: matbudgen@hotmail.com

M: 07776 468513

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

Training Co-ordinator: Jude New

E: newapiary@hotmail.com

Webmaster: Gerald Legg

E: gerald@chelifier.com

Newsletter Editor: Manek Dubash

E: editor@mailforce.net

M: 07788 923557

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 & José 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: Vacant