

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

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EDITORIAL



The BBKA has spent £15,000 on notices, such as this one, in areas where Asian hornet nests have been sighted. Sussex is relatively lightly affected so don't expect to see one around here.

The BBKA has thrown considerable resources behind publicising the threat posed by the Asian hornet not just to honey bees but also to other pollinators and their ecosystems.

The message seems to be getting through: I had a call on 25 September from someone in Ringmer who spotted one in her garden: she was sure it wasn't a European hornet.

Her initial response was to kill it but it got away. This may be a good thing, as a live hornet can be tracked back to its nest, while dead hornets don't talk.

There's a full report on where we are with Asian hornets [on page 4](#). It's mostly not good news, though the public are responding and nests are being destroyed as a result. Next year, we'll see just how successful we've been: if a number of AH queens manage to evade our efforts and survive their hibernation over winter, we'll soon find out.

Events

Winter meetings are underway—the first one was held on 27 September—and the Bee Chats will continue under new management: Rachel Ramaker has kindly stepped in to relieve our chairman Graham Bubloz of the load.

Keep an eye on our social media or the back page of this newsletter for details of all events.

Honey Show

It's October, so it must be the [Honey Show](#). This annual event has been running since 1923 and has a lot going for it. There's a lecture schedule with talks aimed at new beekeepers as well as the more experienced. Workshops aim to help you do stuff, such as building hives or making preserves using fermented honey (who knew?).

And then there's the trade show, where bargains can be had. It's worth the trip.

Manek Dubash, Editor

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 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 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)

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.

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

Fewer words from me this month.

Personally, it's been a strange year from my beekeeping perspective. The weather has been topsy-turvy and I ended up with a very poor honey crop this year. Hope for better next year and that you fared better than me.

The Asian Hornet situation continues to alarm us. No doubt there will be copious coverage elsewhere in this newsletter [Yes. See below. MD].

October should be a quiet month—but maybe the weather will surprise us yet again.

On 18 October, we have our second winter meeting at the Eastgate Baptist Church Hall,

Lewes. The speaker is Daisy Day, Master Beekeeper from Wisborough Green BKA on the symbiotic relationship between flowers and bees.

The National Honey Show takes place from 26-28 October at Sandown Park, near Esher, Surrey. I am hoping to attend. If you haven't been, I urge you to come along. It's a great day and there are always very interesting lectures to attend and equipment bargains to be had.

And finally: the next Bee Chat evening is on 4 October from 7.30pm at The Fox & Hounds, Fox Hill, Haywards Heath, RH16 4QY. See you there.



Manek Dubash
Asian Hornet
Team Co-ordinator

Asian Hornet report: full update



Where are we with respect to the Asian hornet? It's been a busy month so I hope you'll forgive the length of this comprehensive report.

As of the time of writing on 25 September, 50+ Asian hornet nests in 44 locations have been found and destroyed in the UK, most of them in Kent. Locally, one nest was tracked and destroyed in the Newhaven area, following some excellent observational work by a member of the public in Denton, and there was a further sighting in Chailey, though the insect was killed and unfortunately flushed down the loo. No further action could be taken.

More recently, a nest was found and destroyed in Eastbourne and, on 25 September, a member of the public called to say she'd spotted one in her garden in Ringmer. Unfortunately she couldn't capture and photograph it before it flew away. Again, no further action could be taken.

The woman said she would have tried to kill the hornet but, as we know, capturing it so it can be tracked to its nest by the bee inspectors is the correct response. A dead hornet tells you nothing.

There's a rolling update of hornet sightings [here](#).

Further information

If you attended the two talks at the start of September by Andrew Durham, who shared his research and experience, you will be pretty much up to speed on what the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) does, and the threat it poses not just to honey bees but also to the wider ecosystem.

You'll also therefore know that there's a range—perhaps too many—of tools and strategies that beekeepers can adopt to counter the threat.

If you haven't already watched these talks—and even if you have—I cannot recommend highly enough that you absorb and take notes, because it will bring you bang up to date.

Part one of Andrew's talk discusses the Asian hornet's habits and behaviours [here](#). Part two, which is of particular practical interest to beekeepers is [here](#).

(Continued on page 5)

Asian hornet report: a full update (continued)

(Continued from page 4)

Academic research

Of a wider interest is the question: where do we go from here? Reading [a recent blog entry](#) by The Apiarist (David Evans), I found a reference to [a paper by PJ Kennedy and JL Osborne from Exeter University](#) entitled 'A review of the success of the UK strategy to tackle the invasive insect *Vespa velutina nigrithorax*, the "Asian hornet"'.

Strategies for the future

The paper's authors discuss how the UK has countered the AH threat, how successful it has been, the challenges ahead and whether current strategies are likely to succeed.

They highlight that the UK's risk assessment looks at the insect's methods of entry into the country, the likelihood of it spreading, and the 'economic and environment and social harm caused by the species'.

The hornet's entry paths

The current outcrop of nests in Kent points strongly to cross-Channel traffic being the most likely vector, especially over-wintering queens via importation of goods and adults in fruit and plant products. Since checking imported goods is unlikely to be a viable way of

preventing the hornets, the current strategy has the best chance of success: 'detect early, rapidly intercept and prevent establishment via effective nest and colony destruction of the hornet'.

They also say that being blown across by prevailing winds, even if only part-way then picking up a ride on a ferry, is also possible. However, Andrew Durham noted in his talk that a hornet would need a reason, such as olfactory cues, to fly out to sea.

So you've found an Asian hornet

The National Bee Unit's bee inspectors are at the core of efforts to contain the hornet, although this work may reduce the time they have to counter other threats such as foulbrood.

The inspectors gather information from the person sighting the hornet(s), establish a surveillance area, and deploy traps that allow them to mark and track hornets back to the nest.

Beekeepers are key, as the paper notes: 'All known beekeepers within 20km of a sighting are informed via an alert, and beekeepers within 5km are actively encouraged to monitor for the presence of hornets. Local beekeeping associations and AHTs work collaboratively with the NBU bee inspectors, by monitoring in their own apiaries, observing insect visitation of local forage for signs of Asian hornet activity, and providing local knowledge to the NBU.'

Note that the need to notify 'known beekeepers' means that everyone needs to register on BeeBase if you've not already done so.

Once located the nest is killed and the contents sent for analysis. Using DNA to establish relatedness to other finds allows the labs to determine whether a nest is part of an established cohort or is a first incursion.

Summary

The UK's contingency plan relies on the public rapidly recognising and reporting sightings of Asian hornets, preferably using the Asian Hornet Watch app. This helps reduce the false positives, which dominate the

reporting on social media groups, especially hornet mimic hoverflies and European hornets (*Vespa crabro*).

If—or should that be when—eradication proves impossible, containment in a given geographical area is the next step in the UK's counter-offensive.

How effective that is likely to be is unknown but, it has to be said, the experiences in the north of France, on Jersey and in Belgium are not very promising.

In the UK, eradication has proved effective so far but there's a scary-looking map showing how far the hornet's territory could have spread had eradication not been adopted.

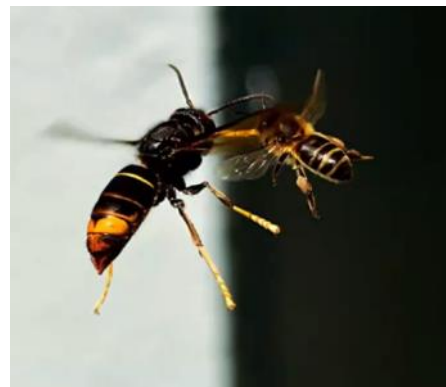
Local action

B&L, through Asian Hornet Team member Tony Birkbeck, is buying some traps that members can mount somewhere near their apiaries. Contact him if you haven't done so already. Each of these traps needs to be put up somewhere near the apiary but not in it, as it may otherwise attract hornets that would otherwise not find your hives.

Organisationally, Asian Hornet Team Co-ordinators across Sussex have set up a WhatsApp group to share experiences. Not much has come of this so far, though I'm keen to make good use of this resource.

My feeling is that we in the UK have yet to be fully tested. That task lies immediately ahead of us. I hope we can pull together on this.

Manek Dubash, Asian Hornet Team Co-ordinator



From our apiaries: Barcombe, Grassroots, Hove & Isfield

Barcombe



Alex Smith on extraction day. Photo: Tony Birkbeck



Tony supervises action at the extraction workshop. Photo: Graham Bubloz



Honey frame awaiting extraction. Photo: Tony Birkbeck

I missed last month's newsletter update because I broke the golden rule of beekeeping and took a holiday right in the middle of one of the most important periods!

So August was extraction month and for me this was a poor year. The bees at Barcombe had eaten everything and my other apiaries were at around 40% of what they yielded last year.

Nonetheless we hosted a couple of brilliant extraction sessions here at Park Farm Cottage with 16 B&L members over two days. We started each session with a great Health and Safety discussion around food hygiene and how to obtain a five star rating (which I hope some of the 16 will be progressing), we then had some people uncapping and using the extractor



while the others were jarring and labelling honey. Feedback was excellent and some great pictures were posted on Facebook and the B&L Buzz WhatsApp group.

Although honey crops were down, I still had around 80 supers stacked in my garage fresh from all my hives and this is where the downside of taking a holiday mid-August comes in.

I should have been concentrating on getting them in the freezer. My freezer takes four whole supers and I freeze for three to four days to kill the wax moth, but taking two weeks away meant the moths started to take hold in the boxes waiting for freezer space. I'm now in mid-September, still processing boxes and the wax moth is now quite bad. Luckily, a local friend has also allowed me access to her freezer so the process has sped up but I think I've still lost about six or seven frames.

Barcombe apiary itself is in great shape with six hives. The Apiguard treatment has finished and I removed all the trays and ekes on 12 September. A very brief inspection on a few frames per hive showed plenty of stores and loads of BIAS (bees in all stages): all six are nice big colonies going into winter.

All the bees were calm even the notorious hives 3 & 5 which were re-queened in this year's successful queen rearing/bee improvement programme. In fact I still have a queen in an Apidea which I intend to over-winter at Barcombe just to see if it can be done!

Over the next few weeks I'll remove the feeders from the hives and wrap them in breathable roofing membrane to keep out any dampness and, apart from feeding with fondant and vaping ApiBioxal. And that will be them left alone until next spring.

I can't believe the season has come to an end—or has it just started?

Tony Birkbeck, Apiary Manager

Hove

Hello from Hove Apiary! The four colonies at Hove are well into preparing for the coming winter. The second application of varroa treatment finished a few days ago, and all looks well with them.

Given the recent poor weather, we have been feeding them with syrup to make sure they will have enough storage for the winter. All of them seem to be building their stores nicely, so fingers cross they will survive through the winter.

Given the news of Asian hornets being found in the vicinity, we hung out traps a few weeks ago, in order to try and catch any. Luckily the traps have remained empty so far, but we will continue to be vigilant for them.

Felicity Alder & José Reina, Apiary Managers

Come to our wax craft workshops

B&L's training co-ordinator Jude New is running three wax workshops this month.



Wax wraps from [Park Farm Cottage's](#) range.

Try out a whole range of things you can do with beeswax:

- Soap making with melt and pour soap with Francesca. She will bring along some of her hand-made soaps and potions for sale on the afternoon.
- Wax wraps with Rachel

- Beeswax lip salve and solid moisturiser with Heidi
 - Encaustic art, painting with coloured beeswax using heat and craft tools with Jude
 - Rolled candle making
 - Gardener's scrub made with sugar, salt, honey, oils and calendula petals
- These will be informal events for chatting, watching a demonstration or two, collecting samples of soaps, candles, lip balm, and an opportunity to buy local honey and wax wrap kits.

There will be a self-service refreshment table where donations for Bees Abroad will be collected during the event. We'll have samples for you to take home, and a chance to buy local honey and DIY wax wraps to make at home. All materials will be provided.

Details

- When: Three places left on Thursday 19 October, two on Saturday 21

October and eight on Saturday 28 October. Time: 14.00-17.00

- Where: The Barn Westdene Green, BN1 5EE
 - How much: £10. Please bring your receipts with you to gain entry
- To book, please contact me (Jude) via newapiary@hotmail.com or B&L Buzz on WhatsApp to make your payment via BACS before the event.

Please bring cash and your credit card as there will be samples to take home and goods to purchase.

When making payment please add 'wax' and your surname on to the reference. I hope you are looking forward to the wax workshops as much as we are. If you would still like to come along, please get in touch before they all get snapped up. See you there?

Jude New, Training Co-ordinator

Quick tips

Crates

Supermarket crates (right, top) make a great way of storing your super frames.

Freeze or treat them beforehand so the dreaded wax moth doesn't rear its ugly head!

Maz (from B&L Buzz on WhatsApp)

Wasps away

Keeping the wasp and other pests away from your bees can be a challenge. They can even creep through the reduced entrance blocks.

Pin a length of cable trunking (right, below) to the front of the hive. This makes it much harder for the blighters to get in.

For anyone who fancies making them, you will need a trip to Screwfix and get [this](#). Two metres costs less than £2.00. You can make a good few (and cock up one or two in the learning process) and it'll cost a lot less than the branded type.

Paul Tarry (from B&L Buzz on WhatsApp)

To share your beekeeping tips, please get in touch!



Bee Chat



September's Bee Chat at The Swan Inn, Falmer. Photo: Rachel Ramaker

Transparency at B&L

Did you know that we publish the B&L committee minutes online?

This was a decision we made some time ago in the interests of transparency for everyone. So if you'd like to know more about what's going in B&L and what's coming up, please head straight to the website's [members' area](#).

There's lots more there too, including every previous newsletter, so if you need it, there's our history.

South of England Honey Show at Ardingly

Held on 23-24 September, this is always a good opportunity to use it as a testing ground for the National Honey Show at the end of October.

Our local hero was B&L's Hilary Osman, who gained first prize for her honey biscuits and second, with a very nice presentation, for her products of the hive display.

This year it was in the Norfolk Stand, instead of the summer venue in a

marquee. The display was split into three sections: the honey show, honey sales and information to visitors, with an emphasis on making the public aware of the Asian hornet threat.

The honey was nicely presented against the window, so it was easy to see the clarity of each jar, and to watch the show jumping arena at the same time. One of the most interesting displays was for four jars of honey,

labelled and ready for sale, for which Croydon BKA seemed to have worked out the winning formula.

The competition was stiff with a good entry of honey of an even standard, so judging must have been difficult for the judge, Clare O'Brien, a newly qualified National Honey Show judge.

Words & photos by Bob Curtis



Above: First prize for Hilary Osman's honey biscuits



Memories of summer: a bee drinks...



Lots of bees drinking today, August Bank Holiday Monday, at Nymans Gardens fountain. Photo: Gerald Legg



B&L events 2023-24

Winter meetings

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
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.

Next Bee Chat

Wed 4 October, [Fox & Hounds](#), Haywards Heath RH16 4QY, 7.30pm.

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.

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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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The co-operative membership
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