

# Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

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So, it's all over then. The beekeeping season has—more or less—ended. Apart from maybe a fortnightly hive check to see that there's enough fondant on the frames and that badgers, deer, woodpeckers, mice or other pestilences haven't invaded our colonies, there's little else to do.

Cleaning, maybe? Leave that until the winter. For now, put your feet up and enjoy the rest.

The National Honey Show will have been and gone by the time you read this so I trust you went and enjoyed it.

Do you plan to spend the winter making things with the wax you've undoubtedly accumulated over the year: wraps, candles, balms and polishes (maybe!) etc.?

If so, I'm reminded of the usefulness of the humble bain marie (above). I picked up a battered second-hand object on eBay a few years back for very little money and it's served me in good stead. Along with a similarly misshapen saucepan—I'm rightly not allowed to use the cookware!—I use it to warm and then strain the wax. Once

melted, it goes into the saucepan, is then remelted and re-strained through a couple of cheap dishcloths into take-away meal cartons, mainly because they're cheap and easy to remove wax blocks from.

The reward—even before you do anything with it—is that wonderful aroma of warm, golden beeswax. What can beat it? A good single malt aside, of course...

### Asian hornets

I guess I have to return to the topic of Asian hornets. The specifics of what's going on I shall leave to the Asian Hornet Report on page 3, but please allow me to say that, for the first time, we have been forced to review and kickstart our defence mechanisms: identification, publicity and trapping. Next year we may well have a harder time of it. I hope not but I'm not feeling optimistic.

### AGM/Honey Show

On a more positive note, please start turning your thoughts to next year and in particular, the B&L AGM and Honey Show. At the AGM, we will need to elect a new Chairman, as Graham Bubloz is standing down, and a new Meetings Secretary, as Bob Curtis is also standing down.

At the Honey Show, we have classes for a wide range of honey/hove products and photography too—plus new for this year is the gadgets class. Details inside on page xx.

**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 November: winter is here

By now you will have tucked your bees up for the winter and they will be left to their own devices until the spring.

There's not much to do around the bees, except for the odd visit to check on whether they are upright after a storm, need a bit of additional feeding with fondant or some other mixture to supplement their stores, or later in December or January to carry out an oxalic acid varroa treatment. For most of the time from now until March you will be spending a considerable amount of time in your garage/shed/store/kitchen/doghouse cleaning, repairing, and building kit.

#### Cleaning up

By far the biggest task for me is cleaning frames and dealing with the wax. Are the frames and wax in good condition? They could be at least five years old by now if it is the first time they have resurfaced, and even older if they have already been reused.

"Five years", you ask? Year one: made up from a kit and had foundation fitted. Year two: spent most of its time on the outside of the brood nest and only drawn out on one side. Years three to five; moved into the centre of the hive where it was continually used to

raise brood. And now the wax is as black as sin. Yes, five years.

#### Wax assessment

The first job is to assess the wax in the frame:

- Clean, still yellow, and little used: Freeze the whole frame, if possible, to kill off any wax moth eggs and larvae then store for reuse next season.
- Damaged and little used wax: cut out and reclaim.
- Looks like it been stuck up a chimney for years: cut out and throw it away. We have all been in the position of saying, "I'm sure there's some wax in there". Wrong. Most of it is propolis, old cocoon sheaths and rubbish. You'll end up with a heap of sludge for a teaspoonful of wax.

#### Frame assessment

Next on the list are frames that have had the wax removed. Are they sound? Are there bits missing or have the wax moth larvae chewed their way through the bottom bars and made them into some delicate filigree? Hate it when that happens.

Once all the damaged bits have been removed, they will need cleaning. Once

clean replace the missing parts with new or reclaimed and clean parts.

Those cleaning frames fall into four camps:

- Manually scrape off all the wax and propolis then scorch with a blow torch. Not such a bad job if you only have a few to do.
- Submerge them, a boiling solution of washing soda and water for five-ten minutes. You'll need a large tea urn like a 10L Burco or similar. Then rinse them in cold water and let them dry. Make sure you do both ends of the frame.
- Put the whole frame, including the wax comb, into a steam wax melter for about ten -fifteen minutes. Two jobs at once, melted wax and steam sterilised frames
- Bin the whole lot and start from scratch. If you have an open fire they make good firelighters. Or you could use £5 notes, whatever you prefer *[won't work with plastic ones! Ed.]*.

#### Melting wax

Above, I've glibly mentioned two processes, wax melting and using a steam wax melter, that may be a little alien to some of my newer readers.

*(Continued on page 3)*



Old black comb: re-use or junk?



Abelo steam wax melter

### Seasonal tips for November: winter is here

(Continued from page 2)

Melting wax is very straightforward. Take a large old saucepan or cooking pot and fill with about 50-75mm of rainwater. In East Sussex, where I live, tap water has calcium salts in it and will spoil the finish of the wax. Bring the water to a very gentle simmer and start adding your bits of wax. Take care when heating wax, it is flammable, but it must reach at least 70°C to sterilise it.

Once all the wax has melted, pour the contents into a plastic bucket and let it cool. When cool, the wax will have formed a hard sheet on top of the water with a layer of detritus on the bottom. Scrap off the detritus and sell the cleaned block of wax back to one of the many equipment wholesalers in exchange for new foundation.

However, if you want to make really clean wax for showing, making wax wraps, cosmetics or candles, then repeat the melting process two or three times and instead of scraping the resulting rubbish off, strain the wax through fine material (eg old tights, pillowcases or muslin) each time to remove any impurities.

If you are doing any of these processes in your kitchen, clear it with



the management [*says the man! Ed.*] and cover everything in newspaper and dustsheets first.

#### Steaming

A steam wax melter may seem an extravagance but it can save you a lot of time if you have lots of frames to clean. Commercially available melters usually consist of a large metal drum with an outlet on one side and a steam inlet on the other.

Inside the drum is a smaller mesh drum. Whole frames and/or wax is put in the smaller mesh drum and steam is passed into the larger drum from an external steam generator (usually a wallpaper stripper). Water and wax drip out of the open outlet and the rubbish is collected in the mesh drum.

#### DIY wax melter

You can make your own. My melter works on the same principle as the commercial version, but it's way cheaper, essentially using components you already have, plus a steam wallpaper stripper (*left*).



10-litre boiler: ideal for frame cleaning



A bain marie makes a good wax melter. Just don't cook anything in it afterwards! Commercial version above left, DIY (bought second-hand) above right.

The outer drum is a brood or super box depending on the frames I'm cleaning. The mesh drum is an open mesh floor (OMF) with the entrance blocked up. The box is sealed by a shallow roof which has had a hole drilled in the top. The hole is big enough to take the end of the steam wallpaper stripper hose.

The wallpaper stripper was bought for use on other DIY jobs about the house. The OMF sits in a large square plastic tray and catches all of the melted wax and water and the OMF catches all the rubbish. Job done. Not one for the kitchen, best done in the garage or outside.

#### Best time of the year

Of course, you can do these jobs at any time of the year, but you've got time now and actually it's easier to deal with some of these cleaning jobs now the temperature is lower and the wax and propolis has started to harden. It's amazing how sticky propolis is even at 18°C.

Another advantage of doing these jobs at this time of year is that you will not be surrounded by bees and/or wasps which will be attracted to the smell of warm wax and honey. Which is what usually happens to me when I'm trying to do something in the garage during the summer.

I know I've not mentioned other hive parts, but I will in my next column.

#### A Veiled Beekeeper Production







**Graham Bubloz**  
Chairman

## Words from the Chair

We've had some strange weather this year, haven't we? However, it looks like we're in for some more traditional autumnal weather. I hope you're ready...

Our winter programme of events continues with one of our youngest members, Alex Smith, presenting a talk to us titled "How to make a Bee Video". Alex is quite a [star on YouTube](#) and so we are indeed privileged to learn just how it's done. The meeting is at 7.30pm on Wednesday 15 November, at the Eastgate Church Hall, Lewes.

By the time you read this, the National Honey Show at Sandown Park will have been and gone. If you went, I hope that you enjoyed it and either won something or bagged a bargain. Please tell us about your visit—our editor will be pleased to help. If you didn't go, I wonder why not?

The Christmas season is coming. Jude New has once again been busy. She has reserved a

table or two at Côte Brasserie in Brighton for a meal on Tuesday 12 December. If you'd like to come along, please contact Jude ([newapiary@hotmail.com](mailto:newapiary@hotmail.com)) and make a £10 per person payment deposit. Partners and/or guests are welcome.

Our regular monthly winter meetings at Lewes are interspersed with some informal pub meetings (called Bee Chat). Many find it good fun to be able to come along and meet with like-minded beekeepers in our patch. We move the venue around to try and encourage members from different areas to get along to these gatherings. So, make sure that you're at the next one which is at 7.30pm on Wednesday 1 November at The Open House pub, 146 Springfield Road, Brighton, BN1 6BZ.

Finally, my best wishes go to those brave few of our members who are taking their BBKA Module 1 exams in mid-November. Fingers crossed...



**Manek Dubash**  
Asian Hornet  
Team Co-ordinator

## Asian Hornet report: thoughts for the future



Reporting on the progress of the Asian hornet through the summer and autumn has been a frantic race to keep up. Every week there's been [more than a handful of new nests discovered and destroyed](#), mostly but not exclusively in and around Kent. It seems the cross-Channel ferry has ferried more than just people, lorries and cars. Note that some of the nests we've found will have been created by over-wintered queens from 2022.

The good news is that the media has been full of the story, hence the glut of reports by the public, most of which turned out to be European hornets, hoverflies or wasps. Better that than no reports.

However, as we know, memories fade fast and the media tires even quicker of what will be perceived as last year's story. But it could be even worse.

In France, nests have primarily been discovered in and around where people live and work: more people result in more discoveries. But nests in more rural areas that aren't as easily found and so propagate unseen and only become perceived as a problem only when it's far too late to do anything but conduct a desperate holding operation.

And I suspect that 2023 will be but a warm-up for a full-on incursion in 2024. Defra's current *modus operandi* of nest eradication may be like whistling in the wind if it continues to rely on a handful of bee inspectors to do a job that could require hundreds of trained operatives. I'm not denigrating the inspectors' hard work thus far but it's clear there won't be enough of them.

I hope I'm wrong but if I'm not, I hope that we will get the resources we need. Maybe send a letter or email to your local MP?

## AGM & Honey Show: Wednesday 21 February 2024 at 7pm

*The AGM will take place during judging for the Honey Show*

### Invitation to submit

Are you prepared for the B&L Honey Show?

There is still time to make a nice set of candles, sort and select your best photographs and select put aside your best jars of honey. If you feel adventurous you could try designing a new label for yourself or showing us a new gadget you have made to improve your beekeeping.

### New Gadget Class

The Gadget Class is new this year and will be run after the AGM. This is a fun class to show us how clever you can be. To enter, you need to have made an improvement to an existing piece of kit or designed something new that will improve your beekeeping. As long as it's your idea there is no restriction on what you can bring (but it must fit through the door!). You will be given

the chance to explain your gadget to the audience and they will vote for the one they like best. There will be a certificate for the winner.

If you haven't entered before, please give it a go, you never know you might be a winner. It's just a great way to improve your appreciation of your hobby.

**Bob Curtis, Meetings Secretary**

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### How to apply

Email your Entry Form and Photographs by Tuesday 6 February 2024 for free entry to all classes to Bob Curtis: [poshpix@me.com](mailto:poshpix@me.com)

Bring your entries for Classes 1-9 to the AGM/Honey Show 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](mailto: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
- Class 8: Six Honey Biscuits: Your own recipe to be provided with biscuits
- Class 9: A wax wrap big enough to covering an orange or similar
- Class 10: A bee related photograph
- Class 11: A close-up shot of a bee
- Class 12: An invention relating to beekeeping or the bee hive (Fun Class—does not contribute to final point. It will be judged by the audience)

### Prizes

Points are awarded for each class. The member with the most points across classes 1 to 11 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 Cake Salver.

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### Rules

- All classes may only be entered by individual members of B&L.
- No entry fee for classes with Entry Forms received by Tuesday 6 February 2024, otherwise £1.00 per Class.
- Classes 1-3, 5-6, & 9-11: maximum two entries, only your highest score counts for the Dixon Hurst Cup.
- Class 4: One Honey Jar Label of your own design on an empty 1lb jar (max. one entry).
- Classes 5 & 6 & 9: 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 to be submitted digitally preferably jpg. Max 4MB; larger files accepted if sent by email. All entries remain the copyright of the author. Entries may be used in the B&L newsletter and website and will be credited to the author.

### Recipe for Class 7

Honey Fruit Cake must be made using this recipe:

### Ingredients

- 50g Honey
- Two 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" (19cm) diameter.



### Meeting reports: 27 September & 18 October



The meeting on 27 September—our first winter gathering—consisted of a Q&A panel consisting of, from left to right, Jude New—on her feet in the photo above left, talking to the 25+ members present about training and workshops—Tony



Birkbeck, Hilary Osman, Bob Curtis and Ian White. The empty front seat was occupied by Manek Dubash, who talked and answered questions about the latest situation regarding Asian hornets. All photos: Manek Dubash



Our meeting on 18 October saw Master Beekeeper Daisy Day talk about the symbiosis between plants and bees.

Her talk, which she planned to give at the National Honey Show, covered the range of topics around the relationship between bees and flowers in particular, especially how bees recognise a flower, and how they know when it contains nectar and when it doesn't. Daisy also talked through which flowers are most attractive to bees. A fascinating talk.

The weather was wet and windy, so attendance was relatively low. Note that B&L Librarian Barbara Summerfield brings the library—books for borrowing—to every meeting.





## Rottingdean apiary clearance

### Preamble

Preparations for Rottingdean Apiary, our new location due to open next year, are moving on apace. As you can see from the 'before' photo, it's a bit overgrown and needs to be cleared. Some of it needs levelling and we need to clear a path to it.

So a working party of B&L volunteers started clearance work on 26 and 27 October, the results of which you can see in the 'after' photo.

The plot is owned by a local farmer who is keen for us to put bees on it so he has helped by cutting back some striplings and shrubs.

Jeff Rodrigues and Julie Lawrence will between them be managing the apiary, so here's Jeff's description of the gruelling (but enjoyable) two days that 14 members of B&L and others spent on 26 & 27 October clearing the site and making suitable for bees and beekeepers. Over to you, Jeff!



Rottingdean apiary—before clearance.

After a super effort, and amid great enthusiasm, the fundamentals of the Rottingdean Apiary are now in place, thanks to the efforts of over a dozen volunteers. Here's how it happened.

### Location, location

It's become clear that our existing apiaries were in more rural locations to the north of our patch. We needed to fill the gap between Brighton and Lewes, making it easier for members living on the eastern side of Brighton and on the coastline to get to our apiary meetings. So the committee decided to move our existing apiary at Isfield to a new location towards the south coast area.

Early next year, the colonies at Isfield, which has not been well-attended and is both rather inconvenient and close to our Barcombe apiary, will be moved to Rottingdean.

After much searching, we are fortunate that local farmer Martin Carr has agreed that we can use a small copse on the edge of his farm. The little wooded area that Martin made available to us lies just down the hill that runs north-south between Rottingdean and Saltdean.

### What we did

When we turned up on Thursday 27 October it looked like the picture above: pretty, quiet woodland but steep and undisturbed for years.

While the women started clearing leaf and twig litter, the men vigorously debated the positioning of hive platforms while others off-loaded the tools and chain saw—a predictable gender division perhaps! But the outcome of the debate was consensus about what was needed and drew on the more experienced constructors, for which I for one was grateful.

The day was fresh and light when we got started on the three main tasks:

- clearing the floor, including some tree/shrub removal
- cutting into the slope to make level hive positions



Ross and his new steps



Adrien and Henry—and mud

- digging out and laying a 14-metre path for observers and visitors.

The wood was filled with the murmur of conversations, the dulcet whine of the chainsaw and the scrape and bang of shovels and digging tools.

### Tea break

By the first tea break by Ross' monster FWD tailgate the basic shape was staring to emerge. By lunch (hot lentil and garam masala soup with cheese scones) the hive areas and path were quite distinct and a model hive slab platform had been built. By the end of the day, we were astounded how much had been achieved and the site looked distinctly sculpted out of the sloping wood. Tired bodies were ferried to the farm car park across the muddy field, flooded in places.

### Day Two

The next day was basically about rain and mud, claggy and slippery. A few less turned up and the work was a little different: some worked on a waste-wood fence to provide additional windbreak for the bees, others did heavy work with putting the hive slabs in place and hammering in stakes to

*(Continued on page 8)*



## Rottingdean apiary clearance (continued)



Above: Work in progress

shore up the upper slope behind each hive platform.

The rest developed the path which included supporting the wooden edging with tree-cuttings and flint on the downside of the slope. There was also some pretty neat cutting of steps near the entrance to the wood.

By lunch time (chorizos and vegetal stew with big fat pasta plus Rick's home-made sausages), it was more or less done and dusted. Then we made the finishing touches and by the time the rain re-started at 3pm, this was the final result—amazing!

### Summing up

While I know we now have a lovely apiary in a lovely wood in the south-



One corner of the site showing hurdle / fence for wind protection and hive pads—and mud

eastern corner of our Division, what lingers in the mind (during a fortnight of gut-wrenching news and images from abroad) is the kindness and humanity of these beekeepers, how the job got done so collaboratively and so well with no single 'leader' and the quality of a hundred small conversations.

Now, what does that remind me of...

### Hero volunteers

Anne Asher, Henry Foster, Lorna Davies, Rick Cruttenden, Adrien Parker, Ross Eager, Paul Tarry, Michael Haughton, Jude New, Graham Bubloz, Jill Davies, Julie Lawrence and me (Jeff). We were guided and assisted by Martin's assistant Ben.

Words by Jeff Rodrigues

Photos by Graham Bubloz



Above: the site as we left. We have enough positions for 6-10 hives; Jeff and Julie are planning the site's layout so more changes will be needed.

Bottom left: Thurs team (L-R) Paul, Ben, Adrien, Jude, Jill, Julie, Jeff, Rick, Ross

Bottom right: Friday team (L-R) Adrien, Jeff, Michael, Anne, Ross, Henry, Rick





## Wax craft workshops: report

*B&L's training co-ordinator Jude New ran a series of wax workshops last month. Here's what happened...*

The first B&L wax workshops were held at the Barn in Westdene on 18, 21 and 28 October.

Run like a slow speed-dating event, up to four participants could sit at a table at one time, watching demonstrations and/or taking part in making activities. After 50 minutes it was all change and off we went to the next table.

We learnt some of the chemistry of cold press soaps and sugar scrubs so we all now know how to get clean and smell delightful. Then a plethora of hand, foot and body lotions, creams and massage bars, means that our skin is going to be in tip-top condition, not forgetting the delicious smelling balms for those chapped lips in the winter.

Then to illuminate those cosy winter nights we learnt how to roll and mould beeswax candles. Helping us reduce our reliance on plastics, Rachel showed us the art of wax wrapping.

To keep us all going, Jude had made a range of delicious cakes, whilst Graham persuaded us all to buy tickets for the raffle, which so far had made £xxx which will go to Bees Abroad charity.

The charity was the choice of ?????? who, when she gave up bee keeping, donated all of her wax and wax crafting materials to BLBKA. So we had plenty of wax to use in the workshop.

Fun was had by all, lots of new skills passed on and learnt, and everyone went away with an amazing bag of goodies and inspiration. As well as a new bain marie on our Father Christmas list *[and everyone looks to be having such a great time, judging by the grins! MD]*.

A big thank you to Jude for the time and effort that went into the organisation and a thank you to the demonstrators.

**Heidi Burgess**

### Credits

**Thursday 19 October:** facilitators were Jane Simpson, Joanne Little (Teas for Bees) and Jude New.

Jane Stimpson made soap and hand scrub, Joanne Lavender: balm. Jude New: hand lotion, beeswax melts and cakes.

**Saturday 21 October:** Francesca; melted and poured soap. Rachel Ramaker: beeswax wraps and hand scrub. Heidi Burgess and Moira made rolled candles, moulded candles and beeswax moisturiser. Jude New: hand lotion and beeswax melts. Moira and I cooked the cakes.

**Saturday 28 October:** Felicity Alder: hand and foot lotion. Moira Mayne and Emma: rolled and moulded candles. Jude New: wax wraps and hand scrub. And cakes.

*More photos of beekeepers having fun are on the next page...*





## Wax craft workshops: more photos

*B&L's training co-ordinator Jude New is running wax workshops. Here's what happened...*



All photos on this and the previous page by Graham Bubloz



### Equipment for sale

*B&L member Chrissie Hogart has had to give up beekeeping so she's put up her kit for sale. See below for details.*



Three complete hives, all cedar wood with two supers, one with a gabled roof. Some have a super full of drawn comb. Prices from £180.



Honey For Sale sign £10. Two poly nucs, one with an eke extension. Green box feeder, clearer boards, dummy boards, eke, two sloping hive stands, queen excluders. Two cedar supers with frames and drawn comb; empty supers & brood boxes; large oblong sieve; honey buckets; DN4 frames; medium-size bee suit with retro-helmet; XL smock-top; bee books (one antique) plus sundries.

Contact: Chrissie Hogarth. 07713 147612 / [chrisinhove@hotmail.com](mailto:chrisinhove@hotmail.com)





## B&L events 2023-24

### Winter meetings

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
Wed 15 November	Alex Smith	How to make a bee video
Wed 20 December*	Dan Basterfield	Managing Apideas
Wed 17 January	TBD	
Wed 21 February		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

7.30pm, Wednesday 1 November, [Open House](#), 146 Springfield Road, Brighton BN1 6BZ.

## National Bee Unit Inspectors

### Regional Bee Inspector

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## 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).

## 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



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



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- **Isfield:** Ian White

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**Sussex BKA County Representative:** Vacant

**National Honey Show Rep:** Vacant