

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2024

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EDITORIAL



Asian Hornet Conference

You may not be surprised that the AH is front and centre of my mind this year. As it should be in the minds of every beekeeper.

In this issue, you'll find [a useful feature](#) on traps and trapping penned by Peter Coxon, Chairman and AH Team Co-ordinator for our neighbouring BKA at High Weald. I also report on the key issues raised at the February's BBKA Asian Hornet Conference in my AH report on [page 4](#).

AGM/Honey Show

The above-mentioned Mr Coxon also came to our AGM, where he outlined what the Sussex BKA does for the various divisions of which B&L is one. Both he and others at county level are, I'm sure, aware that the

work done there has been largely invisible to most members so it's good to hear that this is changing.

Inside: enjoy the [full report](#) plus photos and results of the B&L Honey Show—and congratulations to all the winners!

Graham and Bob

Our outgoing chairman, Graham Bubloz, has been instrumental in helping make change happen at county level. This is one of the many, many behind-the-scenes activities both he and our outgoing Meetings Secretary Bob Curtis have been doing for B&L over the years.

So huge thanks to both of them for helping to make B&L the best it can be—and, certainly during my mere eight years as a member, the best it's been. You'll be missed.

Spring Convention

The annual BBKA Spring Convention is almost upon us: 12-14 April. Some tickets are still available as I write this, though the full accommodation packages went within 10 minutes of the website opening for business. I reckon it's pretty good value given you get fed (and fed well!) and housed for three nights, with a beekeeping show, complete with lectures and workshops, tacked on for good measure.

Manek Dubash, Editor

EVENTS

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

NEXT MONTH

- Seasonal hints & tips
- Asian hornet update
- News updates
- Latest events

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 the vagaries of February and well done on keeping your bees going so far. So what's next?

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). Here's one I found:

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

- Fat-free or ordinary soy flour (226g/8oz)
- Granulated sugar (340g/12oz)
- Brewer's yeast (28g/1oz)
- Sugar syrup (340g/12oz) at 2:1 or your honey

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

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



Choose a sunny day for your first inspection

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.



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

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.



Willow in flower

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

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Seasonal tips for March

(Continued from page 2)

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](#) (ha ha ha).

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



Splitting the hive

confusing. Several types of record cards are available, including paper-based or computer-based ones, and cards can be designed by yourself; as long as they meet your needs, they will be fine.

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, 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.



Overturned lorry contained 16-20m bees

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.

Writing this has whetted my appetite and after last year's poor weather and sickly bees, I can't wait to go and see my bees!

Another veiled beekeeper

Apiary report: Hove

It's all very quiet on the Hove front. All four of our hives seem to have so far passed the winter unscathed, although



Happy-looking bees at Hove ploughing through fondant.

two of them are much smaller than the others.

On the few sunny days we have had, there has been lots of activity around the hives, with some pollen going into the hives. They are all ploughing through the fondant, at a rate of about a kilo every couple of weeks.

We plan to stop feeding fondant (weather-dependent) in the next few weeks, as they have stores and have started moving around the brood box rather than being in a cluster.

Felicity Alder, Apiary Manager



Hove apiary.

Note the new fence in the background, the aim of which is to minimise bee incursions into the neighbouring allotments which have previously generated some complaints.

Photos: Felicity Alder



Graham Bubloz
Chairman

Words from the Chair

I am penning this in my last few days as Chairman of the B&L Division. It's been great and thank you to those who've been kind with their words of support to me.

I'd like to summarise my own observations from the past couple of years:

We'd recently finished with Covid-19 lockdowns and were once again able to hold face-to-face meetings, but we had to move our monthly meeting venue in Lewes because the original site was unavailable, some meetings were held with various degrees of success, using video conferencing.

Our membership rose from 166 to 192.

We have 19 members who have passed their Basic Beekeeping qualification and several more who have taken and passed a Module Exam or two.

We held two Christmas meals, which, as a group, we hadn't done before.

Throughout the year, we meet monthly on an ad-hoc basis, to have a chat about bees over a pint at a different venue around our area.

We have a membership support mechanism using WhatsApp and Facebook which gives some great guidance for old and new beekeepers.

The committee are a dedicated group of volunteers who I am proud to have been involved with and without whom none of this would have happened. Thank you all.

[Editor's note: I'm sure I echo the sentiments of those who've worked with Graham over the two too-short years of his tenure when I say that he has been brilliant in the role: thoughtful, rational and modest, among many attributes. Maybe we can persuade him back at some point...MD]



Manek Dubash
Asian Hornet
Team Co-ordinator

Asian Hornet report

The annual BBKA Asian Hornet Conference took place last month and there were very many useful and interesting take-aways.

Conference summary

Nigel Semmence from the NBU told us the NBU are categorising and prioritising various areas of the country into red, amber and green. In the most severe Asian Hornet hotspots, they are planning to put traps out every square kilometre. He also suggested that when we put traps out, we should be logging them, their position and checking them every two days to release by-catch.

This was reinforced by Alastair Christie, Invasive Species Officer & Asian Hornet Co-ordinator on Jersey. However, there is currently no system or tool in place to help in this task.

In the last talk, from the Dover Beekeepers' Association, the AHAT co-ordinator Jackie Aucott described their system which is old-school, very manual and involves cutting up Ordnance Survey maps.

AHAT roles

The BBKA is solidifying the roles of AHAT co-ordinators and verifiers—that's the AH Action Team—as follows:

- AHAT Co-ordinators
 - public point of contact
 - pass on sightings
 - Link between govt agencies & local verifiers
 - Local contact for spring trapping
 - Report back results of investigations
 - Develop local plans for AH
- Verifiers
 - Assist with monitoring/trapping
 - Report back to the co-ordinator

[Do please join!](#)

Trap-making workshops

Peter Coxon (HWBKA) reports: HWBKA recently held a successful and fun AH Trap Making Workshop and we began thinking about logging traps. Subsequently I was in contact with Tony Warren in Kent where they have created an on-line mapping system AHA CATCH (asianhornetalert.org.uk) where one can log AH sightings.

Here at B&L, our training co-ordinator Jude New is planning at least one trap-making workshop, something we do need to get on top of, so please do attend. Details are available directly from [Jude](#) or via the WhatsApp group or Facebook page.

AGM & Honey Show report



With 38 members in attendance, the 2024 AGM & Honey Show, held on 21 February, was adjudged by all to be a roaring success. Special thanks are due to Peter Coxon, Sussex BKA Chair, who took the trouble to come along and give

us insights into what the county organisation does for us.

AGM results

Formal stuff first: those on the committee were all re-elected and

Nigel Kermod was elected Meetings Secretary (see [back page](#) for full details). We said a very sad farewell both to Meetings Secretary Bob Curtis and to Chairman Graham Bubloz, both of whom have stepped down.

B&L Honey Show results

Class	Description	1st (5 pts)	2nd (3 pts)	3rd (2 pts)	2024 Total Entries	2023 Total Entries	2022 Total Entries
1	One 1lb Jar Clear honey	Nigel Kermod	Ian White	Ian White	11	13	9
2	1lb Naturally Crystallised honey	Rachel Ramaker	Bob Curtis	Ian White	6	7	2
3	Two 1lb Jars of similar honey	Ian White	Ian White	Rachel Ramaker	9	11	4
4	Honey Label	Rachel Ramaker	Bob Curtis	Mat Budgen	3	5	3
5	One Moulded Candle	Hilary Osman	Hilary Osman	-	9	11	5
6	One 1oz block of wax	Hilary Osman	-	Hilary Osman	7	6	2
7	One Honey Cake	Mat Budgen	Judith New	Rachel Ramaker	10	6	5
8	Six Honey Biscuits.	Mat Budgen	Rachel Ramaker	Heidi Burgess	8	6	5
9	A Wax Wrap	Rachel Ramaker	Hilary Osman	Heidi Burgess	6	7	1
10	A bee related photograph	Mat Budgen	Gerald Legg	Rachel Ramaker	7	9	5
11	Close-up of a Bee	Manek Dubash	Gerald Legg	Hilary Osman	11	7	7
Number of entries:					87	88	48
12	Beekeeping Gadget	Mat Budgen	Tony Birkbeck	Bob Curtis	7	New fun class	

Cups & Highest Scores		Points	Winners 2023	Winners 2022
Dixon Hurst Cup. 1st Highest Points	Rachel Ramaker	24	Bob Curtis	Bob Curtis
2nd Highest Points	Hilary Osman	20	Hilary Osman & Rachel Ramaker	Hilary Osman
3rd Highest Points	Mat Budgen	17	Toni Birkbeck	Nigel Kermod
Novice Cup	Mat Budgen		Rachel Ramaker	Nigel Kermod
Honey Cake Salver	Mat Budgen		Ian White	Bob Curtis

AGM & Honey Show photos



Winners and speakers (L to R): Rachel Ramaker (Dixon Hurst Cup) & Mat Budgen (Novice Cup); Special Guest speaker Peter Coxon (Sussex BKA Chairman).

Annual reports: Training Co-ordinator Jude New; Apiary Managers Felicity Alder, Tony Birkbeck and Ian White; Asian Hornet Team Co-ordinator Manek Dubash



BBKA Exam Certificates awarded by Chairman Graham (L to R): Heidi Burgess (Basic Assessment & Module 1); Rachel Ramaker (Basic Assessment); Jude New (Module 1); Jane Stimpson (Basic Assessment); Felicity Alder (Basic Assessment). Congratulations to all!

2024 Honey Show Winners



Gadget Class, judged by B&L members using tokens in cups next to each gadget. 1st: Complete miniature beehive, smoker and hive tool by Mat Budgen; 2nd: Bee hoover by Tony Birkbeck; 3rd Honey bucket tilter by Bob Curtis

Honey Show photos (continued)



Class 10: A Bee-related photo. 1st: Bee chat and drinks by the pool by Mat Budgen; 2nd: Dankton bees by Gerald Legg; 3rd: Untitled by Rachel Ramaker



Class 11: Close-up of a Bee. 1st: Untitled by Manek Dubash; 2nd: Juggling willow pollen by Gerald Legg; 3rd: Untitled by Rachel Ramaker

Honey Show photos (continued)

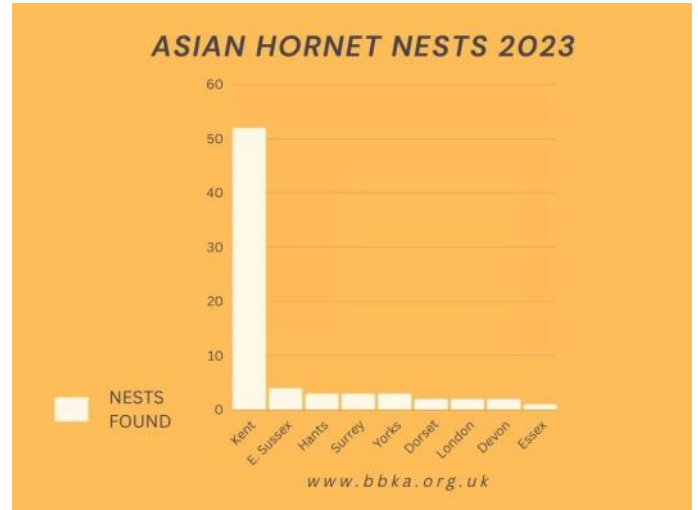


Top left & top right: Judging the show—Gerald Legg and Norman Dickinson. Above left: gadgeteers explain their gadgets: Tony Birkbeck and his bee hoover, Mat Budgen and his award-winning miniature hive, smoker and hive tool. Above right: yummy cakes and biscuits, all delicious (ask me how I know!).

AGM/Honey Show photos by Mat Budgen, Bob Curtis, Manek Dubash, Nigel Kermode & Sarah Peek

Ways forward against the Asian Hornet

By High Weald AH Team Co-ordinator and BKA Chair Peter Coxon



When I took over as AHAT co-ordinator [at HWBKA] I thought/hoped there wouldn't be too much to do ... 'but the times they are a changing'. There was been a huge increase in 2023 in sightings of Asian hornets and their nests, 72 AH nests in 56 locations and mostly in the south-east.

Those of you already in the BBKA Asian Hornet WhatsApp group will have seen the graphs above: somewhat sobering!

Also, as you might have seen, the BBKA is really ramping up activities. They have held a series of Zoom workshops throughout the year, they have created a nation-wide WhatsApp group for AHAT co-ordinators and verifiers and paid £15,000 for a poster campaign on the back of buses (below).

Some take-aways from the 2023 National Honey Show for me were that:

- It's not just a problem for beekeepers; all insects will be impacted and then of course birds

too, other native animals and humans. Those stings really hurt apparently and there have been ~50 fatalities in France. If you are talking to friends and members of the public, you might want to point this out, so they don't think this is just a niche problem for beekeepers.

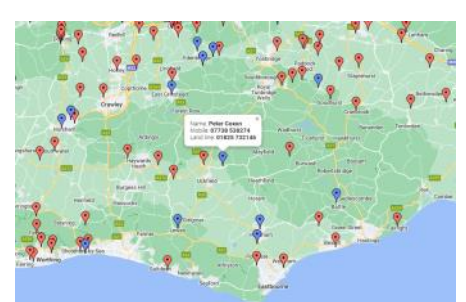
- When I asked why the big increase this year, various reasons were given such as the strong easterlies in the late spring but when I implied it must have resulted in a lack of success in 2022 I was told in no uncertain terms that the NBU / Bee Inspectors dealt with every reported incidence in '22 & '23 and were working around the clock—so why the increase in 2023? Well they can only destroy nests that are found through reported sightings
- So! More public awareness—eyes on the ground are absolutely essential, otherwise...

- Spring trapping and autumn trapping by us will be essential! We ourselves in the HWBKA & SBKA are also ramping up activities with lots of additional resources, such as many more links on the [HWBKA website's Asian Hornet Resources Page](#)—please look at them.

We have plentiful supplies of leaflets and flyers, such as the one below. Please take some and distribute—get the word out! I have hundreds of these. [As have I—MD]

Additional actions we should all be taking:

- Watch Andrew Durham's Lectures links on the [HWBKA website](#) and the BBKA's.
- Take the [on-line test](#) to become a verifier which will mean you can automatically be part of the nation-wide WhatsApp group to get the latest information and if you wish you will be added to the BBKA map which works in much the same way



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Ways forward against the Asian Hornet (continued)

(Continued from page 9)

as the BBKA Swarm map and enables members of the public to get immediate local help.

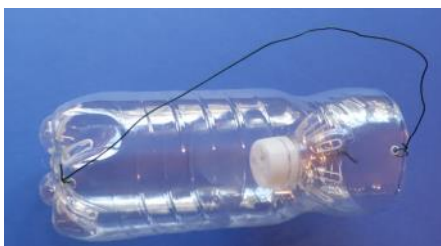
- Start thinking about traps for spring trapping of Asian Hornet queens.



Traps

There are numerous products available commercially such as the Veto Pharma trap which is a nice simple economical trap (£6.00), and which comes with its own lure. However, this will also take a lot of 'by-catch' (i.e. other insects) so perhaps consider using it as a non-killing trap by putting foam or sponges in the bottom and or making 5.5 mm slots in the sides so other insects can escape. I haven't tried this myself but, given the size of the holes in top, by making it non-killing it could be AHs might escape.

A new guy on the block is the Gard d'Apis (below) which I have bought for our Horsted Apiary but haven't tried in anger yet—obviously. Eastbourne used one during their siting and caught AHs. These are rather more expensive at ~£24.00 but are not killing traps so should avoid the by-catch issue.



We need as many of these sentinel traps out there in the spring as possible... hundreds... and we can remove the potential barrier of cost by making our own 'bottle traps' (above).

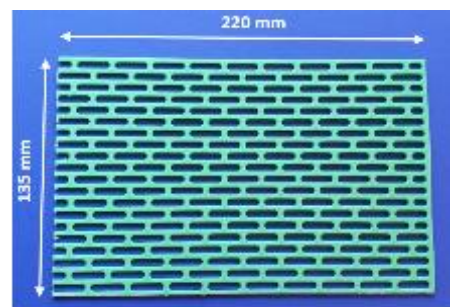
Simply take a coke, tonic or similar PET bottle and drill one or more 8mm diameter holes in the cap. Cut the bottle at the conical end such that when the end piece is inverted and inserted into the main body it is a snug fit. Make some additional 5.5 mm slots to allow the by-catch out but keep the AHs in.

Unless it is going under a roof, consider mounting it horizontally, so rain doesn't wash away the bait or make for it a little roof. In terms of bait, use a commercial lure such as Trappit or make your own. In the spring the queens are desperate for carbs so apparently fermented honey (fermented to keep the bees off), cider and black currant concentrate etc are effective whereas in the summer when



there is brood to feed they need protein and people have used prawns and various other fish ... but more of this at the planned workshops. There are many good suggestions on the [Jabeprode website](#).

The above will suffice as sentinel traps and for spring trapping of AH queens, however, should we fail in these endeavours, then judging by the experiences in France we will need devices that can catch AH's by the bucket full and also devices to help the bees defend their hives.



In France one such device you can buy is the [Jabeprode trap](#)—Jabeprode - dispositifs contre la prolifération du frelon asiatique—which costs ~55 € or you can buy just the conical entrances for 13 €.

This company are not in it for the money but to help control the AH problem and I certainly wouldn't want to deprive them of business but at 55€, which is not exorbitant, it might still be an obstacle for some beekeepers.

(Continued on page 11)

Ways forward against the Asian Hornet (continued)



DIY trapping

As you may be aware already, I do like to delve into the dark arts of DIY as do many other beekeepers, so we had various anti-AH devices on display at our [HWBKA] AGM and Honey Show, including an amazing 3-D printed one—which is rather beyond me and I suspect many others.

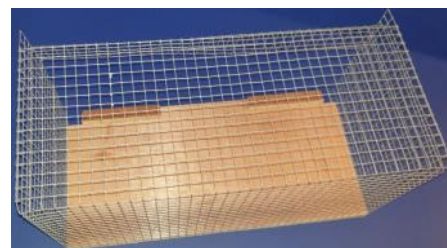
I made a simple low-cost alternative to the Jabeprode trap comprising 1 x 13L polypropylene storage box (~£4.50), 2 x stainless coffee filters (~£6) with an 8mm diameter hole drilled in the base, and two pieces (a



third) of a sheet plastic queen excluder (~£1.50) costing in total £12.00.

In the situation where we need these devices, it seems from the French experiences we might also benefit from hive ‘muselières’ (muzzles) to give the bees a fighting chance of getting in and out of their hives without being picked off.

These too are available commercially from Thornes for £28.50 but can be made easily by those of a practical bent. I made a couple for our honey show, for



example, requiring a minimum of wood-working skills and costing under £6.00.

These and no doubt many more will be available when we [at HWBKA and here at B&L] will be holding talks & workshops soon in 2024 making traps & muzzles, etc. Plans will also be available.

Sussex BKA AGM

Indeed, the theme of next year’s SBKA AGM which will be hosted by the HWBKA on Saturday 2 March will be The Asian Hornet Threat. In addition to the usual scintillating committee business, we will have a talk from our Seasonal Bee Inspector Daniel Morgan who had first-hand experience this year dealing with the Eastbourne nest—and probably others too I am unaware of.

We also plan to have an East Sussex DIY competition for Asian Hornet related DIY traps and devices to be judged by Dan and with a good first prize ...so please do try to come along as it should be a really good day!

Make sure you do all that you can so that this does not get away from us—it will not be nice!

Peter Coxon, HWBKA Asian Hornet Team Co-ordinator & Sussex BKA Chairman





B&L Events 2024

Winter meetings

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
Wed 20 March	Pam Hunter	Poisonous Honey
Wed 17 April	Francis Ratnieks	Ivy Bees

Next Bee Chat

7pm, Wednesday 6 March, The Coach House, 24 High Street, Rottingdean BN2 7HR

Spring meetings

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
Saturday 2 March	Sussex BKA AGM	Asian hornet talk
Saturday 20 April	Barcombe	Out-apiary meeting

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.

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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