

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2024

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EVENTS

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

NEXT MONTH

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

EDITORIAL

There's a new, colour-coded (thanks Nigel!) front page this month because I've heard some people weren't sure when meetings were happening. This is the fix. The normal meetings section on the back

page remains but this new layout means the month's meeting info is front and centre.

And as ever, inside we have seasonal hints and tips and so much more...

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](#).

June events & meetings

Date	Location	Time	Leader	Topic
Saturday 1st	Rottingdean	13.30-16.00	Jeff	Swarm control, collection, hiving
Sunday 2nd	Grassroots	10.00-12.00	Jude	Demaree Technique
Saturday 8th	The Barn	09.00-16.00	Jude	Absolute Beginners Course 3: Feeding for June gap; record-keeping and supering
Friday 7th	South of England Show			Honey Tent Stewarding: volunteers from BLBKA
Saturday 8th	South of England Show			Honey Tent Stewarding: volunteers from BLBKA
Sunday 9th	South of England Show			Honey Tent Stewarding volunteers from BLBKA
Wednesday 12th	Patcham Community Centre	18.00-21.00	Jude	Basic Assessment 5: meeting
Saturday 15th	Grassroots	am	Jude	Basic Assessment 6: meeting
Tuesday 18th	Skype	19.00-21.00	Jude	General Husbandry 5: Bee Diseases with Malcolm Wilkie
Saturday 29th	Grassroots	13.30-16.00	Jude	Inspection & Feeding for June gap (if needed)

Legend

Outside events

Training events

Out-apiary meetings

Out-apiary meetings start at 13.30 and run until about 16.00. Apiary locations are on [the website](#). Bring a mug for tea!

Next Bee Chat

4 June 2024, 19.30, Friars Oak, Hassocks

ONLINE

 [B&L website](#)
 [Facebook](#)



QR link to our website

Seasonal tips for June



Honey bee on cotoneaster in spring

As ever, it's been a busy swarming month, one that's likely to continue for some weeks, almost as if the bees are trying to make up for the time lost during the miserable months of March and April.

And now I'm going to remind you of the possibility of another possible bad event: the June gap.

This is a period normally around June (surprise, surprise) when the last of the spring flowers (not just flowers but trees as well) have gone over and it's too early for the early summer trees and flowers to bloom.

The June gap is most often felt in rural areas dominated by intensive agriculture—like Sussex. The plentiful hawthorn blooms of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and gluts of autumn sown oil seed rape are largely over by June but the summer wildflowers are



The gap between oil seed rape and heather

not yet at their peak and the heather is still weeks away. Because of climate change we may not even get a gap this year, but the weather is, as always, very changeable and the bees may be confined to the hive for some time. This implies that it may need feeding.

Remember, with the colony rapidly expanding, it can get through about 5kg of stores in a week, so count how much is in your hive/s. A brood frame filled on both sides weighs about 2.5kg. Check what percentage of each frame is covered by stores to calculate whether the colony will survive a prolonged period of confinement.

If in doubt feed them. Use either commercial, invert sugar syrup or make your own. I make mine in a ratio of one litre of water to one kg of sugar. You don't have to heat it but it helps to dissolve the sugar. Don't feed the colony with supers on or you'll end up with syrup in your supers.

Colony splitting

You'll probably need to split your colonies at some point, either to make increase or to help suppress the swarming instinct.

Unless you have a source of mated or virgin queens, it will take at least three weeks before you see any sign of new

brood being laid in the queenless hive. About four or five days after splitting the colony, knock out all but one or two of the queen cells, and then leave them alone. You will only end up trying to inspect a very defensive colony and that's no fun for any of us. However, you will still need to continue with weekly inspections to ensure that new queen cells have not developed in your unsplit colonies.

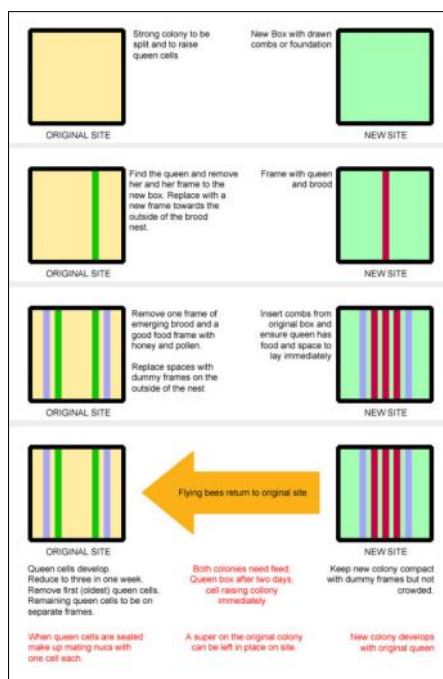
Once the new queen has hatched and is laying, you will have to find and mark her. If you're really keen on selling on your queens, you'll use the internationally recognised colour for the year, as seen [here](#). Or if the eyes aren't what they were, use easily-seen colours like yellow or white.

Finding the queen

On a warm still day when the foragers are out working, open the hive. Picture what the queen looks like. Working smoothly, take out the first frame, if it has few bees on it, place on the ground near the entrance.

As you lift each frame from the hive, scan it in a zig-zag pattern from top to bottom and then around the sides. Queens usually move away from the light, heading for the dark side, so you might see her as she goes over the top.

The queen has a very characteristic way of walking close to the comb and



A splitting plan



A marked queen. Photo: Nigel Kermode

Seasonal tips for June (cont.)



Queen bee with her court

will also be trying, determinedly, to reach the darker side, so look for a bee on the march. Look for the longer abdomen and the longer brown legs. If you're lucky you'll see a 'court' of bees around her—see above.

If you haven't found her on your second pass through the hive, your next step is to pair up the frames.

Put two pairs of frames in a nuc with a space between them. Space the remaining frames in the main hive with at least a frame's gap between each pair. We know the queen avoids the light, so remove a pair of frames and open them like a book. Do this with each pair until you find the queen.

The last resort is to sift the bees through a queen excluder. As the name implies, all but the queen (and drones) will pass through the excluder.



Nicely filled super frame.
Photo: David Evans, aka The Apiarist

Next steps

You will need to put supers on your hive. The first will need to go on when the hive has about nine seams of bees in it. Shuffle the frames as they fill to get evenly drawn combs. The next super should go on (above or below the existing) when the first super is nearly full.

If you have hives near oilseed rape (OSR) then you will need to extract the honey before it sets like concrete. Do not wait until the honey is capped: that's too late. Do the shake test before it is capped. Hold the frame upside down and shake vigorously. If nectar drips out, leave it for a few more days. If no nectar drips out, it's time to extract.

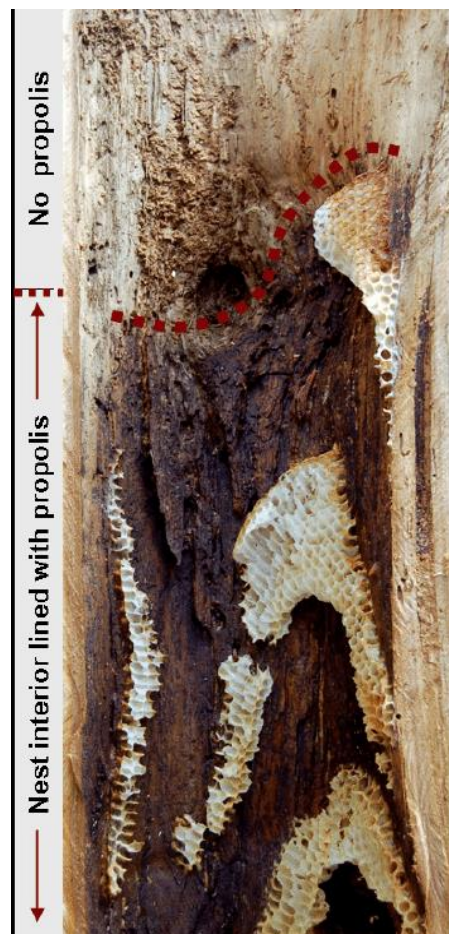
Varroa

Continue to monitor the varroa mite count. An average of more than ten a day indicate that treatment is required urgently. If you have honey supers on use MAQS or another type of treatment that can be used when the supers are on. Formic Pro, which remains commercially available, unlike MAQS, is not approved for use with supers on, despite its active agent, formic acid, being the same as MAQS. This, I would suspect, is a consequence of both the cost and the time taken to achieve approval for medicines. Otherwise treat with your preferred agent.

In the event you haven't been able to split your hive/s, always have a bait hive set up nearby; you never know, you might even catch someone else's bees.



Bees with deformed wing virus, transmitted by varroa mites



A cross-section of a feral honey bee hive within a tree cavity found September 2009. The nest interior where comb is present is coated in a thin layer of propolis creating a "propolis envelope" around the colony.

Photo: [Michael D. Simone-Finstrom](#)

A quick recipe for bait hives is to make it smell like home—if you're a honey bee. Researchers have found that swarms of bees in the wild are much more likely to set up home in a tree cavity that has previously been used by bees than not.

So make it a reasonably sized hole: a National brood box is ideal. Put a ranky old frame in there, just one frame, as the scout bees from a swarm will measure the size of the cavity and, if they keep bumping into frames, they are more likely to reject it.

With luck you'll be the recipient of free bees.

The Veiled Beekeeper



*Manek Dubash
Asian Hornet
Team Co-ordinator*

Asian Hornet report

You can't have failed to notice the huge amount of publicity and media attention having been given to the Asian hornet problem in recent weeks.

The combined efforts of the BBKA and the NBU are bearing fruit: almost everyone I speak to asks about them. The social media forums are full of them, and the mainstream media have, by and large, started to get their facts and images right.

This is all good news: awareness is up and people are on the alert. Let's hope it lasts.

Because the one thing we haven't seen much of yet is Asian hornets. That's largely because, I suspect—and maybe I'm a bit Cassandra-like—it's still early days.

The queens will by now have finished their public perambulations and will instead be busy laying eggs inside primary nests as workers get on with building up their nests.

That said, we've now had a handful of reports of queens being spotted and trapped in Four Oaks—in the Tenterden area—and one in Denton. But I get a sense and experts also suggest that the poor weather this spring may well have killed off a number of nascent nests. We shall see.



What can we do now?

For now though, our efforts are best directed in two directions: awareness and trapping. Workers will start go out and about in the next few weeks so we need to start switching from queen to worker trapping.

If you have a Gard'Apis trap (*above*), use the smaller of the two cones. And if you've built a selective trap, Sussex BKA have a small supply of perforated lids that fit on popular jam jars.

If you want a lid or two, please let [me](#) or [Jude New](#), our Training Co-ordinator, know.

Custom-made muzzles for sale

Protect your bees against yellow-legged Asian hornets

Retired cabinet maker Mike James, based in Hassocks, is prepared to make Brighton and Lewes members Asian hornet muzzles for your hives.

The normal going rate for these items start at about £28, for a national or WBC hive. I have seen them priced at £43, and then there will be postage costs on top of that. The wood is made of pine, (Mike is allergic to cedar), and the wire netting is of the larger size. Please see photo.

The cost of these per item, whether for a National or a WBC hive is £22.

For further information or to buy one of these from Mike please contact him on 01273 844992 or 07821 126037.

Remember these do not need to go on the hive all year round. Usage details are available on the [BBKA website](#).

Be a scout or girl guide NOW and be prepared for this invasive insect.



Hilary Osman

Out-apiary meetings

Barcombe

At last, after all the planned apiary meets at Barcombe were cancelled last year because of the weather, we finally had a successful first session of 2024, and what a great session it was!

Thirteen members turned up at 10am on Saturday 20 April; the weather was sunny but very chilly. Luckily the apiary at Barcombe is somewhat sheltered which calmed the bees.

Hive 11 was opened first. The ladies were very calm and I proceeded through the hive, passing three frames around. Members spotted eggs, larvae, capped brood, a bee being born, nectar and pollen. We had fun pretending drones were queens and picking them up and pretending to mark and clip them.

Hive 13 was next. This was the swarm from hive 10 last year that ended up building comb under the mesh floor while a new queen took over above the mesh floor. Everything was in order and new beekeepers witnessed me murdering wax moth larvae (a very satisfying pastime!). Then came hive 10. A new member who hadn't handled bees before started to go through the hive but when he pulled out the second frame we found queen cells.

Pagden split

We decided to do a Pagden split. We found the queen and put her in a clean brood box in the original position. We moved the old brood box with all the brood into a new location and knocked down all the queen cells apart from one (I went back the following Wednesday and checked for any more cells and gave them a feed of syrup; I'll report on how they are getting on next month.

Coda: I think one of my to-do jobs is to renumber the hives!!

Tony Birkbeck, Apiary Manager

[Editor's note: this report was due to have been published last month. Oops!]

Hove



April

We currently have five hives here, one absolutely crammed full of bees; the queen has been extremely busy. An uncapped, loaded queen cell was found and so we split the colony in two to avoid them swarming. We're looking forward to showing you these colonies during our first out apiary meeting on the 12 May.

A second colony is still very small, so we decided to move them to a poly nuc in the hope that they will do better in a smaller home. The other two are doing well despite the cold and wet weather.

May

We have been quite busy keeping swarms under control over the last few weeks.

All four hives decided to make preparations to swarm as soon as the

weather got warmer, so we did several splits to avoid losing them. At the moment we have seven hives, three of which are queenright and the other four are in the process of raising a new queen. We will see how they all get on over the next few weeks, and decide whether any need to be combined again later in the season.

Overall, the season's start has been quite a challenge in terms of weather. We've had to extensively feed them to make sure they had enough storage during the wet spring, but now all existing hives have enough storage and are busy filling their supers, so fingers crossed for a good honey crop this year.

We had our first, slightly underwhelming out-apiary meeting in May—only Joy, who owns the site, turned up! We're blaming the fact it was one of the first properly sunny days of spring for the lack of attendance. Hopefully we'll see some more of you in June and July!

Felicity Alder, Apiary Manager

[NB: Photos are on the next page...]

Rottingdean

At last, our three colonies are growing! A little slowly at first but a big growth spurt in the last three weeks.

The single supers in each of them are filling with nectar (though no honey yet) and we are preparing additional supers.

No sign of swarming yet and I've seen practice queen cells in only one hive.

The beekeepers in the village (Rottingdean) have lost 11 colonies over the winter so this growth is welcome. I've only heard of one swarm so far, but...

We had a fun frame-making workshop and lunch on Sunday 19th May. Lunch was a Burmese prawn in tomato sauce dish with feather-light poories (a sort of chapati) and a glass of rosé. [Where's my invitation?? MD.]

Our first open apiary meeting will be on 1 June from 11.00.

Let me know if you want to come as I'll need to let the farm know and make sure there are car parking spaces available in the farmyard:

m4my0@icloud.com.

Jeff Rodrigues, Apiary Manager

Out-apiary meeting: pictures from Hove



Above left, from top: Hove apiary; brood comb; swarm cells. *Middle:* Queen laying an egg; swarm cells; uncapped queen cell. *Right:* uncapped queen cell; unmarked queen (can you spot her?).

Photos by Felicity Alder

Queen rearing at Grassroots



The weather was good: sunny and 19 degrees C.

Grassroots will be using the Miller method for queen rearing to assess its effectiveness, ease of use and so on, although Apiary Manager Jude New is open to alternatives, either independently or in conjunction with Tony Birkbeck at the Barcombe apiary, who is using the Nicot system.

After three days, a check will be made to determine whether the queen has laid in the Miller frame. If so it, along with the queen cells, will then be transferred to the Grassroots cell-builder colony.

Words & photos by Graham Bubloz



Finger-pressed areas prevent the queen laying eggs at the edges



The Miller board is inserted into the hive



A Cloake board—essentially a modified queen excluder—with a sliding metal screen stops queen pheromones from being transmitted between top and bottom boxes. Shown here without (*top photo*) and with (*lower photo*) the screen inserted.



Heidi volunteered to cut out the distinctive shapes in the drawn comb



The cell-builder colony

Training for Basic Assessment

This is the intrepid Basic Assessment group finding out how to shake bees from the frame without hurting them, checking for foulbrood, checking that they can spot brood comb, drone comb and sealed stores and pollen cells.

We found the queen and caged her while we poked the hive; see how interested the bees are in their queen. They didn't mind too much. There was not much in the way of stores or pollen evident on any of the frames.

The event nearly stalled because the shed padlock wouldn't open. I think that the rain and rust just finished it off. Thank you to our member who helped us get what we wanted from the bee shed (you know who you are).

My facilitator and I returned later to cut the padlock off, replace the door handle and fix the new padlock. The door might not be bee-tight any more, so I am working on a way to make the two doors meet properly...

The group has one more session planned before assessment, with places being booked before 4 June in time for assessment on Tuesday 16 July.

Please [get in touch](#) if you are studying independently but would like to be assessed this summer. I will send you the link for you to register and pay £25.00 fee for the assessor and paid directly to BBKA.

Jude New, Training Co-ordinator



See text for captions. Photos by Graham Bubloz

Swarm stories

It's swarming season, so let's see your swarm stories. Those bees....



This is cut out I did [in early May] in Nutley in a dormer, was very successful. Unfortunately though some people don't want to incur the expense of scaffolding and building work so spraying and destroying is an inevitable option which is a shame but understandable. I use a powder called Ficam which kills wasps and bees very quickly in those situations. Bees tend to move away from powder though so it's not as quick as I'd like it to be.

Tony Birkbeck (from the B&L Buzz WhatsApp group)



Kathy (from the B&L Buzz WhatsApp group)



A swarm captured from the top of a tall tree (*above*).

Stephen Gould (from the B&L Buzz WhatsApp group)

As some of you might know I am forever at the tip and saw these bees (*left*). Looks like they have made the container their home!!

Jessica Gould (from the B&L Buzz WhatsApp group)

And then there's one that got away: smoked them but they just retreated deeper into the hedge, instead of climbing into the box above... MD.



B&L Events, June 2024

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Saturday 1st	Rottingdean	13.30-16.00	Jeff	Swarm control, collection, hiving
Sunday 2nd	Grassroots	10.00-12.00	Jude	Demaree Technique
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Out-apiary meetings start at 13.30 and run until about 16.00. Apiary locations are on [the website](#). Bring a mug for tea!

Next Bee Chat

4 June 2024, 19.30, Friars Oak, Hassocks

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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Seasonal Bee Inspectors

Daniel Morgan

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M: 07500 954390

NB: SBI Diane Steele, whom many beekeepers will know, has now retired. Diane, we hope you enjoy your retirement.



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

The co-operative membership
Community Fund

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- **Grassroots:** Jude New

- **Hove:** Felicity Alder & José Reina

- **Rottingdean:** Julie Lawrence & Jeff Rodrigues

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Sussex BKA County Representative: Vacant

National Honey Show Rep: Vacant

Disclaimer: 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.