

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER JULY 2024

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EDITORIAL

Wow! How a month, or a week or two, changes things. A week or two ago, I was doubted there'd be much honey this year.

But as I write on 26 July, it's mid-20s outside and the bees are going bonkers. Not only have they stored up all their swarminess for this week, there's a flow

on, big time. My supers are filling up like no-one's business. Expect yours are too.

So if in doubt, put a super on. Even if it's raw foundation, the nectar flow means they'll draw it, and it's warm enough that the bees won't struggle to heat the space.

Manek Dubash, Editor

July events & meetings

Date	Location	Time	Leader	Topic
Saturday 6th	Telscombe Cliffs		Norman	Fair Stand and Display
Sunday 7th	Hove		Jose	Inspection & Feeding for June gap (if needed)
Saturday 13th	Rottingdean	13.30-16.00	Jeff	Check for disease and varroa counting
Sunday 14th	Barcombe	15.00-17.00	Tony	Check for disease and varroa counting
Tuesday 16th	Grassroots	10.00-16.00	Jude	Assessment with Mike Cullen x 4 (others tbd)
Saturday 20th	The Barn, Westdene	09.00-16.00	Jude	ABC beekeeping-4: Management of bee diseases
Saturday 27th	Grassroots	13.30-16.00	Jude	Check for disease and varroa counting
Tuesday 30th	Skype	19.00-21.00	Jude	General Husbandry-6: OSR honey and making creamed honey with Pam Hunter

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

TBD

EVENTS

- Meetings and more
- See this & [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 July

As I write the warm weather we dream of has arrived—although we paid for it with months of cold and rain. This has put the bees back by several weeks, but now the flow is on and the swarm season has started in earnest.

If nothing else, these periods teach us to be patient. If you have made sure your bees are as healthy and as well fed as possible, all you can do is leave it up to them. I know from experience that it can take six weeks from splitting a colony as part of your swarm control procedures to finding newly laid eggs.

By early June, the queen should be laying to her maximum potential and colonies should be reaching maximum brood capacity by early July to capitalise on the flowering of the summer blooms which will continue until late autumn.

You should still continue with regular weekly inspections and be looking out for:

- A queen laying viable brood in a good, close pattern
- Enough room for the queen to lay
- Supers filling up
- Disease
- Sufficient stores until the next inspection
- Presence of queen cells

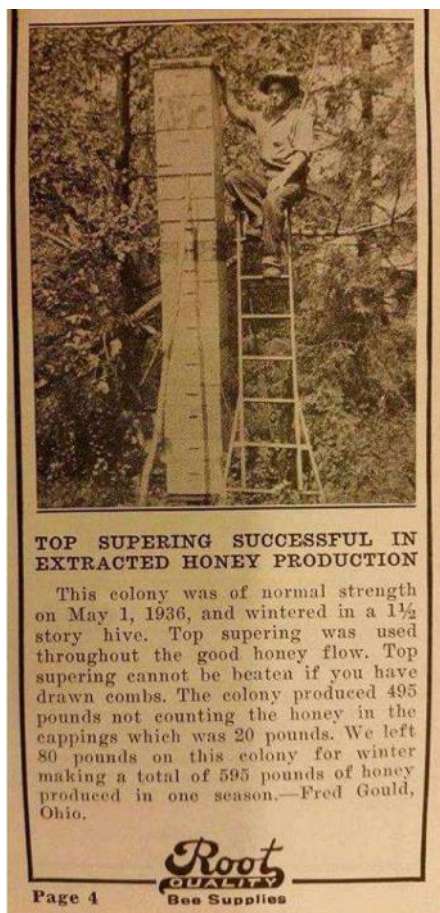
I know that, generally speaking, July is late for colonies to swarm, but they can and do swarm then. It would be a shame to lose half of your workforce just when they're needed, so continue to be vigilant for those swarm cells.

Summer supering

Assuming everything is OK and your colony is not preparing to swarm, then you need to think about providing



One vertical egg per cell, laid on the base



Don't let it get this far!

enough space for the bees to store the nectar. They may need more space than you think.

When nectar is brought into the hive it has a water content of about 80 per cent, and so needs a lot of space. The bees reduce its water content to about 18 per cent and then store and cap it, ready for use later by the bees—or in most cases, the beekeeper.

So, when do you put supers on? If you don't do it soon enough, you risk having it stored in the brood comb, reducing the availability for the queen



A very full super. Photo: The Apiarist

to lay and possibly inducing the colony to prepare to swarm.

Too early or too many will reduce the bees' ability to maintain the right hive temperature suitable for raising brood or, because the warmest part of the colony is in the centre, only the frames above the brood will get filled with honey (known chimneying or the chimney effect).

So once the brood box has about seven to eight seams of bees, put on the first super, preferably with drawn comb. Once this super is 80 per cent full with nectar put the second one on, again preferably with drawn comb.

Super tips

Why drawn comb? Because it takes a lot of nectar to make wax—about 8kg of nectar for 1kg of wax—and you want to maximise the honey harvest. Sometimes you don't have drawn comb, so either get it drawn early in the season using a rapid feeder or wait until later when there is a flow on with plenty of nectar to go around.

Next, the vexed question of whether you put the new super on top of the original, or under the existing. For me, it makes sense to put the new super under the existing one.

This gives the bees access to a lot of space and can reduce overcrowding in the brood box, it's nearer to the bees storing the nectar and it's warmer, right near the brood. It also makes harvesting easier: the top boxes are the fullest so there's less box manipulation to be done.



Lots of supers. Photo: Barnsley Beekeepers

Seasonal tips for July (cont.)

You might also consider using Manley frames in your supers: they're wider than the National frames which allows the bees to make the honey cells deeper. You get 10 frames in a super. Uncapping is easier too, as the capping is at the same level as the edge of frame sidebar, so you need only to run a serrated knife across the top to uncap.

Honey harvesting

I think most of us use wired super frames and spin out the honey at harvest time leaving us with that ever-so-useful drawn comb.

However, there are other ways of harvesting and presenting your honey. The most straightforward method is to use un-wired foundation and cut out sections of capped honey: this is known as cut comb.

Purists say that the mid-rib in this type of comb is too thick and suggest a narrow starter strip is used at the top of the frame allowing the bees to draw out the comb, giving a finer structure.



Honey bee on heather. Photo: Liam Olds



Section honey

Or you could forego the sticky pleasure of cutting up the comb and use preformed sections. Again, this uses unwired foundation mounted into 100mm x 100mm frames or 'sections'. These sections are arranged in rows of four or five across the specially made super, giving about 50 uniform sections to harvest.

Anecdotally, I understand that the bees are not very accepting of this arrangement and will store honey anywhere else until they have no choice, so it's not advisable to use a mixture of normal super frames and sections.

Heather or wildflower?

Most of us have to make do with the forage available—wild or cultivated flowers and blossoms in the fields and gardens near our apiaries.

Having said that, it's very surprising to note the vast differences of these honeys, dependent on the time of

harvest and the forage available. I've seen some early harvests from Downland apiaries the colour of white Vinho Verde and a harvest from a more wooded area, the colour of used engine oil.

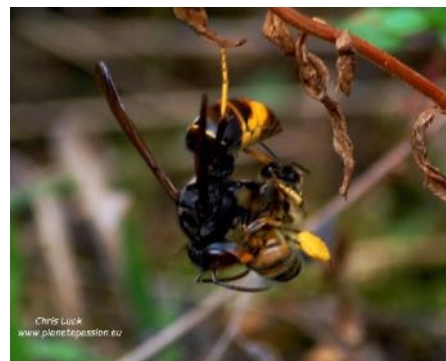
If you are lucky enough to live in the north of our area or are organised enough to move your hives, you may get what some think is the best honey in the world: the fabled heather honey.

Whatever you harvest, I'm sure you will be proud of your achievements and that of your girls and share your bounty with friends and family.

Asian hornets

And finally, although we have yet had no local sighting of the Asian Hornet (below, seen dismembering a bee) at the time of going to press in our area, please keep an eye out for the blighters in your traps.

Another veiled beekeeper



South of England Show



B&L's Hilary Osman (left & middle) and retired SBI Diane Steele (below) showing bees at the SES last month. *Photos by Bob Curtis*



Manek Dubash
Asian Hornet
Team Co-ordinator

Asian Hornet report

Bit of a June/July gap this month: we're in the period when the AH queens have more or less stopped flying and are instead concentrating on building the primary nests and laying eggs, and the workers have yet to emerge *en masse* to start preying on our bees and other pollinators.

So it's unlikely now that you'll find queens or workers in your traps. This is, then, the time to make plans for where you'll put those traps and what you'll bait them with.

We have some lids at £1 each that fit supermarket jam jars, available from [Jude](#)

[New](#). In the jars can go anything that will attract hornets, Trappit being one of the best. Beware though that jars are likely to be non-selective: you don't want to trap anything other than Asian hornets.

Help with identification

In the meantime, we have posters and wallet-friendly cards available to display and hand out to members of the public to help with identification, a time that cannot be far away. People are primed now to look for hornets: let's help!

B&L's out-apiaries: the why and what

Rottingdean Apiary sets out its stall: come and see us!



Great news! This month we're really pleased to announce that the Rottingdean Apiary is fully up and running! It has been a lot of hard work to prepare it but now we have a new apiary to the east of Brighton for more balanced coverage across our area.

The apiary is aimed primarily at new beekeepers, those who may want to keep bees in the future and anyone who is interested in learning about beekeeping.

A key objective is to give people hands-on experience with bee colonies and their hives. This means learning how to handle the animals themselves, their equipment, the tools and the immediate environment.

Another objective is to learn what to look for when hive inspections are carried out. This includes identifying healthy brood and brood patterns,

identifying stores of nectar, pollen and honey, but also looking for warning signs of disease and taking remedial action.

A third objective is to learn how to spot potential problems for the beekeeper, such as swarming, starvation and so on

We also want to cover specific beekeeping topics in a practical way, for example, how to manage fast-growing colonies by splits, swarm avoidance etc.

Finally, we want to provide some friendly interaction—so there is always some sort of social gathering after open apiary meetings. It might just be some on-site coffee and cake or a return to Jeff and Julie's for cheese scones and soup or tea.

Contact Jeff

If you think you'd benefit or just fancy a pleasant chat with added bee action and you live within easy travel distance of the apiary, say within 10 miles, please let Apiary Manager Jeff Rodrigues know—or bring anyone else who might be interested.

Contact details are as follows: m4my0@icloud.com or text 07711 554811.

Wax workshop?

Do you fancy a day with wax?

We have a question for you: would you be interested if we arrange wax workshops this autumn?

In October (morning session) or November (afternoon session) at the moment. Each session is planned to last 3 hours, hall availability is already an issue. There will be a charge for materials, and opportunities to make a range of items with beeswax. We will have a pop up honey shop so if you have honey to sell you will be able to bring that along too. Please [contact me](#).

Jude New, Training Co-ordinator



Out-apiary meetings

Barcombe



Well, what a rubbish spring! The bees at Barcombe have been suffering and unbelievably I was feeding three of the hives with syrup at the beginning of June as they were so hungry. The notorious Hive 5 (last year's angry colony, now requeened and calm) just hasn't grown at all—and because they have been starving have just become angry again. None of the colonies have produced a single drop of spring honey, and that goes for all my colonies too.

I disappeared on 12 June for a tour of the Pyrenées; before I went, most colonies were void of stores and things looked gloomy.

However, on my return on 22 June an inspection told a completely different story and it seems we have a summer flow at long last: supers are filling up. I'm not being too optimistic yet though as I suspect this late into the season the yield won't break any records.

Bad luck seems to come together, before I went to the Pyrenees I added some supers in the hope the flow would start while I was away. However the storage shed has been infested with mice: they got into the stored frames



and ruined them, and into an old wooden nuc. I need to find time to completely clear the shed out and clean what I can—I'll try and give a full damage report in next month's report.

Queen rearing

This year's queen rearing/bee improvement programme at Barcombe has been successful again. It kicked off in May using the Nicot system again which produced five queen cells (lower than expected as I put the queen in the Nicot cage late as I couldn't find her). Three of these went into Apideas, the other two into a colony that I had split and a colony to replace an old queen.

All five successfully mated, however—the next bit of bad news—at some point while I was away an animal must have knocked up against the Apidea stand and knocked one on its side which knocked the lid off and so this apidea subsequently failed.

The surviving queens need a little more time before I decide what I will use them for.

Tony Birkbeck, Apiary Manager
Photos by Tony Birkbeck



Hove



It's been a bit of a topsy turvy month at Hove. Of the six hives here, four are queenright, one with a drone-laying queen and one which had a new queen who seems to have disappeared, hopefully she will make a return at some point, or the bees will build new queen cells.

When we were there doing an inspection this week, we were lucky enough to catch sight of a queen emerging from a queen cell (see photo below). If the good weather continues, she will embark on a successful mating flight and head up a productive hive.

Our next out-apiary meeting is on Sunday 7 July, please do let us know if you are planning to attend, we look forward to you there.

Felicity Alder & José Reina,
Apiary Managers



Out-apiary meetings

Rottingdean



Bait nuc at Rottingdean.

The little wood is now leafy, with lovely filtered light and very busy bees.

But overall things are quite slow to get going although the last ten days of warm weather have seen a growth spurt.

One colony is developing well: the super full of nectar and the bees have started seal the cells. In fact I am thinking of doing a vertical split this week to create a third colony. There is still time for virgin queens to be mated and start laying before the end of the season.

Only two survived the winter and these were transferred to me three months ago by Ian. So I would like to ensure that we go into winter 2024/25 with at least three colonies.

The second B&L colony has been struggling in the last 12 weeks. It is poorly propolised, there is no activity in the super, sugar syrup has not been taken down and egg-laying has been much less than in the first colony and in my own hive. When I inspected a few days ago, it appeared queenless. But there were six or so queen cells so I closed up and left them to it (ie creating a new queen).

The next open apiary will be on Saturday 13th July. We will be able to see how the vertical split is faring, maybe we can take off some frames for honey extraction, talk about diseases and doing a varroa mite count.

*Words & photos:
Jeff Rodrigues, Apiary Manager*



A peek into the Rottingdean apiary. Check out the feature about the days of hard work members put in to prepare it, in the November 2023 issue.

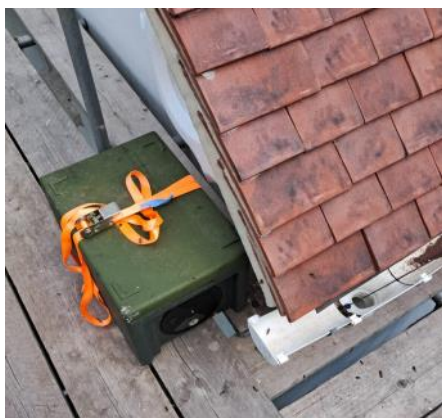
Basic Assessment training: the final session at Grassroots



Basic Assessment training (cont.)



Swarm collection photos & stories



A very exciting morning; my colony at home swarmed again, just as I was going to inspect. Managed to collect the swarm (almost went through the shed roof). They're now tucked up in a nuc with foundation and syrup. Sith Lord and Sensei Jude: am I now a beekeeper?

Words & photos: Ross Eager

Ian & Manek (but mainly Ian) surveyed a house near Stanmer Park where a swarm had installed itself under the eaves, between insulation and roof tiles. With no way to shift them from inside the roof space, since HMQ would already have had time to lay eggs, we set up a bait nuc. We will block them in temporarily before the scaffolders come to remove the scaffolding...

Words: Manek Dubash.

Photos: Ian White

Sad swarm story

I went to retrieve a swarm from one of my hives. It was hanging conveniently near the ground on a shrub so I shook

them into a nuc, but instead they took off and headed down the South Downs Way. Hope they find a good home.

Manek Dubash

Feel like I have been dubbed into the sisterhood/brotherhood. First ever swarm collection. Up a tree and huge. Think I got the queen as there is a lot of fanning going on. A first year queen and they had loads of space. I imagine that the endless wet weather followed by a hot spell has kicked them into gear. Thanks to mentor @Shirley Light for showing me the ropes the first time we met.

Words & photos: Peter Brooke-Ball



B&L Events, July 2024

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	The Barn,			ABC beekeeping-4:
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TBD

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).

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NB: To ex-SBI Diane Steele, we hope you enjoy your retirement.



The co-operative membership
Community Fund

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

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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.