

# Brighton & Lewes Beekers

A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2025

AGM & Honey Show  
19 February 2025, 7.30pm



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### EDITORIAL



The big news this month is of course our Annual General Meeting and Honey Show on 19 Feb. At our November meeting, we showed how you can participate in the competitions, so I'm looking forward to seeing some of those fab entries.

I hope your bees are well. I was relieved to find that my remaining four hives (out of the six I went into winter with) were

still alive on 25 January. Here's hoping the storm on 26th, the day I write this, hasn't done for them...

On the Asian Hornet front, there's no report this month as there's nothing to say other than that the NBU has announced it will no longer be able to respond to reports via the AH Watch app that do not include an image of an insect.

Finally, it's not too late to register for the [BBKA Spring Convention](#); booking opened on 27 January and while the best accommodation goes quickly, there always seem to be places. I've found the 2-3 days of concentrated thinking and talking about beekeeping amazingly stimulating and well worth the money. And the food is excellent. Do join me!

*Manek Dubash, Editor*

### Winter meetings

| Date               | Topic  |
|--------------------|--|
| Wednesday 18 Sept  | How was your beekeeping season? Short talks plus Q&A   |
| Wednesday 18 Oct   | From Buckfast to Buckingham Palace, by Richard Rickitt                                       |
| Wednesday 20 Nov   | Let's get ready for the Honey Show: judging standards by Jude, Gerald and Bob                |
| Wednesday 18 Dec   | Must-haves vs nice-to-haves: a commercial beekeeper's perspectives, by Dan & Ken Basterfield |
| Wednesday 15 Jan   | How to keep your bees in the best of health, by Margaret Murdin                              |
| Wednesday 19 Feb   | 2025 AGM & Honey Show  |
| Wednesday 19 Mar   | The role of drones and drone congregation areas, by Stephen Fleming                          |
| Wednesday 16 April | The special language of bees, by Margaret Murdin   |

All meetings are LIVE and start at 19.15 for 19.30 at Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Lewes BN7 2LR  
**Next Bee Chat: see social media**

### EVENTS

- Meetings & more
- See this and back page for details

### NEXT MONTH

- Seasonal hints and tips
- Asian hornet update
- News news news!
- Latest events
- Meetings & more

### SHARE YOUR PHOTOS & 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 group](#)



QR link to B&L website

# Seasonal tips for February

### For the beginner

There's not a lot you can do until you get your bees, so go on holiday and research basic beekeeping.

### Education

Knowledge is key: Training Co-ordinator Jude New is running courses in spring including an Introduction to Beekeeping for those still thinking about keeping bees. It's a full day, with guest speakers. For those who have been keeping bees for a couple of years, there's the BBKA Basic Assessment. All courses will be in Brighton and at our apiaries.



There's also a number of excellent books on the market aimed at all levels of experience. Here are just three:

- **Bees & Honey** by Ted Hooper: a bit dense but highly informative.



British Modified National hive

- **Beekeeping for Dummies**: less intense; ignore the bit about bears

- **Haynes Bee Manual** by Clair & Adrian Waring: our teaching aid.

You could borrow a book from the our library: a list of titles is on the site, and you can email our Librarian [here](#).

### Equipment

Where to start? There's a number of practical questions, such as the type of hive to use. Most use the Modified National design but there are others. It depends on what kind of beekeeper you want to be.

Make sure the hives and components are readily available, or make your own. Stick with one design; some parts will interchange but not all.

### Location

Then there is the question of where to site your hive. There are some good leaflets available from the BBKA. But in general, allow at least 600mm around each hive to give you space to work and to put things down.

Position hives so they can be approached from the side or rear. Face the entrance into a hedge or fence so the bees have to fly up above head height before orientating.

Don't point the entrance across a path; bees are very single-minded and fly in straight lines, so if anyone is in the way they will get a bee in the side of the head. The bee won't be happy.



Make up hive and frames. Save putting foundation in until later but remember to do it—the Swarm Co-ordinator will be miffed if they ring you with a swarm and you're not ready.

### For the experienced

As well as all the stuff above, there will be winter tasks to do.

Firstly, it's still not too late to carry out winter varroa treatments using oxalic acid. Either trickling a solution between the frames or vaporising the crystals with an 12V heated wand or gas burner placed at the bottom of the hive. Please follow the manufacturer's directions for each method and complete your Veterinary Medicines Record for each hive.

Just remember, if you didn't uncap all the brood before the treatment, there will be brood in the hive, especially as it's been so mild this winter so you may not get all the varroa.



### Cleaning

If you've not done it already, clean and repair your old used equipment from last year. I've just got the last two boxes from last year still to do (plus all the dead colonies I'll find later).



Heleniums: bee-friendly flowers

Wooden parts, especially the larger bits, can be scraped off, then blowtorched or steamed. Smaller items like frames can be boiled in a strong washing soda solution and then rinsed in clean water or steamed.

If you are feeling flush, burn the lot and start from scratch with new frames and foundation.



## Seasonal tips for February



Heated wand for oxalic acid

Polystyrene hives or plastic bits can be scraped; I use a Stanley knife blade, wash in a strong washing soda solution and rinse.

After cleaning, you're left with a pile of wax. What are you going to do with it? In normal years you would have taken melted and slightly cleaned the wax to a trade show or Paynes in Hurstpierpoint (sadly, now closed) or some other outlet, in exchange for clean foundation. Or, as I've been promising myself for years; do I make candles?

Then there are cosmetics (see any article by Dr Sara Robb) or wax wraps (see advice on the BBKA site).

### Feeding

Fine, still days are ideal times to think of your bees. February is when the days start to lengthen, and the queen starts to lay, and the increasing colony can eat through the stores you left them last autumn.

So, when was the last time you saw them, and do you think they have enough stores to see them through the rest of the winter?



Fondant on the frames. Photo: David Evans

Lift the hive from the side or rear, does it still feel heavy? If not have look under the crown board. Have they eaten all or most of the fondant you put on earlier? If they have put more on. If you're unsure put some on any way. If they are hungry, they will take it if not they won't.

### Vermin and weather

While you're there, check the hive. Are the mouse guards, if you use them, clear of dead bees? If the entrance gets blocked it can stop the bees taking cleansing flights which in turn could lead to diarrhoea or worse. If you use an entrance block, try inverting this so the entrance space is at the top, so any build-up of dead bees will be below the entrance.

Are the hives weather-tight? Is the mesh still in place to deter the Green Woodpecker. Can you still find the hive under all the undergrowth that has accumulated since the summer?

### Planning ahead

Which swarm management technique? Will you raise your own queens? Why not plant some bee-friendly flowers? Usually most native annuals or perennials are good, or if you want something a bit more exotic, try something from anywhere that lies in the temperate region. American



Heated wand for oxalic acid

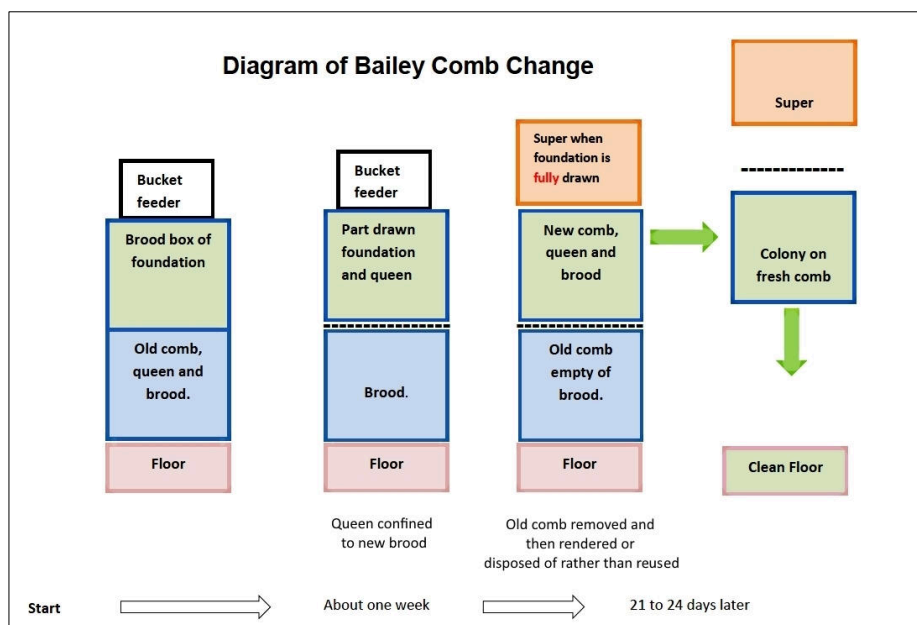
prairie flowers do well here.

Do you need to change the brood comb this year, if so, what method will you use, shook swarm or Bailey comb change? Apiary Managers will be carrying out shook swarms this year as part of integrated varroa management, so why not come along to a meeting and see how it's done.

All the answers to these, and many, many more questions can be found in a library, on our, or any of the other beekeeping web sites, Facebook, YouTube or by phoning a friend or asking the audience.

Hope to see you later.

*Another Veiled Beekeeper*



# Annual General Meeting and Honey Show

## Wednesday 19 February 2025

### ENTRY FORM

Any queries about the entries should be made to:

**Bob Curtis: 07421 087683 or [poshpix@me.com](mailto:poshpix@me.com)**

For **Free entry** this form must be returned to the above email with any digital photographs **by Tuesday 4 February 2025**. (You can print just this page from the PDF).

If this is not possible, please let Bob know that you are entering and bring the form with your entry to the Honey Show.

Photographs must be entered by Tuesday 4 Feb. Late entries will not be accepted.

Late entry on the night: £1.00 per entry for all other classes

**PLEASE SEND ENTRY FORM AND PHOTOGRAPHS TO [poshpix@me.com](mailto:poshpix@me.com)**

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

First name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone no: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you come First in any class in a previous B&L Honey Show: yes/no

#### DECLARATION

- I am a member of Brighton and Lewes Division
- Honey in classes 1-3 and wax in classes 4, 5, 6 & 9 is from my own apiary
- I have taken the photographs entered in class 10, 11 & 13. I have made class 12 items

| Class No. | Official Use Only | Description | Results | Fee |
|-----------|-------------------|-------------|---------|-----|
|           |                   |             |         |     |
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|           |                   |             |         |     |
|           |                   |             |         |     |

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ (your name typed will be accepted)

## Annual General Meeting and Honey Show

### Wednesday 19 February 2025

## SCHEDULES

**Judges:** Gerald Legg, Judith New, Norman Dickinson & Bob Curtis. Classes 1 – 3 (GL); Classes 4-6 & 9 (JN); Classes 7 & 8 (ND); Class 10 & 11(BC); Class 12 & 13 (all members present)

**To enter** you need to **email your Entry Form and Photographs** (Classes 10 & 11) for free entry to all classes to Bob Curtis: [poshpix@me.com](mailto:poshpix@me.com) by Tuesday 4 February 2025.

- Bring your entries for Classes 1 – 9, 12 & 13 to the meeting on Wednesday 19 February 2025 at 7pm. On the night entry fee is £1.00 per entry.
- 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. NEW. Two identical candles, rolled, moulded or dipped, no more than 30cm long.
  - Class 5. One Moulded candle.
  - Class 6. NEW. Two 1oz block of wax. Weight and match will be judged.
  - Class 7. One Honey Cake. As per the recipe overleaf.
  - Class 8. Six Honey Biscuits. Your own recipe to be provided with biscuits.
  - Class 9. A wax wrap big enough to cover an orange or similar, only using beeswax.
  - Class 10. A bee related photograph (Max file size 4mb jpeg).
  - Class 11. A close-up shot of a bee (Max file size 4mb jpeg).
  - Class 12. An invention relating to beekeeping or the beehive. Max. one entry per person. This is a fun Class & does not contribute to final points. It will be judged by the members present.
  - Class 13. NEW. A short bee-related video presentation of not more than 30 seconds to be shown after the AGM and judged by the audience. (Bring USB sticks on the night only)
- Points are awarded for each class (see below for details). The member with the most points across classes 1 to 11 will be awarded the Dixon Hurst Cup.

### Points awards

First: 5 points  
Second: 3 points  
Third: 2 points

### Notes

Only the highest placing for each class will be counted towards the overall score

The Novice with the highest points will be awarded the Novice Tray. This is an award for the member with the most points who has not won a first award in a previous B&L Honey Show.

The Best Honey Cake will win the Honey Cake Salver.



Above: a small selection of last year's entrants. Some of the winners are on the next page.



## Annual General Meeting and Honey Show

### Wednesday 19 February 2025

## RULES

All classes may only be entered by individual members of Brighton and Lewes Beekeepers.

No entry fee for Entry Forms received by the Tuesday 6 February 2024, otherwise £1.00 per entry.

- Classes 1 – 3, 5, 6 & 9 – 11: maximum of two entries, only your highest score will go towards the Dixon Hurst Cup. Classes 12 – 13: maximum of one entry per class
- Class 4: Candles must match, can be rolled, moulded or dipped and no more than 30 cm long
- Classes 4, 5, 6 & 9: The Wax must come from your own apiary and presented in a plastic bag.
- Classes 9: Wax wraps may only be made with beeswax and a fabric and presented in a plastic bag.
- Classes 7, 8, 12 & 13: maximum one entry

### Recipe for Class 7

Honey sultana and apricot cake (recipe from National Honey Show 2024)

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#### Ingredients

227g self-raising flour  
227g honey  
113g butter  
2 medium eggs  
pinch of salt  
113g sultanas  
60g dried apricots, soaked overnight and chopped  
1 tsp of lemon zest  
3 tbs milk

#### Method

1. Cream the butter with honey until light and fluffy. In a separate bowl, beat the eggs together and gradually add the beaten eggs to the butter mixture a little at a time, beating between each addition, adding some flour if the mixtures begins to curdle.
  2. Gradually fold in the flour.
  3. Add the fruit, lemon zest and milk.
  4. Put the mixture into an 18 cm / 7in lined round cake tin.
  5. Bake at 160°C / (150°C fan) / 325°F / Gas Mark 3 for approximately 1hr 30mins until the cake is firm. Timing is a guide only as appliances vary.
- 

**Honey exhibits:** must be from the member's apiary. Jars must be unlabelled, 1lb glass jars with gold lid are preferred.

**Cakes and biscuits:** must be presented on a plate and covered with clingfilm. The honey used should be from the member's own apiary or locally produced honey.

**Classes 10 & 11:** Photographs must be submitted digitally, preferably jpeg, max file size

4MB (larger files accepted if they can be sent by email). All entries remain the copyright of the author. Entries may be used in the B&L newsletters and website and will be credited to the author.

**Class 12:** Any item that you have made, eg Asian Hornet traps, special boards, gadgets to make life easier, or somehow related to bees or beekeeping.



Above & left: some of last year's winners

## How to keep your bees in the best of health

*Report from January's open meeting, addressed by Margaret Murdin*



We began with our first 2025 winter meeting on 15 January with Margaret Murdin (above) explaining 'How to keep your bees in the best of health'.

This followed an excellent presentation by Dan Basterfield in December, which promoted a lot of interest and debate in the hall and online. So, the challenge was set for Margaret, and she certainly rose to it.

Bee health is a major theme this month. Jude is promoting a Study Group on Bee Health to start next month, and this presentation aimed to complement it and raise interest. Indeed, after this session, 14 members were signed up for the study group.

We were very fortunate to have Margaret Murdin talk to us: her qualifications are second to none. She has a degree in Biological Sciences, was a principal of a Further and Higher Education College, is a Master Beekeeper and holds a National Diploma in Beekeeping. She talks and

gives workshops all over the UK, is an examiner and assessor for the BBKA and is currently Chair of the Trustees.

### Strong colonies

Margaret began by emphasising the benefits and characteristics of a healthy bee colony. She highlighted the importance of avoiding stressing the bees. So she highlighted the importance of building a strong colony in August, because this helps carry the colony through winter. However, the especially critical time is now: January and February, when colonies build up but have limited resources. The queen will be laying again now and nurse bees are the winter bees born the previous year. This is when pollen demand is highest, and where she recommends pollen substitutes.

### Pollen

One of her more contentious points involved pollen substitutes and their timing. Margaret made a strong science-based argument for the importance of pollen to the growing bee. A typical bee needs 125mg of pollen to mature in the cell (that's 20 kg per year for a typical colony). But pollen diversity is just as important: the bee needs 20 amino acids but each source might only provide three or four. Of the 20 amino acids, 10 can only come from pollen (so-called essential amino acids) and 10 can be self-made. In short, pollen variety is essential for good bee health.

### Diseases and hygiene

Margaret reviewed various diseases we might find. She has a talent for explaining AFB, EFB, chalk brood, sac brood, nosema, varroa and DWV, plus pests such as mice, wax moth and woodpeckers in simple, easy to understand language, giving tips how to differentiate between the diseases.

Having covered all the known bee diseases, Margaret gave some no-nonsense advice: the first was to always know why you are inspecting a hive and to do it efficiently to cause

the bees the least stress. Secondly, follow good hygiene practices, clean all your personal kit with a bucket of soda solution for hive tools and a waste bucket for debris. Only combine healthy colonies and make sure dead colonies are closed up. Never, ever, feed your colonies with honey unless it is your own, as honey can be the source of disease.

### Post-debate

As well as the stimulating presentation from a beekeeping authority, the intense debate over tea and cakes after the meeting, and comments on B&L Buzz, were a great sign these events are energising and revitalising you during the winter season!

Finally, many thanks to all those who attended. We were just shy of 40 members—our best audience yet.

Thanks too to those who made it possible: Norman for flawless tech, Rowena and Dave for setup and sign-in, and Ross, Mim and Jude for hot drinks and a simply outstanding selection of homemade cakes.

Our next meeting is our Annual General Meeting and Honey Show on 19 February at 19.30. So please, please, please join in the fun, and bring along as many entries as possible.

PS: Don't forget, we still have four more exciting winter meetings planned for 2025...

*Nigel Kermode, Meetings Secretary*



A lot of heated debate about pollen and timing. Photos above and right by Nigel.



Ross makes the difficult decision between Victoria sponge and flapjack!

## B&L Training prospectus

*Training Co-ordinator Jude New provides an update on the 2025 training programme she is preparing, with the Bee Health Certificate front and centre.*

This programme is work in progress, dates will be published as soon as it is clear that members would like to attend. This is the plan so far.

Open hive meetings—which are part of our training programme—are open to all members. Terms and conditions of membership and for visiting an apiary are on the [B&L website](#).

Please look through the offerings below and make a selection.

### Training assessment

#### Study group for Honey Bee Health Certificate

To encourage beekeepers who have been awarded the BBKA Basic Certificate and have at least three years of beekeeping experience to improve their understanding and practice of beekeeping.

The candidate will be able to demonstrate a range of beekeeping skills.

The syllabus and reading list is available from [the BBKA here](#).

I am very happy to accept applications for the study group who do not want to register for the assessment at the end, your practices and your bees will benefit if you look

at the research and learn about honey bee health.

A small fee will be charged to cover use of a venue and admin, Zoom meetings may also be an option (5-10 applicants via Jude + £45.00 fee payable to BBKA by 31 May). Please register interest using the email address below.

### Queen rearing

Venue: Grassroots apiary

Colonies will be selected for queen rearing or splits made. Available to new members and experienced beekeepers who can support new beekeepers to develop swarm control through prevention methods.

to be delivered by Jude and others  
Dates: May (tbc)

Please register interest using the email address below.

### Basic Assessments

Date: Saturday 12 July

Venue: Grassroot apiary

Details available, syllabus and reading list from [the BBKA here](#). Jude is the assessor with Gordon Allen. Prepare at your own pace or join a study group with four Saturday meetings in June/

July 2025.

A £35.00 fee will be payable to BBKA. Course to be completed by 12 July 2025. Please register your interest using the email address below by 30 June 2025.

### Wax workshops

November 2025 dates tbc x 2 to be delivered by Jude and others

### Open hive meetings

Each month of the beekeeping season mostly for new beekeepers, experienced beekeepers also welcome April, May, June, July, August, Practical work: Inspecting hives, shook swarm, Bailey Comb Change, disease identification, Demaree swarm control (other methods are available) varroa counts and treatments, feeding bees, when necessary and which feed is appropriate.

Other training may be arranged during the year and advertised on [www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk)

Festive meal: 1 or 8 December for all members, venue tbc.

Jude New, Training Co-ordinator  
Email: [newapiary@hotmail.com](mailto:newapiary@hotmail.com)

## Honey Bee Health course details

| Date   | Tutor       | Subject   | Method |
|--------|-------------|---|--------|
| 3 Feb  | Gerald Legg | Apiary hygiene: brood diseases, sac brood, chalk brood, chilled brood |        |
| 10 Feb | Mike Cullen | What I'm looking for during an assessment                             | Zoom   |
| 24 Feb | Jude        | Apiary hygiene: robbing, beekeeper                                    | Zoom   |
| 3 Mar  | tbc         | Notifiable diseases: AFB & EFB  | Zoom   |
| 10 Mar | Manek       | Adult bee diseases: CBPV, DWV, wax moth                               | Zoom   |
| 17 Mar | Jude        | Nutrition and poisoning   | Zoom   |
| 24 Mar | tbc         | tbc   |        |

| Date   | Tutor | Subject                                  | Location                        |
|--------|-------|--|---------------------------------|
| 31 Mar | tbc   | Brood disease inspection                 | Virtual or at Grassroots apiary |
| 26 Apr | tbc   | Bailey comb change                       | Grassroots apiary               |
| 3 May  | tbc   | Shook swarm                              | Grassroots apiary               |
| 10 May | tbc   | Sampling 30 bees for adult bee diagnosis | Virtual or at Grassroots apiary |
| 17 May | tbc   | tbc                                      |                                 |



### Winter meetings 2024-25

| Date              | Topic  |
|-------------------|--|
| Wed 18 Sep        | How was your beekeeping season?<br>Short talks plus Q&A                                      |
| Wed 18 Oct        | From Buckfast to Buckingham Palace, by Richard Rickitt                                       |
| Wed 20 Nov        | Let's get ready for the Honey Show: judging standards by Jude, Gerald and Bob                |
| Wed 18 Dec        | Must-haves vs nice-to-haves: a commercial beekeeper's perspectives, by Dan & Ken Basterfield |
| Wed 15 Jan        | How to keep your bees in the best of health, by Margaret Murdin                              |
| <b>Wed 19 Feb</b> | <b>2025 AGM &amp; Honey Show</b>   |
| Wed 19 Mar        | The role of drones and drone congregation areas, by Stephen Fleming                          |
| Wed 16 Apr        | The special language of bees, by Margaret Murdin   |

All meetings are LIVE and start at 19.15 for 19.30 at Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Lewes BN7 2LR

**Next Bee Chat: see social media**

### Newsletter deadlines

Please send all contributions, **including photos**, to the Editor (contact details on right). Max length 500 words.

Copy deadline: 18th of the month before publication date, except 11 December. Email photos for the website to Gerald Legg (details on right).

### National Bee Unit Inspectors

#### Seasonal Bee Inspectors

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We are grateful to the following for their support:



**Lewes Town Council**

**Co-operative Membership Community Fund**

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#### Apiary Managers

- **Barcombe:** Tony Birkbeck

- **Grassroots:** Jude New

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

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

#### **B&L Facebook Group**

Group Administrator: Graham Bubloz

E: [graham.bubloz@gmail.com](mailto:graham.bubloz@gmail.com)

M: 07758 866278

**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.