

# Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER MAY 2025

### CONTENTS

<a href="#">Notes from the Chair</a> .....	2
<a href="#">Asian Hornet report</a> .....	2
<a href="#">Seasonal hints &amp; tips</a> .....	3
• Swarm control & prevention	
<a href="#">News from the Division</a> .....	5
• Apiary reports	
• Education & training: upcoming events	

- Frame-cleaning workshop
- Graham's Notes
- What does the Sussex BKA do for us?
- Meeting report: the language of bees
- Report: BBKA Spring Convention
- [Meetings and contacts](#)..... 13
- Who, what, when, where: new names

### EDITORIAL



I'm delighted to report that Norman Dickinson, pictured at our last winter meeting, is our new President. Previously our Chairman, then Membership Secretary and Treasurer, Norman has been a stalwart of B&L for more years than I can recall—which isn't saying much...  
Congratulations Norman!

*Manek Dubash, Editor*

## Spring/summer events

Date	Event	Location	Leader	Group
Sunday 4 May	Queen rearing	Hove	Adrien	Module 5
Saturday 10 May	Queen rearing	Hove	Adrien	Module 5
Saturday 10 May	Sampling for microscopy	Hove	Adrien	Module 7
Saturday 10 May	Sampling for microscopy	Grassroots	Jude	Module 7
Saturday 17 May	Sussex BKA Bee Market	Uckfield College		All
Sunday 18 May	Honey Bee Health	Grassroots	Jude	HBH
Sunday 18 May	Honey Bee Health	Rottingdean	Jeff	HBH
Sunday 18 May	Swarming	Hove	Adrien	BB & BA
Saturday 7 June	Queen rearing	Hove	Adrien	Module 5
Saturday 7 June	Hive making	The Barn	Jude	All
Saturday 14 June	Basic Assessment theory & practical	The Barn	Jude	BA
Thursday 19 June	Queen rearing	Hove	Adrien	Module 5
Saturday 21 June	Basic Assessment theory & practical	The Barn	Jude	BA
Sunday 22 June	Out-apiary meeting	Rottingdean	Jeff	
Saturday 12 July	Basic Assessments		Jude	BA
Saturday 19 July	Bee Health	Hove	Adrien	BB & BA
Saturday 26 July	Hive making	The Barn	Jude	BB
Saturday 9 August	Clearing hives for honey	Hove	Adrien	BB
Saturday 9 August	Clearing hives for honey	Grassroots	Jude	BB
Saturday 9 August	Clearing hives for honey	Rottingdean	Jeff	BB

### EVENTS

- Last meeting of 2024/25
- Swarm control
- Frame-cleaning a go-go!
- See 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

## Notes from the Chair



**Manek Dubash**  
*Chairman*

Update on a couple of the issues I mentioned last month, last one first: increasing colony numbers as a problem. Well, it's not a problem yet but I am up to six from the three I had a month or so ago. All is well...

### **What does Sussex do for us?**

Last month I also mentioned Sussex BKA: there was a committee meeting recently at which it was agreed that the chair of East Grinstead BKA and I will get together and hatch a plan that will enable the five divisions in Sussex to work together more, sharing information and facilities where appropriate. This could save us all some work and money.

For example, at the moment, we all have apiaries, we all have to administer membership and money, we all conduct

education programmes, and we all have winter meetings. There's no particular reason why we couldn't learn from each other how best to manage all these activities: we are after all as divisions of the same county organisation part of the same team. Some of this is already taking place, especially with respect to education.

I'll bring you more on this as it happens, but in the meantime, just in case you were wondering, you might like to read Graham's take on what Sussex BKA does for us: see [page 10](#).

### **Frame cleaning (yes!)**

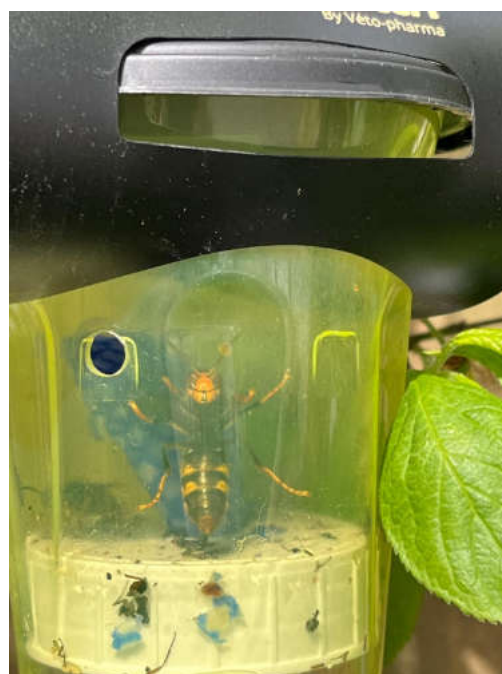
And finally: I had a very satisfactory and enjoyable morning...cleaning frames, with Hilary and Shirley. Pity no-one else turned up, but there may be another opportunity. See the ad on [page 9](#).

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## Asian Hornet report



**Rachel Ramaker**  
*Asian Hornet Team  
Co-ordinator*



Trapped Asian Hornet queen on Jersey

Guernsey and Jersey have reported much larger numbers of Yellow Legged Hornet queens this year—approaching 600 according to John de Carteret, a figure not reached until July in 2023, and in 2024 by

this time of year, only 24 had been reported; it's massive.

We have also seen reports of YL Hornets in Kent and Hampshire this year.

### **Local reporting and monitoring**

We have just completed our first monitoring week in this area. We will repeat this at the end of May. So far we have around 10 people monitoring in our area. This is a fraction of what we would need if a YL Hornet would be sighted here, which will be very likely. Please contact me on [blbka.ahat@gmail.com](mailto:blbka.ahat@gmail.com) with your trap locations so I can add you as monitor.

For those trapping in our area, we are only continuously monitoring near the coastline, as that is the most likely point of entry. The advice is to only put traps out in other areas for shorter periods of time to avoid damage to our native insects.

### **There's an app....**

Please download the app so you can correctly identify a Yellow-Legged Hornet. With any suspected sighting, try to get a photo as the authorities won't investigate the sighting without evidence. I am always happy to ID your photos [*as am I. MD*].

# Seasonal tips for May

May is mostly about swarm prevention and management, and making sure you have enough bees in the hive to continue collecting nectar.

People talk about swarmy bees and non-swarmy bees, but in my experience they all swarm at some time, so be prepared. As it's natural for colonies to swarm, you need to manage this inclination and to have enough equipment to hand for the strategy you are going to employ.

In the words of the Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy: 'Don't Panic'.

## The three-legged stool

Back when I was in the construction industry, we were taught about the fire or combustion triangle. It's a simple model for understanding the necessary ingredients for most fires and illustrates the three elements a fire needs to ignite: heat, fuel, and an oxidising agent (usually oxygen). A fire occurs when all three elements are present and combined in the right mixture.

Claire and Adrian Waring (of Haynes Bee Manual fame) proposed a similar model for the swarm. The three elements of a swarm are:

- A queen
- Brood and nurse bees
- Flying bees

In the fire model, if you remove one element from the equation then the fire can't ignite; by the same token, if you remove one element from the swarm equation, the bees won't swarm.

Sounds simple doesn't it?

A colony will not usually swarm until there are drones for the new queens to mate with, so if you can't



Two queen cells opened up, with clearly copious amounts of royal jelly

see drone cells, they're not ready to swarm. Once drone cells are visible and the hive starts to become congested, about seven to ten seams of bees, then if you have not already put a super on do so now. There will be a lot of flying bees and they need somewhere to put their nectar and pollen.

## Queen cells

Start looking awfully hard for the preparation of queen cells. Not to be confused with supersedure cells or emergency cells, which will be covered in a later article. Queen cells will usually be built at the bottom of the frame and will be built down towards the floor and once complete will look like a peanut shell (see image below).

I said 'look hard', and 'usually', because they can be built on the sides of the frame or between unevenly

drawn comb. They start life as small cups. At this stage start making your plan.

Once big enough, the queen will lay an egg in it; make sure you have the equipment necessary for your plan. Next the egg will hatch, and the nurse bees will flood the cell with royal jelly. Now is the time to act, as you only have a couple of days until the cell is sealed, and once that happens the hive will have usually swarmed.

## Regular inspections

Knocking the queen cells down will not stop them swarming. It is therefore particularly important that you inspect your bees on a weekly basis during the swarm season. Not so bad for us retired folk but if you're working, you can't afford to miss an inspection even if the weather is not conducive or the family intervenes.

Here's a bit more clarity about the life cycle of a queen cell. Once the cell is formed and ready:

- Day 1: the egg is laid.
- Day 4: the egg hatches and the larvae starts to be fed royal jelly.
- Day 8: the cell is sealed, and the old queen and half the bees will swarm.
- Days 9-15: the new queen pupates.
- Day 16: the new queen hatches.

So, back to our swarm model and your plan. There are various ways of separating the elements of a swarm, some of them are quite straightforward and some are like 'Find the Lady' in some carnival side show; what most of the methods require is that you find the queen (Manek).  
*[Who, me?? Ed.]*



How easy is to spot the queen?



A fistful of queen cells



A nuc full of bees



## Seasonal tips for May (continued)



Marked queens are easier to spot

### Separating the colony

You can separate the queen and the flying bees from the brood and nurse bees creating an artificial swarm by leaving the queen in the original hive, in the original position and moving the brood and nurse bees to a different hive and location.

You do need to ensure the brood and nurse bees have enough stores to see them through until they develop enough foragers to sustain themselves.

They also need the ability to create a new queen, so leave one queen cell intact to develop into the new queen, or leave at least one frame in the hive with the eggs or larvae in the right stage for the remaining bees to develop a new queen.

Or you can create a nucleus with the queen and a couple of frames of brood, nurse bees and stores. Remember to feed this nucleus as there will be no foragers for quite a while. Again, you will have left at least queen cell intact or have one frame in the original hive with the eggs or larvae in the right stage for the remaining bees to develop a new queen.

### If you can't find the queen

What happens if you can't find the queen? Split the hive into two nucleus boxes with an equal distribution of brood (in all stages) and nurse bees.

You can shake a few extra frames full of nurse bees into one of the nucs. Remove all queen cells from both nucs.

Leave the nuc with the depleted number of nurse bees in the original position to catch all the flying bees and move the other one to a different location and in a different orientation to the original.

What you have now created is a combination of the artificial swarm and the nucleus method. The nuc with the queen will have thought it has swarmed and will settle down to expand, the queenless colony will create a new queen cell and raise a new queen.

You will need to inspect this nuc to make sure there is only one queen cell, otherwise it can create lots of casts—secondary swarms—as each queen cell hatches, until the colony becomes unviable.

### Opportunity knocks

If nothing else, see this as an opportunity.

On the one hand, it will help you develop your bee husbandry and confidence; and on the other, you have the opportunity to harvest those spare (not unwanted) queen cells and create



Queen cells. Photo: Rusty Barlow

other nucs for future expansion or to start your own selection and breeding programme.

Told you it was simple. Remember, every day is a school day.

### Further reading

If you have any doubts, please read Wally Shaw's very good booklet 'An Apiary Guide to Swarm Control 2nd Edition 2020', published by the Welsh Beekeepers Association and is available [free to download here](#) [pdf] or we have a copy in the library.

It develops methods for dealing with the bee's tendency to swarm either pre-emptively or reactively depending on what stage the colony is in its swarm preparation. My only criticism is that it involves a lot of lifting sometime quite heavy brood boxes. (I'm not being paid for this. Honest.)

Now back to those supersedure and emergency queen cells.

In essence they are the same and are the product of the colony deciding their queen is failing and they want to raise a successor—ie supersedure—or where the queen is missing for whatever reason, and the colony needs to raise a new queen to survive.

In both cases the new queen cell is developed from existing brood. The existing cell or cells that are chosen are extended to form a banana-shaped queen cell that extends down the face of the comb. The modified Demaree method Wally describes in his booklet develops these types of cells.

Have a great season!

*The Veiled Beekeeper*





## Apiary reports

### Grassroots

Grassroots apiary has been checked by Helen Hadley, our new seasonal bee inspector on Wednesday 16 April. It was a bit of a marathon for both of us.

At the beginning of April, the honey bee health group members set up a Bailey Comb exchange on two colonies, a strong one and a weak one. We aim to replace all the comb for fresh without losing brood.

Helen was interested in the weak colony. She prodded with her tweezers and sniffed the frames, did a

foulbrood lateral flow test and then pronounced the hive weak. The foulbrood lateral flow was negative, so more thinking about how to proceed for the best outcome for that colony.

All the colonies have queens, two have virgin queens (? how did that happen? Long story short, one colony was on brood and a half because I hadn't put the queen excluder on for the new season, I lost the queen, split it when I saw the queen cells, knocking back to one queen cell on

two frames, put one in a nuc and left the other in the colony, and hey presto, beginning of April 2 virgin queens. Watch this space, there could be two supersedure swarms before the end of the season from those two hives!) so they will be marked when they have sealed brood in the hives and no notifiable diseases were found in any of the hives.

Phew!

*Jude New, Apiary Manager*





## Apiary reports

### Hove



This season we are starting with three colonies and it is my understanding that all have 2024 queens.

Hive one has come out of winter quite weakly. There are only six seams of bees on a single National deep. When the hive was opened for the first time and the floor changed, there were some dead bees on the floor. It could be the presence of nosema but time will tell.

I hope to change the brood comb when the colony is stronger. This will be achieved by rotating some of the brood frames out as the colony isn't strong enough to cope with a full comb exchange.

Hive two is well established on a double brood configuration. It has overwintered quite strongly but the



queen is probably not prolific enough to remain on a double brood.

Hive three is a nicely balanced colony on a single National deep. The brood comb, like the other hives, is not the best so I will consider completing a full comb exchange at the next visit.

#### Apiary visit

We started the season with an informal gathering when the weather was warm enough to disturb the bees. We lifted the hives and changed the floors. It was good to start practical beekeeping but the fact that we managed to fit one of the floors upside down showed that our practical skills were a little rusty. Thanks to my assistant apiary manager Ross, we were able to enjoy a cup of tea.

The first official apiary meeting at Hove was well attended by beekeepers intending to take the Basic Assessment, new beekeepers and



those wishing to keep bees. We talked about beekeeping equipment, the advantages and disadvantages of different types of hives and what to think about when setting up an apiary. We inspected two of the hives and spotted all three castes of bee and looked at healthy brood in all stages. It was quite difficult to spot eggs under the dappled shade of the apple trees so we had to change hives.

#### Absent tea

We hardly finished with tea and cake. Sorry to those who had to leave before the cake appeared. I promise to do better with my time management next time.

*Adrien Parker, Apiary manager*





## Apiary reports

### Rottingdean



Rape meadow nearby, Amex Stadium in the background

Oh, it was going so well! We went into the winter with five colonies, four in the High Barn Apiary and one in the garden apiary. We reduced the High Barn Apiary colonies to one brood box without supers and insulation between crown board and roof.

Varroa treatment via vaporisation was administered in all colonies in December. All colonies were fed with fondant throughout the winter. The fondant was taken down by all of the bees although consumption varied.

#### Cold spring strikes

We came through to March with all colonies alive but the very cold and wet week in early March saw one colony die out. It looks like they died from starvation in spite of having fondant and stores in the brood box. The fondant directly above the cluster was eaten but a circle of fondant around the central hole was left untouched, forming a doughnut shape. It was a small colony and I suspect that the cluster was not well enough



Queenless and low numbers

populated so that crawling the extra centimetre or two to the outer circle of fondant was too much for the bees to risk. There was no sign of disease.

However, by the time of the first inspection on a warmish day in late March, it seemed to us that both B&L colonies and one of our own were queenless or with troubled queens. There was either no brood or only small patches of brood, very little sign of forage activity and no or few pollen stores.

Our other colony was very busy, full of bees and, by 4 April, several frames of biscuit-coloured brood in all stages of pupal development and sealed brood too.

In mid-April we used the newspaper method to unite the two queenless colonies, using a dab of honey and a couple of tears to encourage the bees to eat through the paper, but this did not work.

#### Uniting the weak

So, on 14th, I poured one colony onto the other and introduced a third set of (nurse) bees with eggs and brood: last-chance saloon, I think.

In the garden apiary, Julie found bees clustering on the ground outside the hive. Earlier inspection has shown small patches of brood and a few emerging worker bees which we took as evidence of a failing queen. This was not surprising since the colony had originated in the late summer as a primary swarm collected in Elm Grove Brighton. When I disturbed the cluster on the floor, I found a queen, captured and marked her in yellow (only available pen!) and put her back in the hive. The rest of the bees eventually returned to the hive. I fed with syrup and a small amount of Neopoll.

#### Queenless: not sick!

I wasn't at the last Association meeting in Lewes on 16 April, but I heard that a report had described 'sick bees' at Rottingdean Apiary. I am not sure what was intended but 'sick' to me means diseased. But this is not the



Sad queenless colony

case—these bees are not diseased, they are queenless!

Inspection today (22 April) showed a booming colony but also showed the queenless united colonies still in the last, last chance saloon—they had not yet created queen cells from the frame of eggs and young brood I put in last week.

*Jeff Rodrigues, Apiary Manager*  
*Words & photos by Jeff*



Lots of lovely biscuit-coloured brood

## Education report: what's upcoming?

### First aid course

As mentioned at the last winter meeting, we have first-aid courses arranged with paramedic Peter.

- 14.00 on Saturday 12 July at The Barn, Barn Rise, Westdene BN1 5EE.
- 18.45 - 21.00 on Wednesday 23 July at Ringmer Village Hall, BN8 5QH.
- Each session is about two hours, tailored to beekeepers.

Up to 12 in each session can be accommodated and we can use one or both of these dates.

We have asked Peter to talk about bee stings and anaphylaxis, burns, sprains and heavy lifting for the common tasks beekeepers deal with during inspections, clearing and extraction.

There are a few spaces left for the 23 July session but we may start a waiting list if it is over subscribed and invite Peter for a further session(s).

### Build a hive

This is a new venture. Bring your flat-pack hive to The Barn (address above) we will help you to put it together.



Beginner beekeepers have been talking about hives which are common, in our division and locally, or which suit them and their bees...

So we are inviting beginner beekeepers to bring the flat-pack and tools along to the Barn where experienced beekeepers will help you build the brood box.

We will have to limit the numbers; we are aiming for a max of eight. If all goes well, we will run the session again. We have the use of The Barn for two sessions.

We can provide glue, hammers, set squares, clamps, nails but please also bring your own. At the end of the session(s) beekeepers should be walking away with a hive constructed.

If you would like to bring a small project, a shallow box or a hive roof to construct, please get in touch and we will try to accommodate you. We are leaving choice and purchase of hives to you, although we recommend cedar hives for lightness and ease of maintenance.

### Queen rearing

Weather permitting, queen rearing at Grassroots will start on Saturday 31 May. I will be using the Miller Method which doesn't use grafting and has an instruction book. If it works it will raise four or five queens...

If you want to come along to Grassroots on June 1st please DM me so that I can accommodate everyone. If the group is too big some of the

learning is lost and you won't be able to go to your own bees and repeat the process. The ideal group will be about eight or fewer, then I will have set up a second round if there is enough interest. There are pictures of some of the group who tried the Miller method for the first time, on Facebook, from last season.

Check [Miller Method with Stewart Spinks](#).

### How to book

To book any of these courses, contact me on [newapiary@hotmail.com](mailto:newapiary@hotmail.com), or DM on Facebook or the WhatsApp Buzz group if you want to come along.

*Jude New, Training Co-ordinator*



## Sussex BKA Bee Market 2025

### Come along to the Bee Market at Uckfield College!

- There are stalls of interest to beekeepers, selling plants, bees and beekeeping equipment
- Guest speakers:
- Steve Riley, talking about treatment-free beekeeping
- Malcolm Wilkie (Chairman, High Weald BKA) talking about how and where to start beekeeping—so one for your friends and family?
- An auction of bees and equipment (usually with lots of excellent bargains)
- Admission: £2

All welcome. What's not to like??

**10.00–16.30, Sat 17 May, Uckfield College, Downsview Crescent, Uckfield TN22 3DJ**



## Frame-cleaning workshop

# Half-day workshop in Laughton

Are your frames clean, and now require  
replacing with new foundation?

Here's a relaxed event where you bring your dirty frames to clean and insert new foundation for 2025.

Depending on interest this may be held at different times during the day.

We will also be discussing **Solar Wax Extractors** with the availability to build your own, using a polystyrene container. We do have access to some of these, so please book your space so we can get more if required.

Cost: £5 per person, with refreshment provided.

**10 May, 09.30 – 13.00**



### More details

Chatting at the Bee Chats has highlighted that beekeepers with some experience require further help with this. And this workshop is geared to beekeepers who have some experience of beekeeping and now want to expand their knowledge.

Questions that occur time and time again:

- When do I change my foundation?
- Is it OK to use brown foundation?

The answer is that a third should be changed per year, per hive. Do you have all the correct equipment to do this process?

We both use an urn with soda crystals. We have worked together cleaning our equipment in a friendly, chatty way. Learning as we go along.

Come along with your dirty brown foundation, and learn how to get the best from your frames, cleaning process and replacing with new foundation.

We will supply the refreshments, and we will teach you how we clean up. This is not a wax workshop, but a workshop showing you one way of making your frames last longer.

### What to wear

You will need to wear old clothes, and need to bring with you: Plastic gloves, apron, frames, hammer, nails, new



foundation, hive tool, cloths for cleaning, plastic bag to take your old comb away, mug and money for the course.

### Solar wax extractor

We will also be talking about making your own solar wax extractor. We have access to some polystyrene containers, so you can take one home with you **if you let us know** so we can get more if required, so please book.

### Location

We will be working at Shirley's in her barn in Laughton, with plenty of parking.

### To book

If you are interested and to book please contact Hilary on [osmans.home@btinternet.com](mailto:osmans.home@btinternet.com) or phone/txt on 07713532285.

Cost: £5 with refreshments included.

## Graham's notes

I'd like to record my thanks to Norman Dickinson whose two roles I have inherited. He has left some large shoes to fill.

Some will recall the difficult times some years back, and in the aftermath, he almost single-handedly dealt with running almost everything and for that we should all be very grateful.

I have been attempting to gain access to the Division's bank account—but anyone who has dealt with banks can probably sympathise with me—because even now, after

applying and several phone calls to transfer ownership, I am still unable to get logged-in.

I am confident that we shall get this resolved. Fortunately, Norman is still available and has kindly agreed to process payments in the interim.

### Check your membership

You will have probably received an email from me either to check your membership records are correct or to give you a nudge if your membership appears to be overdue. Please let me

know of any error or omission. I hope to have a different system in place to renew next year.

In the meantime, please bear with me whilst I get my feet under the desk. If you have any questions – either catch me at a meeting or send me an [email](#) or you can phone or message me—contact details on the back page.

*Graham Bubloz*

*Membership Secretary & Treasurer*

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## What does Sussex BKA do for us?



This short piece is to try and explain the reasons and purposes of our parent organisation, the Sussex Beekeepers Association (SBKA).

To partially explain why B&L are established and form part of the SBKA, it is worth reading the short history published on [the SBKA website](#).

The SBKA has its own committee (on which Manek, Ian White and I current sit). There are five divisions in the SBKA: East Grinstead, High Weald, Hastings & Rother, Eastbourne and Brighton & Lewes.

The SBKA Committee meets every couple of months or so, the most recent meeting being on 22 April 2025. The meetings have an agenda and minutes are taken so it's a formal meeting, but there is a fair amount of banter and good humour thrown in for good measure too.

This most recent meeting was mainly focused on the forthcoming Bee Market on Saturday 17 May 2025 at Uckfield College, Downsview

Crescent, Uckfield, TN22 3DJ.

The B&L team will be on site that day, including the members already mentioned, plus there will be a catering team running the Refreshments Stall. Please do come along and support the market: it is the main funding event for the whole Association.

So, I hear you ask, what has the Sussex Beekeepers ever done for us? Here's a few examples:

- We are determined to try to share resources and equipment.
- We are taking a holistic approach to coordinating the Yellow Legged Hornet threat and you'll be aware that our own Rachel Ramaker is our local co-ordinator. She is liaising with others within SBKA and beyond.
- You may not be aware, but there are some impressive microscopes that can be borrowed; suitable caveats about care etc need to be considered.

- There is also an intention that best practices should be co-ordinated across our patch to try and get things done in the best way and in a consistent manner.
- Finally—and this may not be a good reason as such—but the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) of which SBKA is a member, will not allow our individual divisions to become associations in their own right: they contest that there are enough Associations and will not entertain yet more Associations to join. We could possibly challenge that, but currently, that is one reason we remain as a division.

I hope that I have given you a small insight into the Sussex Beekeepers Association. If you have any thoughts or questions, please contact me or Manek.

*Graham Bubloz*

*Membership Secretary & Treasurer*



## Meeting report: the special language of bees



Margaret Murdin, Master Beekeeper and Examiner/Assessor for BBKA, (above) gave us a new talk on the communication of bees, based on latest scientific findings.

Margaret began by challenging us on how to think about bee communication in a superorganism. We humans use physical connections to enable parts of our bodies to communicate. A bee colony does the same thing chemically, achieved through touch, smell, taste, sound, vibrations and trophallaxis using some 7-8,000 sensors.

Food is shared throughout the colony, so we should think less about a bee honey stomach but the colony stomach; honey helps the colony work in unison.

### Chemical communication

Pheromones are volatile organic compounds which the bees use to elicit a response by other bees. The classic example is the pheromones that the queen transmits around the hive. Abbreviated to 9-ODA and 9-HDA, they suppress the worker bees' ovaries to prevent drone-laying workers, create colony cohesion



A packed hall captivated by new insights

(queen-right) and maintain worker behaviour. In swarming contexts, they help stabilise the swarm and can be detected by drones on queen mating flights at up to 50m distance.

Margaret showed how the bee larva controls its development, not the workers. It emits pheromones which tell the worker exactly at what stage it is, and so stimulates the worker to take the appropriate action. Larval pheromones are not volatile because they need to work in the specific cell the larva is located.

Margaret then introduced us to kairomones, chemicals emitted by one species and taken advantage of by another species. So, in the case of a larva it emits chemistry to inform the worker that the cell needs capping, yet this chemistry is understood by the varroa mite and allows it to enter the cell just before capping takes place.

Finally, allomones are chemicals emitted by a species, but unlike kairomones, these benefit the emitter against another species. Margaret shared the emission of allomones to create aggressive and stinging behaviour when the hive is disturbed. These might cause us humans to walk away and leave the hive in peace!

### Dancing on the comb

We then moved onto the different types of dances that foraging bees perform to communicate food source, distance and direction. The food type can be identified through trophallaxis and the distance and direction through four types of dance.

To conclude, we then reviewed the evolution of the relationship between bees and plants. This has evolved from simple reward systems for the bees by plants in exchange for pollination, to today's relationship where plants signal to bees exactly when nectar is available and when not. This signalling, of which many examples were shared, increases efficiency for both the pollination of the plant and energy expended by the bee.

This summary can only scratch the surface of the detail which Margaret shared, but it provoked some great

discussion on hive management and how best to combine hives whilst respecting the chemistry going on within them.

Margaret stimulated and provoked us into a lot of debate on how her talk impacts our day to day beekeeping. It is extremely gratifying to see that conversation still going on with our B&L Whatsapp group!

### Tea and cakes for all

One of the marvellous aspects of our Association is the fantastic effort many people make to ensure we have a great get together after the talk. This picture shows just how many people brought cakes and biscuits to the event. So, thanks to Ross and Beth (below), Steven, Heidi, Julie, Jude and Dorcas for a wonderful selection.

This was the last talk for the 2024/25 Winter Season, but planning is already underway by Jude and Joy to create an exciting programme for 2025/26. I want to offer special thanks to the Rottingdean crew, who tirelessly arrived early every evening to help set up and were always the last to leave.

And special thanks to our new President, Norman, who attended every Zoom meeting and without fail ensured all meetings were technically flawless. Well done! And then there is Ross, who brought the social element of our evenings together by manning the kitchen keeping us all fed and watered. Finally, there was you, the members, who set some record attendances for this year.

*Nigel Kermode, words & photos*



Ross & Beth giving us all the joy of cakes

## Report: 2025 BBKA Spring Convention

As ever, the three-day Spring Convention, held on the first weekend of April, consisted of workshops—interactive classroom-style talks and practical work—and lectures, plus a trade show on the Saturday of the event.

It opened with a talk by Prof. Alice Pinto of Bragança University in Portugal on the genetic diversity of honey bees. She described how her team's detailed research had analysed the genetics of *Apis mellifera* in Europe using mitochondrial and nuclear DNA.

### Apimondia and tropilaelaps

Jeff Pettis gave a two-topic talk which was billed as an update about Apimondia—a global organisation of which he is President, comprising beekeepers, vendors and scientists, whose aim is to be a forum for an exchange of information where attendees can listen, discuss and learn. The next biannual Congress runs from 23-27 September in Copenhagen.

However, Jeff went on to discuss *Tropilaelaps mercedesae*, a mite from south-east Asia (below). It's a highly topical subject, given that the mite—half the size of varroa and far more deadly—is following the same path westwards as varroa did, and has reached Turkey. He described how early beliefs that the mite would not survive in more northerly climes was disproved when it was found breeding inside hives in S Korea, where winters are harsh.

The mite's key attributes are that it moves fast on top of the brood comb, reproduces in both worker and drone cells and has a short reproductive cycle of about a week, after which both male and female mites leave the

cell. It does a lot of damage: an infestation can kill a hive inside weeks. And they're coming our way.

We'll have a deeper look at *T. mercedesae* next month.

### Varroa control with brood break

A highly practical workshop was led by Brittany beekeeper Richard Noel, who described how a cunningly designed queen cage (see below, right), from Italian company [ApiMoBru](#), prevents the queen from laying for several weeks. This breaks the brood cycle and allows him to apply oxalic acid sublimation on the phoretic mites after all remaining brood has emerged. He said it's like a shook swarm but without losing brood. And after she's been caged for three weeks, she goes into full lay—like a bullet, he said. A fascinating and detailed workshop.

### Asian hornet control

The other practical workshop from which we could all benefit was given by Jackie Thomas, AHAT Co-ordinator at Dover BKA. She and her team are in the front line when it comes to the Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet, so she described the efforts she has made to ensure that traps are laid, that collaborative work was undertaken with neighbouring BKAs and emphasised the need for vigilance.

She provided the following guidance for other BKAs (such as us):

- Discuss boundaries with neighbouring BKAs
- Check AHAT team involvement—do they still want to do it?
- BKA members should be consulted on proposed strategies and so promote engagement
- Consider how and when you will monitor
- Consider what your teams will need
- Audit your area and identify hot spots which would benefit from monitoring now
- Start raising awareness
- Fund your monitoring programme

### Weather and beekeeping

A very timeous lecture was given by master beekeeper and bee farmer Geoff Blay. His practical advice was too extensive to detail here but could be boiled down to: 'watch the weather and stay ahead of the bees'; or 'read the hive, the weather and the forage'.

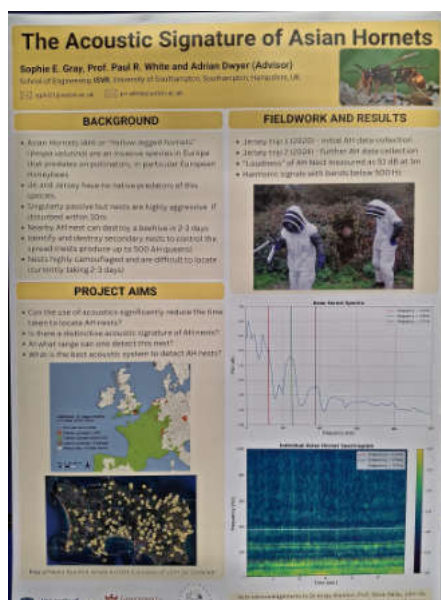
For example: a spell of poor weather that keeps the bees at home increases swarm pressure, so be aware of that once it warms up again.

### More research

As well as formal lectures and workshops, there was an intriguing poster (above) describing research from the Southampton University using the acoustic signature of Asian hornets to speed nest location. The team went to Jersey—where there's a surfeit of AH nests—to find out. More information on this when I see it.

It was a weekend well-spent and worth every penny. Join me next year?

*Manek Dubash, Chairman*





## Spring/summer events

Date	Event	Location	Leader	Group
Sunday 4 May	Queen rearing	Hove	Adrien	Module 5
Saturday 10 May	Queen rearing	Hove	Adrien	Module 5
Saturday 10 May	Sampling for microscopy	Hove	Adrien	Module 7
Saturday 10 May	Sampling for microscopy	Grassroots	Jude	Module 7
Saturday 17 May	Sussex BKA Bee Market	Uckfield College		All
Sunday 18 May	Honey Bee Health	Grassroots	Jude	HBH
Sunday 18 May	Honey Bee Health	Rottingdean	Jeff	HBH
Sunday 18 May	Swarming	Hove	Adrien	BB & BA
Saturday 7 June	Queen rearing	Hove	Adrien	Module 5
Saturday 7 June	Hive making	The Barn	Jude	All
Saturday 14 June	Basic Assessment theory & practical	The Barn	Jude	BA
Thursday 19 June	Queen rearing	Hove	Adrien	Module 5
Saturday 21 June	Basic Assessment theory & practical	The Barn	Jude	BA
Sunday 22 June	Out-apiary meeting	Rottingdean	Jeff	
Saturday 12 July	Basic Assessments		Jude	BA
Saturday 19 July	Bee Health	Hove	Adrien	BB & BA
Saturday 26 July	Hive making	The Barn	Jude	BB
Saturday 9 August	Clearing hives for honey	Hove	Adrien	BB
Saturday 9 August	Clearing hives for honey	Grassroots	Jude	BB
Saturday 9 August	Clearing hives for honey	Rottingdean	Jeff	BB

**Key:** BA: Basic Assessment; HBH: Honey Bee Health; BB: Beginner Beekeepers.  
Please check with group leaders for timings.

**Next Bee Chat:** see our WhatsApp Buzz group or Facebook

## Newsletter deadlines

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

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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.