

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2025

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EDITORIAL



Quick note about this month's newsletter: I've put this month's events timetable below, and you can find the rest of the year's events [on the back page](#).

In addition to our regular hints and tips page, there's a big tranche of photos and reports from the May apiary meetings, where education for beginners and the more experienced are underway. I'm always impressed by anyone who can graft a tiny, tiny bee larva into a plastic cup.

Don't forget to check out the Bee Safari happening in July—full details [on page 9](#). Join, and you will get to walk through other beekeepers' apiaries.

Manek Dubash, Editor

June 2025 events

Date	Event	Location	Leader(s)
Tuesday 3 June	Queen rearing	Grassroots apiary	Jude
Thursday 5 June	Queen rearing	Grassroots apiary	Jude
Saturday 7 June	Queen rearing	Hove apiary	Adrien
Monday 9 June	Miller method	Grassroots apiary	Jude
Wednesday 11 June	Make up nucs	Grassroots apiary	Jude
Saturday 14 June	Apidea	Grassroots apiary	Jude
Saturday 14 June	Basic Assessment practical	Grassroots apiary	Jude
	Basic assessment theory	The Barn, Westdene	Julie, Ian, Manek
Thursday 19 June	Queen rearing	Hove apiary	Adrien
Saturday 21 June	Basic assessment practical	Grassroots apiary	Jude
	Basic assessment theory	The Barn, Westdene	Graham, Heidi, Sarah

Bee Chats

Wednesday 4 June, The Juggs, Kingston
 Wednesday 2 July, The Hope Inn, Newhaven
 Wednesday 6 August, The Cock Inn, Ringmer

You can find the full list of 2025 events and meetings [on the back page](#).

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*

B&L Honey Show cuts loose

Big changes are afoot at B&L. For some years, we have run our Honey Show—the competition for best honey, wax, gadget, photo etc.—alongside the AGM in February.

However, this doesn't give the judges enough time to do their job properly, not least because they are often officials of B&L, so they need to report to the AGM, and it could be thought that, judges being also members, impartiality might be hard.

So the solution is to split the Honey Show off. It will now be held in autumn, soon after the harvest, probably at a weekend; we also hope to use experienced external judges.

In addition, we'll invite the public in to buy produce either from us or from stallholders who will be invited along. More details later as we firm it all up.

Sussex BKA is levelling up

Last month, I mentioned that [Sussex BKA](#)—of which B&L is a Division—is exploring what each Division does best, aiming to share that information across all five Divisions, and so level everyone up.

So I met with Alastair Lee, chair of East Grinstead BKA recently, and we talked through the areas that Sussex BKA could usefully tackle. These include education and training, communications, apiary management and swarm management. The plan is to get representatives of each Division together on a per-topic basis and talk through how they do what they do. We hope people will find ideas that they can apply.

It's all bit top-level at the moment but I'll let you know how it's progressing. The first meeting is planned for 7 October.

Asian Hornet report



*Rachel Ramaker
Asian Hornet Team
Co-ordinator*

For this month's article about Asian or Yellow Legged Hornets, I would like to share some information from the Jersey Beekeepers website. It is very likely that we too will be overwhelmed by these invaders in the future. What can we expect?

The YLH threat

Yellow Legged hornets as a non-native species are a danger to all pollinators including honey bees. A French study estimated that an average nest consumes 11.32kg of insect biomass in its season.

When Asian hornets hawk in front of hives, the bees become super-defensive which leads to foraging paralysis. Just five Asian hornets hawking can reduce the foraging activity by half. And less foraging leads to a weakened hive.

Autumn predation reduces the winter bee population, and a full invasion of the hive will strip it of honey, bees and brood.

This is a serious threat to your bees: in some areas of France, 80% colony loss has been reported.

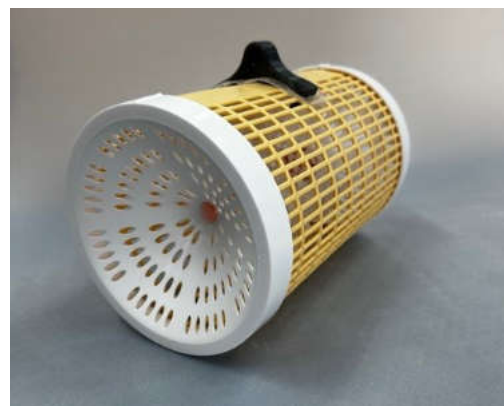
What can beekeepers do?

Report any sightings of Asian hornets at your hives or elsewhere. A photo helps

confirm the sighting, and location details will help form a picture of hornet activity in the area.

- A report is the first piece of information that leads to finding the nest.
- Use the Asian Hornet Watch app which includes a good ID guide.
- Host a spring queen trap (below), and encourage friends to do the same.

More generally, in our area, spring queen trapping is coming to an end, though keep them up for the time being. Unless we experience an upsurge of sightings in our area, trapping is likely to resume in the autumn.



Seasonal tips for June



Honey bee on coneaster in spring

As ever, it's been a busy swarming month, one that's likely to continue for some weeks, unlike last year with its miserable spring. And now I'm going to remind you of the possibility of another 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 not yet at their peak and the heather is still weeks away. Because of climate change we may not



The gap between oil seed rape and heather

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.

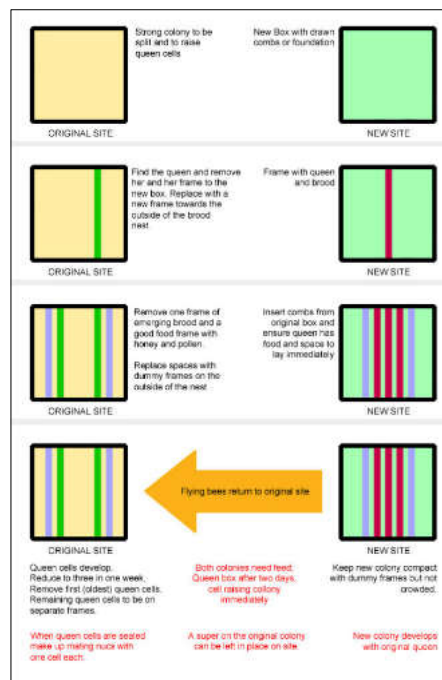
Once the new queen has hatched and is laying, you will have to find and mark her. If you're really keen on selling on your queens, you'll use the internationally recognised colour for the year, as seen here. Or if the eyes aren't what they were, use easily-seen colours like pink, yellow or white.

Finding the queen

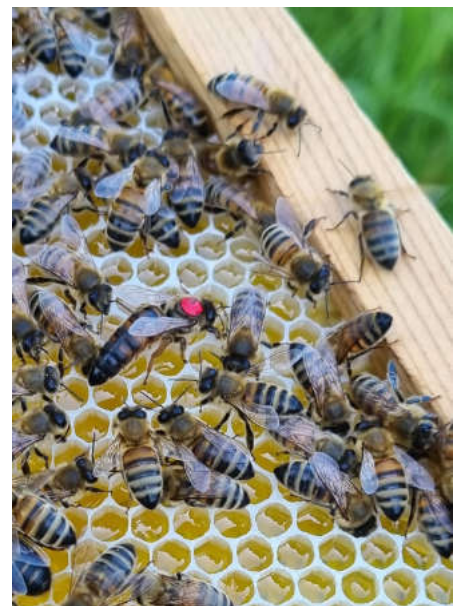
On a warm, still day when the foragers are out working, open the hive. Picture what the queen looks like. Working smoothly, take out the first frame, if it has few bees on it, place on the ground near the entrance.

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 will also be trying, determinedly, to reach the darker side, so look for a bee



A splitting plan



A marked queen. Photo: Nigel Kermod

Seasonal tips for June (continued)



Marked queen bee with her court

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 (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.

And this year looks likely to be a good one.

Varroa

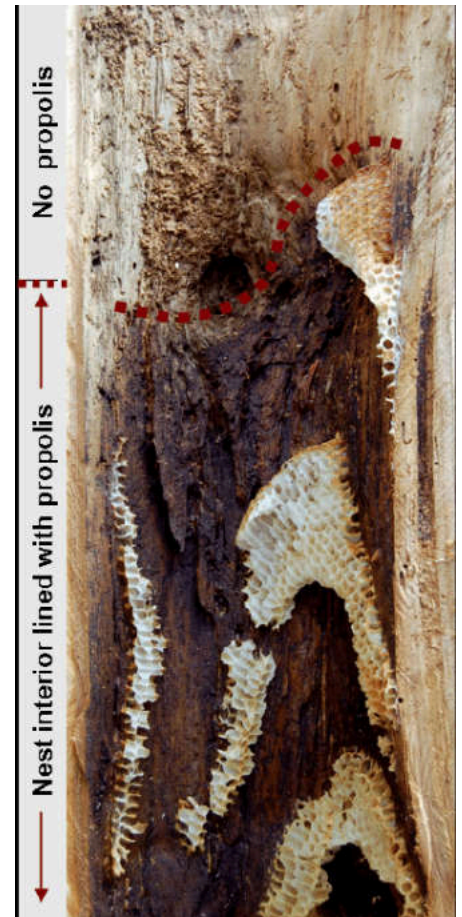
Continue to monitor the varroa mite count. An average of more than ten a day indicate that treatment is required urgently.

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,



Bees with deformed wing virus



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

you might even catch someone else's bees.

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 manky 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

Apiary reports

Grassroots

We all arrived at Grassroots to be amazed at the size of the apiary, due to hedges that formed the boundary having been cut back and the grass cut.

We were all then shown how to identify diseases that the colony within the NUC had, after it had recovered from nosema early in the season.

Then we looked at the larger hive where we had carried out a Bailey comb change earlier in the season, where the bees had effectively decided to undermine our work and

fill the brood frames that we hoped to remove with honey!

Change of plan in the afternoon session: we thought we might nadir so encourage the bees to move the honey into the right place. While I was breaking the seal on the capped stores I came to one frame of brood which I shouldn't have been there, then another then another three frames of brood in all stages and a queen!

While we were attending to this hive, we decided to refresh ourselves by identifying the eggs laid, and size of the larvae.

Then Jude demonstrated a way to collect approximately 30 adult bees for examination for diseases, using a toilet role inner tube and a self seal food bag. Jude then demonstrated how a queen cage worked for the non-chemical treatment for varroa, by introducing a brood break, while we all consumed the delicious freshly baked marble cake from Punu and hot drinks, biscuits and KitKat from Jude.

Very nice cake and great bee chat. Thank you, morning group.

Stephen Allen-Tidy (words & photos)



Apiary reports

Hove

All change at Hove

Our second open apiary meeting was held at the end of April attended by beginner beekeepers and beekeepers taking the Basic assessment. The aim was to demonstrate a disease inspection and to examine brood frames closely with no bees present.

The target hive was single deep colony on stand 1. We noted when the floor was changed on this hive in March that the brood comb looked old and in need of changing, the colony was not thriving, and there was a large number of dead bees on the old floor. Now was a chance to see whether the colony had kicked on and to identify any problems.

We opened the hive and it was immediately clear that all was not well. Although the brood box initially looked well populated and the bees looked healthy, the brood had not expanded as anticipated, the brood pattern was very patchy and there were some cells with perforated

cappings. Despite this, we found no minor or major brood diseases and the larvae looked healthy. We closed the hive and added a varroa board to monitor the mite drop.

We then looked at a very strong, queenright hive with laying workers in the supers and finished with a cup of tea while the Basic Assessment candidates demonstrated a Bailey comb exchange (not helped by me not having all the necessary equipment ready for them).

As we enter May the apiary has changed:

- Stand 1 has been shook swarmed with nice new comb and will be treated with Api-Bioxal before any of the new brood cells are capped.
- Stand 2 (double brood) has been split and reduced to brood and a half.
- Stand 3 is now the queenless split from Stand 2 which will be allowed the requeen under emergency conditions.

- Old stand 3 is now Stand 4 and has been expanded to a brood and a half. The first round of queen rearing on 4 May was cancelled because of bad weather but we were able to start the following week.

Jude New attended and led a session of frame building and taking a sample of bees while I introduced the remaining beekeepers to the mystical world of queen rearing.

We grafted young larvae into artificial queen cups on a cell bar frame which was placed over a queen right colony. We successfully raised three queens out of a possible seven attempts. One queen cell has been used to requeen a hive at the Hove apiary and the other two virgin queens have been given to members of Brighton & Lewes beekeepers.

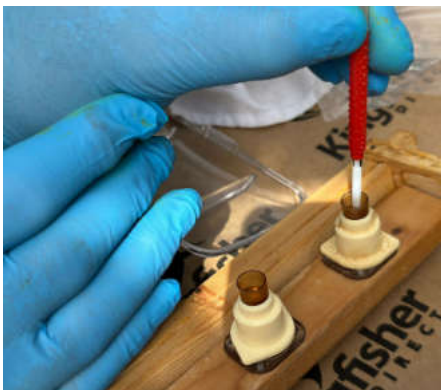
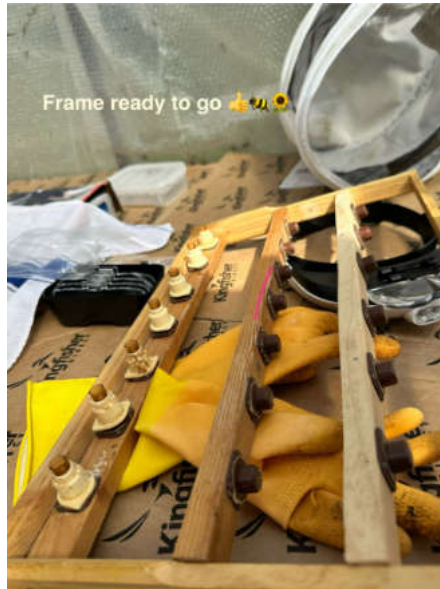
*Adrien Parker, Apiary Manager
Thanks to Mim for the photos (this page and overleaf). Apologies for the lack of credit last month!*



Apiary reports

Hove (continued)

Queen rearing at Hove apiary: from grafting to big dummies, this is how it's done



Apiary reports

Rottingdean

Well, things are looking up since the last newsletter. With Ian's support I have managed to collect four B&L swarms, two from Ian himself. Three are queenright and the fourth looks like its in its way.

I'm looking after them in our garden apiary so that I can keep an eye on them, and regularly top up syrup as they draw out the foundation brood comb—I look in every two days. Nectar and pollen are going in in reasonable amounts.

Virus

One of the swarms seems to have some deformed wing virus, with 15+ dead bees on the ground every day. I am going to wait and see and hope the bees themselves will resolve the problem. The mortality seems to be

reducing so that is a hopeful sign. When I am confident that the colonies are well-established, I will transfer them to the apiary on the farm up the hill.

Nectar flow

The amazing nectar flow being reported in the B&L WhatsApp threads is definitely not happening here. I bumped into Rowena who said her experience was similar to ours.

That is quite a conundrum as there is so much forage here with the huge number of flowering gardens, not to mention agricultural crops (see the Blue Tansy pic).

But we will definitely get a harvest in the next few weeks. I spoke with a fellow beekeeper in Brighton who had just taken of what looked like 50+ jars

last week—honey envy or what!

Apiary location

I am still wondering whether the apiary's location up the hill is the right environment for honey bee hives. It is always a degree or two cooler up there, and leaf cover is later to develop than in Rottingdean village so that easterly winds blow directly onto the hives.

They are protected from the cold northerlies by being in the lee of the hill. So clearly, environment and ambient conditions are important for beekeeping. On the other hand, my own colony up there is thriving.

Food for thought.

Jeff Rodrigues, Apiary Manager



Blue Tansy—huge fields of it—just half a mile from Rottingdean Apiary. Photos: Jeff Rodrigues

Bee Safari: an apiary walk

Fancy a stroll around other peoples' apiaries? Join the Bee Safari: no lions, just bees



Saturday 19 July 2025

This event is suitable for all beekeepers who want to know how others keep their bees, the joys and tribulations of the site they work with the bees and how they manage the highs and lows.

Our members are willing to chat about the site and their bees. There will be time for chat and a break to enjoy your packed lunch.

Four of our members will open the doors to their apiaries, chat about the bees and the site, and allow us to follow hive inspections led by our Seasonal Bee Inspector, Helen Hadley. She will conduct full disease inspections on one or two hives, providing everyone with a fantastic opportunity to ensure they recognise diseases that might be in their own hives. She will use a dummy lateral flow test to demonstrate how she determines if there is any foulbrood in the hives she inspects.

Beginner beekeepers might also

notice the choice of site, the boundaries, the spacing between hives the types of hive in use.

Schedule

In the morning, we will begin at Jessica's apiary in Poynings which is on a working farm and light industrial site. She has three colonies and can welcome up to 10 visitors including me and Adrien.

Adrien has an apiary near Rushfields Garden Centre in Poynings which he will open. He looks after the hives and after extraction provides the farm shop with honey.

We could eat our packed lunch at Rushfields and use their toilets.

In the afternoon at about two, we will meet Ian at Cooksbridge apiary. He is near the railway and suburban gardens, there is a wide variety of forage and protection from the trees which grow above the hives. We will open a couple of hives for a disease inspection and then go on to Joy's

apiary in Ringmer.

Adrien keeps his bees in Langstroth hives, Jessica and Ian use National hives, and Joy keeps her bees in shallow boxes, providing the bees with multiple boxes for the brood nest and other shallow boxes where the bees store the honey.

Preparations

- Please bring a packed lunch so that we have time to include both apiaries in the afternoon.
- Please wear a clean suit and boots and bring clean gloves if you want to handle frames of bees.
- Car sharing would be appreciated to make parking at each apiary easier.
- Each apiary is different, and you may visit all, of them if there is space.

Looking forward to seeing you all on 19 July.

Jude New, Apiaries Manager

Photo: Manek Dubash (his apiary)

Summer/autumn events

Date	Event	Location	Leader(s)
Tuesday 3 June	Queen rearing	Grassroots apiary	Jude
Thursday 5 June	Queen rearing	Grassroots apiary	Jude
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Saturday 14 June	Apidea	Grassroots apiary	Jude
Saturday 14 June	Basic Assessment practical	Grassroots apiary	Jude
	Basic assessment theory	The Barn, Westdene	Julie, Ian, Manek
Thursday 19 June	Queen rearing	Hove apiary	Adrien
Saturday 21 June	Basic assessment practical	Grassroots apiary	Jude
	Basic assessment theory	The Barn, Westdene	Graham, Heidi, Sarah
Saturday 12 July	Basic assessment	Grassroots apiary	Jude & Assessors
Saturday 12 July	First aid	Westdene Barn	Joy & Paramedic
Saturday 19 July	Honey bee health	Bee Safari, Hove	Adrien, Jessica, Ian, Joy
Wednesday 23 July	First aid for	Ringmer Village Hall	Jude & paramedic
Saturday 26 July	The repair shop	The Barn, Westdene	Ross, Jessica, Jude
Friday 8 August	Honey extraction	Hove apiary	Adrien
Friday 8 August	Honey extraction	Grassroots apiary	Jude
Saturday 9 August	Managing supers	Hove apiary	Adrien
Saturday 9 August	Managing supers	Grassroots apiary	Jude
Saturday 16 August	Extraction	The Barn, Westdene	Graham
Saturday 6 September	Basic Assessment graduation	The Open House	Jude

Bee Chats

Wednesday 4 June, The Juggs, Kingston
 Wednesday 2 July, The Hope Inn, Newhaven
 Wednesday 6 August, The Cock Inn, Ringmer

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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Co-operative Membership Community Fund

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Sussex BKA Representatives:
 Ian White & Manek Dubash

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.