

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers

A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

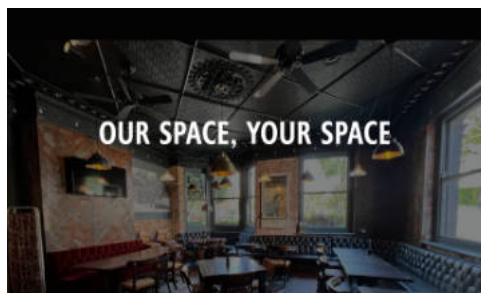
NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2025

Special Bee Chat
12.30pm, Sat 6 September
Open House, Brighton BN1 6BZ

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EDITORIAL



Over lunch on Saturday 6 September we can celebrate the highs and lows of the honey production and swarms we wish we had prevented...

This will be a chance for an extraordinary Bee Chat with course participants and tutors at the end of our summer programme. We can celebrate

with the Basic Assessment graduates of 2025, mingle with other members of B&L, share pictures and experiences of our beekeeping year, while getting ready for the winter meeting programme of speakers and events.

Venue

Pictured left: Open House, 146 Springfield Road, Brighton BN1 6BZ is next to London Road station. Buses run along the bordering Ditchling Road and London Road. Parking is metered via the PAYBYPHONE app.

See you there.

Jude New, Training Co-ordinator

EVENTS

- Harvesting
- Extracting
- First aid for beekeepers
- Repair shop

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.

September 2025 events

| Date | Event | Location | Leader |
|---------------------------|---|--|-------------|
| Saturday 6 September | Basic Assessment graduation | The Open House | Jude |
| Wednesday 17 September | Honey—The Essentials from Harvest to Sale | Eastgate Church Hall, Lewes | Andy Pegley |
| Saturday 4 October | | Crossway Church Hall, Clinton Place, Seaford BN25 1NP | |

Bee Chats

12.30pm, Saturday 6 September, Open House, 146 Springfield Road, Brighton BN1 6BZ

You can find the full list of 2025-26 events and meetings [on the back page](#).

ONLINE

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



QR link to B&L website

Notes from the Chair



Manek Dubash
Chairman

Unsung heroes, part 94

One of the important jobs performed by a range of individuals over the 10 years I've been part of B&L is that of the Librarian.

I know that we are probably all to a greater or lesser degree addicts to those wretched tiny screens we all need to carry around. But reading remains a great pleasure—and what could be more pleasurable than curling up with a good book about bees?

So this is a paean of praise for the B&L Librarian, whose job is to curate our fairly hefty book collection, accumulated over decades, of information and entertainment about and around our great hobby.

Why am I talking about this? After being

our Librarian for some time, Jose Manuel Reina has decided to pass on the baton to Alisdair Nichol—contact details are on the back page—so I'd like to thank Jose for his service, to welcome Alisdair to the job, and also to thank him for picking it up so swiftly after we advertised the vacancy.

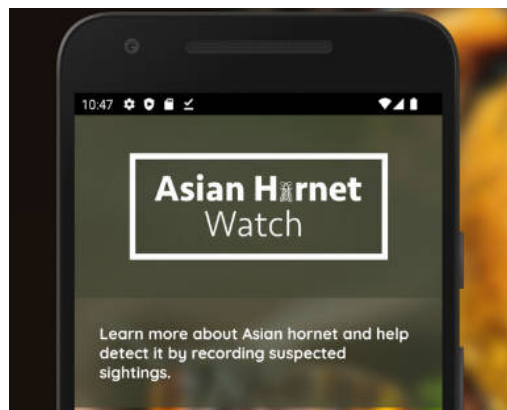
Winter is coming

Meanwhile, as the season draws to a close and we dream of mists and mellow fruitfulness, Jude is dreaming of meetings and workshops: so there's a bundle of things to do after the season ends, both individually as beekeepers but also as part of our group. Please join us for all or any of our winter programme's events.

Yellow-legged Asian Hornet report



Rachel Ramaker
Asian Hornet Team
Co-ordinator



Talk: Annual YLH update

This year's 'Yellow-legged Asian Hornet Week' takes place 1-7 September, when we will be continuing our work to raise awareness, improve identification and encourage people to download the 'Asian Hornet Watch' app.

In the middle on Wednesday 3 September 7.30pm is a Zoom Talk by the always informative Andrew Durham: Yellow-legged Asian Hornet—Is Nest Destruction a Dangerous Delusion? Is Spring Trapping the Lesser of Two Evils?

Andrew will examine the pros and cons of the different schemes in operation in France and Jersey, and suggest how beekeepers could best use their limited resources to serve their bees.

The talk will be recorded and made

available on the [BBKA YouTube channel](#).

Yellow Sock Day: 5 September

The idea behind 'Yellow Sock Day' is to wear yellow socks to emphasise 'yellow legs' as a key identifier of Yellow-legged Hornets. Please take a photo of yourself wearing yellow socks and share it on social media tagging the BBKA: #BBKA and #YellowLeggedHornets

BBKA Trustee Luke Whyatt will also be visiting various London landmarks during Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet Week wearing the Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet costume to help raise public awareness.

Taking action

Lucie Chaumeton, AHAT Coordinator North London Beekeepers and point of contact for all AHAT Coordinators, has written to her local MP and has kindly shared the letter template.

We would ask all of you to write to your own local MP to help galvanise them into action with regard to Yellow-legged Asian Hornets and also highlight 'Yellow-legged Asian Hornet Week'. Please [contact me](#) to receive the template.

Links to Zoom calls and additional info will be shared on our WhatsApp during the week. Please post pictures of your yellow socks or any awareness-raising action. There will be a prize for the best effort!

September: end of the season

So you've taken the honey off—and I hope you had as good a harvest as I did this year. Now is the time to thoroughly check the brood for disease and mite levels. Only treat your bees if they need it. Use the [National Bee Unit Guide on Managing Varroa](#) and go to the chapter on Integrated Pest Management.

If your daily average mite drop is above 10, then treat immediately. Several treatments are available to us, but some need to be applied before the temperature drops too far. As you can see from the photo below, I upset this colony when I put Apiguard on.

You will also want to protect the stores, so it's a good idea to reduce the hive entrance size to help the bees guard against wasps and other bees robbing, especially smaller colonies.

Winter feeding

So what constitutes a small colony? It's been suggested that anything with fewer than five frames of bees is in danger of failing during the winter.

There could be a number of reasons for this, but the primary one is that there isn't enough mass in the cluster to protect against heat loss unless you take extra precautions to conserve heat inside the hive.

There are many solutions to protecting bees in colder environments, one being to unite them with or into larger colonies using the newspaper method.

Your records will show you which colony to choose and which queen to cull (yes, a bit of regicide, but sometimes bee husbandry calls for it). The resulting colony will have a better chance of survival, a better developed



Apiguard reaction. Photo: Ian White

queen and more stores to see them through the winter.

Feeding: how and how much?

When the last of the ivy has flowered there will be little chance for your bees to collect more forage for the winter and they will have to rely on their stores for five to seven months. Lower temperatures also limit the ability of the cluster to move to new stores. So having stores readily available, close to the cluster is essential.

You will need anywhere between 18-27kg of stores, depending on the location of your bees and the external temperature. A National super frame holds about 2.5kg of stores.

Counter-intuitively, the warmer it is, the more food the bees will need to survive the winter. This is because the cluster will be looser, and the bees will be able to move to new areas of stores within the hive easily.

If you think there will not be enough stores for the winter, either because they've eaten it already or you've taken it all, you will need to feed additional 2:1 thick syrup (1kg of sugar to 630ml of water to be precise) or commercial invert syrup to make up the shortfall.

How much is enough? In my opinion, keep feeding until they stop taking it down. However, if you want to be a little more measured and you're making it yourself, then 1kg of sugar will make 1.25kg of stored syrup once the bees have processed it. So, if you think the shortfall is 10kg then divide 10kg by 1.25kg to give you the resulting 8kg of sugar you will need to make your syrup (10/1.25=8). Be sure to make enough: the bees can empty a 10-litre feeder in a couple of days.

At the end of the process, as a rule of thumb the hive will feel like it is fixed to the ground if you try and lift it.

Feeder types

You can use a contact feeder: a bucket whose lid has a fine mesh outlet. When full and the lid is in place, the bucket is inverted over one of the holes in the crown board. An eke is put over the

inverted bucket and the hive cover replaced. Or you can use a rapid feeder, usually 75-100mm deep open trays with an entrance at the bottom (below). These may require an eke or if they are big enough, can act as the crown board and the hive lid placed directly on top of them.

There are no practical differences between them: the important thing is to add all the winter feed in one go. [Dave Cushman's website](#) has more details.

When feeding, and to avoid any unnecessary excitement, try not to spill any syrup. Make sure your feeder is bee/wasp proof from the outside and try to feed later in the day when there is little foraging activity.

Nadiring: should you?

If you have left your bees a super of their own honey for the winter, the next question is whether to leave it above or below the brood. I favour the latter option, known as nadiring. Remove the queen excluder.

My reasons for nadiring are that bees always move upwards where it's warmer. So, as the brood nest shrinks there will be space for the bees to store honey in the brood comb and towards the top of the frames. As the weather gets colder, the bees will move up into the region filled with stores.

Remove the super very early in the spring, or the super will end up with brood in it as the brood area expands.

Enjoy your harvest and think about entering the National Honey Show—contact Norman for details; you'll be surprised at what you can do with honey and other hive products.

The Veiled Beekeeper



Apiary reports: end of season roundups

Barcombe



I would like to start by thanking Tony Birkbeck for managing this apiary for the last few years and Nick Lear for letting us use the land at his farm. I look forward to re-establishing this venue as a teaching apiary to add to the other three we already have.

I made my first official visit to Barcombe this year in early March, however, the one remaining hive looked a bit forlorn. Tony explained that there had been a severe infestation of wasps the previous autumn which had decimated the other hives leaving this sole survivor.

Those of you that visited the apiary last year will have known that one of

the hives—number 5—was particularly grumpy, but with Manek's help it was re-queened and amazingly had survived the wasp attack and made it through the winter.

Jude also donated a spare hive from Grassroots, so we started the year with two fairly strong colonies. You will all be aware of and experienced the strange weather we had early in the year, which induced the hives to store lots of the early honey crop and thus decide to swarm in early April.

A double-edged swarm

Being distracted by my own bees, I failed to stop one of the hives swarming but managed to split the other before it was too late. I further supplemented the number of hives with three local swarms I picked up, bringing the total to six.

Although the weather remained warm and settled with a good honey flow, all of the bees' efforts were put into building comb. Particularly in the new swarms but also the two older hives, where I initiated a Bailey comb

change. The swarms have done very well and built up to quite strong colonies but at least two of them have decided to re-queen and as I write at the end of August, two of the swarm hives have been united and are in the process of raising emergency/supersedure cells. However, by the end of July, they had had collectively managed to store enough honey for me to extract and sell at Rottingdean and pay Nick his rent.

Next year we intend to reintroduce Barcombe back into the Division's teaching apiaries and I look forward to welcoming you all in 2026. We intend to be putting on a full programme of visits to the apiary throughout next summer, so watch this space.

In the meantime, if anyone (experienced or new beekeeper) wants to help me manage this apiary and assist with the routine inspections, please contact me.

Ian White
Barcombe Apiary Manager

Grassroots



Our year at Grassroots began with one overwinter loss: a suspected queenless colony died out with stores left in the hive but very few bees and no brood.

February: Members were offered a series of presentations and practical work at the apiaries to prepare for a Honey Bee Health Assessment. The online element of the course took place on Monday evenings from February to March, and was presented by a mixture of speakers.

The first four or five openings of Grassroots and Rottingdean apiaries were dedicated to the Honey Bee Health Assessment. Attendance was good and all said that they felt more confident about disease inspection

and what they were looking at in their hives.

One of our candidates registered for and passed the assessment in July 2025 with Master Beekeeper and Assessor Pam Hunter.

Mid-April: our new Bee Inspector Helen Hadley made a routine call to Grassroots to check for small hive beetle, foulbrood and general honey bee health. All the hives were found to be queen right and no notifiable diseases found. Happy days!

Mid-May: Grassroots and Hove ran queen rearing sessions. Hove began at the start of May with Grassroots a bit later in May and still in the swarming

Continued overleaf...

Apiary reports: end of season roundups (cont.)

Grassroots (cont.)



season, working with a nectar flow and swarming urges in the colonies.

Queen rearing

Grassroots used the Miller method of queen rearing recommended by BBKA. It doesn't use much equipment although the version we used and written about by Master Beekeeper



and NDB Lynfa Davis (Welsh BKA) put two colonies behind for honey production by six weeks.

There was a core of five or six members coming to the apiary to share different parts which eventually raised six queen cells. Four queens emerged and headed up new nucs for Grassroots.

This queen emerged in the Prairie Gardens where she proved she had mated well, and her bees were good tempered.

June: Grassroots was the venue for Basic Assessment training followed by assessment in mid-July by Gordon Allan and Tom More. They assessed eight candidates, one who came to us from another division.

Celebrations

We will be celebrating the successful candidates at Open House, Springfield Road, Brighton on Saturday 6 September from 12.30-15.00. We won't have their certificates, although they will be very willing to tell you about the assessment and their success!

Preparing for winter

Our teaching sessions at the apiaries



are almost over at the time of writing; Hove, Rottingdean and Grassroots will open for the last time on Saturday 30 August where we will demonstrate how to prepare bees for the winter. Also see the Hints and Tips page ([page 3](#)).

We have seen a video produced by the BBKA and on the learning platform on winter preparations, such as varroa treatments and dealing with starvation. You can find them on Facebook and our WhatsApp Buzz group.

See you there.

*Jude New, Apiary Manager
Photos by Jude New*



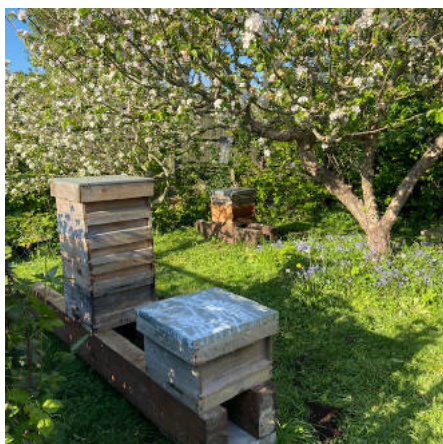
Apiary reports: end of season roundups (cont.)

Hove



Hove apiary started the season with two viable colonies and one weak colony that was going nowhere. It was a surprise that any of the colonies made it through winter. All the brood comb needed changing and the stands needed strengthening.

At the first open meeting we changed and cleaned open mesh floors, re-adjusted frame spacings and assessed the health of each colony. During the following weeks it was clear that the weak colony was in trouble. Although the brood looked healthy, the brood pattern was terrible and the colony was not increasing in size. We treated for varroa and despite the colony being a bit too small, we changed the brood comb. Unfortunately over the next few weeks



there was no growth in bee numbers, so in June it was time for a new queen.

The open apiary meetings this year have been targeted at new beekeepers and those beekeepers planning to take the Basic Assessment. Luckily the weather enabled us to complete all the planned meetings with the exception of the first queen-rearing meeting in June which was delayed by a week.

The new beekeepers were able to cover topics such as choosing a hive system, buying equipment, the mechanics of a basic inspection, what a healthy colony should look like, swarm control, feeding bees, clearing bees from the supers prior to extraction and many other beekeeping topics that arose from questions. I also learnt to manage my time better so that we could drink and chat for longer.

In June we ran queen rearing sessions based on the Ben Harden method. We grafted young larvae into artificial queen cups and placed them into the same queen right hive. We all tried grafting using a Chinese grafting tool (specially adapted by me) and I think those that attended were surprised at how easy it was. Rearing your own queens is a really interesting and satisfying process.

At other meetings we covered topics that were included in the basic

assessment syllabus and the basic assessment candidates were given the opportunity to demonstrate their beekeeping skills and knowledge.

As a teaching apiary, I thought it important that new beekeepers should experience keeping bees using different hive types, so I added a National 14x12 hive and a Langstroth hive to the apiary. This complements the National hives which are now run as single brood, brood-and-a-half and double brood hives.

Yes, the apiary has moved on. We now have six thriving B&L colonies with two additional colonies of my own on site. Three of the B&L hives produced about 100kg of honey and this was extracted at the Divisional extraction day.

Thank you to all those who took part in the extraction day. I was unable to attend but I am very grateful for your efforts.

Finally, right in the middle of all the honey extraction the apiary was inspected by a seasonal bee inspector. I'm pleased to say that it passed with flying colours.








*Words & photos by
Adrien Parker, Apiary Manager*



Apiary reports: end of season roundups (cont.)

Rottingdean



| Good news | Bad news |
|--|--|
| Got all five colonies through winter! |  Between the third week of March and the second week of April, four colonies died. |
| Captured eight swarms in attempt to re-stock And seven transitioned successfully through old queen, supersedure, virgin queen, successful mating to vigorous laying |  Oh, the demoralising broodless break, not knowing for sure that virgin queen had mated successfully and found her way back. More bated breath. |
| And one weedy one stayed in three last-chance saloons |  And finally got polished off by wasps |
| Actually produced some (very modest amount) honey for B&L in spite of our problems...and it all got sold at the Rottingdean Fair | |
| Using the observation hive at the Ovingdean Farm day worked really well—lots of interest But now know what to expect next year |  Just a pity we did not know what to expect and thus not as well prepped as we could have been |
| Really enjoyed helping to deliver the education programme for new beekeepers—got good feedback on both on-line and face-to-face sessions | We're still housing our stuff in a container shared with chicken farm workers and a lot of  |
| Worked hard again this year |  Got the stings to show it! But not one proper sting—just mini-stings through gloves and sleeves so all over in an hour |
| Successfully avoided honey cornucopia-envy |  Well, not really, the endless stories of huge harvests from other B&L saintly beekeepers were just so annoying! |

Well done B&L for a great year of learning, discussion, meetings, support and member growth!
So, we head towards...Christmas?

Oh, no. Summer is not over yet and Halloween merch is already in the shops—but no-one has told the queen bees, as they're still reproducing like

it's flaming June. It's been a good year.
Jeff Rodrigues, Apiary Manager
Photo: Manek Dubash

Swarm Co-ordinator's Report 2025: a mad year

My previous reports were full of doom and gloom, and I expected this year to follow on in the same vein. Just shows how wrong you can be. I won't go into the strange weather we've had this year, but it took us all by surprise.

This year saw a massive increase in the number of calls into the swarm phone and subsequent swarms collected. Because of the warm, settled weather in the early part of the year, I had received five messages by the time I switched the swarm phone on in early April. Admittedly, they were about solitary and bumblebees.

One message was about a swarm on a heather bush. When I explained that the bush was attracting all the bees in the area as it was the only thing in flower the lady was reassured.

So, apart from these messages the first swarm call came in on the 21 April. A B&L member's bees had swarmed while she was at work. By the end of the month (nine days), I'd had 14 calls.

May, the proper start of the swarm season, continued to stay warm and settled, there was no let up on the calls with an average of 2.5 a day. The 20th May sticks in my mind and not in a good way. I had 11 calls in the space

of about 2-3 hours. I started the early afternoon intending to go to my apiary (three miles away), only to be diverted to a swarm in Lewes. By 5pm that evening I hadn't made it out of Lewes.

The weather in June continued in the same vein but at least the calls were in manageable numbers with about one a day. Towards the end of the month I started to get calls for wasp nests and bumblebees.

By July with the weather still settled it was all over, with the number of calls for any flying creature being counted on the fingers of one hand.

What just happened?

A mad year is my considered opinion: just under five times more calls than last year, 94 of them involving honey bees, although this didn't translate into a lot more swarms being collected with only a slight decrease on last year. The other slight change was a small increase in the number of swarms in the fabric of buildings. And despite the press coverage about wasps, we had few calls about those.

Again, I'm sure that we didn't get all the calls. Some anecdotal thoughts and observations I have gathered from

other beekeepers and bee collecting colleagues:

- Due to the change in people's working patterns there may be more swarms being collected without recourse to the Swarm Co-ordinator
- People working from home have managed their bees better
- The use of social media has made communication easier so the swarm reports can reach more people before the Swarm Co-ordinator hears about it
- Established beekeepers are advertising, on social media and by word of mouth, swarm collection services.
- Lots of casts
- People can't be bothered to report swarms

I'm not sure what 2026 will bring, or whether this upward trend of calls means there is still a need for a dedicated Swarm Co-ordinator. I do know, if it continues, I will need help or someone to take over next year. Or as happens elsewhere, they only rely on the BBKA listings of swarm collectors or social media instead.

Ian White
Swarm Co-ordinator

| | 2022 | % | 2023 | % | 2024 | % | 2025 | % |
|------------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
| Total calls | 67 | 100 | 51 | 100 | 29 | 100 | 131 | 100 |
| Swarms collected | 45 | 67 | 25 | 49 | 20 | 69 | 74 | 56 |
| Not recovered | 6 | 9 | 13 | 25 | 4 | 13 | 15 | 11 |
| Non honey bee | 11 | 16 | 10 | 20 | 10 | 34 | 13 | 9 |
| Other | 4 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 17 | 30 | 23 |

Note: rounding errors

Can you help?



I am sure you can see I have rewritten 'It takes a village to raise a child'.

Each year, members of the local community contact our Division wanting us to contribute.

Examples include:

- A talk about beekeeping to our primary school about beekeeping
- An enquiry on a local Facebook page

for local honey for sale

- A request for a beekeeper to talk to a local group like the U3A or a care home or hospice about beekeeping or Yellow Leg Hornets—threat monitoring and management of sightings.

Continued on [page 13...](#)

New rules bring success at Rottingdean Fair

After several years of organising Rottingdean Fair, this report is not just the usual 'good news' story, but raises a fundamental question we face as an association. So please read on. 😊

Rottingdean Fair has always been an important event on the B&L calendar where we can meet the general public and promote beekeeping within our community. And of course, it is our opportunity to sell honey and other hive related products.

Outstanding success

This year was an outstanding success, with the Fair organisers commenting how much attention our stand attracted, how it helped educate on nature and wildlife whilst being fun for young and old alike. Thanks to the excellent weather (not too hot and no rain) the footfall was at times overwhelming, contributing to a record turnover on the stand. We took over £1,800 in revenue and sold nearly 150 jars of honey, of which 50 were from our own association. That is truly unprecedented.

So, in short, a successful event on every measure. None of this would have been possible without the volunteering and support that our association is infamous for. Thanks go to Manek, Graham, Ian, Hilary, Norman and Bob (see picture) and I apologise profusely for missing Graham, who was probably buying the coffees for us at the time! It was, first and foremost, a massive team effort and while I hesitate to single anyone out, special thanks go to Ian for getting up so early to prepare an observation hive (the centre of attention on the stand) and



all the heavy equipment. But it was a true team effort, exemplified by the fact we were still selling honey at 16.05 while others were clearing up, yet at 16.35 we were one of the first to have cleared up and left the site.

Cash benefit for B&L

But there is even better news for our members this year. Previously, Rottingdean Fair has always generated high turnover, but little of it found its way back to B&L.

But at the committee meeting on 2 July it was agreed—and ratified at the next meeting on 13 August—that we would promote B&L's honey ahead of members' honey, and that all members would pay a 20% commission on their own honey sales at the event.

This has transformed the value of the Fair to the Association, giving it a route to sell its own honey while also helping the B&L bank account which will be reinvested in you, the members.

The most satisfying aspect of Rottingdean Fair this year was that Jeff Rodrigues' honey from B&L's Apiary in Rottingdean sold out first, where all the proceeds go directly to the association. Thank you, Jeff.

We also sold Association honey from Barcombe (thanks Ian) and Hassocks (thanks Jude). In summary, of the £1,800 revenue, over £400 will go to the association from this one event alone!

New rules—and a crossroads

It was not a coincidence that we changed the association rules for Rottingdean Fair. B&L is facing

financial pressure, and while not at crisis level, we need new interventions to create revenues. This is to be able to support our four apiaries, and our training and winter programmes as just a few examples. While there are many ways to achieve this, the highest potential is selling our association honey which generates the biggest return for the effort.

This is where we are at a crossroads. Rottingdean Fair is currently the only event which is designated as an Association Event on our calendar. I was informed that, at the 2 July committee meeting, all other association events had become private member events. As a direct consequence of this, we now have no clear route to sell any more association honey from the four apiaries which we fund.

In its new form, Rottingdean Fair stands as a precedent to demonstrate how this association could be vibrant and flourish for years to come. Jeff's Rottingdean Honey flew off the shelves first, because it was local to Rottingdean.

We must do the same for Hassocks, Barcombe and Hove and we should rightly expect revenues comparable to those detailed above. Otherwise, if private member events are the new norm, which excludes our Association, the inequalities between our members will call into question Rottingdean Fair itself, and the precedent of Saturday 2 August might not be a sunny B&L future but may prove to be a false dawn.

Nigel Kermode, words & photos



B&L's annual extraction yields bumper crop



Graham checking moisture content with Jill, Katherine and Valerie before extraction. Photo: Jude New

It's too late: you have missed the great divisional extraction day! Since the first nectar flow, we have been watching the supers fill and get higher, then lower, then higher again. I have seen reports of High Weald beekeepers extracting supers and returning them to the hives several times during this season.

Production line setup

On Saturday 16 August, Graham organised The Barn and set up ready for an extraction production line. Graham and Ross collected ten supers from Hove, so lots of frames to uncap. I collected the cleared supers from Grassroots in the cool of the morning—along with some bees!

Ian arrived with his 20-frame electric extractor and started setting up with Graham, Debbie and her non-beekeeper husband Steve. We had two electric and two manual extractors working from 09.30 until late lunch at 14.00-ish.

We are producing food for human consumption so we have to abide by [government regulations when jarring honey](#). So as new boxes of supers were opened, the frames were checked for ripeness. Graham and Ian used their



Uncapping and draining the cappings

refractometers to check for moisture content: it must be no more than 20% according to the regulations.

Moisture check passed

There was excitement when the moisture content was at 17%. After the refractometer check, uncapping began.

No one went thirsty: tea and coffee were plentiful, and we had some tasty flapjack and cake donations to go with



Electric extractor draining honey through a double strainer.



Debbie shows new members how to use an uncapping knife before loading the four-frame manual extractor. Photo: Jude New

it. Sometimes with added honey, because extraction is a sticky business.

When all the honey that could be, had been extracted, the room was wiped over and put away, the floor covers folded and mopped. We hoped that those who manage the hall wouldn't even know we had been there...

The supers and honey from Hove were returned for Adrien to jar and label; three hives at Hove produced just over 100kg of honey. Grassroots produced 5.7kg from 16 frames; these had the lowest water content.

I have been reading on beekeeping forums that honey has been plentiful in bordering areas of High Weald too.

B&L benefits

Adrien and I will sell the honey, and the money raised will go to the Divisional bank account to be used for the membership. After locking the hall, I put my bee suit on to return the three supers to the hives at Grassroots for the bees to clean up.

Happy day.

*Words by Jude New
Photos: Iva and Jude New*

B&L's upcoming events and more



Our winter programme will open with our first meeting on Wednesday 17 September at Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Eastgate Street, Lewes BN7 2LR. The speaker is Andy Pedley, who will be talking about food safety around the Beekeeper Food Safety Legislation and how it applies to the beekeeper.

Andy will share his extensive knowledge on food safety in the context of honey production, an often overlooked but critical aspect of beekeeping.

Using his 30+ years of beekeeping experience, Andy provides invaluable insights into maintaining a clean and safe honey house, discussing the

importance of proper sanitation practices, the risks of using outdated equipment, and the potential contaminants that can affect honey quality.

You will learn about the specific challenges and solutions related to honey storage, the use of food-grade materials, and the importance of keeping equipment clean and well-maintained.

Andy also highlights the legal implications and responsibilities that come with producing and selling honey, emphasising the need for beekeepers to stay informed and proactive about food safety standards.

About Andy

As an Environmental Health Officer, Andy developed an interest about 14 years ago in the law on food safety as it applies to beekeepers and honey production.

He realised that there was a fair amount of misinformation and traditional, but not always good, practice, among beekeepers.

So in 2009, he authored a series in BeeCraft magazine on food safety legislation. He has authored other relevant articles for them too,

including pieces on the honey regulations and recycling jars.

He's recently worked more on the nuts and bolts of food safety for beekeepers, and has presented talks at the UK's National Honey Show workshops and to local associations on this, and on the Food Safety laws as they apply to beekeepers.

His knowledge has been encapsulated by Northern Bee Books, who asked him to write a book on the topic. It's available [here](#).

Andy is currently the Training Apiary Manager for Oxfordshire BKA; this gives him responsibility for 10 colonies there as well as his own seven in various apiaries around Oxfordshire.

Meeting details

Please arrive between 19.00 and 19.15 pm to help put out the chairs for a scheduled start time of 19.30. You can ask questions on the night.

If you cannot attend but have questions to put to Andy, please email me in advance and we will ask for you. My contact details as always are on the back page

Jude New, Events Secretary

Coming soon: B&L Honey Show 2025

Did I mention that there is a honey show for Brighton and Lewes beekeepers at Crossway Church Hall, Steyne Road, Seaford, BN25 1HT on Saturday 4 October?

We will be there from 09.00 to receive your entries for exhibition in our honey show. We will help you add your registration number to your entry and, where applicable, assist to display cakes and biscuits on paper plates and plastic bags.

Unless you say otherwise after judging these will be sold.

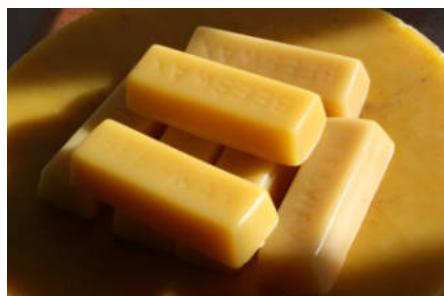
Candles and wax blocks

The candle classes will need candle

holders so that they can be lit as part of the judging process.

Information sources which could make the difference to your wax entries.

We recommend looking through the National Honey Show publication 2



Beeswax Candles for Show where Morna Stoakley writes about (the booklets are available to download from the [National Honey Show shop](#)), cost £3 at the time of writing.

She addresses the wax's colour, the wick's composition and size in relation to the circumference of the candle, the difference between moulded, and dipped candles and what the judge is looking for when examining a rolled candle. She then explains the judging process and lists the points she awards for each element of the candle.

...continued overleaf

Coming soon: B&L Honey Show 2025 (cont.)



The winning entry in the Moulded Candles class at the 2016 National Honey Show

Our judges will use similar criteria to those of the National Honey Show.

Criteria

Wax: The wax must be clean enough to stand inspection with a magnifying glass.

Its colour—whether deep yellow or pale cream—must be clear and bright. It must have the delicious honey smell that comes from fresh beeswax.

The following points of appearance will be noted by the judge.

- Whatever number of candles is specified in the schedule they must match each other in all respects, eg, colour, symmetry.
- Moulding should be clear; no join mark must show, and no release agent should remain. Smooth surfaces must be smooth.
- The wicks must be correctly positioned: centred at the top and at the bottom. This can be checked immediately after filling the mould.
- Does the wick look like the right size? Only burning will confirm this. Is the wick tip waxed?

Lighting and burning

The schedule indicates that the judge will light one candle; failure to do so would be like judging honey without tasting it.

Firstly, the candle must light easily. If there is no wax on the wick above the finished candle it may go out

before the flame ever reaches the wax and that's the end of your entry.

Then it must burn well. The flame should be bright and even; the wick should curve so it does not smoke.

If the wick is too thin it will not burn the wax up fast enough and excess melted wax will run down the side of the candle (guttering);

If the wick is too large the candle will burn with a small flame and give off smoke. The molten pool will also collect any dirt left in the wax.

The candles must burn for at least an hour during which time the judge watches their performance.

When removing honey from your hives, take care of the beeswax. Use publications from the [National Honey Show publications shop](#) to find out how to prepare wax for show.

I have been criticised for using a lot of electricity for wax rendering, now I use a Bain Marie over a camping stove powered by gas. All the health warnings apply!

Have a look at [this YouTube video](#): From Comb to Candle.

Beeswax blocks

Class 6: Three Blocks/bars of Beeswax, each 28g (1 oz), matching in all respects. Prepare for the honey show by making some blocks of pure beeswax, the wax must come from your own hives.

Are you up for the challenge?

Start rendering your cappings now and practise your procedures and processes.

The competition is not confined to members of Brighton & Lewes: we have invited other divisions of the Sussex Beekeepers Association to enter our Open Classes, so you will be able to compare and contrast show-standard beeswax candles from Hastings and Rother, High Weald and Eastbourne beekeeping associations.

How to enter

Please read and re-read the schedule to avoid disappointment on the day.

We will register your entries by email and BACS payment of £1.00 per entry until 27 September, payment to:

- Account name: Brighton and Lewes Beekeepers
- Sort code: 09-01-54
- Account: 97693488
- Reference: Your surname

If you wish to enter and pay on the day the fee will increase to £2.00 per entry and is at the discretion of the Show Secretary.

Entry forms

These are available for download on the Brighton and Lewes Beekeepers' website [here](#).

Please send your completed entry forms to Graham Bubloz, Treasurer & Membership Secretary, as soon as you like. All contact details are [on the back page](#).

Jude New, Events Secretary



New miracle bee food on the horizon?

We beekeepers spend a lot of money trying to ensure that our honeybee have enough food resources to get through the winter.

We use large amounts of fondant and 2:1 syrup and sometimes pollen patties. These are all mainly sugar, flour proteins and oils/lipids. But we still experience massive colony losses (four out of five in the case of Rottingdean Apiary in 2025) and attendant heartache at the start of spring.

What is so interesting and promising about the [Oxford research team findings](#) mentioned in the national TV news last night (20/08/2025) is that:

1. They have identified six specific compounds that are key in bee

- health and;
2. They have engineered these compounds in the lab.

Sterols in the frame

Sterols are a type of lipid that is key to the health of cell membrane, keeping membrane permeable. They also play a precursor role in essential development of certain molecules (eg hormones).

Sterols are actually quite diverse in the plant and pollen world, but we now know that bees selectively transfer just a few sterols from their bodies to their larvae. Nurse bees are critical here as it is they that make 'bee bread' in their mandibular glands and feed these to larvae in the form of a jelly. The feed that we give our bees

in autumn and winter does not contain these sterols.

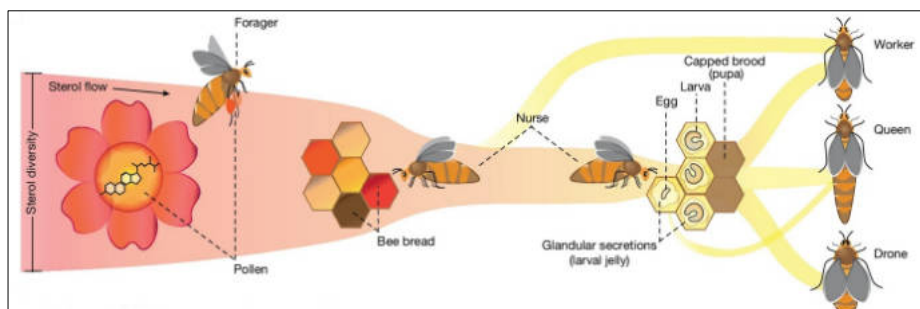
The research team engineered the six sterols via a yeast (*Yarrowia lipolytica*) and they fed this to bees and other non-sterol feeds to control groups of bees over a three-month trial period. The results are amazing!

1. Colonies fed with the yeast produced up to 15 times more larvae than in the control groups;
2. These colonies were more likely to continue rearing for the whole trial period;
3. The sterol profiles in the guts of these larvae matched the sterol profile in naturally foraged colonies.

The research team used gene-editing and made the yeast in bioreactors then dried and powdered the compound for ease of use.

It's early days yet, but if large-scale trials back up these findings, we could have a new winter feed supplement in around two years to produce much more robust bees...and a lot less heartache and self-loathing!

Jeff Rodrigues



Can you help? (cont.)

...continued from page 8

Could there be something you can do to help to raise awareness of beekeeping and honey, mentor a new beekeeper or a small number of beekeepers, depending on the size of your apiary?

Can you give some time to talk to a group of beekeepers about an aspect of beekeeping which you have mastered? We have an ambitious programme of training for the Division which would benefit from your assistance.

Can you donate money towards events arranged for the benefit of the Division? It could be used as payment

towards the hire of space for Beginner Beekeepers, Honey Bee Health theory, First Aid, Honey Show, running wax workshops.

Open your apiary

Maybe you could help to maintain an apiary by joining a group of other people once or twice a year or with the annual inventories of equipment, annual fumigation of drawn comb cleaning equipment on the apiary sites for winter storage?

What about opening your apiary for an afternoon for a bee safari and a cup of tea next summer?

Can you give a small amount of time to attend the committee to help the

smooth running of the division?

Would you volunteer to join a rota to run the stall which we will be selling light refreshment at the B&L Honey Show in Seaford or at the Bee Market in Uckfield, which takes place in spring 2026?

How to help

If you see anything in this piece which you know you could provide, please contact the apiary managers, the committee or me—contact details on the back page.

Jude New
Training Co-ordinator

Autumn/winter events

| Date | Event | Location | Leader |
|--|---|--|-------------|
| Saturday 6 September | Basic Assessment graduation | The Open House | Jude |
| Wednesday 17 September | Honey—The Essentials from Harvest to Sale | Eastgate Church Hall, Lewes | Andy Pegley |
| Saturday 4 October B&L Honey Show | | Crossway Church Hall, Clinton Place, Seaford BN25 1NP | |
| Saturday 18 October | Wax workshop | Rottingdean | Jude |
| Saturday 1 November | Wax workshop | Patcham High School | Jude |
| Wednesday 19 November | The Sustainable Apiary | Eastgate Church Hall, Lewes | Kevin Thorn |
| Monday 1 December | Festive dinner | tba | |
| Wednesday 18 March 2026 | Apitherapy & medicines | Eastgate Church Hall, Lewes | Chris Park |
| Wednesday 15 April 2026 | tba | | |

Bee Chats

- 12.30pm, Saturday 6 September, Open House, Springfield Road, Brighton
- October: Hassocks area. November: Lewes area. December: no meeting

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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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.