

Brighton & Lewes Beekeeper

B&L newsletter scores at the Honey Show!

A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2025

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EDITORIAL



B&L wins at the Honey Show

I'm delighted to report that our newsletter won second prize in the 2025 Honey Show newsletter

competition (Class 107). While I'm obviously gutted that we didn't win—the winner was Liverpool BKA—I'd like to thank those of you who punted the notion of entering the competition to me, as I would otherwise not have thought of it.

I do though want to emphasise that the newsletter would not be what it is without the contributions from the many people who write and who take photos: thanks are due to them too.

Next year, we'll win...

And I'm still waiting for the Honey Show to publish the full results for 2025, so we can fete those of our members who won awards in other classes. If you've won anything, please let me know.

Winter stuff to do

Jude has reminded me that, sadly, the time of year has come when we must admit there really is a big pile of kit at our apiaries that needs cleaning and repairing.

Please get in touch with one of our apiary managers to see if you can help with cleaning or repair of our hives and kit to get it ready for next year before it is stored for the winter. Have fun!

Manek Dubash, Editor

EVENTS

- Winter events
- Festive fare
- Wax workshop

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.

November 2025 events

Date	Event	Leader	Location
Saturday 1 November	Wax workshop	Jude	Patcham Memorial Hall
Tuesday 11 November	Bee Chat	Mim	Coach House, Rottingdean
Wednesday 19 November	The Sustainable Apiary	Kevin Thorn	Lewes
Monday 1 December	Festive dinner	Jude	Open House, Brighton

Bee Chats start at 19.30. **Open meetings** start at 19.00 for 19.30.

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

The inaugural B&L Honey Show was a great success: congratulations to all the winners, and especially to the overall winner, the indefatigable Rachel Ramaker, and to Debbie Cole, making her debut at the Honey Show. Full results below.

Hats off too to Jude who single-handedly steered the event through the committee, organised it, publicised it (with some help from the newsletter), and brought it to a successful conclusion.

This was not a simple operation. As well finding and hiring a hall both that we could afford and that was available, she found an independent, qualified judge who could dispassionately assess the various entries with neither fear nor favour.

And then plenty of people attended, and not just those with a stake in the outcome either.

Though the number of entries was perhaps smaller than we might have wished, for an first event of its kind for our

organisation—in other words, a standalone event not tied to the AGM—my opinion is that the lessons learnt laid solid foundations for next year’s event.

I’d be keen to hear your thoughts, whether through email, the WhatsApp Buzz group, or whatever medium (so many to choose from!) takes your fancy.

Wax workshop

If you’re looking for something to fill those empty, lacklustre days until you can shove your hands back into a beehive, why not pop along to our next wax workshop on 1 November, at Patcham Memorial Hall?

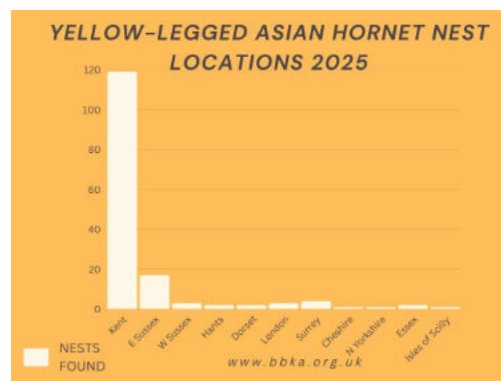
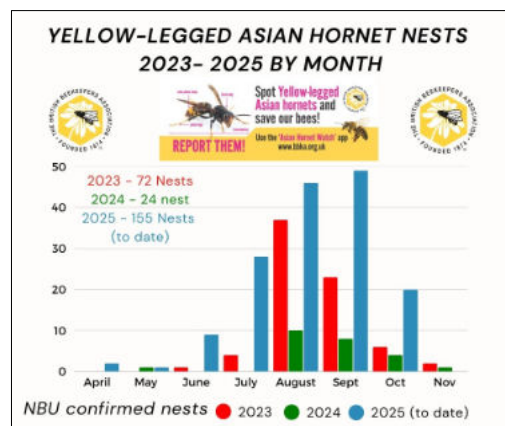
There you’ll find out how to make best use of the wax that you’ve been assiduously scraping off the tops of frames all year,

What’s more, if you follow the advice generously donated by our Veiled Beekeeper later in this issue, you’ll be able to rock up with lovely clean, yellow beeswax, all ready to go.

Yellow-legged Asian Hornet report



Rachel Ramaker
Asian Hornet Team
Co-ordinator



This has been a bumper year for the Yellow-legged Asian Hornet. The number of nests has rocketed to 155, [according to the National Bee Unit](#).

The NBU reports that: “It is important to note that the numbers of second-generation hornets are very low and there have been good levels of monitoring by beekeepers and the NBU. The NBU deployed 350 traps and a total of 5,500 trap checks were made.

“This is not considered to be strong evidence of an established population and

the NBU are continuing to take contingency action against YLH. The evidence gathered from action taken during 2025 will be reviewed over winter.”

Most recently, nests have been found in Sussex in Lewes, Haywards Heath and Wadhurst. The Yellow-Legged hornet was also found in New Zealand and Northern Ireland last month (October).

So there’s some cause for optimism if there’s little sign of an established population. But the vigil must continue.

November: winter is here

Now what do?

This month's title is a little misleading, as by now you will have tucked your bees up for the winter and they will be left to their own devices until the spring. Except for the odd visit to check on whether they are upright after a storm, need a bit of additional feeding with fondant or some other mixture to supplement their stores, or later in December or January to carry out an oxalic acid varroa treatment.

For most of the time from now until March you will be spending a considerable amount of time in your garage/shed/store/kitchen/doghouse cleaning, repairing, and building kit.

Cleaning

By far the biggest task for this period is cleaning frames, boxes and ancillary equipment.

Some questions to ask yourself: are the old frames that you have removed over the season in good condition?

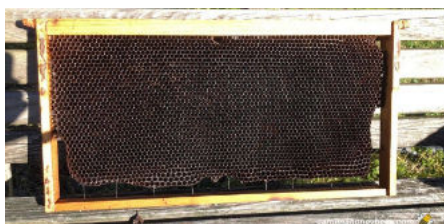
Depending on your replacement programme, some of them could be at least five years old by now and it's the first time they have surfaced since you put them in.

"Five years", you ask? Year one: made up from a kit and had foundation fitted. Year two: spent most of its time on the outside of the brood nest and only drawn out on one side. Years three to five: moved into the centre of the hive where it was continually used to raise brood—and now the wax is as black as sin.

Wax assessment

So, the first job is to assess the wax in the frame.

- Clean, still yellow, and little used: freeze the whole frame if possible, to kill off any wax moth eggs and



Old brood comb is best thrown out



Wax in an old comb has been melted away

larvae then store for reuse next season.

- Damaged and little used wax – Cut out and reclaim.
- Looks like it been stuck up a chimney for years? Cut it out and throw it away.

We have all been in the position of saying, "I'm sure there's some wax in there". Wrong. Most of it is propolis, old cocoon sheaths and rubbish. You'll end up with a heap of sludge for a tea spoonful of wax.

Frames

Are they sound? Are there bits missing or have the wax moth larvae chewed their way through the bottom bars and made them into some delicate filigree? Once all the damaged bits have been removed, the remaining parts will need cleaning. Once clean replace the missing parts with new or reclaimed and clean parts.

Frame cleaning involves one or more of four processes:

1. Manually scrape off all the wax and propolis then scorch with a blow torch. Not such a bad job if you only have a few to do, or don't have access to 2 & 3;
2. Submerge them, a boiling solution of washing soda and water for five-ten minutes. You'll need a large tea urn like a 10L Burco or similar. Then rinse them in cold water and letting then dry. Make sure you do both ends of the frame;
3. Putting the whole frame including the wax comb into a steam wax melter for about 10-15 minutes. Two jobs at once, melted wax and

steam sterilised frames;

4. Bin the whole lot and start from scratch. If you have an open fire they make good firelighters, or you could use five-pound notes, whatever you prefer.

Other equipment

Next is the rest of the kit, roofs, crown boards, supers, queen excluders, brood boxes and finally floors. If they are wooden, all the wax and propolis can be scraped off and the wood scorched and sterilised with a blow torch. Metal fittings can also be cleaned in a similar manner.

If they are plastic/polystyrene, all the wax and propolis should be scraped off, washed in a strong hot soda solution and then rinsed in cold water and left to dry.

Of course, you can do these jobs at any time of the year, but you've got time now and actually it's easier to deal with some of these cleaning jobs now the temperature is lower and the wax and propolis has started to harden.

Wasp no more

Another advantage of doing these jobs at this time of year is that you will not be surrounded by bees and/or wasps which will be attracted to the smell of warm wax and honey, which is what usually happens to me when I'm trying to do something in the garage during the summer.

Yet another Veiled Beekeeper production



Warming wax in a Bain-Marie over water

Report: B&L Honey Show 2025

Class	Description	First (5 points)	Second (3 points)	Third (2 points)
1	One Jar Clear Honey	Rick Butcher	Mat Budgen	Miriam Uzzaman
2	One Jar Naturally Crystallised Honey		Joy Garnsey	
3	Two Jars of Similar Honey	Mat Budgen	Rick Butcher	Joy Garnsey
4	One Pair of Beeswax Dipped Candles		Heidi Burgess	
5	One Pair of Beeswax Candles by any other method			Rachel Ramaker
6	Three Blocks of Beeswax, each 28g, matching in all respects	Heidi Burgess	Dorcas Kalani	
7	A Beeswax Food Wrap, minimum 30cm square, fabric and beeswax only	Miriam Uzzaman	Heidi Burgess	Rachel Ramaker
8	One Honey Cake (using recipe provided)	Rachel Ramaker	Rick Butcher	Debbie Cole
9	Six Honey Biscuits (using recipe provided)	Rachel Ramaker	Rick Butcher	Debbie Cole
10	Two 340g/454g Jars of Honey Marmalade			
To be judged by the public and not included in the final score				
11	A Bee-Related Photograph	Mat Budgen		
12	Close-up Photograph of a Bee	Mat Budgen		
13	An Invention Related to Beekeeping	Mat Budgen		
Cups and highest scores			Points	
	Dixon Hurst Cup (for Highest points)	Rachel Ramaker	21	
	Second Highest Points	Rick Butcher	14	
	Third Highest Points	Heidi Burgess	11	
	Novice Cup	Debbie Cole		
	Honey Cake Salver	Rachel Ramaker		



Overall winner Rachel Ramaker accepts the Dixon Hurst Cup from B&L President Norman

Thank you very much to all the people who entered the 2025 Honey Show, 58

entries in total yesterday that seems like a great turnout to me.



Mat and Ian in charge of library sales

I have no idea how that compares with previous years, I would like to know.

Judging

It took Brad Davis a while to judge the honey entries, which he did first with a torch.

Several jars were not judged for honey, because the jars had dirty or mismatched lids (two similar jars of honey). All the jars had fingerprints on the glass which he said at division level could be excused, but at county

Report: B&L Honey Show 2025 (continued)



B&L President Norman Dickinson presented awards to Rachel Ramaker, winner of the Honey Cake Salver; to Debbie Cole, winner of the Novice Cup; and to Mat Budgen, winner of all three photographic entries.

and national level would prevent further judging!

The insides of the lids were checked for honey deposits or signs of dust from the seals. He used his torch to look for air bubbles, lack of standing time, bee body parts—he didn't find any—and hairs and dust particles, which he did find. He then opened the jars for ranking first to third, and the honey was sniffed and taste tested.

Wax and candles

He smelled the beeswax blocks and weighed them. Two entries initially had additional aromas suggesting that they had been stored with something strong smelling—perfumed candles perhaps.

The winning beeswax blocks averaged between 26g to 30g and were shiny and crisp compared to the others which were underweight and not shiny. They too had a torch shone on them, looking for clarity of wax, evidence of double pouring, and

impurities such as honey propolis or pollen plugs left in the wax.

The pairs of matching candles were not lit but judged visually. Wicks should be prepared by dipping in wax before the wax is poured into the mould or before dipping.

Well done to the entrants: with that knowledge, at the next show the candles could get to the stage where they can be lit.

Comestibles

Brad smelled the cakes, and checked on top for over-cooking and underneath for sogginess and fruit deposits. They were cut in half and the middles tested for texture and overall colour of bake. The biscuits had similar treatment: a snap was required; cakeiness or cookie texture would have been unacceptable.

Photos

Some [*such as me! MD*] argued that the photographs should be judged by a

photographer, as per previous years, but the entries this year were judged differently.

Instead, the show attendees were also the voters and showed their preferences by placing stickers on pictures they found engaging, using whatever criteria they chose. The winning photographs portrayed a story, were eye-catching and colourful.

Aftermath

The Cross Way Church Hall was just the right size for our event. Thank you to all those who entered and helped before the event and behind the scenes on the day.

I hope I wasn't the only one at home after the event, feeling warm and smug with what had been achieved. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Jude New, Events Secretary
Photos: Manek Dubash



Norman in charge of the cash



Cakes and biccies: Rick, Debbie and Ann



The happy event crew

Apiary reports

Barcombe

Not too much to report at this time of year. The bees have been fed and watered, and tucked up for the winter. I'll check later in November to see if they want some fondant, but as it stands at the moment at least two of them have a brood box full of stores.

So now is the time for a bit of maintenance at the apiary—and I'd like to thank Michael Haughton, one of

two people who answered my request for help in the last report, who spent an afternoon welding strimmer, hedge trimmer and chainsaw to great effect.

I think we have doubled the usable space at Barcombe, having cut everything back to the original borders of the plot.

Winter preparations

Next, we hope to reinstate the fence to make it stock proof and set up some more hive stands. You can probably just make out the jumble of the original stands by the shed, which have come to the end of their useful life and are only good for firewood.

One last project is to rebuild the base for the shed. At the moment, water tends to seep under the bottom

frame of the shed during bouts of heavy rain, making the floor wet and causing the boarding to delaminate and become unstable.

Ian White, Apiary Manager

Photos: Ian White



Rottingdean

There I was, sunning myself on the lovely Greek island of Skopelos and thinking of finishing off the winter prep back in Rottingdean Apiary—then I return to find that the bees are still bringing in pollen, apparently still growing their numbers and bursting their hives at the seams. Give them expansion room or not? Not, for me: they'll just have to manage the space,

which for most is just a brood box.

But it's not surprising, in a way. Bees are principally affected in their winter prep behaviour by day-length ('the photoperiod') and temperature; the former is predictable, the second less so.

During these shorter days temperature tends to have a stronger effect on their approach to brood-rearing than photoperiod. In late winter/early spring, the reverse is said to be the case. So you can see from my photo that the cat is soaking up the sunshine when she would normally have come in for the winter (she lives outside in the summer), some plants are flowering for the second time and the bees in my garden's poly double nuc are making hay (sort of).

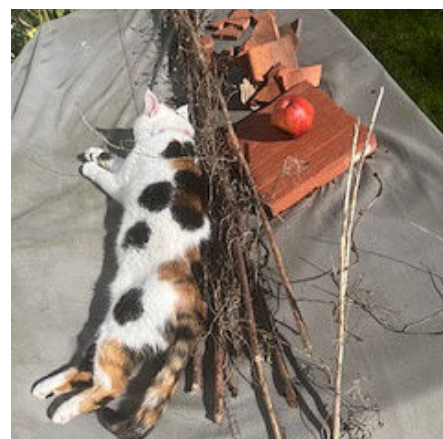
Other than the bees, I will soon be putting up windbreaks to try to shelter the hives from the north and east winds blowing into their wood. This will be a mixture of a bamboo windshield bought from a local

Association member, and some deadwood hedging found in the wood.

And find insulation: I tried to put on one of my favourite heavy wool cardigans only to see the holes eaten into them by moths escaping in clouds. Julie put the thing out of doors immediately before I could rescue it for the bees' insulation.

Jeff Rodrigues, Apiary Manager

Photos by Jeff (and Manek—top left)



November meeting: the sustainable apiary



The speaker at our next winter meeting is Kevin Thorn (seen grafting, above), who left banking to set up a

bee farming business in Suffolk. He works on bee improvement strategies, supporting the work of BIBBA.

If you are passionate about looking after bees, and keeping them happy and healthy, then come to listen to Kevin and quiz him about developing your own sustainable apiary.

For example, what method should you follow to improve your bees and to produce queens? Avoiding queen imports or offspring of recently imported stock can give good results. The beekeeper, through careful selection, can witness a steady

improvement in stock and a tendency for stock to tend towards native over time.

Kevin also breeds varroa resistant bees as part of his bee improvement strategy.

Would you like to have varroa resistant, frugal bees? They won't need expensive varroa treatments, they won't need feeding with syrup or fondant.

What's not to like?

Details: 19.00, 19 November, Lewes

Jude New, Events Secretary

Come join our wax workshop!

Are you thinking of joining the shenanigans?

We have enough participants to run the workshop, and some new demonstrations to show you.

Beekeepers and non-beekeepers welcome. All ingredients will be provided. Bring an apron or wear old clothes for these workshops, in case of spillages.

Multiple choice

We usually set up the hall so that we can have at least four stations. At previous workshops, each station had at least two recipes to demonstrate.

When you have made one sample you can stop for a coffee, cake and a chat with your friends. You can move to a different station as soon as the next is ready to start.

Then take the recipes home and make your own. You will be given a sample and the recipe so that you can make it yourself.

Last year we made rolled candles, wax melts, foot lotion with peppermint essential oils, hand lotion with lemon essential oils, calendula hand scrub, lip balm flavoured with chocolate, food-safe wood polish for chopping boards and wooden spoons, fire starters and furniture polish.

Pitch up and find out how to do it. You will be able to make some unusual and very personal gifts.

What's going on?

Have fun, enjoy tea, coffee, homemade cake, demonstrations for using beeswax and other ingredients and samples to take home to admire and

give away with the recipes!

There will be a couple of pop-up stalls selling Divisional honey, bee-related items and beeswax.

We would like at least 16 participants; these sessions are not suitable for young or unaccompanied children.

You won't be disappointed.

When and where

13.00-16.30, Saturday 1 November. Patcham Memorial Hall, 3 Old London Road, BN1 8XR.

A fee of £15 payable in advance, includes the workshop and refreshments. Card and cash accepted. To book your place, [contact Jude](#).

Jude New, Events Secretary



Smiling faces from last year's workshop



How to clean your wax

I was reminded the other day that some newer beekeepers may not have approached this subject before.

Cleaning wax is totally different to the wax workshops Jude is running (see previous page): it's the stuff you do before you get to the process of making things with wax.

Starting out

The process starts when you reclaim drawn comb or damaged foundation that has been used during the year or when kit is cleaned.

Once you have a pile or bucketful of used wax, melting wax is very straightforward.

- Take a old large saucepan or cooking pot and fill with about 50-75mm of rainwater; tap water will leave chalk deposits and spoil the finish of the wax.
- Bring the water to a very gentle simmer and start adding your bits of wax. Take care when heating wax, it is flammable, but it must reach at least 70°C to sterilise it.
- Once all of the wax has melted, pour it into a plastic bucket (I use old 5L emulsion paint cans) and let it cool for a day or so.
- When cool, the wax will have formed a hard sheet on top of the water with a layer of rubbish on the bottom.
- Remove the wax from the bucket and let it dry. When dry, scrap off as much of the detritus as you can.



- At this point you can then sell/exchange the cleaned block of wax to one of the many equipment wholesalers, in exchange for new foundation.

The extra mile

However, if you want to make really clean wax, such as the blocks shown on the right, for showing, making wax wraps, cosmetics or candles then repeat the melting process two or three times. But this time melt the wax in a Bain-Marie or double saucepan with water in the bottom pan and wax in the top pan. Instead of scraping the resulting rubbish off, strain it through fine material such as muslin each time to remove any impurities. If you are doing any of these processes in your kitchen and if you're not the management, make sure you have cleared it with management and covered everything in newspaper and dust sheets first.

Melting the wax

A more industrial approach can be the use of a steam wax melter. This may seem an extravagance, but it can save you a lot of time if you have lots of frames or wax to clean.

Commercially available melters, such as the one by Abelo shown above, usually consist of a large metal drum with an outlet on one side and a steam inlet on the other. Inside the drum is a smaller mesh drum. Whole frames and/or wax are placed in the smaller mesh drum and steam is

passed into the larger drum from an external steam generator (usually a wallpaper stripper). Water and wax drip out of the open outlet and the rubbish is collected in the mesh drum.

The DIY approach

My home-made melter works on the same principle but the outer drum is an old brood or super box depending on the frames I'm cleaning. The mesh drum is an open mesh floor (OMF) with the entrance blocked up.

The box is sealed at the top with a shallow roof with a hole big enough to take the end of a steam wallpaper stripper hose; the steamy device was bought for use on other DIY jobs about the house.

The OMF sits in a large square plastic tray and catches all of the melted wax and water and the OMF catches all the rubbish.

This is effective, is simple to construct and costs much less.

Job done. Not one for the kitchen, best done in the garage or outside and in late autumn or winter so you will not be surrounded by bees and/or wasps which will be attracted to the smell of warm wax and honey.

Which is what usually happens to me when I'm trying to do something in the garage during the summer.

Yet another Veiled Beekeeper production



Jude judges wax entries at the last combined AGM & Honey Show, February 2025. Photo: Manek Dubash



Winter/spring events

Date	Event	Location	Leader
Sat 1 November	Wax workshop	Patcham Memorial Hall	Jude
Wed 12 November	Bee Chat	tba	
Wed 19 November	The Sustainable Apiary	Lewes	Kevin Thorn
Mon 1 December	Festive dinner	Open House, Brighton	
Wed 21 Jan	From Swans to Swimming Pools	Lewes	Simon Tuck
Wed 18 March 2026	Apitherapy & medicines	Lewes	Chris Park
Wed 15 April 2026	tba		

Bee Chats

- 19:00 in a pub. December: no meeting

Winter meetings

- From 19:00 for 19:30, Eastgate Church Hall, Eastgate Street, Lewes BN7 2LR

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.