

# Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers



A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2024

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- Out-apiary meetings and other, bee-related events

### EDITORIAL

Am I done with beekeeping for the year? I should say not! There's stores to be checked—with the warm weather we've had towards the end of October I'm anticipating a need to feed fondant already.

And a couple of the hives will need one of the two nadired supers removed before I apply sublimated oxalic acid in a few weeks. That's because the medicine makes honey unsuitable for human consumption and any super on those hives will need to be marked 'for the bees only'.

We've now had a couple of great meetings under Nigel's new management so if you've not managed to make it to one

of them, I highly recommend you push it higher up your priority list. Same with the Bee Chats, a couple of hours in the pub, always enjoyable and relaxing.

Inside you'll find a full report on [Jude's latest wax workshop](#), with another to take place in November so if you fancy making wax wraps, candles or any other product of the hive, that's the place to be.

Finally, congratulations to B&L's Mim Uzzaman, who has won second and third in two separate classes at the National honey Show: photos on [page 7](#).

*Manek Dubash, Editor*

### Winter meetings

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

- All meetings are LIVE and start at 1915 for 1930, at Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Lewes BN7 2LR

**Next Bee Chat: TBD**

### EVENTS

- Meetings and more
- See this & [back page](#) for details

### NEXT MONTH

- Seasonal hints & tips
- Asian hornet update
- News updates
- Latest events

### SHARE YOUR PHOTOS AND 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](#)



QR link to our website

## Seasonal tips for November: winter is here

By now you will have tucked your bees up for the winter and they will be left to their own devices until the spring.

There's not much to do around the bees, 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 up

By far the biggest task for me is cleaning frames and dealing with the wax. Are the frames and wax in good condition? They could be at least five years old by now if it is the first time they have resurfaced, and even older if they have already been reused.

"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. Yes, five years.

### Wax assessment

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 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 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 teaspoonful of wax.

### Frame assessment

Next on the list are frames that have had the wax removed. 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? Hate it when that happens.

Once all the damaged bits have been removed, they will need cleaning. Once clean replace the missing parts with new or reclaimed and clean parts.

Those cleaning frames fall into four camps:

- 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.
- 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 let them dry. Make sure you do both ends of the frame.
- Put the whole frame, including the wax comb, into a steam wax melter for about ten -fifteen minutes. Two jobs at once, melted wax and steam sterilised frames
- Bin the whole lot and start from scratch. If you have an open fire they make good firelighters. Or you could use £5 notes [*er—aren't they plastic? Ed.*].

### Melting wax

Above, I've glibly mentioned two processes, wax melting and using a

*(Continued on page 3)*



Old black comb: re-use or junk?



Abelo steam wax melter

## Seasonal tips for November (continued)

steam wax melter, that may be a little alien to some of my newer readers.

Melting wax is very straightforward. Take a large old saucepan or cooking pot and fill with about 50-75mm of rainwater. In East Sussex, where I live, tap water has calcium salts in it and will 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 the wax has melted, pour the contents into a plastic bucket and let it cool. When cool, the wax will have formed a hard sheet on top of the water with a layer of detritus on the bottom. Scrap off the detritus and sell the cleaned block of wax back to one of the many equipment wholesalers in exchange for new foundation.

However, if you want to make really clean wax for showing, making wax wraps, cosmetics or candles, then repeat the melting process two or three times and instead of scraping the resulting rubbish off, strain the wax through fine material (eg old tights, pillowcases or muslin) each time to remove any impurities.



10-litre boiler: ideal for frame cleaning



If you are doing any of these processes in your kitchen, clear it with the management [*says the man! Ed.*] and cover everything in newspaper and dustsheets first.

### Steaming

A steam wax melter may seem an extravagance but it can save you a lot of time if you have lots of frames to clean. Commercially available melters 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 is put 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.

### DIY wax melter

You can make your own. My melter works on the same principle as the commercial version, but it's way cheaper, essentially using components



A bain marie makes a good wax melter. Just don't cook anything in it afterwards! Commercial version above left, DIY (bought second-hand) above right.

you already have, plus a steam wallpaper stripper (*above*).

The outer drum is a brood or super box depending on the frames I'm cleaning. The mesh drum is an open mesh floor with the entrance blocked up. The box is sealed by a shallow roof with a hole in the top, sized to accept the wallpaper stripper hose.

The wallpaper stripper 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. Job done. Not one for the kitchen, best done in the garage or outside.

### Best time of the year

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. It's amazing how sticky propolis is even at 18°C.

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.

I know I've not mentioned other hive parts, but I will in my next column.

*A Veiled Beekeeper Production*







Manek Dubash  
Asian Hornet  
Team Co-ordinator

## Asian Hornet report



The Southampton nest. Photo: Alan Baxter

We're now at the end of the yellow-legged hornet's annual lifecycle. Any mated queens that escaped the net will have either found a place to hibernate or will have died from exposure; there have been one or two cold nights in recent weeks.

As you'll doubtless recall from last month, a big nest was found a month or so ago near Southampton (*left*), and since then, one nest was located near Four Oaks, north-north-west of Hastings, thanks to the vigilant eyes of a member of the public.

So there's little more to report: I would say that the amount of publicity that has flooded the news and social media channels has by and large worked. Despite, as Defra's Nigel Semmence reported, only a handful of the 20,000 or so of the reported Asian hornet sightings being verified as the target insect, people are nonetheless looking out for it. Same is true on the social media sites: every single request for verification (that I saw) as to whether an unusual insect was *Vespa velutina* was not: wood wasps, hornet mimic hoverflies and European hornets were the main misidentifications, along with a handful of wasps.

Let's hope that next year, people remain similarly alert.

## Apiary reports

### Barcombe



WASPS!! It seems a mixed bag of reports coming from various beekeepers this year regarding wasps, some are saying they haven't seen any, others, like myself have been inundated by them.

My home apiary has really suffered as has the Barcombe bees and unfortunately they have now destroyed half of the stock. Three colonies have been wiped out, Hives 2 and 10, both of which had wasp blocks on and a nuc.

Members who visited the last out-apiary session will remember that I used a new queen from an Apidea in Hive 10 at the same time as splitting it with another new queen into the nuc. All three colonies had lots of BIAS but all the stores had been eaten with no bees in sight.

In fact, on a Facebook group people have been reporting late swarms, but I believe these were colonies that faced the same trauma and simply absconded!

This unfortunately now leaves Barcombe with three colonies, one of which is still the notorious Hive 5 which just keeps on going.

### Winter worries

As I type, I'm hoping the wasps will have mostly died out but this is a huge worry on how the last three will survive the winter months. I've never



gone into winter with so few colonies having been hit quite badly at my Maresfield Apiaries too; it seems only my Hadlow Down Apiary has avoided them.

In other news however, the three have finished their varroa treatments and do have plenty of stores so they certainly start the winter with the best of chances.

Tony Birkbeck, Apiary Manager

## From Buckfast to Buckingham Palace

*Beekeeping insights—a talk by Richard Rickitt*



Oh wow, what an evening! This was our second Winter Programme meeting held on Wednesday 16 October. A class act, we were not disappointed.

Our aim in setting up the Winter Programme this year has been to bring in the best speakers and if necessary, resort to Zoom when travel is prohibitive. Richard came to us highly recommended after speaking at various national events and for our first professional talk of the year, we selected this, more general, talk on beekeeping.

Co-editor of Beecraft magazine, at 105 the UK's oldest bee publication, Richard owns around 30 hives, as well as others for some high-profile locations and individuals.

He took us on a journey from Buckfast Abbey, ending up at Buckingham Palace, but the route was unknown. Starting at the Abbey, we learnt how Brother Adam perfected the Buckfast bee, prompting questions about how Buckfasts relate to today's commercially available bee.

From Buckfast we headed to Denmark, followed by Tree Bees and



the life of Charles Butler who helped define both the queen bee and the drone. We traced the evolution of skep beekeeping before heading to Manchester where the city motto *Concilio et Labore* (Counsel and Effort) is represented throughout the city with the emblem of the bee.

Then off to London Docklands where bee emblems denoted quality wool before heading to Salisbury Plain for quality honey on Ministry of Defence land. Thence to Watership Down followed by the natural history of Selborne which led of course to Radio 4's *The Archers*!

We then learned about illegal beekeeping in the New Forest before investigating the super-rare Flower Potter Bee at Seaford Head. Did you know Sussex has the most diverse range of bees in the UK, with 229 species out of the 275 identified in the UK so far? Buckingham Palace next, and how its gardens are managed organically and sustainably with a focus on bee friendly planting. The King can boast 65 species of bee in the Palace gardens.

### Summary

This was a *tour de force* of the beekeeping world, where everyone could take home some insight or point of interest to broaden their beekeeping experience. So much so, that I decided to buy Richard's latest book which is aimed at the hobbyist beekeeper keeping bees in their garden.

Apart from the content, I was personally very pleased to meet and chat with a few new members to the club at the meeting. Not only is this a very important part of what we are trying to achieve as a committee, it can also lead to a lot of help and support. I can still remember (just!) my first-year beekeeping and how daunting everything felt. So, please, if you are a new member with the club, come along and join us and we will try our best to



make you welcome and hopefully pass on some good advice!

The Winter programme would just not be possible without a lot of help from very many people. We aim to make these meetings (especially using Zoom) technically flawless, and credit goes to Norman for making this meeting such a success. And they are designed to be a social event too! Our hot drinks and snacks would not be possible without Ross and his 'behind the scenes' work. We loved the Apple and Date cake and thank you Jude for bringing along even more cake ☺ The empty box you took home spoke for itself!

The next meeting is designed to pass on some experience from within B&L ahead of our Honey Show in February 2025.

'Let's get ready for the Honey Show' will be led by four experts and will show you what it takes to prepare a winning entry to the competition. So please be there, Wednesday 20 November at 19.30.

*Nigel Kermod, Meetings Secretary*  
*Photos: Manek Dubash (except top left)*





## Photo report: Winter wax workshop



The first workshop was in the morning of Saturday 19 October.

During the weeks before the event recipes were researched from many sources. An advert for the workshop was placed as an event on B&L's Facebook page and in the WhatsUp Buzz group.

B+L members were given first choice of spaces, then the events were placed on two or three Facebook pages in Patcham and the surrounding area.

As the list of attendees swelled a request for support was made for B&L members to run the demonstrations on the day, and to run the catering.

There was a thought that participants may need something to occupy them if there were no spare



seats on the carousel of demonstrations, so two pop up shops provided by Adrien and Hilary selling honey, and a selection of bee related items. Both Hilary and Adrien said they had a brisk trade.

### What we did

Each demonstrator had two recipes, ingredients and hot plates to melt wax, oils and butters to mix into some lovely lotions and bars. They also made a cake for the kitchen to cut and sell with the coffees and teas. We were extremely lucky that we were able to get all our electrics PAT tested before the event by one of our new members.

We know that participants had a good time, there was a buzz of activity going on all morning, loads of hands to help clear up and pack away and then emails and Buzz messages thanking us for a great time. Job done!

### The take-away

Each participant was able to take a sample of the craft and the recipe home so that they will be able to recreate it at home and look through their chutney pot samples for the recipe they liked most. Almost half were non-beekeepers who wanted to come along and try making something different, to make new friends and to buy honey.



We sold tea and cake and surplus containers for participants to take home, as a presentation for themselves, family and friends. So at the first workshop, we raised £100.

Maybe something similar will be collected at the next workshop in the afternoon of 9 November from 12.00–16.00 at Patcham Memorial Hall. By the time you read this it may have happened...maybe we will do it again next year.

*Jude New, Training Co-ordinator*

*Photos: Graham Bubloz (more overleaf)*

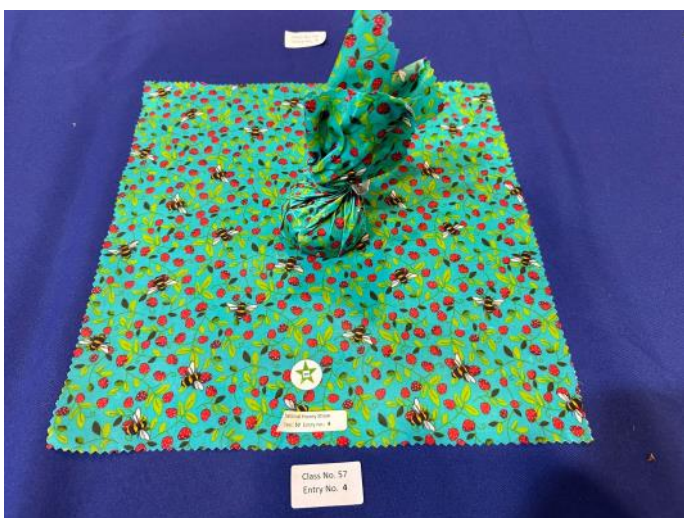




## Photo report: Winter wax workshop (continued)



## B&L member stars at the 2024 Honey Show



Judge(s): Eleanor Attridge

**Class entries / awards - Winners Only 2024**

| Entry No. | Name                 | Town        | Country            | County Points to | Award |
|-----------|----------------------|-------------|--------------------|------------------|-------|
| 57        | Two Beeswax Wraps    |             |                    | Entries: 21      |       |
| 2         | ★ Mrs Lisa Riley     | Runeaton    | Warwickshire       |                  | 1st   |
| 11        | ★ Mr Bill Fisher     | Chorleywood | Buckinghamshire    |                  | 2nd   |
| 4         | ★ Mrs Miriam Uzzaman | Brighton    | Sussex             |                  | 3rd   |
| 1         | ★ Mrs Liane Dorrell  | Blackburn   | Lancashire & North |                  | VIC   |
| 19        | ★ Mr Michael Brand   | Cupar       | Scotland           |                  | HC    |
| 20        | ★ Ms Tracy Hood      | Southampton | Hampshire          |                  | C     |

Judge(s): Bill Fisher

**Class entries / awards - Winners Only 2024**

| Entry No. | Name  | Town               | Country | County Points to | Award |
|-----------|---|--------------------|---------|------------------|-------|
| 242       | Two Jars Medium Honey (Sussex members only) |                    |         | Entries: 10      |       |
| 10        | ★ Miss Lesley Francis                       | St Leonards-on-Sea | Sussex  |                  | 1st   |
| 2         | ★ Mrs Miriam Uzzaman                        | Brighton           | Sussex  |                  | 2nd   |
| 1         | ★ Mr Malcolm Wilkie                         | St Leonards on Sea | Sussex  |                  | 3rd   |
| 6         | ★ Mr Richard Ramsden                        | Dorking            | Sussex  |                  | VIC   |

Congratulations to B&L regular Mim Uzzaman who has won awards for both her wax wraps (third in the Beeswax Wraps class) and her honey (second in Jars of Medium Honey class) at the National Honey Show, held at Sandown Park on 24-26 October 2024. Well done Mim!



## Winter meetings 2024-25

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|--------------------|----------|--|
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| Wednesday 16 April | Live     | The special language of bees, by Margaret Murdin   |

- All meetings are LIVE and start at 1915 for 1930, at Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Lewes BN7 2LR

### Next Bee Chat

TBD

### Deadlines

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

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

## National Bee Unit Inspectors

### Seasonal Bee Inspectors

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**grassroots grants** The co-operative membership Community Fund

Managed by the Community Development Foundation  
Funded by the Office of the Third Sector

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**Sussex BKA County Representative:** Vacant

**National Honey Show Rep:** Vacant

**Disclaimer:** Brighton and Lewes Division of the SBKA cannot accept any responsibility for loss, injury or damage sustained by persons in consequence of their participation in activities arranged by the Division.