



The *Apiarist*

..... *High Weald Beekeepers' Newsletter*

Editor's Buzz....

And so another season begins! By all accounts a lot of peoples' bees are romping away. Mine are not so far advanced, but the location of my hives means they tend to be a bit behind. It gives me more time to get myself sorted for swarming! Don't forget – BEE prepared. They can be quite sneaky those bees!

Sam Bowles

Chairman's Chatter

Well, it looks like 2019 might be shaping up to be a real ripsnorter.

I took advantage of that amazing warm snap at the end of February to make my first inspection...risking the consequences of ending up with a queen-less colony as per Malcolm's Topical Tip of a few weeks ago. However, unlike many folk I leave all the supers 'on' over the winter with at least one full super to get the bees through the winter. I'm sure it must be better for the bees, saves me storing lots of supers and the bees keep them immaculately clean all winter long. It's a good strategy for a lazy beekeeper like yours truly. It's also a good system for a tightwad who resents buying kilos of the old Tate & Lyle (other products

are available). The downside is that I do need to do an early inspection if only to put the queen excluders back before the queen starts laying up the first super. To my amazement, on the 27th February one colony had brood on 6 frames already... a very pleasant surprise, and they were the nice bees too. I suspect I'll pay for this early build up when they all start swarming soon. Most recently I found drones and queen cups during an inspection at the end of March

A highlight in March for me was the talk about Asian Hornets by Bob Hogg from the Jersey Beekeepers' (see later). It was original and informative. Bob has become very knowledgeable through necessity since Jersey became the latest conquest in the relentless march of these invaders. Bob is rather idiosyncratic and charming and peppered his talk with humorous anecdotes. What I liked most was the way he has completely embraced the threat in a light-hearted way, even to the extent he has a genuine liking for his enemy...which is not to say he is not doing his damndest to control the problem ... possibly more than most.

We all react to potential threats differently but many of us experience a sense of anxiety and

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 12-14 April – BBKA Spring Convention
- 30 April – Bee Banter Mayfield
- 18th May – SBKA Bee Market
- 25th May – Re-queening Workshop
- 28th May – Bee Banter Mayfield
- 1st June – Brood Disease Workshop
- 22nd June – Taster Day
- 25th June – Bee Banter Mayfield

Full Calendar & Details

<http://hwbka.org.uk/events/>

even resentment, viz Brexit whichever side of the divide you're on, and which does rather take the enjoyment out of life. Embracing the Asian Hornet problem as Bob has gives him some power with it and even some fun. As he said, it's going to happen so we may as well embrace it!that which we resist only persists.

Peter Coxon

Re-Queening a ghastly colony: a cautionary tale!

As beginners, David, my bee partner, and I thought this bee keeping malarkey was just great. A bit of a mystery, but at times fascinating. The beginners' bee course was very helpful and the bees did roughly what we expected them to do – or so I thought! Then in mid July we discovered we had a colony with a drone laying bee/s. On Malcolm's advice we "chucked the bees in a hedge", at least we did once I'd found out what that meant. After that brutality we left the bees alone to settle for 3 weeks and David left the bees to me to look after as he'd been stung and had a very bad reaction.

After the 3 weeks were up (early August), I went in for a proper look and inspected them from the top down. I now realise that's not a good idea (sorry Malcolm, was obviously asleep when you told us how it should be done!). The top super had 3 frames of bees and was manageable. The next super had 7 frames of bees and they were more aggressive but I managed to look through the frames. When I got to the brood box, close to the brood nest, it was impossible. There were masses of bees. They flew directly at me and landed all over me. Wearing a tee shirt under the bee suit, I got stung on my arms. I abandoned. Apart from anything

else, I couldn't see what I was doing through the cloud of bees. I contacted Malcolm for advice. He said "Regicide!" The Queen I'd originally bought had given me a lovely calm colony. This one had been raised by the colony following a Pagden manipulation and she was bad. The good news was Malcolm had a nuc with an apidea-raised Queen and, more to the point, offered to help me kill off the horrible Queen. Originally the plan was just to go in and find her but after more discussion we settled on a slightly different approach, as I couldn't see that even Malcolm's expert eyes would be able to find my Queen given number of bees in the colony and their murderous intent.

The plan

- set up a new hive close to the existing one to take the new Queen and bees
- the existing colony would be moved, approx. 20m away, the Queen would be killed and the colony encouraged to combine with the new bees and Queen
- and possibly, if the horrible bees didn't kill the new Queen first, she would transform the ghastly bees into happy bees

Preparation

First job was to take off both supers to make the hive lighter to carry. The intention was to put in a cover board with bee portals below each super to progressively move the bees into the brood box. I failed. I managed to get one cover board in but abandoned at that point. The bees were even more aggressive and frankly I was too scared to finish the job. By the time I'd finished, my gloves (heavy-duty Marigolds) were covered with stings sticking into the rubber! A few days later I took off the top super, which was almost empty of bees. I also prepared the

site for the temporary location of the hive.

Re-Queening

A week later (mid August) we did the deed

- in the afternoon: set up new hive (brood box only), adjacent to ghastly colony for the new Queen and her bees. Brood box had 6 frames of brood with new Queen and bees from Malcolm, and 5 frames of drawn/undrawn foundation
- entrance block was added to ghastly bees' hive to make it easier to stuff the entrance with foam later to keep all the bees inside
- at dusk, really quite dark, we put the foam in and carried ghastly bees to new site. Once in place, the foam was pulled out. No bees appeared I'm pleased to say.

The idea was that in the morning the foragers would go out foraging and, on the way back, would return to the site of their original home where they would find instead, the newly populated hive which, hopefully, would let them in.

The next day

- A good amount of traffic at the new hive. No evidence of the ghastly bees being warned off. Pollen going in.
- Hardly any traffic at ghastly bees' hive so we hoped a good number had already decamped. Actually, there were still loads of bees in the hive but Malcolm found the Queen and squished her. Hurrah!
- Then the bees were carried frame by frame to the new hive, were given a coating of icing sugar (to encourage the bee guards to let them in) and then shaken on to the grass near the hive.

- The comb from the remaining super was chucked into the apiary for the bees to collect the honey.
- Empty frames, boxes etc were gathered up and shut in the shed. Actually this was a mistake. I should have taken the stuff home to clean straight away. Some bees smelt honey and found a way into the shed, causing chaos for a few days and great unpopularity for me!

After 24 hours the piles of bees both by the new hive and at the temporary hive site had disappeared.

Malcolm said to leave them for at least 6 weeks to let the Queen establish herself. I kept an eye on hive activity and it looked good, with lots of pollen going in. At the end of August I put on a rapid feeder. At first, topping up the feeder was an unpleasant task as the bees were not very nice but after 3 – 4 weeks they started to calm down. I was hopeful.



By the time 6 weeks were up the weather was cold so I waited until it warmed up properly before opening the box. Other than feeding and sublimating they were undisturbed for 7 months. The result was amazing. A beautiful Queen, the box was stuffed full with calm bees, 7 frames of brood and lots of stores. I added a super and away we go!

All in all a great success. But I was lucky. It happened when a Queen and brood was available; I started with a lot of bees; and I was able to

leave the bees undisturbed to establish themselves. Though it all seemed a bit grim at the time, I think the bee-gods were with me.



Fiona celebrating!

Fiona Henniker

Asian Hornets in Jersey

Lecture by Bob Hogg in the Uckfield Civic centre, March 26, 2019



(Bob & Team in Jersey)

Bob started by saying beekeeping wasn't that easy in Jersey, because the most famous products, Jersey potatoes and Jersey cows mean that the crops aren't particularly good (the potato plant has a short flowering season, and grassland doesn't produce much pollen for pollinators).

But Bob initiated what he calls The Bee Field, an area where he plants flowers and bushes that are pollinator friendly, and invites schools etc to visit.

In 2017 he was part of a "Bio Blitz", where people gather all kinds of insects and fauna, and ask scientists to tell you what you have found. One of the scientists said "do you know you have Asian Hornets here? Bob had seen some stray Hornets, but had thought they were odd visitors from France.

Soon after he came across a sick oak tree with lots of sap oozing out from it, and noticed a single Asian Hornet gathering sap from this oak. This was July 2017, and he decided to catch and mark the Hornet, and try and figure out where her nest was. She was coming back repeatedly to the sick oak tree, but Bob lost her as soon as she flew into the woods. He caught and marked three more Asian Hornets, but lost track of those as well when they flew into the woods.

The first question he asked himself was how fast an Asian Hornet would fly, to try and calculate the distance to the nest based on the time it took for her to return to the food source. He didn't know, in spite of asking around over the whole world of experts.

In August 2017 he decided to place traps to attract the Asian Hornets, and found that Suterra Trappit hornet bait solution worked well, and started to place this on yellow buckets placed upside-down. He later was told that this was a perfect choice, since Asian Hornets are attracted to yellow things. But he just bought the yellow buckets because they were the cheapest!

He still couldn't follow the Asian Hornets to the nest, and started to investigate what might be the most likely type of tree that the Hornets would build their nest in. Of the five most popular trees only oak was

common on Jersey, so he thought he could focus on looking in oak trees.

But now a problem arose. The Jersey government representatives told him that he shouldn't interfere with their work putting out traps. While they killed the trapped Asian Hornets, Bob marked them and let them free again (in order to try and follow them to the nest). This frustrated Bob, but he obeyed instructions for a while. One weekend he decided to set out his baits (he figured no civil servant worked on a weekend) and placed some buckets with the Sutterra bait solution. He soon had Asian Hornets finding the bait, and so moved the bait closer and closer to where they flew back. He now had them coming back within one minute, so figured he was very close to their nest. But even when going in 90-degree angles and placing new baits, he still couldn't see any nest.

He realized he needed more people to help him, and thought he should try an area with fewer trees. So soon after this he and some friends selected an area close to the previous site, and this time they could trace the Asian Hornets to what had to be their nest. But it still took a while for them to spot the actual nest – up high in a Sycamore tree! And it wasn't Bob himself that spotted the nest, to some disappointment, but one of his friends.

Using this method, they started to try and track down more nests, and found two primary nests with queens, and 8 secondary nests (the bigger nest built by the worker hornets from the primary nest).

(My note: The method Bob developed was actually known by bee scientists from before, and also used by native bee gatherers around the world to track down feral bee

nests in order to collect honey. But he didn't know this at the time, and only learnt that later. The American bee scientist Tom Seeley for example used this method, and lectured on this in the 2017 National Honey Show – you can find it on YouTube under the title "Honey Bees in the Wild – part 2")

The first nest, found in the Sycamore tree, caused a big sensation. The Fire



Brigade sent up a drone to inspect it, and the Asian Hornets attacked the drone! This was broadcast worldwide, and the BBC interviewed Bob.

By this time it is obvious that Bob is not only fascinated by the Asian Hornets, he admits that "he loves them", and even tried to breed them at home. He claims they are very discreet, and don't attack unless heavily provoked. He told us about nests found in bicycle sheds, where the children have taken their bicycles in and out every day, not being aware of the Asian Hornet nest above their heads! But he agrees that a big secondary nest should be approached with care. While a lone Queen is shy and will normally fly away if detected, a big nest with lots of hornets will attack

an intruder in order to protect the nest.

In 2018 Bob and friends used his method to track down 13 Primary nests, and 37 Secondary nests. And that was probably not all of the nests on Jersey! The first nest was found April 23rd that year.

The good thing that have come out of all this publicity is that the public on Jersey are now very aware of the

Asian hornet problem, and help report any sightings to either the Fire Brigade, or named people in the Asian Hornet Action Teams on Jersey. Bob thinks this is key to find nests early on.

Bob now has a good idea about how fast an Asian Hornet flies – about 3.2 meter/second. This helps when calculating how far the nest is, if you trap and mark an Asian Hornet and measure how long it takes her to come back to the bait.

But Bob has since learned that it's not enough to remove a nest once – the remaining Asian Hornets in the area will quickly start to build a new nest at, or very close to, the original spot. You need to try and remove all traces of the old nest, or other Asian Hornet queens will take back the space! This year (2019) Bob and team will try and attract the Asian

Hornets to nests in prepared places, baiting with remains of previously destroyed nests. It will be interesting to hear from him later on how this worked out.

Bob and team remove the nests at night, using IR light to see in the dark. The trapping and tracking of Asian Hornets will continue in 2019, and Bob and team will even try the old method of attaching a thin fishing line to an Asian Hornet, with a small feather at the end of the line. This helps when trying to follow the Asian Hornet back to the nest.

Bob also reminded us to save Asian Hornets from any found and destroyed nest. This will help scientists to analyse where they came from, using DNA analysing methods.

One challenge for us in the UK is that according to EU law you are not allowed to release an Asian Hornet once it has been trapped. You should kill it! But this makes it almost impossible to find the nest. We will need to decide how to deal with this if (or rather when) Asian Hornets are reported in our area.

Bob ended the lecture on a positive note – the threat from the Asian Hornets is real, but we will manage it. There are several ways to protect your beehives, for example letting grass and Bramble grow quite high in front of the beehive. This is to let the bees have somewhere to hide from the lurking Asian Hornets, as well as disturbing the Asian Hornet when they try and catch the bee. And there are “muzzles” to place in front of the hive entrance, which helps somewhat.

Bob ended his lecture by challenging us to try different methods, and to share experiences between us in the Association.

In the Q&A session he made it clear that he is sceptical about the use of Spring traps. You might trap and kill some Asian Hornets, but you are more likely to trap and kill many harmless pollinators.

On the question of has he been stung, he admitted to have been stung three times. But he claims that the Asian Hornet normally only make a warning sting, if on her own, and this stick doesn't hurt much. But again – to approach a big Secondary nest is a different matter – he will use a double layer bee suit then.

Notes by Paul Lindström, HWBKA

First Inspection

Hopefully all of your bees came through winter successfully and are now bringing in lots of pollen. Please do keep a check on their food stores, as there is still a risk of starvation, especially if we have a cold snap and there are more mouths to feed. If needed, you can either continue with fondant, or give them a thin syrup mix (1 pint water: 1 lb sugar).

With the improved weather you should be able to carry out your first inspections. Choose a dry (sunny?) day, 12 degrees or more and no wind. I use cloths to keep the frames covered and only expose one frame at a time. Although the queen should be easy to find, the reason for the inspection is to confirm the state of the hive.

1. How many frames of brood are there and in what stage (eggs, larvae, capped)?
2. Is the brood healthy or are there any deformities?
3. How many frames of stores do they have?
4. Importantly, how much space is there for the queen to lay? If all frames are full, remove one frame of capped stores (or pollen) and replace with a fresh frame of foundation. Put this

next to the brood. If an outside frame has space, move this next to the brood.

5. Consider putting on a super. If the brood box is cramped then this is a must. As well as storing fresh nectar, the bees will move honey up from the brood box creating space for the queen to lay eggs.
6. Finally, check for play cups / queen cells. There is an expectation that the swarming season will be early this year so you need to be prepared. Have you got equipment ready for immediate use and a plan of action in place? When I checked my hives yesterday, one colony had eight large play cups (almost queen cell sized)!

I hope you all have a successful season and get pleasure from your beekeeping.

Steve Davies

Polynuc sublimation box

In response to a friend's request to sublimate her bees, I had to be 'creative' in treating the colony in a Payne's poly-nuc. With conventional hives, I tend to turn over the varroa tray and sublimate through the mesh floor. This clearly could not be done with the poly-nuc and a sublimation box had to be made.

I opted not to make it full width to concentrate the fumes up into the poly-nuc. It could, however, easily be adapted if that is your preferred choice.

Materials:

Two lengths 400mm x 50mm timber (all frame timber was 20mm thick)

Two lengths 265mm x 50mm timber

One length 450mm x 270mm plywood (any sized thickness will do, I used 5mm)

Small offcuts of timber 1 ½ " (36mm) nails

½ " (12.5mm) tacks our frame nails

Wood glue

Method:

- Cut all wood to size. Leave plywood slightly oversized and sand back on completion.
- Assemble 50mm framework with 1½ " nails pinning and gluing all joints.
- Cut out 'entrance' rebate 20mm high and across the full, internal, length.
- Pin and glue plywood to framework using ½" nails making sure it is below the entrance rebate.
- Sand down any plywood overlapping the frame.
- Pin and glue an off cut to the inside of the plywood approx. 170mm from the back end. This will be your depth stop for your vaporiser.
- *Optional* - Pin and glue two small off cuts and a 15-degree angle to the depth stop. These need to be slightly wider than your vaporiser tray and will act as guide rails. NOTE: the mesh in the Payne's poly-nuc is offset slightly due to the inbuilt feeder. The guide rails will need to take this into account. The centre point that I worked round was 190mm from the back end and 90mm from one side.
- Add draft excluder around the top surface of the frame to seal



the box to the poly-nuc.
Timber ready for assembly (note entrance rebate).

Framework on bottom of poly-nuc to check alignment.

Completed box showing entrance



rebate, off set depth stop, guide rails and draught excluder.

Vaporiser in place and entrance



rebate blocked with foam.



Poly-nuc on top of sublimation box, ready for use.

I use the Vapmite vaporiser and the measurements have taken this into account. You may need to adapt slightly if you use another product.

This has been made specifically to administer varroa treatment via sublimation. My next project will be a hive stand with landing board and inbuilt varroa inspection tray/sublimation tray for the polynuc. As it is in constant use, with occasional sublimation, the priorities are different and it is full width.

Steve Davies

[Annual Bee Market 2019](#)

The High Weald Beekeepers will once again be involved in the Sussex Beekeepers Association Annual Bee Market, to be held on Saturday the 18th May at the Heathfield Community College.

We will be hosting the Plant and Honey Stall and invite members to donate or provide plants for us to sell on the day (a commission is taken from the sale price). Volunteers are also required. You don't have to be there all day, just volunteer for whatever you can spare us on the day! Many hands make light work and it's a lot of a fun too.

If you wish to bring plants for sale please ensure that they are labelled and priced up correctly. This helps us to ensure we know what we are talking about! A form will also need to be filled out and this will be sent out nearer the date.

Any questions please contact a member of the Committee. Any questions please contact a member of the Committee.

An unusual approach to Biological Warfare?!

A friend, who is a paper conservator, was invited to look at some very old documents held in Oxford, which are thought to date from the time of Edward III. She sent me the attached photo. The picture was at the back of a volume of illuminated pieces, and it seems that the artist never quite got around to colouring it in. Nevertheless, it appears to show attack techniques (in warfare); the usual slingshots and arrows, but also launching beehives off a windmill! Most extraordinary. Poor bees!



HWBKA Activities

Finally, for all those uncomfortable using our website to find out what is going on, here's the HWBKA diary for 2019

2019	Date	Event
Sat	08-Dec	Members Workshop (Oxalic Acid treatment)
Mon	17-Dec	Members Workshop (Oxalic Acid treatment No.2)
Wed	09-Jan	HWBKA Committee Meeting
Mon	21-Jan	SBKA committee meeting
Tue	29-Jan	Educational Talk - Pollination – Plants and Bees
Tue	05-Feb	HWBKA Committee Uckfield SANGS visit
Sat	23-Feb	WSBKA Annual Convention
Tue	26-Feb	Bee Banter - Rose and Crown, Mayfield
Thu	28-Feb	Lotions and Potions Workshop
Sat	02-Mar	SBKA AGM: (East Grinstead)
Thu	07-Mar	Educational Talk - Queen rearing
Sat	09-Mar	Apiary Working Party
Sat	16-Mar	Beginners Course - 1
Mon	18-Mar	SBKA committee meeting
Sat	23-Mar	BBKA Module Exams
Sat	23-Mar	Withyham Parish Assembly
Tue	26-Mar	Bee Banter - Crow and Gate, Crowborough
Tue	26-Mar	SBKA – Talk about Asian Hornets by Bob Hogg
Wed	03-Apr	Educational Talk - Swarm Control
Sat	06-Apr	Beginners Course - 2
Sat	13-Apr	Beginners & Members Workshop Combined (Bee Hives & Equipment?)
Fri	19-Apr	Good Friday
Sun	21-Apr	Easter Sunday
Mon	22-Apr	Easter Monday
Sat	27-Apr	Beginners Course - 3
Sat	27-Apr	Heffle Cuckoo Fair
Tue	30-Apr	Bee Banter - Rose and Crown, Mayfield
Thu	02-May	HWBKA Committee meeting
Mon	06-May	Early May Bank Holiday
Sat	18-May	SBKA Bee Market
Sun	19-May	Beginners Course - 4
Sat	25-May	Heathfield Show
Sat	25-May	Members Workshop - requeening a bad-tempered colony
Mon	27-May	Spring Bank holiday
Tue	28-May	Bee Banter - Crow and Gate, Crowborough
Sat	01-Jun	Members Workshop (Brood disease)
Thu	06-Jun	South of England Show
Thu	07-Jun	South of England Show
Sat	08-Jun	South of England Show
Sat	15-Jun	Beginners Course - 5
Sat	22-Jun	Taster Day
Tue	25-Jun	Bee Banter - Rose and Crown, Mayfield
Sat	06-Jul	*** TBC - The Cobnut Food Fair (St John's Nursery)
Sat	06-Jul	Langton Summer Fair
Sun	07-Jul	*** TBC - The Cobnut Food Fair (St John's Nursery)
Sat	13-Jul	*** TBC - BBQ
Sat	13-Jul	Beginners Course - 6 (bee safari)
Sat	13-Jul	Crowborough Summer Fair
Sat	20-Jul	Members Workshop (Requeening a bad-tempered colony?)
Tue	30-Jul	Bee Banter - Crow and Gate, Crowborough
Sat	03-Aug	Beginners Course - 7
Sat	03-Aug	Weald on the Field - Luxford Field, Uckfield
Sat	10-Aug	Framfield and Blackboys Show
Sat	17-Aug	Members Workshop (Winter preparations?)
Fri	23-Aug	French Exchange
Sat	24-Aug	French Exchange
Sun	25-Aug	French Exchange
Mon	26-Aug	Summer Bank holiday
Tue	27-Aug	Bee Banter - Rose and Crown, Mayfield
Sat	07-Sep	Beginners Course - 8
Sat	07-Sep	Hartfield Fete
Sat	21-Sep	Apiary Working Party
Tue	24-Sep	Bee Banter - Crow and Gate, Crowborough
Fri	27-Sep	*** TBC - Weald Woodfair (Bentley Wildfowl & Motor Museum)
Sat	28-Sep	*** TBC - Weald Woodfair (Bentley Wildfowl & Motor Museum)
Sun	29-Sep	*** TBC - Weald Woodfair (Bentley Wildfowl & Motor Museum)
Thu	24-Oct	National Honey Show: (Sandown Park Racecourse)
Fri	25-Oct	National Honey Show: (Sandown Park Racecourse)
Sat	26-Oct	Apiary Working Party
Sat	26-Oct	National Honey Show: (Sandown Park Racecourse)
Tue	29-Oct	Bee Banter - Rose and Crown, Mayfield
Sat	02-Nov	SBKA Autumn Convention
Sat	09-Nov	BBKA Module Exams
Sat	16-Nov	HWBKA AGM and Honey Show
Tue	26-Nov	Bee Banter - Crow and Gate, Crowborough
Sat		Christmas Do
Sat		East Sussex WI
Sat		Skep Making
Sat		Wax Workshop