



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

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## From our Chair



*Karin Courtman  
chair@lbka.org.uk*

Thanks to everyone who helped out on the April and May Introductory Courses. Despite the grim weather forecasts, it was mostly dry and we were able to open

hives on all days. We now have up to 60 people looking for mentors. Previous students say that the mentoring is the best bit. It would be great if more beekeeping members would act as mentors. Please contact Tristram on [mentoring@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentoring@lbka.org.uk) if you are interested in being a mentor this season.

Swarm season has started and so far we have collected a number of swarms, which makes me think this will be a swarmy year as we only collected a total of 6 over the whole of last season. 2 of the 3 swarms came out of air bricks high up on the sides of buildings. Hopefully we will be able to use these swarms later in the year to stock the new LBKA apiary we are setting up on Mudchute Farm in East London.

Finally, are you looking for a site for your bees? One of our members has agreed to visit and risk assess the new site we have been offered in Victoria. The idea is that if possible this will be a site which 3 or 4 members could share, as happens at the Hospice on Clapham Northside. If the site isn't big enough, the company have already indicated that they have other sites that they may be able to offer us. Please let me know if you are looking for a site.

## Announcements

### June meeting

We've had to move the date of our June monthly meeting and it will now be on **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June** at the usual time (11:00) in the usual place (Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY).

Howard Nichols will lead this session on how to make up a nucleus and how to introduce a queen to a colony. This will be followed by the usual coffee, biscuits and chat.

### We have nucs available!

We're in the middle of the swarming season and our Chair Karin is currently looking after the swarms that our members collect. She tests/treats for varroa and manages them in order to bring to the BBKA nuc standard. Queens are marked and clipped. Bees are tested for temperament and if necessary they are requeened. Once they are ready, we sell them to members for £140. You can either bring their own box the day before or borrow an LBKA nuc box (returnable deposit of £40).

If you would like to purchase a nuc, please email [nucs@lbka.org.uk](mailto:nucs@lbka.org.uk), giving an indication of your experience. We recommend that people have done a basic beekeeping course and have been mentored for a season before getting their own bees.



### LBKA at Brompton Cemetery

The LBKA will be at Brompton Cemetery open day for the first time this year. We will only have a small stand and we will be giving away leaflets and seeds (for a donation). There will also be chance for beekeepers to sell their honey. If you would like to join the team to sell your honey on July 20th please contact Jon Harris ([treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk)). As space is restricted, it will be on a first come first served basis.



[debikirksey.blogspot.com](http://debikirksey.blogspot.com)

### Nightingale School in Tooting

This special needs school has a farm attached with beehive and the new farm manager is trying to make contact with the beekeeper. Please contact Richard Glassborow ([apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk)) if you have ever kept or know anyone who has kept a colony at Nightingale School in Tooting.

### Members advertising to members

We're planning to have a section in the newsletter (and perhaps on the website in future) to enable members to offer beekeeping-related products and services directly to other members. This would include honey, nucs, queens, wax. Although LBKA would not be involved assessing the quality of items advertised, we would draw attention to the BBKA nuc standard guidelines for those who wish to sell nucs (<http://bit.ly/1ICQjUw>).

If you are a member and would like to offer beekeeping-related products or services to other members in the newsletter, please email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

### More than Honey

The excellent **More than Honey** film is being shown at the **Clapham Picture House on 2<sup>nd</sup> June**:

<https://www.ourscreen.com/film-details/149577>.

Member Emily Heath wrote some of her thoughts on the film on her blog:

<http://adventuresinbeeland.com/2013/09/22/thoughts-on-more-than-honey/>

### Bee Lab Citizen Science Project

The Bee Lab project is an Open Source bee hive monitoring kit designed for National beehives. They are looking for volunteers who want to monitor their colonies for temperature, humidity and the weight of their hive.

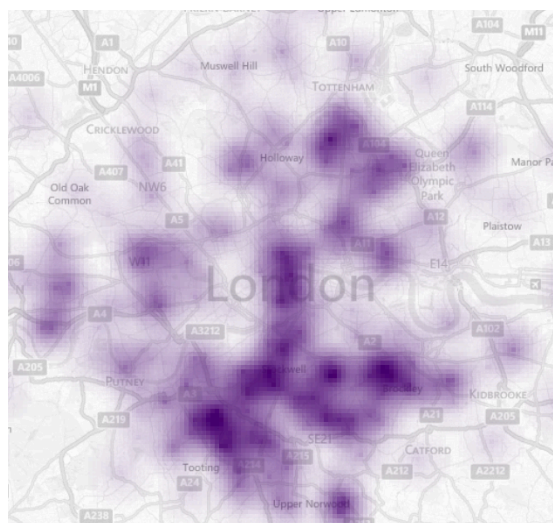




See <http://beelab.org/recruitment/> for more information. If anyone manages to take part, do let us know!

## Members

We now have almost 300 members, including those complementary memberships that we give to all students who take our introductory courses. The map below indicates the density of our members and their hives. It does indicate the logistical problems we sometimes have placing mentees with mentors. If you are interested in mentoring and live in one of the lighter areas, we may be looking for people like you!



## Call for volunteers!

We are looking for helpers on the LBKA stall at these 2 events:

- Lambeth Country Show, Brockwell Park, weekend of 19th and 20th July
- Brompton Cemetery Open Day, Sunday 20th July - we are looking for people who would like to sell their honey, as well as general volunteers

Both events are really good fun to do and the duties not too taxing!

Emily Abbott ([emilyabbott@virginmedia.com](mailto:emilyabbott@virginmedia.com)) is coordinating us all, so please drop her an email if you're able to help and she'll be back in touch sorting out details next week.

## Newsletter

Thanks to Jon Harris, Emily Heath (via her excellent blog), Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Simon Wilks for their contributions this month.

Please contact Aidan at [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) if you'd like to discuss writing an article. I'd encourage you to do so!

## May in the apiary

Howard Nichols  
[education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk)

### Where should we be with our colonies at this time of year

May (and June) is all about swarm control. Routine inspections should be made each 7 days to check for queen cells. If 2 brood boxes are used (brood and a half or double brood) then the bees nearly always build some of their queen cells between the 2 boxes. A simple routine check may be made by lifting / tilting the upper brood chamber to inspect the bottom of the frames in the upper box. It is not necessary to remove all frames using this quick method although it is not foolproof. The only way to be entirely sure is to remove each frame then carefully and systematically inspect each one. Even then a queen cell hidden behind bees may be missed.



Shared by Daniel Toth via Facebook

## Signs of swarming

Swarm control action is only needed when 1 or more queen cells are seen. Build up of drones or drone brood is not a sign of swarm

preparations. Neither is the building of queen cups unless containing larva and royal jelly.

### Action to be taken

Quick but not immediate action is required. Do not feel intimidated into taking immediate action. There is time to close up the colony, think matters through and collate necessary equipment. Do not attempt to destroy the queen cell, as this will not remove the swarming impulse. Best solution is **Artificial Swarm method** but this does depend upon finding the queen. Most beekeeping textbooks cover this method.

### What if the queen is not marked?

If the queen is unmarked then shook swarm is the sensible option. A spare brood box is needed. It is disruptive for the bees but not harmful. Again, textbooks cover this method.

Other action to be taken this month includes the following:

- Add supers as necessary, adding another in advance of it being needed by the bees.
- Use May nectar flow to draw out some foundation into drawn frames.
- Check varroa mite drop if not done in April.
- Make sure you have sufficient spare equipment for swarm control.

## May in the forage patch

*Mark Patterson*  
[forage@lbka.org.uk](mailto:forage@lbka.org.uk)

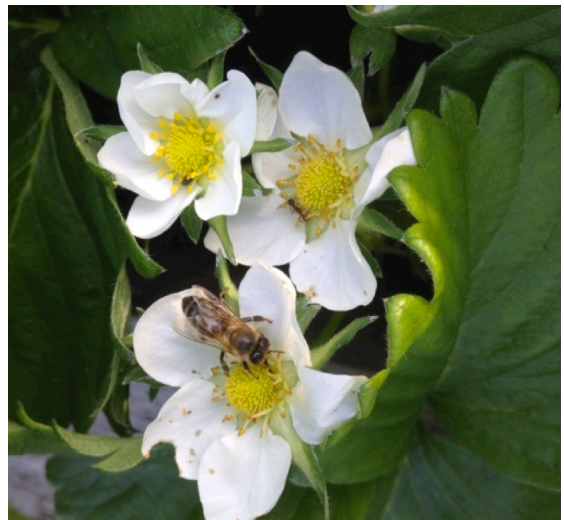
Timings of the seasons seem to have gone mad this year. A recent report by the inter-governmental panel on climate change suggests plants are flowering a week earlier per decade than they were a century ago. This year it feels like everything is a whole month earlier than the norm. The rate of change in timings of the seasons is alarming for conservationists who are worried that our wild pollinators emerging from hibernation might be affected.

A very early spring has seen most of our spring flowers come and go already. At a time of year when I would expect many of my late flowering fruit trees on the allotment to still be blossoming I'm finding fairly advanced fruit being born already.

Early spring flowers have all finished now and the later spring flowers like blue bells, Aquilegia



*Cotoneaster*



*Strawberry*



*Red Horse Chestnut*



and wallflower are now going over as well. A good month or more ahead of their usual flowering times Catmints, coreopsis, lavender, oriental poppy, Echinops and other summer flowering plants are already making an appearance. I've even got an Echinacea coming into flower in my garden which doesn't usually bloom until July. Many of our wild flowers have also been and gone. Hawthorn, also referred to as May flower has flowered in April this year in many parts of London and most bushes are already sporting tiny green berries.

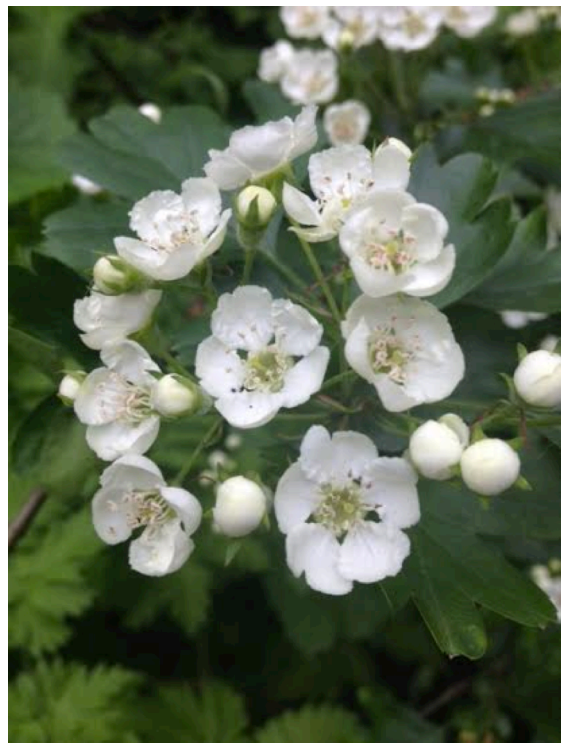
So with all this seasonal earliness, what might out honey bees be foraging on in May? Well there is currently a bumper show of horse chestnut throughout the capital and the lime trees will be following any week now. Already I've seen several lime trees showing signs of flower buds. With the abundance of chestnut and lime blossom we can expect a big nectar flow and a busy month for our bees. If you haven't got supers on your hives already (the hives at the association apiaries have up to 3 supers on already!) then now is the time to get them on if you a) want a honey crop and b) reduce overcrowding which can contribute to swarming.

Other prominent sources of nectar to be found in the city this month include Catoniaster, Pyracantha and Ceonothus which are all coming into flower. Clover will soon come into flower. Those of us close to large open areas such as Wormwood Scrubs or city parks where the grass is allowed to grow can expect our bees to forage on this.

Blackberry is also in flower in many parts of the city. Riding the tube last week (between the strikes) I've whizzed past some large flowering bramble patches in zones 1 and 2. This is a plant not normally in bloom until July and is an important constituent of London honey.

If you want to know what sources of forage your bees are exploiting one way to investigate is to study the pollens the bees bring back to the hive. Right now toffee coloured pollens (*Prunus*) rich chestnut brown pollen (red horse chestnut) pale greens (*Acer*) pale yellows (sprouting broccoli, Elder and *Salix*) green/grey (*Cotoneaster*) and bright red (red dead nettle) feature prominently in my hives. A good book to help you identify them is "A colour guide to the pollen loads of the honey bee" by William Kirk published by the IBRA.

The early spring appears to have been beneficial to our bees with plenty for them to forage on but the question on many minds as we head into June and July will be 'what will there be to feed on then as most of the early



Hawthorn



Green alkanet

summer flowers will have been and gone already.

Most trees and shrubs only flower once per year so if they flower early, once they are over they are over until the following spring. It is possible to extent or repeat the flowering of many of our garden herbaceous plants though

by cutting them down before they set seed, giving them a good feed and watering which will encourage them to flower again. More on that next month.

## April Monthly Meeting and EGM

Howard Nichols and Aidan Slingsby  
[education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk), [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

Attendance at the meeting was about 30 in number.

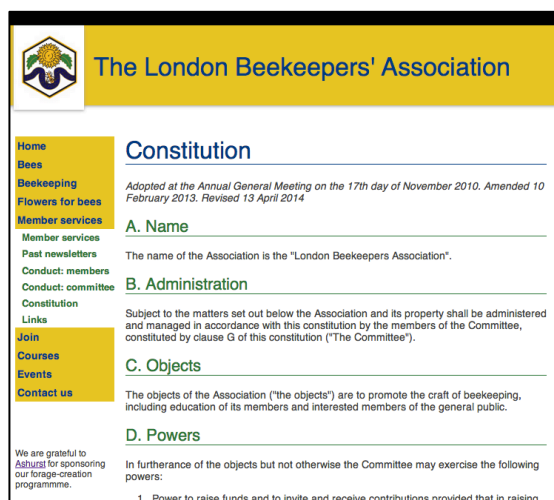
### Statements

At the commencement Howard Nichols made a statement to quash a rumour that had started to circulate. Richard Glassborow then read out a detailed, prepared statement regarding the misconduct of a tiny minority of members. The purpose of this was to inform the wider membership of happenings.

### EGM

The business of the meeting then commenced as an EGM.

Abby Taubin and Simon Wilks **proposed some constitutional amendments** in consultation with David Hankins of the LBKA committee. All of these passed by healthy majorities and our updated Constitution is available from the website at <http://lbka.org.uk/constitution.html>. We thank Abby, Simon and David for the hard work in improving our Constitution.



The screenshot shows the website for The London Beekeepers' Association. The header features the association's logo and name. A navigation menu on the left includes links for Home, Bees, Beekeeping, Flowers for bees, Member services, Past newsletters, Conduct: members, Conduct: committee, Constitution, Links, Join, Courses, Events, and Contact us. The main content area is titled 'Constitution' and includes the following text: 'Adopted at the Annual General Meeting on the 17th day of November 2010. Amended 10 February 2013. Revised 13 April 2014'. Below this are sections A. Name, B. Administration, C. Objects, and D. Powers. Section A. Name states: 'The name of the Association is the "London Beekeepers Association"'. Section B. Administration states: 'Subject to the matters set out below the Association and its property shall be administered and managed in accordance with this constitution by the members of the Committee, constituted by clause G of this constitution ("The Committee")'. Section C. Objects states: 'The objects of the Association ("the objects") are to promote the craft of beekeeping, including education of its members and interested members of the general public'. Section D. Powers states: 'In furtherance of the objects but not otherwise the Committee may exercise the following powers: 1. Power to raise funds and to invite and receive contributions provided that in raising

Sharon Basseys motion **"in future our AGM will be only for association business and not taken up by a speaker"** was discussed but this motion did not pass. However the

committee will reconsider the format of this year's AGM and will try and make space for Association business to be discussed. We thank Sharon for bringing the motion and the useful discussion it promoted.

### Swarm control

The meeting then turned to the usual format which this month dealt with the topic of swarm control. The swarming season is now upon us and this topical subject was covered by Richard Glassborow. Due to time constraints he dealt with Artificial Swarm only, which relies upon finding the queen. A marked queen makes it so much easier. Richard combined Artificial Swarm with a varroa control method which most people found illuminating. After questions and answers and general discussion the meeting ended for a more informal and sociable chat.

To any new members who have not been to our Sunday monthly meetings please do come along and give it a try. You will find a friendly atmosphere and informative and passionate discussion about many beekeeping aspects. The monthly meetings are all included within your membership and are free to all. Even the tea, coffee and cake are free! As the beekeeping season is now underway then the monthly meeting is also an opportunity to obtain assistance with some of the more challenging areas of apiculture.

## Swarms, Nucs and Buying Bees

Karin Courtman  
[chair@LBKA.org.uk](mailto:chair@LBKA.org.uk)

We are in the middle of swarm season. Everyday I get emails from members of the public who want the LBKA to deal with their 'swarm'. The registered swarm collectors also get phone-calls that go like this:

*I've got a swarm living in my roof/air brick/compost bin. I desperately need them moved because I've got grandchildren/a baby/dogs/a garden party. I'm terrified of bees. Please will you come to collect them?*

We then try to explain that we help with honeybee swarms but we may not be able to help with established colonies in inaccessible places and that if they are wasps or bumblebees, then we can't help. About 19/20 of the contacts about swarms are actually about



bumblebees or wasps. At this point some people get angry and others start whining and sound tearful. Some say that they know bees are protected (not true) but they want them gone. I explain about how some bees are endangered and how bumblebees won't be there for long and that they are mostly harmless. Occasionally if the caller is close and seems vulnerable, I do agree to visit to confirm they are bumblebees. Last year I did rehome one colony of *bombus hypnorum* bumblebees that were living in a bird box and were particularly aggressive, but bumblebee nests often fare badly if moved, so I won't be moving anymore even if the bumblebees come straight out and sting me and the householder when I visit like those did.

If they are a honeybee swarm, I ask how long they have been there and how high they are so that I can bring a ladder if needed. Sometimes when I get there they have already left for their new home. I shake the swarm into a cardboard box and then turn the box upside down and place it on the ground propped up by a brick so that the scouts and other bees can join the rest of the colony in the box. I then leave and arrange to go back at dusk to collect them.

At the moment we are using one of my apiaries in Dulwich as the isolation apiary for the swarms collected by the LBKA. I'm hoping that someone else will take this role of looking after the swarms and nucs from me. At most we have had 30 colonies, but after swarms have been combined and nucs sold, we haven't had more than 5 to over winter. The unknown provenance of the swarms brings some risk so you should not really keep your own bees at the isolation apiary.

Swarms are put into a nuc box and tested and treated for varroa if needed. Swarms are fed after 3 days if the weather is bad and they cannot forage (if you don't feed and weather is bad, swarms will starve to death after about 5 days). Swarms are then managed to bring them to BBKA nuc standard. Queens are marked and clipped. Bees are tested for temperament and if necessary they are requeened. Once they are ready, we sell them for £140. Either people bring their own box the day before and I will transfer them into that box ready for collection the next day or people borrow an LBKA nuc box. (Returnable deposit of £40).

We are going to use some of the nucs to stock the new LBKA apiary we are setting up at Mudchute, but have 2 nucs ready to sell and more in the pipeline, so please do contact [nucs@LBKA.org.uk](mailto:nucs@LBKA.org.uk) if you want one. Please also contact me if you want to take over looking after the nucs and swarms or if you want to

come out with me next time I go out for a swarm chair@LBKA.org.uk

## Introductory Course

Jon Harris

[treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk)

*Thanks to **Richard Glassborow** and **Jon Harris** for organising the Introductory Courses this year and also to the volunteers who led sessions, opened hives, made tea and otherwise helped the course be a success. The piece below by Jon Harris is about the April course.*

One of the things I enjoy most about beekeeping, are the training courses that we run from our Eden apiary in Clapham. They give us a chance to meet the next generation of beekeepers for the LBKA.

Having said that, its never very nice getting up at the crack of dawn on a Saturday!



I arrived at the hall at 9am sharp, hot from a shopping trip to Sainsbury's, to stock up on tea, coffee and lunch for all the helpers, to find it a hive of activity, Richard and Emily busily setting up the projector and laptop, ensuring that all the slides were there and in the right order, John, Brian and Maria setting out all the chairs and helping Callie ensure there was enough tea, coffee and snacks for all the course attendees. Karin and Aidan were ensuring that we had all the right documentation to register our attendees, whilst they worked with Angela to lay out all the suits and gloves.

People started to arrive from 9.15, so it was great that all the guys had got there a little early to ensure we were covered. Questions started from the off, and it was reassuring to have the comfort of the whole team around to help to answer some of the more tricky questions and some that we had never thought to ask!

It was also good for both students and speakers, that we had such a variety of speakers, so the pressure was off a few people having to stand and talk for the whole day, it was especially nice to see Allan, who talked and also ensured that

the students were exposed to a lot of different hives.



Bruno Rocha via Facebook

For the first time since I have been doing the courses, I was based in the hall, while the students were out looking at the bees, I have always shied away from this, however, I did find it really interesting and challenging to talk through all the kit that we use. This year we cut our frame making down to one day only and for only 30mins, this was a great opportunity to work out who to ask for frame building help from in the future. (I think the phrase "The good the bad and the ugly" covers this part of the day!) I for one need a few refresher lessons in hammer technique (and the number of nails in a BBKA Basic frame – thanks Richard!).

We had some really great feedback from the attendees - one that really springs to mind is "What a great way to spend a weekend!" Which I have to agree with!

We do now however need to place these with some more experienced beekeepers for a year, so if you think you have what it takes to be a mentor, or would like to know more, please get in touch with Tristram (mentoring @lbka.org.uk), who will be able to help.

**A big thank you** from the committee, all the members and all attendees, to those of you that gave up a great deal of time to make the weekend the success it was!

Have a great bee season everyone!



## LBKA at Phoebes Garden Centre

*Mark Patterson*  
*forage@lbka.org.uk*

On Saturday 3rd May LBKA forage officer mark and member Sid manned a beekeeping display at Phoebes garden centre SE London. Phoebes is one of several garden centres which actively promotes and encourages the public to plant for bees in their gardens and has developed its own brand bee friendly kite mark on many of their plant ranges.



During the event members of the public visiting the garden centre were able to see bees up close in an observation hive, learn about which plants are most attractive to bees and learn about providing homes for solitary bees in their gardens. Phoebes were very pleased to have us present in the day and have already invited us to come back later in the year to repeat the event. On the day LBKA members were able to take advantage of a 10% discount on purchases at the garden centre and we were pleased to see many familiar faces pop along to stock their gardens.



# Musings of a beekeeper

Simon Wilks

## Bouncing Bees

There you are stood by your hive, trying to see if you've done your hat up properly and whether the smoker's still alight and what might be happening at or around the entrance and whether it's worrying or reassuring or both, going through the mental checklist of all the equipment you haven't got ready that you'll need to deal with whatever you're hoping the bees almost certainly shouldn't have done, and painfully wondering if the trouser pocket is really the best place for a Baldock cage while, with a muted thunk, a bee lands flat on its back on the top of the hive, waving her legs in the air as if angling for a tickle.

You might, once in a while, wonder why. But, more often than not, you're going to have fifty thousand other things to worry about and by the time the lid is on the floor, and you're busy looking for five things at once while remembering not to trip over the smoker, it has become a vague and unreliable memory.

Occasionally people ask. And the standard answer is that returning foragers, heavily laden with honey, will often misjudge their final approach.

For various reasons, this doesn't ring quite true. One reason is that bees have evolved over a very long time to do what they do quite well, and being able to land while carrying nectar is a vital part of that. Analysis of bee landings shows they have a clear set of mechanisms, depending on the angle of surface they're landing on, involving a brief period of hovering (1/5 of a second or less), which suggests the landing process is much more than a free-style dive\*. And secondly, it's a very small proportion of returning foragers that seem to land upside-down at any one time, which suggests it's not a general problem caused by, say, the size of the payload or the direction of the wind.

So here are some possibilities that have been suggested:

1. **Old age:** Foragers have a finite lifespan and a forager on her last legs may lose her faculties gradually, making accurate landings near the end of life more difficult.
2. **Low fuel:** Lack of food reserves may mean the bee has too little energy to complete the landing process properly.
3. **Physical damage:** Damage, especially, to hind legs or wings would mess up the landing process.

4. **Confusion:** Bees navigate using the sun as a marker and do so, even when it's cloudy, because sunlight is 'polarised', and the bee is able to measure that polarisation. Secondly, we know that reflected light, even when scattered from a dull metal surface, keeps its polarisation. And, finally, we know that the ocelli (the three simple eyes on top of a bee's head) are involved in working out which way up a bee is, and seem to be able to detect polarisation\*\*. It may be possible that, at a specific angle, the light reflected from the metal of a hive roof interferes with the polarisation information from the sun, and gives a bee approaching at that precise angle, the sensation of being upside down, which the bee then corrects.
5. **Varroa:** A bee harbouring varroa mites beneath its segments may be prompted to land heavily, and upside down, in an attempt to dislodge them.
6. **Collision:** Hitting another bee on approaching the hive might knock one of them onto the roof.
7. **Pesticides.** Some combinations of some substances seem to disrupt effective foraging by affecting the bees' ability to navigate. Perhaps something similar is causing landing problems.

As far as I can tell, nobody has yet studied this phenomenon, so nobody knows if any, all or none of these possibilities is correct. That's understandable because there are several possibilities, which makes it difficult to study without spending a lot of time, effort and probably money that might be better spent elsewhere.

And that's why there are still many things about bees that we may never know the answer to, many of which we may have seen with our own eyes. Things we might call obvious, but which are also mysteries. They may spark our idle curiosity, but until idle curiosity can line the pockets of grant-hungry scientists, that's as far as it will go.

In some ways, it's similar to the neonicotinoid issue, in which governments and scientists seemed to take a very long time to react to an apparently obvious problem. One reason it took a long time was because while there wasn't a proven significant effect, there wasn't a proven reason for looking for one.

Happily, science is not exclusive, and many dedicated amateurs have made valuable contributions to science. So this may be your opportunity - if you've the time and the inclination, pick a possibility you fancy, design

your experiment and carry it out. It really is as simple as that.

\*Evangelista, C., Kraft, P., Dacke, M., Reinhard, J. and Srinivasan, M. V. (2010). The moment before touchdown: landing manoeuvres of the honeybee *Apis mellifera*. *J. Exp. Biol.* 213, 262-270.

\*\*Ribi W<sup>1</sup>, Warrant E, Zeil J. (2011) The organization of honeybee ocelli: Regional specializations and rhabdom arrangements. *Arthropod Struct Dev.* 40(6):509-20

## Adventures in Beeland: Easter inspections; a new queen emerges

*Emily Heath's guest article from her excellent <http://adventuresinbeeland.com/blog>.*

There was a lot going on at the apiary on Saturday. Naive people might think that on a bank holiday Easter weekend the apiary would be quiet. Not so when there is tea to be drunk, hot cross buns to be eaten and even some beekeeping to do!



These were my first ever attempt at hot cross buns. They looked fine but the texture was more like that of a weapon than a squishy doughy bun.

I left the buns on the table and watched Jonesie inspect his hive. Here's a chunk of drone comb he sliced off to check for varroa. He'll put it in his freezer and then break it open to look for mites once it's frozen. There's something very appealing about the chunkiness of drone comb, the regular golden bumps. The workers were reluctant to leave it.



In the foreground below is a strange little bee Jonesie found in his hive. She was a honeybee, but so bedraggled and black that it was hard to recognise her as one. Her sisters seemed to be trying to clean her up – could she have fallen in some kind of oily substance? Poor wee thing.

EDIT: Thanks to commenters westernwilson and thomas73640, who have identified the black bee as probably suffering from chronic bee paralysis virus (CBPV). This is a virus associated with the varroa mite, which probably helps transfer it between bees. It is also associated with crowded hives, as close contact between overcrowded bees breaks hairs from the cuticle, allowing CBPV to spread from diseased bees to healthy bees via their exposed epidermal cytoplasm.



Below you can see a new hive that has landed in the apiary. It belongs to Brian, who has taken an old abandoned top-bar hive in the apiary and made it his own. I can't wait to see what bees do with it. To the left is a bait hive he's made, sitting on the top of the main hive. Here you can see Brian explaining the hive to Andy Pedley. Andy is always full of enthusiasm and told Brian that even if the hive is a complete disaster, at least it will be very entertaining and a great experiment.





Tom inspected his hive, which last week he suspected was queen-less. He had put a frame of eggs and larvae from Jonesie's hive in there last week to see if the bees made a replacement queen for themselves. There were no new queen cells made – but suddenly Tom said 'There she is!' and pointed at a little virgin queen walking around a frame. Mysteriously, there was no sign of any queen cell she might have emerged from – did the workers remove all evidence of it?



You need sharp eyes to spot a virgin. At the moment she's about the same size as the workers, but her abdomen is more pointed at the end. Some sunshine is forecast at the end of next week, so hopefully she can get out and mate then. Most of the hives have begun to produce drones now.

"There's always summat takes you by surprise with bees" Tom said. "I open them up expecting them to have made a queen cell and instead I find a virgin running around." That's the joy of bees!

As for our bees, Myrtle and Chilli are doing well, although Chilli's workers have drawn out about three frames more than Myrtle's. Myrtle is our favourite queen as she and her mother, grandma and great-grandma etc. before her have produced the gentlest of bees. I hope her colony will be ok!

Chamomile's colony was decidedly narky and kept going for me, which I'm not used to with

our bees. It could have been the weather as it was chillier than I would have liked, so I gave up on any ideas of starting the Bailey comb change off this week. I noted more perforated cappings and exposed dead larvae in a small patch of brood.

Chamomile's bees are on a double brood box and I'd really like to get them down onto a single to make them easier to inspect for queen cells etc. If Myrtle produces any queen cells I would feel tempted to replace Chamomile with a new princess from Myrtle. I dislike getting rid of queens, but I don't like inspecting bees that try to sting me either.

When I got back from inspecting all the hot cross buns bar one had disappeared, so hopefully they weren't as bad as I thought, although they did get called "hot rock buns". Andy left me a comment on my Facebook page afterwards to say:

"They were delicious, thank you so much .... The beekeepers are just teasing ... And it might be that they think by "challenging" you, you will bring more the next week. We might allow you a week or two off but bring double when you get back from honeymoon, because we will all be starving!"

## Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions (and offers of help!), but remember that we are all volunteers with busy lives. We are **Karin Courtman** (chair; chair@lbka.org.uk), **Jon Harris** (treasurer; treasurer@lbka.org.uk), **Angela Woods** (secretary; admin@lbka.org.uk); **Howard Nichols** (education; education@lbka.org.uk), **Aidan Slingsby** (members' services and web; services@lbka.org.uk and webmaster@lbka.org.uk), **David Hankins** (membership secretary; membership@lbka.org.uk), **Richard Glassborow** (apiaries' manager; apiaries@lbka.org.uk) and **Mark Patterson** (forage officer; forage@lbka.org.uk). **Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/>.**