



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

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From our Chair



Karin Courtman

chair@lbka.org.uk

Welcome to the August newsletter. For most of us the honey is now in the buckets. We still have to complete the extraction from the LBKA teaching

apiaries at Eden in Clapham and at Brockwell Park, over the next 10 days. We're not sure that we are going to be able to sell to Fortnums this year, so we are looking at other options.

The new teaching apiary at Mudchute Farm in Docklands is buzzing with bees and the WBC hives we have there have been repaired so they will withstand the downpours.

Time to reduce entrances now, especially on our smaller colonies as there is a greater risk of robbing now the nectar flow has reduced. I have seen lots of great big hover flies that mimic hornets this year. These are nothing to worry about. You can tell they are flies and not hornets as they have only one set of wings.

I had a proper hornet land on my beesuit as it was hanging on the washing line this week. I guess it must still have smelled of bees. Mostly these European hornets just take dead bees and are much less troublesome to bees than wasps can be. If you see wasps going into the hive you need to dramatically reduce the size of the entrance to about 2 bee spaces, as wasps will wipe out small colonies. We'll talk in more detail about preparing the colony for Winter at the September meeting. Quite a few people are struggling to know what to do with half full supers and wondering about the pros and cons of leaving a super on over Winter.

We're going to do honey tasting at our October meeting and we'll bring some refractometers so that we can compare the water content of the different honeys. We also plan to run through how to make your own labels. Please bring some of your liquid gold to the October meeting so that we can compare the different honeys we have harvested this year.

Announcements

Apology to Dale Gibson

The LBKA Committee would like to offer its unreserved apology for the use by the LBKA of personal data supplied to the LBKA by Dale Gibson. Mr. Gibson's complaints against the LBKA have been upheld by the Information Commissioner's Office and we regret any inconvenience caused as a result of this issue.

LBKA at Phoebes Garden Centre

Mark will be manning the LBKA stand again at **Phoebes Garden Centre, Penderley Road, Caford, SE6 2LQ, 10:00-15:00 on Saturday 16th August**. LBKA members get 10% off purchases – look out for the voucher in your email.



September monthly meeting

We didn't originally plan a monthly meeting in September because this usually coincides with the Thames Festival. This year, we've decided not to have a stall at the festival, so we've organised a monthly meeting instead on **Sunday 14th September at 11:00 at Fairley House Junior School** (220 Lambeth Rd, SE1 7JY). It's will be the time to think about preparing our colonies for the winter and this will be the subject of the monthly meeting. We'll have honey tasting in October – please bring honey to taste!

LBKA Junior Beekeeper Scholarship

Earlier this year the committee agreed to allow Mark to run a beekeeping scholarship for young people of high school age in London.

Inspired by his trip to Metro Atlanta Beekeepers Association in the US last year where they have a thriving junior program we have invited ALL secondary schools in the boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark to take part in what we hope will become a successful London wide scheme. The aim of the scholarship is to encourage more people from the younger generations to take up beekeeping which currently has a strong bias towards the

older generations. The UK is very far behind many European countries in that it has very few junior beekeepers. The team behind the recent UK entry into the international convention of Young Beekeepers struggled to find even a handful of junior beekeepers in the UK to take part. Engaging young people in beekeeping is essential if the craft of beekeeping is to survive.

To enter the scholarship the **young person must write an essay** of between 500-1000 words on the subject of **'the importance of bees as pollinators'**.

The Essay competition winner will receive a place on one of our spring 2015 introduction to beekeeping courses along with a parent or guardian.

His or her school will also be visited by the LBKA who will take along an observation hive and deliver a talk about the importance of bees. We will also offer the school some assistance in making their school grounds more bee friendly by planting of flowers, giving them some of our LBKA branded seed packets and making and erecting solitary bee homes.

The schools have been contacted and we are hoping to start receiving entries over the summer. Nearer the time we may advertise opportunities for members who wish to help deliver this work in schools.

Thanks to French Flint

We thank French Flint, who have continued to give our members a good discount on their honey jars. We hope many of you were able to take advantage of this.



Newsletter

Thanks to Emily Abbot, Karin Courtman, Emily Scott (via her excellent blog), Richard Glassborow, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Angela Woods for their contributions this month.

Please contact Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk if you'd like to discuss writing an article. Please do so!

Out and about: Improved forage for Mudchute

*Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk*

During July our forage officer Mark and Mudchute apiary manager Barbara held meetings with Farm managers at Mudchute, Members of their board of trustees, respected Botanists and the Tower hamlets Ecology officer to set in motion plans to improve forage opportunities for the bees at our new apiary. It is being proposed that we improve some substantial areas of existing grass fields through wild flower plug planting and implementation of a carefully thought through new management regime. The farm which owns large areas of land currently lacks the funds and specialist equipment needed to manage its grasslands in a way which is conducive to promoting wild flowers.

Mark has recently forwarded costings for this work to be undertaken and through consultation with the Ecology officer and botanists put together a very appealing list of plants to include in the proposed scheme. The farm has already had some expressions of interest from corporates in nearby Canary Wharf who may be willing to not just fund the work but send some of their staff on day release to volunteer and help plant the new meadow.

With luck this will come together by the autumn and we can look forward to another LBKA planting project where members can get involved directly helping the bees by planting for them. If this goes ahead it would be the largest forage creation project the Association has yet to undertake and will represent a significant gain in forage for bees in the area. The LBKA is committed to encouraging the public to help bees by planting for them and through these projects involving our members and partner organisations we hope to lead by example.

Mark has also been to visit the apiary at Eden from which we run our introduction courses. Talks with the gardeners there have identified areas which could be improved with planting for bees. We hope to undertake some bulb planting here in the autumn followed by flower planting next spring and Mark is currently writing to several bodies to apply for small grants to allow this to happen.

In the meantime the meadow we planted in Oval back in March is looking terrific and feedback from the landowner has been one full

of praise and gratitude for our help providing the materials and volunteers to make it happen.

August in the apiary: Where we should be with our colonies at this time of year

*Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk*

The calendar year commences in January but many beekeepers view the new beekeeping year as commencing in August. So, a happy new year to all LBKA members! The honey has been taken off and the beekeeper is now starting to prepare the bees for winter. The objective for both August and September should be to put the bees in the best possible position to go into winter.



The results of last March's LBKA planting event in Kennington.

Preparing the colony for winter

A significant risk to the colony in winter having too many varroa mites in the hive. The most common form of treatment at this time of year is Apiguard. This needs to be in the colony for a minimum of 4 weeks and is most effective when the outside temperature is greater than 15C. Early August is the optimum time to treat as the honey has been removed and temperatures are still above 15C. MAQS strips, a relatively new product using formic acid as the miticide, are also suitable.

Sound and stable hive

Hives can be checked that they are on a stable and level surface. There should be no leaks or gaps as the hive must be waterproof and

draughtproof to withstand the extremely testing conditions of winter. August is also a time of robbing by other bees as the nectar supply is scarce. Wasps may also be a nuisance and so there should not be any gaps in the woodwork where they may gain entry.

Strengthen colony with young bees

Worker bees produced from eggs laid in August and September need to live for up to 6 months rather than 6 weeks. A feed of sugar syrup after the honey has been removed will stimulate the queen into continuing her egg laying whereas, otherwise, she will be decreasing this activity.

Entrance blocks

Use entrance blocks to help bees defend the colony against attacks from wasps and from robbing by other bees.

Check food reserves

Check that bees still have sufficient food reserves after the honey has been removed. Uniting colonies where appropriate

Unite colonies where appropriate.

A large colony has a better chance of coming through the winter months than 2 small ones. If you successfully artificially swarmed a colony then the artificial swarm and colony of origin can be reunited.

Protect and store supers against wax moth

Protect and store supers against wax moth. If you have the opportunity to put super frames in a deep freeze for 48 hours then this will kill all 4 stages of the Wax Moth lifecycle. Take care when removing the frames as they are very brittle until the wax reaches ambient room temperature again. Acetic acid may also be used but special care is required as it is corrosive. Burning of Sulphur strips is another method. These 3 methods may be summarised as follows:

- **Freezing:** effective against all 4 stages of Wax Moth
- **Acetic Acid:** effective against 3 stages of Wax Moth (not always against pupae)
- **Sulphur strips:** effective against 3 stages of Wax Moth (not against eggs)

My own viewpoint is that used brood combs should be burnt and that retention is not compatible with running a modern day apiary. Conversely, super combs are an extremely valuable resource and the beekeeper should make every effort to look after these on behalf of the bees until next spring.

August in the forage patch

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

August is normally the driest and hottest month of the year. At this time of year when rainfall is often scarce and the summer heat can rise to 30 degrees or more in the city centre, plants struggle to gain enough moisture from the soil. In these conditions plants will reserve what little moisture they have to sustain themselves and will secrete less nectar or may cease to produce nectar at all. Many of our native plants which have evolved in a hay meadow cutting regime over hundreds of thousands of years will have already flowered and gone to seed. This means that late summer and August in particular are lean times for our bees with flower availability much reduce.

Of all the months of the year, August is the time when our bees rely most heavily on urban gardens to sustain their colonies. Because we like to see colour in our gardens all year round urban gardens tend to be well stocked with a wide variety of flowers which emerge at different times providing a succession of flowers. The summer months are when we tend to use our gardens the most so many gardens will be at their best during the summer months. This is good for our bees as it provides them with a food source when times are otherwise lean for them. As well as being a period of dearth in forage August is also the time of year when many of us will take the honey crop away from the bees. Basically we are taking the bees food away from them at the time of year when they need it most as forage is thin on the ground but the colonies are still peaking in numbers and there are many mouths to feed. This is one reason why colonies are often more aggressive around this time of year.

This year has been an exceptional year for our bees and a great year for a good honey crop. The early spring and long hot summer has seen an abundance of forage but many summer flowering plants are already beginning to go over having flowered far earlier than normal this season.



Catmint, popular with bees now going over



The same catmint partially cut back reveals a fresh flush of growth beneath. If the old stems are cut back and the plant well watered it will soon flower again.



A hover fly visits Helianthus flowers.



Honey bee visiting Rudbeckia



Golden rod



A crab spider snatches a honey bee on an echinacea flower



Echinacea 'flame thrower'

Things we can do to prolong the flowering period of many plants

Dead heading. Removal of the flowers as they begin to fade and before they can produce seed triggers the plant to keep producing new flowers as we interfere with the plants ability to set seed and reproduce.

Cut back herbaceous perennials that are past their best. Hacking back herbaceous plants like Catmint, Salvia's, Hardy Geraniums, Eryngium and Bowles mauve wall flower will encourage fresh new growth and a second flush of flowers a few weeks down the line.

Keep plants well watered. Top-dress them with some fish blood and bone meal and mulch with well-rotted garden compost or leaf mould. The additional nutrients will give them the support they need to keep flowering and produce a second flush of growth if they have been cut back hard. Mulching will help conserve moisture.

Sow successional sowings of your favourite annuals to ensure some are in flower all through the season.

Top plants for August

Heleniums. These North American perennials are highly attractive not just to honey bees but also many of the small solitary bees of the Lassioglossum and Halictidae genus. They also attract the very large and magnificent Volucella zonaria – Britain's largest hoverfly, a hornet mimic.

Echinacea. Another North American plant known as the cone flower for the large conical shaped flower/seed heads produced. These flowers come in a wide range of colours from Blood red to orange, yellow and white. They attract mainly honey and bumble bees but are also great for butterflies.

Eryngium also known as sea holly. These plants, some of which are native to the UK do well in hot dry conditions as they are adapted to live in very poor free draining sandy soils along coastal dunes. The silvery blue flowers look like miniature teasel flowers as are attracted to a wide range of bee species. The seed heads are also great for dry flower arranging being highly decorative.

Echinops (Globe Thistle). These plants come in varieties such as 'ritro' which is quite small and grows to about 4 feet. Its wild counterpart on the other hand can reach 6 feet when mature. The striking blue flowers are popular with bumble bees and honey bees as well as butterflies.

Verbena. There are a wide range of Verbenas available in garden centres today. Avoid the highly showy and delicate bedding types but go for species types such as 'rigida' which is relatively low growing, 'Vestata' which is a medium height Verbena producing pyramid like spikes of purple/pink flowers and the very common 'bonariensis' which can grow to 6 feet or more and seeds itself freely around the garden. They are hardy but short lived perennials. All 3 varieties mentioned here have a long flowering period and are attractive to honey bees.

Rudbeckia. Yet another North American Prairie plant popular in UK gardens. The bright yellow flowers of the very tall 'maxima' or shorter *fulgida* are attractive to honey bees and short tongued solitary species.

Dahlias. Simple open type Dahlias such as the many varieties of 'bishops' Dahlia are popular sources of forage with a wide range of bees at this time of the year. Bishop of Llangdaff is particularly attractive despite being red – a colour the bees do not see.

Cosmos. These annuals are very attractive to bees in late summer and into autumn.

Zinna. These annuals like cosmos are very popular particularly with bumble bees.

Eupatorium or Joe pie weed – yet another North American plant! There's a theme here. Like many North American plants this hardy perennial is a magnet for all kinds of pollinating insects

Agastachi black adder. Giant Mexican Hyssop. Recent plant trials have named this plant as being the most attractive common garden plant to bees and other pollinators. There certainly a big hit in my garden.

What happened at the July Meeting

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

Attendance at the meeting was about 20 to 25 in number and these ranged from new beekeepers to older, more established beekeepers.

The topic was "Queen Rearing for the Small Scale Beekeeper". We covered 3 different methods of queen rearing and then went on to the use of mini nucs to finish off the queen cell development and to enable the new queen to mate. The former was dealt with by general

discussion and use of props and the latter by use of PowerPoint slides and props.

The difference between queen rearing and queen breeding

Only rearing was considered.

Impulses under which a colony raises queen cells

We discussed the 3 impulses under which a colony raises queen cells.

Beekeepers' selection criteria

There are 5 main selection criteria for choosing the colony with the genetic material for queen rearing. This also illustrates the importance of keeping colony records.

3 practical examples of how to rear queens.

Judicious use of queen cells as part of Artificial Swarm Control in Spring when the bees produce queen cells under the swarm impulse. Rather than destroy most of these they can be harvested.

Miller method. This is a more proactive method whereby the beekeeper instigates and then controls the production of queen cells under the emergency queen cell impulse.

Grafting method. Again, a proactive method whereby the beekeeper instigates and more fully controls the production of queen cells under the supercedure impulse. Different types of grating tools were observed and considered. The setting up of the cell-raising colony also formed a significant part of this section of the meeting.

Making up and management of a mini nucleus

Finally, the specific topic of making up and management of a mini nucleus was covered. This was dealt with by the use of powerpoint slides and supplemented with an Apidea mininuc.

It was particularly heartening to find so much interest and enthusiasm for this subject. A lot of questions were asked. The 2 main points taken away by members seemed to be that it is not as difficult and mysterious as thought and that any beekeeper can embark upon this subject at 1 of the above 3 entry points,

depending upon his or her level of confidence. "Queen Bee" by David Woodward was the suggested textbook for those wanting to further explore this subject.

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. If you have not been before please introduce yourself to a committee member so that we know you are new. 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. The topic of discussion is only one element of the meeting. It is also an informal and sociable event where members meet with each other to discuss bees and beekeeping and secure support with managing their colonies.

The Committee tries its best to reflect members' wishes and aspirations on beekeeping matters. If you would like a particular beekeeping subject to be the topic for discussion at a monthly meeting please ask a committee member.

Lambeth County Show 19-20th July

Emily Abbot

We had another fun year at the Lambeth County Show, held in Brockwell Park.



It's a huge event with an incredible range of stalls and entertainments; from camel racing to sheep shearing, fun fairs, an owl sanctuary, and a gorilla wondering around (if the lady on the tanhoy was to be believed!). We were in the farm area, next to the Wildlife Trust and a

children's bookshop. Our stall looked great, covered in green grass, banners about pollinators, LBKA meadow in a wheelbarrow, an observation hive which attracted lots of interest, candle making using brightly coloured foundation sheets, leaflets to hand out on planting for bees, and we were also selling members' honey, lip balms made with bees' wax and bee inspired jewellery.



We were there for two great days, with loads of visitors all keen to chat and hear more about the bees. We couldn't have done it without the army of helpers, who threw themselves in with huge gusto and enthusiasm!



Thanks to all these members for being the face of the LBKA, we did ourselves proud: **Julie Adams, Jean Azzopardi, Shaun Baddeley, James Bardolph, Karin Courtman, Corrine Edwards, Roger Jeffs, Mark Patterson (special thanks as chief organiser!), Patricia Pelican, Marnie Petersen, Aidan Slingsby, Paul Vagg and Angela Woods.**

We raised over £300 for the association through candle rolling and seed sales and raised £58 for Bees for development through our raffle to win a place on our spring 2015 course.



Finally, a special mention to the LBKA marquees which withstood the most torrential downpour known to man on Sunday afternoon and sheltered us and many of the public huddled underneath. It didn't collapse, and it didn't leak!

Brompton Cemetery 20th July

Angela Woods

On the 20th of July I was delighted to take the lead on manning the LBKA's stand at the Brompton Cemetery.



We were double lucky as not only is the place just so lovely but we were able to set up alongside fellow LBKA member Peter Teller and Desmond Olayemi. They enthusiastically beckoned us over and between us we made a

very impressive bee corner next to the chapel and catacombs.

Peter and Desmond keep bees within the cemetery and what with the abundant flowers and wildlife I am guessing they do very well. They were selling some early honey and Peter, who is from Hungary, took bees to make an observation hive before everyone arrived. The first we knew about it was him arriving from the apiary bare chested having been stung all over... the bees were grumpy because of the thundery weather which dodged us but drenched the good folk manning the LBKA stand at the Lambeth Show that same day.



Observation hive

Peter is an artist and naturalist and their stall featured some intriguing bee related artefacts. The observation hive was made out of two brood boxes and had a triple set of windows to look at. It was also embellished with gold leaf.



Wasps' nest

Peter and Desmond move wasp nests and they had encased one, alive and fully functioning, in

a small glass box last summer. A tube allowed the wasps to travel happily outdoors and Peter had the nest sitting on his desk to view. The colony died away naturally and you can see what was left in one of the pictures here.

The LBKA stand, ably staffed by **Brian, John, Sue and Sid** did a roaring trade in seeds and honey; literature was handed out, all sorts of bee questions from the public answered and money was raised for the BBKA. We've been invited back but I'll surely visit before then as Brompton Cemetery is spectacular.

LBKA Summer Social

*Richard Glassborow (photos by Anthony Garner)
LBKA Apiary officer*



Gateway to paradise

The LBKA Summer Social on July 13th was once again blessed with glorious weather. Members who attended were able to relax in the beautiful Walworth Garden Farm, surrounded by flowers, bees and fellow beekeepers, bathed in warmth and sunshine, enjoying good food, beer ice cool Hiver beer (or tea if you preferred) and conversation. And no matter where you went or whom you sat next to, the conversation never strayed far from bees. Well, isn't that what beekeepers never tire of talking about.

Many commented on the excellence of the food and for that we owe a **big thank you to Mark**

Patterson who organised it all and to those who helped out in the kitchen and with the clearing up afterwards.

Thank you to **Anthony Garner** for volunteering to be the photographer for the day.





LBKA past and present

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

Over the weekend of the Lambeth Country show an LBKA member handed me a copy of his 1983 '**Inner London Beekeeping Association Year book**'. Upon reading the year book I learnt that until as recent as the 1980's/90's the LBKA was known as the 'inner London association'. It's a fascinating read and it got me thinking about how the association has changed since those days. Reading through the list of members published in the yearbook and comparing it to the current membership database we have very few members who were also members during the era of this yearbook. If any other veteran members have yearbooks that shed light onto the history of the LBKA we would very much welcome copies to join this book which will go into our archives for our records. Here are some facts I gleaned from the yearbook:

In 1983 there were 138 members, compared with 2013 when we had over 370 members. In-between then and now the association's membership has shrunk and expended several times.

The association was broken up into several divisions, each covering a corner of London. Today we have no divisions.

The association had 4 training apiaries at Regents Park, Mallory School, Battersea Park and Westfield College. They had tried repeatedly and been unsuccessful at gaining Holland Park and Fulham palace as apiary sites - both of these sites now have bees belonging to LBKA members. Holland Park has a small group of keepers who manage the hives and Fulham palace has 10 LBKA members who manage the hives on behalf of the Palace Trust. 1983 was a poor year and only 80lbs of honey was harvested. This earned the association £11.25 (£33 in today's money accounting for inflation) and some was used to pay apiary rent. Compare

that to 2013 when LBKA apiary honey earned the association almost £2k from honey sales.

In 1983 the association had a modest sum of £1444 in the bank (£4256 in today's money) compared with over £50k in 2014 (almost half of which has accumulated in the past 3 years under the management of the new administration!) This money has been hard earned by the association through the delivery and charging of beekeeping courses, apiary honey sales and the awarding of grants from our sponsors Ashurst. Our long term aim for this tidy sum of money is towards a permanent home for the association. Though given rising prices of land and property in central London we may need to keep on saving for a bit longer!

There biggest outgoing cost was subscriptions to Bee Craft Magazine at £231.71 for the year. These were distributed by hand, later by post by the then secretary. A much smaller percentage of the membership subscribe to bee craft magazine today. Perhaps this is due to the improvement in quality and content of the BBKA monthly magazine incorporating the British Bee Journal which all beekeeping members receive free as part of their annual subscriptions?

Back then as it is now there was a small core of dedicated people who ran the association and did the bulk of the work. It seems that it has always been a challenging job to involve members more in the running of the association. I think today we have a greater number of more involved members but we ALWAYS need more! Today's larger association needs more people to make things happen and service the less experienced members.

Monthly meetings were held on the first Sunday of every month at the home of the association Secretary! Today we hire a hall for our monthly meetings which attract up to 50 people some months. I can't imagine fitting all our regular monthly meeting attendees into Angela or David's living rooms!

The then president of the association Lady Polwarth had sadly passed away that year leaving a huge void in the association. Her loss was greatly felt by the association who valued the work she did as president, helping to promote the beekeeping craft. Today we currently have no president but are hopeful that some one of stature and political influence will offer to take up this position.

The book contains lots of useful information about bees and beekeeping and useful list of beekeeping equipment suppliers and baking with honey recipes as well as a full inventory of the LBKA literature library. We currently have no volunteer for the position of Librarian so if

archiving and caring for books is your thing get in touch with Aiden.

The entire year book was printed in black and white. Presumably because back then when personal computer technology was still in its infancy and newsletters could not be sent by email it would have been far too expensive to print in colour.

I think it would be a really nice project for a group of members to perhaps consider putting together a modern year book for the association so that in another 30 years' time someone could stumble upon a copy and marvel at the changes which have taken place since 2014. Hopefully by that time we would have a permanent home, have an active and influential president and still be living in a city buzzing with bees.

LBKA Apiaries

Richard Glassborow
LBKA Apiary officer

Just a brief report from the apiaries this month, one way or another we have all been very busy.

At Eden we had chosen to put a lot of suppers on earlier in the season to keep them busy and discourage swarming, with the result that now we have been manipulating them to see if we can get the bees cap them all off. But of course the nectar flow has fallen dramatically. Even so we have taken 50kg so far with probably as much again still to come. And that's not counting plenty to leave for the bees for winter.

If all goes well, sales of this will help pay for the apiary. And of course it is the first introduction for mentees to the harvesting, extracting and bottling of honey. And they are having to work for that experience!

Barbara reports that Mudchute is the antidote to civilization. Surrounded by tall grass and pollinators, you would never believe you were next to Canary Wharf.

Anyone interested in escaping London should come to Mudchute – in London. Barbara needs mentees and helpers. She has 3, possibly 4 beautiful, active WBC's and is about to get one national hive with more bees.

The place, as they say in New York, is Gorgeous!

Adventures in Beeland: A wonderful day to be a beekeeper

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

I felt so lucky to be heading down to the apiary in glorious heat today. I know a lot of people don't like this hot weather, and I'm sorry about that, but I have to admit I love it. We'll have plenty of rain, wind, frost and storms ahead in the autumn and winter for you cold weather lovers I'm sure.



Brian cutting into his top bar hive

Last week I had a photo of Brian's clever top-bar hive design in my post 'Bees, honey, flowers, cake and a party'. Today you can see him cutting into the hive like a cake. What he's doing here is cutting down around the edges where the comb has been fixed to the hive walls, so he can lift the comb out and inspect it. The little cluster of bees you can see on top are gathered round the space where the bees go up into the super, which he's lifted off before inspecting.



Brian inspecting

I love the shape of these combs, like bunting or flags. The bottom corner of the triangle wobbled as he lifted each one out. As top-bar hive combs don't usually have a wooden bottom and sides, they tend to be more delicate than National hive

combs. However people who are good at wood working can choose to provide them with a hollow frame tailored to the size of their top-bar hive, to make the comb sturdier.



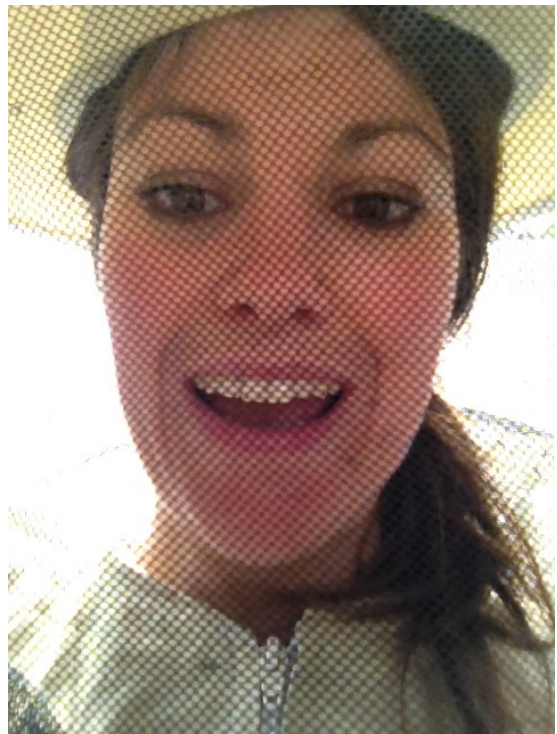
Unfortunately there was no sign of eggs or uncapped brood in the colony. Just plenty of honey, pollen and some capped brood.



Brian blowing on the bees

Here Brian is blowing on the bees to try and move them out of the way so he can check for eggs. He didn't find any but he could give them eggs from another top-bar hive he has.

By the way all the time he was inspecting we had some live African style tribal music coming from the Mencap centre next door. It had a lot of rhythmic drumming that made me want to dance. Who knows what effect it had on the bees, I was concerned it might whip them up into a frenzy but bee business continued as usual.



Me in my suit

This is a photo I took of myself in my bee suit before inspecting our four hives. Afterwards I was far too tired and sweaty to be taking any photos. I'm using surgical style gloves at the moment but they get uncomfortably sticky and clingy very quickly. It feels great to rip them off and inspect bare handed, except then my hands get covered with yellow propolis. Also the feeling of the bees on my bare hands is a little distracting.



Honeybee on Japanese anemone

All was well inside our new queen Pepper's hive, with lots of eggs. They have drawn out a few of their super frames. I don't expect to harvest anything from that hive, but am hopeful they might complete the super by late autumn with the ivy flow, giving them good winter stores. Chili's hive is in a pretty similar situation.

Worryingly I spotted a poor bee with useless shrivelled slivers of wings in Chamomile's colony, a sign of deformed wing virus

(associated with varroa). I thought I also saw a mite on a drone's back. And in Chili's colony I saw workers chasing a black and shiny hairless worker – a symptom of chronic bee paralysis virus (CBPV), also associated with varroa. We shall be doing Apiguard treatment on all our colonies in August.



A drone in love with Emma – he stayed on her hands fanning himself on Tuesday evening while she inspected several frames.

Last week Emma wrote about our favourite colony, previously headed up by Queen Myrtle, in her post Pink queens and a swarm? Sadly it seems our most gentle queen is no more. As the colony had produced queen cells, I am desperately hoping one of her daughters is in there and will begin laying soon. There was no sign of eggs this week, so I tried putting a frame of eggs from Chamomile's hive in there, as a test. If they make queen cells from it, that suggests they're queen-less. If not, hopefully all is well and a daughter of Myrtle will mate and begin laying soon.



Honeybee on ragwort

My reason for particularly liking Myrtle's bees are that they are the direct descendants of a colony which was kindly given to me and another Emily by a Ealing beekeeper named Ann Fox six years ago. Since then the colony has

made itself new queens most years, but they are all ancestors of that original colony and queen. They're lovely bees – absolutely nothing phases them – and have been very productive this year too. So fingers crossed Myrtle's genes live on.

LBKA Marketplace

In this section, members offer products and services to other members. If you'd like to add something to this column next month, please email services@lbka.org.uk.

*This is a service to members and does not constitute any recommendation or otherwise by LBKA. **LBKA is not involved in any of these transactions and buyers and seller must proceed at their own risk.***

Jonathan Dale: Honey from Clapham Junction; £6.50 for half-pound jars. Email jondale35@gmail.com for details.

Jonathan Dale: Nuc of bees to (BBKA's nuc standard) with marked (but not clipped) queen. Nice bees whose queen has a nice laying pattern. Complete with hive and queen-lineage (third generation Buckfast) notes. I'm selling them just because I've just run out of space! £130. Email jondale35@gmail.com for details.

Upcoming events

Sunday 14th September: Preparing colonies for winter

11:00-12:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

Tips for successful overwintering of colonies. Followed by chat with coffee and cake. Non-members are welcome to come and find out more about LBKA.

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), **David Hankins** (secretary and membership secretary; admin@lbka.org.uk and membership@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), **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/>.**