



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

August, 2015

Welcome to this month's newsletter. At this busy time of year, we've been at shows and extracting honey, but have also been planning an Autumn beekeeping course and planning our summer social (which you should all come to). As well as reporting on this, we get an insight into the management of LBKA's swarms and nucs, a book review and some musings from Simon, as well as the usual regular features. And – like many of us – Emily's been extracting honey.

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A big thank you to all this month's contributors: Matt Casbourne, Richard Glassborow, Cerys Harrow, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Laura Jean Sargent, Emily Scott, Vesko Starchikov, Stephanie Turner, Paul Vagg and Simon Wilks. Martin Hudson once again provided his valuable poof reading skills.

We're always looking for new and interesting contributions – please contact me if you're interested.

Aidan Slingsby
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From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

Summer time is Show Time! The LBKA attended two major events in July, the Lambeth Country Show in Brockwell Park and the Bee Conscious Event on Clapham Common.

Lambeth was gloriously sunny and a huge success. Our observation hive was, as always, a great attraction and we were able to talk ourselves hoarse bringing all things bees to a great many members of the public. Collectively, members and the LBKA sold just over £1700 of honey and other bee related products. This would not have been possible without our army of volunteers. It was hard work but the atmosphere was great and the general consensus was that we all enjoyed ourselves. A big thank you to all who helped.



Honeybee on courgette flower.

Sadly, the Bee Conscious event on Clapham Common did not enjoy good weather. In fact it was dismal – cold, wet, windy and, as a result, attendance was almost non-existent! I felt so sorry for the organisers; they had worked so hard and with such enthusiasm. A special thanks to Jon Harris for getting us involved – quite right, it is on the doorstep of our Eden teaching apiary so it was good to meet our neighbours. As a result we are negotiating with a local delicatessen to stock locally produced honey. Any qualifying – i.e. local – members interested please contact me on chair@lbka.org.uk. I would also like to thank Mark Patterson for once again making our stall look like a world fit for bees. Our message that bees and flowers go together is really getting out there.

The next event in our calendar is the LBKA Summer Social at Walworth Garden Farm on August 23rd, starting with our monthly meeting on varroa at 11 am and progressing to BBQ, drinks and socialising till 4pm. Details are on the website but please drop us an email to say you will be coming so that we can plan catering numbers to services@lbka.org.uk. We don't want people to go hungry or to have to waste food.

On a very different note, I have been approached by a number of members, including committee members, about an alleged proposal by a well known charity to put swarm bait-boxes throughout London to attract swarms and encourage them to set up feral colonies.

Many of us are very concerned by this proposal, especially those of us who struggled to cope with the level of swarm call outs this year and by the poor state of health of many swarms that seemed to have come from feral colonies. If the swarms are that bad, the parent colonies must be worse, and are probably a potential reservoir of disease. Neither would more feral colonies help the growing concern about the balance between colony density and forage availability in some parts of our city. The proposal is not public knowledge yet and we are seeking confirmation. But, if true, the committee is minded to register our disapproval of the proposed scheme. But first we would like to hear views from our members. Please contact me on chair@lbka.org.uk.

Looking ahead, while you are extracting and potting your honey have a thought about Honey Shows. Given the excellence of London Honey our members are somewhat under-represented in both the National Honey Show – <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/> – October 29th to 31st, and the London Honey Show, <http://www.lancasterlondon.com/londoneventscalendar>, also October, no details yet. October may seem a long way away but you will be making decisions about packaging etc. very soon and some of the entries have strict rules so now is actually the time to start thinking about entering. I am confident our members have much to be proud of and there are prizes to be won in some categories. But nothing can beat the bragging rights of an award winning entry. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Announcements

August Monthly Meeting and Summer Social

Our August meeting will be on **23rd August** (two weeks later than usual) at **11:00** and will be at **Walworth Garden Farm** (206 Manor Place, SE17 3BN) rather than in the usual place.

As in previous years the usual monthly meeting will take place first. The topic will be **“Varroa – the damage it causes and its treatments”**. It is intended to cover the subject from all perspectives (not just treatment with Apiguard) including its lifecycle, the damage it causes and the array of IPM treatments available to the beekeeper. However, how to apply Apiguard will be specifically included.

As it will be too late to apply Apiguard reliably, **we strongly suggest that members source and apply apiguard now**. Apiguard must be inside the hive for a minimum of 4 weeks when outside ambient temperatures are above 15°C. When temperatures fall below this the bees do not work as effectively and so the effectiveness of the distribution of the thymol is reduced. We will have a few sachets available for purchase at the meeting, but (again) remind you to purchase and apply from elsewhere now.

The monthly meeting will be followed by our **Summer Social** and barbecue. **If you'd like to come and bring a guest, please email services@lbka.org.uk with numbers and dietary requirements to help in our planning. Please bring some salad or dessert if you can!**

LBKA as a Charity

We're investigating becoming a charity. In last month's newsletter, we summarised the main issues and implications of this, and the download location of full details: http://lbka.org.uk/lbkaCharityDocs_draft-07-2015.zip. Please do look at these and feed-back any opinions to Tristram on mentoring@lbka.org.uk. We plan to hold a members' vote on this in the non-too-distant future.

“A Taste of Beekeeping” course

The committee have decided to bring back our 3-hour “taster” course this year to cater for people interested in bees, but not necessarily in keeping them. . . at least for now. Those with their appetites whetted will have the chance to enrol onto our full beekeeping course (with mentoring) next Spring.

The course has a capacity of 30 people and will cost £40. Full details at <http://lbka.org.uk/courses.html>.



A hand-powered extractor in use.

Selling honey?

We often get queries about where to buy local honey. Aidan maintains a list of members with honey to sell, which he sends out to anyone who asks. They'll be able to contact you directly. **If you'd like to be included on this list, please send apiary location (plus first part of postcode), name, contact numbers/emails and sizes/prices to services@lbka.org.uk.**

Extractors

If you'd like to use one of our honey extractors, please contact **Paul Vagg** on resources@lbka.org.uk or **0790 301 8351**. We have a variety of different types of extractor which you can hire for **£5** for up to about 3 days. We're also asking for a **£20 deposit** (which you'll lose if you don't clean the extractor properly!)

Also, don't forget that French Flint (<http://www.frenchflint.com/>) offer LBKA members a substantial discount on honey jars. Please contact services@lbka.org.uk for the discount code.

Members' services

Bee buying, extractor hire and discounts are examples of LBKA member benefits. We try to keep information about these accessible and up-to-date on <http://lbka.org.uk/members.html>.

"Saving our Bumblebees", a talk by David Goulson

Sidcup Beekeepers have invited us to a talk by **Dave Goulson**, Professor of Biology at Sussex University, founder of the Bumblebee Society, author of a number of best selling books and a popular speaker at many national and regional events. On **Saturday 12 September at 15:00 at Orpington Village Hall (311 High St, Orpington, BR6 0NN)**, he will talk about the amazing life and behaviour of bumblebees, the

problems they face, and what we can all do to help them.

If you'd like to go, you need to book in advance by emailing melody.faulkner@gmail.com and the **price is £3**.

Beekeeping exam success

Congratulations to Petros Hahladakis on passing his BBKA Module 1 exam. Well done! Petros manages the Brockwell Apiary on behalf of LBKA.

Is your honey heavenly?

The Urban Food Awards (<http://www.sustainweb.org/londonfoodlink/guidelines/> run by the London Food Link, Mayor of London's food team and the London Evening Standard) are looking for nominations.

They're looking for the best London produce. Of most interest to us is the 'heavenly honey' category. They are looking for applicants with a good story behind their product such as community outreach, supporting local markets and similar,

Opportunity for paid work as a beekeeper

An East London school is looking for an experienced beekeeper to deliver a comprehensive range of workshops covering all aspects of beekeeping and hive products over a 18 month period. This will include: a honey extraction and processing workshop, a honey jar label workshop covering legal requirements of honey labelling, a wax processing workshop, cosmetic-making workshops, a 10 week introduction to beekeeping course, assisting staff and students assembling hive equipment, sourcing and installing bees and weekly mentoring/practical beekeeping sessions.

Suitable candidates should contact Gary Lynch (garyllynch@spwt.net) for more details and a full brief ASAP. Applicants must be registered self employed, may need background checks and should have relevant bee keeping qualifications.

Another honey sales opportunity

Pearly Queen Honey is a new Beekeeping Co-operative, creating a group of beekeepers who can contribute their produce to be branded and sold collectively under a single brand – with an emphasis on the locality.

We aim to help create a community where we can all share resources and make beekeeping and honey harvesting easier, using the brand to help facilitate a better connection between bees & their keepers, and the general public. We have already done a lot of the legwork and have a number of retailers interested, and after selling out of our own honey, decided we



Pearly Queen Honey – a new Beekeeping Co-operative.

could help more beekeepers distribute their produce too. Last year, we also branched out into producing milk & honey soap, as well as beeswax candles.

In addition to this, we aim to encourage knowledge and understanding of bees and bee keeping amongst the general public through informal classes, sessions working with various organisations throughout London. As we would be selling the honey under the Pearly Queen brand it doesn't need to be jarred or labelled (although if it already is, it's not a problem). We are also interested in pollen and we can take wax from old frames off your hands too.

There is no formal commitment involved, just feel free to sell what you like! If you are happy for us to purchase your honey, would like to help with the sessions with the public or have any more questions, then please feel free to get in touch! Contact us directly on meetal_patel@hotmail.com, or Facebook/Twitter – Pearly Queen Honey

BBKA statement on neonicotinoids

BBKA have a statement on the EU's moratorium on the use of neonicotinoids, expressing their dissatisfaction that they first learnt about the emergency suspension of this (in certain area) from the BBC's Today programme. As members of the Pollinator Strategy Advisory Group, they've demanding a special meeting with DEFRA to discuss this with some urgency.

The full statement is here: http://www.bbka.org.uk/files/pressreleases/information_for_bbka_members_4_august_2015_1438684738.pdf.

BBKA initiative for young beekeepers

Ian Homer from BBKA is looking to ensure that beekeeping attracts younger beekeepers. The International Meeting of Young Beekeepers is one way of en-



John Chapple saying a few words at Clive's funeral.

couraging them, but he'd like to hold regional training days or selection events for the England Team.

If anyone is interested in running events for young beekeepers in our area, please contact ian.homer@bbka.org.uk. "The average age of beekeepers is increasing all of the time – do your bit, fight back and enlist a younger beekeeper!"

Clive Watson

As reported in the newsletter last month, Clive Watson's death was reported with sadness. Karin was among those that attended the funeral and took a few pictures that reflect both the dignity of the event and Clive's popularity.

Old announcements from July

Check previous newsletters at <http://lbka.org.uk/newsletters.html> or contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

Wax for artist: East London based artist, Claire, is



A smoky and touching salute to Clive Watson.

looking for beeswax for her paintings – hamillclaire@yahoo.co.uk.

Wax for cosmetics: Gabby is looking for 570g–1.5kg of clean wax for making cosmetics and is offering cosmetics, a guided tour and medicinal plant leaves in return! gabrielle.boraston@groundwork.org.uk.

Craft bakery wants honey: A recently opened bakery near Half Moon Lane between Dulwich and Herne Hill is looking for London honey that's as local as possible. Call Stefan on 0770 100 9145 for more details.

Old announcements from June

National Bee Unit SE Region Associations Forum: the regional bee inspector has invited LBKA to send two representatives to an Associations' Forum, probably on **Friday 21st August** at the **DEFRA Offices** in London. If you'd interested in attending, please contact Emma on admin@lbka.org.uk.

Can you recommend online beekeeping resources and suppliers? We want to expand these parts of the website. Please email suggestions to Aidan on services@lbka.org.uk.

Old announcements from May

Do you have old honey in bulk? Emily Abbott (07971 453330 or emilyabbott@virginmedia.com) will buy it off you!

Photography project. Olivier (olivierbarjolle@gmail.com) is a French photographer based in London and is looking to photograph beekeepers of all ages, genders and ethnicities.

Old announcements from April

Volunteers needed for outreach activities: Contact forage@lbka.org.uk if you would like to get involved. We can provide training.

Old announcements from March

Forage-planting suggestions? Contact forage@lbka.org.uk if you have any suggestions.

Selling unpackaged honey to a London restaurant: contact Barbara barbaratager@gmail.com for more details.

Old announcements from February

Stepney City Farm are still looking for more London Honey to sell in their farm shop – contact services@lbka.org.uk for more information.

Do you have any announcements?

If you've any announcements for the next issue of LBKA News, please send them to Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk.

July's Monthly Meeting: Honey extraction and labelling

What happened at last months' meeting.

Cerys Harrow
LBKA member

The meeting began on a sad note as Howard announced the death of long time member Clive Watson and those who knew him expressed their sadness and paid tributes to his tremendous generosity and support.

As we are getting near to the highlight of the year – the honey harvest – this month we were given a practical demonstration of honey extraction. First there was a reminder that this was a food product and hygiene should always be a priority. Despite some technical hitches with equipment, Richard took us through the whole process and gave many handy hints on how to avoid ending up in a sticky mess. He won a well-earned round of applause for his expert uncapping with a knife. He made it look so easy! Then with equal dexterity, he demonstrated how to use heat to melt off wax cappings. They disappeared as if by magic.

There was some discussion about what to do with the wax cappings. Alternatives ranged from recovering the wax to exchange for foundation sheets at beekeeping suppliers, to being creative with candle making – can be smoky if the wax isn't pure enough apparently.

As Richard went through the process, he helpfully flagged up the bits of equipment you really need and those you can improvise. Remember that extractors are available for hire from the LBKA.

There was just time left at the end for Mark Paterson to run through the rules and regulations for labelling honey. He alerted the meeting to the fact that regulations had been updated recently and it would be a good idea to check the BBKA website for up to date details.

As ever there were more questions than there was time to answer them and discussion ran on informally over cups of tea and coffee, cakes and biscuits.

Lambeth Country Show

Matt reports on LBKA's presence at the Lambeth Country Show. Our heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers who made our stall such a success.

Matthew Casbourne
LBKA member

Celebrating Another Un-Beelievable Year at Lambeth Country Show 2015

"Now where should we put the observation hive? Where did we have it last year? How should we place the display flowers and banners? Oh, there they tumble in the breeze again."

LBKA volunteers milled about in the early hours of a bright Saturday morning, setting up tables and tents from which to sell the bounty of their hives and raise funds for the organisation while educating residents on what it means to be a London beekeeper. A sea of visitors made their way up the hill to the far end of Brockwell park to buy locally produced honey and other bee inspired wares, like Corrine's hexagonal rings and pendants, or to learn the careful art of candle-making for £1. We were even fortunate to have Anne stop by with a generous donation of black-and-yellow striped smokers that added a nice accent to the display table.

Paul, as was his wont, performed his role with enthusiasm shaking wildflower seed packets like maracas while occasionally singing a Mary Poppins inspired song with adapted lyrics 'packets of seed, £2 a packet, seeds, seeds, £2 a packet' (think back to the old woman on the stairs covered in pigeons if you're having trouble remembering). A friendly rivalry began between Paul and Angela on who could sell the most seed packets, but as no one was keeping count they were both announced as mutual winners by the end of the day.

As anticipated, the observation hive was a real draw, especially to the children who got their first glimpse of a colony in action. "Can you spot the Queen?" Volunteers would ask and then - if they hadn't lost her themselves – would point her out, crawling across the glistening combs with a distinctive red dot on her back. "That's so the beekeeper can spot her quickly" they would add and launch into other fascinating facts about the small and industrious creatures they devote countless hours to caring for.

Of course, there were a multitude of questions from curious bee enthusiasts eager to start their own hives. Emma, Richard and Carole (who was decked out in a



violet beekeeping suit) were only too happy to share their experience and recommend the LBKA's intensive beekeeping course, underscoring the rewards and challenges that come with taking on the care of a living super-organism – no small feat.

As the day wore on we met with beekeepers as near as Brixton and as far as Poland, comparing notes on colony temperament and this season's honey production. Trisha and Aidan were star honey sellers, explaining to patrons the variety in colour and taste as jars differed from one hive and area to the next. Jon, choosing to avoid all the messy business of honey extraction, had instead full wax combs on display positively dripping with the sweet stuff, packaged in containers, ready for slathering on warm toast.

With so much bee-talk, by late afternoon volunteers would have faltered in their duties were it not for our close proximity to the Pimm's tent. So to generate a real buzz, we celebrated good company and good weather with a refreshing drink and raised a glass in thanks to those we met in the community at the Lambeth Country Show 2015.



LBKA at Bee Conscious

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

On Sunday 26th July, the association stand was featured at the 'bee conscious' event at Clapham Common. The event was organised by local businesses around the common to highlight the important role our bees provide in pollination of our favourite foods and why they need our help.

Our stall was coordinated by our forage officer Mark and chair Richard with help from Members Jon Harris and Mauricio. Other exhibitors present included local food establishments, local brewers, Friends of the Earth and the Friends of Clapham Common. The event started with a fancy dress bee parade leaving from Clapham Common station to the bandstand and festival area. There were several talks and speeches given including an introduction to bees by our chair Richard.



LBKA at the Lambeth Country show



August in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

Many beekeepers view the new beekeeping year as commencing in August. The honey has been taken off and the beekeeper is now starting to prepare the bees for winter. The objective from now on in should be to put the bees in the best possible position to go into winter.

Preparing the colony for winter

A significant risk to the colony in winter is 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 15°C. Early August is the optimum time to treat as the honey has been removed and temperatures are still above 15°C. At outside temperatures below 15°C the bees do not work as effectively resulting in less efficient distribution of the Apiguard. MAQS strips, using formic acid as the miticide, is now a popular alternative.

Other winter preparations that may be dealt with in August are:

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. If a problem is found with a hive then this is the time to fix it. 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.

Other action to be taken this month

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

Check that bees still have sufficient food reserves after the honey has been removed.



Uniting 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. 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 from the freezer 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. Sulphur strips is another alternative. Freezing is effective against all 4 stages of Wax Moth. Acetic Acid is effective against 3 stages of Wax Moth (not always against pupae). Sulphur strips – effective against 3 stages of Wax Moth (not against eggs)

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.

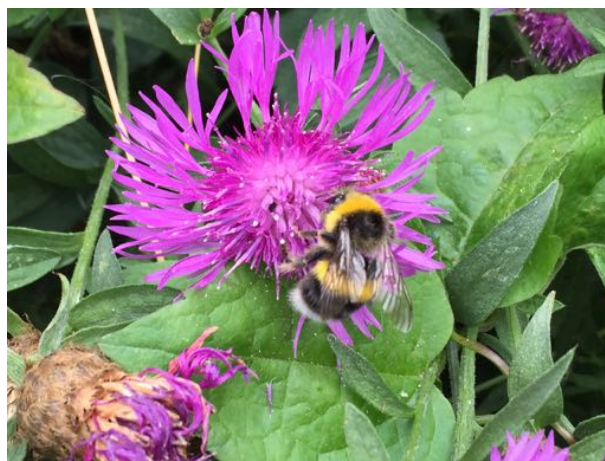
August in the Forage Patch

Mark's regular update on what is in flower that bees like.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

June and July have not given us the honey flow we would have expected. The soil has been dry due to lack of rain during late spring. This has resulted in the **limes** producing little to no nectar to seduce our bees. There has been a strong **bramble** flow for those near railway sidings or wild areas where they prosper but for many it will have been a disappointing year for a good honey crop.

As we leave July behind and move into August we enter what is probably the leanest time of year for our honey bees. Right now the nectar flow is pretty much over and colonies will struggle to bring in enough stores to keep themselves ticking over. The majority of our native flowers have evolved over thousands of years in a landscape managed for hay production and as such must complete their reproductive cycle and set seed before the August harvest. From now until autumn there is a dearth in flowers which will last until the **ivy** blossoms. The limited forage available in London at this time of year may be enough to sustain colonies but for most of us it does not provide a surplus for honey production.



Knapweed.



Shasta daisy.

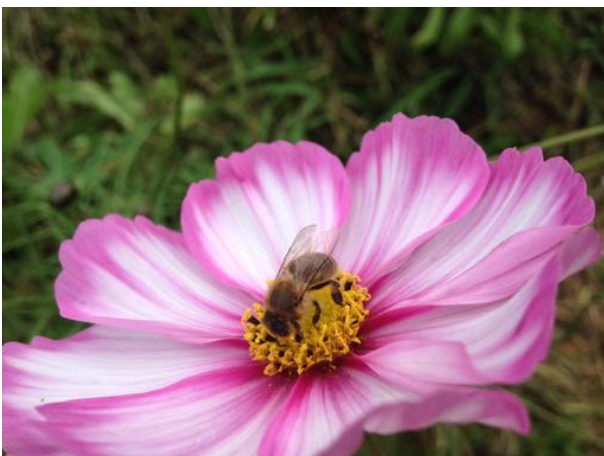
Research has shown that during August, honey bees struggle the most to find sufficient food and foragers significantly increase the range of their foraging trips in search of profitable flower patches. Instead of the usual 3km foraging radius workers may travel up to 12km. For the past year I have been recording the waggle dances in my indoor observation hive. I can see that my bees mostly forage within a 1.5km radius but in August I have recorded them flying 9km from the apiary to collect **balsam** pollen.

Recent research by PhD students at Sussex university is indicating that types of flowers usually associated as being weeds are preferred flowers during August. **Ragwort, hogweeds, thistle, teasel, rosebay willow herb** and **Himalayan balsam** are proving to be particularly popular forage options in agricultural areas. These plants can all be commonly found in London along railway sidings and on brownfield land.

At this time of year, colonies are at their peak and are just starting to shrink down towards their much smaller winter bee population. There are many thousands of hungry mouths to feed and far fewer flowers available. It's also the time of year when we are taking the honey crop off the bees. It's very important only to take surplus honey off the hives as starvation is quite possible during the August dearth. Warm sunny weather can



Rosebay willow herb.



Cosmos.



Helenium.

often mislead the keeper in to thinking the bees will happily be able to feed themselves but you may find you have to feed bees during summer after removing a honey crop.

For this reason August is the time of year when our domestic gardens can help bees the most by providing pollen and nectar during times of shortage. Plants like **dahlias**, **cosmos**, **lavender**, **helleniums**, **echinacea**, **solidago**, **agastachi** and **perovskia** are all popular garden flowers for honey bees from now into autumn.

Shrubs like **hebe** are popular with honey bees, many varieties flower in late summer such as the pink flowering 'Great Orme'. I have several of these shrubs around my apiary which I planted 3 years ago and they are now 1.5m tall, covered in blooms and bees from late July through to September. Other shrubs attractive to honey bees at this time of year include **escalonia**, dome varieties of **hypericum**, **buddleia** and open type **roses**.

Jobs to do in the garden this month include dead heading flowers to extend the flowering season. With herbaceous plants like **salvia nemorosa**, **catmint**, **petennial cornflower** and **geraniums** you can trick plants into producing a fresh flush of flowers in a month or so time

by cutting plants back harshly and giving them a good feed and mulch followed by a generous watering.

Another useful trick for extending the flowering season is the 'Chelsea chop'. This technique devised to extend the flowering season of plants to be exhibited at summer flower shows involves chopping back herbaceous perennials in mid spring. Instead of growing tall and producing fewer large flowers the plants respond by regrowing, so producing a later abundance of smaller more numerous flowers. This year I have used this technique on my **helleniums** and the result is untouched clumps flowering now whilst the others will flower in a month's time.

Now that privet and other hedge plants have ceased flowering they can be trimmed back without depriving the bees of their blooms.

Soon we'll be in autumn and it will be time to plant spring bulbs. Now is a good time to start thinking of which bulbs to buy and plant and to start ordering for delivery in time for September.

Our Teaching Apiaries

News from LBKA's teaching apiaries.

This is a busy time of year! We haven't have time to write much this month except to say that we harvested 400 8oz jars of honey from Brockwell for LBKA. Thanks for all those involved, but special thanks to Petros Hahladakis who manages this apiary for the association and helps provide mentoring.

From "Bee Basic" To "Bee Guru" (?)

This year, Paul Vagg found himself in charge of LBKA's swarms and nucs. How did he do?

As well as thanking Paul for his hard work, we also thank Karin (who did this for the past few years and provided support this year) and all our swarm collectors.

Paul Vagg
resources@lbka.org.uk

A Year Managing Nucs And Swarms

When I was first asked to manage the LBKA nucs and swarms apiary site, in addition to my committee role, I was understandably a little apprehensive, not just because of the extra work involved, but more so because of my inexperience as a beekeeper and the problems I might encounter.

What a learning curve! It felt like being thrown in at the deep end, without a life jacket, and with swarm season rapidly approaching, I readied my swarms apiary site for the expected influx of swarms collected by the LBKA. Fortunately in my committee role as resources officer responsible for the LBKA equipment and storage, I had already restored nuc boxes ready for the season ahead. So with the equipment repaired, painted and ready to go, it was with anticipation that I awaited the arrival of the first swarm.

"Funny thing swarms. . . a bit like London Buses – nothing then loads come along at once!", I remember saying to our chair Richard one day that I was getting anxious as I hadn't received any swarm calls yet. Then suddenly the phone wouldn't stop ringing! We had a number of swarms arrive from the west London area that were feral swarms and frankly riddled with varroa, but as with all swarms and casts entering the apiary, I immediately treated all the colonies on site.

One of the first things I learnt is that some swarms just don't seem to appreciate a nice new nuc box, frames and being fed! They instead prefer to abscond, and I had numerous instances of colonies having upped and moved the following morning. Oddly I originally felt this was something I was doing wrong when housing them, but I learnt quite quickly that this is quite often the norm when dealing with swarms. Secondly, I learnt quite quickly that I would have to endure unholy hours of the morning that I hadn't seen since before retirement, but the early morning or late night, is often the best time to move the colonies around as the bees are less likely to be flying.

I was extraordinarily nervous but pleased when the regional bee inspector decided to visit my own apiary and the swarm apiary, giving both a nice clean bill of health,



Cleaned-up LBKA equipment at the start of the season.



Hiving a swarm.



Swarm on a tree.

which frankly was a relief as I had had the jitters for days before, not knowing what to expect having never been inspected previously, but I was actually quite surprised at how helpful he was.

When my first swarm call came it was at an incredibly high class club in Putney, and when I say high class it was like wow! 47 acres, its own lakes, cricket grounds, gym and tennis, ballroom everything you could want if you're rich enough and prepared to join the 20 year waiting list for membership. I was extremely grateful to find the swarm quite conveniently placed, at the perfect height around a tree, but what was even better was getting driven around in a giant buggy by the wonderful Aby which frankly was a lot of fun. On the tree on site and then in they go, sort of!

They were not all that simple though, I received a call to collect a swarm on the Isle of Dogs, when they rang they said I would be going in up in a cherry picker! They fibbed! It was a window cleaners box dangling from the side of a building. I seem to remember reaching about 20ft and thinking that I really want to get down now! Unfortunately I had to do that very male thing and 'style it out' as they say! Why? Well there were two policeman, the guy operating the cradle, several workers and members of the public all watching the obviously extraordinarily brave bee keeper, and it just wouldn't have seemed right to shatter their illusions! "Even now I still feel slightly nauseous looking at that height.

Believe it or not, there was a fair bit of panic at times and on one particular occasion I remember quite distinctly running around like the proverbial headless chicken! It was late May and I was dealing with a small cast on the back wall of my garden, now the



It's a long way down.

other side is a large building site where they are building new homes, along with which there are several polish/Bulgarian/Eastern European builders that don't seem to be particularly adept at spoken English! So when they were leaning over the wall exclaiming "Bees, Bees" I just sort of smiled politely and said yes bees rolling my eyes. Bees, Bees, Bees, they continued to exclaim more and more vociferously, as I smiled politely. It was only then that I realised they were pointing behind me. Turning round I was confronted with an enormous swarm descending upon the swarm apiary. No idea where it came from, but it's fair to say I had quite the Dad's Army moment! Panic. I had absolutely no idea what to do as a massive battle ensued as they tried to get into one of the swarm colonies. I was ringing Karin, Richard, Mark anyone I could think of and couldn't get hold of anyone. In the end there was a large pile of dead bees outside the colony and I think mine won, as I found a dead queen which wasn't mine.

Top Beekeeping Tip

When you are transporting bees in a brood box, make sure the floor is pinned at the back. They can sag you

see, and the bees get out as I discovered one morning on my way back from Kennington. Now I drive a little Fiat 500 convertible, and as I was coming up to Vauxhall I noticed a few bees in the car. Within two minutes there was 40-50, so I thought it prudent to raise my veil. At the traffic lights in Vauxhall I let the roof down! You should have seen the look on the HGV lorry drivers face behind me, as the roof opened and what was by now several 100 bees shot out.

On a serious note, it has been extraordinarily hard work and a little intimidating at times, but I am grateful to have had the chance to manage the swarm apiary. Over the season my disease recognition, colony management skills and general beekeeping knowledge has improved immensely, and I'm certain it contributed, along with Howard's excellent education classes, to my pass with credit In the basics this year. It's been amazing, and frankly very humbling how many members have contacted me for bee keeping advice and help, and I believe that I was able to assist on most occasions, from general advice to visiting apiaries to give advice and assistance. Although I still struggle to understand how it is that when you become an apiary manager, all of a sudden you know everything about bees! and instantly become some sort of bee guru!

Sorry to say I don't, and I have many years of beekeeping studies ahead of me to get to where I want to be, but again I find myself extremely humbled, but also grateful that members would perceive me as someone that could assist when required. As the swarm season ends and we head towards the end of summer, I would like to take the chance to thank the committee and members for the opportunity. I've seen queen cells hatch simultaneously, been up the side of office buildings, run around like Captain Mainwaring, been able to help other bee keepers and been treated like a Beekeeping Guru!

The Bulgarian Beekeeper

Vesko continues his month-by-month series writing about his beekeeping back in his native Bulgaria.

Vesko Starchikov
LBKA member

Caring for the bees in August

In August the honey flow has finished in most areas, but in mountain areas where I live, bees collect nectar in August from wild plants that flower in late summer.



Wasp

To continue the collection of honey in the summer, climatic conditions are very important. In droughts – which are common – honeybees stop collecting nectar because all plants and herbs around the apiary are dry and there are no fresh flowers nearby. During this time mildew begins to appear on coniferous and deciduous trees which bees collect to produce honeydew.

Condition of bee colonies

Brood decreases to 4-6 frames. Bees move honey from the edge of the nest to the middle to be close to the winter cluster. Bees begin to remove drones from the hive. Queens reduce their egg-laying, particular where queens are old and colonies can become weaker, being less able to defend their colony against robbing. Colonies strengthen security at the entrance of the hive, guarding against robber bees or wasps.

My work in the apiary

After removing the honey supers I do a full review of the hives. Depending on the state of bee colonies, I take action for the autumn their development and for their stockpiling food for the winter. When there are late flowering plants and a flow of nectar, I narrow hive entrances to reducing robbing – weak colonies can be decimated because of this.

In this season, with its lack of flowering plants and with the absence of the honey flow, I begin to prepare colonies for the winter. I feed them with a syrup



Herbs that I use for the prophylactic treatment of bee colonies. Left: *Hypericum Perforatum*; right: *Achillea Millefolium*.

of honey and water in a ratio 1:3 to stimulate the colony to raise young bees for the winter and to increase their stores for the long winter. To help keep colonies healthy. I make honey syrup and make tea from herbs *Hypericum Perforatum* and *Achillea millefolium* to protect my bees from getting sick in the winter and stop the spread of fungal disease.

If I find that a colony is left without a queen or she is damaged I give them a new queen. I also take care of spare colonies that I use to restore the main colonies in the apiary if I find any problems with them in autumn, winter and spring. I monitor the possible occurrence of the disease status of colonies and if symptoms occur, I immediately begin prophylactic treatment to prevent the growth of disease. I do prophylactic treatment of families and for varroa.

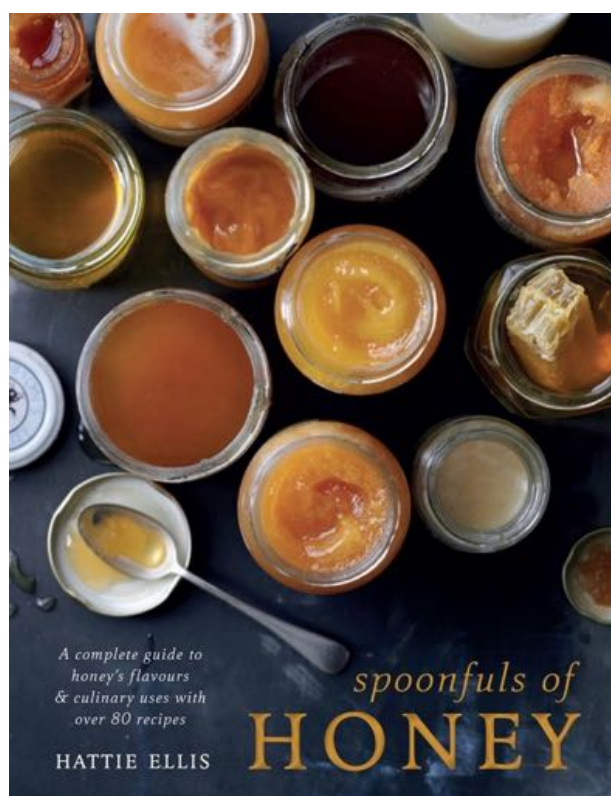
During this period, I deal with the issue of ants invading colonies. If no measures are taken, ants can form colonies inside. Wasps are another problem. Wasps are predators and will kill bees to feed their young. In a wasp attack a bee colony can be destroyed within a few hours. For this I set traps in different places in the apiary against the wasps.

Book Review: "Spoonfuls of Honey" by Hattie Ellis

We asked Laura to review this book because she's both good at writing and it seem uncannily compatible with the company she runs.

*Laura Jean Sargent
LBKA member*

Running an organisation that's based around pop-up dinners, you'd think I'd be a dab hand in the kitchen?



Spoonfuls of Honey by Hattie Ellis

I'm not. Given that those pop-up dinners are entirely bee-related, you'd think I'd have a list of honey-related recipes ready to go? I don't. I have to admit, I leave the all the food stuff down to my partner Joe, who's more than able and, as Senior Sous Chef at Petersham Nurseries, there's not much point in competing.

However, I was both excited and inspired to receive *Spoonfuls of Honey*, the new recipe book from Hattie Ellis – an award winning author with a heavy focus on (and justifiable passion for) seasonal, sustainable produce. If you're stuck in a honey rut, wondering what to pair certain honeys with, or are simply interested in the role of honey around the world, then *Spoonfuls of Honey* makes an excellent resource indeed.

"From prehistory onwards, mankind's love of bees, honey and all that they symbolize has been part of music, poetry, architecture, art, philosophy, politics and religion."

We kick off with a series of informative chapters that put honey well in its captivating context. Its global appeal is explored, considerations are covered around both buying and storing honey and its health benefits are highlighted, before divulging the important function that bees play in nature. This combined easily leaves you with a heightened appreciation of both honey and bees, all after just 20 minutes or so of light reading.

The history of honey was hooking stuff, from the honey hunters that used birds as guidance to their loot, to the ceremonies and celebrations that have been had over the centuries in honey's honour. As time passed, a

common ground was shared, as year upon year appears seemingly linked by a revered thread – one that saw bees as powerful, precious and, in some cases, even supernatural creatures.

"In Africa, some hunters follow honey-hunting animals such as the honey guide, a small bird that is unusual in that it can digest beeswax."

Spoonfuls of Honey moves on to an A-Z of honey, which takes you from blended honey, through monofloral and all the way to world trade, before an A-Z of honeybees, starting at (you guessed it) bees and saving the best for last, with royal jelly. We move on to tasting methods, before exploring its Honey and Health and, quite appropriately, ending with Honey and the Natural World. A heartfelt thank you to Ellis is due here, as she rounds up with Bees: their problems are our problems.

When you consider the astonishing facts that Ellis presents around just how hard a bee has to work to produce a tiny amount of honey (I won't spoil it but I am amazed) it was pleasing to learn that the recipes she's collated and worked upon never call for too much of it. There's a natural fear that dishes can be made over-sweet with honey and this is well addressed; a teaspoon here or a glazing there is often all you need to reap the benefits of this liquid gold.

"Just a little honey adds glistening glamour to plain roots."

Divided into mealtime sections that include Breakfast and Brunch, Lunch and Supper and Teatime Baking, amongst others, Ellis has pulled together a number of recipes, which she's diligently tried, tested and added her own personal touches to if appropriate. Each opens with an introductory paragraph, giving authentic glimpses into Ellis' long journey with honey, and includes historical tidbits and fast facts that kindle a robust enthusiasm for a recipe from its outset.

Needless to say, the Roman Honey Mushrooms really caught my fancy. The recipe recommends a teaspoon of dark, thyme or Greek honey for the best flavour. Elderflower Fritters made perfect use of the season, and served as an impressively innovative dinner party starter - this time, a light honey was suggested, such as acacia or orange blossom. I also tried the Honey Buttered French Peaches – Ellis' version of an Alain Passard recipe. This is wonderfully easy to make, with enlivening ingredients such as basil, saffron and grenadine to really spark the taste buds.

"The cooking of ancient Rome was full of honey."

Spoonfuls of Honey comes to a close with an encyclopaedia of global varieties, spread over a closing chapter entitled *Around the World in 90 Pots*. This guide to the most widely available honeys is a staple on any self-respecting honey-lovers book shelf. Learn of avocado honey's malty aroma, chia's nutty flavours, lehua's butterscotch notes and sourwood's spicy overtones as

you read through these final pages for either pleasure, reference or both.

If you can prise Spoonfuls of Honey from your sticky fingers, it'll only be to clear a cupboard shelf, as you'll be dying for the full scope of honey's possibilities in your own kitchen after absorbing this fascinating read. Ellis presents a perfectly persuasive case for starting your own flavourful journey, or enthusiastically wading on with whatever golden relationship you may already have underway.

Spoonfuls of Honey was published in September 2014 by Pavilion Books. RRP £20.00 <http://www.pavilionbooks.com>.

Musings of a Beekeeper: Honey standards

Simon makes a welcome return to LBKA News with some musings about honey standards.

*Simon Wilks
LBKA member*

You may never have heard of Bertha Cardona who, in January 2011 bought a jar of HoneyTree's Market Pantry Honey, for around \$3, from a Target store in Redlands, California.

She took good care of her purchase, it seems. Because, nine months after buying it, and reading an article on the Food Safety News website, she decided to take action. Or, more accurately, some friendly lawyers decided to attempt a class action on her behalf. It was one of several in California and Florida around that time, presumably prompted by the same article, that stated that "the Food and Drug Administration says that any product that's been ultra-filtered and no longer contains pollen isn't honey", and that most of the retail jars of honey they'd tested contained no pollen at all.

These cases seemed to have some merit. In both California and Florida, state law provides that "no pollen or constituent particular to honey may be removed except where unavoidable in the removal of foreign organic or inorganic matter", and the honey they'd bought, in all probability, wouldn't have contained any pollen at all.

Not everyone was happy about this, not least the honey packers, and attempts were made to put a lid on these challenges, all claiming that nobody wanted pollen in

their honey in the first place. National Public Radio posted an article, the National Honey Board (NHB), a branch of the Agriculture Marketing Services (AMS) division of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), issued a press release titled "Honey Without Pollen is Still Honey" and honey packers joined in too, updating their websites in an attempt to reassure. Burselson's, for example, reassured customers that it used "an industry-standard microfiltration system to remove suspended solids. (Honey in... and honey out!)", and justified filtering as important as it "removes bee parts, wax and solids, including the majority of pollen that can hasten crystallization... the number one consumer complaint in regards to honey."

When Bertha's case came before the honorable George H King, however, the good judge threw it out. The reason was that federal law outranks state law, and federal law had no definition for honey. Which meant that labelling had to reflect the 'common name' of the product, which was 'honey', whether or not it had been filtered. Not labelling honey as 'honey', filtered or otherwise, would have been a breach of federal law for, unless it's been adulterated by the addition of things, it must still be honey. And so he dismissed the case with prejudice, a pattern repeated in all similar cases.

This probably surprised the folk at Food Safety News, and seems to have surprised some consumers. Yet, if they'd done their research properly, they would have found that the USDA has a voluntary, but presumably legal, grading system for honey that's been in force for many years and that requires 'Grade A' honey to contain only 'a trace of pollen'. That looks very much like official, federal encouragement to filter the pollen out of honey.

Things might have been different. For In 2006, a number of producer and packer associations, worried by the threat of counterfeit honey, petitioned the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to adopt the definition of honey from the Codex Alimentarius, a set of international food standards, compiled by the World Health Organisation and the US Food and Agriculture Organisation, that are promoted as voluntary guidelines that nations can choose to adopt into national law. Where honey is concerned the Codex includes the recommendation that "No pollen or constituent particular to honey may be removed except where this is unavoidable in the removal of foreign inorganic or organic matter", and so it was as well that the FDA did not adopt the Codex definition into federal law, what with pollen removal by filtration being a "commercial norm" in the words of the petitioners.

But in October 2011, five years later, the FDA formed a conclusion and denied the petition. In a letter to the producers' legal representative, a Ms Kirsten C Gunter, Esquire, they concluded "that no standard of identity for honey was necessary". They pointed out that according to "Webster's New World College dictionary, honey is 'a thick, sweet, syrupy substance that bees make as food from the nectar of flowers and store in honeycombs",

and reckoned that was good enough anyone. The risk of adulteration, they reckoned, could be solved by existing labelling regulations and inspection regimes.

While the FDA was deciding to leave things as they were, however, a scandal that Bloomberg called the "Largest Food Fraud in US History", was emerging. A scam that ended with two major packers and assorted brokers being charged for avoiding \$180m in import tariffs by disguising the origin of imported honey by, among other things, ultrafiltration. (I should point out at this point, that neither of the firms was prosecuted, choosing to cooperate and pay some modest fines instead.)

Rumours of this had been rife beforehand, however, and a few large US honey packers had reacted by setting up True Source Honey in 2010, a paper-based initiative that aims to certify honey that's been legally and traceably sourced, and was free from adulteration. True Source, however, has as much to say about pollen as you'd think.

But that hasn't stopped people worrying about 'ultrafiltration', even in the light of the National Honey Board's explanation, which stated that ultrafiltration "involves adding water to honey and filtering it under high pressure at the molecular level, then removing the water. It is a much more involved and expensive process which results in a colorless sweetener product that is derived from honey but is not considered 'honey' in the U.S."

Those worries might be justified. For although the NHB mightn't consider ultrafiltered honey to be honey, the FDA, and Webster's dictionary doesn't seem to make the same distinction. Happily that, again, may change. Last year, as a result of the 2014 Agriculture Act, the USDA was charged with developing a Federal Identity for honey, launched a consultation, and are now, we presume, working out the details. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the packers consider pollen grains among the "defects", whereas several other submissions, from retailers, beekeepers and the public, are keener to adopt the full Codex definition.

It's easy, from the safety of Europe, to snigger at the squabble and laugh at how commercial interests mean that, in the land of the free, consumers know less about their food than we do. But sniggering might be premature. In the next thrilling instalment, I'll aim to show why that might be.



Ben's bee's 'dead' eggs.

July's Facebook (In)digest(ion)

LBKA's open Facebook page is an active community of over 1000 from around London and other parts of the UK and world. Lots of interesting material gets posted, but here's a mere glimpse of what you might have missed.

We're looking for more volunteers to take turns writing these – please email services@lbka.org.uk if you're interested in being one of these.

*Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk*

"Misbehaving" bees

Bees regularly seem to not behave as we expect them to... and this month has been no exception!

Tristram had a hive he suspected contained laying workers, but there were single eggs (laying workers often lay multiple eggs in each cell) and were not making queen cells. Most people suggested that they probably had a queen but the issue was not resolved. There was also talk of how to deal with colonies with laying workers by shaking the bees out away from the hive so that only the non-laying foragers manage to find their way back.

Ben had a puzzling puzzle, with something (either a queen or laying workers) seemingly laying 'dead' eggs that failed to develop any further. This flummoxed most people who went off to ask others. Thomas



"If a beekeeper tells you he knows what he's doing, be wary and keep a keen eye on this fellow, for he has already told one lie, and no doubt will tell you another" -

- unknown

Reminding us that we'll probably never know everything.



Drone larva with a varroa mite.

found a Beesource Beekeeping Forum post with a similar situation, but apart from a few suggestions, no solution. Olivia suggested that a slimmed-down queen pre-swarm might find it difficult to start laying again, but this isn't the case here as the queen was a virgin queen, hopefully now mated. Emily pointed to Dave Cushman's site (<http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/eggdevelop.html>) that suggests that eggs produce a fluid as they hatch and that it seems that these eggs weren't. Perhaps some kind of disease that might stop this. No resolution was found. A week later, there was still no brood and Ben asked for advice what to do next. The combining option was considered too risky as the problem wasn't known and leaving them to die out didn't seem a satisfactory option. That left requeening, and a request for somewhere to source a new queen. But not before Paul posted a light-hearted picture putting beekeepers' knowledge into perspective...

Varroa

Olivia uploaded a photograph of drone brood with a varroa mite on... a reminder of the need to monitor their levels.

Mark recalled a workshop that he gave last year at an LBKA meeting where he mentioned highly effective non-chemical methods of controlling varroa numbers. He also posted a video outlining their life cycle: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2vg59Snt6c>.



Follow Winnie-the-Pooh on his latest adventure to help save the honey bees - find out more...

"But if there aren't lots of bees then there won't be any honey." Winnie the Pooh. Source: <http://www.friendsofthehoneybee.com/about/bee-friendly-with-winnie-the-pooh/>.

Honey flow

At the start of July, Llŷr asked for opinions about the honey flow. As usual, people had different experiences and opinions, but most people seemed to think that it was an OK rather than outstanding year. Mark found that the dry early summer led to the - usually important - lime trees not producing much nectar this year. Karin says that hers were on the lime and brambles and Thomas found this year to be better than the last so far.

Winnie the Pooh

Several people were quite pleased that BBKA are using Winnie the Pooh to raise awareness about bees.

Hives

Marc asked whether a National hive is the best to start with. The general consensus was yes because it's the most common type and so easier to get parts for, but to find out what his peers had, although some suggested deep brood or brood-and-a-half. Ribbet suggested Warré hives as being more natural, though Nigel wondered whether any keeping in a man-made box was 'natural'. Angela, Mark and Thomas suggested to stick with a national at first and then to see.

Whilst on the subject of hives, Thomas identified a mystery hive from photographs posted by Afshin as a stackable urban beehive, "perfect for beginner beekeepers"; <http://inhabitat.com/stackable-urban-beehive-is-perfect-for-beginner-beekeepers/>.

Mark and Richard checked the 7 colonies in our Holland Park apiary. See the pictures of what they found - a recently-hatched queen cell and a large block of wax from the solar wax extractor.

Poisonous trees?

Emily asked about the lime trees whose nectar is poisonous to bees as her friend had seen a lot of dead bees near a lime tree. Mark confirmed this was Silver Lime (*Tilia tormentosa*) and that it's not an uncommon tree, particularly in Victorian Parks.



The Stackable Urban Beehive; <http://inhabitat.com/stackable-urban-beehive-is-perfect-for-beginner-beekeepers/>

Lambeth Country Show

The Lambeth Country Show was a success for us. We sold seeds, members' honey and talked to the public about bees. Angela thanked the volunteers for making the stall work so well and for their teamwork and good vibe. Paul listed some of those who helped on the Saturday: Emily, Richard, Patricia, Aidan, Carol, Corrine, Matt, Sara, Angela, Mark. There were other volunteers on the Sunday. Angela and Mark posted some pictures of the event.

Mark, Richard and Jon also ran a successful show at the "Bee Conscience" event in Clapham Common.

Bees in decline

Mark wrote a long post in which he attempted to dispel what he (and others) regard as the honey bee declines myth. He pointed to high-profile campaigns about honey bees declines, citing research showing that this is (at least now) not the case. He suggested that we should concentrate our efforts on bumble and other wild bees. Although the largest focus has been on colony collapse disorder (CCD; mainly affecting the US) and neonicotinoids, other causes are as important – habitat loss, invading exotic pests and pathogens and bad husbandry practices – often overlooked. He cited research that suggests that recent winter losses have not been worse than usual and suggests that they are more dependent on the weather in that year than anything else. His message was to stop focussing on honey bees and to consider other pollinators that have to fend for themselves.

This generated a fair amount of comment. Angela concurred with Marks comments, recalling questions from



Our Chair Richard with a block of wax from our Holland Park apiary's solar extractor.



New queen cell with the queen's pupae skin and residue still in the cell – must have just hatched!



Varroa on a honey bee in its pupa stage.



One of Mark's endoscopic varroa pictures.

the public at the Lambeth Country Show stall about honeybees under threat. (Another) Mark noted that people and organisations connected with bees have an interest in preserving the honey bee decline message. But Thomas challenged some aspects of the article, saying that if there were no beekeepers, honeybees would be under threat. William had an interesting and quite ironic perspective – his bees rely on the oil seed rape crop but if the ban neonicotinoids results in crop failure or the crop not being grown, that's a lot of money lost for the farmers and less nectar for his bees.

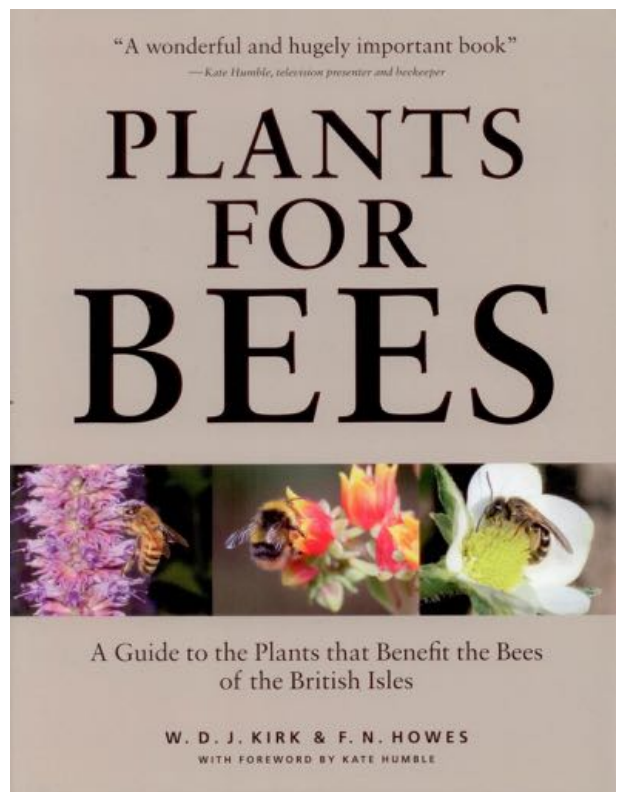
Angela later posted an article from the Washington Post that seems to support this view: <http://wapo.st/1IWSQnB>.

Abbie is doing her Masters thesis on this subject and asked for views on this and whether beekeepers have noticed. Mark and Angela both said that honeybees are not in decline and Angela said that she's not known of any beekeepers finding that their bees are in decline. Katie and Bill identified varroa as one of the biggest problems that beekeepers have to stay one step ahead.

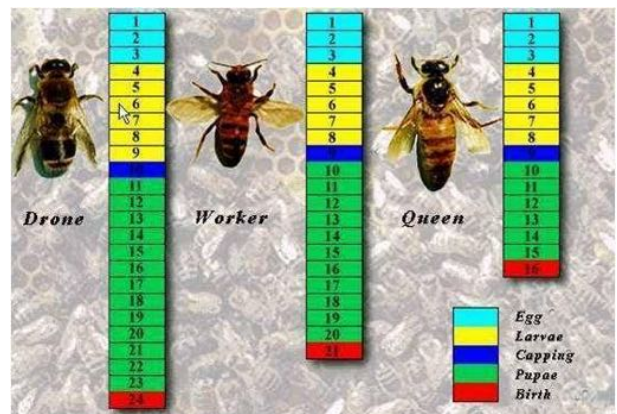
Neonicotinoids are back

Mark reported the news the the National Farmers' Union successfully lobbied for the moratorium on neonicotinoids use to be temporarily suspended in some areas. David provided a link to a petition against this.

Mark later reported that first indications are that the Oil Seed Rape crop was higher than usual. This has caused many to question the "emergency measures" apparently needed for the moratorium on neonicotinoids to be lifted. However, William did point out that these overall figures masked large yield drops in some areas and that the agricultural calendar was such that it is not possible to wait until the yield figures are in. However the temporary moratorium lifting has attracted widespread criticism from conservationists, beekeeper and others. Angela posted BBKA's official position on this: <http://bit.ly/1Dzww3b>.



Celebrate Pollinator Awareness week.



Three castes, posted by Angela.



"Worker bees", posted by Angela.

Varroa treatment

Angela posted about the importance of treating for varroa in August for healthy overwintering. It was interesting to get views from other parts of the country, such as the late Heather flowering that makes early varroa treatment difficult.

Endoscope hive inspection

Mark posted some impressive pictures of varroa taken with a cheap endoscope sourced from Ebay.

Other things

Norman recommended the Plants for Bees book as an invaluable resource for Pollinator Awareness week.

Paul asked for people to wish him good luck for this The Voice auditions, which he duly got.

Angela posted a link to a BBC news story about a couple of Greek beekeepers being accused of accidentally starting a large fire...and warned about being extra vigilant with smoker fuel.

Rebecca, an Edinburgh-based anthropologist wanted to meet some London beekeepers for her upcoming London trip. She's interested in urban beekeeping and how the presence of bees in the city might be transforming our ideas about nature and urban living.

Angela posted a useful picture of the difference between the three bee castes and their development cycles. It is important to understand these, particularly for the queen for swarm management.

Marjorie posted an article reporting that scientists have found that bees naturally vaccinate their young: <http://wapo.st/1MCs1HO>.

Adventures in Beeland: The path to honey

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

Emily Scott
LBKA member

The path to honey is a long and arduous one. Arguably it starts in September after you've extracted your summer honey. Then the beekeeper can treat for varroa and prepare the colony for winter. As the cold nights draw in mouse-guards go on, insulation can be put in the roof and the long wait to see whether the bees will survive winter begins.

Come spring, if all goes to plan and your bees have emerged healthy and well, you may be able to put supers on in April or May. The bees fly high and far, gathering nectar wherever they can. You inspect and wait, making sure the queen is laying and preventing any swarms occurring.

Finally, after much heavy lifting, stings, breaking of nails, splinters, sweat and pain, hopefully the bees have managed to fill and cap a super(s). Now is honey time. But your efforts are not over yet. In fact, some of the worst times are still to come – do any beekeepers really genuinely enjoy honey extraction?

The job that faces you first (at least for frames built from foundation) is to uncap the heavy honey frames, using a knife or uncapping fork. This is best done in hot weather (to help the honey flow) in a room with all the windows closed (to stop the bees and wasps coming to get their honey back).

The resulting wax cappings can be given back to the bees to clean up and then turned into candles or wax blocks afterwards. Ideally nothing goes to waste. The



Honey frame before uncapping.

heady, almost boozy scent of the honey rises around you. A few licks are all it takes to start feeling slightly sick from the sweetness. I understand why bees go into a robbing frenzy if honey is spilt around the hives – it’s an enveloping, intoxicating smell. Your hands are covered with gooey, sticky honey by this point – probably along with your clothes, the floor and everything around you.

Once you’ve uncapped the honey, now you can spin it out. Last year we got to this stage and put the frames in Emma’s extractor, only to find nothing came out. We had extremely stubborn, viscous honey. It must have been thixotropic, which means that it becomes temporarily fluid when shaken or stirred but a gel again when left standing. We got all sorts of sceptical looks from other beekeepers who hadn’t experienced this when we told them about it! People kept asking whether we’d uncapped the frames properly or said we weren’t putting enough welly in (despite it being an electric extractor which span faster than any human!).

In the end Emma had to stir each cell individually with a sterilised key to get it to flow out – see her post, “How to extract honey too thick to spin out of a perfectly good extractor” (<http://missapismellifera.com/2015/07/25/a-beekeepers-notes-for-july/>).

This year my allotment honey was a dark, rich brown. Would it spin out?

Much to our relief, the answer was yes. We took turns cranking the handle around, with Emma’s boyfriend John joining in at one point too. A tiring job but at least we could see results as the honey gradually built up at the bottom of the extractor. We drained the extractor after every super of frames, as it can only be used whilst on the floor and then must be lifted up onto a surface so that the honey can flow into a container below. If you extract too much honey before draining it, the extractor will be extremely heavy/impossible to lift!

The honey you can see oozing out above is lighter honey from our apiary hives. Emma has some more photos of



Wax cappings.



Two uncapped allotment frames.



Frames ready to uncap.



Oozing honey from extractor.

the extraction at <http://missapismellifera.com/2015/07/25/a-beekeepers-notes-for-july/>.

The job is not over yet, as the honey must be filtered through a sieve to remove wax particles before finally being bottled. I hope this post conveys some of the work hobby beekeepers go through to produce honey and explains why local honey costs more than the mass produced supermarket kind, which has been churned together from multiple hives and sometimes even from colonies in several different countries. This process, in combination with intense micro-filtering and pasteurisation by heating, usually results in a loss of flavour.

By the way I'd be interested in hearing from other beekeepers as to how you store your honey. I saw keeping it in a fridge or freezer recommended in a magazine this month, as at under 4.5°C granulation stops. Have you ever done this? And what did your family think about the fridge or freezer being full of honey?!

Poetry corner

Stephanie (Sonority) Turner (<http://www.sonorityturner.com/>) is a poet, social artist and creative facilitator. She works with young people and community groups using creativity to explore ideas around ecology, society and empowerment. She is currently developing a collection of poems about bees which will be exhibited in 2016. She has provided two short poems for our enjoyment.

Stephanie (Sonority) Turner
Poet, social artist and creative facilitator

Bees vs Wasps

If truth is a bee,
and deceit were a wasp.

Truth is be spreading love,
whilst deceit is stinging us.

Longing For Greener Grass

The bee was meant to be a bee
from the moment the bee was born.

It bumbled, buzzed and had a sting
at the bottom of its bum,

but the bee wanted to be a bird
because the bee had heard

that pesticides are genocide
and there is no place for the bees to hide.

Members selling to members

This section is for members selling things or selling services to others. This could include honey, nucs and wax. Email services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

No one is selling anything this month.

Upcoming events

Sunday 23rd August (date changed): Monthly meeting: Summer Social

11:00-16:00 at Walworth Garden Farm, 206 Manor Place, SE17 3BN.

Monthly meeting and Summer Social at Walworth Garden Farm. Some apiguard will be on sale to members but since it will be a bit late in the season, we strongly recommend members to source their apiguard from elsewhere this year. Members and their guests are welcome.

Saturday 12th September: "Saving our Bumblebees", a talk by David Goulson

15:00 at Orpington Village Hall, 311 High St Orpington, Kent, BR6 0NN.

Professor of Biology at Sussex Uni, Dave Goulson, founded the Bumblebee Society and has published a number of best selling books; a popular speaker at many national and regional events, on 12 September, he will talk about the amazing life and behaviour of bumblebees, the problems they face, and what we can all do to help them.

This event is organised by **Sidcup Beekeepers**. You need to book in advance by emailing melody.faulkner@gmail.com and the **price is £3**.

Sunday 13th September: Monthly meeting: Honey tasting

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

The diversity of flowering plants in London honey gives London Honey complex flavour and helps make

it highly-sought after. For this meeting, we ask those luckily enough to have had bees that produced surplus honey to bring some along to the meeting for tasting. We will provide tasting sticks. We will also talk about using refractometers to estimate the moisture content of honey. Non-members are welcome to come and find out more about LBKA.

Saturday 26th September: Croydon Honey Show

10:00-15:00 next to Sainsbury's, 130 Addington Rd, South Croydon, CR2 8LA.

This honey show is organised by the Croydon Division of the Surrey Beekeepers Association.

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)! We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, chair@lbka.org.uk
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary:** Emma Nye, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership services:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Forage:** Mark Patterson, forage@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Paul Vagg, resources@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Emily Abbott, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Tristram Sutton, mentoring@lbka.org.uk

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/>.

