



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

April, 2018

Welcome to the April Newsletter, which comes at a time where Spring is looking more convincing. This month, there's news of our forage and hive mapping project (p4), LBKA's day at the races (p11) and the usual fantastic regular submissions which make the newsletter so worth reading. Thanks very much to those who produce these every month.

As ever, more contributors are welcome. We'd like the newsletter to reflect the membership of LBKA as well as possible. Perhaps you have some beekeeping experience that might entertain and/or inform us, some reflections on beekeeping news or practice ... or even just some nice photos of some bees!

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Thanks to this month's contributors: **Dominique Bernard, Emily Cunningham, Richard Glassborow, Eugene Fahy, Martin Hudson, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Simon Saville and Vlad Zamfir.** Thanks as usual to **Martin Hudson** for proof-reading it.

Would you like to join the esteemed list of contributors above? If so, please contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

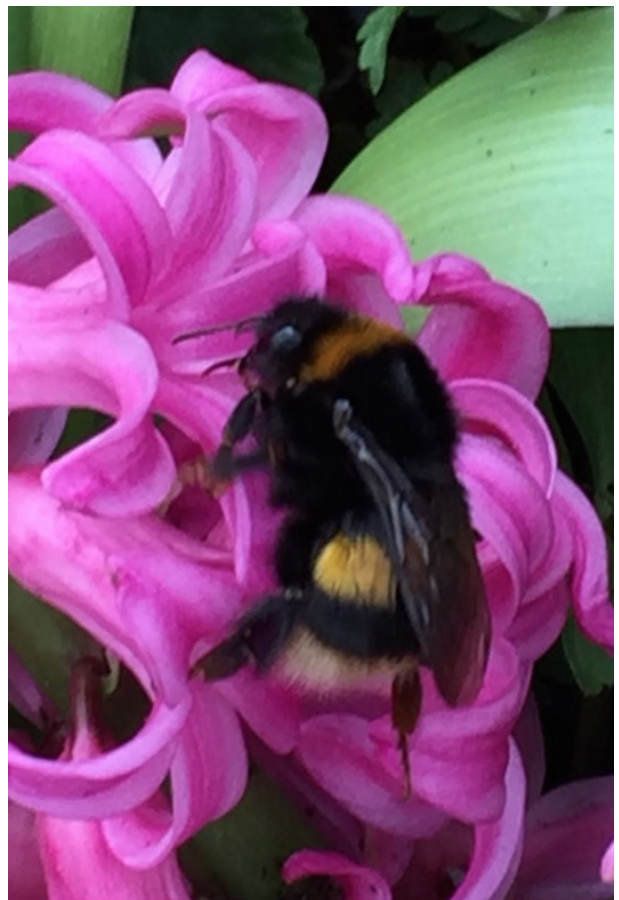
Aidan Slingsby, Editor, services@lbka.org.uk

From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

I hope you have all had a good Easter and have not been outwitted by your bees now that temperatures are finally beginning to rise. It is an easy mistake to think that colonies that have survived winter are somehow waiting for some proper warm spring weather before they really get going. That's what we do: they don't.

Meanwhile, I am pleased to say that the LBKA is also "building up", not so much numerically but in terms of making further progress towards fulfilling our better,



Queen Buff-Tailed Bumblebee on pink Hyacinth, part of our bee-friendly planter at Ascot (p11). Photo: Mark Patterson.

better, better mantra with new activities and initiatives joining our core offer to members.

Coaching for the BBKA certificate is in full swing with a record cohort this year, our two training courses at the end of this month are fully booked (they always are), candidates have taken BBKA modules, the May Taster course is filling and we have been approached to provide another in September, dedicated to schools. This will be funded by a charity who have also asked us to pilot 6 school visits in June. They will also be funded. This is perfect timing since we had only last month recruited twelve new volunteers to expand our capability to visit schools and introduce children to the fascinating world of the honey bee. We will be in touch with those volunteers (and anyone else who would like to join in) shortly to develop this programme.

And of course, it's planting season. We have a thousand flower seed mix packets that need to be sown. If you know of a community project or school or any other bright idea for planting flowers to attract pollinators, please contact Mark at forage@lbka.org.uk.

In the February edition of the LBKA News I announced that we had finally got permission from DEFRA to use NBU data on registered colonies to compare with forage distribution recorded by GIGL. Some of you will have seen the draft data maps that I have brought to the last two monthly pub social meetings. The feedback and ideas you have given us at those meetings has been a great help. On page 4, Simon Saville and I have written up a short introduction to these maps and how we intend to use them to improve the London environment for bees and other pollinating insects (and Londoners).

To support these maps and try to identify areas most in need of improvements, we are now developing our own London honey survey so that, in effect, the bees can answer the question of how much is enough themselves. We do urge members to take part in this so that we can get a meaningful sample across the city. I hope to be bringing an early draft of potential questions so that members can help develop a user-friendly survey.

Although we have always been cautious about a bee-club getting involved in London's environmental issues, we hope it will be apparent that, in time, this initiative will directly and indirectly benefit our members and, we hope, also create new areas of evidence-based, bee related interest and involvement for non beekeepers as well as those at all levels of beekeeping.

Finally, I would just like to take this opportunity of thanking Mark Patterson, who saw the potential and made the first FOI request to the NBU and Aidan Slingsby who doggedly persisted in the face of "difficulties". Both also combine considerable expertise in forage and computer modelling, a combination without which this would not have started.



The venue for our monthly meeting – the white door on the left.

Announcements

This is our official place for announcements. If you only read one section of the newsletter, it should be this one!

April Monthly Meeting: Microscopy for Nosema

Our next Monthly meeting will be on **Sunday 8th April at 11:00** where we'll have a **hands-on microscopy session** where we'll be diagnosing Nosema in our bees. We have a number of LBKA microscopes and the session will be run by Howard and Richard. We will be at our usual venue of Fairley House Junior School, [220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY](#).

If you'd like to test your bees, please bring along about 30 of your bees that have been humanely killed in a freezer overnight. The best way is to probably collect returning foragers in a bag or box, putting the bag in the freezer once you have enough. Do this not too long before the meeting – the day before is perfect. If you don't have any bees to test, I'm sure there'll be enough bees to go round!

Next month's meeting will be about the Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle. This will be on Sunday 13th May at the usual place and usual time.

Bee Health Day

Bee Health Day will replace the monthly meeting in June. It will see Mark, Howard and Richard talking about recognising and mitigating against bee diseases. It will include inspection of a hive and inspection of other comb. More details to follow.

Monthly cake

We try to have homemade cake at our monthly meetings. If you would like to bake cake for an LBKA a monthly meeting, please let Aidan know on services@lbka.org.uk. Of course, you're welcome to bring along



Richard Tinkler.

cake on a whim. But it makes sense to also coordinate a bit so that there's at least some cake every month!

Monthly Tuesday Socials

Our next Tuesday Social will be on **Tuesday, 24th April** at **Cittie of Yorke** (22 High Holborn, London WC1V 6BN). We will book an area for us.

Monthly Tuesday Socials will be held in a different (food serving) pub each month. Any suggestions should be emailed to admin@lbka.org.uk.

Remembering Richard Tinkler, member of LBKA, who died suddenly in his flat just before Easter

Dominique Bernard and Emily Cunningham

Dominique Bernard of LBKA: Richard was my mentor and taught me all I knew about bees. Over the years, we became friends. We would discuss bees' life and life in general around multiple cups of tea in his allotment. Over the last two years his diminishing sight was a worry and he felt he needed help with his bees. Our last cup of tea was early March and he was looking forward to the spring and the new season. Richard will be sadly missed by the bee community.

Richard's niece, Emily Cunningham adds: My Uncle Richard was a charismatic and energetic character, always involved in interesting projects. Although he



Richard Tinkler with Dora and Nancy.

was reticent about his past, in fact it was very glamorous: in his twenties he was a navigator on Vulcan bombers in the RAF, he then travelled all around the world, living for several years in Brazil, where he got to know Antonio Carlos Jobim, who wrote *The Girl from Ipanema*. Wherever Richard went, he would quickly make a circle of friends and become involved in different schemes with them. He returned to London in his forties, where he lived for the rest of his life, and always kept his beloved bees on his allotment in Thornton Gardens, Streatham, which was more like a nature reserve/garden complete with cans of Carlsberg floating in the water butt. He enjoyed teaching his great-nieces Dora and Nancy all about bees and during one visit, once wrote their names on a frame, waited until the bees had filled it with honey, then posted it to them, much to their delight. His only close relatives were me, my brother Ben and sister Sarah. We will miss him.

Emily's, [first ever piece in a national newspaper was about Richard Tinkler](#) – have a read!

The **funeral date** has not been set yet, but the family have invited all LBKA members to come. If you'd like to be informed about the funeral date, let Aidan know on services@lbka.org.uk.

Nucs and swarms

There's a list of people interested in nucs (and swarms) [here](#) to which all LBKA members have access.

You can ask to be added/removed from this list and it can be seen by all members so that anyone with suitable quarantined and checked nucs to sell can do so.

The best way to find out about swarms is to join the swarms WhatsApp group (and have an empty hive ready to go when the opportunity arises!)

Start to sow your wild flower mixes

Now is the time to start sowing any wildflower seed mixtures you might have, for a good display of flowers for the rest of the year. We have some suggested suppliers on our [website](#).

Possible Central London apiary opportunity

From time to time, LBKA is asked if we know of any experienced beekeepers who would be interested in managing an apiary on a voluntary or paid basis. In the past we have put specific opportunities to members when they arise however, because we are in contact with a couple of hotels in the West End with apiaries which might need managing and because Spring is approaching fast, we thought we would see if any members would be interested in principal in managing such an apiary so that we could respond quickly if a request came in.

Although LBKA would not be vouching for the appropriateness of any applicant we would suggest that applicants should have a minimum of 2 years experience and the BBKA Basic qualification.

If you would be interested in principal in managing an apiary for a West End hotel, one with an active bee club of novice beekeepers, please let resources@lbka.org.uk know so we can pass your contact details should a specific request come in.

Old announcements from March

Check our [previous newsletters](#) or contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

Development Update: Simon Saville updated us with LBKA's input to consultation on the Mayor's New London Plan.

Spring Convention: BBKA's [Spring Convention](#) will be on **Friday 13th - Sunday 15th April** at [Harper Adams University](#), Newport, TF10 8NB. See their [website](#) for more details.

BBKA's "Positive Thinking" Newsletter: World Bee Day on 20th May, two new BBKA shows (Chatsworth and Blenheim Palace, International Meeting of Young Beekeepers (IMYB) near Bordeaux, and some suggested text to write to our councillors to push for more forage creation.

Annetta Pedretti: We are sad to report the passing of Annetta Pedretti

Wax supplies wanted: Fiona is looking for beeswax. Members should contact her by email if they can help: envelopdesigns@gmail.com.

Citizen science Bee research project: see <https://goo.gl/forms/w4AUJHwZnTpwQHNe2>.

Apiary space in Harrow: someone is offering their garden in Harrow as an apiary – contact services@lbka.org.uk.

Build your own nuc box: Contact elliott.hodges@lbka.org.uk for further information.

Old announcements from February

BBKA swarm list: Contact Aidan (services@lbka.org.uk) if you'd like to be on BBKA's swarm list this year, confirming the postcode and phone number you'd like to be listed. These will be listed on a public page (currently "under construction"). This is an important public service that beekeepers can provide, but may result in many phone calls.

LBKA Swarms WhatsApp group: Internally, we coordinate swarm collection through a WhatsApp group. You should join this group if you're a swarm collector, want to learn to be a swarm collector or want a swarm. Contact Aidan on services@lbka.org.uk or Vlad on apiaries@lbka.org.uk.

Do you have any announcements?

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

London's Forage and Bees: Bees and flowers go together

Three years ago the committee began an initiative to seek better information on the relationship between available pollinator forage across London and the distribution of known honey bee colonies.

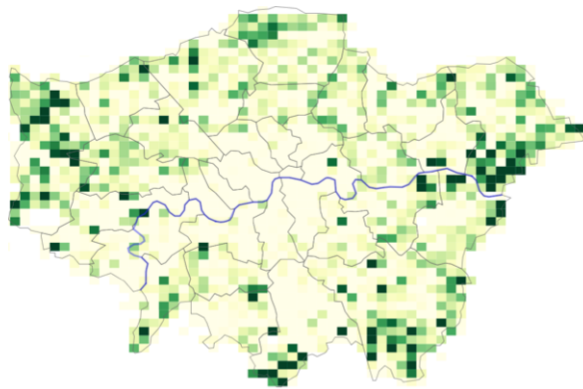
Simon Saville and Richard Glassborow
development@lbka.org.uk
chair@lbka.org.uk

We were aware of an increase in the number of enquiries about keeping bees, particularly from the business sector in central London, often as part of a corporate social responsibility strategy.

We were also aware of anecdotal evidence from some of our members, suggesting significant variance in survival, health and productivity from area to area.

So what was happening? Were bees in balance? Was it sustainable?

Quality pollinator forage

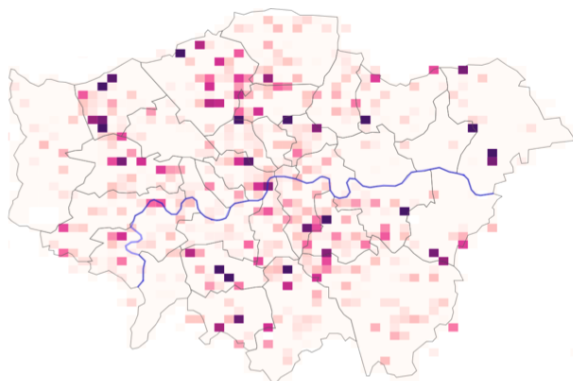


Source: Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL)



Hectares of good quality habitat per 1 sq. km

Registered honeybee colony density



Source: UK Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government License v2.0.



Registered colonies per 1 sq Km

Maps of forage quality and registered colonies

NBU data shows that the number of registered colonies in London has more than doubled since 2011. Although this refers to registrations, we think it is safe to assume that the number of actual colonies has increased in line with this trend.

At the same time, we know that there has been progressive habitat loss in London, due largely to development, conservatories and paving over front gardens. Habitat loss from London’s estimated 3.8 million gardens alone is equivalent to twice the area of Hyde Park per year¹.

Crudely, honey bees are not in decline in London but they soon will be because their habitat is in decline.

London is a big place; is the balance of honeybee colonies and forage evenly distributed?

¹GiGL 2009 – Greenspace Information in Greater London – the biological records centre for the Greater London area

We asked GiGL to advise us on the distribution of good quality forage across London. A juxtaposition of the honeybee colony density alongside the forage availability shows a tendency for the concentration of beehives in London to be inversely proportional to the forage available.

The maps refer to slightly different time frames. But, given that the number of colonies is increasing and the amount of green space in London is decreasing, we don’t think this will alter the conclusion. Our planned honey survey will tell us whether honey yields are indeed lower in areas of high colony density/lower forage availability.

We aren’t suggesting that people stop keeping bees in London! But we are reminded that bees and flowers go together. After all, a single healthy honeybee colony requires a bathtub full of nectar every year just to survive - and more to produce a honey crop.

Our objective is to use this data to motivate, inform and bring together local groups - including communities, companies, boroughs and others - to prevent further habitat loss, improve existing green spaces for wildlife, encourage new developments to provide biodiverse habitat.

Our first step is to share the information with our members - through this newsletter and at our monthly socials. Suggestions from the March social were to share the maps with other London BKAs, and to invite other London BKAs to contribute to the honey survey.

We welcome your comments and thoughts on these findings and our plans to put it to use to create a better London environment for bees (and Londoners).

Out and About

News of LBKA members’ outreach activities. Let us know if you want to get involved in some of these activities on behalf of LBKA. Also... we can only report things if we know about them, so please send your activities to services@lbka.org.uk.

LBKA at the Races

As last year, we were invited to run a stall at the Family Day at Ascot. Vlad has written this up on page .

Help in translation

Howard has been helping provide English text for some interpretation boards for a museum in Gehlberg (Thuringia, Germany).

Here’s the text he’s suggested:



Bee breeding apiary in Thuringia, Germany.

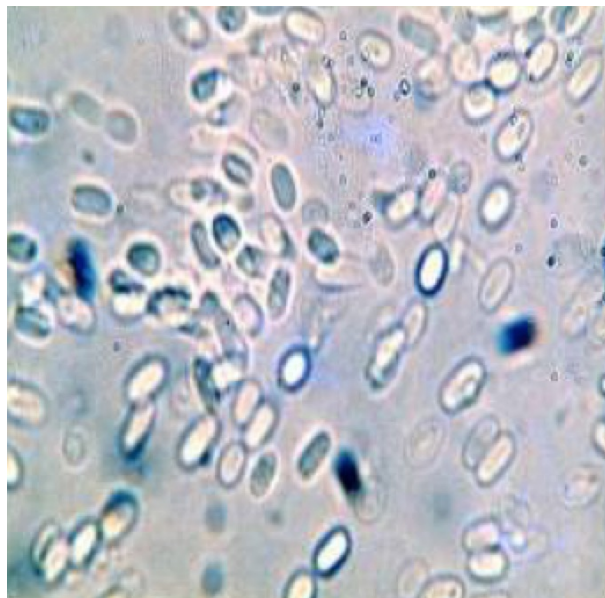
1. **Mystery Drone Congregation Areas.** Drones assemble in drone congregation areas. These are locations away from the beehives and to which drones travel and wait for a virgin queen bee. They are usually at the same place in each area each year.
2. **Beekeeping tradition in Thuringia.** Beekeeping has a long tradition in Thuringia. The first German beekeeping association was founded in 1837 along with a bee breeding programme.
3. **Procreation location at Gehberg.** A procreation site (Bee Breeding) is a site for beekeepers to produce unfertilised queen bees and male drones of the same race. They are used for targeted breeding of honey bees so as to preserve characteristics.
4. **Queen bee mating flight.** Normally, each queen bee flies to a Drone Congregation Area only once in her five year lifetime. This is when she is about 1 week old and sexually mature. She mates with several drones thereby collecting sufficient sperm to lay fertilised eggs for the rest of her life.

Last month's Monthly Meeting: The Microscopical Ins and Outs of Nosema

Martin Hudson reports on another fascinating monthly meeting in March – the first of a double-header talking about and examining the tiniest – but worryingly common – of bee diseases – Nosema.

Martin Hudson
LBKA member

I am always amazed at the quality of the informa-



Nosema spores (magnified 600 times).

tion which London Beekeepers provide for us at their monthly meetings. If you've not been – you really should – because it gives you an opportunity to learn something new every single time – and I've been going to them regularly for four years now!

Howard Nichols, LBKA's Education Officer, was at his usual scintillating best in March when he gave us his talk on the two types of single-celled Nosema - a fungus affecting a honey bee's alimentary tract (gut). The two types are *Nosema apis* and *Nosema ceranae*. They look very similar (Howard admitted that he had not been able to identify the difference between them), but they both require mashing up the abdomen of (dead!) bees with a few drops of water, and putting this mixture under a microscope at 600 times magnification before they can be seen - as rice-grain shaped forms - amongst the pollen and bee hair detritus. Some beeks suggest that *N. ceranae* is slightly longer than *N. apis* - but I suspect that this is just because beeks, by their nature, need something to have different opinions about!

When the spore-forming microsporidia are ingested into the gut of the bee, they penetrate the lining of the gut (the 'epithelial layer') where they multiply (by millions) and are then ejected with the bees' faeces. Nurse bees, when cleaning the hive, themselves ingest the spores, and the life cycle repeats. Howard explained that it is likely that Nosema is endemic in colonies to a lesser or greater extent.

Once in the gut, it affects the bee by competing with it for the protein that it needs. This considerably shortens the life of the bee – and particularly affects the foraging strength of the colony, which is likely to dwindle. With *N. apis* this is often in the Spring, when it should be expanding.

Apart from this dwindling, *Nosema apis* often causes dysentery in the colony and, unusually for bees which are scrupulously clean, there are signs of defecation oc-



Signs of dysentery in the bees, a common symptom of *Nosema apis*.

cur both inside the hive and around the hive and at the entrance. *Nosema apis* will also make a colony more susceptible to viruses such as black queen cell and filamentous virus, and Bee Virus Y (one I had not heard of before), and may dwindle during the Spring. Bees will often crawl listlessly in and around the hive.

A colony with a *Nosema ceranae* infection is likely to dwindle at any time of the year, have a greater likelihood of winter losses, and a reduced honey production and foraging capacity. Bees will die earlier than normal, but not usually in or around the hive. However, eventually (because of insufficient numbers of bees to do the work) a seriously affected colony may collapse altogether.

Howard explained the main different effects that each of the two types of honey-bee *Nosema* have on the colony. He suggested that, although they are sometimes referred to as ‘the *Nosema* twins’, they are, in fact, more distantly related. In fact *N. ceranae* is more closely related to a third *Nosema* type, found in wasps, *N. vespulis*.

<i>Nosema apis</i>	<i>Nosema ceranae</i>
Faecal staining	No faecal staining
Peaks in Spring	Virulent all year round
Infects ventriculus	Infects other parts of alimentary tract
Bees ramp up immune system	Bees suppress immune system

Howard then moved on to how to deal with a colony with *Nosema* – the bad news! There are now no authorised (chemical or veterinary) treatments available for *Nosema*, and various methods of hygienic manipulations (including the eponymous “change the queen” and/or putting the bees onto new foundation) solutions are suggested. He went through the normal good practice guidance, such as cleaning tools and equipment, returning boxes to the same colony from which they came, thoroughly torching and cleaning empty boxes, and replacing comb regularly. Howard finished his talk with a brief description of a Bailey comb change – when the entire brood frames are replaced.

His talk was very informative, and although I knew some of what he talked about, there was a lot more that I did not, or had forgotten! For the very reasonable cost of annual LBKA membership, these monthly meetings are extremely good value for money – not least because Aidan sometimes brings his own home-made cakes on the back of his bike – and it’s delicious – despite that!

Next month’s monthly meeting, as you will see from elsewhere in the Newsletter, is Part Two of this *Nosema* story – the practical session- - testing your own bees for *Nosema* infection. Howard and Richard will show us how to mash up our bees – hopefully killed in the freezer the night before - and how to use the Association’s microscopes to examine the entrails!

We’ll see you there, and good luck!

April in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

It is in April that colony populations substantially increase and drones start to appear. There should normally be sufficient available forage for the bees to be self-sufficient if the weather holds good. This is far from reality at the time of writing at the end of March when it is still very cold. I have not yet been able to do a proper colony inspection. The most important job for the beekeeper in April, given the weather, is to ensure that the colony is not starving. If it is still too cold for a proper inspection and if in doubt, then feed.

Assuming that the cold snap will come to an end and the weather will pick up then other action to be taken this month normally include the following:

- **Mouseguards.** Remove mouseguards and replace with a clean, sterilised entrance block.
- **Marking the queen.** If the queen is unmarked then this is an ideal time to find and mark her. The colony is now going to continue to expand in numbers up until July whereupon it will start to contract. Swarm control will be considerably easier with a marked queen.
- **Colony build-up.** Is the colony continuing to build up? A significant benefit of keeping colony records is that the number of frames of brood is recorded.
- **Varroa mites.** Check mite drop if not already done in March.
- **First full inspection.** If not done in March then the first full inspection and spring cleaning of the

hive should be carried out. From then on regular inspections should be made.

When inspecting a colony, 5 questions should be asked and actions taken if appropriate:

1. **Is the queen present and laying?** You do not need to find the queen. If there are eggs and these are only 1 egg per cell, or newly hatched larvae, then this is evidence that she was in the hive and laying 3 or 4 days ago.
2. **Has the colony enough room?** This is a 2-part question, being enough room for the queen to continue to lay eggs and enough room for the colony to store nectar. If not then provide room by adding a super.
3. **Are there any queen cells?** Queen cups are to be expected and should normally be ignored unless containing an egg or larva. Queen cells require swarm control action by the beekeeper. If the bees have sufficient space then swarm control should not normally be an issue until early May. If there is insufficient space in the hive, leading to congestion and inhibition of the circulation of queen substance, then swarming can be an April problem. Therefore, ensure that the colony has sufficient space. Add a super if necessary.
4. **Are there signs of disease?** This is a comprehensive question but the strategy is best approached by being familiar with healthy brood. Anything that does not fit this description is, prima facie, suspicious. Healthy unsealed brood is pearly white in colour, evenly laid, segmented and lies in a 'C' shape in the cell. Healthy sealed brood is light brown in colour, evenly laid and with slightly raised dome cappings.
5. **Are there enough stores until the next inspection?** The equivalent of 2 full National brood frames is regarded as more than sufficient at this time of year, even if there is a serious and prolonged downward turn in the weather. Nectar does not usually rise in the UK until the temperature reaches 18°C. So, beware of low stores.

Happy beekeeping for 2018!

April in the Forage Patch

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

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

As we enter April many of our true heralds of spring



Flowering currant.



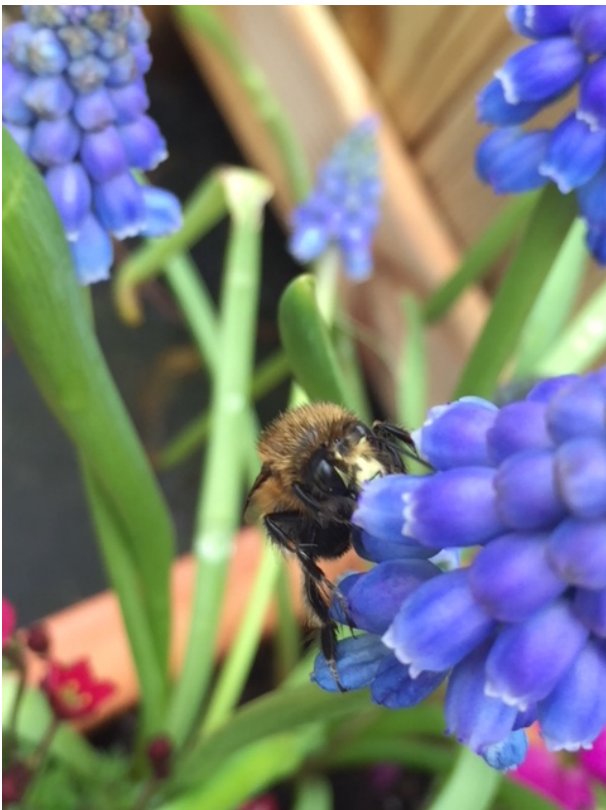
Marsh marigold.



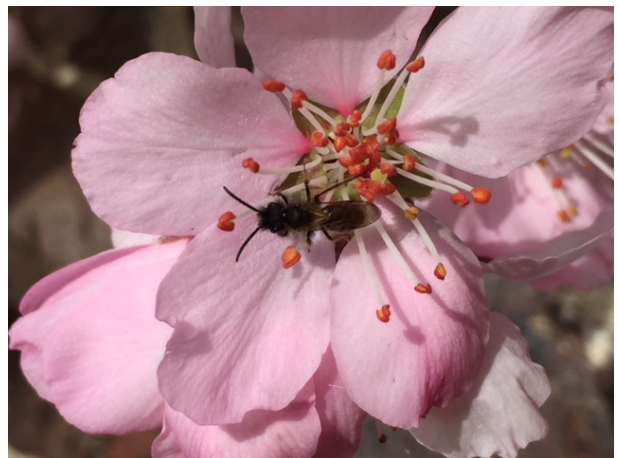
Celandine.



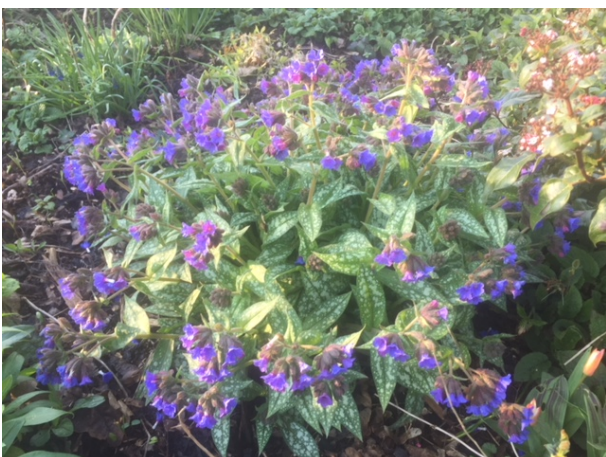
Tulips.



Muscari.



Peach blossom in Fulham palace walled garden.



Pulmonaria.



The pollinator friendly window box we took to Ascot.

have begun to flower. Among them the pretty pink **Cuckoo Flower** *Cardamine pratensis*. This dainty little pink flower is a true sign that spring 'proper' has arrived. It's an important nectar plant for many pollinators and the main food plant for the larva of the **Orange Tip Butterfly** – a species sadly in decline.

Deadnettle, Dandelions, Coltsfoot, Primulas, Wood Anemones, Green Alkanet, Comfrey and Lungwort are at last now coming in bloom 2-3 weeks later than last year. The latter 2 in particular are popular with the **Hairy Footed Flower Bee**. Another flower I'm noticing lots of **small solitary bees** on at the moment, is **Lesser Celandine**. This plant is unusual in the buttercup family (*Ranunculaceae*) as it is one of the few buttercups that is attractive to bees. Most other *Ranunculus* have nectar which contains the toxin protoanemonin which bees cannot digest and can lead to poisoning. Lesser Celandine, however, is popular with many of our early solitary bees and occasionally Honey bees. Many of the **Micro Andrena** solitary bees feed on the golden yellow flowers which form vast carpets among cemetery, churchyards and beneath hedgerows. Another member of the buttercup family which bees may visit at this time of year the **Marsh Marigold**.

Most of the **tulips, crocus and Winter Aconite** have now long gone over but there are still **Daffodils** in flower (though they are of little use to our bees), **alliums, wild garlic and Muscari** (Grape Hyacinth) in bloom.

This time last year, across much of southern England, **bluebells** were making an appearance. They are later this year and so far I've only seen signs of the fresh green leaves, but no flowers yet. In another few weeks, they should be out putting on a gorgeous display of blue. Blue bells may be visited by Honey bees and can produce a honey crop but they are also popular with some of the longer tongued solitary bees. Most Bluebells in London will be the invasive Spanish bluebell, but a few locations still hold stands of the native species.

During the last few days **Flowering Currant** have started to bloom. This plant is a reliable indicator that spring proper has arrived and for me a timely reminder to undertake first proper inspections. I'm writing this 24 hours after doing full inspections on several colonies where I have had to add supers because the brood bodies are full of sealed brood and honey. If a flow starts now and the colony runs out of room they could begin swarm preparations.

Other important sources of forage this month are the willows. The catkins of willow bear copious amounts of sulphur-yellow pollen. If your honey bees are returning to the hive dusted in yellow they will most likely have been visiting willow. It's not just honey bees that visit willow. Many bumblebees and *Andrena* bees will also collect willow pollen, and seem to time their emergence with Willow catkins. Unlike the earlier flowering catkins of **Alder** and **Hazel** willow will also produce nectar.

Other trees coming into bloom right now include **Field Maple, Sycamore, Poplar** and **Ash**. April is when we normally expect to see **Cherry Laurel** blooming in abundance but across much of the country this evergreen shrub is delayed flowering due to the recent cold. On the 4th April I saw the first inflorescence about to burst into flower. Many of the small solitary *Andrena* bees rely on this shrub for pollen and nectar.

As we progress through April we should expect to see the first **Horse Chestnut** blossom. Chestnut produces very distinctive dark brick red pollen which honey bees will collect with enthusiasm. Chestnuts are one of the best examples of how plants communicate with their pollinators; the individual blooms of the flower stalk change colour as they are fertilised to inform the bees that they need not bother to visit that particular bloom. Other trees coming into bloom will include Cherry, Plum and Apple. Currently the Blackthorn is putting on a good show of blooms and on warm days the bees may bring in a crop from this nectar source. At one of my apiaries my bees have access to about 45 hectares of mostly **Blackthorn** scrub and they bring back copious amounts of the brown coloured pollen and can fill a super with honey in little over a week.

One of the larger gardens where I keep my Honey Bees includes a 34 tree fruit orchard. So far the **nectarines, peaches** and **Mirabel DeNancy plum** are the only trees to have flowered. The **pears** should begin to bloom shortly followed by the **apples, Victoria Plum** and **Greengage**. Worryingly the half dozen Crab Apples planted around the edge of the garden to cross pollinate our cultivated apples have already bloomed which begs the question what will our apples pollinate with this year? The varieties planted were supposed to flower in unison providing cross pollination and better fruit set with the heritage apple varieties which unlike many modern cultivars do not self-pollinate.

On the outer edges of the city **Oil Seed Rape** will be starting to come into bloom and will flower well into mid-May. Beekeepers either love it or hate it for it can produce an abundance of honey but the grainy texture and trend to crystallise rock hard in the comb are a drawbacks. Our member Geoffrey Hood produced a lot of Rape honey in 2015 and when I find time I intend to use it as seed honey to try and make Creamed Honey. If I'm successful you can expect a write up about that.

Jobs to do in the garden

From now on, weeding will become a regular chore in the garden. For the past 3 weeks I have been meticulously pulling out the seedlings of **Germander Speedwell**, the first shoots of **Bindweed** and **Common Cleavers** which every year threaten to take over my garden. Keeping them in check requires constant attention. Weeding is a garden chore I like the least – if only it could all be about planting flowers!

Prune back damaged branches on shrubs and fruit



Here's what we prepared earlier. . .



Our honeys for sale and for tasting.

trees. Storm Katie has battered quite a few trees on my allotment which will now need pruning. Remove dead or damaged tissues cutting to the branch bark ridge.

Plant out summer flowering bulbs once threat of frost has gone.

Sow your LBKA seed packets – now is the best time. If you want a supply, speak to me at a Sunday meeting or email me forage@lbka.org.uk they are £2 each

LBKA at the Races

For the second year running, we were invited to the **Family Day** at the **Ascot Racecourse** to talk to the public about bees, honey and candle rolling.

Vlad Zamfir
apiaries@lbka.org.uk

For the second year running, LBKA was invited to have a stall at Ascot Racecourse, for their family day. The day is about ensuring that the families enjoy their visit so we've made sure that there is plenty of information and a few experiences for kids and adults to take part in: candle rolling, an observation hive (which had 2 sister queens which obviously did not read any beekeeping books), plenty of props (beeswax blocks, propolis lumps, etc.), honey tasting and our leaflets (Helping Honey Bees and Who's Who of London's Bee). Of course, we also had seeds and honey for sale in case people wanted to get some of the honey they tasted.

A lot of planning went into making sure everything went well on the day. Beyond just getting some of the items from storage, a number of committee members pre-prepared the materials for making 800 candles (last year we ran out of supplies after rolling about 400 candles)



Our bee-friendly floral display.



Our free information leaflets.



The calm before the storm.



Our seeds.



Candle rolling in action – over 600 candles were rolled by children (and some adults).



Observing the observation hive.

and packing seeds. We ended up filling 2 cars with all the things needed for the Ascot Family Day.

On Sunday 25th of March, 4 of us (Richard, Mark, Aidan and I) set off to Ascot. It was fairly cold (8 °C) and damp at the racecourse in the morning but the bees did not seem to mind and were moving around nicely in the observation hive. We prepared our stand, set up a candle rolling area, got some hot tea and assumed our posts for the 10:40 start. It didn't take much more than one hour for the candle rolling to be going full-tilt, requiring both Aidan and Richard to coordinate, Mark was going horse (ahem, hoarse – sorry, just needed to



How many queens can you see?



Bee taxi.

put that pun in there) from talking about bees and I was making sure no one double-dipped in the honey taster pots and kept tally of the sales. There were a few lulls in the day (when the races were on) and by the end we made around 600 candles, sold a few jars of honey and got told by the organisers that they would love to have us there again next year!

Facebook (In)digest(ion)

Some of the highlights from LBKA's [public facing Facebook page](#).

*Eugene Fahy
LBKA Member*

There was a decided arts and crafts feel to some of the



Richard giving a tour of the hive.



Our stall.

posts this month. Ben Robards highlighted an [exhibition of beekeeping related art](#) at the Joan Miro foundation in Barcelona. The exhibition runs until May.

Geordy Mark [posted pictures from the LBKA stand at the Ascot Race Course Family day](#). The stall was one of the most popular at the event and featured live bees, candle rolling and honey tasting. Our volunteers helped to roll almost 650 candles, raised over €1000 for our association and have been invited back for next year.

Richard Glassborow [posted an item about a device called BuzzBox](#). It uses audio sensors to monitor hive activity and health and sends data via wifi to an app. The makers claim that colonies make particular sounds depending on factors such as queenlessness, temperature, CO² levels, and availability of forage. Richard is hoping to get a device for test purposes in the near future.

Radek Tydlacka from Vigantice [posted a picture of some bee boxes](#) he has made to encourage pollinators. While practical objects in themselves, they would not look out of place in a gallery.

There were also a number of posts which fell under the general heading of "education". John O'Reilly shared

a [link to a quiz from the Irish Beekeepers Association website](#). If you get an answer wrong, you are given the correct answer with a link to further information. However, Geoff Hood spotted an error in one of the questions which asked about the three castes of honey bee. Geoff points out that the BBKA now uses the scientific, rather than American, definition of caste so there are two sexes of honeybee, male and female and two castes of female – queen and worker.

More recently (April 1), Martin Hudson [shared a link to a Youtube item](#) about the Flybe International Breeding Scheme, a collaboration between the BBKA and Flybe to fly colonies of bees to parts of the UK where colony numbers are in decline.

Finally, Norman Carreck [posted a reminder about the BBKA Spring Convention](#) which will be held at Harper Adams University in Shropshire from 13 – 15 April.

Guest Blog

I'd like to feature a guest blog article from a member every month here. If you write a blog, I'd love to be able to reuse your content here (no extra effort for you!) Please let me know on services@lbka.org.uk.

Members' marketplace

This section is for members offering beekeeping items or services to members or requesting items. Items could include nucs, wax and honey. Email services@lbka.org.uk to add something here.

No marketplace items this month.

Upcoming events

Sunday 8th April: Microscopy and Nosema Testing

11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

A hands-on practical session with microscopes for testing your bees for nosema. Bring along about 30 of your bees which have been humanely killed in a freezer overnight. Followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat. Meetings are for members only, but you're welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association.

Friday 13th - Sunday 15th April: Spring Convention

All weekend at Harper Adams University, Newport, TF10 8NB

The BBKA's annual Spring Convention with over 20 lectures, over 50 workshops and a trade show. See the BBKA website for more details.

Sunday 13th May: Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle

11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

This month, the subjects will be the Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle. Followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat. Meetings are for members only, but you're welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association.

Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions. We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, chair@lbka.org.uk
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary:** Natalie Cotton, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Forage:** Mark Patterson, forage@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Emily Abbott, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Tristram Sutton, resources@lbka.org.uk
- **Apiaries:** Vlad Zamfir, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- **Development:** Simon Saville, development@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/> and the pictures are in the same order as the names above.

