



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

October, 2018

It is the season for conferences, talks and shows and Andrew has written up his attendance at the BIBBA's conference (p12), Sally has written about "Learning from Bees" (p13) and Geoff is encouraging us to attend the National Honey Show (p4). We also have a book review from Stephen (p11). Howard has given us a roundup of LBKA's educational activities (p7) and details of upcoming activities (p6). Do take advantage of these opportunities (be quick for the microscopy course!) Following Richard's sobering account of the AFB/EFB mess in London this year, Mark provides important reading so we can do our bit to help keep this under control (p8). On a lighter note, he has also written an interesting article on pollination of squashes (p10) and Fulham Palace's blog reports beekeeping successes (p15). The AGM is on 11th November – let us know if you want to get more involved.

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A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Natalie Cotton, Richard Glassborow, Sally Haywill, Geoff Hood, Stephen King, Andrew Slade, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Vlad Zamfir.** Thanks as usual to **Martin Hudson** for proof-reading it.

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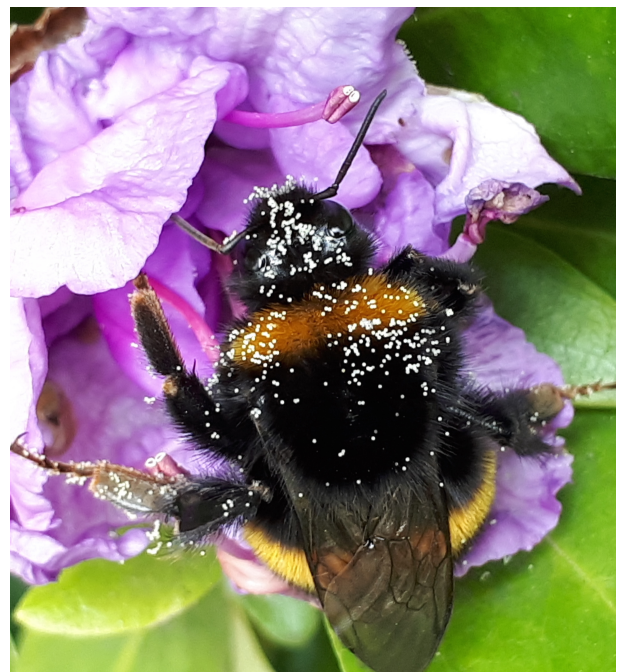
From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

For many beekeepers in London, this year has ended on a note of sadness and concern as the scale and spread of outbreaks of foulbrood has become apparent. Sadness, because it is probable that a considerable number of colonies will have had to be destroyed, certainly all those with AFB and, it appears, all the cases of EFB identified late in the season. Concern, because we have not seen these numbers of cases in London for a very long time, if ever, and it has highlighted all too starkly the realities that lie behind the theories and practices of good husbandry we ignore at our peril.

This has been a shock and a wake-up call. The LBKA committee recognise some things that need to happen at Association level. But we also ask our members to let us know what you think you need to help you help your bees.

EFB and AFB are infectious bacterial diseases and none of us can afford to be complacent. Some good beekeepers have been caught up in this outbreak so we are all going to have to raise our game and we must not



Bumblebee covered in pollen.

avoid asking some uncomfortable questions and look for lessons to be learned if we are to reduce the risk of this happening on such a scale again.

We may never know exactly why and how the diseases spread. It is recognised that foulbrood diseases are endemic: they are there in the background all the time but the bees cope until something triggers a symptomatic outbreak. Shortage of food and/or sufficient nurse bees to serve the larval brood are known to be implicated and an exceptionally hot dry summer in which nectar all but dried up in June, leaving many colonies stressed and hungry, could certainly produce those conditions in some colonies. These are also conditions likely to encourage robbing, a known vector for spreading disease.

But it will not do to blame the weather (or the bees' behaviour). When it comes to asking uncomfortable questions we must recognise our own role, individually and collectively. For example, population density can be a factor in the spread of infection. We know that the density of recorded colonies in some parts of London is very high (Bee Base records 722 within a 10Km radius of Eden) and on top of that there are significant numbers of unrecorded colonies, not to mention feral colonies (resulting from swarms). Reduction or limits to urban beekeeping do not have to be the only option. Better beekeeping is an option.

Another uncomfortable question is raised by the statistic that apparently 80% of EFB found is not first recognised by the beekeeper but by the bee inspectors. Early recognition not only reduces opportunities for disease to spread but, in the case of EFB, it increases the options for successful treatment of infected colonies rather than last ditch destruction in the interests of containment. Learning to recognise symptoms may not be straightforward but, as an association, we have to ask ourselves (and we do) how can we improve that statistic?

Some of our members directly involved in this outbreak have raised concerns about the level of APHA resources in London this year, and they are right. Foulbrood disease is notifiable for good reason and the bee inspectors play a crucial role in containment of disease that, left unchecked, would almost certainly lead to large numbers of colonies dying out. The bee inspectors are on the same side as good beekeepers when it comes to wanting these diseases to be contained. But can one part time inspector really be effective in carrying out all the inspections and follow-ups required across an area the size of Greater London, complete with all its logistical challenges. To be fair, the Bee Unit would probably agree that more resources are needed to carry through their procedures to an effective end. But if the resources are just not there, maybe the procedures should be revisited as well as the number of inspectors. LBKA feels it is necessary to raise these questions at government level.

The issues raised by this summer's outbreaks do not stop at best practice to reduce the risk of pests and



*Look at this photograph. It shows how infected equipment **has** to be destroyed – a fire pit 1m×1m×0.5m. Ask yourself the question, “where would I have a fire like that?”. If you have an out-apiary, ask yourself, “how is my host going to feel about this?”*

disease. We must all recognise this stuff happens, even to the best. And when it does, with notifiable diseases there are procedures required by law that are going to be quite challenging for some, if not most, urban beekeepers.

Look at the photograph. It shows how infected equipment **has** to be destroyed – a fire pit 1m×1m×0.5m. Ask yourself the question, “where would I have a fire like that?”. If you have an out-apiary, ask yourself, “how is my host going to feel about this?” Clearly, this is not always going to be possible but, where it is not, the only alternative currently permissible (in some circumstances) is containment and removal for specialist incineration by an APHA approved hazardous waste handling company. We are trying to find out the likely cost of this but expect four figure sums.

LBKA feels it is ultimately in the interests of our members and other parties, such as land owners/managers who want to help beekeepers and host apiaries, to make such questions generally more visible in advance of events, so the implications and options can be carefully considered without critical time pressure. Accordingly, we will be updating and making more prominent our Guidelines for Responsible Urban Beekeeping and our Template Agreement between Beekeepers and Apiary Hosts.

If any of our members have other needs or concerns in relation to this (or any other topic), be it practical help, information, or representation, please do let me know – chair@lbka.org.uk.

Finally, something completely different: Standing for the committee. I hope you are all by now aware of the

approaching AGM, Wednesday 7th November, 6.30 at Roots & Shoots. It is a requirement of our constitution that each year, at the AGM, the committee stands down and candidates put themselves forward for election or re-election to the committee. Formal details are given elsewhere in this newsletter but I would just like to offer some informal reflections here by way of encouragement for new candidates to come forward.

As we are a charity, we have a minimum requirement to have three Trustee roles (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) who have allocated responsibilities related to the governance of the organisation and, for the purposes of the election process, roles, or job descriptions, have to be provided for all committee members. But we are concerned that this can appear off-putting to potential new candidates as it doesn't really represent all the realities of how volunteers help run an organisation like LBKA. There are opportunities for people to get involved at different levels of commitment.

Unlike a job market, where there will be a sizeable pool of potential applicants (internal and external) who have held similar jobs or are on the relevant career path, volunteer organisations such as ours have a relatively small pool of members who have at least the motivation and some time, never mind job matching experience.

In practice, within the charitable structure, we need to have enough team players with a shared interest in helping the organisation carry out the tasks it needs to execute and enough time available (doesn't have to be onerous). I think it fair to add that many discover they do in fact have the abilities relevant to tasks they have not necessarily undertaken in name before. We know what needs to be done and can often be quite imaginative and flexible in how to match those needs with the people who step forward.

We also know some members have genuinely valid reasons for not wanting to be on the committee but are still interested in helping in some kind of organising or specific skill-based capacity and this coming year we hope to be building this extra-committee level of organisation into the structure of the Association.

If you have any inclination at all to help, please talk to any current committee member or contact me (chair@lbka.org.uk) to find out more.

Announcements

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



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

October Monthly Meeting

This month's meeting will be this coming **Sunday 14th October**, at **11:00**, at the usual venue of Fairley House Junior School (220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY), on the subject of **Bees on the Move**, about the process of moving bees to a new apiary. This will be followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat.

Next months' meeting will be led by Vlad on **Sunday 11th November** on the subject of **Insulation for Beehives**.

Monthly Tuesday Social: Natalie's pub pick

On **Tuesday 30th October** from 18:30, we go back to central after some forays south and north. A return to an old favourite, the place of our first ever pub social, **The Lamb** on **94 Lamb's Conduit St, Bloomsbury, London WC1N 3LZ**. An atmospheric and historic pub, with the additional benefit of not playing music – ideal for conversation.

Membership renewals

Although the membership year has officially ended, we haven't been organised enough to set up membership renewals yet! Bear with us... but before long, you'll get instructions on how to renew your membership. Thanks for your support this year and we hope that you wish to continue being a member of our association.

Upcoming AGM: 7th November, 6.30pm, Roots and Shoots

Natalie Cotton
admin@lbka.org.uk

Our AGM is approaching on 7th November. All members are welcome. As well as formal business, it's a chance to see the full picture of what LBKA does and to have a drink (non alcoholic or alcoholic) with both the 2018 and 2019 committee.

All members will receive two emails about this: the first with details of how to submit a motion and with details

of the committee roles; the second the formal notification of the AGM. The formal notification will include accounts for the year, a report from the Trustees, details of any resolutions to be voted on at the meeting, and short biographies of all those standing for committee.

If you've any questions about the AGM, contact Natalie on admin@lbka.org.uk.

Foul Brood

As you know it's been a very bad year for foul brood in London. See Richard's introduction and Mark's writeup on page 8. This is very important reading.

LBKA courses and tuition

Howard – LBKA's education officer – has provided details of some upcoming courses. See page 6 for more details. Our microscopy course is very popular, so do register your interest early. He will also help members preparation for the BBKA Bee Basic – which we encourage all members who've kept bees for at least a year to take – and BBKA Module 3 exams, for those who are a bit more advanced. Howard is a great teacher and is known for getting people through exams!

Visit to Gosnell's Mead

Tom Gosnell, the founder of Gosnell's Mead has offered to show LBKA members around their Peckham offices where they make the mead on **Saturday 1st December at 2pm**. Some of you may remember doing this 3 or 4 years ago. It was a great trip and so interesting to see! The tour is free and then Tom's happy to open up the bar for us if we'd like to buy a drink, or bottles to takeaway. Mead is the oldest alcoholic drink apparently, and Tom's tastes lovely! Please email Emily on events@lbka.org.uk to book your place. And for further information visit <http://www.gosnells.co.uk/>.

LBKA Bee Banter

There's a new WhatsApp group, for general bee chat for LBKA members. All LBKA members are welcome to join. You'll find the URL in the membership area of the LBKA website, or you can email us so that we add you. Please set up your name in your WhatsApp profile so people know who they are talking to. It's been a lively group so far, so you might want to turn off notifications.

Now LBKA Swarms can have some peace.

Trees for Cities

Trees for Cities would like to invite LBKA members to support our projects by leading bee-themed ecology workshops for schools or community groups, either on a voluntary or paid basis. We would like to link our tree

planting activities more closely to the wildlife it benefits. Please contact Jess Massucco, Community, Education and Volunteer Manager at jess@treesforcities.org or call 020 7820 4412.

National Honey Show

Geoff Hood
LBKA member

The National Honey Show takes place Thursday 25th to Saturday 27th October at Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher, Surrey, KT10 9AJ, UK. See <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/>

The National Honey Show includes lectures, workshops, a trade fair, book shop and of course the Honey Show. The cost of daily admission is £12.00. However if you pay the £20 membership to National Honey Show then have access to all the three days of the show, which includes the lectures.

A selection of the workshops at the show are: Swarming (Thursday 25th), General Husbandry Assessment (Friday 26th), Queen Rearing (Saturday 27th), Friday and Saturday all-day skep-making.

BeeCraft lectures (Friday 25th) include "Genetic analysis of the Irish honey bee", "The Bees Roadz: connecting landscape for bees and people" and "UK native honey bee: adaptive traits and genetic signatures".

New Beekeeper Lectures (Saturday 26th) include: "Dead Bees Don't Buzz: surviving the Winter", "Honey Bee Communication: a look at how bees share information and communicate with each other", "honey bees: foraging and feeding", and "managing the workers".

There is also a selection of lectures that fit in with the BBKA Module exams and in total 14 lectures over the three days that are varied and cover a wide range of subjects. The full list of lectures, beginner lectures and workshops are [on the web](#). The previous year's lecture are [on YouTube](#).

Enter your honey to the National Honey Show

The deadline for [submitting entries to the National Honey Show](#) has passed, but they may still accept late entries if accompanied with an additional fee.

LBKA sponsor three classes and it would be great if some of our members win prizes for this, this year! These are: "Two Jars Urban Honey" judged solely on taste and aroma (class 321), "Two jars of Jam, Marmalade or other Preserve' with Honey as the only sweetening ingredient (class 322) and "One jar of liquid honey" to be shown in an interesting or unusual transparent container (class 323).

If you're unable to go, last month, Geoff promised to collect entries from the October Monthly Meet-

ing (14th October) and return them at November's Monthly Meeting (11th November). It's good to hear that some of our members have already entered this year.

Can you help us find storage space?

In recent years, we've been lucky enough to be able to store all our equipment in one fairly central and accessible place at Walworth Garden. Unfortunately, we have to move from there and are currently storing our equipment in expensive commercial premises.

We're urgently looking for a cheaper alternative and we hope that members will be able to help.

Ideally, we're looking for a secure space (e.g. a lockable yard) within which we could keep our 10-foot shipping container which would store our equipment (e.g. hive parts, tools, honey extractors, other equipment, catering supplies, bee-related pamphlets). We'd be responsible for the container including its contents (and insurance), delivery (and eventual removal).

However we'd also be very happy to have a (secure and dry) garage or other out-building.

A limited number of LBKA members would have access to the container (which could be shared with you if necessary). We would like access to collect or drop off equipment at any time but usually at weekends.

If you might be able to help or have any ideas, please drop Tristram a line at resources@lbka.org.uk.

Consider standing for the committee

We're looking for new people interested in joining the committee or otherwise helping out, so enable us to do more. See Natalie's article of encouragement on page 8.

Offer of apiary in W6

A woman called Benita Cruickshank in W6 (Hammer-smith/Ravenscourt Park) has a domestic garden in which she would like to offer space for a hive. We have no more details than that at the moment, but contact forage@lbka.org.uk if interested.

Old announcements from September

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

Geoff to represent LBKA: Geoff Hood has kindly agreed to represent LBKA at the National Honey Show and NBU's South-east Regional Forum.



Spotted by Stephen King in London: a very grand tomb in Kensal Rise Cemetery with a bee hive on it.

LBKA forum: Don't forget to ask for access to the [LBKA-Forum Facebook group](#) if you're a member.

Honey in NW3?: Deana runs the shop "Artichoke" in 36 Heath street, London, NW3 6TE. She'd like to stock local honey. If you're interested in supplying her, contact services@lbka.org.uk.

Paid one-to-one teaching opportunity: A novice LBKA member with one hive is looking for some one-to-one teaching and guidance in Battersea for the remainder of the season. If interested, please contact her on camilla.ween@gmail.com.

Hives in SW7 need a new beekeeper. Cynthia Oakes is looking for a beekeeper to manage her 4 hives in central London (SW7) as her current beekeeper is moving away next month. If interested, contact Cynthia directly on email@cjoakes.net.

Asian Hornets in Jersey: BBKA's latest edition of [Positive Thinking](#) has an interesting article about the arrival of the Asian Hornet in Jersey.

Old announcements from August

European Foul Brood: This year has been a particularly bad year for European Foul Brood outbreaks in the Greater London area.

BBKA Basic Assessment success: Congratulations to Claire Cater, Jonathan Dale, Susannah Kingston, Alfonso Moreno, David Roy, Martin Crow, Jeni Harris,



Spotted by Stephen King in London: a painting in the national Gallery with a cherub being attacked by bees having stolen some comb.

Cairis Hickey, Brian Kealy, Silviya Valkova, Simon Saville, Lena Spazier, David Phillips, Oliver Picard, Andrew Hudson, Sue Lee and Giovanni Zintu, who passed the BBKA Basic Assessment.

Extractor Hire: Collect from and return to Walworth Garden (206 Manor PI, Kennington, SE17 3BN) by arrangement with Tristram (resources@lbka.org) at £10 each with £20 deposit.

Applying for grants: If you belong to another organisation, know of a local group, or are aware of an opportunity that might partner with us to attract funding that helps meet our charitable objectives, please contact treasurer@lbka.org.uk.

Looking for beekeeping partner school Pete is a teacher in Munich whose school keeps bees and who's partnered up with another school that keeps bees in France. He's looking for a UK-based partner school that keeps bees with children aged 13 upwards. Please email services@lbka.org.uk if you have any leads.

Old announcements from July

New privacy policy: We have a new [privacy policy](#).

We have over 300 members. Hooray!

We shouted out to our readers in Co Mayo and Mary Walsh who's a member of both us and them.

Should any of them find themselves in London, they'd be most welcome to attend one of our events.

Old announcements from June

Want to sell to other members? If you have a beekeeping-related product or service that you wish to tell other members about, either ask services@lbka.org.uk to add it to the members' marketplace section of the newsletter (p 16) or post on the [LBKA-forum](#), the members' only Facebook page.

Asian Hornet. Be vigilant in looking out for the Asian Hornet.

Monthly cake. If you would like to bake a cake for an LBKA a monthly meeting, please let Aidan know on services@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.

Forthcoming LBKA Internal Courses and Tuition

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

LBKA Microscopy Course: Anatomy of the honey bee and pollen analysis

LBKA proposes to run a detailed microscopy course for interested members during the winter months. This is the 5th time this will have been run by our association and is likely to be 3 x 2 hour evening sessions organised and led by Richard Glassborow and Howard Nichols. It will concentrate on the use of microscopes for members to learn about both the pollen grain structure and the internal anatomy of the honey bee. It will be mainly hands on practical work and over the 3 weekly sessions we expect to deal with the following:

1. Simply theory of lenses, setting up of optical instruments and a summary of terminology used.
2. Investigation and analysis of pollen grains. How to prepare a slide. Use of negative and positive stains. Internal and external structure of a pollen grain and its features.
3. Embedding and dissection of the honey bee.

Item 3 is expected to form the major part of the course with 2 full sessions covering this subject. Embedding, dissection of head, thorax and abdomen will all be separately dealt with. Did you know that a mammal is pinned on its back for dissection but a bee needs to be pinned face downwards?

All equipment will be supplied by LBKA. Numbers must be limited to a maximum of 8 people due to availability of equipment and pupil/teacher ratio. There is no charge - it is part of your LBKA membership subscription. Date to be decided but will be 3 evenings at Walworth Garden Farm in January or February 2019.

Please note this course is open to all LBKA members. The only entry requirement is an interest. Although specialised in form it is for anyone interested or curious about these aspects of beekeeping. Microscopy and dissection are "niche subjects" and so equally accessible by both very new and long standing beekeepers. It is not dependent upon length of beekeeping experience. Beekeepers in their first year enjoy this course just as much as older beekeepers. It is truly a fascinating sub-optical world and exploration is an adventure.

Due to the organisation involved we need to have an idea of those interested so that the sessions and content can be properly planned. Please register your interest by email to education@lbka.org.uk as soon as possible. This does not require you to commit at this stage but attendees are dealt with on a strictly first come basis as demand usually exceeds the 8 available places.

2019 BBKA Basic Assessment

Both the BBKA and London Beekeepers Association encourages members to take the BBKA basic assessment where possible. The BBKA requirement for entry is that the applicant has been managing bees for a minimum period of 1 year. We cover the theory on the revision nights and, for those wanting it, also offer a practical session at an apiary beforehand.

The assessment is fairly straightforward and the syllabus can be downloaded free of charge from the BBKA website. Follow the dropdown menu for "Members" then "examinations and assessments". The cost is £20 and entry forms can also be downloaded at the same time.

London Beekeepers Association will run a revision course in the spring for members wishing to take the examination. This is likely to last for 3 evenings (2 hours per evening) in early April. The assessment is both practical and simple oral questions. It lasts about 1 hour. It is not difficult, is within the capabilities of anyone who has been handling bees for 12 months and who is willing to download the syllabus and undertake some background reading. We also supply free course notes in electronic format.

Any LBKA member who has been keeping bees for a minimum of 12 months and wishes to take this assessment please confirm by email to education@lbka.org.uk.

We will then be able to let you have some electronic course notes to read at your leisure over the winter months. Several members have already notified their interest. The BBKA website should be sufficient to deal with any queries regarding the assessment. Alternatively, ask another LBKA member who has taken it. Preparation for the Basic is an interesting way of continuing your beekeeping activities through the winter months. Even if you have been keeping bees for several years but not previously taken the assessment then please do seriously consider taking it in 2018. It is well worth the effort.

Module 3 in March 2019

A couple of members have expressed an interest in taking Module 3 in March 2019. This is the BBKA modular examination which covers honeybee diseases, pests and poisoning. If a minimum of 4 people are interested then we will run this over 3 or 4 evenings in January and/or February. It is a BBKA requirement that anyone sitting any modular examination has passed the BBKA Basic. Each module is a "stand alone" written examination lasting 90 minutes and it is not necessary to have taken Modules 1 or 2 beforehand. If interested in this then please email me and I will supply further details. Alternatively, please ask me at one of the monthly meetings.

Education summary in 2018

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

The beekeeping season has finished for 2018 and set out below is a summary of the education activities undertaken by the association during this beekeeping season. Our objective is to produce competent and confident beekeepers. The 2018 education plan has tried to meet this as best we can.

Monthly meetings

The primary function of the monthly meetings is as a social meeting point but we also incorporate these meetings into our education programme. Although we need to include essential topics such as Varroa management and swarm control we try to introduce more intermediate and advanced topics. This year we included a double, back to back session, about Nosema. The first session was to gain an understanding about its lifecycle, transmission mechanism and how to deal with it. This was followed the next month with practical sessions on taking samples from bees and using

the Association's compound microscopes to identify the pathogen in colonies. In line with previous years we continued to introduce new topics. This year there were 4 new topics, being Nosema (March), Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle (June), water and propolis (August) and, still to come, colony thermoregulation in November.

In addition many of the seasonal apiary tasks have also been covered but in more depth so that there is always something for everyone. Anyone who would like a particular topic to be covered in 2019 please contact a committee member and we will see if it can be included.

Bee Health Day

This was an entire day and held in May at Walworth Garden Farm. It was a comprehensive programme, both theory and practical. Thanks must go to Tristram for letting us use the hives at the farm and several other members who organised this and gave freely of their time and knowledge.

Module 2

The association provided tuition in January for 5 members who wanted to sit the BBKA Module 2 in March 2018. We are expecting to run a similar course early in 2019 for Module 3, subject to demand.

Basic Assessment

We arranged tuition and the assessment for 17 members who then took the BBKA Basic assessment in May and early June. Anyone interested in this assessment in 2019 please email your details and I will forward electronic course material for winter reading. It does not require any commitment at this stage. More details are on page 6.

Beginners' Course

All the above events were free and included within the annual membership. We also ran our 2 usual beginners courses which is a fee paying event. Each course is for Saturday and Sunday and both were organised by Emily Abbott and Richard Glassborow. Both weekend courses were fully booked. Each weekend a variety of LBKA members were involved, each speaking or demonstrating a single aspect of the course content and attending the course for half a day. The time given by all of these individuals is greatly appreciated.

Mentoring Programme

We have again been able to run our mentoring programme. This has been organised and monitored by Elliot Hodges and appears to have been very successful as usual. We intend to match all people attending the Beginners Course with a mentor (assuming they want

a mentor), but subject to availability of mentors and appropriate geographical areas. Elliot will, no doubt, communicate a summary to us at a later date.

Foul brood, beekeeping failures and improving apiary hygiene

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

Unfortunately, we had to remove this article.

Why join the LBKA committee?

This article from LBKA secretary Natalie was published last here month. It's still relevant, so we are republishing it this month. As the beekeeping season comes to an end, so does the LBKA membership year... and the committee. We're looking for new members to join the committee and help run London's largest amateur beekeeping association.

Natalie Cotton
admin@lbka.org.uk

LBKA benefits from having a diverse mix of experience and viewpoints on the committee, so here are some of the reasons why you should consider getting involved, based on my own experience!

You'll make new friends, from all walks of life

The great thing about beekeeping is it unites people into a community of interest. You get to meet people that you otherwise wouldn't in the normal course of working and socialising. I really value the social connections I've made through being involved with the LBKA Committee.

You get to use your existing skills for a good cause

I joined the Committee two years ago, at the end of my first season of beekeeping. I wasn't at all sure how much I could contribute given that my beekeeping experience was so low, but in reality LBKA needs a whole mix of skills – from event organising, taking inventories, dealing with sponsors and businesses, market research or running social media. As beekeepers are from such varied background, you might have a unique skill to contribute.

You learn new skills

It goes without saying you will learn from a lot of very experienced beekeepers. But you also get the opportunity to hone other skills that are transferable in to the other walks of life. This year everyone on the Committee has been involved in setting up Governance, and I've learnt a lot about organising and administrating minutes, GDPR, drawing up agreements with landowners, and accounting for small organisations. Crucially, everyone is a volunteer so it's a safe and welcoming place to try out new things.

You debate and work in a group

"Ask three beekeepers, and you'll get five opinions" goes the adage. When you have 10 around a table, you can expect a debate! I can't put enough value on having this dynamic, especially in an age where reasoned debate could be perceived to be dwindling.

It's fun

Obviously there's an element of responsibility to being on the committee, but we are all volunteers, and ultimately we do it because we enjoy it.

Hopefully there will be some new faces on the Committee this year. If you are interested, then please speak to any of the existing members. If you are interested in being more involved but not ready or able to commit to a committee role, then there are plenty of volunteering opportunities, from apiary managers to event support, so please get involved!

October in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

Feeding syrup to the bees should have been completed by the end of September as the colony will now start to find it difficult to process and cap the syrup due to the colder temperature. If left uncapped then there is the risk of fermentation and subsequent dysentery within the colony over the winter months. A colony should go into winter with at least 15kgms (35lbs) of stores if possible. This will avoid the possibility of the bees dying of starvation in a cold spring or the necessity for the beekeeper to feed in spring.

The bees will now start to cluster as temperatures fall. Clustering starts at about 18°C, albeit very loose, and the cluster becomes smaller and more compact as temperatures continue to fall. They form a complete cluster at 13°C. Other than this the colony will continue to operate as usual but on a much smaller scale. The queen will still be laying a few eggs, nurse bees nurturing a smaller amount of brood and bees should still be flying in the day throughout October. Bees should be foraging on ivy, which is the last flowering plant of the year. Another reason that feeding should now be complete is that subsequent collection of ivy nectar will then be stored on the flanks making it easier to remove in spring if necessary. (If ivy nectar is brought in whilst feeding then many more frames may become clogged with ivy honey/syrup.) If Apiguard was diligently applied in August and a feeding programme undertaken in September then the colony will be in optimum condition to face the harshness of the next few months. This leaves the beekeeper to make final preparations for winter. The objective for October is to put the bees in the best position to deal with winter by trying to do small things to tip the scales in their favour.

Stable hives

Check that hives are secure, straight and stable. If using a wooden floor then the colony should be slightly tilted slightly forward. Bees have evolved over millions of years to deal with cold temperatures and do this with relative ease. They cannot deal with damp and condensation. During winter they need to uncap and metabolise honey to keep warm, resulting in production of water vapour. If the hive is not adequately ventilated then dampness may build up leading to fungi growth. It is essential that the hive interior remains dry throughout

the winter. This is another advantage of using an open mesh floor.

Mouseguards

Once the night frosts commence then mice will look for a dark, warm place to hibernate. The smell and disturbance will upset the bees and, in more extreme instances, the colony can die out. Use of a mouseguard is essential as it is extremely effective but there must be no way the mice can bypass it.

Gardening measures

Check there are no branches grown up over summer and now overhanging the hive. If so then prune to remove. Also check that grass and weeds have not grown up around the hive as these will both reduce ventilation and promote damp. A quick trim with a strimmer or garden shears should be sufficient for the winter.

Other jobs

Make sure that spare brood and super boxes are cleaned and put away in a cold place for the winter to deter wax moth. Placing combs in a deep freeze for 24 hours if possible kills all 4 stages of wax moth. The bees put a lot of work and resources into making the comb. The beekeeper, as custodian over the winter months, has a duty of care to look after this valuable resource until returned to its rightful owners in the spring! Other equipment such as queen excluders, crownboards should also be cleaned and stored the same way.

National Honey Show

Finally, October is the month for the National Honey Show. This is the 87th year of this event and will be held at Sandown Racecourse, Esher, Surrey KT10 9AJ from Thursday, 25th October to Saturday, 27th October. If you are unsure about going then ask at the LBKA October monthly meeting. It is always more enjoyable to go with someone else if possible. Any LBKA members who are entering exhibits at the show then Geoffrye Hood will be collecting and transporting these on behalf of our members.

LBKA Apiaries

News from LBKA's apiaries.

Mudchute

Vlad Zamfir

LBKA Apiaries Manager and Mudchute Apiary Manager

This is usually the last month when temperatures are high enough for the bees to be flying around for most of the day and processing sugar syrup. In Mudchute, I did only one proper inspection per colony in September, to check for health (all good - phew!), brood area, queen presence and stores. Some colonies needed heavy feeding as they used up a lot of their stores and, even though the ivy flow came on later in the month, they were not able to stock enough ivy honey. I found that adding a couple of drops of rose extract (concentrated rosewater from the baking section in the supermarket) in 5L of syrup gets the bees to take it down much faster than if it wasn't scented.

Another action I take is to put the supers which have some honey or nectar under the broodbox. The bees don't really like having honey under the brood so they will try and move it above (usually - sometimes they move the brood under the honey if they can). This means that by spring the super is empty and can be stored or placed on top of the brood box, ready for the spring nectar flow. Since it's also accessible to the bees, they will protect it against wax moth (if they're a strong colony)

Finally, I've put the mouse guards on and tidied up the apiary so it's ready for the new season.

Pollination of Pumpkin and Squash

Mark tells us about the pollination of pumpkins and squash.

Mark Patterson

forage@lbka.org.uk

October is Pumpkin season, with colourful pumpkins often the centre of attention at harvest festivals and vegetable produce competitions. Almost every county in the land will have a 'biggest Pumpkin' competition and supermarkets and garden centres put on fabulous

colourful displays of the impressive fruit. One of the best displays in the UK each year is at Kew Gardens where the lily house is transformed into a seasonal display of Pumpkin, Gourds and Squash. The biggest Pumpkin fruit come from the variety Dills Atlantic Giant but there are hundreds of varieties ranging from tennis ball sized fruits to those you can carve into a small boat.

Pumpkin fruit are of cultural significance in the western world with millions of plants grown each year for Jack-O-Lantern carving at Halloween and throughout North America pumpkins are cooked and eaten at Thanksgiving. They are also widely referenced in fairy tales like the pumpkin transformed into a carriage in the Cinderella story. Pumpkin and their cousins the Squash are members of the Cucurbit family (along with Cucumber, Cantaloupe Melon, Gourds and Marrows). Cucurbits typically have separate male and female flowers with male flowers usually outnumbering female flowers. The flowers are usually only receptive to fertilisation for a single day and the pollen from the male flowers quickly expires, especially in hot weather. The flowers are therefore most receptive early in the morning when the pollen is freshest and the heat of the sun has yet to wilt the delicate flowers and cause them to perish.

Across the world Honey Bees are used to pollinate Pumpkin and Squash and they perform this task well however they are often tempted to stray from the Pumpkin flowers by other flowering plants which offer more nectar. Honey Bees are also reluctant to fly at the crack of dawn when air temperatures are often much cooler. Bumble Bees with their higher metabolism and insulated bodies covered in a dense pile of fur can fly in cooler temperatures and are also important in pumpkin pollination, but like the Honey Bee they may be tempted away from the crop by other flowers which yield more nectar.

The real Pumpkin pollinator specialists though are the solitary Peponapis and Xenoglossa bees of North America. Peponapis in ancient Greek translates as 'Pumpkin Bee.'

There are 13 species of Peponapis bee and 7 species of Xenoglossa bee native to North America. They are Cucurbit specialists feeding on a variety of wild Gourds, Squash and Cucumber as well as farmed cultivars including Pumpkin and Butternut Squash. Both male and female bees feed exclusively on cucurbit pollen and nectar.

These bees are slightly larger than a honey bee, covered in a dense pile of hair and are fast flying even in very cool conditions meaning they can visit many more flowers than a Honey Bee can during the same period of time. They also spend more time on each individual flower than most other bees and their movements inside the flower results in more contact with the reproductive parts and increased transfer of pollen grains compared to other bees.

Peponapis Bees emerge very early in the morning often before the sunrise and are busy pollinating Pumpkin in the near darkness well before any other bees are active. The female bees excavate nest burrows in the soil around or very close to their host plants. The burrows may be a foot or more deep and contain numerous chambers where pollen is cached and an egg laid.

The male bees roost communally inside the male flowers and emerge at dawn from their sleep covered in pollen which they then transport to the female flowers as they search for nectar. It's thought that the male bees are more efficient at pollinating Pumpkin crops than the females because of this habit.

The most widespread and important of the Peponapis Bees is Peponapis pruinosa which can form large nesting aggregations on Pumpkin farms and result in the importation of honey bee hives to pollinate the crop becoming obsolete. Recent genetic studies have shown that Peponapis pruinosa originated in latin America and as Humans began to cultivate the wild Cucurbits they foraged on and spread them northwards across North America the bee expanded its range alongside the crop plants to become the most widely distributed and abundant of the Squash Bees. Populations of these bees are easy to encourage on farms by ensuring Pumpkin and Squash are grown in the same or adjacent fields year after year and by reducing damage to their nesting sites through till free farming practices or not ploughing through the nesting grounds. It's been shown that till free farming practices can result in a 3 fold increase in numbers of Peponapis bees on Pumpkin farms compared to those using traditional ploughing practices.

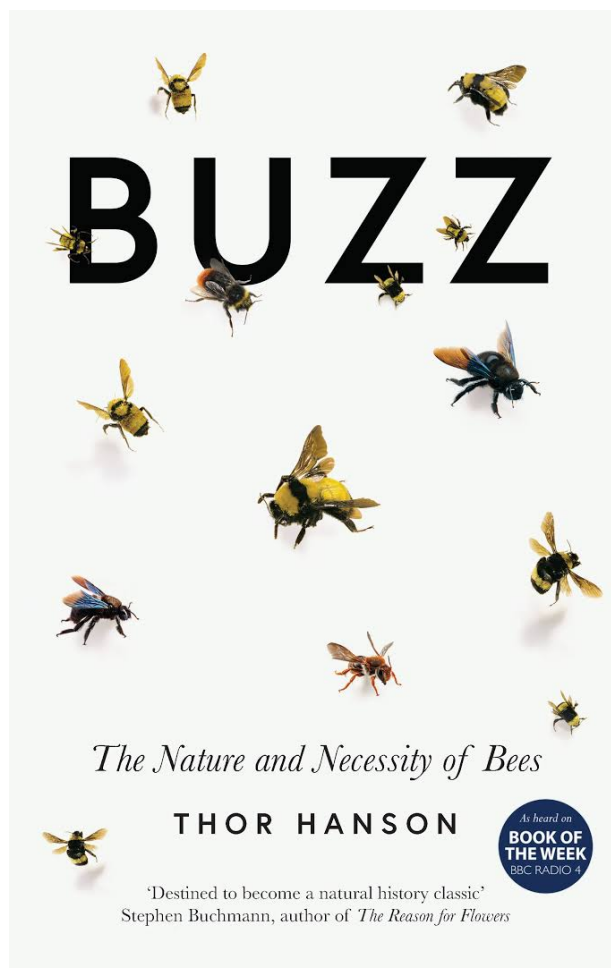
See this [nice video](#).

Book review: Buzz: The Nature and Necessity of Bees by Thor Hanson

This is a book review of **Buzz: The Nature and Necessity of Bees** by Thor Hanson.

Stephen King
LBKA member

It was Julius Caesar's librarian (and keen beekeeper) who came up with the honeycomb conjecture, proposing the hexagon is the most effective shape, storing the



most honey for the least wax, but it was only in 1999 that it was proven mathematically.

Thor Hanson's wonderful book is filled with details like this is. But this no ode to honeybees, in fact he states writing a book about bees and only focusing on one species would be like writing a book about mammals and only talking about cows. His focus is on wildbees, in all their diversity. Written in a friendly, personal way it provides a gentle, but detailed discussion, more approachable than a text book.

The book ranges across evolution and ecology, looks at Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), and is always referencing back to human's relationship and reliance on bees. The book's themes chime well with LBKA's wider objectives, around protecting and enhancing the right habits for a diversity of bees (and other insects) to thrive. Hanson provides some optimistic examples of where farmers have realised that for their own survival they need to proactively provide a diversity of habits.

Some elements I am sure most LBKA members will know, and will be looking for a more detailed analysis (like CCD). Also dissecting a Big Mac to demonstrate the importance of pollination feels a bit laboured, although the list of all the food crops relying on bees is fascinating. But there is enough here to keep your interest and will help no end in your bee bore credentials,

including why you can get away with using dumbledore in scrabble. The relationship between bees, honey and human evolution is a fascinating theory, providing a high calorie food with the energy for our bigger brains. The co-working of humans with south African Greater Honeyguide bird is also remarkable. The bird actively guides people to bees' nests, with the bird feasting on the left overs and often rewarded with a comb by the successful hunters, and earning it the wonderful Latin name of *Indicator indicator*.

If you liked Dave Goulson's "A sting in the tail", you should like this. Hanson has Goulson's personal passion, with lots of anecdotes about bee hunting, but travels down more cultural bee related paths. A good read for the winter months, looking beyond the hive to bees in all their forms and wider roles. Also if you have a friend you need to convert to the wonders and importance of bees this would be a good place to start.

Sadly Caesar's librarian is not reminded as fondly as he should be; Marcus Terentius Varro has sadly been immortalised by mite taxonomists rather than beekeepers.

Bee Improvement and Bee Breeding Association Biennial Conference

Andrew Slade
LBKA member

The Bee Improvement and Bee Breeding Association biennial conference was held at Royal Cirencester Agricultural University last month.

The main message from the conference was "we have to breed more of our own queens" and that applies to the small beekeeper as well. A figure of 15,000 imported queens a year was quoted many of which will be hybrids. This number is not good for our own bee stock and as the imported genetics start to unravel over the subsequent generations unwelcome traits can emerge. Breeding your own queens is not difficult and should be part of the annual cycle for all beekeepers.

The conference was spread over three days with a wide range of topics on offer. Each day had five presentations and a choice of three topics per session running simultaneously. Plus a practical workshop. I attended the practical work shop on Instrumental Insemination. For those new to the idea there is a [good video to introduce the topic](#).



Learning from the Bees Conference

LBKA members Sally and Mary attended the “Learning from the Bees Conference” in Doorn, Holland in September. Sally has kindly written up her thoughts.

Sally Haywill
LBKA member

Mary Walwyn and I spent 3 days in the company of over 300 people from 39 countries at this conference organised by the Natural Beekeeping Trust. I spoke with people from Romania, India, Australia, the USA, Holland, Germany, Belgium, France, Ireland, the UK and Israel. The backgrounds of participants was as diverse as the countries they came from – from amateur hobby beekeepers, bio-dynamic farmers, conservationists, bee farmers and bee inspectors to scientific researchers and artists.

Likewise how people kept (or didn't keep) bees and on what kind of hive and whether they treated or not varied hugely. This was a conference with a difference, not only because of its subject matter. It was held in an impeccably clean and comfortable modern hotel set in a vast National Park Forest, so very tranquil and relaxing, and each day began with all 300 plus participants singing together!

Workshops with keynote speakers ran in parallel sessions, followed by a feedback session to the whole conference, and with ample time to network, both in designated sessions but also breaks and at superb sumptuous meals.

Highlights of the conference for me were hearing Prof Tom Seeley from Cornell University in the USA speak about the long term survival of wild colonies of bees in the Arnot Forest, despite the arrival of varroa in the 1990s, and from this the lessons for better beekeeping, such as – capture bees with swarms from wild colonies, disperse the hives (in the Arnot Forest each

The presentations were aimed at different levels of beekeepers from beginners to seasoned beekeepers to advanced but you were free to attend whichever presentation interested you.

The presentation that most caught my imagination was by Dr. Paul Cross from Bangor University. “Long distance drone tracking of key pollinators in agriculture and natural landscapes: achieving sustainable use of natural resources.” Dr Paul Cross and engineering colleagues at Bangor University have developed a revolutionary tracking technology designed to follow honey and bumblebees across their entire foraging range in real time with high accuracy. The tracking system uses a piezoelectric micro-generator that harvests electrical energy from the bee's own body vibrations to power radio-wave transmission from a miniaturised antenna attached to the thorax. This eliminates the need for bulky battery-powered transmitters and provides an unlimited energy source over the bee's lifetime with negligible hindrance to its flight capacity.

An automated self-tracking drone (helicopter type) captures the transmitted signal. The drone will track target insects with a wing beat rate of >160/sec and a body mass of >0.09g for up to 40 minutes across their entire foraging range.

The venue for the next BIBBA biennial conference has not yet been decided. The conference was run by a team of dedicated beekeepers lead by Roger Patterson and I hope to see them at the next conference.

wild colony is approximately spaced 1km apart), house bees in small hives (about 40 litres), allow them to swarm, rear queens from your survivor colonies, give survivor colonies 1 frame of drone comb per hive; his thoughts on re-wilding of bees, and his explanation of the crucial importance of allowing natural selection in creating genetic diversity for the long term survival of honey bees. Tom has written many excellent books on bees over an academic career spanning more than 30 years. 'Honeybee Democracy' is one of my favourites, and I look forward to reading his forthcoming book 'Follow the Wild Bees'.

Another was hearing Torben Schiffer, of the BeeNature Project, in Wurzburg, Germany, explaining his research demonstrating the importance of looking at hives in the wild to understand the facts to help us with better bee-keeping. He made a vivid analogy, in which he likened trying to deduce bee behaviour and needs from observing bees in a hive to looking at an elephant in a zoo and deducing that elephants like being fed apples and bananas proffered by children. He has done some thought provoking work on varroa, so crucial that I asked him if he might be interested to come and speak about his work in the UK. Somewhat to my surprise he immediately said 'yes'! It would be good to hear from anyone who would also be interested to hear more about his work. I can be contacted at shay-will@fastmail.co.uk.

However the most challenging idea for me came from Jenny Cullinan from Ujubees (ujubees.com) in South Africa who researches wild colonies in a section of Table Mountain National Park. She showed us beautiful photos and videos of wild bee colonies and questioned the whole notion of 'keeping' bees. Instead, she encouraged us to think about becoming bee watchers, observing wild bees, as her groups of trained volunteers 'bee guardians' do.

I guess a logical development of moving towards a more natural way of keeping bees is the growing interest in putting up log hives. There were images and talk of these in the conference – and we are fortunate in East London in having several fine examples!

For me the elephant in the room in thinking about the decimation of insect populations, of which bees are a minute proportion, is the role of industrial agriculture, and in particular the role of giant chemical companies in pushing the sale of their pesticides, fungicides, weed-killers, fertilisers. Terry Oxford from UrbanBeeSF in the USA spoke about campaigns in California attempting to ban such harmful chemicals, and the huge difficulties campaigners face. Sadly one of the powerful organisations that actually voted **against** a bill to alert the public to chemically treated 'plants for pollinators' was the California Beekeeping Association, representative as it is I understand of commercial bee-keepers who truck many thousands of bees hundreds of miles to pollinate the Almond orchards. Among many thought provoking ideas in the conference was her assertion that varroa is a diversion useful to the pesticide companies, who



Tree beekeeping. Source: Natural Beekeeping Trust website.



A wild bee colony in South Africa. Source: Ujubees Facebook page.

have taken a leaf (pun not (originally) intended!) out of the tobacco industry's book, was one of the most compelling for me.

Heather Swann, author of a lovely book "Where Honey Bees Thrive" spoke poignantly; she told us that farm-workers who work with pesticides get Parkinson's Disease, that destroys the body slowly. Her father, a farmer, has the disease.

A potentially hugely significant development in combatting degradation of the earth is an initiative by Poly Higgins of <http://MissionLifeForce.org> to criminalise destruction of the earth, with the premise of "Do No Harm". Her legal case is being taken to the Hague this Autumn.

Guest Blog: Another Successful Season for our Bees

Some of our members at Fulham Palace keep a blog and this is the [entry from this month](#). They've also made a [nice YouTube video](#).

*Sarah Nicholl-Carne
Volunteer Beekeeper, Fulham Palace*

The Fulham Palace bees have had a good year, producing over one hundred jars of delicious honey which we harvested in August. The first batch has already sold out with a second and final batch due to go on sale at the Apple Day celebration on Sunday, 7 October.

Our honey is raw honey, which means it has never been heated (unlike supermarket honey), which has had most of the beneficial enzymes and goodness boiled out of it.

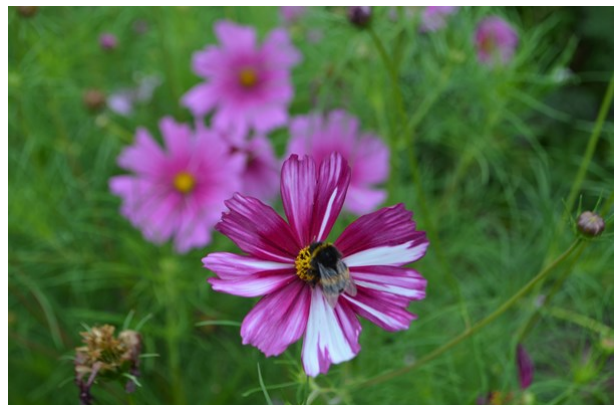
The severe weather last winter, meant that we lost some of our hives to the 'Beast from the East', and we now have just two hives, which we are readying for this winter.

Recently, we dosed them with some foul-smelling medication, to get rid of the parasitic Varroa mites, which infest most British bees. I am sure they feel much better now, and they are busy laying down stores to see them through until spring. We give them a helping hand this month, feeding them a thick syrup of sugar and water, which they convert into honey.

The population of the hives is also changing; by the end of August, all the male bees (drones) had been evicted – literally pushed out of the front door – and are now dead. During high summer, there are around 50,000 female worker bees in each hive. That number is falling now, and by the end of October there will be about 10,000 worker bees and the Queen, and they will overwinter together. The workers only go out if the weather is fine; the rest of the time, they cluster in a ball around the queen, keeping warm by fanning their wings, and feeding themselves from the stores.

In a few weeks, we will fit a mouse guard to the entrance of each hive; a metal strip with a series of bee-sized openings, which are too small to admit even a field mouse, who would love to find a warm dry place, with a good supply of honey, to spend the winter months.

The next task will be to make beeswax candles from quantities of spare wax we have accumulated through the year. They will be on sale during November and



December. Beeswax candles burn with a much cleaner, and delicious smelling flame than the everyday paraffin candles, and were much prized in the days before electricity.

During the winter months, the beekeeper has very little to do, except keep an eye on the apiary, and keep her fingers crossed that the colonies all make it through to spring.

To learn more, [watch this video](#) about our Volunteer Beekeepers.

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.

Emily Abbott: I run Hive & Keeper Ltd a company that sells single apiary/harvest honeys from small scale beekeepers around the country. Jars are labelled with the honey's main flavour, the name of the beekeeper and where the apiary is. Hive & Keeper currently works with about 30 keepers and your honey would be enjoyed by people across the country. Let me know if you have honey you want to sell, but don't want to jar and sell it yourself. We buy 30lb buckets (a minimum of 3). Check out <http://www.hiveandkeeper.com/> or email emily@hiveandkeeper.com.

Vernon De Maynard: has some new and unassembled national standard brood frames (50) and wax (30) for sale, originally from Thorne. He's looking for £60 for them. Anyone who'd like to purchase them? He'll accept reasonable offers.

Upcoming events

Sunday, 14th October: Monthly Meeting: Bees on the Move

11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London, [SE1 7JY](#).

This meeting will be entitled "Bees on the Move" about the process of moving bees to a new apiary. 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.

Thursday-Saturday, 25th-27th October: National Honey Show

All day at Sandown Park Racecourse, Portsmouth Rd, Esher, [KT10 9AJ](#).

The annual National Honey Show isn't just about honey. There are talks and a trade show as well as the honey showing and judging. It's worth going for those alone.

If you're interested in the honey, we sponsor three classes and would be pleased to have members enter: "Two Jars Urban Honey" judged solely on taste and aroma (Class 321), "Two jars of Jam, Marmalade or other Preserve" with honey as the only sweetening ingredient (Class 322), and "One jar of liquid honey" to be shown in an interesting or unusual transparent container (Class 323).

Tuesday 30th October: Monthly Pub Social

from 18:30 at The Lamb on 94 Lamb's Conduit St, Bloomsbury, London, [WC1N 3LZ](#).

Back to central after some forays south and north. A return to an old favourite, the place of our first ever pub social, The Lamb on 94 Lamb's Conduit St, Bloomsbury, London, WC1N 3LZ. An atmospheric and historic pub, with the additional benefit of not playing music - ideal for conversation.

Wednesday 7th November: Annual General Meeting

18:30 at Roots and Shoots, Walnut Tree Walk, Kennington, [SE11 6DN](#).

All members are welcome. As well as formal business, it's a chance to see the full picture of what LBKA does and to have a drink (non alcoholic or alcoholic) with both the 2018 and 2019 committee.

Sunday 11th November: Monthly Meeting: Insulation for Beehives

11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, London, [SE1 7JY](#)

This month will be able how to insulate hives and the pros and cons of doing this. 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.

