



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

## November, 2018

The AGM was this week and we have a shiny new committee. Well, it's not so new (but still shiny) – being comprised of last year's committee – unfortunately minus three long-standing committee members. See Richard's piece.

The beekeeping year is winding down, so this month's contribution is a bit lighter than usual, but thanks as usual to all those who've contributed this month. As well as usual monthly content, Mark brings his enormously valuable experiences of beekeeping practice (p6), new contributor Deborah summarises a research article she's read (p9). And we have a few announcements, for example the free mead-making tour that we've organised.

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A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Deborah Blythe, Natalie Cotton, Eugene Fahy, Richard Glassborow, Jeni Lea, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson 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](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)*

## From our Chair

*Richard Glassborow*  
[chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk)

Last month this column was rather long and focused predominantly on the sombre subject of foul brood disease outbreaks in London this year. By contrast, I can start this month with some good news: in recognition of our charitable activities, Big Yellow Self Storage at Nine Elms have agreed to provide us with a storage unit for all our equipment on very favourable terms. This is a huge relief as it enables us to pursue our quest to find a home, including storage, in a measured way without draining our resources into London's commercial property rates while we do so. Thanks to those who answered our call for help.

The staff at Nine Elms are very friendly and helpful and have arranged out of hours access for us, which is necessary since many of our activities require equipment to



*Autumn morning in North London. Photo: Aidan Slingsby.*



be collected early in the morning and or returned late in the evening. It is refreshing to find a business fulfilling their social responsibility with genuine practical and financial help to charities and, as you may have noticed, we are happy to recognise Big Yellow's support on our social media platforms. And is there not a certain resonance between bees, honey, and yellow?

Thanks to those who have already rejoined LBKA. The committee tries to see that you benefit from your membership but equally, a strong membership helps us represent beekeeping interests in London on your behalf. The Trustees annual report (which we have already sent to members) gives details of the Association's inward and outward facing activities and how (we hope) they all benefit members, directly or indirectly.

Thanks for those who attended the AGM this week. At the AGM this year, three long-standing, invaluable members are stood down from the committee: Emily Abbott, Mark Patterson and Vlad Zamfir. Their contributions over the years cannot be overstated: in addition to carrying out their specific duties, organising volunteers, events, forage, and teaching apiaries, etc., each, through personality as well as skill and knowledge, has made their mark on the character of the Association today as well as its organisational effectiveness. They will be sorely missed.

Fortunately, while they will no longer be on the committee, we are not losing them to the Association entirely. Mark will continue to contribute his considerable specialist knowledge of forage and Vlad continues to manage the teaching apiary at Mudchute and mentor new beekeepers. Emily may be moving northwards out of



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

London but she will not be allowed to leave the LBKA! On behalf of all members, I extend our profound thanks to each of them and our best wishes for their "other lives" and enterprises.

Finally, if you did not make it to the AGM but you do still have questions or want to make suggestions, you can of course do so at any time: just contact me or any of the other committee members.

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## Announcements

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

### November Monthly Meeting

This month's meeting will be this coming **Sunday 11th November**, at **11:00**, at the usual venue of Fairley House Junior School (220 Lambeth Rd, London, SE1 7JY), on the subject of **Insulation for Beehives**. The meeting will be led by Vlad Zamfir and Geoff Hood and will be followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat.

We will also be selling Apibioxal at the meeting as £10 per sachet. Each sachet treats 10 colonies, so you might like to buddy up with some other beekeepers.

Also note that this is Remembrance Sunday, so there will be [some road closures](#).

Next month is almost Christmas! We will have our **annual Christmas Quiz** with Quiz Master Jon Harris. This extra-special meeting will be in the usual time and place on **9th December**.



Spotted by **Aidan Slingsby**: "Bee hives in a Berlin park."

## Monthly Tuesday Social: Natalie's pub pick

Natalie's pub pick is the [Yorkshire Grey](#) on 2 Theobalds Rd, London, [WC1X 8PN](#). This will be on **Tuesday 27th November** from 18:30.

Every month we go to a food-serving pub for informal chat and socialising. All welcome.

## New Committee

As already noted elsewhere, we've just had our AGM and have a shiny new committee. Well...it's not entirely new, it's made up of last year's committee minus (unfortunately) three long-standing committee members: Mark, Vlad and Emily. They all have other commitments this year, but we are pleased to report that Mark will still be working with us on forage-related issues and Vlad will still manage the Mudchute apiary and will still be a mentor. The new committee would like to thank all three of them for their contributions over the last few years.

## Membership renewals

Thanks to the 145 members who have rejoined LBKA. All last year's members got a personalised email with a renewal link. Please use this to renew and give us some feedback at the same time. If you don't have your renewal link, please ask [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) to resend it.

Thanks for your support this year and we hope that you wish to continue being a member of our association.

## Register your hives

The (UK Government) Animal and Plant Health Agency are updating their records. This is really important as it helps them monitor bee health. This has been particularly important this year with the large number of EFB and AFB cases in London. They are currently trying to establish the number of overwintering colonies.

Please [update your records](#) by 31st December. It's really simple to do if you already have an account. If you don't, we would encourage you to register your colonies for the sake of the health of bees.

## 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. 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.

We've now set up an [EventBrite invitation](#), so please sign up if you want to go, even if you've told Emily already.

**GOSNELLS**  
OF LONDON

## Old announcements from October

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

**Foul Brood:** A very bad year for foul brood in London. See last month's newsletter for important information and tips.

**LBKA courses and tuition:** Howard provided details of (a) a microscopy course for members to learn about the pollen grain structure and anatomy of the honey bee; (b) instruction sessions for those looking to do the BBKA Basic Assessment; and (c) instruction sessions for those looking to do BBKA Module 3 in March 2019. See last month's newsletter and email [education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk) for more information.

**LBKA Bee Banter:** Join this WhatsApp group for general bee chat for LBKA members. Join from the [membership area of the LBKA website](#) or email us so that we add you.



Spotted by **Jeni Lea**: "The photos are taken in Georgsdorf, a small village in Lower Saxony Germany where I was cycling with a (very) pregnant friend. We stopped at the cafe where there was a collection of skeps, all uninhabited (I checked). They were displayed with an ancient extractor, presumably not in current use but as an example of beekeeping from the past. The skeps were beautifully made from straw but I wonder how the honey would be extracted without destroying the colony? Sadly my German was not good enough to decipher the signs."

**Trees for Cities:** Help lead bee-themed ecology workshops for schools or community groups, either on a voluntary or paid basis. Contact Jess Massucco, Community, Education and Volunteer Manager at [jess@treesforcities.org](mailto:jess@treesforcities.org) or call 020 7820 4412.

**Offer of apiary in W6:** Benita Cruickshank in W6 (Hammersmith/Ravenscourt Park) has a domestic garden in which she would like to offer space for a hive. Contact [forage@lbka.org.uk](mailto:forage@lbka.org.uk) if interested.

## Old announcements from September

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

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:email@cjoakes.net).

## Old announcements from August

**BBKA Basic Assessment success:** Congratulations to Claire Cater, Jonathan Dale, Susannah Kingston, Alfonso Moreno, David Roy, Martin Crow, Jeni Harris, Cairis Hickey, Brian Kealy, Silviya Valkova, Simon Saville, Lena Spazier, David Phillips, Olivier Picard, Andrew Hudson, Sue Lee and Giovanni Zintu, who passed the BBKA Basic Assessment.

**Applying for grants:** If you belong to another organisation, know 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](mailto: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](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) if you have any leads.

## 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](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

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# Annual General Meeting

Natalie reports back from our Annual General Meeting was on 7th November at Roots and Shoots.

*Natalie Cotton*  
[admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk)

The AGM took place at Roots and Shoots, Kennington. As well as formal business, Chair Richard Glassborow presented a short review of LBKA's activities over the past year, from managing apiaries to engaging with local authorities. Member Bryher Pennells lived the proceedings with the bee outfit she has been using



*Our AGM with our Chair Richard presenting and Buzz (Bryher's bee costume) looking on.*

to engage schoolchildren as part of the School Food Matters programme.

Howard presented certificates to those who had successfully passed examinations, including modules 2 and 3. We had 17 people take and pass bee basic.

The Committee stands down at the AGM and members present vote in the new Committee. All nominees were voted in with 20 members voting, making the meeting quorate. No abstentions or objections were received.

Three positions on the committee are vacant this year - apiaries officer, events officer, and forage officer. The new Committee intends to co-opt Martin Hudson as events officer at its first meeting. John Mead also expressed an interest in becoming involved.

The Committee meet in November to discuss the programme for the year ahead. Feedback and participation is always welcome.

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## November in the Apiary

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

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

Even with the extended period of warm weather this year, November is still not an active month for the beekeeper. But a certain amount still needs to be done.

**Tidy.** Do a final tidy up the apiary if not already



*Bryher's bee costume features in the AGM and is used for outreach events.*

done. Complete cleaning, sterilising and storing of equipment.

**Check stored supers.** Check stored supers for evidence of wax moth infestation. The lifecycle of the wax moth is substantially different to that of the honey bee. A wax moth egg is temperature dependent and is able to stay as an egg then hatch after a few weeks or months. Supers should be stored in a cold and draughty place if possible but also checked during winter. If any evidence of wax moth is found the best way to deal with it is to place the frame(s) in a deep freeze cabinet for 48 hours. This will kill the wax moth in all 4 lifecycle stages.

**Varroa treatment.** Plan for further varroa treatment in December. December is the usual month for treating the colony with Oxalic Acid. Monitoring natural mitedrop in November is a useful diagnostic tool and precursor to actual treatment next month. Insertion of the varroa floor for 1 week in November will give useful information to the beekeeper.

**Check hive is secure.** Check the hive is secure and that the roof cannot blow off or be dislodged. Placing of heavy items such as a couple of housebricks on the roof is usually sufficient for a National with a well fitting flat roof. They are designed not to blow off. A hive with a gabled roof, such as a WBC, may need tethering with rope.

**Fit mouseguards.** The mouseguards should already be on the hive entrances. The colony should not now be

opened until Spring except for the Oxalic Acid treatment in late December.

**Consider doing the BBKA Basic Assessment.** For those who have not taken the BBKA Basic Assessment, please download the syllabus from the BBKA website and consider background reading with a view to taking the assessment next summer. The requirement is that you have kept bees for a minimum period of 1 year. The LBKA will not pressurise anyone to take the assessment but will actively encourage and assist those wishing to do so. Reading about bees and beekeeping in the winter months is a useful way to spend our spare time and will act as a beekeeping bridge between the seasons.

**Consider your approach to next season.** Will you need an additional hive, nuc box or replacement frames? Most equipment suppliers have winter sales where they sell slight seconds. This is an excellent time to buy, especially if you search 2 or 3 websites for offers. If 2 or 3 people jointly purchase then you may even be able to save on the delivery charge.

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## Beekeeping failures

Mark tells us about his experiences of bad and failed beekeeping.

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

Over the years both in and outside of my role as an inspector I have come across many examples of complacent beekeeping practices and poor practices that come about because of lack of knowledge and understanding of the bees. Sometimes I have also come across failures purely because the beekeeper is being tight with their purse and is trying to cut corners and avoid investing in essential equipment.

### Dummy boards

Classic examples include the beekeepers who don't use dummy boards. Dummy boards are there for a reason, they fill the space between the outermost frame and the side of the hive wall. Removing the dummy board offers the beekeeper room to slide frames to the side making them easier to pull apart and lift from the hive to inspect without annoying the bees or risking rolling them on the frame. Frequently rolled and squished bees quickly become defensive.

The dummy board also prevents the bees from filling the space between the outermost frame and the hive wall with wild comb by maintaining the correct bee space – this is the essential measurement which under-

pins all hive design and is the space needed for two bees to pass each other back to back.

Not using dummy boards results in wild comb being produced which cannot easily be inspected for brood, pests, disease or queen cells and constantly removing wild comb will upset the bees and set the colony back by forcing them to expend resources rebuilding the comb between inspections – this is time, energy and resources they could be spending filling your honey supers instead!

Dummy boards are not always cheap but they are worth the investment for ease of management alone. You can always make your own out of plywood or by fixing a sheet of corex to an empty frame.

### Crown boards

Not using crown boards. This is one practice which really gets on my nerves as an inspector and something I wouldn't dream of doing with my own bees (except for my paradise honey poly hives which are designed not to have them) as it prevents all kinds of messy situations from occurring.

Crown boards perform several functions which help both the beekeeper and the bee colony. Firstly it is the boundary of the hive nest and acts as the ceiling of the colony nest space above which they don't usually consider home. The crown board also helps to keep in the warmth and cold out.

Most hives are designed so that the roof fits on top of a crown board and without a crown board the bees are presented with several inches of empty space which they will try to fill to minimise drafts, dead space but also occupy if they feel they need more space because the beekeeper hasn't provided them with enough boxes on the stack. What results is a lot of wild comb usually filled with honey attached to the underside of the roof and the tops of the top bars. This makes opening the hive to inspect very difficult as you have to tear apart the roof and the uppermost box ripping up and destroying the honey filled wild comb in the process which upsets the bees leading to increased defensive and aggressive behaviours. It can also be a very sticky affair and make you really not want to have to open them.

The knock-on effects of this are that, faced with difficult hives and stropy bees, many beekeepers will simply not inspect such colonies as often as is needed which means those stropy colonies are more likely to swarm and perpetuate local stocks of aggressive or defensive bees.

Do yourselves and your bee inspector a favour and just buy goddamn crown boards!

Crown boards are also really useful when feeding the bees, as you can site a contact or rapid feeder on top over a feed hole, they can be fitted with bee escapes for clearing bees from supers prior to taking off the honey

and importantly can be used in manipulations during inspection. When you have to remove upper boxes and stack them to access the lower boxes containing brood a crown board placed on top of the stack of removed hive bodies contains the bees within them, meaning fewer bees buzzing around the keeper carrying out the inspection and it doesn't leave the supers exposed to robbers.

## Taking too much honey

Being greedy and taking all the honey. This is one practice which really gets on my nerves and I find quite upsetting when I come across it. All too often I've encountered beekeepers who take **all** the honey off their bees in late summer and leave the colony with very little to no stores at all to survive on. An individual bee may be small and its individual food requirements tiny but 60,000 of them go through at least a pound of honey a day in the active season, a lot more when they are rearing large amounts of brood. Many beekeepers don't seem to be able to understand this or able to recognise when their bees are on the brink of starvation. I've lost count of the number of listless starving colonies I've come across in my time.

What is different about beekeeping and sets us apart from other forms of animal husbandry is that bees are not subject to the same animal welfare and freedom of farming rules which apply to other livestock and family pets. For example poultry, cattle and sheep and even small pets must comply with 5 basic principles:

- Freedom and protection from pain, fear suffering and disease
- A suitable diet, freedom from hunger and starvation
- Be housed appropriately in a safe and comfortable enclosure
- Be able to express natural behaviours
- Be housed with other animals if appropriate (flock/herd/social animals)

If these 5 principles were applied equally to honey bees then many beekeepers would be facing prosecution for neglect! We wouldn't treat other livestock in this fashion so why is it deemed acceptable to treat honey bees this way?

Colonies not left with sufficient food suffer from malnutrition and stress which accelerates and aggravates any parasite or pathogens which may already be present, weakens the health of the colony and if not remedied quickly will lead to the downward spiral for the colony. I've seen too many cases of obvious starvation caused by the greedy beekeeper taking all the honey and they try and tell you it was 'colony collapse disorder.'

Don't take all the honey – leave them with at least a couple of frames of stores to last them the immediate few weeks until a new nectar flow kicks in or until you can feed them sufficiently to see them through winter.

It's all fine and well taking the crop off the bees and then substituting the honey with gallons of inverted sugar syrup but all you're giving the bees is simple carbohydrates – syrup lacks all the micro nutrients and pollen (full of fatty acids, protein, and vitamins) which bees need to remain healthy. Increasingly we are seeing research which highlights that bees need a varied and nutritiously balanced diet.

## Spending too much time looking for the Queen

This is a common beekeeping mistake/failure especially among newer beekeepers who are easily delighted with spotting Her Royal Highness strutting about on the combs.

Yes it's important to know your colony is queen right but you don't need to see her every inspection or spend ages trying to find her. Firstly if you mark your queen she will be easier to find when you need to, you will also know what year she was born if you're using the right coloured pens.

But seeing the queen is unnecessary. As long as you can see eggs and larva at all stages of development you will know if you have a functioning laying queen present.

More time should be spent paying attention to what's in and on the combs than relentlessly looking for the Queen every inspection. The state of the larva in the combs, the stores, the Honey, pollen, the state of the brood cappings all give clues to the health and condition of your colony far far more than simply seeing the Queen will ever tell you. Get out of the habit of looking for your Queen every inspection and get into the habit at looking at the combs.

## Cutting corners on swarm management

When it comes to responsible urban beekeeping swarm control and prevention is high on my agenda. Its absolutely necessary in an urban environment like London to ensure your bees do not swarm and cause a nuisance or cause negative economic impacts on neighbouring businesses and disruptions to public services.

In the city environment it is necessary to inspect your colonies weekly during peak swarm season to ensure you can catch the bees in the act of making swarm cells allowing you to intervene with a hive manipulation before a swarm departs. If you clip your queens then you can afford to leave this a little longer 12-14 days between inspections and you might lose an old queen in a botched attempt to swarm but you won't lose your bees and your honey crop...until they start caste swarming.

One of the worst lazy attempts at swarm prevention I've come across was a beekeeper who left queen excluders

beneath the brood box all year round to prevent a queen departing in a swarm and believed they didn't need regular checking during the swarm season. What transpired was the colonies produced lots of drones which became trapped in the queen excluder, blocking access to the hive by the foragers and cutting off the ventilation from the open mesh floor and the entrance resulting in a colony that was by and large dead. The bees overheated and starved to death as they couldn't escape. The other outcome I've seen in this scenario is when the colony tried to swarm and couldn't, and a new queen emerged and killed off the old queen only to then be unable to exit the hive herself to mate, became a sterile drone layer and the colony went belly up in a matter of weeks.

Don't be a lazy beekeeper – be proactive and check on your bees regularly. It's in the name 'beekeeper' – it implies you're keeping them and looking after their welfare.

### Not treating for Varroa

Too many people see beekeeping through romantic rose tinted glasses and ignore one of the most important lessons that is integrated pest management.

Beekeepers living in denial about the severity and need to treat for Varroa are a threat to all beekeepers.

Yes – in a healthy isolated environment with no bee movements – colonies may over time develop some coping strategies that enable them to cope better with varroa but that's not the reality for most of us. Over 18000 queens and 1000s of packages of bees are imported to the UK each year from abroad and then moved back and forth across the country by beekeepers.

Varroa Destructor to give it its full name is still the single biggest issue affecting bees and beekeepers today. Living in blissful denial about it won't make it go away, its time to face the music and deal with your Varroa.

All too often I encounter beekeepers who either don't treat for Varroa or they leave their Varroa treatments far too late in the season to be effective. I'm not going to go on about Varroa too much here as it's a whole blog in itself so all I'm going to say is get on top of it.

Varroa mites feed on bees' fat (not the hemolymph as previously thought) and weaken bees' immune systems. The Bees fat body organs are where essential nutrients are stored and it's also an organ involved in immune defense and metabolic regulation. Varroa feeding on this weakens the bees and opens them up to a variety of viral pathogens which can quickly overpower a colony. Pupae dying in their cells with tongues outstretched, perforated cappings, pepper-pot brood pattern and stunted bees or bees with shrivelled up or poorly developed wings are all signs of unacceptable varroa problems.



*These bees had severe varroa infestation as a result of the beekeeper failing to treat for mites all season. The frames were also void of any stores as the keeper had taken ALL of the honey leaving the bees to starve.*

*This colony died out at the end of winter but when I inspected in September the keeper still hadn't sealed it up to deny access to robbers and the combs were robbed out and filled with wax moth.*

*Please do use crown boards. It's better for the bees and the beekeeper.*



The problem with not treating bees' varroa-related problems is that other diligent beekeepers who are treating can very quickly become re-infested with a high Varroa count if their bees rob your varroa infested hive or if Varroa infested hives rob their recently treated hive. This is referred to as being 'Varroa Bombed' and will make you very unpopular in beekeeping circles.

So as I've highlighted there are some widespread and common failures which are frequent among beekeepers both old and new and the beekeeping community as a whole has much room for improvement. If we all really care that much about these wonderful creatures which underpin our agriculture and contribute so much to us in our daily lives then we really need to get our acts together as a community and improve our husbandry.

It's particularly shocking that 80% of beekeepers do not recognise disease in their hives – evident by the fact that 80% of notifiable disease is found by the bee inspectors and not by the hive owners. I do believe that LBKA members coming through our robust training courses, mentoring system and those who regularly attend our monthly meetings are off to a good start with their beekeeping and I do think our members generally are streets ahead of what is normal average beekeeping. Our association is constantly striving to better educate and train our members and 'better beekeeping' is top among the association's agendas. Currently the LBKA is second in the country for the percentage of its membership which passes the BBKA basic assessment each year.

The bee basic is only the first small step on an education ladder that the LBKA supports its members through and I'd like to see more of us better our beekeeping and studying for the module exams and new practical assessments that are available.

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## Are mushrooms the new weapon in the fight against varroa?

Deborah Blythe summarises an article she read in Nature entitled "[Extracts of Polypore Mushroom Mycelia Reduce Viruses in Honey Bees](#)".

*Deborah Blythe*  
LBKA Member

There was a very interesting scientific report reported on in The Scientist magazine recently which concluded

that honey bees may gain health benefits from fungi and their anti microbial compounds.

Fungi produce a wide array of chemicals and microbial activity including compounds active against bacteria. The report acknowledges that two of the most important factors contributing to widespread colony losses are infestation of honeybees with the parasitic mite varroa destructor and the suite of associated viruses. Varroa infestation is now known to be associated with at least 10 honeybee viruses. Currently beekeepers are only able to indirectly control virus levels by using miticides to reduce mite infestation rates but this has only limited success due to the rapidity with which the mites develop resistance to synthetic miticides. Another potential approach would be to reduce levels directly in honeybees by using functional anti-viral material but no such products are currently available.

There is evidence that some fungi produce substances which demonstrate anti-viral activity. Honeybees have been observed foraging directly on mycelium growing in outdoor beds leading to speculation that they may be procuring a nutritional or medicinal gain. This behaviour may represent a novel facet of social immunity given that a growing body of evidence indicates that bees self medicate using plant derived substances.

A study was carried out on extracts derived from mycelia of several polymore mushroom species for activity against two major honeybee viruses in both laboratory and field studies. In both cases bees that were fed mycelial extracts in sucrose syrup showed a 79 fold reduction in deformed wing virus and a 45000 fold reduction in lake Sinai virus compared to control colonies. The published report<sup>1</sup> describes the methods they used to prepare the fungal mycelia extracts to feed to the honey bees . It remains to be seen if this will now be followed up with a newer and better anti varroa product on the market.

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## Facebook (In)digest(ion)

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

*Eugene Fahy*  
LBKA Member

<sup>1</sup>P.E. Stamets, N.L. Naeger, J.D. Evans, J.O. Han, B.K. Hopkins, D. Lopez, H.M. Moershel, R. Nally, D. Sumerlin, A.W. Taylor, L.M. Carris and W.S. Sheppard. 2018. [Extracts of Polypore Mushroom Mycelia Reduce Viruses in Honey Bees](#). Scientific Reports, volume 8 (13936).

To begin at the end, the most recent of this month's posts was the exciting news from Richard Glassborow that the [LBKA has found a new home for our equipment](#). Thanks to generous support from Big Yellow Storage at Nine Elms we now have a convenient and secure storage space.

Andrea Quigley shared a number of posts, one of which [highlights the variety of opportunities for non-scientists wishing to work in bee research and conservation](#). These include, administrators, outreach workers and extension workers who can publicise the research output through public education.

She also highlighted the [launch of a new honey bee reserve at The Lost Gardens of Heligan](#) in Cornwall and [posted a link to a research paper](#) on the anti-viral properties of extracts of polypore fungi in controlling deformed wing virus.

Also on the topic of infection control, Anthony Patterson (AP) [posted a reminder of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate advice](#) that it is illegal to use thymol in feed to control nosema infection. This prompted responses from Nigel Eddon and Kevin Thorne suggesting that it may be legal to use it to stop the syrup going mouldy. Further VMD guidance subsequently posted by AP seems clear that if it is consumed by the bees or likely to get into the food chain, then it can only be used if prescribed by a vet under the cascade system.

AP also posted a link [questioning the reliability of the BBKA's annual honey survey](#). However there was some agreement that Central London harvest's were slightly up on last year partly due to the increased number of flying days and the fact that the parks and public gardens were irrigated throughout the warm weather. The increased incidence of foul brood, with hives being burnt, could explain the decreased yields in other areas.

There were a couple of creative arts related posts. Documentary maker [Lisa Muller wants to interview urban beekeepers](#) and film them and their hives and [Lily Bungalow wanted to borrow a hive](#) to use as part of her degree show exhibition.

We had requests for experience from Eleanor Field and Geoff Hood. Eleanor [posted a video asking about bees she filmed bearding outside the hive in the evening](#). AP replied that bees were working overtime to evaporate the moisture from recently collected nectar, before the weather turned too cold and that they seemed to congregate outside to cool off. Geoff [asked for advice on a risk assessment](#) which he had to agree with his local council for a community gardens apiary. AP said hazards such as bleach washing soda and butane gas used for scorching should be included.

Finally, as we approach the end of the year and with only the midwinter oxalic treatment to come, it seems fitting to end with the beekeeper's blessing as given by Bill Turnbull at the recent National Honey Show and which [Sara Ward relayed in her post](#)

*May your colonies be healthy and of good temper  
May your supers be overflowing  
And may your swarms be someone else's bees!*

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## 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](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

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## 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](mailto: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](mailto:emily@hiveandkeeper.com).

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## Upcoming events

### 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.

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## 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](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk)
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, [treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk)
- **Secretary:** Natalie Cotton, [admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk)
- **Education:** Howard Nichols [education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk)
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)
- **Resources:** Tristram Sutton, [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk)
- **Development:** Simon Saville, [development@lbka.org.uk](mailto:development@lbka.org.uk)
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, [mentor@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentor@lbka.org.uk)

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

