



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

September, 2019

Thanks to those who came to our Summer Social and those that helped organise it. Now it's September, the beekeeping season is coming to an end and once we've ensured that our bees have enough food, we can turn our attention to shows and talks. The National Honey Show at the end of October is worth attending (p2) and you might like to have a go at entering your honey. Thanks to this month's contributors Howard providing us with monthly tips on what to do in the apiary (p4), Natalie on what the committee talked about this week (p3), Natalie and George for their writeup and photos of the social (p4) and Eugene for telling us what's been happening our public forum on Facebook (p11).

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A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Natalie Cotton, Eugene Fahy, George Kozobolis, Howard Nichols and Mark Patterson**. Thanks to **Martin Hudson** for proof-reading it. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, do contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

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

Announcements

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

September Monthly Meeting: Defensive behaviour in honey bees

September's Monthly meeting will be at **11:00 on 8th September** and will return to **Fairley Junior School Hall** (218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, SE1 7JY). It will be on a new topic: **defensive behaviour in honey bees** including advice on how to minimise the chances of being stung. The meeting will be led by Howard and Vlad. As usual, there will be tea, coffee and chat



Honey bee on Lavender in Walworth Garden Photo: George Kozobolis.



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

afterwards. If anyone would like to bring some cake, I'm sure that would go down well.

I think October's Monthly Meeting on **13th October** will be a particularly good one. It'll be a practical session with LBKA microscopes where we'll discuss pollen, how to prepare microscopy slides and we'll look at pollen. Bring along some flowers, have a go at extracting the pollen and take a look through a microscope!

Natalie's pub pick

This month's Pub Social will be heading South of the river to **The Old Red Lion** (42 Kennington Park Rd, Kennington, SE11 4RS) in Kennington from **18:30 on Tuesday 24th September**. A dark-beamed pub near to Kennington station, with a quirky interior and a decent selection of ales.

National Honey Show and the competitive classes

The **National Honey Show** is **Thursday 24th to Saturday 26th October** at Sandown Park Racecourse (Esher, Surrey, KT10 9AJ). Despite its name, it has more of a focus on talks and workshops about bees and beekeeping and a trade show of the latest in beekeeping gadgets. Some suppliers (including Thornes and Maisemore) let you order on line and then pick up your order from the National Honey Show, which saves you postage.

LBKA is affiliated with the National Honey Show (represented by Geoff Hood, who also represents us on NBU's South-East Regional Forum) and we sponsor three classes at the **National Honey Show** in October: "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). They are open to all, but it would be nice if some LBKA members won these and other competitive classes (of which there is a surprising number).

More details about the honey competitive classes are

[on their website](#). You'll need to register your entries by 7th October.

Standing for committee

Our Annual General Meeting is in November (6th November), at which the committee is up for election. We would welcome people interested in standing. Please contact any member of the current committee if you're interested in standing or knowing more about what being on the committee is like. If you want to get more involved in LBKA, this is one way of doing so, but you can also get involved in other ways.

Membership renewals

Our membership year ends at the end of September, so it will be necessary to renew your membership if you wish to continue being a member of LBKA. As usual, you will all be sent emails with instruction on how to renew your membership. We will be keeping the LBKA membership fee of £15 the same, but have yet . Please wait until you get your personal renewal email to renew.

We hope that you think there are multiple benefits of being members. Benefits include being on our members' only Facebook and Whatsapp Groups. You will also need to be a member by the AGM if you wish to exercise voting rights.

Help for research into the practice of beekeeping in London

Tom Moody (tom.moody@chch.ox.ac.uk) is research student interested in talking to as many beekeepers as possible in London about "the practice of beekeeping in London". Do contact him if you'd like to chat to him.


Asian Hornet week

Next week (9th-15th September) is "**Asian Hornet week**" in which BBKA is highlighting the importance of being vigilant in looking out for the Asian Hornet. There has already been **one confirmed sighting in Hampshire** this year. Every month, we reprint the BBKA/NNSS information about how to identify the Asian Hornet (p3) and what to do and we encourage beekeepers to familiarise themselves with this.

Old announcements from August

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

BBKA exam success. Frank Ryan passed the BBKA Module 2 examination and Robin Yearwood passed the BBKA Module 3 examination. Mark Patterson passed the BBKA General Husbandry. Well done all!



www.nonnativespecies.org

Produced by Lucy Curran, Cliff Bony (NNS), Guy Harris, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Hara, National Biodiversity Data Centre (Ireland) Stuart Roberts (BKAUK)

Asian Hornet

Alert!

Species Description

Scientific name: *Vespa velutina*
AKA: Yellow-legged Hornet
Native to: Asia

Habitat: Nests usually high in trees and man-made structures, sometimes closer to the ground; hunts honey bees, other insects and also feeds on fruit and flowers.


Not easily confused with any other species. Dark brown or black velvety body. Characteristically dark abdomen and yellow tipped legs. Smaller than the native European Hornet.

Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. In 2016 the first UK sighting was confirmed in Gloucestershire. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, or other untreated timber. The possibility that it could fly across the Channel has not been ruled out.

A highly aggressive predator of native insects. Poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators.


Do not disturb an active nest. Members of the public who suspect they have found an Asian Hornet should send a photo to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

Report sightings of this species to:
alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk



Key ID Features

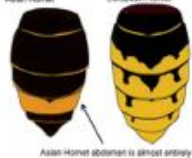
Asian Hornet Queen



Queens up to 30 mm long, workers up to 25 mm long

Entirely dark brown or black when fully developed with a fine yellow band

Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends




Asian Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4th abdominal segment

Asian hornet: 'battering' for honey bees prey

Similar Species


Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) for comparison

- Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 25mm long
- Legs yellow at the ends
- Dark brown / black abdomen with a yellow / orange band on 4th segment
- Head dark from above, orange from front
- Dark coloured antennae
- Entirely black velvety thorax
- Never active at night




European hornet (*Vespa crabro*)

- Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 30mm long
- Legs brown at the ends
- Yellow abdomen marked with brown on the upper part, not banded
- Head yellow from above, yellow from front
- Yellow antennae
- Thorax black with extensive brown markings
- May be active at night




Giant woodwasp (*Ducerus gigas*)

- Larger than Asian hornet, female up to 45mm long
- Legs yellow
- Distinctive yellow and black banded abdomen
- Long cylindrical body unlike Asian hornet which has an obvious waist
- Long yellow antennae
- Female has an obvious long sting-like appendage (ovipositor) which it uses to lay eggs in trees




Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Vilucella zonaria*)

- Abdomen has more yellow stripes than Asian hornet
- Legs darker than Asian hornets
- Only one pair of wings (hornets and wasps have two pairs)
- Large, globular eyes



Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)

- More extensive yellow and orange colouration on abdominal segments than Asian hornet
- Yellow markings on thorax unlike Asian hornet



Field Signs

Active April-November (peak August/September). Mated queens over winter singly or in groups, in various natural and man-made harbours – underneath tree bark in cavities left by beetle larvae, in soil, on ceramic plant pots – potentially any small, well-insulated refuge. Makes very large nests in tall trees in urban and rural areas, but avoids pure stands of conifers. Will use man-made structures (garages, sheds etc.) as nesting sites.

For more information visit:
www.nonnativespecies.org
www.nationalbeeenit.com

Alert!

Report sightings of this species to:
alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Old announcements from July

Congratulations to Andrew Slade, Alison Kings, Adela Vavrecka, Annie McGeoch, Kathy Jo Stevenson, Raphael Larizza, Jeremy Rosie and Rosemary Danielian for passing their BBKA Basic Assessment.

Extractors We have extractors which can be hired by members. We charge £10 to hire for up to 3 days and we ask for a £20 deposit (which you'll lose if you don't bring the extractor back clean). Email resources@lbka.org.uk.

Beekeeper wanted: The vicar at St John's Church (W10) is interested in a beekeeper keeping bees at the Church. Contact services@lbka.org.uk for the contact details.

Old announcements from June

Success in Modules 2 and 3: Congratulations for Frank Ryan (Module 2, Honey Products and Forage) and Robin Yearwood (Module 3, Honeybee Diseases, Pests and Poisoning).

Paid beekeeping opportunity at Ally Pally. Details are up for discussion, but the proposal is that the beekeeper would train on-site staff, so they can manage the bees in the long term. More details from development@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.

September's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discuss at our monthly committee meetings (and what keeps us awake at night). Let us know if you can help or have any suggestions that might help.

Natalie Cotton
admin@lbka.org.uk

Tristram Sutton has taken the role of apiary officer. His focus will be building capacity of LBKA's four teaching apiaries.

The Committee is preparing for November's AGM. Members will receive a notification in October and it is provisionally scheduled to take place 6 November.

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: BBKA website.

Martin suggested honey tasting to augment the usual proceedings of voting in the Committee for the coming year and the Chairman's report.

The Committee are keen to encourage new applications to join the Committee. They will advertise for Committee members with exact roles to be agreed later, in order to encourage people to join and contribute. The exceptions are the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer roles which have to be voted in at the AGM so will be advertised.

The Committee decided to trial a different meeting schedule, to separate more clearly governance of the Association from day-to-day executive decisions, so will normally hold Trustee-only business meetings three times annually, with executive meetings held in the intervening months.

Last month's Monthly Meeting: Summer Social

What happened at our meeting last month.

Natalie Cotton
admin@lbka.org.uk
 Photos by *George Kozobolis*

Fifty members attended the buzzing annual summer social this month, gathering for conversation, food and a few Hiver honey beers at Walworth Garden.

A creative menu of middle-eastern inspired vegetarian food was provided by Persepolis in Peckham. LBKA honey appeared in many of the dishes, including the black olives with lavender, orange and honey (note to the Committee - order more desserts next year, our beeks have sweet teeth!).

Walworth Garden made a beautiful backdrop with the expertly tended gardens looking vibrant after a wet summer.

Many thanks to all who contributed to making this event a success.



Extracting wax from a hive by pumping steam into it.



Geoff demonstrating making foundation.

September in the Apiary

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



The amazing food supplied by Persepolis.

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

The bees' tetchiness subsequent to the end of the honey flow should now have ended and colonies likely to be a lot calmer and easier to inspect. The bee population will continue to decline in September but the new bees now being born will need to live for up to 6 months through to next April, instead of 6 weeks. They need to be healthy, free of varroa mites and associated viruses

and with plenty of stores. Those members who diligently applied Apiguard or some other such proprietary varroacide throughout August should now be the custodians of newly born healthy and mite free bees.

Feeding the colony

This is always the main job for September. A full sized colony needs to have 35lb (16kg) of honey to see it





Clearing up. Thanks to all those who helped

through to next April. A National brood frame holds 5lb (2.4kg) and so the equivalent of 7 frames is needed. If, say, you estimate 5 frames of honey is currently in the hive then this is 25lb (11kg) and a further 10lb (4.5kg) is required. 1lb (0.45kg) of sugar will make 1.25lb (0.57kg) of stores (stores are 80% sugars and 20% water). Therefore, using this example syrup should be made from 8lb (3.6kg) of sugar to complete the stores. Any surplus will not be wasted as it will be used by the bees next spring.

Feeding fondant in winter causes the cluster to break up and is an unnecessary disturbance. It is preferable to feed in September and so ensure that there are sufficient stores for the winter. Fondant in winter should only be used as an emergency feed, not part of a planned strategy. The best time for winter and spring feeding is in the preceding autumn!

If feeding is left until October then the bees are less likely to be able to evaporate down the water content to less than 20% and then cap the stores. This will lead to the syrup fermenting over the winter period. All feeding should be completed by the end of September.

A stronger syrup should be used at this time of year as this means the bees have less work to do in evaporating off the water. This syrup is not for immediate consumption but for winter and early spring stores. 1kg of sugar dissolved in 660mls of warm water is the desired strength. Sugar must be white granulated sugar. Any other sugar is harmful to the bees. Sugar prices in some of the discount supermarkets is currently 60p/kg.

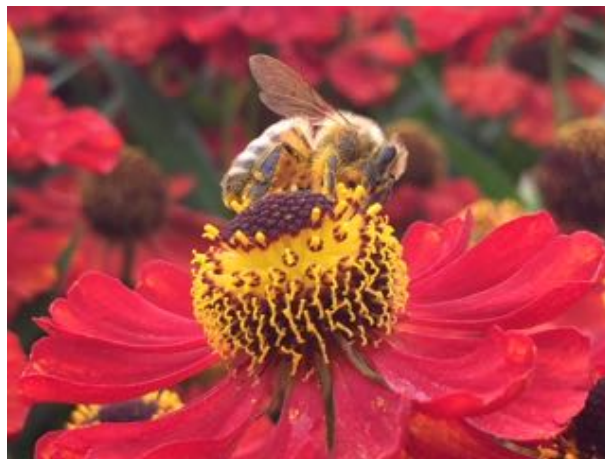
If the feeder needs to be topped up then it is essential to wear a veil. Bees may not appear to be very active if late in the month and it is cooler but they will still surge through the feedhole if the feeder is disturbed or taken off. It is best to commence feeding all colonies in the apiary at the same time and in early evening or dusk. This should prevent an outbreak of robbing.

Other action to be taken this month

Marking the queen. If the colony has a new queen born this summer then now is the best time to find and mark her. The colony is contracting with the brood limited to just a few frames and this makes it a much easier proposition. If the queen is marked then next season's swarm control will be so much easier. I have a colony currently undergoing supercedure so the new queen will not be laying until towards the end of this month.

Checking the hive. Hive body should be draught free and the roof should be waterproof. Now is the time to repair or replace any defective or ill-fitting equipment before the onset of winter.

Protecting against wasps and robbers. Entrance blocks must be in situ with the smallest entrance size in



Helianthus.

use. Many beekeepers reduce the entrances to as little as 2 or 3 bee spaces. If a colony is being robbed it is extremely difficult to stop.

Fumigate supers. These should have been fumigated immediately after having been returned to the bees for cleaning and removed again. Fumigated supers should be put in a place secure from wax moth and vermin.

Cut back encroaching vegetation. I spent 2 hours in my own apiary on 1st September using the strimmer on the grass and secateurs on the brambles. All leading towards the goal of ensuring the hives are clear of encroaching vegetation for the winter.

Mouseguards. If it starts to turn cold then these should be fitted late in the month or, otherwise, in early October.

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article reprinted from last year.

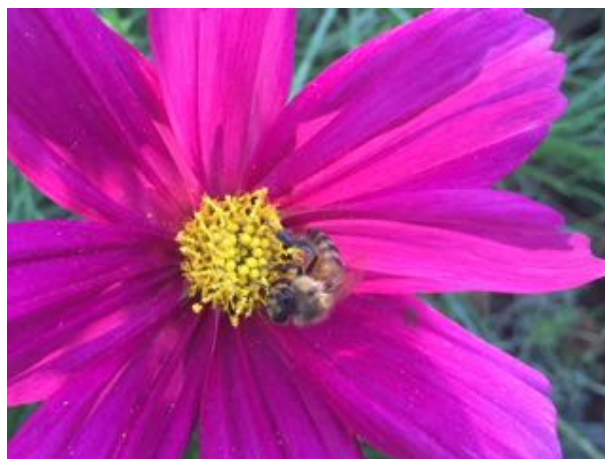
Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

After a scorching hot summer where the mercury rose to record levels for record lengths of time, our efforts now shift to preparing our bees for winter. It's been a mixed summer for beekeepers. Travelling on my rounds across Greater London I've witnessed a few beekeepers whose hives have brought in bumper crops but the majority seem to be down on their luck this year.

We often assume that prolonged hot sunny weather must be great for the bees but it can actually be counter-productive if the hot spells last too long. During the intense heatwave this summer many summer



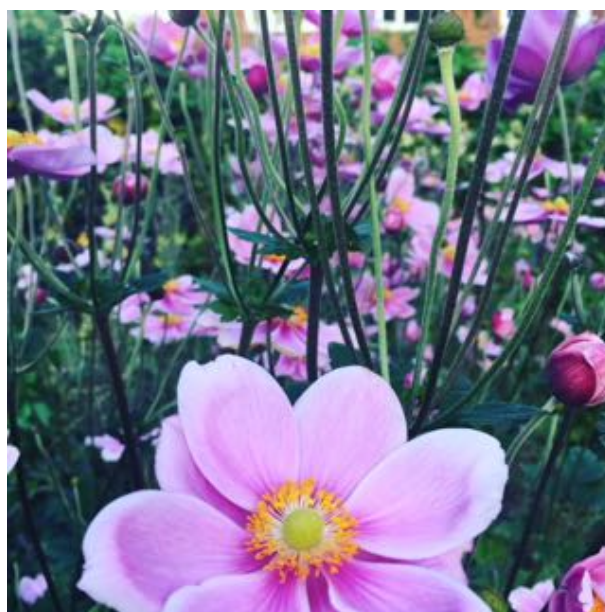
Aster.



Cosmos.



Hebe.



Anemone.

flowering plants failed to yield much nectar as they simply couldn't afford to lose the precious moisture need to secrete nectar. This has meant many hives have failed to bring in a big crop of honey and many (especially if supers have been taken off for harvest) now require urgent feeding to bulk up their food reserves before winter arrives.

This year I have had a 70% reduction on the previous year's honey crop. I'm having to feed all but a handful of my colonies. Many of my Langstroth colonies have recently had £30 worth of feed given to them each. I've been giving them inverted fructose sugar syrup. This is much easier for the bees to handle and turn into storable honey as the sugars are easier for them to process being already inverted. Other colonies I have had to mix syrup with hot water and granulated white sugar. Most of my colonies did not have any honey removed from them this year. After recent rain and the arrival of cooler weather I'm hoping that we will get some mild sunny weather this autumn to allow the bees a last opportunity to top up the stores I've given them with some real nectar.

Flowers out this month include many North American prairies species. Many varieties of **Rudbeckia** are in flower. Rudbeckia 'Prairie glow', Rudbeckia speciosa, Rudbeckia 'Goldstrum', Rudbeckia 'Little gold star' and

Rudbeckia 'Summerina yellow' are just a few of the varieties which are great for bees. Similar in appearance to Rudbeckia and equally attractive are the **coneflowers** in the genus Echinacae. Varieties 'Magnus', 'Purpureae', 'Flame Thrower' and 'Sundown' are among my favourites.

In scientific trials the **North American daisy** (Helenium) regularly comes out on top as the best garden bee plant for late summer and into autumn. The variety 'Autumnal' is the best but 'Moerhiem beauty', 'Gold', 'Sahins Early' and 'Chelsea' are also very good. Other good bee plants for autumn include Aster Twilight, Aster 'Amelia', Moat of the Solidago Golden rods are good for bees particularly solitary bees, any of the single flowered Coreopsis, Kalimeris madiva, Sedum 'Spectable' and Sedum 'Purple Emperor,' Saffron Crocus, Japanese Anemones, Hebe 'Autumn Joy,' and Symphyotrichum novi-belgii.

By far the most important flower for pollinators this season is **ivy** (*Hedera helix*). It is one of the most important late season sources of forage for our pollinators



Ivy bee on ivy blooms.



Sunflower.



Coreopsis.

and is greatly under rated. It's not just honey bees which rely on the ivy blooms, a whole host of insects rely upon the them to stock up before winter. Bumblebees and social wasps queens rely on ivy flowers to fatten up before their long winter hibernation, Hoverflies and butterflies also rely on the ivy to feed up before their winter sleep. Honey bees will bring back the nectar and store it as honey to feed on during the cold winter.

Several of our pollinators are migratory and rely on ivy to fuel their long autumn migration south to warmer climes. One of the most spectacular examples of autumn insect migration is that of the Painted Lady Butterfly. For decades their migration was a mystery and scientists assumed that butterflies migrating north in spring climaxed and then perished before they could return south leading to a dead end population. Thanks to advances in modern radar technology the mystery has now been solved. Using sophisticated radar, scientists have been able to track the butterfly's migration from central Africa through sub-Saharan Africa, across the Mediterranean and through Europe where 6 million butterflies cross the English Channel into the UK. Some of these butterflies make it as far north as Greenland. Using radar technology, scientists were then able to track 29 million butterflies making the return journey south

in late September. The butterflies fly at an altitude of 500-1000 feet and are propelled south by high altitude wind currents enabling them to make the journey to Africa in under a month. The longest insect migration in the world is fuelled largely on ivy nectar.

Another insect which relies almost exclusively on ivy is the Ivy Mining Bee (*Colletes hedera*). This attractive stripy bee is a relatively new addition to the British Isles. 40 years ago this was a very rare vagrant but in the past few decades it has expanded its territory north into the UK and is now increasingly common throughout southern England. This bee emerges from its 9 month hibernation in late August/early September and when it emerges it seeks out ivy blooms to collect nectar and pollen to provide for its offspring. They nest underground in burrows often in large congregations. You can help map their expansion in the UK by [submitting your sightings](#) to the Bee Wasps and Ants Recording Society

Whilst ivy is loved by many of our pollinators, it is not universally loved by beekeepers. Ivy honey is rich in Glucose sugars which means it readily granulates and can turn very hard as set honey in the comb. It can be difficult to extract. It also has a flavour which is unpalatable to many but to a few who find the strange flavour a welcome change. Personally I quite like ivy honey, once it has aged a little the flavours mellow and it's much nicer to eat. It makes good seed honey for creaming.

Facebook (In)digest(ion)

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

Eugene Fahy
LBKA Member

The Facebook page has seen a decrease in postings and as a result the monthly summary has been getting shorter. Whether this is a good or a bad thing, you can decide for yourself, but as [Mark Anthony Patterson \(MAP\) pointed out](#), many of the LBKA members now communicate on the members'-only WhatsApp groups, particularly Bee Banter. MAP also [posted pictures](#) from his appearance on the BBC1 Sunday Morning Live program with his observation hive.

Daria Unwin [shared a link to a Natural Beekeeping Trust article entitled "What are Beekeepers for?"](#). The post prompted a very large number of comments, assertions and anecdotal rather than scientific evidence on the benefits of leaving bees undisturbed, including not treating for varroa.

The Lebanese poet, Kahlil Gibran said:

*For to the bee a flower is a fountain of life
And to the flower a bee is a messenger of love,
And to both, bee and flower, the giving
and the receiving of pleasure is a need and an ecstasy.*

The fruits of this symbiotic bliss are evident at this time of year – Jonathan Lingham [posted a picture showing him hard at work with an extractor](#) while Bruce Richardson [shared a link to a Guardian story](#) about a Turkish beekeeper who discovered that "thieving bears prefer premium honey". The beekeeper has lost \$10k worth of honey over four years and set up bowls with different types of honey including Anzer which proved to be their favourite. Produced from the nectar of flowers which grow only on the Anzer plateau. It is claimed to be the most expensive honey in the world, selling for £250 per kilo, which makes London honey a bargain by comparison.

Finally, Tom Moody, who is completing his dissertation at Oxford University is [looking to interview urban beekeepers in London](#). The study is focussed on beekeeping and engaging with nature in an urban setting.

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.

Upcoming events

Sunday 8th September: Monthly meeting: Defensive behaviour in honey bees

11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, London, SE1 7JY

New topic, where we will learn more about defensive behaviour in honey bees and how to minimise the chances of being stung. 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.

Tuesday 24th September: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at The Old Red Lion, 42 Kennington Park Rd, Kennington, SE11 4RS.

This month's Pub Social will be heading South of the river to The Old Red Lion (42 Kennington Park Rd, Kennington, SE11 4RS) in Kennington. A dark-beamed pub near to Kennington station, with a quirky interior and a decent selection of ales.

Sunday 13th October: Monthly meeting: Pollen analysis with microscopes

11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, London, SE1 7JY

Hands-on session where we will be staining and mounting pollen grains on glass slide so we can study them under the microscope. 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 24th to Saturday 26th October: National Honey Show

All day at Sandown Park Racecourse, Portsmouth Rd, Esher KT10 9AJ

Promoting the highest quality honey and wax products with international classes, lecture convention, workshops and beekeeping equipment trade show. We sponsor some classes in the show. More details on their website.

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
- **Resources:** Tristram Sutton, resources@lbka.org.uk
- **Development:** Simon Saville, development@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Martin Hudson, events@lbka.org.uk

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

