



The London Beekeepers' Association LBKA News

October, 2020

This month, a paper was published that, amongst other things, considers the possible impacts of managed honeybee colonies on the ecosystems. Do [read it](#), particularly the section on urban beekeeping, which was influenced by LBKA's thoughts on the topic. See Richard's reflections opposite. LBKA has also organised two Winter Lectures, perhaps with more to come if they are popular. The first is on Wednesday (21st October) on the history of beekeeping at Buckfast Abbey. Do join via Zoom – details on joining have been emailed to you. There's also the [National Honey Show](#) this month and some Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association (BIBBA) [talks](#), all of which will be online. And then our AGM next month – also online – whose date has changed to Wednesday, 11th November.

This month, we have an article from Geoff on Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus (p8) as well as regular contributions from Richard (p1), Howard (p6), Mark (p7) for their contributions and Martin for proof-reading. We'd welcome contributions from more members. Do email me if you can contribute anything: articles, photos, recipes...

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A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Richard Glassborow, Martin Hudson, Eugene McConville, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Steven Wheelwright.**

Happy beekeeping.

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

From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

Many of you have already seen the recently published paper by Professor Stevenson *et al* from Kew: [The State of the World's Urban Eco-Systems: What can we learn from trees, fungi, and bees?](#) If you haven't yet read it, I urge you to read it now.

The whole paper is interesting but the section on urban beekeeping is essential reading for beekeepers, particularly if you keep bees in London since the section on urban beekeeping was to no small extent influenced by our own report, The London Bee Situation: Simon Saville and I shared information and discussed the situation in London with Professor Stevenson during the formative stages of his paper. He has told us that he wouldn't have been able to write that section without our input.

While the content and conclusions are not news to us,



Ivy bee on ivy. Photo: Eugene McConville.

Stevenson's data is more up to date and his vocabulary more forthright: keeping honey bees in some areas of London is unsustainable and may be harmful to wild bees (biodiversity). But read the whole paper carefully, it is well informed, complex and nuanced. Stevenson is not casting honey bees as villains but pointing out, as we did, that a situation has arisen which has negative consequences for honey bees and biodiversity. His paper acknowledges the beneficial aspects of urban beekeeping as well, particularly the important role they play, not just as pollinators but as "educators". Honey bees are a route by which urban dwellers discover and engage with the natural world.

Unfortunately, headline writers don't do nuanced, but they do obey the laws of physics and tend to swing pendulum-like from one extreme to the other. Having for years supported, even amplified, the "keep bees to save bees" narrative, which is one of the drivers helping to bring about the overcrowding situation, the headline summary of the entire paper is, predictably, "Too many bees kept in cities is harming bio-diversity, scientist says".

One of the concerns that motivated us to compile our own report was our recognition that ever-rising densities of honey bees in London may be not only be unhealthy for bees (all bees) but risks fuelling a reaction against the practice of urban beekeeping .

I hope and believe our own report, the debates we have already had and continue to have within the membership, and some of the sustainable positions and practices we already follow (forage planting, public understanding, etc.), put us ahead of the curve on this controversy and enable us to engage positively with and push back against over-simplistic, one dimensional reactions to the Kew paper.

To be honest, I think LBKA should welcome this paper's conclusions and by and large, support them and use the opportunity to further improve, strengthen and promote the direction we have been taking for more than six years towards Responsible Urban Beekeeping in London, honey bee welfare and a sustainable balanced relationship with our urban eco-systems.

Announcements

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

October's online Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

October's Monthly Meeting was last week, featuring Geoff and Elliot showing how to build flat-pack hives. Our thanks to both of them and everyone else who contributed. Next month's Monthly Meeting will be on **Sunday 8th November** on "Hygiene Matters: the end of season cleanup", led by Richard.

Our **Pub Social** will be via **Zoom** again on **Tuesday 27th October** from 18:30. We will use the same link each month which is in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email.

Membership renewals

Our membership year ended last month and members will have had an **email telling them how to renew their membership**, if they wish. Note that renewals are not automatic, but are **very easy** to do.

We hope that you wish to remain being part of LBKA. We rely on a large and active membership to enable us to do our work in helping promote better urban keepings, helping us influence policy, helping with our outreach and education work, and helping build a supportive beekeeping community. If you didn't get the email, please check your spam folder or email services@lbka.org.uk.

Join the committee

There is a change to the date of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) from that which was advised in the September newsletter. Please be advised that the new date is **Wednesday, 11 November**. Formal notice of the AGM will be sent to all members no less than 14 days prior to the meeting, which will be held on the Zoom platform. Please try and attend this meeting, to elect charity trustees and help direct the work of the London Beekeepers Association.

Please consider standing for the committee and make a difference. Don't worry if you don't feel you have a "role" yet, there will certainly be things you will be able to help with! Please talk to any committee member if you'd like to know more. Details and deadline for nominating members for committee positions will be provided in advance.

Winter Lectures

We have two lectures scheduled for the coming weeks, both to be delivered on the Zoom platform.

The first will be held on **Wednesday 21 October** at **18:30**, and will be delivered by a team from Buckfast Abbey. The lecture is titled "**A History of Beekeeping at Buckfast Abbey**".

The second is scheduled for **18 November**, also starting at **18:30**, and will be delivered by Professor Jeff



Sent by Steven: a picture of a dissected laying worker from his <http://advancedbeekeeping.org.uk/> training this weekend. It shows the partially-developed ovaries and eggs inside the tubes. Photo by Steven Wheelwright.

Ollerton, Professor of Biodiversity at the University of Northampton. That lecture will be titled **"Pollinators & Pollination: Nature and Society"**.

These winter lectures are an opportunity for members to hear about subjects, (often peripheral to day-to-day beekeeping), from experts in their chosen fields, as well as a bit of a social occasion – though socially distanced, this year at least. These lectures are paid for by LBKA subs and free to all members, and it is hoped that a sizable audience will attend, provide feedback, and influence the selection of topics and presenters for other lectures later this winter. Invitations to the zoom lectures will be emailed to all LBKA members 24 hours before the start time.

National Honey Show

The [National Honey Show](#) will be online this year on 22nd–24th October, with planned pre-recorded demonstration workshops and lectures with live questions and answers during the day and online social events in the evenings.

BIBBA

The Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association (BIBBA) have a programme of talks that are [free to sign up for](#).

Asian Hornet **Alert!** Report sightings of this species to: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

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 Asian unbranded 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.

Key ID Features

Asian Hornet Queen
 Queens up to 30 mm, workers up to 25 mm long
 Entirely dark brown or black except for yellow legs and a fine yellow band
 Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends

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

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

Median wasp (*Delichoneura 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 (gargoles, sheds etc.) as nesting sites.

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

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

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: [BBKA website](#).



“LBKA’s Schools Food Matters Programme: We’re getting good feedback from our Schools Food Matters programme. This photo is from Park Hill Infants who say “The session went really well. The kids are already telling their fellow classmates everything they’ve learnt about bees which is fantastic. Thank you very much! I’ve attached the pics I took during the session, hope they help”.



“Sent by Geoff”: Geoff’s new “automatic slug-control units”. Photo: Geoff Hood

Honey for sale?

Ask service@lbka.org.uk if you’d like it to be added to our honey page.

Old announcements from September

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

Beekeeping opportunity in Camberwell: A retired lady has asked whether a member of LBKA would like to take over her bees saying that “it would be an opportunity for someone without bees to find out what it’s like to run an apiary”. If interested, please contact Simon Saville on 07572 612722.

Old announcements from August

New Resources Officer: Our new Resources Officer is Will Fry and you can contact him on resources@lbka.org.uk.

Hiring extractors: We have extractors which can be hired by members – £10 for up to 3 days with a £20 deposit – email resources@lbka.org.uk for more information.

Apiary that needs a beekeeper: If you’re interested in an apiary site near Wandsworth Road Station, contact 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.

October’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.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk



'LBKA's Schools Food Matters Programme: We're getting good feedback from our Schools Food Matters programme. Also Netley Primary say "I just wanted to say thank you so very much for yesterday! The children really enjoyed it and we had a fantastic time yesterday afternoon looking for bees outside in our garden. They're really becoming invested in caring for the environment".'

The first part of the meeting reported on operational matters. Richard reported that, despite a disrupted programme due to the changing Covid situation and technical issues, LBKA's delivery of the **School Food Matter programme** is going well and is getting positive feedback. David reported that he has set up two **Winter Lectures** that will take place in October and November. The committee also discussed **preparations for the AGM next month**, including progress on the Trustees' Report.

The second part focused on more strategic matters. The recent publication of **a paper by scientists at Kew** and resulting media interest was identified as an opportunity for LBKA to establish a position on the impact of beekeepers on the local ecosystem and the committee discussed a draft position paper put together by Richard. The committee also discussed possible LBKA adaptations to the Covid situation that might be required, the accounts (and the effect Covid is having on LBKA's income streams), a **Christmas quiz**, how decisions made outside committee meetings should be recorded, and the tone of some of the discussion on the the "Bee Banter" WhatsApp group (which Richard made reference to in his introduction).

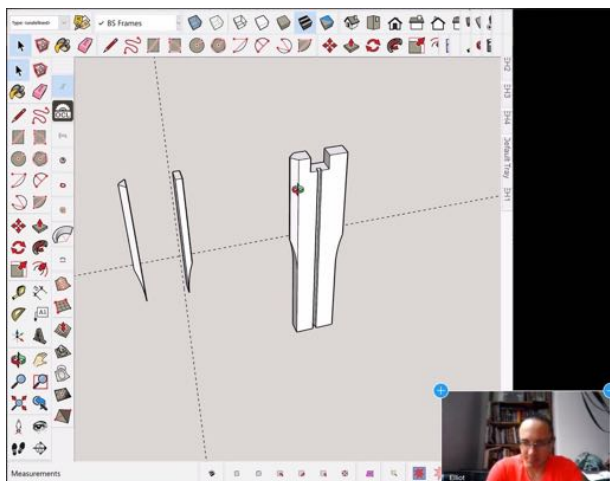
This month's Monthly Meeting: Hive assembly, frame assembly and timber properties

What happened at our meeting last month.

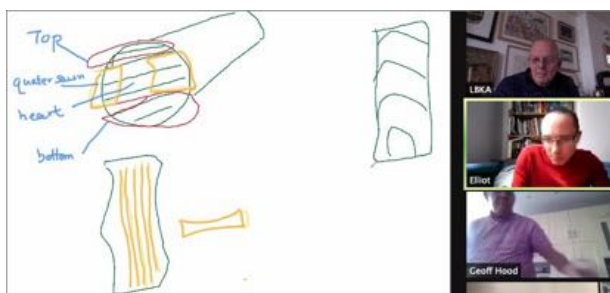
Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

With characteristic expertise and thoroughness, Geoff Hood gave a much needed demonstration of how to assemble a flatpack hive.

Elliot Hodges demystified the arcane world of frame parts (a subject I have never got my head around)



Elliot explaining the differences between different types of side bars on frames.



Elliot explaining about some of the properties of wood.

and then proceeded to demonstrate there is no limit to where beekeeping can take us with an absorbing session on the moisture content of wood and how the way logs are planked will determine how wood is likely to 'move' as the moisture content changes.

Our thanks to both.

September 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 find it difficult to process and cap the syrup due to the colder temperature. If left uncapped then there is the risk of fermentation leading to dysentery over the winter months. A colony should go into winter with at least 15kg (35lb) of stores if possible. This will avoid the possibility of the bees dying of starvation in a cold spring.

The last colony inspection of the year needs to be made and the quantity of stores detailed in the colony records. A full brood frame can hold up to 5lb of honey and a super frame up to 3lb.

The bees will now start to cluster as temperatures fall. Clustering starts at about 18°C 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 small amount of brood and bees should still be flying in the day throughout October. Bees should start to forage on Ivy, which is the last flowering plant of the year. This leaves the beekeeper to make final preparations for winter. The objective 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.

Check that hives are secure, straight and stable.

If using a wooden floor then the colony should be 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. As a result of this, water vapour is produced. If the hive is not adequately ventilated then dampness will 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 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 and 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 waxmoth. Other equipment such as queen excluders, crownboards, entrance blocks, etc should also be thoroughly cleaned and stored the same way.

Finally, October is the month for the [National Honey Show](#). This year it is being held online and full details are at their website.



Autumn crocus



Golden rod

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article has been reprinted a few times.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

October signals the end of the active foraging season for our bees. By the end of the month our colonies must ensure they have sufficient stores of honey and pollen to last them through until spring. Pollen becomes available again when the crocus and snow drops bloom but the weather is often too cool for the bees to fly to take advantage of it. Nectar is an even longer wait. It's usually April when the first substantial nectar sources begin to flow so October really is a "make-or-break" month for our bees if they still need to pack away winter stores.

Apart from ivy substantial blooms of any particular plant are becoming rare this month. In gardens **Dahlias**, **Echinacea**, **Rudbeckia** and **Cosmos** persist but they will soon begin to keel over as the first frosts hit.

Winter flowering shrubs like **Viburnum tinus** are however starting to bloom and will peak at around New Year. These offer the bees pollen and sometimes nectar when winter days are mild enough for them to fly.

In about a month's time we should see the first **Mahonias** begin to bloom. These are frequented by honey and buff tailed bumble bees on mild winter days.

Jobs to do in the garden this month include propagating semi ripe cuttings from your favourite flowering shrubs. Lavender, rosemary, hebe, flowering currants



Ivy blooms

are all easy to propagate in this way. Push 6" cuttings into gritty compost and keep cool and moist over winter.

If you're planting bulbs for bees, October is the best time to do this.

As leaves start to drop from trees, collect and bag to make leaf mould to mulch plants next year. Mulching helps prevent plants drying out in dry weather and helps to keep them flowering and your bees well fed.

As perennials begin to die back you may want to begin clearing the old stems. Some plants benefit from having their core exposed to the cold over the winter whilst others benefit from the insulating properties of their dead stems and leaves.



Sedum Autumn joy



A hairless bee with CBPV.



A hairless bee with CBPV, with oft-mentioned black colouring.



Bee with "K-wing", crawling around in front of the hive.

initially in Lincolnshire – but now appear to be almost endemic throughout Britain. CBPV can kill a colony of bees quite quickly, so you must know the first signs that your bees are infected.

There are two syndromes.

- **Syndrome one:** You see shaking bees outside the hive with "K-wing" (one wing appears dislocated) and the bees cannot fly. These bees are climbing stems of grass and plants or walking aimlessly around in front of the hive. Bees within the hive can also shake, but not to be confused with the waggle dance
- **Syndrome two:** This is more easily spotted during inspections because you see shiny hairless bees with bloated abdomens being harassed by other bees either on the landing board or the tops of frames as you opened the hive for inspection.

You will find that most books referring to signs of CBPV say that infected bees are shiny, hairless and black. However, since bees in London tend to be mixture of many breeds, their colours vary. When these mongrels lose their hair, they are not shiny and black, but shiny, orange and black (it annoys me when such inaccuracies get repeated).

CBPV: What is it and what has it to do with the Isle of Wight?

Geoff sheds some light on this virus that appears to be become more common.

*Geoff Hood
LBKA member*

CBPV – or to give it its full name "Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus" – has been becoming more common in recent years. The current outbreaks started around 2007 –

So have we had endemic CBPV before? Yes! Just before the first world war. It started in the Isle of Wight and was called therefore Isle of Wight Disease (IOW). The only 'treatment' was to re-queen with an imported queen from the Continent. By 1920, it was endemic, and was said to have killed off the native British black bee. The tracheal mite *Acarine woodii* was identified in 1921 by Renne. Renne blamed it for causing IOW. Treatments to kill the tracheal mites included various essential oils like thymol, mothballs or sulphur feeds. IOW disease gradually faded as a problem and by the 1950s very few cases occurred. In 1964, L. Bailey of Rothamsted Bee Unit suggested that IOW disease was caused by a virus called Chronic Bee paralysis Virus, but most beekeepers and books still blamed *Acarine woodii*. In 1984, after further work by L. Bailey, having examined further samples of 1920 bees with IOW, he published evidence that IOW was caused by the CBPV virus, not tracheal mites. However, to this day, Wikipedia still says that IOW disease was caused by *Acarine woodii*.

CBPV is a small virus that is transmitted horizontally from contact between bee to bee and enters the bee's body and haemolymph (blood) via a broken hair. It is therefore more prevalent in large crowded colonies. It is now thought it can also be transmitted via trophallaxis (bees feeding bees) and vertical transmission Queen to egg/larvae/bee. The current CBPV outbreak has been tracked by Newcastle University and it does not follow normal invasive spread of a disease. It is slowly working its way across the country but is spread by local clusters that then stop and reappear in other locations in different counties. This is therefore more likely to be a seeded spread, suggesting that there's a vector. Newcastle university is doing further research as to whether the larger out-breaks are related to the import of queens and their horizontal transmission to their offspring. The problem is either that colonies don't have general resistance or that they don't have resistance to the local CBPV strain. This is another reason not to import queens (though Dutch queens did not seem to be responsible for CBPV outbreaks).

Current treatment is limited to the long-term good practice of changing your comb regularly and if you find shiny hairless or shaking bees, shook swarm them onto new foundation in March to July. In August-September, you can also shook swarm, but has to be on to acetic acid-sterilised comb. The preferred method of shook swarm for CBPV is not to shake the bees to inside a clean box, but to shake the bees outside of the box on to a sheet sloping up to the entrance. The theory is that CBPV infected bees are refused entry to the hive and less viral particles gain access to the new hive.



Frank's hive stands.

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.

Frank Ryan: I make beehive stands from strong premium-grade materials, painted an attractive holly colour using bee-friendly paint. Each stand is made to measure a for comfortable working height and has the option to expand from a single stand to a double. The dimension allow for ratchet-strapping. Contact Frank on 07877388933 or frankryan60@hotmail.com.

Upcoming events

Wednesday 21st October: Winter Lecture: A History of Beekeeping at Buckfast Abbey

18:30 at Via Zoom.

Our first Winter Lecture will be given by a team from Buckfast Abbey.

Thursday 22nd to Saturday 24th October: National Honey Show

All day, online

This annual event will be ONLINE this year, with planned pre-recorded demonstration workshops and lec-

tures with live questions and answers during the day and online social events in the evenings.

Tuesday 27th October: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at via Zoom (see your email for a link)

Our monthly trip to the pub. Catch up with all the latest news over a pint in a nice food-serving pub.

Sunday 8th November: Monthly Meeting: Hygiene Matters: the end of season cleanup

11:00-13:00 at Via Zoom.

Richard will be giving important advice on cleaning your equipment in preparation for the next year's beekeeping.

Wednesday 11th November: Annual General Meeting

18:30 at via Zoom.

As well as the formal business of electing a new committee, the AGM is a chance to review what LBKA has been doing and to have a say in what it should be doing in the coming year. All members are welcome (please note that you must be a 2020 member though - so don't forget to renew!). Please consider standing for the committee - speak to a committee member for more information.

Wednesday 18th November: Pollinators and Pollination: Nature and Society

18:30 at Via Zoom.

Professor Jeff Ollerton, Professor of Biodiversity at the University of Northampton will talk to us on the subject of Pollinators and Pollination: Nature and Society.

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

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

