



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

May, 2021

In between the showers, the swarming season is in full swing. Check our website for [some of our Monthly Meeting recordings](#) including ones that cover swarming. This month, our Monthly Meeting will turn its attention to bee health, especially as EFB in some places is raising its ugly head.

This month, Kathy continues her tour around LBKA's apiaries (p9), John tells us how he got into beekeeping (p6), and Eugene and George have sent some nice bee photos. Thanks to the regular contributors for their regular contributions, including from Richard (p1), Howard (p5) and Mark (p7).

We are in desperate need of help on the committee, so if you can volunteer some time, please do contact us. We need volunteers who are reliable, enthusiastic, good organisers, good at writing, and/or good with people. As ever, we're also looking for more newsletter contributions. Do email me if you can contribute anything including articles, photos and recipes.

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A big thank you to this month's contributors: **George Kozobolis, Richard Glassborow, Martin Hudson, John Kembury, Eugene McConville, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Kathy Stevenson.** Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, do contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

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

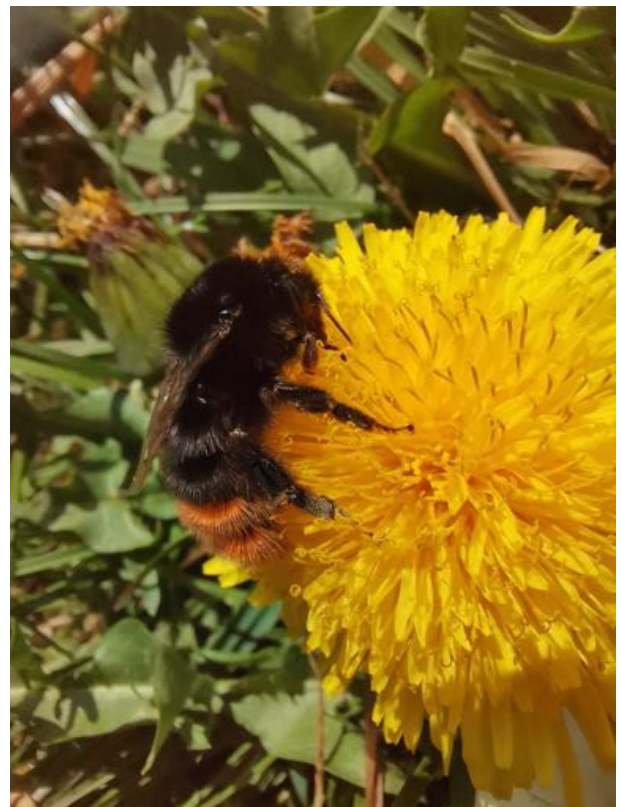
From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

I want to take this opportunity to give members an update on what has been happening on the London Bee Situation.

Since the Report was formally adopted at the AGM in November 2010, we have formulated and begun implementing a strategy of sharing the report and our position with organisations with an interest in "bees", beekeeping, forage and habitats upon which pollinators depend.

At the risk of being repetitive, I am including links to the relevant documentation again here so that new members can see them in context and members who have seen them before can refresh their memories if they wish without having to scabble about trying to find them.



Red-tailed bumblebee on dandelion. Photo: Eugene McConville.

In the first instance, we sent the [report](#), our [Position Statement](#) and a link to the paper by Professor Stevenson, [State of the World's Urban Ecosystems](#) to the 13 neighbouring BKAs who also have members within Greater London. This was an obvious first step, not only because of potential mutual interest and shared experience but also as a matter of courtesy.

We did not know what to expect. As it turns out we have only had an initial response from 6 to date. All of those expressed interest and most specifically agreed with the need for beekeeping to be sustainable and showed support for our efforts to raise public awareness of the true bee situation in London and try to correct misleading "save the bees" narratives. We intend to continue to build relationships and support within these beekeeping associations.

In the meantime, we have also started to share the report with other organisations with interest in bees and or the habitats on which all bees depend: The Bee Farmers' Association, Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers, City of London Corporation, London Borough of Lewisham, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. We are proceeding slowly and learning a lot as we go. Each contact brings new contacts and, so far the reactions have been very encouraging and seem to confirm the premiss of our decision to take this proactive course of action. No doubt challenges will come at some point but we are confident that we are gaining valuable support and influential allies.

Our ultimate objective remains promoting responsible urban beekeeping in London, sustainable within biodiverse ecosystems.

The current misleading and or lack of information in the "save the Bees" narrative is undoubtedly a major factor driving "beewash" business models and other, often well-intended, beekeeping activities.

It has been developing over more than ten years. We believe that better information, communication, public awareness & understanding should be given a chance to self-correct the trend for ever increasing numbers of honey bees. At the same time we will continue to promote environmental improvements for pollinators and Londoners.

The next steps involve consolidating what we have been doing, widening the circle still further, and starting to raise our profile and public visibility.

And now, looking ahead in a different direction: planning continues for a return to face to face events. Remember those! In no particular order, but starting with a bit of unadulterated pure fun (subject to Covid protocols remaining on course) – The Summer Social is back! Provisional date, 8th August t.b.c., Holland Park.

School visits are back; this year there are also going to be school apiary visits to Holland Park Apiary. In conjunction with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's Bee Superhighway initiative, we are putting

on an Apiary Open Day at Holland park and a Honey Try and Buy stall, selling members' honey.

All these events require volunteers. Before we have to send the press-gangs out, if you have even the slightest inkling to get involved (you don't have to know how) please get in touch with Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk and make yourself known.

Stay well.

Announcements

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

May's online Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

This month's Monthly Meeting will be on **Sunday 9th May** at 11:00 on **bee health**. This is a vital topic, particularly with all this European Foul Brood about. The main part of the meeting will be how to do a detailed and full brood inspection, led by Howard and Richard. At the usual Zoom link (in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email).

The **Pub Social** will be on **Tuesday 25th May** from 18:30 (Zoom link in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email).

June's Monthly Meeting will be on Sunday 13th June on Honey extraction.

Summer Social

With COVID cases decreasing and restrictions easing, we're tentatively starting to plan a Summer Social at Holland Park in August. Watch this space!

Log your NBU disease notifications and swarm collections!

We're collecting data to help build a better picture of what's going on in London. Please save and use the following links:

- **NBU EFB/AFB notifications:** Please log the EFB/AFB notifications from NBU so help us understand the geographical spread of bee diseases: <https://tinyurl.com/4vxzk8n>
- **Swarm collections:** Tell us where and when you collect a swarm, so we can compare swarming seasons across years: <https://bit.ly/2RvbXzx>

These data will be kept anonymous and will only be published as highly aggregated data with no personally-identifiable data.



Spotted by Eugene. Bee with bright red pollen on a geranium at Kew. Photo: Eugene McConville

Winter Lectures

Sadly, our Winter Lectures have finished for the year (owing to it being Spring. . .), but some of the recordings are [available here](#).

Join the committee!

LBKA is a reasonably-sized organisation with (currently) over 200 members that is building a good reputation for its stance on beekeeping, the quality of its outreach activities and the quality of its advice. We need more committee members to enable us to do more. Don't worry if you don't know quite what role you might be able to fill. You'll find your place! Please contact any member of the committee (see back page) for a chat.

Paid opportunities for members

Every now and then opportunities for paid work relating to beekeeping come to the committee's attention. It is policy to make these opportunities available to all members. However, from experience, the process of advertising the opportunities in the monthly Newsletter is not always timely for the work required. We are therefore proposing to use a "framework agreement" type process to identify members who are interested, able and have the relevant experience, skills/qualifications and resources (including insurances where relevant) to respond to different categories of services required on a hypothetical basis in advance of real opportunities arising. This will allow a more appropriate response time when specific requests for services come in but retain



Spotted by George. Busy honeybee loaded with pollen and drinking the sweet aromatic nectar of the Morello Cherry blossom. Photo: George Kozobolis

the openness and fairness to potential member suppliers.

In the first instance we are therefore inviting "expressions of interest" from members for the following categories of paid services should they be requested by potential client businesses, organisations (potentially including the LBKA), or individuals:

- Beekeeping, apiary management, consultancy and delivery, etc.
- Bee related ecological, environmental, land management, planting consultancy, design and delivery services
- Bee related educational consultancy and support, including content development and supply, etc

Any member wishing to respond to this invitation please contact Simon Saville in writing to development@lbka.org.uk, clearly stating which category/categories you are interested in and a brief CV of relevant experience and or qualification and any insurances held (if relevant). You may then be invited to respond in further detail to specific hypothetical requirements.

Are you "good" with social media?

If you are good at communicating with social media, then you could help LBKA!

LBKA has a presence on all the main social media channels - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram - but we aren't currently using these channels as effectively as we could. We are looking for a Social Media Officer to take the lead in how these channels are used. Ideally, we would co-opt you onto the committee so that you're up-to-date with the latest discussions on key topics of interest.

Our social media channels already have an impressive reach, but we aren't using them very proactively to manage our communications. This is a good opportunity to help develop a profile of a local charity and its charitable objectives.

- Twitter: [@LondonBeeKeeper](https://twitter.com/LondonBeeKeeper)
"Serving bee keepers & conservation enthusiasts in London"
7,000+ followers
5,000+ tweets since 2012
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/londonbeekeepersassociation/>
Recently set up; little activity so far
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2512721609/> (open site)
"Welcome to the open group London Beekeepers Association page. This page is not an official LBKA page but is managed by LBKA members as a means of public engagement, sharing of information and for discussion about beekeeping in London."
Public group, 2,800+ members

These channels have excellent potential to help us get our messages to key audiences, especially to non-members who have an interest in bees and beekeeping. Along with our excellent website, they are the public face of the Association – who we are, what we do, and what we stand for.

Please get in touch with Simon if you have an interest in getting involved: development@lbka.org.uk and 07572 612722.

Contribute to the Newsletter

You'll see a few gaps in our regular contributions. If you can help with any of these (not necessarily every month) please drop me line. We'd welcome contributions from more members and would love it if you could propose a new regular feature. We usually end up with 300 or so members and the newsletters are [available to all on our website](#). Do email me if you can contribute anything including articles, photos and recipes.

We're looking for members to summarise the issues discussed in a digestible way. Please contact services@lbka.org.uk if you may be able to help in some months.

Old announcements from April

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

LBKA Pollinator Fund: still inviting members to apply for grants to help support small community groups to improve their local environment for the benefit of bees and other pollinators. For comprehensive guidance on the application process, and an application form, please contact treasurer@lbka.org.uk.

Old announcements from March

Christmas Quiz winner: Congratulations to **Mark Patterson** for winning the Christmas Quiz. Elliot arranged a very special prize – a bespoke glass bee by [#CrazedPurpleGlass](#).

Allotment Agreements with Beekeepers: Our proactive strategy for **responsible urban beekeeping in London** seems to be working as we have been helping advise Lewisham Borough Council on allotment beekeeping policy.

Old announcements from February

BBKA Bee Basic: If you're a beekeeper and haven't yet done the BBKA Bee Basic certification, please consider doing it. We will help you prepare for it. See Howard's piece on page 7 of [January's newsletter](#) which also outlines other aspects of LBKA's education programme.

Old announcements from January

"Bee Banter" WhatsApp group: The join link is in the [Members' Area](#) and in your welcome email and **you can turn off notifications, if the traffic becomes too much for you.**

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.

April'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

We firstly we noted that we are desperately short of capacity to enable us to do what we want to do. We really need people to volunteer their time. Things coming up include School Food Matters school trips, schools visits to our Holland Park apiary and Kensington & Chelsea's bee superhighway events.

Richard gave an update on the current circulation of the London Bee Situation report and we considered what the next steps should be. Richard has sent the report to all beekeeping associations in London, with generally positive feedback. The committee agreed to gradually make it more public, helping remodel the "save the bees narrative". Richard will write more about it

in the newsletter, eventually an article in Beecraft and some other outlets.

We started planning a Summer Social, pencilled in for August at Holland Park, at which we hope our favourite caterers will provide delicious food.

We also discussed courses, whether we wanted to run courses for new beekeepers and 'improver' courses for existing beekeepers. Using the online format for theory, we discussed the possibility of spreading it over several evenings. We considered the role mentors could have in helping train members.

Finally, we considered some members' requests for an extractor to be based in North London for hire. Will look into this.

Last month's Monthly Meeting: Swarming

What happened at our meeting last month.

We need volunteers willing to help write these sections. Please contact services@lbka.org.uk if you may be able to help in some months.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk

This month's meeting was about swarming. We recorded the meeting and [it's available to members on our website](#).

May in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

May is all about swarm control. For many of us, myself included, April has already been all about swarm control. For those of us whose colonies have not already swarmed or tried to swarm then May should be a busy, interesting and exciting month. Daylight hours are continuing to increase, a continual supply of new flowers is emerging and healthy bee colonies are expanding.

For colonies which have not yet swarmed or attempted to swarm, inspections should be made each 7 days to check for queen cells. If 2 brood boxes are used (brood

and a half or double brood) then the bees often build some of their queen cells between the 2 boxes, attached to the upper box. A simple routine check may be made by removing supers, then lifting/tilting the upper brood chamber to inspect the bottom of the frames in the upper brood box. This quick method is not foolproof. The only way to be entirely sure is to remove each individual frame, then carefully and systematically inspect each one. Even then a queen cell hidden behind bees may be missed.

Signs of swarming. Swarm control action is only needed when 1 or more queen cells are seen. Build up of drones or drone brood is not a sign of swarm preparations. Neither is the building of queen cups unless containing larva and royal jelly. However, either of these events should put us on "amber alert".

Action to be taken. Quick but not immediate action is required. Do not feel intimidated or panicked into taking immediate action. There is time to close up the colony, think matters through and collate all necessary equipment. Do not simply attempt to destroy the queen cells, as this will not remove the swarming impulse. The best solution is Artificial Swarm method but this does depend upon finding the queen. Swarm control was the topic at the April LBKA monthly meeting. Most beekeeping textbooks cover this method.

Other action to be taken this month includes the following:

Brood disease inspection. A specific brood disease inspection should be carried out if not already done in April. This should involve shaking all the bees from each brood frame, one frame at a time, into the bottom of the hive and carefully checking each brood frame for signs of abnormality. As with any disease or pathogen, the sooner it is detected and a course of rectification commenced then the more the likelihood of a successful outcome.

Add supers. Add supers as necessary, adding another in advance of it being needed by the bees. A super may be required either below the queen excluder or above it.

Draw some combs. Use May nectar flow to draw out some foundation into drawn frames.

Varroa. Check varroa mite drop if not done in April.

Spare equipment. Make sure you have sufficient spare equipment for swarm control. This includes having either spare drawn comb or made up frames with foundation.

Asian Hornet. Spend a few minutes in the apiary to specifically look for the Asian Hornet. It is a good idea to have your mobile phone with you so that you can take a picture if you think you see one.

Enjoy! Most of all, enjoy your May month of beekeeping!

A Beeginning

LBKA member John tells us about how he got into beekeeping.

John Kembury
LBKA member

It's three years ago I was first introduced to bees by my wife Kate, and everything from here on in is her doing. She was the one that organised a birthday "experience" in south London for me that gave me a whirlwind introduction to keeping.

By Spring I signed up for LBKA's weekend introduction to beekeeping course. There I met like minded individuals perched on chairs in a crowded (pre Covid) hall room and was transported into the lives and goings on of bees, how to rub along with them and ultimately take care of them.

I was soon filled with facts and information written by all manner of experts. Though as several of you have said, have the bees read that, and that I knew I know nothing.

My real learning happened during the fabulous mentoring period. I was lucky/unlucky enough to be made redundant from the job so had the necessary time availability to become a mentee.

My mentor Geoff and fellow mentees spent many a day lifting, shifting scraping getting sticky and generally learning the dark art of observing and having a plan.

A pause in my learning was caused by a new job and spoiled it all for me. However, the introduction of remote video calls allowed me to stay in contact Although in another country, I could fortunately join the online pub socials and attend the winter lectures. The monthly newsletter was also great Aidan!

I'm now back and ready to break out on my own and setup an apiary bringing together all that knowledge. Have I learnt anything? Time will tell.

I've done it by the numbers and have a plan. It started by researching during winter, and placing orders in Jan for hives, tools, monitoring tech and the bees.

#1 Nick Buttle Peak Hives workshop

I've gone for Nationals from Peak Hives and cleared a dapple shaded area at the bottom of a friends central London garden that backs onto the the Railway.

#2 Location, location, location

I've cleared and levelled the ground and put together a base of bricks. Checked the sun tracking app to point



them roughly in the direction of the morning sun and cleared away some of the over hanging foliage.



#3 Is there enough suitable urban forage?

Forage is provided by all the wonderful arboretum-like gardens across these long gardens and there is water available from the nearby lily pad fishpond. The neighbours have been informed and are as equally excited as my friend providing the garden.

It's all now coming together, and the hives have arrived and set up, with the extra supers to be stored in a yet to be tidied up shed.



#4 Home sweet home?

The two Nuclei of bees and their queens are coming from Cambridgeshire near the Fens, sometime in May. Of course this is all dependent on the weather.

I also looked at the many options for using technology around apiaries and have decided upon the scales and hive monitoring tech from Arnia.



#5 The Arnia/AgriSound tech collaboration



#6 The Home Screen

No bees yet!



Some of the technology hasn't arrived yet, would you believe due to the container ship jamming up the Suez,

but it promises lots of data – not sure what or how I'm going to use it but being handy with data and Excel could be useful. But all in all the new apiary is prepared for their arrival and also registered on BeeBase.

#7 Just waiting for the bees. . .

Is there anything I've forgotten? Probably, but the support and advice when you're in a jam is swiftly available via the WhatsApp LBKA group.



By the way, thank you Kate and Geoff and wish me luck.

Focus on Forage

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

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

Bees struggling to build up in April should now have an easier time as the spring nectar flow improves. One or two of my colonies are not doing so well this year whilst others are booming. The good weather and improved availability of forage is helping them to recover – though I will be unlikely to get a honey crop from these recovering colonies this year.

Plants important to bees this month include **Horse Chestnut** (dark red pollen), **Sycamore** (pale yellow pollen), Sorbus trees such as white beam and **Mountain Ash** (pictured), **Bird Cherry** (pictured) and **Elder**. In parks, gardens and municipal areas **Choysia**, **Cotoneaster**, **Ceanothus** and **prunus laurocerasus** 'lunken' are all shrubs visited by bees.

Herbaceous perennial plants important to bees this month include **Dandelions** which are coming to the end of their main flowering period in London, **Green Alkanet** (pictured; now at its peak), **Forget-me-nots** and **Spanish Blue bells** with their green-blue pollen.

Starting to make an appearance are the first of the summer flowers which will become much more important



Rowan blooms.



Bird cherry.



Ceonothus up close.



Honey bees visiting my apples.

later in the season when the trees have ceased blooming. These include **Scabious, Knapweeds, Centaurea, Valerian, thistles, milkweeds** and the simple flower of **umbellifers** and composite flowers.

Right now in my garden the bees are visiting my **Bowles mauve wall flowers, apple blossom, Pulmonaria** and **strawberries**.

As we transition from spring into early summer the flowers change guard and so do the wild bees.

Many of the early emerging solitary bees will by now have built nests, provisioned for their offspring and are beginning to die. Their offspring will emerge next March to begin the cycle again. Some are bivoltine meaning they have a second generation later in the summer but for many including the hairy footed flower bees their time for this season is coming to an end, the males now bleached grey by the sun instead of their fresh gingery blonde.

As the early *Andrena* bees and flower bees disappear, a new batch of pollinators will take over, equipped to forage on a different set of later emerging plants. Soon we'll see the yellow faced bees, wool carder bees and leaf cutters visiting the flowers in our gardens.

Jobs to do in the garden

- Dead head spring flowering bulbs
- Plant out non hardy plants such as **tomato, runner beans, cucurbits** and **peppers**.
- Continuous weeding
- Water if dry
- Sow biennials now to ensure you have flowering plants for next spring. These include **foxglove, honesty** and **echiums**.



Green alkanet.



Brockwell Park Community Gardens.

LBKA Apiaries

What's happening in LBKA's apiaries.

Kathy Stevenson
LBKA member

This month we explore Brockwell Park and the LBKA teaching apiary located there.

I visited the park on two occasions, midweek and weekend, and was so happy to see the number of activities enjoyed in this massive, 125.5 acre space. People were swimming in the lido or working out on the open-air, purpose built 'gym floor'. Up the hill, the basketball and tennis courts were full. There was music every-



The Brockwell apiary.

where. Resident swans were nesting right at the edge of the lake, and there were also two walled gardens to explore. The 18C walled garden, criss-crossed with walkways, enabled a closer look at the emerging perennials and flowering specimen trees. The 'Quiet Please' sign and the many benches invited a pause for rest and reflection.

I was completely enchanted by my destination, the community garden. At the entrance there was a stall selling organic produce, chutneys and other home made goodies and honey from a local beekeeper. I walked the orchard path and discovered informative, hand written signs describing the trees throughout. The extensive herb garden was also self-explanatory and brimming with healthy kitchen and medicinal herbs. Everywhere plants were thriving, a credit to the care and dedication of the staff and volunteers.

I found a greenwood 'bodging' workshop set up in another corner. The volunteers' mess area contained a retractable sun shade and a PIZZA OVEN - both of which had been built by students on courses designed to teach the relevant skills. The winning results were being enjoyed by the volunteers. Brilliant!

The LBKA apiary lies within this community garden, along the north wall inside a sturdy screened enclosure. The entire south facing wall contains large, plexi-glass windows to allow the public to get right up close to hive inspections.

I met with the Bee Team on one of their regular Sunday sessions at 1:30pm. At that time, there were three colonies but, a little unnervingly, only one queen among them. The team set about giving one queenless colony a frame of brood and reversing its position with a strong colony. Trading places would ensure flying bees to return to their old spot, and help to populate



Practical beekeeping: A super frame left in the brood box over winter becomes a drone trapping frame in the spring.

the weak colony now residing there. Another colony seemed queenless after a recent formic acid treatment. Although there were no eggs or queen seen and several queen cells, the bees were calm. Had the MAQs interfered with the queen's pheromone, leading the bees to think they were queenless or had the MAQs caused the queen to go off-lay? Had they swarmed? After two fruitless attempts searching for her, the decision was taken to leave the colony with one, sealed queen cell. But wait - there was one more sealed queen cell! This was ceremoniously cut out of the frame and attached to a mating nuc frame by way of an elastic band. One cup of young bees completed the set up, and only the bees can decide what happens next.

The Brockwell Bee Team were very welcoming and I encourage any member to request a visit. Broaden your horizons and your beekeeping knowledge!



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 dimensions allow for ratchet-strapping. Contact Frank on 07877388933 or frankryan60@hotmail.com.

Upcoming events

Sunday 9th May: Monthly meeting: Bee Health

11:00-13:00 at Same zoom link as usual (in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email).

Understanding bee health and ensuring our bees are in tip-top condition.

Tuesday, 25th May: Pub Social

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

Our ONLINE pub social in the historical surroundings of your own home. Bring your own beer. Using the usual Pub Social Zoom link in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email.

Sunday 13th June: Monthly meeting: Honey Extraction

11:00-13:00 at Same zoom link as usual (in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email).

Demonstration and tips on honey extraction.

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/Events:** Annie McGeoch, 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
- **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.

