



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

September, 2021

Welcome to this month's newsletter which just follows a welcome pre-autumn burst of hot weather.

Thanks to those who have contributed to the newsletter this month. Annie has written about her experience on the committee (p7), Stephen has written about queen rearing (p8), Elliot has written about a conversation with a Greek beekeeper (p11), Howard has summarised last month's Monthly Meeting (p7), and George, Janet, Adam, Eugene and Richard have provided some stunning photos. This is in addition to regular contributions from Richard (p1), Howard (p5), Mark (p12) and Kathy's update on the apiaries (p14). And to Martin for proofreading.

Another plea to consider helping us out, either by serving on the committee or simply contacting us to tell us how you would like to help. We need volunteers who are reliable, enthusiastic, good organisers, good at writing, and/or good with people (and you don't have to be all those things!)

From our Chair	1
Announcements	2
September's Committee meeting	4
September in the Apiary	5
Last month's Monthly Meeting	7
Annie McGeoch on joining the committee	7
Small-scale queen rearing for beginning beekeepers	8
Conversation with a Greek Beekeeper	11
Focus on Forage	12
LBKA Apiaries	14
Members' marketplace	15
Upcoming events	15
Committee	16

Thank you to this month's contributors: **Adam Armstrong, Janet Evans, Richard Glassborow, Martin Hudson, George Kozobolis, Eugene McConville, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Kathy Stevenson.** Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, contact me.

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From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

Oh! for goodness sake, he's still banging on about the Character and Direction of LBKA!

I'm afraid so. These are not ordinary times and, like it or not, there are some big questions on an agenda we do not control. We could pretend that beekeeping is only concerned with what happens inside the box of bees but for a good nine months of the year a third of our bees spend the hours of daylight outside the box. So, arguably, we need to know about what happens outside the box and at times even "think outside the box".

I am not just talking about forage, though given the London Bee Situation, that is certainly one very important element of responsible beekeeping: bees and flowers go together as surely as sheep eat grass (though bees and flowers have been around a lot longer than sheep). Would a shepherd knowingly keep putting sheep into a field with no grass?

Taking a brief look through a wide-angle lens at the landscape in which we London beekeepers keep our bees



Spotted by Richard: "*Mayathropa Florea*; aka the 'Batman Hoverfly'. Look at the markings on the thorax to seeking. Last year I found their rat-tailed larvae in a bucket of logs that had filled up with rain water (their larvae live in water and have a breathing tube that looks like a rat's tail)".
Photo and quote: Richard Glassborow.

we can see a number of “agents of change” that will affect us. The London Bee Situation is an obvious one; the Covid pandemic has already turned our lives upside down; climate change will do so even more, albeit at a different pace, though soon enough, and it has already started, arguably. Biodiversity loss and the growing awareness of interactions between honey bees and biodiverse ecosystems is also something that may affect us, politically if not biologically.

The landscape is changing: we have to adapt. But as with all changes, there are also opportunities. Even as the initial shock of the Covid arrival has disrupted our routines, it has caused us to rethink, reinvent, and in so doing given us an opportunity to improve the way we do what we do – our beekeeping. That much we are trying to do.

But the London situation, climate change, and issues over biodiversity present opportunities to expand and enrich beekeeping beyond the traditional boundaries of what goes on in the honey bee box. LBKA recognises that not every individual beekeeper/member is necessarily interested in widening the scope of beekeeping but I would hope that by now it is recognised that there is an element of collective self-interest and benefit in our more public-facing and environmental activities.

And of course, there is much more to it than self-interest: the public hunger for insight into the world of bees is strong and genuine, and feeding it contributes to general awareness of and respect for the natural world. These are not empty words. More than once on our schools programme, I have felt a seemingly tangible atmosphere when showing live bees to the children, particularly in the apiary when the hive is open and you pass round a frame of bees and two worlds meet. It's very special.

Stay well.

Announcements

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

September's online Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

September's Monthly Meeting will be on **Sunday 12th September** at 11:00 and will be a fascinating one. It will be on **everything you ever wanted to know about drones** including drone-laying workers, drone-laying queens, eggs on sides of cells, young queens laying multiple eggs, queen pheromone suppressing worker laying, half sister worker policing, the need for drones and simple drone genetics. It will be led by Geoff Hood

The meeting will be at the usual Zoom link (in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email).

The **Pub Social** will be on **Tuesday 28th September** from 18:30 (Zoom link in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email).

October's Monthly Meeting will be on Sunday 10th October – topic to be confirmed

AGM and new committee

The **AGM** will be an online AGM on **10th November**. You will get to find out what LBKA has been up to and have the chance to comment and help set the agenda for the coming year.

As we hope you're aware, we are a very active association and have the potential to be more active to the benefit of public understanding about bees and beekeeping, better trained beekeepers, and the pollinator environment in London. We need people to help make some of this happen and we need a wide spectrum of people, including those with ideas, those with organisational skills, those with time to volunteer, those with skills that would help us and those willing to learn more about bees and about outreach. Being involved in a small and influential charity led by an active and committed set of trustees, committee members and members is a great opportunity to meet others, learn lots and make a difference.

If you are interested in joining the committee please talk to any of us. But you **don't need to join the committee**; you can simply register your interest with one of the committee. We would like to be able to draw on as many members as possible for maximum enjoyment and benefit. See Annie's personal reflections on this on [page 7](#).

Hiring extractors

We have extractors which can be borrowed 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!

Please email resources@lbka.org.uk for more information.

Help for a film

Someone called Paris Palmer is producing a film on air pollution in London and would like to include a bee keeper in the film.

She says: “The film itself is looking at ‘How does the mega-metropolis London combat air pollution and climate change today and tomorrow?’. And they feel showcasing a local bee keeper is a strong symbol for good air quality and sustainability in London. What we are asking from the contributors is a quick interview about your passion for bee keeping and the local neighbourhood. We would need a few hours of your time the week commencing 20th September. It would be great



Spotted by George: "TA few days ago I witnessed a hornet mimic (*Volucella zonaria*) and a wild bee foraging happily very close together on a (*Jacobaea Paludosa*) wild flower". Photo and quote: George Kozobolis.



Spotted by Eugene: Bee on passion flower. "The long and short of it". Photo and quote: Eugene McConville.

if you could come back to me on if this is something you would be happy to be involved in."

Let services@lbka.org.uk know if you're interested to take part.

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.

Thank you to those who have answered this call in recent months. I hope everyone agrees with me that this has certainly enriched the newsletter.

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.



Spotted by Janet: "Not a bee, but an oak gall wasp. We opened up the oak apple expecting to see a grub and this came out". Photo and quote: Janet Evans.

Old announcements from August

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

Congratulations: Congratulations to members – Rachel Dewhurst (distinction), Karlis Briedis (credit), Kyle Moreland (pass), Luke Wyatt (credit), Katharina Bielenberg (pass), Rodney Phillip (credit), Sergio Ramos (credit), Anna Gaudion (credit), Annette Pearson (credit), Sue Irani (credit), Deborah Blythe (credit), Khevir Jettoo (distinction) and Andrew Hinton (credit) – who passed the BBKA "Bee Basic" Assessment. Well done!

Paid opportunities for members. LBKA occasionally receives invitations or requests to undertake paid work such as apiary management, ecological/planting design/consultancy or educational consultancy. If you have the skills that may make you suitable and you would be interested in being considered to take on such work, please contact Simon Saville at development@lbka.org.uk. Once we've verified your skills, we'll start to push suitable opportunities your way when we get



Spotted by George: "Wild bee collecting fragrant nectar from a beautiful marigold.". Photo and quote: George Kozobolis.



Adam's mead: Adam got **highly commended** for this mead at the National Honey Show, with the raisins and oranges in initially as a yeast nutrient. Photo: Adam Armstrong.

them. Seemore details in last few month's newsletters (link above).

We need to help run our social media. If you are good at communicating with social media, then we need your help. 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. Please contact



Spotted by George: "Loaded with pollen this honeybee is busy sucking up nectar from a pink begonia flower". Photo and quote: George Kozobolis.

Simon Saville at development@lbka.org.uk to find out more.

Old announcements from July

Welcome Stuart Kennon! The committee is pleased to announce the co-option of Stuart Kennon onto the committee. You can contact him at stuart.kennon@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.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk

We fixed the date for the upcoming AGM to 10th November and agreed that it would be run online to try to maximise attendance. We thought it would be too difficult to run a mixed-mode meetings. Richard suggested that we should have an in-person social in an outside venue quite soon, perhaps close to the AGM.

Relatedly, we talked about how to encourage more members to get more involved, either by joining the committee or otherwise helping out, perhaps by joining sub-committees. Our ambitions are currently severely



Spotted by Janet: "Carder bee (I think) all over the dahlias at RHS Wisley". Photo and quote: Janet Evans.

limited by the lack of people to help carry them out. School Food Matters is a good example. It is a major commitment for which we do not have adequate numbers of volunteers. The committee will be asked if they can cover slots in September.

The committee agreed that Simon should become the secretary, enabling Annie to focus on helping manage events and volunteers. The committee thanked Annie for her work in the role and for Simon for agreeing to take over on role.

The committee decided that membership fees would stay the same despite next year (we've not raised our fees for years). However, BBKA have raised their fees, which we will need to pass on to members who want to join BBKA and the BDI scheme.

David has agreed to organise the winter lectures this year and Elliott has offered to explore the possibility of having a Christmas quiz in December.



Spotted by George: "Honey bee attracted by the aroma of the delicate dill blossom". Photo and quote: George Kozobolis.

September in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

The bees' techiness subsequent to the end of the honey flow should now have ended and colonies are 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. Such a colony will be in a better position to withstand winter.

Feeding the colony

This is always the main job for September. A full sized colony needs to have 35lb of honey to see it through to next April. Given the mild winters we now experience I suspect this is an underestimate. The 35lbs estimate is based upon bees clustering for a significant time and also a break in brood rearing. Neither of these seem to happen these days. A National brood frame holds 5lbs 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. and a further 10lb is required. 1lb of sugar will make 1.25lb of stores (stores are 80% sugars and 20% water). Therefore, using this example syrup should be made from 8lb of sugar to complete



Lasioglossum bee on marigold in Janet's allotment. Photo from Janet Evans.



Spotted by George: "Beautiful hover fly resting on a fragrant wide basil leaf". Photo and quote: George Kozobolis.

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 there are sufficient stores for the winter. Fondant in winter should only be used as an emergency feed, not part of a planned feeding 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.
- Sugar must be white granulated sugar. Any other sugar is harmful to the bees. Sugar prices in some of the discount supermarkets is currently 65p/kg.
- 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 660ml of warm water is the desired strength.
- 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.
- Better to commence feeding all colonies in the api-

ary 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.

Checking the hive. Hive boxes 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 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. Prevention is better than cure.

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. Bees have evolved to deal with the cold winter but not damp. They would not build their nest in a machine planed

box only 2 feet above ground and so damp can be a very real issue in winter. Cutting back grass, brambles, etc all lead towards the goal of ensuring the hives are damp free for the winter.

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

Last month's Monthly Meeting: Bee stings and anaphylaxis

What happened at our meeting last month. **Thanks to Howard for writing this. Other volunteers needed for future months!**

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

The August meeting was, as usual, an on-line zoom meeting due to the Covid-19 issues. The subject matter was Bee Stings and the meeting was led by Will Fry, LBKA member and medical doctor.

Will dispensed with the difficult stuff first which was how the body reacts to bee venom and how a person may have a serious reaction. He illustrated and explained how a person may be stung and experience little reaction but the next sting becomes more serious. He also explained what happens in the body and why we have symptoms. From then on it was straightforward. Will was also supported by Natalie Cotton and Adam Armstrong, both of whom had experienced a severe reaction to bee stings and had both undergone the desensitisation programme. It was useful to hear about their first-hand experiences. Also see Adam's article in [last month's newsletter](#).

Will explained that for most of us a bee sting is a trivial matter but for a small number of people it can be extremely serious. 2-9 people die annually due to a bee sting but it was not known if any of these had an underlying condition or not.

The 3 key practical points from Will's talk were:

1. Protect yourself
2. Recognition of symptoms
3. Call for help early

The [Anaphylaxis Campaign](#) also has important information on its website.

Both Natalie and Adam shared their experiences of what happened when they had a severe reaction and also how the desensitisation programme worked. The

main feature of the programme was that it required a long-term commitment by the beekeeper.

With hindsight, this topic should have been covered at a monthly meeting before now and was long overdue. Thanks must go to Will, Natalie and Adam for coming forward to provide the content for the meeting.

Annie McGeoch on joining the committee

Annie McGeoch
events@lbka.org.uk

You know when you're already busy and have no time to spare. And someone asks you to do something and you think "hmm that might be interesting". And you say yes?

That's how I came to be on the committee of LBKA.

I might have said I am too busy with work and bee colonies. But I suppose I was flattered to be asked. And I thought I would learn more about bees and the situation in London and would be able to contribute towards helping the pollinators.

And I have learned a lot. I have become familiar with the main issues affecting bees in London. The issues are huge and we aren't going to solve them in a committee. But we can start to influence the narrative and raise the profiles with those who can help makes the necessary changes.

A year later, we're still working on the same big issues...will do so for many years to come. We also need to deal with the smaller but important issues of how we run our organisation effectively to support our members as well as helping address the bigger issues at play.

We have a lot to do. The apiaries have to be tended. They have to support our training programmes. We aspire to make teaching videos – a big commitment for a small group. As you know, we are trying to tackle the big issue of influencing the narrative on the relationship of honeybee colonies with a big urban area like London. The School Food Matters project is a huge undertaking in which I have become involved, in which we go into primary schools with an observation hive and a few props and talk to 4 classes a day about pollination and bees. Exhausting but rewarding. We also have gaps in our skillset. Take social media, for example. We need to be able to use our social media channels more effectively and we don't currently have the right person to do this effectively.



Stephen Wheelwright

This is all far too much for 9 men and one woman!

LBKA is a small charity. We need to pull together to help deliver for our association. We need more women to get involved and need a more diverse set of committee members and volunteers. We need to pick our battles or projects and focus our energy. We need small groups working together on some of the above. We cannot do it all, but we should pick some projects and do them well.

To help, you don't have to join the committee but can be part of a small group working on one aspect of the charity's aims. It is fun and worthwhile.

Small-scale queen rearing for beginning beekeepers

Thanks to Stephen for writing this up. Those of us on the Bee Banter WhatsApp group will appreciate his knowledge sharing, microscope dissection pictures and his recent generous offer to help members queen-rear. Also thanks to Stuart for suggesting to Stephen that he write this.

Stephen Wheelwright
LBKA Member

Queen rearing by grafting is often viewed as an advanced skill, and is therefore never attempted by most beekeepers. Many perceive it as too difficult, or requiring too much time or resources. Below I share some of my observations and experiences rearing queens in my second and third year of keeping bees, using only a six frame nuc in my garden.



A graft frame with two different styles of graft cups.

Why raise queens as a beginner?

Queen rearing offers many opportunities to practice and gain confidence in the basic hive manipulations, improve one's understanding of the biology of the honeybee, and see hives in many different states (hopelessly queenless, on the brink of swarming, etc). And unlike other traditional beekeeping activities such as swarm prevention and control, and collecting surplus honey during a flow, queen rearing can be practiced multiple times per year, and according to a schedule set by the beekeeper.

Deliberate queen raising is also a great way to improve bee genetics, requeen hives with young queens to reduce swarming, and make increase.

There are many methods to raising queens, each requiring different equipment and techniques. Some techniques which are suitable for large-scale commercial queen raising operations are impractical for a beekeeper with only two or three hives. What I describe below is one method which has worked well for me and requires very few resources. I have used this method to raise several batches of queens in a single six-frame nuc in my garden.

The 6-frame nuc method

Requirements are:

- a 6-frame nuc with a liquid feeder and lots of bees. This will be made queenless.
- a hive with a good queen which can donate a frame of eggs
- a few frames of foundation
- one graft frame, two graft bars, 10-20 graft cups, and a grafting tool
- a few patties of pollen substitute (I use Ultra Bee)

It will yield about 10 queen cells, ready to place into hives 17 days after you begin.

One week before graft day:

- remove the queen from the 6 frame nuc
- add 1:1 syrup to the feeder
- add a patty of pollen substitute



A worker larva in a plastic queen cup on the day it was grafted. The royal jelly in the cup was taken from an emergency queen cell.



Queen cells 1, 2, 3, and 4 days after grafting.

- put at least one frame of foundation into the nuc

On graft day:

- shake all the bees off each frame in the nuc, and remove all the emergency queen cells
- put a little royal jelly from one of the emergency queen cells into each of the graft cups
- using a frame of eggs from a good queen, select the smallest larvae you can find and graft them into the graft cups. The larvae can be placed directly on top of the small pool of royal jelly. The larva you select should be in an arc right next to eggs which have not yet hatched. Keep the graft bars covered in a warm, damp towel while you work. Try not to flip the larvae over: keep the up-side up, and the down-side down.
- Place the graft bar into the nuc with a frame of open brood on one side, and a frame of pollen on the other. The graft bar should be in the middle position in the nuc.
- top up the feeder with 1:1 syrup
- Ensure the bees have at least one frame of foundation to work on
- add a new patty of pollen substitute
- You can check the graft frame in a day or two to see if the grafts were accepted.

10 days after grafting:



9 cells ready to place into nucs.



Queens cells after a queen successfully emerged.

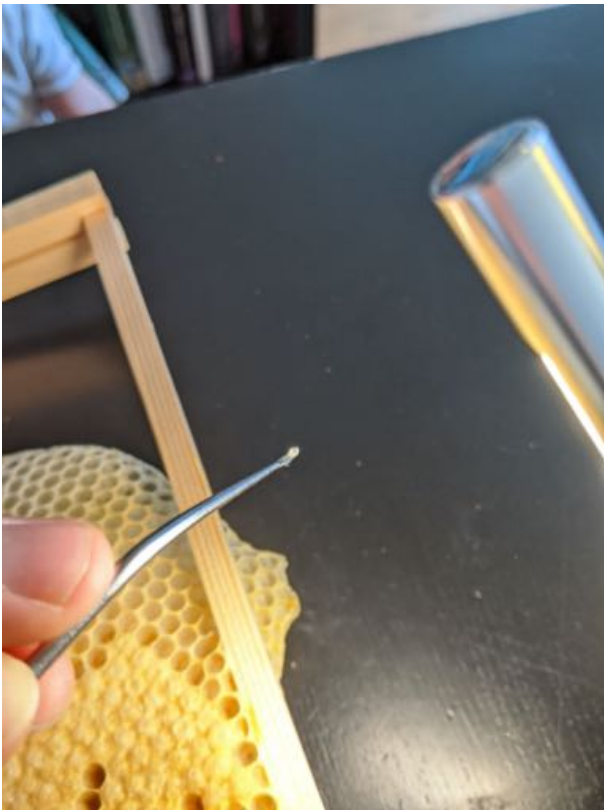
- carefully remove the graft frame from the hive, and place the cells into new hives. These can be:
 - newly made up nucs
 - full-sized hives which were made queenless on the same day
 - miniature mating nucs
- The 10 day schedule is critical. 11 days may be too late. If you graft on Wednesday, you should transfer the cells to new hives on the following Saturday.
- The cells should be pushed into the middle of a frame in a section of brood, or hung between two brood frames. This will ensure they are kept warm enough until the queen emerges.

A few days after placing the cells in the new hives

- check if the queens emerged from their cells. If successful, the end of the cell will have a nice circular hole chewed out.

Problems with graft acceptance

I believe the most important factor affecting the acceptance of grafts is the state of the hive receiving the grafts. Ideally, it will be hopelessly queenless, crowded with young nurse bees, and have ample nutrition. There are several manipulations that can be performed to make the hive crowded with nurse bees; the easiest may be to shake a few frames of nurse bees from another hive into it.



Grafting.

If your first set of grafts is not accepted, or the acceptance rate is poor, you can throw out the batch and immediately introduce another set of grafts. It may take one or two attempts to get a frame of grafts that is mostly accepted.

Feeding the nuc 1:1 syrup for a week before grafting, and in the first four days after grafting is important in helping the bees accept the grafts, and in providing ample nourishment to the developing queen larvae. Make sure there's at least one frame of foundation for the bees to draw out at all times while you are feeding the bees, to prevent the development of burr comb between the graft cell cups. Four days after grafting, the cells are sealed, so feeding is no longer necessary, but may be continued to draw out more frames. After a few weeks of continuous feeding and rotating of foundation frames, your 6-frame nuc will have drawn out and filled a few frames with syrup. These can be used to make up nucs to place cells in on day 10. Keeping a patty of pollen substitute on the hive during the same period of time will ensure the bees have enough protein, even if the weather is bad for a few days.

Grafting technique

You can practice grafting dozens of larvae on bars that you never intend to put into a hive. Then when you are ready to do the grafting for real, you can move quickly and accurately. I prefer to lay the frame of eggs on a table in front of me with the top of the bar facing towards me. This makes it easier to look down into the cells. I hold a torch in one hand and a grafting tool in the other. If I mishandle a larva in any way, either in



A mated queen on a frame of a miniature mating nuc. Note the pink larvae in the frame indicating that the queen is laying.

picking it up or placing it in the cup, I discard it and get a new larva. This way, all of the larvae in the grafting cups that we place in the hive are the very best we can produce.

Getting the queens mated

Ripe queen cells can be placed into miniature mating nucs, regular nucs, or full-sized hives.

Miniature mating nucs are very fiddly: they require special care when initially stocking with bees and a queen cell; they require frequent feeding; they are less able to defend themselves against wasps; they cannot hold a mated queen for very long; and they cannot be directly scaled up to a full-sized hive.

I prefer to use a 2-in-1 poly nuc box with full sized frames. This has entrances on opposite sides, and can be divided into two 3-frame nucs. It also includes a large feeder on top that keeps the bees on each side separated. This is only slightly more expensive than an Apidea, but is much more flexible. It can be used to raise cells, then on day 10 be converted into a 2-way mating nuc with 3 frames on each side. It can easily be used to keep a hive over winter, and having an extra 6-frame poly nuc is always useful for swarm prevention and control in the spring.

If you do decide to use miniature mating nucs, avoid the "rainbow" plastic mating nucs. They are garbage.



Honey.

Conversation with a Greek Beekeeper

Elliot recounts a conversation with a Greek beekeeper.

Elliot Hodges
mentor@lbka.org.uk

During a humid evening in Greece walking away from the hustle and bustle of the restaurant strip I met a local beekeeper selling honey off the back of his moped by the quayside in Lefkas, Greece. Makis sells his produce on most evenings. We had a pleasant but somewhat broken conversation regarding beekeeping, our enthusiasm not deterred by our limited linguistic overlap. There are both similarities and differences between UK urban beekeeping and beekeeping local to Lefkas. This is my interpretation of our conversation.

Makis explained in his profession you get stung all of the time - hands, arms, neck, ears. When opening up a colony which is known to be more defensive then sometimes the beekeeper smokes their groin area too.

Makis believes to make good honey you have to respect the bees and respect nature.

When a honey is sold as 'pine honey', 'heather honey' or any other particular type of honey, it is likely to be mainly from that source, but you can never guarantee this is the case as it is not known exactly where/what the bees forage upon. London has a far greater floral biodiversity whereas the Lefkada region of Greece has fewer types of forage which are locally concentrated.

The aroma and taste of Greek honey varies depending upon when the honey is taken from the hive. Also the

amount of rainfall the area receives has a big impact, Greece being relatively arid.

Makis has 40 hives close to Lefkas and another 30 hives 200 miles away.

Colonies are inspected every 15 days and then are moved together to a new site.

When I explained I had witnessed slugs entering some of my colonies in London Makis said confidently that the reason was because my colonies are not moved to new locations on a regular basis.

Registration is compulsory for Greek beekeepers who sell honey. Beekeepers who make honey for their own consumption do not need to register.

Recent wild fires in Greece have impacted upon honeydew honey production through the loss of aphids. The aphid population will grow back as their food source returns. Beekeepers who had hives in affected areas had to work through the night to remove their hives to new locations before the fire reached their hives. Makis has not been personally affected.

Although aware of the Asian hornet Makis says it has had no impact on Lefkas yet.

I described the importation of many Italian queens to the UK and beekeeping associations desire/drive to teach British beekeepers how to rear queens locally but that there are still a large volume of Italian queens imported each year. He laughed and said that Greece exports many queens to Italy, so they are probably of Greek origin.

In Makis' opinion the biggest threat to Greek beekeeping is the importation of cheap (and presumably adulterated) honey from Bulgaria and Romania. This is forcing the price of local honey down. The cost I paid for a jar of honey is €6 for 340g. Makis was interested to learn of London honey being sold for £1/oz.



The box on the back of Makis' moped is not a hive, it is a pizza delivery box.

Other beekeeping products Makis has for sale includes beeswax made into a balsam, propolis mixed with alcohol and pollen by the jar.

I asked why one of the jars of honey contained drone brood (see picture). He explained it was not drone brood but chopped walnuts. This combination is sold as an aphrodisiac.

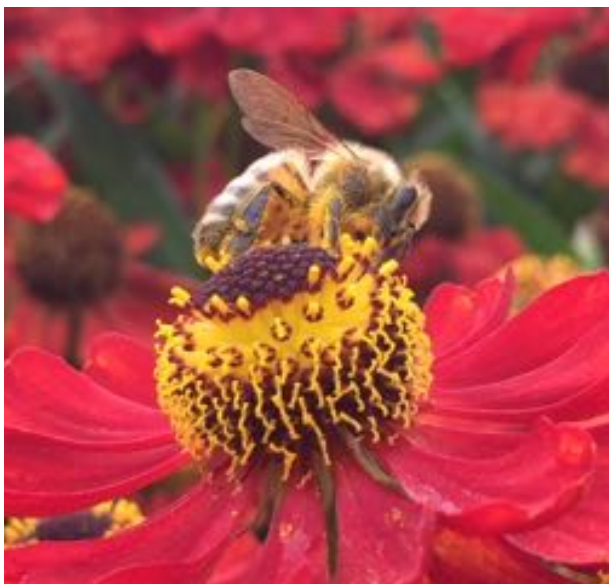
When I got back to my hotel I was in trouble with my partner (who wandered off a few minutes into our chat) because I was talking with the beekeeper for over an hour and the room key was still in my pocket. Sorry Vreni.

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is the one we used last year.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

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 Echinacea. Varieties 'Magnus', 'Purpureae', 'Flame Thrower' and 'Sundown' are among my favourites.



Helenium.



Aster.



Hebe.

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', Most 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 *Symphotrichum 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 and is greatly underrated. 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 wasp 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.

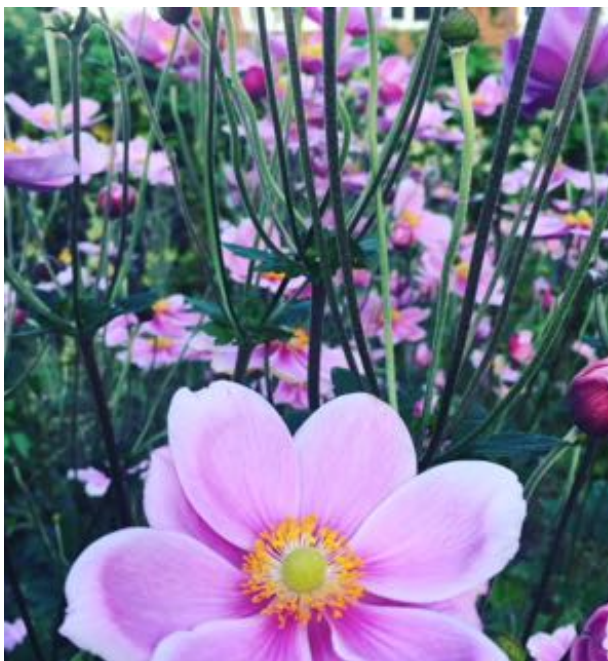
Another insect which relies almost exclusively on ivy is the Ivy Mining Bee (*Colletes hedera*). This attractive stripy bee is a relatively new addition to the British Isles. 40 years ago this was a very rare vagrant but in the past few decades it has expanded its territory north into the UK and is now 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](#)



Cosmos.



Coreopsis.



Anemone.



Sunflower.



Ivy bee on ivy blooms.

[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.

LBKA Apiaries

What's happening in LBKA's apiaries.

Kathy Stevenson
LBKA member

As we finish the bee keeping season, the well deserved rewards are divided between the bees and the keep-



Children proudly sign their uncapped frames at Brockwell Park apiary.



Future beekeepers skillfully uncap super frames for the Brockwell Park apiary

ers. As it happens, taking off the honey coincides with school holidays and I visited the Brockwell Park teaching apiary to see how the honey extraction was getting on, as many children and their carers had signed up to help with this momentous event.

The weather on this mid-August Monday was mild, warm and very humid. The Brockwell Community Garden was not open to the public on this day and I was let in by Larry, the LBKA volunteer who would be showing the observation hive. A glasshouse was laid with tables and tools for pressing flowers and fashioning wax into rolled candles. The extractor sat gleaming in the small but well equipped kitchen. A few heavy supers were set aside for visitors to test their skill at uncapping the frames.

At 1:30 small groups began to arrive and there began a well-organised flurry of activity: glasshouse wax crafts, observation hive, apiary, uncapping, loading and spinning. The children ranged in age from about five to ten years. They loved searching the observation hive for the queen. They marvelled at the weight of a frame full of honey and enthusiastically dug in with uncapping

forks. Finally, the moment everyone was waiting for - honey tasting!

I enjoyed helping with as much as the children. Thanks to the Brockwell Park volunteers for inviting the public into a rare experience.

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.

Julian Lush: Is (regrettably) giving up beekeeping and has a job-lot of "pretty old, due a clean-up, but still serviceable" kit to sell all in one go. The list of items is: stands (low; x3), brood box (x2), brood frames (x12), queen excluders (x3), supers (x5), 3x12 frames (x36), crown boards (x3), 9cm ekes (x2), thin Ekes (x2), feeder boards (x2), hive kit box, smoker, hive tools (x2), medium bee suit, jackets with veils (x2), head veil, gloves (x3), super frame kits (x12). super foundation sheets (25), swarm catcher stocking and sheets (x2). Please contact him directly if you're interested on 07815 637706.

Upcoming events

Sunday 12th September: Monthly meeting: Everything you ever wanted to know about drones

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

This month's Monthly Meeting will be about everything you ever wanted to know about drones, including drone-laying workers, drone-laying queens, eggs on sides of cells, young queens laying multiple eggs, queen pheromone suppressing worker laying, half sister worker policing, the need for drones and simple drone genetics. Prepare for a fascinating meeting!

Tuesday, 28th September: 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 10th October: Monthly meeting: TBC

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

This month's Monthly Meeting will be on a topic to be confirmed.

Tuesday, 26th October: 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.

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/Development:** Simon Saville, development@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Annie McGeoch, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Will Fry, resources@lbka.org.uk
- Stuart Kennon, stuart.kennon@lbka.org.uk

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

