



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

## July, 2023

It's hard to believe we're past the longest day!

Sunday's meeting is all about entering your honey to honey shows. It will be led by John Chapple, former Chair of LBKA and knows all about judging honey. We hope to see some more LBKA winners at the National Honey Show at which we sponsor 3 classes. Please also put our Summer Social on 13th August in your diaries for our spectacular Summer Social at [Bell House](#) in Dulwich.

Another short (and sweet) newsletter with this month. We have some announcements worth reading (our book lending library and extractors) and Tristram has written up a short piece on last month's Improver Course. Howard has provided his usual summary of what we should be focussing on in the apiary and Mark has his "what's flowering at this time of year".

<a href="#">From our Chair</a>	1
<a href="#">Announcements</a>	1
<a href="#">July's Committee meeting</a>	3
<a href="#">Improver Course on 11th June</a>	4
<a href="#">July in the Apiary</a>	4
<a href="#">Focus on Forage</a>	5
<a href="#">Upcoming events</a>	7
<a href="#">Committee</a>	7

Thank you to this month's contributors: **Elena Bessusi, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Tristram Sutton**. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, contact me. Please help make the newsletter better by providing content – photos, articles, thoughts, reflections, advice, recipes, poetry. . .

Aidan Slingsby, Editor, [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

## From our Chair

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

*The chair apologises that he is unable to supply his column this month owing to exceptional level of commitments.*

## Announcements

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

### July's Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

July's meeting on Sunday (**9th July**) is about "preparing honey for the Honey Show". Our special guest



Bumblebee on Hebe. Photo: Aidan Slingsby.



Spotted by Elena. Lime out in blossom on NW4. Photo: Elena Besussi.

is **John Chapple**, former LBKA Chair, long-standing LBKA member and someone who has been involved with the Honey Show for many years. He is very knowledgeable about the extra layers of preparation, presenting, what judges look for, etc. We encourage members to enter honey into the Honey Show this year and attending this talk will be of significant benefit.

Our Pub Social will be on **Tuesday 25th July** will be at [Tufnell Park Tavern](#), 162 Tufnell Park Rd, London, N7 0EE, a short walk from Tufnell Park Station (Northern Line).

August will see our Spectacular Summer Social with food from our favourite caterers, the Delica Sisters. This will be straight after August's Monthly Meeting on **feeding bees** on **Sunday 13th August** at the amazing [Bell House](#) in Dulwich.

## BBKA Bee Basic Assessment

We are delighted to report that **Arthur Starzec** and **William Bunker** have both passed their **BBKA Bee Basic Assessment**. Very many congratulations!

The BBKA Bee Basic Assessment is an important means of learning and showing basic competence in beekeeping. We strongly encourage all beekeepers to take it. We used to have more than ten people a year taking it. Numbers have dropped in recent years but we hope that more members start taking this soon.

Please contact Howard on [education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk) if

you're interested in taking it next year. Howard will provide all the coaching needed for you to pass it as part of our membership offering. Please take advantage of this.

## Selling honey

Members can list their honey for sale on our website at <https://lbka.org.uk/honey>. Please let me know if you'd like to keep your entry by emailing [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) and whether there are any updates. I will remove the details of those who do not contact me.

## Electric extractors

The committee has already agreed not to rent out our electric extractors to members because we cannot assume that members know how to use them safely and because that often come back damaged or even broken. We do rent out manual extractors – email Will at [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk) to reserve.

We're thinking of running a member-led honey extraction day using the electric extractors where members bring along their supers and training and group help would facilitate safe and productive extraction. If you are interested, please contact Tristram on [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk).

## LBKA book lending library

We now have a library and librarian! Thank you to Mary Walwyn for volunteering to catalogue, look after and lend beekeeping books to members. More details are in the members' area of the website at <https://lbka.org.uk/library>.

## Summer social

Our spectacular Summer Social will be on 13th August after the Monthly Meeting. Continuing a long tradition of summer socials with excellent food from the Delica Sisters. It will be at the amazing [Bell House](#) (27 College Road, SE21 7BG) in Dulwich. It's a bit further out from Central London than usual, but it will be worth it in all respects. Please put in your diaries! You will need to buy tickets in advance – details nearer the time.

## School Food Matters

We are currently delivering [School Food Matters' Honeybee programme](#). The programme gives city children an insight into how food is produced and the importance of insect pollination for helping providing our food.

## Lambeth Country Show

We were at the [Lambeth Country Show](#) last month, telling the public about the importance of pollinators and about beekeeping and selling honey.

## Monthly meetings

This year's monthly meeting will be as follows. Note that some of them will be special meetings with practical and/or social aspects. Please put them in your diaries! As ever, see [our website for details](#) with up-



coming events on our [front page](#), all events on our [events page](#) and in the [members services](#) part of the website.

- Sunday 9th July: Honey Preparation for Showing
- Sunday 13th August: Feeding bees and **Spectacular Summer Social**
- Sunday 10th September: Monthly meeting: Winter preparation
- Sunday 8th October: Monthly meeting: Natural History of bees

### Old announcements from June

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

**Award for Battersea Children's Zoo's partnership with LBKA.** We were delighted to hear that Battersea Children's Zoo **won an educational award** for their partnership with LBKA from **British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA).**

### Do you have any announcements?

If you've any announcements for the next issue of LBKA News, please send to Aidan at [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

## July's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discusses 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](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

We met in Islington the same lovely venue as last month provided by member Sabine.

We had already agreed not to rent out our electric extractors to members because we cannot assume that members know how to use them safely and because that often come back broken. Tristram suggested that we run a member-led honey extraction day where training and group help would result in safe and productive extraction. We have a working 9-frame LIGA extractor, a second one that is being repaired and plus another that has never been used. The venue needs to have space and access to a hose for cleaning the extractor between uses. Jack Hobbs Club, Mercato Metropolitan, and Brockwell are possibilities.

We agreed (as we often do!) the need for "succession planning" to ensure the future of LBKA. Most of the committee have been in post for many years and

The leaflet is titled "Asian Hornet" and features a prominent "Alert!" banner. It includes a "Species Description" section with scientific details and a photograph of the hornet. A "Key ID Features" section compares the Asian Hornet Queen to the European Hornet, highlighting differences in their abdomens and legs. A "Similar Species" section lists and compares the European hornet, Giant woodwasp, Hornet mimic hoverfly, and Median wasp. The "Field Signs" section describes where and when to look for the hornet. The leaflet concludes with contact information for reporting sightings and a final "Alert!" banner.

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

some are planning to leave the committee in the coming years. But we have a distinct lack of members that we know about who are open to taking on these roles in future. We agreed to try and talk to and identify members who might be willing to take these roles on in future. In particular, the role of treasurer is likely to be vacant soon and we would like to have members in a position to take over when that time comes.

Richard has no update on the "LBKA Character and Direction", but he is giving a talk to Devon BKA soon and has had further supportive inputs from Prof Phil Stevenson at Kew. Xerces (the US invertebrate charity) cited LBKA in their latest magazine on the impact managed honey bee colonies on insect forage

---

## Improver Course on 11th June

Last month's Monthly Meeting.

*Tristram Sutton*  
[apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk)

A big thank you to David for organising and Howard for leading the Improver Course held at our Mudchute apiary. As Howard said, an improver is any beekeeper who wishes to improve, whatever their years of experience or skill, so it was a relevant learning opportunity for most of us!

The course covered one's approach to every inspection, in particular: the smooth handling of bees; the comparison between what one expects with what one sees; and thinking about the reasons for any difference. After the classroom session we toggled up and went through a detailed inspection of a couple of hives to try and put into practice what Howard had described in the classroom. Needless to say there was plenty of informed discussion throughout!

For me it was an example of what the LBKA does best, enthusiasts getting together to learn together.

The only disappointment was that only 8 of the 18 who signed up attended the course. Some did cancel their places beforehand, but too soon for them to be refilled. From what we hear, it is clear we need more "improver sessions" and we need more members to turn up when they are held.

---

## July in the Apiary

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

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

July beekeeping work has 2 distinct parts. These are **dealing with the early July nectar flow** then, at the end of the month, **removal of honey**.

During May and June the bees utilise this period to build up their numbers and to swarm. There is now a lot less inclination to swarm and the bees direct their attention towards capturing the flowing nectar from the summer flowers. When they do this then supers can quickly fill and it is important that the beekeeper has sufficient frames and supers in advance of the flow. There will not be time to buy extra supers and to make up frames. Nor can the beekeeper extract the honey and return the super to the same colony as the honey is unlikely to be ripened until after the flow ceases.

### Nectar flow

Exact timing of the nectar flow depends upon weather and locality but is usually mid June and early July in London.

**How do I know when it has started?** The coming and going at the colony entrance becomes a lot more purposeful when the nectar flow starts, bees leave the hive entrance in a determined and focussed way. They have the appearance of knowing exactly what they are doing and where they are going. As the nectar flow progresses then, of course, the supers also become heavier but, by this time, the flow is well underway.

**Adding supers.** Regular inspections are still needed but the beekeeper's attention should now be directed towards checking there is enough room in the supers. A cursory glance in the top super should be sufficient. When the frames in the top super are covered with bees then it is time to add another. Many beekeepers move the frames around a little by putting a few combs of honey and nectar into the newly added top super as this encourages bees to continue onwards and upwards. The nectar flow can also be used to draw out new combs from foundation.

### Removing honey from the hive

A comb of honey should only be removed when it is at least 75% sealed by the bees. This is to avoid fermentation of the final product. There are several methods of clearing bees from the supers. These can be grouped into physical methods (bee escapes, etc), chemical methods (repellents available for purchase from bee equipment suppliers) and mechanical methods (blowers which blow the bees off the frames). Some beekeepers have concerns relating to the use of chemicals and

mechanical methods are more akin to commercial bee-keeping, not hobbyists. It is only the physical methods detailed here. The 2 most common physical methods are Porter bee escapes and shaking the bees off the frames.

### Porter bee escapes

Most of us use Porter bee escapes incorporated into a clearing board. This works well provided they are used properly and the metal spring escapes are clean, not stuck with propolis. After about 48 hours most of the bees have gone down through the one-way valve and there are relatively few bees in the super. Better to use a crownboard with 2 bee escapes. If 1 malfunctions then the other is still in use.

Make sure there is plenty of space for the bees below the supers. If necessary then insert another empty super with frames below to house the bees. Ensure the bees cannot come back up into the supers being cleared. Ill fitting, non bee spaced equipment or defective Porter bee escapes are the usual reasons for failure.

### Shake and brush

Another method is shaking the individual frames to remove as many bees as possible then brushing off the remainder. An extra super is needed to hold the shaken frames and this should be placed on an upturned hive roof and covered with a sheet or large cloth. As it is being used to hold honey (a food product) then it should not have direct contact with the ground.

This method causes a certain amount of disturbance to the bees and may not be suitable for a hive in close proximity to people. Its advantage is that it is quick and only involves 1 visit to the apiary. Porter bee escapes involve 2 visits to the apiary.

## Other action to be taken this month

**Check space.** Once the nectar flow starts then most colonies abandon the idea of swarming as it is now not in their interests to do so. There is still a small risk of swarming and this is increased if the bees do not have enough room to store nectar. Another reason to ensure that enough supers are on the hive.

**Check space.** The nectar flow is a golden opportunity to undertake a brood disease inspection. As the bees are so busy with the nectar they have little time to remove dead larvae until the flow ceases. Leaving the brood disease inspection until autumn may leave insufficient time to take corrective action. Optimum times for a specific brood disease inspection are early spring and in summer whilst the nectar flow is in progress.

**Reduce colony entrances.** Reduce colony entrances when the nectar flow ceases to minimise robbing.



*Privet*

**Plan your varroa treatment for next month.** Decide your strategy and buy any supplies you will need.

**Reserve your use of an extractor.** Reserve your use of an extractor next month if you usually hire LBKA equipment. Email Will on [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk).

Finally, please make an effort to attend the monthly meeting at the Foundry. The speaker is John Chapple who will be talking about honey and its treatment for showing at the National Honey Show. It is hoped that many of our members will enter products into the honey show this year and this talk will focus on how entries are judged, what judges look for, etc. It is expected to be extremely informative.

---

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

As we pass from June into July, all our hopes for a decent harvest now rely upon the **Lime** trees. Limes are blooming. There are 3 species of limes native to the UK: Large Leaved Lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*), Small Leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) and a naturally occurring hybrid of the before mentioned two (*Tilia × europaea*).





*Bird's Foot Trefoil*

The small leaved Lime is common throughout England but in the south west it is largely replaced by the large leaved lime which thrives better on the lime-rich soils.

Be aware of the Silver Lime (*Tilia tormentosa*) which is an exotic introduction and flowers a bit later than our native limes. Its nectar is toxic to bees and when there is a dearth in forage the bees may mistakenly collect its nectar and in the process become intoxicated before falling comatose beneath the tree.

Limes are capable of producing copious volumes of nectar but only if the weather conditions are just right. High soil moisture content from spring rains followed by very warm sultry weather is needed to trigger a good Lime flow.

Lime honey is highly sought after as it has a minty aftertaste and tangy tone to it. It's also high in fructose sugars and low in glucose meaning it stays liquid for a long time and resists crystallisation prolonging its shelf life and makes an attractive looking jar of honey for the sales stall.

We are fortunate in urban areas to have an abundance of lime trees growing in our parks and side streets. In London limes represent our biggest potential for a bumper honey crop but as mentioned earlier this only becomes a reality when the weather conditions come together at the right time. During a strong lime flow a healthy colony of honey bees can fill a super in a matter of days so it's important you have spare boxes at the ready.

Other plants which are important for our bees this month include **bramble** which should now be in peak flower. Like lime nectar, bramble is mostly fructose which leads to a light fruity honey which seldom crystallises. I am lucky that all my apiaries are bordering over ground railway lines which have an abundance of bramble growing along the sidings.

Around water and damp ground **Himalayan Balsam** is now flowering and will continue to do so right up until late August. Balsam is loved by many Beekeepers for its

flowers providing forage in bulk at a time when there is often little else around. It's a contentious plant though, being a non-native plant and highly invasive. It's listed under schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as illegal to plant, knowingly aiding it, or allowing it to spread. The penalty if found guilty can exceed a £5000 fine and a criminal record. So please beware of those beekeepers on Internet forums advocating its spread as a plant good for bees! Far better plants suited to damp ground include Water Mint, Purple Loosestrife and Hemp Agrimony which are all loved by bees.

Other good sources of forage joining the summer flow this month include **Tree of Heaven** (*Ailanthus altissima*), **Indian Chestnut** (*Aesculus indica*), **Chinese Privet tree** (*Ligustrum sinense*) and **Indian bean tree** (*Catalpa Bignoniodes*). All are abundant in urban parks and provide pollen and nectar after all our native trees have ceased flowering. Last year one of our members in north London had their honey analysed by a forensics lab and most of the pollen was from Tree of Heaven.

In urban areas shrubs including **Choisya**, **Cotoneaster**, **Privet**, **Philadelphus**, **Escalonia**, **Abelia**, **Santolina** and **Hebe** will continue to attract bees.

**Elder** is just coming to an end along with **Dog Rose** meaning few native shrubs continue to flower into July.

As July progresses our bees become more and more reliant on ground level flora for their forage. Wildflowers like **Bugloss**, **Birds Foot Trefoil**, **Vetches**, **Knapsweeds**, **Thistle**, **wild Thyme**, **wild Marjoram**, **Scabious**, **Teasel** and **Umbellifers**. Plants which many of us associate as 'weeds' and try our best to eradicate are often plants important to bees in high summer – among them **Ragwort**.

July and August are the months of the year when most Beekeepers remove their honey harvest but it is also the time of year when our honey bees are flying the furthest to find profitable flower patches. Research undertaken at Sussex University has shown that during July and August Honey Bees are regularly flying as far as 12 km away to forage and their decoded waggle dances indicated that the bees were making a bee line for nearby towns and villages where they can find abundant blooms in our domestic gardens.

We can all help make life a little easier for the bees in late summer by making better plant selections in our gardens. You can find planting suggestions on my website <http://www.apicultural.co.uk/> along with some good suggestions for plants suitable for balconies and window boxes.

## Upcoming events

See our [website](#) for an up-to-date list.

### Sunday 9th July: Monthly meeting: Honey preparation for Showing

11:00-13:00 at *The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London, SE11 5RR*

July's meeting is about "preparing honey for the Honey Show". Our special guest is John Chapple, former LBKA Chair, long-standing LBKA member and someone who has been involved with the Honey Show for many years. He is very knowledgeable about the extra layers of preparation, presenting, what judges look for, etc. We encourage members to enter honey into the Honey Show this year and attending this talk will be of significant benefit.

### Tuesday 25th July: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at *Tufnell Park Tavern, 162 Tufnell Park Rd, London N7 0EE, a short walk from Tufnell Park Station (Northern Line)*

We're back in North London this month. A nice pub with lots of space that serves food.

### Sunday 13th August: Monthly meeting: Feeding bees and Spectacular Summer Social

11:00-16:00 at *Bell House, 27 College Road, SE21 7BG*

Feeding bees... followed by our Spectacular Summer Social at the Our spectacular Summer Social. It continues our long tradition of summer socials with excellent food from the Delica Sisters. It will be at the amazing Bell House in Dulwich. It's a bit further out from Central London than usual, but it will be worth it in all respects! Booking necessary - see 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](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk)
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, [treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk)
- **Secretary:** Simon Saville, [admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk)
- **Education:** Howard Nichols [education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk)
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)
- **Events:** Annie McGeoch, [events@lbka.org.uk](mailto:events@lbka.org.uk)
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk)
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, [mentor@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentor@lbka.org.uk)
- **Resources:** Will Fry, [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk)
- Stuart Kennon, [stuart.kennon@lbka.org.uk](mailto: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.

