

‘THOUGH BASSEY’S PRIME MOTIVATION IS HELPING THE BEES... SHE INSISTS LONDON HONEYS ARE THE BEST’

SHARON BASSEY London Beekeepers Association

Most people, when their children leave home, get a pet; Sharon Bassey got thousands. 'I'm mad about bees. I started with one hive about five years ago and I've now got five hives on this site, and a few on other sites. I'm looking at getting into breeding next.'

Bassey, who is also course director for the London Beekeepers Association (LBKA), co-manages her bees with other enthusiasts on her Nunhead allotment, sharing jobs such as near-daily inspections for signs of the queen bee and checks that the bees are healthy.

Though Bassey's prime motivation is helping the bees rather than producing honey, she's won awards and insists London honeys are the best. 'It's because of the variety of forage. In rural areas they may feed on one crop, say rapeseed, but here we have lots of lime trees, lots of flowers, herbs, blackberries... it's a more complex taste.'

Although thrilled at the rise in popularity of beekeeping, Bassey is concerned that too many people start hives without knowing what they're doing. The LBKA is also worried that there may not be enough forage to go round, especially if London's drought continues. While recommended density is five or six colonies per square kilometre, within the one square kilometre around the Royal Festival Hall, for example, there are 156 – making groups such as Bassey's the ideal way to keep bees.

Does her pastime mean everyone buys her bee-related presents? 'I have been given bee earrings, yes.'

lbka.org.uk

