



# LBKA NEWS

## Feedback from the BBKA Annual Delegates' Meeting 2013

On an icy January morning I went up to the BBKA headquarters at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire as the LBKA delegate accompanied by John Chapple (representing The National Honey Show), Len Mole (Dover BKA) and Clive Watson (Kent BKA). It was a very long day but I'll give you the highlights - I think not everyone realises that it is our BBKA and we have a say in what it does.

### What is the BBKA and what does it do for us?

If you are registered as a beekeeping member of the LBKA you will also automatically become a member of the BBKA, The British Beekeeping Association. The BBKA is a charity. Most of the work is done by volunteers and the elected Trustees, backed up by a handful of paid staff.

As a member of the BBKA you will receive the magazine BBKA News, public liability insurance and also bee disease insurance. This is an efficient and good value way of organising this cover. The BBKA are involved in campaigning at a national level around beekeepers' interests. They also undertake fund raising in order to pay for research into topics that beekeepers see as a priority. At the moment most of the research they fund is in relation to the effects of pesticides on bees and also on ways to treat against varroa.

Some individual beekeepers, as well as beekeeping associations and of course universities, have received grants from the BBKA to enable them to undertake research. You don't have to be linked to a university to get a research grant from them, but to succeed you would need to prove that your proposed research is cutting edge, that it hasn't been done before and that you have read and understood the previous research in the area.

### How BBKA priorities are decided

The BBKA is democratically controlled by the local associations. All local beekeeping associations that are affiliated to the BBKA are entitled to send a delegate to the Annual Delegates' Meeting (ADM). For most matters decisions are reached on the basis of one person one vote, but for more contentious matters card votes are called for. In card votes the number of BBKA members in each association is taken into account. This means that the big county associations that have a number of sub branches, like Kent, Yorkshire and Devon, will have much more say than the small associations like London that only have one branch.

### The agenda

The agenda is sent out in advance and includes the notes of the previous ADM and also the accounts for the year previous year and a forecast for the coming year. Motions (that have been made available in advance) from the current BBKA Executive and member associations are considered. We haven't put a motion in for some years, although we have seconded a motion against pesticides previously. We have another 9 months to plan if we want to put in a motion next year.

Continued overleaf...



## History

In the past ADMs have sometimes involved strong passions and occasionally intemperate words. Now things feel milder, although from muttered comments I could tell that for some people this issue is not consigned to the past. You could write a book about this topic, but here's the short version. About 8 years ago a lot of local BKAs were very unhappy that the BBKA had signed a sponsorship deal with BAYER, a multi-national chemical company that makes a lot of money from selling pesticides. The BBKA logo of a honeybee appeared on cans of pesticide. This was supposed to indicate that this pesticide was less damaging to honeybees than previous pesticides. It probably was, but all pesticides kill honey bees in a big enough dose. There were questions from some BKAs about whether the BBKA Executive had had a mandate to agree to this sponsorship deal and this inflamed passions further. For a number of years this issue cast a shadow over ADMs.

Almost every year, including this year, there is a motion on pesticides at the ADM. There is usually a notable town / country split on the vote, with the more urban associations generally voting to ban pesticides and the rural ones (especially the big county associations where there are a lot of beekeepers with close relationships with farmers) voting to allow 'responsible' pesticide use. It was the same this year.

## Edited highlights

Actions agreed from last year had mostly been appropriately followed up. The only notable outstanding issue was that last year local BKAs had voted to contribute a voluntary contribution of £5 per member to the BBKA research fund, but many associations sent no money at all. We sent ours.

In recent years there have been more candidates than posts for the elected BBKA Executive Committee and Exam Board, but this year there were no candidates for some posts. I checked this week and the vacancies have now been filled. There are quite a number of Trustees that will need to be replaced in 2014, so the BBKA have asked delegates to encourage people to put themselves forwards.

We are coming up to the 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the launch of the BBKA. Please contact them if you have ideas on how this should be celebrated.

There was some contention around the way the BBKA 2012-2013 accounts and the 2013 - 2014 expenditure forecast had been prepared. There were things in the 2012-2013 accounts, including honoraria, that were not well explained, and the 2013-2014 forecast looked hugely over-optimistic in relation to future income. The income stream from the Adopt a Beehive scheme was lower than expected. It was eventually agreed following a close vote that the BBKA membership fee should increase by £2 per member for the coming year. (I voted against this.)

The motion from Hampshire BKA proposing that the BBKA negotiates with DEFRA and farmers to encourage the setting up of a reporting system around pesticide use (including the use of systemic seed treatments) failed. The motion that the BBKA better publicise its swarm collection service was passed. The motion from Gloucestershire which said that the BBKA should make co-ordinating information about the sub-lethal effects of neonicotinoids (systemic pesticides), its top priority was narrowly passed.



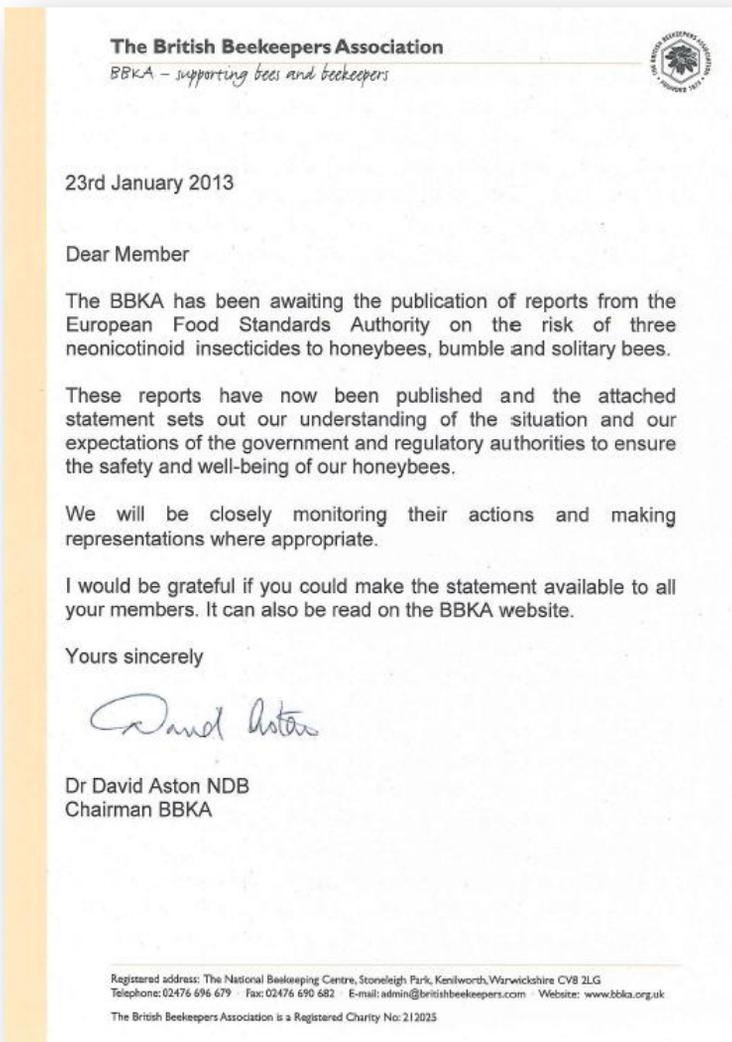
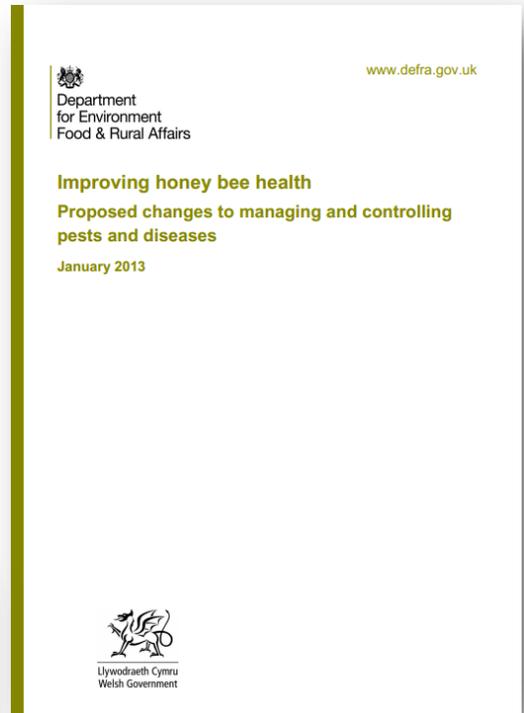
## IMPROVING HONEY BEE HEALTH

### A public consultation to guide the way in which Defra deals with Bee health in future years.

Defra have launched a public consultation on the 'Proposed changes to managing and controlling pests and diseases', which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2013/01/10/bee-health-1301/>

The consultation ends on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2013



Here is a letter from the BBKA Chairman, David Aston, regarding the European Food Standards Authority report on the risks of 3 neonicotinoid insecticides to honey bees. **The statement the letter refers to is sent in the same email as this newsletter.**



## FEBRUARY IN THE APIARY

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

February is a time of increasing activity, not so much for the beekeeper but for the bees. Although cold and bleak on the outside, and to all appearances very quiet, a lot is happening inside the cluster. The main job of the beekeeper is to keep an eye on stores. Bee colonies are known to die out in February / early spring due to starvation, not due to the cold.

The queen will now be laying at an increasing rate. The empty cells inside the cluster have been prepared and eggs are being laid. The temperature of a broodless cluster is maintained at 20C but a cluster with brood requires a 35C temperature. This also consumes more stores.



If feeding is necessary then fondant is probably still the best bet. If, on a warm day, the bees are flying and emergency stores are required then feeding liquid stores is a possibility. Bees carry and metabolise nectar at 50% concentration. 1 Kg of sugar dissolved in 1 litre of water will give this concentration and so involve the bees in the minimum amount of work. If stores are not required then it is better not to feed liquid syrup so not to cause any disturbance.

On a warm February / early March day the bees will fly for forage. Main sources in February include snowdrops, crocus and early flowering hazel. The latter is a godsend when it flowers as it provides an abundance of pollen. All these sources provide pollen only, not nectar.

Dead bees about! Late February / early March is a challenging time for bees. The winter bees are old but now need to work at an increasing rate to feed larvae and young bees. Many of these older bees will be dying off and a disproportionate number will die in the hive. It is not unusual to find a large quantity of dead bees in front of the hive or behind the mouseguard. Just lift the mouseguard and brush out. This should not normally be cause for concern and does not mean that the colony is dying out.

#### Other jobs to do:

- Carry on reading the beekeeping books.
- Have an outline plan for the forthcoming season. Have a strategy to develop a particular beekeeping skill.
- Assemble frames and ensure you have sufficient equipment for the season.
- Do not forget the LBKA monthly meetings and the mid-week winter lecture series.

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



## WINTER WATCH FOR BEES

Many thanks to Sarah Tennant and her blog (<http://missapismellifera.com/>)

'Do they ever do any beekeeping at this cafe?' asked someone while we sat around the apiary table on Saturday afternoon. The first weekend after New Year and Ealing's beekeepers had made no resolutions to give up tea and cake.

Luckily, Pat had brought something to show why bees need keeping in winter – a feeder tray with a hole bored in the side of the wood by a woodpecker. Woodpecker damage to bee hives is not common in West London, but this case of break-and-entry shows why we should keep watch. The woodpecker had attacked Pat's hive at Osterley first by boring a hole into the top of the feeder tray, where it wouldn't have found anything interesting, next drilling the wood below before getting fed up or disturbed and flying off. 'It must have been very disappointed,' said Pat.



Bee larvae can make tasty treats for hungry woodpeckers in cold weather, and maybe bees too, while causing considerable damage to the brood nest. However, Ted Hooper's [Guide to Bees and Honey](#) says that woodpecker damage to bee hives is a learned behaviour:

The chicken wire is on order for the Osterley hives.

Pat advises using chicken wire wrapped around the whole hive to keep woodpeckers off and to 'make sure there's a good clearance all the way round so they can't peck through it'. A walk around our apiary showed that the woodpeckers haven't learned about the delicious morsels inside our hives – yet.



I carried out a few other winter checks including:

- hefting the hive to check the weight of stores – it's heavy
- lifting the roof to look at the fondant – the bees are tucking in greedily and the hole in the fondant (a 'window' into the winter hive) suggests the cluster inside is loose
- observing the entrance – foragers are flying home with bright yellow pollen suggesting that the queen has started laying.

Overall, the signs indicate that our bees are well and active, perhaps because of the mild weather, although in January they should be conserving energy. All that flying means eating a lot of honey, but at this time of year there won't be much nectar about to replace it. We'll need to keep a close eye on the hive's weight and amount of fondant between now and spring.

I went back to the apiary table to report my findings. John agreed: 'It's much easier to get a hive through a very cold winter than a mild one, because they don't fly about as much.' I asked where the bees might be finding the yellow pollen and Pat thought it was from mahonia. There wasn't much else to be done except have another cup of tea and try Cliff's culinary invention – the 'pake'.



## FEBRUARY IN THE FORAGE PATCH

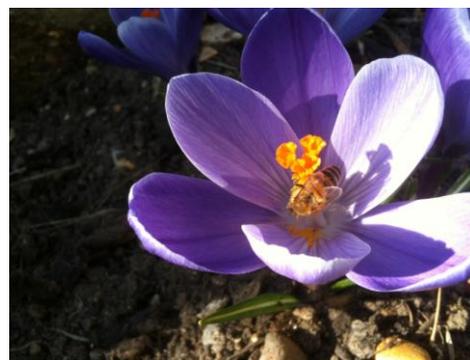
Many spring flowers have already been flowering in London due to the earlier mild weather and our bees have already been taking advantage of them on milder days. Heathers, Daffodils and Snow Drops have all been spotted in flower during December and January in parts of London and reliable flowerers such as Mahonia, Winter Rose and Viburnum have been frequently seen being visited by bees, judging by the numbers of emails I've received from members requesting plant identification.

The mild weather has meant some colonies have had brood, evident by the numbers of bees reported bringing in pollen during January. Later in the month many of us were caught off guard with sudden heavy snow fall across London. What started off as a very mild winter turned bitterly cold and for the first time this winter bees were confined to the hive for several days at a time as 3-4 inches of snow fell in less than 42 hours and daytime temperatures rarely rose above freezing.

The forecast for February is predicted to be wild and unsettled at first with the weather gradually becoming milder and more settled later in the month. As the weather settles we might see our bees venturing out again to collect pollen, as by now the Queen should have resumed laying and they will have brood to feed. Reliable winter flowering plants such as Mahonia, Sarcococca, Viburnum shrubs and Wall Flowers will continue to flower well into spring. Joining them this month we should expect to see more Snow Drops appearing and Winter Aconite followed by early Crocuses. Crocus are an important early forage plant for honey bees. Whilst they provide no nectar they produce an abundance of pollen which bees will gather with enthusiasm. A patch of crocus a few meters from your hive would be well visited by your bees. Choose simple species type which flower early and larger showy crocus hybrids for later flowering.

Crocus are best planted just beneath the soil, not too deep. The best time to plant is as dormant bulbs in autumn but you can also buy live plants in pots at this time of year in garden centres. Very early in the year when the weather is cold honey bees will not venture far from the hive to forage as they soon become cold and inactive outside of the hives warmth. For this reason sources of nectar and pollen within a short distance of the hive will be visited and plants further afield usually ignored.

Other plants which may make an appearance in February if mild enough are Aubretia, whose carpet of flowers range from white to pale pink to violet. We may also see the first Primroses appear, which may be visited by honey bees to forage pollen although their tongues are not always long enough to reach the nectar. Hazel should also be producing catkins this month. Hazel pollen has been shown to be highly nutritious for bees and though wind-pollinated honey bees will gather pollen from the male catkins.





## AN OUTLET FOR YOUR 2013 HONEY CROP...

The Golden Company is a social enterprise that works with young people aged 16 -21. We aim to provide accredited learning and part-time employment opportunities whilst nurturing entrepreneurial spirit in young people. We do this by working with nature and enterprise - developing our business caring for bees and producing natural cosmetics. The young people who work with us are paid for their time and are involved in all aspects of running the company.

For the past three years we have been lucky enough to be one of the Social Enterprise schemes supported by Borough Market. Our honey stall operates on the last Saturday of the month and gives the young people working with us opportunities to sell their products, gain experience of working in a customer-facing environment and develop their cash handling skills. We sell honey from beekeepers in different parts of London and have got regular customers who come back month after month to find out what honeys we have in store.



We would love to hear from any beekeepers based in London or the South East who might be interested in having their honey sold on our stall. The more we have to sell, the more stalls we can run, the more young people we can send home with a small part-time wage. It's as simple as that, we are passionate about the honey we sell and take time to learn about the local forage and flavours that characterise each type. Please direct any enquiries to [zoe@thegolden.co](mailto:zoe@thegolden.co). Thank you!

## DO YOUR BEES NEED FONDANT?

For those requiring fondant then BAKO in south London is a possibility (5 minutes walk from South Wimbledon underground on the Northern Line). Address is 1-6 Merton Industrial Park, Lee Road, London SW19 3XX. Tel 020 8543 1212.

Last known price was £15.34 for 12.5kg. It's worth 2 or 3 members buying 12.5kg and dividing it up between them. Compare this price with main beekeeping suppliers.

Does anyone know of a supplier in another part of London? If so please let us have details so that we may communicate these to members.

Many thanks to all our contributors this month: Karin Courtman, Howard Nichols, Angela Woods, Mark Patterson, and Sarah Tennant for sharing her blog.

And if there are more blogs or any other content out there that we can share then please send them to me at [communications@lbka.org.uk](mailto:communications@lbka.org.uk)



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### LBKA Monthly Meeting: Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> February

#### Preparing for the Beekeeping Year Ahead

This will be followed by an EGM and then the usual chat with coffee and cake.

11am at [Fairley House Junior School](#), 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

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### Winter lecture: Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February

#### Making Soaps

Dr. Sara Robb will take the second lecture on making soaps. Dr Sara is an award-winning scientist, professional speaker, author and managing director of her company Bath Potions. Some of us have already enjoyed her lectures and have lured her to the LBKA to share her knowledge with us.

18:45 at [Roots and Shoots](#), Walnut Tree Walk, London, SE11 6DN

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### LBKA Monthly Meeting: Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March

#### Microscopy

Alan Kyme will show us how to detect Nosema and Acarine in bees using a microscope. We will have microscopes, but please bring one if you can. Due to limited space, this session is only open to **LBKA members who have brought a sample of about 35 bees** to test ([collect](#) the day before by holding a polythene bag in front the hive entrance to collect returning bees then put them in the fridge overnight to kill them).

11am at [Fairley House Junior School](#), 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

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### The BBKA Spring Convention, 12-14<sup>th</sup> April

There will be lectures and sale of beekeeping equipment. Tickets should now be available from the BBKA website.