



The London Beekeepers' Association LBKA News

July, 2015

Welcome to this month's newsletter. We've got bees to sell, extractors to hire out and a progress report on the work we've been doing on getting ready to applying to be a charity. Comments about the latter are welcome. As well as some sad news about Clive Watson, Mark's been travelling again, Amanda tells us about the joys of WWOOFing, there's some art and poetry. And Emily's solved the mystery of the elusive queen.

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A big thank you to all this month's contributors: Jason Butler, Karin Courtman, Richard Glassborow, Cerys Harrow, Martin Hudson, Julian Lush, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Amanda Pearson, Emily Scott, Tristram Sutton, Tabitha Stanmore, Vesko Starchikov and Stephanie Turner.

We're always looking for new and interesting contributions – please contact me if you're interested.

Aidan Slingsby
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From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

Where is the honey this year? I have heard this from quite a few beekeepers in recent weeks and until this week I was asking myself the same question. Partly, I suspect it is the stark contrast with last year when extraction began in June in order to recycle supers back onto the hives, so fast was the nectar coming in. But this year has seen a long, cool, dry spring. Colony build-up has been slower, particularly for those of us who practice shook swarming to control varroa.

Personally, I was so focused on swarm control that it was only when beekeepers started asking if I had any honey that I realised there wasn't much going into the supers and the few that were heavy just weren't being completed and capped. Some beekeepers were even reporting feeding colonies in June, something I have never had to do in London.



Ragwort. Photo: Mark Patterson.

So, what happened to the great Horse Chestnut flow this year? I can't say I was aware of it. Or maybe the colony build up had been too late and too slow for colonies to have enough foragers to bring it in. Or is the colony density having an adverse effect – too much competition?

My experience has been that, in my apiaries at least, this all suddenly changed last week. In the space of little over one week I have gone from concern about swarming to worrying about whether I have enough supers. I was expecting this turn around to be Lime trees as they have just come into flower. But I am not so sure. Casual observation reveals a lot of grey pollen so I suspect the flow is bramble.

There are exceptions of course, there always are with beekeeping. Throughout this dearth I met one beekeeper who already had 5 supers on one colony two weeks ago, two capped. And that was not far from Eden. So the maxim holds, in beekeeping, unusual things usually happen.

Happy harvesting!

Announcements

July Monthly Meeting

This month's meeting is on **Sunday 12th July** at the usual time and place (11:00 at Fairley Junior House School, 220 Lambeth Rd, SE1 7JY). It will be about the messy business of honey extraction and also legal and practical issues of honey labelling.

Please bring along some of your labelled honey jars if you can, so we can see how different people label their honey (we're not doing honey tasting, just label comparison!).

Bees for members

We still have plenty of bees which Karin and Paul have worked hard to bring on to a state in which we can



Where we have our Monthly Meetings – the white door on the left. Source: <https://goo.gl/maps/dbB8a>



Some labelled honey from last year.



A hand-powered extractor in use.

sell to members. It is approaching the end of the season and they are surplus to our requirements in our apiaries.

For this reason, the committee have decided to sell these to member as a discounted rate of **£75 for a 5-frame nuc** and **£100 for 11-frame hive**. These prices don't include the box, so you'll need your own equipment, though you may be able to borrow a nuc box for a £40 deposit. These colonies are strong enough to be suitable for overwintering.

If you have an appropriate level of experience and want to know more, please contact Paul on resources@lbka.org.uk or on 0790 301 8351.

Extractors

It's soon time to think about the messy business of extracting honey. LBKA has a variety of different extractors which you can hire for **£5** for up to about 3 days. We're also asking for a **£20 deposit** (which you'll lose if you don't clean the extractor properly!)

If you're interested in using one of LBKA's extractors, please contact Paul Vagg on resources@lbka.org.uk or 0790 301 8351.

Members' services

Bee buying, extractor hire and discounts are examples of LBKA member benefits. We try to keep information



Our stall and some of the team at the Lambeth Country Show last year.



Candle rolling at the Lambeth Country Show last year.

about these accessible and up-to-date on <http://lbka.org.uk/members.html>.

LBKA as a charity

We have details of our **progress, proposal and draft working papers to support our possible application to become a charity**. We could like members' feedback on our progress so far – see page 5.

Lambeth Country Show

As is tradition, we will have a stall at the **Lambeth Country Show** on 18th–19th July. It's a fun weekend where we talk to the public about bees, show them bees in our observation hive and sell products from (or inspired from) the hive.

Please come and visit our stall! If you're interested in helping out, please contact Emily on events@lbka.org.uk. If you're interested in selling anything, please talk to Richard at chair@lbka.org.uk.



Observation hive.

Can you organise barbecues?

We're looking for help organising our August Social on 23rd August. Do you have a large barbecue that you could lend us and would you be interested in helping organise food and cooking? To discuss further, please contact Mark on forage@lbka.org.uk as soon as you can.

Help needed for managing a research hive

The Department of Biological and Chemical Sciences of Queen Mary University of London are seeking an experienced, engaged and motivated beekeeper to help out once a week at their Mile End Campus. General beekeeping will be required for one to two nuclei/hives during the summer months. All travel expenses will be covered and if the honey production permits, honey will also be provided.

Please contact Dr Ana Pengelly (a.pengelly@qmul.ac.uk) or Dr Paul Hurd (p.j.hurd@qmul.ac.uk).

Anthropologist looking to talk to urban beekeepers

Rebecca is an anthropologist based at the University of Edinburgh. She's currently working on a research project about bees and society. The project is called Beelines – <http://www.beelines.org/>.

She's visiting London this month and would like to be able meet and perhaps interview some urban beekeepers.

She has the Scottish Beekeepers Basic Beemaster Certificate and her ten year old son (who will be accompanying her) also passed his Junior Beekeeping exam last month. She also has a research collaborator, Dr Kate Milosavljevic who will be in London in July as well.



Some of Claire's wax and natural pigment-based art.

If you're interested in talking to her, contact her on r.marsland@ed.ac.uk.

Any wax to sell?

Claire is an artist based in east London is looking for a source of beeswax. She paints using beeswax and natural pigments and would like to start promoting bees through her artwork and the problems of their decline. You can contact her on hamillclaire@yahoo.co.uk.

Gabby is looking for 570g-1.5kg of clean wax for making cosmetics. She's part of the "Phytology" project located in Bethnal Green Nature Reserve and is offering some of their products, a guided tour of the site and some medicinal plant leaves in return! You can contact her on gabrielle.boraston@groundwork.org.uk.

Honey sales opportunity

A craft bakery has recently opened near on Half Moon Lane in SE24, between Dulwich and Herne Hill. It is looking for London beekeepers' honey, the more local the better. Call Stefan on 0770 100 9145 for more details.

Old announcements from June

Check previous newsletters at <http://lbka.org.uk/newsletters.html> or contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

National Bee Unit SE Region Associations Forum: the regional bee inspector has invited LBKA to send two representative to an Associations' Forum, probably on **Friday 21st August** at the **DEFRA Offices** in London. If you'd interested in attending, please contact Emma on admin@lbka.org.uk.

Can you recommend online beekeeping resources and suppliers? We want to expand these parts of the website. Please email suggestions to Aidan on services@lbka.org.uk.

Old announcements from May

Do you have old honey in bulk? Emily Abbott (07971 453330 or emilyabbott@virginmedia.com) will buy it off you!

Photography project. Olivier (olivierbarjolle@gmail.com) is a French photographer based in London and is looking to photograph beekeepers of all ages, genders and ethnicities.

Want to review "Do Beekeeping: The secret to happy honeybees"? If so contact Aidan on services@lbka.org.uk and he'll arrange for you to receive a review copy.

Old announcements from April

Volunteers needed for outreach activities: Contact forage@lbka.org.uk if you would like to get involved. We can provide training.

Old announcements from March

Forage-planting suggestions? Contact forage@lbka.org.uk if you have any suggestions.

Selling unpackaged honey to a London restaurant: contact Barbara barbaratager@gmail.com for more details.

Old announcements from February

Stepney City Farm are still looking for more London Honey to sell in their farm shop – contact services@lbka.org.uk for more information.

Do you have any announcements?

If you've any announcements for the next issue of LBKA News, please send them to Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk.

Clive Watson

Mark Patterson, Howard Nichols, Julian Lush, Karin Courtman and others.

It is with great sadness that we report the death of former LBKA member Clive Watson.

Clive was the Chairman of the Kent Bee-Keepers' Association and Chief Show Steward of the National Honey Show. He established and kept hives at Roots and Shoots. He was LBKA's swarm coordinator for many years.

He was very kind and generous, regularly coming to members' rescue, lending equipment and giving advice. He was also a great champion of the beekeeping community. His involvement along with former chair John Chapple ensured LBKA's survival during difficult times of dwindling membership in the 90s. He was a stalwart and dependable member of the formative group and will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

Clive's funeral will be on **Tuesday, 14th July** at 4.30pm at Beckenham Crematorium, Elmers End Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 4TD, followed by a reception at Dorset Road Allotments, Dorset Road, BR3 4EA. All are welcome.

LBKA will organise a card which will be available to sign at our monthly meeting on Sunday. We will also make £50 donation to St. Christopher's Hospice, Clive's chosen charity.



Clive Watson will be deeply missed.

LBKA as a Charity

Tristram Sutton
mentoring@lbka.org.uk

Following approval in principle for the LBKA to become a charity at last year's AGM we have been investigating the details and our progress is summarised here. **We provide a link to our draft application documents below and ask all members to have a look and provide feedback to Tristram**, particularly as our constitution was recently amended and will need to be amended again.

Approval

At the next AGM we intend to seek LBKA members' approval to our making an application to register the LBKA as a charity. Based on the experience of other people who have applied to register charities we can expect the Charity Commission to require us to amend details of our application so LBKA members' approval will allow the LBKA Committee to discuss and agree these details with the Charity Commission on behalf of its members as part of the registration process.

Type of Charity

Having looked at the different types of charity it seems that the most appropriate for the LBKA would be the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). CIOs are incorporated entities which means that they can enter contracts such as rental agreements without their trustees having to do so on their behalf, yet are not required to register as companies and so would not have to report to Companies House in addition to having to report to the Charity Commission.

Changes

Given that the LBKA's objects are already charitable (ie and we would expect would be allowed to remain unchanged by the Charity Commission), the main changes to the LBKA's Constitution would be: to introduce a board of trustees (i.e. instead of a committee) and to set out what would happen in circumstances not anticipated by the current LBKA constitution. The Charity Commission provide applicants with a model constitution. We have marked up this model constitution to incorporate provisions from the current LBKA constitution. Although the charity commission can be expected to require some amendment, the draft proposed constitution will be made available for LBKA members to review.

We will propose that the LBKA Committee approved at the next AGM will become the first Trustees of the LBKA CIO.

Timing

Once the proposal for the LBKA to register as a charity is approved by its members, say at this year's AGM in November, we will then seek Charity Commission approval which we would expect to obtain by early 2016.

Information

Working papers written as part of this exercise (including the briefing document approved by LBKA Members at the last AGM and a draft constitution for the LBKA CIO) are available at http://lbka.org.uk/lbkaCharityDocs_draft-07-2015.zip

Questions, comments and suggestions are welcomed – please contact Tristram on mentoring@lbka.org.uk. Please note that these are draft documents which we hope you can help us improve.

June's Monthly Meeting

What happened at last months' meeting.

*Cerys Harrow
LBKA member*

Rearing Queens

Lots of people had turned up this month to hear Howard explain the intricacies of queen rearing. He began by reassuring us that it was not as difficult as people think. He outlined several options from simply supporting the bees' natural impulse to create a new queen to actively grafting queen cells onto specialised frames to rear several new queens. Timing is key to this operation as you need to be able to identify larvae less than 36 hours old and be confident enough to transfer them without damage. So a steady hand is useful too. Howard made it all look simple and straightforward of course and emphasised that we should not be scared of having a go. He recommended David Woodward's book "Queen Bee – Biology, Rearing and Breeding" as the one to consult if you wanted to read more on the subject.

Bringing the session to a close, Howard reminded everyone that if there was a topic that they would like to see covered in a monthly meeting they should let any of the committee members know as new ideas were very welcome.

And before he could sit down, this year's Bee Basic

candidates surprised Howard with a thank you present for steering them all successfully through the exam a few weeks ago. For anyone who hasn't done this yet, Howard provides a really excellent series of seminars each spring to prepare people for the bee basic exam and has had a 100 per cent success rate in recent years.

As always there was then time for informal chat with other beekeepers about any current problems – or successes – in our apiaries.

July in the Apiary

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

*Howard Nichols
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 there is relatively little nectar flow and the bees utilise this period 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.

Nectar flow

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

How do I know when it has started?

There are at least 2 ways. The first is to keep in contact with other local beekeepers and association members. This is an advantage in joining an association – you become part of a pool of knowledge and experience. The second is to watch the colony entrance. The coming and going 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 the 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 beekeeping, 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. These work well provided they are used properly and the metal escapes are clean and not stuck with propolis. After about 48 hours most of the bees have gone down through the 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 the upturned hive roof and covered with a sheet or large cloth.

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.

Other action to be taken this month

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. This is another reason to ensure that enough supers are on the hive.

The nectar flow is a golden opportunity to undertake a brood disease inspection. As the bees are so busy with the nectar. Leaving the brood disease inspection to 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 when the nectar flow ceases.

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

Reserve your use of an extractor next month if you usually hire LBKA equipment.

June in the Forage Patch

Mark's regular update on what is in flower that bees like.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

The spring has been rather dry this year in comparison to previous years and this is having an effect on what forage is available to our honey bees. Despite the Lime trees being in bloom for many weeks now there has been little if any nectar flow from these trees this year. Limes produce nectar in vast quantities when the conditions are right, moist soil and sultry hot humid weather. This season we're experiencing the heat and humidity, but unfortunately the soil is just too dry. All over London I've seen limes flowering in profusion but not a single bee visiting the flowers due to the absence of nectar.

What has been a great source of nectar this season is Bramble. The humble blackberry bush has flowered exceptionally early this season and is producing a great deal of nectar. I am fortunate that all my apiaries are close to railway sidings where bramble rambles unchallenged and these hives are all doing exceptionally well.



Knapweed.



Scabious.



Rosebay willow herb.



Mark's garden bursting with Salvia nemorosa, Nepeta, Echinops thistles, Wallflower Bowles mauve and lavender.



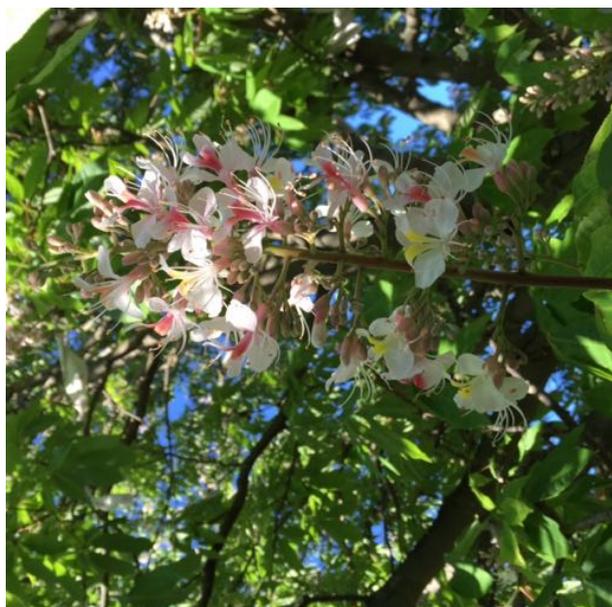
Lime blooms – a poor flow from them this year.

I'm about to add my fifth super to some hives in the first week of July.

Other forage sources which are good for bees at this time of year include Cotoneaster. This shrub has many cultivars from sprawling shrubs/small trees to the compact prostrate Cotoneaster horizontalis. Almost all of the Cotoneasters are good for bees. It's not just honey bees which work them, bumble and solitary bees also frequent them.

Hebes will also attract bees throughout the summer. Again there are many cultivars with flowers ranging from white to pink to deep purple. The colour of the flowers seems not to matter to the bees but the larger specimens appear to receive more attention.

There are still a few trees out in bloom but they are sparse on the ground. If you're fortunate to live near a large Victorian park you may have Oriental chestnuts in bloom. There are some good stands of these trees in Kensington Gardens and Regent's Park. The flowers look very similar to the usual horse chestnut but the leaves hang differently and are glossy. Like chestnut the blooms communicate to the bees that they have been pollinated and the nectar dried up by changing colour from yellow to orange pink.



Oriental chestnut.

From this month onwards our bees will be most reliant on garden plants and ornamentals for their forage needs. dahlias, Salvias, Lavender, Nepeta, Bell flowers and Veronica's are all popular with bees. If you're fortunate to be close to any large parks with wildflower meadow areas then Birdsfoot Trefoil, Knapweed, Ragwort and Scabious may be visited. Some of our most important bee food plants during the summer are plants most of us consider as serious weeds; Hogweed, Ragwort, Thistles, Bindweeds, Teasel and Rosebay willow herb.

Large ponds can be a good source of forage from July onwards. Marginal plants like Water Mint and Purple Loosestrife will not dry up like terrestrial plants and can provide forage through most of the summer.

Our Teaching Apiaries

News from LBKA's teaching apiaries.

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

Towards the end of June I accompanied the bee inspector to view our teaching and swarm apiaries, all except Brockwell which he visited with Petros last weekend. I am happy to report that all have a clean bill of health. We apiary managers of course knew that but it is still good to have official confirmation and to receive compliments from someone who visits a lot of apiaries during the course of the season. The only

glitch was at Eden where a new queen has revealed herself to be drone laying. Interestingly, we had one at Holland Park too, they must be like buses! Both now replaced.

This is I think an appropriate moment to thank our apiary managers, Karin Courtman and Petros Hahladakis (Brockwell), Paul Vagg and Karin (swarms), Barbara Linda, Geoff Remington and Nick Gallagher (Mudchute). Thank you all, I know just how much hard work goes into running these apiaries and your standards of beekeeping are a credit to the Association.

The bee inspectors now come under APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency) which is part of Defra. This all sounds heavy government stuff but, if you are new to beekeeping, do not be put off – the inspectors are on our side. They would rather be consulted in error than not consulted in error, if you know what I mean. At the time of our inspection I was told that foulbrood diseases of either persuasion are rare this year and no cases have as yet been reported in London. However, remain vigilant. And please keep your apiaries registered and up to date on Bee base: you will then get warning of pests and diseases in your area. Of course, the bee inspectors still have powers to visit you even if your apiary is not registered!

I was also told that Asian hornet and small hive beetle are both expected "at some time". The Eden and Brockwell apiaries are considered to be at high risk because of their nearness to Covent Garden at Nine Elms. This is because of the number of imported goods – these are likely to be a vector for spread of these pests. So, start familiarising yourselves with these pests, especially if you have hives in the Vauxhall area.

Meanwhile, at Holland Park, we are still in negotiation with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to formalise an agreement over the apiary there. Illness and staff leave have held things up but it will be worth the wait. Unfortunately, we cannot take groups up to see it yet as one of the things that is holding up progress is checking the roof loadings: no problem for bees and a couple of beekeepers but another matter for a group. Never the less, there is still quite a lot of work to be done, so, if you are keen to see it, why not volunteer to help out on a work party? I am afraid timings are a little vague and tend to be spontaneous at the moment but if generally interested, please email me, chair@lbka.org.uk or Mark, forage@lbka.org.uk.

A travelling observation hive from Eden can be seen at the Lambeth Country show on the 18th and 19th. And again at a Bee Conscious Event on Clapham Common (near the Bandstand) on Sunday 26th July. Do come and say hello.



The Bulgarian Beekeeper

Vesko continues his month-by-month series writing about his beekeeping back in his native Bulgaria.

*Vesko Starchikov
LBKA member*

Weather conditions

July is a typical summer month. High temperatures and cloudless skies characterise the July weather. July is the warmest month in many places in Bulgaria with average monthly temperatures of between 20°C and 22°C. Rainfalls are local and short-lived. They are very often accompanied by showers, lightning, thunder and a temporary increase in wind.

Phenological calendar in Bulgaria

In July, lime trees still blossom in mountain areas. Wild flowers in fields and pastures also begin to bloom as well as other wild plants, grasses, shrubs and trees.

Bees collect nectar mainly from wild plants and less from lime trees. That is the way of producing herbal honey and linden honey with herbs. Sometimes bees cannot take advantage of the nectar, due to frequent droughts in July.

Condition of bee colonies

Queens begin to reduce their egg laying activity in the second half of July. Sometimes the bees eject the drones out of the hive because swarm instinct has already gone and they do not need them anymore. Bees almost cease to build wax bases and stop to work on the construction frame. Sometimes colonies try to rob each other.



My work in the apiary in July

I regularly visit the apiary and watch the work of bees. I make sure the fence remains in good repair to keep the neighbouring animals out of the apiary. To prevent ants in hives I grease the feet of the hive's stands with substances that repel ants.

In the first half of the month, the bees begin to cap the frames again. When they cap more than half of them, I extract the honey.

In good years, in the second half of the month I get Honey dew, which has been taken from the leaves of deciduous trees and shrubs. I take all the honey, because bees must not be overwintered with it because the honey turns sour in the hives during the winter.

At the end of the month when foraging has come to an end, I extract honey and put them back on the hives at dusk. This allows the bees to clean any remaining honey. Honeycomb cannot be stored uncleaned because honey may begin to ferment.

During droughts, I provide bees with water if the area has no clean running water. If some the the queens are old, I replace them. I take measures against theft.

In July I should ensure good ventilation of all colonies by keeping the floors open and shade covering with grass to shade them. After the main nectar flow, I do a full inspection to find out about the status of the colonies and their needs. I check whether the brood is healthy.



Christine.

Why not try... WWOOFing?

This guest article came about as a result a slightly unusual cross pollination took place when Amanda Pearson met Aidan at the BBKA stand at the Edible Flower Show and suggested beekeeping opportunities for volunteers.

In return, Angela will write an article in their newsletter about the importance of forage for bees and other pollinating insects.

Amanda Pearson
World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF)

WWOOF UK has nothing to do with dogs – and everything to do with farming and growing vegetables in an organic and sustainable way. The acronym actually stands for “World Wide Opportunities on Organic

Farms.” This means many of the farmers WWOOF works with are wanting to attract bees onto their land – and of course are not using pesticides that can be harmful to these insects. Indeed some of them even have their own apiaries.

The charity specialises in linking farmers and growers with people who are interested in learning more about organic food production and sustainable life styles and promotes an educational exchange whereby volunteers help out on a host farm in return for food, accommodation and learning new skills.

The concept dates back to 1971 when a London secretary was looking for a cheap way to get out of the city for the weekend. Realising that organic agriculture was more labour intensive than conventional farming methods she hit on the “win win” idea of offering her time in return for some country air and physical exercise. Now you can “WWOOF” (as volunteering within the charity is affectionately known) in more than 60 countries worldwide.

WWOOF UK are always looking for new and interesting hosts... and of course for more willing volunteers. So – if you could do with the occasional pair of extra hands to help out with your bees or their honey ...or indeed



Christine's top-bar hives taking shape.

if you yourself would like to trace Sue Coppard's steps and get out in to the country and meet bee-keepers in a different setting – then do check out <http://www.wwoof.org.uk>.

To inspire you further we thought we would feature two of WWOOF UK's bee-keeping hosts here.

Christine, a Devon beekeeper

Christine lives along the appropriately named Buzzacott Lane, in deepest, darkest Devon. She is not a conventional farmer but someone who is seeking to live as sustainably as possible – inspired by a film she saw on TV in 2008 (but can't remember the title of). Part of her plan to move involved completing a BBK course – which was underpinned by her already having a degree in biology.

Her property consists of approximately 2 acres. One acre has been planted up with trees, mostly for fuel but also to create an attractive woodland and for fruit and nuts. A vegetable garden is in process – and her apiary for bee-keeping started up in April 2011. Volunteers are usually housed in one of two spare double bedrooms though camping is also possible, weather permitting.

Christine keeps 3 hives on a carved terrace accessed via an old shed with an exposed end wall that means visitors can view the bees easily. Below the terrace is a copse with bee forage and there is a pond too (whose main purpose is to distract the bees from the neighbours swimming pool!).

Whilst acknowledging that all bee-keeping is “unnatural” Christine tries to keep interference to a minimum; planning flower forage for them, not feeding them sugar and only taking enough honey for her own needs – and some wax for the occasional candle.



Steve.

In 2014, after providing for her friends and family, Christine had a good year, with an excess of 12 jars of honey being sold in the village shop, and also the thrill of trading some more in return for a Christmas goose with some neighbours who are WWOOF hosts too.

Christine always delights in opening up her hive seeing the eggs and larvae and inhaling the smell of wax and honey on a sunny afternoon.

As with many people – she first heard of WWOOF UK via word of mouth. She has been a member for 4 years and finds she is inundated with offers of help in July. She prefers to have visitors for one or two weeks at a time.

Of course – not all volunteers are interested in bee keeping (they do gardening or bee related tasks like making frames); some are wary and keep away but equally there are those who want to borrow a suit, hold the smoker and complete an inspection.

Christine's most memorable “WWOOFers” painted the afore mentioned shed and went along to the local BBK branch meet with her; taking selfies of themselves in their suits – which other members of the meeting found hilarious.

Given some of the health and safety issues around working with bees – Christine always requires willing volunteers to wear a suit and checks whether they suffer from sting induced anaphylaxis! She also checks in with them frequently to ensure they are completely comfortable with the situation. The key to a successful WWOOF exchange, she says, is good communication and the clear setting of boundaries – which the main WWOOF office would strongly agree with.



One of Steve's hives.

Steve, a Norfolk beekeeper

By contrast, Steve Mahoney, a host in Norfolk, runs about 80 hives and sells honey and wax locally.

His relationship with bees started about 20 years ago after helping a friend with his bees. "I guess I just had some kind of affinity with it because like a lot of people I was hooked straight away and now a summer without bees would be very sad indeed!" says Steve.

For him part of the fascination of bee keeping is its weather dependency, both day to day and seasonally, and the connection this brings with the local environment.

Steve feels seeing the bees through a year keeps him very in tune with the local conditions and ecology. As no two years are the same there are new challenges (and frustrations) each season but you never stop learning – Steve acknowledges that he makes new mistakes every year but somehow the bees seem to put up with him!

Steve heard about WWOOF through local friends who are smallholders – and joined in 2008. He says he has had many great experiences and met lots of interesting people through WWOOF and would thoroughly recommend it to anyone who wants a hand with their land and has a desire to share skills and stories with keen helpers.

He is delighted when any of the volunteers who come along are interested in bee-keeping. Not only is it great to share the experience, but the lifting too!

Asked about the best thing about working with WWOOFers and bees, Steve comments "There is always that moment with a new helper when we open the

first hive and I see a "Oh my God there are so many of them!" look flash across their face but straight away we focus in on the task in hand and within moments the fascination takes over and we are working away surrounded by thousands of bees taking no notice of us except to wish we were out of their way so they can get on with their important work."

Like Christine – Steve is careful to ensure all his helpers have proper protection as it is essential for them to feel completely confident. He always makes sure they are well kitted out and resists the temptation to manage with granny's old net curtains and a pair of marigolds!

Opportunities

So – we hope anyone keeping bees and growing food (on any scale) in an environmentally sensitive and responsible way will consider joining WWOOF to pass on their skills and enthusiasm- and get some useful help from some great people!

Or maybe you might just join WWOOF for a bit of a busman's holiday and visit some other bee keepers and share ideas! WWOOF currently has 9 hosts who feature bee keeping as part of their activities but with 600+ hosts on their books you may find there are a few others who dabble – or provide you with interesting and complimentary alternatives (or distractions)!

A Recent Trip to US

In May, Mark took 3 weeks off work (during which time he removed his queens to mini mating hives and left most of his colonies with a single queen cell to re queen without risk of swarming whilst he was away) and went to visit his friends in the U.S.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

It has not been a good year for US Beekeepers. Average winter losses across the 50 states of 40% have left many keepers feeling less than optimistic. According to the Bee Informed Partnership, most amateur keepers have blamed varroa and other pests and pathogens as the main cause of winter losses whilst the majority of commercial keepers have blamed the long cold winter they have had.

Whilst in Atlanta I had time to spend a day with my friend Cindy Hodge, chair of the Metro Atlanta Beekeeping Association. Cindy's losses were small and her losses were mostly small nuc colonies from late splits and swarms which failed to combine.

Despite some minor losses she has managed to increase her stocks since I last saw her in October and has over 50 hives. According to figures just released by the Bee Informed Partnership US colony numbers are currently at a 20 year high, busting the myth that CCD is wiping out honey bee stocks.

I helped Cindy move 2 hives to a new apiary. The hives were given to her by a couple moving to the state of Alabama where taking comb and used equipment into the state is forbidden. The hive owners had made up packages of bees from their 2 hives to start again in their their new home and the parent colonies had been given to the association as a gift. Three colonies were big. One was a double brood Langstroth with 3 heavy supers on it. We strapped them up best we could and used Cindy's clever hive lifter to carry the hives between us. The hives were moved about a 30 minute drive outside of the city to a large organic farm with meadows, lake and woodland – a perfect new home for them.

By end of May the beekeeping season is considered pretty much over in Atlanta. Few plants still flower by then and it's very hot and dry. Many colonies actually have a brood gap during the summer as queens go off lay due to lack of incoming stores. They then resume reproduction in the Autumn with the blooming of the late season perennials.

I was glad to see very few small hive beetles on this trip. The cold winter had helped to kill a lot of them.



Cindy's hive lifter.



A beneath brood box oil trap tray to collect hive beetles.



Breathable entrance blocker Cindy uses when transporting hives.

"Don't Bee Sad – Bee Appy"

Jason Butler
Creator of Bee Appy

Jason contacted us about his new record-keeping App. We've not tried it, but if someone tries it, perhaps they could review it for us?

For me a plastic coated sheet in an A4 folder near the apiary doesn't quite cut it in the modern age. Possibly as it's bulky, but mainly as it doesn't really have the added functionality that comes with the social networks of today.

How therefore can the hive inspection be modernised? Most of my life is aligned to my iPhone/iPad, hence the first piece was to see if they work with Nitrate gloves – yes! Next is making sure that the screen cover can survive a bit of propolis or honey – rubbing alcohol wipes seem to work fine to clean it up. I remain unsure I would want to do it without a screen protector in place. The basic functionality is simple to replicate, take the best features from the many hive inspection cards that are on the internet. Touch screens mean that instead of a pen all you need is your finger, instead of multiple folders and sheets just your iPhone.

What functionality could be added – well hive identification is easier with GPS, so a mapping system. It means you can share the location with a fellow beekeeper as well as provide driving directions. Why not add photographs of the apiary, hive and queen. Get the system to automatically record the date and time of the inspection then provide data that trends the hive through the years. Finally add useful links – BBKA, beebase and the ability to buy equipment online if needed.

So why this article? Well if you search for an iPhone/iPad hive inspection application then you will be disappointed in the lack of affordable software. My hive inspection system Bee 'Appy has now been released on the Apple store, if you do decide to download it please let me know what's missing or how it could be improved. Don't Bee Sad – Bee Appy (look I'm a beekeeper not a slogan writer)

June's Facebook (In)digest(ion)

LBKA's open Facebook page is an active community of over 1000 from around London and other parts of the UK and world. Lots of interesting material gets posted, but here's a mere glimpse of what you might have missed.

We're looking for more volunteers to write these in different months. If you'd like to, please email services@lbka.org.uk

Tabitha Stanmore
LBKA member

Swarms

As swarm season continues, unsurprisingly swarms questions and reports continue to feature on the LBKA Facebook group.

After completing an artificial swarm, Ben found that the parent colony was still making 2-3 queen cells every week, while three weeks on the new colony's queen wasn't showing any new larvae or eggs. The consensus from Thomas and Sarah was to insert a test frame of eggs into the new colony and see how the bees react. Thomas suggested that the weather may have just made the young queen a slow starter. Depending on where the queen cells are in the parent colony, the bees may be in supercedure or swarm mode.

Andrew inspected his hives in time to find eight sealed queen cells and – amazingly – the old queen and colony unswarmed. Andrew performed an artificial swarm, and left two queen cells in the new colony, and a new queen emerged almost instantly as he was tearing down her cell. Andrew wasn't sure what to do as next steps; Geoff suggested that the new queen will be fine, but might set off in a cast swarm or destroy the remaining queen cell, 'depending which book she reads'. It's unusual that the old queen remained until after the new queen emerged; Karen suggested putting the extra queens into mating nucs.

Jon asked whether one of his colonies, which swarmed to a bait hive close to their old hive, will react well to being moved back to their old site. Mark suggested keeping the new colony away from the parent for the time being, and waiting to see how the parent colony (which has been acting haphazardly and may be queenless) develops before maybe reuniting the colony. Moving the new colony to the old site would risk confusing the bees of the parent colony, and causing the queens to fight.

Binish asked for advice about a new swarm she had



Conveniently at shoulder height.

installed in a hive, but hadn't seen any bees coming or going for two days. The consensus was that the bees had either died or left.

Mark shared a photo of a swarm he discovered on the way to his allotment. The bees were gathered at shoulder height, but on either side of the fencing boards so not so easy to collect. Unfortunately the seat of Mark's trousers tore halfway through the collection – needless to say the new bees came at an eye-watering price!

Mark mentioned a swarm he was called out to collect at Monument Station. The bees had gathered on railings and boarding beside the new cycle superhighway, and stopped workmen from their work. When Mark arrived there were already two well-known monetising beekeepers on the scene – all of the swarms Mark has been called out to handle this season were on commercial properties, suggesting companies charging to keep poorly-managed hives are the root cause of urban swarms, not yuppy beekeepers!

Angela posted a 'warts and all' article about urban beekeeping from the Telegraph, describing the challenges urban beekeepers experience in cities during swarming season: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/goodlife/11621655/I-loved-beekeeping.-Then-the-swarms-escaped.html>

Angela posted an article from the Evening Standard about a man who was fined for careless driving after a swarm of Russian bees escaped from a box in his car. The conclusions: 1) the Evening Standard is obsessed



"I loved beekeeping. Then the swarms escaped". Source: Telegraph.

with Russian busybodies, and 2) take care when collecting swarms in your car!

Diseases and pests

The International Bee Research Association's studies were shared a lot this month, as were articles on varroa and Colony Collapse Disorder.

Norman and Andrea both shared an image from the IBRA about the small hive beetle in Europe. There have been no instances of SHB in Italy or Sicily so far this year, but EU-mandated inspections will carry on until November.

Norman shared a post from the IBRA about Nosema Cerenae. New research has shown that the bacteria can shorten an adult bee's life if the larvae are artificially infected. The implications of this are still unclear.

Dara shared an article in USA Today, revealing that Varroa mites are able to adapt their scent to match that of beehives, making it easier for them to infiltrate a colony. Angela added that new mites adopt the hive's scent within 20 minutes of emerging, explaining why bees don't notice the parasite. Article here: <http://msutoday.msu.edu/news/2015/a-smelling-bee/>.

Catherine shared an article about the controversies around Colony Collapse Disorder. Angela pointed to poor treatment of honey bees by commercial pollinators as a cause, as well as pesticides. John argued that CCD is a catch-all term to cover for the propensity to treat bees as pests in the US, and the overuse of GM crops and antibiotics.

David shared an article reporting the death of 37 million bees in Ontario after nearby farmers sprayed Neonicotinoids onto their crops: <http://bit.ly/1NSgUHZ>.

Norman shared an IBRA lecture on 'Pesticides and Bees: A Dangerous Mix'. The lecture is now available on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZSGTsPQJCY>

Roman shared a new method for varroa control being

trialled in the Czech Republic, involving thermosolar hives: <http://yhoo.it/1HR6rfKI>.

Paul shared an article from the Daily Mail warning of honey bee losses of up to 15% per year due to poor weather. The article sparked controversy in the group, with Angela citing 10% losses as normal, so a 15% loss is not so extreme, while Mark pointed out that honey bees are still on the increase overall. Bill agreed that honey bees seem to be thriving but stressed that without beekeepers' intervention, colonies would be faring far worse from varroa. Andrea and Angela discussed the negative impression the BBKA are making by being so pessimistic about honey bee numbers, while the real threat through habitat loss is felt by solitary and bumble bees.

Queens

Paul wrote an extraordinary account of his experience at the swarm apiary, where he managed to watch three new queens emerge from their cells simultaneously on the bottom of the same frame. Knowing that the queens were from a very docile and productive colony, Paul moved one of the queens to a mating nuc with a few girls, left one queen to stay in the original nuc and, on a whim and as an experiment, placed the final queen at the entrance to a queenless colony. Expecting the queen to be instantly killed, Paul was surprised to find that within 30 seconds the guard bees had accepted her and let her into the hive! Hours later, she was well settled in and being taken care of by the bees.

Jon put out a request for a new queen, as he has a colony with no eggs (and apparently no queen), but the bees are failing to create any queen cells on the frame of brood Jon introduced. Thomas and Richard both suggested waiting longer to verify whether there is an unmated queen in the colony, as Richard once waited 5 weeks for a new queen to start laying.

Tristram asked for advice on a colony which seems to be queenless with laying workers, but no queen cells developed on the test frame he inserted. Tristram asked whether laying workers can inhibit the bees' impulse to create queen cells, and if workers are able to lay single eggs. Responses varied, with Andy and Angela suggesting that there is still a queen in the hive, possibly unmated or just not very effective. Angela suggested re-queening or uniting the hive to ensure the colony is strong enough to get through winter.

Emma asked whether the bees were continuing to act normally, as if they're not irritated or erratic it's likely the queen is still in the hive. She suggested a different method for finding the queen if a test frame failed: 'Put an empty brood box on the upturned roof next to the hive. With a partner, take out each brood frame one at a time, check both sides thoroughly for the queen and pass to your partner to do the same. Put the brood frame in the empty brood box and do the same for each brood frame in turn. If the brood frames are put in the empty brood box in pairs, sometimes the bees



Mating bees.



Lime (linden) blossom.

start to cluster around the frame with the queen and give the game away. Usually if a queen is in the hive then she'll be found in this way.'

Sales/announcements

Ribbet Malone is looking to speak to beekeepers as part of some research he is conducting at SOAS. Ribbet is exploring the relationships between urban beekeepers and their bees, and would like to talk to as many beeks as possible, visit hives, and conduct interviews. If you are interested and would like to get involved, please contact him at 604535@soas.ac.uk.

Norman posted a link to the updated bee disease identification cards he has created, now available through the International Bee Research Association bookshop for £5.

Norman highlighted that all issues of the Journal of Apicultural Research from 1962 onwards are now available online through the Taylor & Francis website.

Paul and Dara shared an incredible video from The Guardian showing the mating flight of a queen bee: <https://embed.theguardian.com/embed/video/environment/video/2013/sep/06/queen-bee-wedding-flight-video>.

Andrea reminded us that pollen identification cards are available from the IBRA website.



Sadly honeycomb is unwelcome in bird boxes.

Andrea shared a photo of the COLOSS B-RAP meeting in Copenhagen by the International Bee Research Association. The topic was 'Bridging Bee Research and Beekeeping Practice', discussing ways to connect bee research to beekeepers.

Apiterra shared photos of his hive and linden (lime) trees, stressing the value of linden nectar.

Karen shared an article from the Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects about the flower-visiting rates of bees: <http://www.hindawi.com/journals/psyche/2015/134630/>.

Mark and Paul both advertised a number of nucs for sale from the LBKA; all collected swarms with 3+ frames of brood and a marked, clipped, mated queen. If anyone is interested in buying a nuc, please get in touch with Paul Vagg and resources@lbka.org.uk.

Graham shared photos of wild comb he removed from a lady's bird box – beautifully formed, but sadly unwelcome!

Adventures in Beeland: Case of the disappearing queen: mystery solved

Emily's regular guest article from her excellent blog:
<http://adventuresinbeeland.com/>.

Emily Scott
LBKA member

It is always satisfying to solve a mystery. Even when you turn out to be the culprit.

You may recall me mentioning that Queen Andromeda has been missing in action since I combined her colony with Queen Cassiopeia's on 6th June, as poor Cassiopeia had turned out to be a drone layer. Two test frames of eggs/larvae kindly donated by Tom had resulted in no queen cells being produced – usually an indication that a satisfactory queen is already present. Yet I could find no eggs or uncapped larvae in the brood box and could not find Queen Andromeda, who had previously been a star layer.

Well, yesterday I looked in my super properly. At first it seemed to be bursting with incredibly heavy capped honey. But then – a tiny bit of worker brood on one of the frames. Could it be? And there, climbing up a super frame with an egg emerging cheekily from her abdomen, was the elusive, much looked-for, Queen Andromeda. A face-palm moment. She has now been moved down into her rightful home, her two brood boxes.

This colony at the allotment has given me no end of trouble this year but I have learnt a few things from it:

- Trust the test-frame. If they don't make queen cells from a test-frame you put in containing eggs and larvae, you can be pretty certain they already have a queen they're happy with, even if you can't find any evidence of her.
- If something goes wrong, it's probably your fault! Beekeeper error seems to cause the majority of queen problems and indeed most beekeeping problems in general.
- Inspect supers more closely. I have been avoiding doing this because the bees are so tightly packed in there it's hard to take frames out without rolling the bees and squashing them, but smoke would help with that. We have discovered a queen cell in the top of Melissa's two supers this year!

The "wall of comb" (see picture) was an amusing thing we found in Melissa's super yesterday. They have done



Poppies and hives at allotments.



Wall of comb.



Natural comb in super.



Honey bee on buddleia.

away with the bottom bee space and joined the top and bottom frames in the two supers together. Such naughty bees.

Oh and the “natural comb in super” (see picture) is another brilliant example of beekeeper error. This is what happens when you leave a super one frame short in the hottest week of the year. The bees fill the space in for you with a perfect comb which makes it impossible to take the super off to inspect the brood box. We will have to put bee escapes in next weekend and then harvest some cut comb the next day once all the bees have left.

Meeting this sweet little honey bee was a high point of my Friday lunch break. I was walking along by some ruined roman walls, a busy walkway used by tourists and office workers. Stopping to look at pretty wildflowers growing along the walls, I noticed a honey bee crawling on the pavement. I touched her but she didn't fly off. This concerned me as she seemed sluggish and so perhaps likely to get stepped on. I put my hand down to her and she climbed on. Cupping her gently in my hands, I carried her to this buddleia flower, as she seemed in need of sustenance.

To be honest, I think she probably died soon after I left her. She seemed barely able to move. But I was comforted that here was somewhere fragrant and peaceful for her to pass away. Better for this tired summer worker to die surrounded by the enveloping heady scent of nectar – her life's work – than to be trodden underfoot by someone's unseeing shoe.

In honour of her memory, and in honour of all her hard-working nectar and pollen carrying relatives, here is a pretty poppy.



Pretty poppy with hoverfly.

Poetry corner

Stephanie (Sonority) Turner (<http://www.sonorityturner.com/>) is a poet, social artist and creative facilitator. She works with young people and community groups using creativity to explore ideas around ecology, society and empowerment. She is currently developing a collection of poems about bees which will be exhibited in 2016. She has provided three short poems for our enjoyment.

Stephanie (Sonority) Turner
Poet, social artist and creative facilitator

Shakespeare

Two bees or not two bees?
 Maybe it was two wasps.

B-U-Z-Z-I-N-G

A bug and a bee
 sitting in a tree
 B-U-Z-Z-I-N-G

First came a laugh
 then came a dance
 then they came down
 to the ground.

The B-Line

Like a train on a track
 or the wave of an ocean

Like a grumble from a belly
 or the white noise of an analogue telly

Like the rumble of a tumble dryer
 or the shake of an earthquake

The B-boys and the B-girls
 are break dancing
 on bark carpets

Its bigger than hip-hop
 that's the B-line
 from a buzzing Bee hive.

Members selling to members

This section is for members selling things or selling services to others. This could include honey, nucs and wax. Email services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

Andrew Tottenham is moving house and has some full hives (with bees!) to sell. Please contact him on andrew@tottenhamco.com for more information.

Upcoming events

Sunday 12th July: Monthly meeting: Honey extraction and labelling.

11:00-12:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

Honey extraction and labelling: how, advice and regulation. Non-members are welcome to come and find out more about LBKA.

Saturday 18th to Sunday 19th July: Lambeth Country Show

Brockwell Park, Dulwich Road, SE24 0PA

Come and see us at our stall at the Lambeth Country Show.

Sunday 23rd August (date changed): Monthly meeting: Summer Social

11:00-13:00 at Walworth Garden Farm, 206 Manor Place, SE17 3BN

Summer Social at Walworth Garden Farm, including use of and sale of Apiguard. Members only (and their guests).

Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions (and offers of help)! We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, chair@lbka.org.uk
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary:** Emma Nye, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership services:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Forage:** Mark Patterson, forage@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Paul Vagg, resources@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Emily Abbott, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Tristram Sutton, mentoring@lbka.org.uk

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/>.

