



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

September, 2016

Welcome to this month's newsletter! There are quite a few events with competitions and honey-selling opportunities coming up – see the announcements! Mark is back this month, along with Richard, Howard and Emily who provide their regular contributions (though, luckily, Richard's bad new is not so regular). Eugene is also back, this time reporting on what went on on our open Facebook page. Vlad tells us what's been going on at our teaching apiary at Mudchute, Martin recreates the Summer Social in words, Simon bears the sad news of Billy Ashton's passing and Geoff tackles Ivy honey.

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A big thank you to all this month's contributors: **Eugene Fahy, Richard Glassborow, Geoff Hood, Martin Hudson, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Emily Scott, Simon Wilks and Vlad Zamfir.**

Please contact me if you would be willing to contribute to next month's newsletter.

Aidan Slingsby
Editor
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From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

I happen to be reading a book at the moment called "Black Box Thinking". Essentially it is about the culture of organisations in respect to their response to errors and other adverse events. Are they able to learn when things go wrong or do they blame, entrench and deny? Two contrasting examples are the health industry (worldwide), which the author maintains has a hierarchical blame culture inclined to deny anything adverse and so is inclined to repeat "mistakes" and is very slow to improve; the other is the airline industry, also worldwide, which has a remarkable safety record given the inherent risks because it has developed a culture that learns from adverse events and errors and encourages reporting of all errors and potential risks regardless of rank.

I believe there are lessons here relevant to beekeeping and this has been called into focus because, as many of you will by now be aware, one of our teaching apiaries – Brockwell – recently had a case of EFB confirmed. This is an adverse event if ever there was one and I hope here to share some of the experience so that we as an organisation, as well as our members individually, may learn from the experience.

As we know, EFB is a notifiable disease. We are bound to report it to the bee inspector. But that supposes you identify it. I have never seen EFB before and I have never been confident that I would recognise it if



I did see it, not least because the early stages are not dissimilar to sac brood. Some side by side comparative images here might be useful but in the meantime do keep checking the APHA guide to Foulbrood Diseases of Honeybees: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadDocument.cfm?id=7>.

I understand that 80% of cases of EFB are first identified by the bee inspector rather than the beekeeper, so well done Petros for suspecting the worst and calling in a second opinion, and well done Karin (the second opinion) for recognising EFB and calling in the bee inspector. It is easy to underestimate how hard it can be to catch up when theory turns into real life.

I do not intend to dwell here on the beekeeping details of identification, treatment and prevention but I believe there are some useful lessons in some of the peripheral events surrounding an EFB outbreak.

The first thing to happen on confirmation is that the apiary is locked down. Nothing goes out and anything that has recently left must be brought back for sterilisation. Do you know what has been in your apiary recently? It could include clothing, tools, equipment, supers, honey buckets. The honey itself is safe once jarred – for humans but not for bees. (It is thought that contaminated honey, either robbed from other colonies or stores or from shop bought honey left where bees can get at it, is a very likely source of EFB outbreaks).

If an outbreak occurs early in the year and is detected before it has infected too much of a colony, EFB can be treated by performing a shook swarm. But the old, infected frames still have to be disposed of on site. Will you be able to do this in apiary? It might be good to think ahead.

At this time of year (as at Brockwell) it is too late for a shook swarm. The colony would not be able to recover before winter. So the bees and the frames have to be destroyed, again by fire. You can see from the photos at Brockwell, we are not talking about a BBQ. The recommended dimensions of the fire pit are 1.5×1.5m by as deep as you can get it up to 1m. (If the outbreak had been AFB the hive boxes would have to go in as well as the frames.) We were lucky at Brockwell but I know I would struggle to find this kind of area of diggable land at some of my apiaries.

While the fire is raging the rest of the equipment has to be scraped then scorched and the scrapings committed to the fire. A chef's blowtorch would not be adequate for this much work.

While on the subject of just how much equipment needs to be treated it is worth reflecting on the importance of record keeping. We all know the importance of marking hives and supers so that wet supers can go back on the same hive they came from after extraction – to reduce the risk of cross-infection. But here is another thing: if you cannot prove which supers had been on the infected colonies, all the supers in the apiary will



Petros digs a big pit.



We put bricks at the bottom of the pit to create a sump to collect the honey from the frames (burning honey is evil).

have to be treated and all frames destroyed. But you will only get insurance compensation for the number of infected colonies. With a big apiary or colonies with a lot of supers you could really lose out for the want of adequate record keeping.

Insurance might also have another sting in the tail: when you fill in your BDI form you state how many colonies you have. If the worst happens and you have to make a claim, the bee inspector will see how many hives you have and that is what goes on the form. If it is the same or less than you have insured, well and good: you will get compensation. But if you have had a split, artificial swarm or brought in a collected swarm and you now have more colonies than insured, the worst just gets worse – you are under-insured and you will get no compensation. This did not happen at Brockwell, but the lesson is still there to learn. When you register colonies with BDI, anticipate some expansion.

So I hope this experience has provided some additional learning to add to the basic beekeeping best practices such as apiary hygiene, keeping strong healthy colonies and never, ever allowing your bees to feed on shop bought honey or dirty old frames. But for all that, Brockwell was a well-organised, clean, well-run apiary. It still got infected. If it can happen to an apiary like that it can happen to anyone. We can all help reduce the risks by being open, non judgemental and share our worst experiences as well as our narrow escapes – as well of course as the successes we so like to boast about!

Finally, for help managing this outbreak, I would like to thank Petros Hahladakis, apiary manager, the very experienced Karin Courtman, and David Roy, a new mentee who was very generous with his time and effort. Good teamwork is everything at a time like this.

Our thanks also to the bee inspector, Mark Patterson. I recommend all good beekeepers should recognise that the bee inspector is on our side.

Announcements

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

Next Monthly Meeting

The next monthly meeting will be on **Sunday 11th September at 11:00** at **Fairley House Junior School** (220 Lambeth Rd, SE1 7JY) on the subject of **uniting colonies for the winter**.

We'll talk about the relative merits of uniting colonies or otherwise for winter, how to do it, and people ex-



This was no BBQ.



A lot of equipment to scrape and scorch.



The venue for September's monthly meeting – the white door on the left.

periences of this. This and other related topics will be followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat.

That the Tour of Britain on the same day as our meeting. See TFL's travel advice at <https://tfl.gov.uk/status-updates/major-works-and-events/tour-of-britain?cid=tour-of-britain>.

For **next month**, we have **moved October's Monthly Meeting** – both in space and time – back a week to **Sunday 16th October** at the **Lancaster London Hotel** (Lancaster Terrace, W2 2TY). This is so that we can go along to the London Honey Show afterwards (page 5!)

Harvest Stomp

We'll have a stall at this annual community festival on **Saturday 25th September** at **Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park** that celebrates food and the harvest, providing the festivals with a fascinating showcase of bees, beekeeping and products of the hive. Mark is running the stall and will have a wide range of informative and entertaining props that will help us tell East Londoners about bees... and hopefully be able to show them some live bees.

If you'd like to **help** and/or **sell honey** (or other hive-related products), please email Emily at events@lbka.org.uk. You'll need to bring your products to the event yourself, but let us know if you need some help doing so. We will sell honey at fixed prices to help make it easier to keep track of what's going on – probably £10 (1lb jar), £7.50 (8oz) £10 (300g cut comb) and £8 (200g cut comb). Just make sure you know exactly how many you brought with you.

Harvest Stomp also has a series of fun cake and vegetable based competitions. Enter yours for the Best Planted or Decorated Boot, Best Bake with a Harvest or Garden Theme (sweet or savoury), The Longest Runner Bean, The Tastiest Homemade Preserve, The Funniest Wonky Vegetable, The Most Creative Fruit & Veg Animal (an animal or character made using fruit & veg), The Tastiest Locally Grown Tomato, The Best Dressed Harvest or Vegetable Themed Dog, The Heaviest Pumpkin, Best Photo (gorgeous garden and beautiful balcony) and The Best Gardening Poem. Do con-



sider entering something and do us proud! The deadline for entries is **21st September**.

Courses for bee campaigners

This September we will be running two courses for the campaigning organisation 38 Degrees (<https://home.38degrees.org.uk/>). They have tens of thousands of members in London who have campaigned against pesticides and this course will be a chance for us to share our passion for bees with them and bust some common myths about their plight.

The courses will be on **Monday 26th and Friday 30th September** at **St Paul's Church** in Clapham from **18:45 to 21:30**. Do let us know if you're able to come to help on the tea bar. Contact admin@lbka.org.uk to find out more.

Billy Ashton

We are very sad to report that Billy Ashton died very suddenly last month (page 7).

Want to help run our association?

The LBKA Committee will soon be up for election and we'd like to have some new people join the committee.

So whether your interests are in fundraising, writing, using social media in new ways, organising, campaigning, graphic design, film-making, giving talks, educating, etc., joining the committee can help your skills and improve the association. If you're new to the association and have enjoyed taking part in our activities, do consider it for the coming year!

Of course, you don't need to be on the committee to volunteer and help us out. But being on the committee presents a unique opportunity to help take the association in new directions. Now we are a charity, there is even more scope for doing new things. One of the major impediments to us doing new things is having enough people with required skills to lead and otherwise help us carry these out.

The Buzz around Lancaster Gate

LONDON BEES.COM W2

Please talk to any of our committee (see back page of this newsletter) if you want to know more or offer your skills and ideas, even if you don't actually want to join the committee.

London Honey Show

The London Honey Show (<http://www.londonbees.com/>) is on **Sunday 16th October** at the **Lancaster Hotel** (Westbourne Suite, Lancaster Terrace, W2 2TY). We will have a stall there at which members can sell their honey, but watch this space!

Like last year, they have some competitive classes: Best Home Honey (honey from hives kept in your garden, allotment or own residential space), Best Rooftop Honey, Best honey from Hives kept at a Business or Educational site, Best Packaging and Battle of the Regions (North vs South) – more details are at <http://www.londonbees.com/the-london-honey-show-2013-2/honey-competition/>.

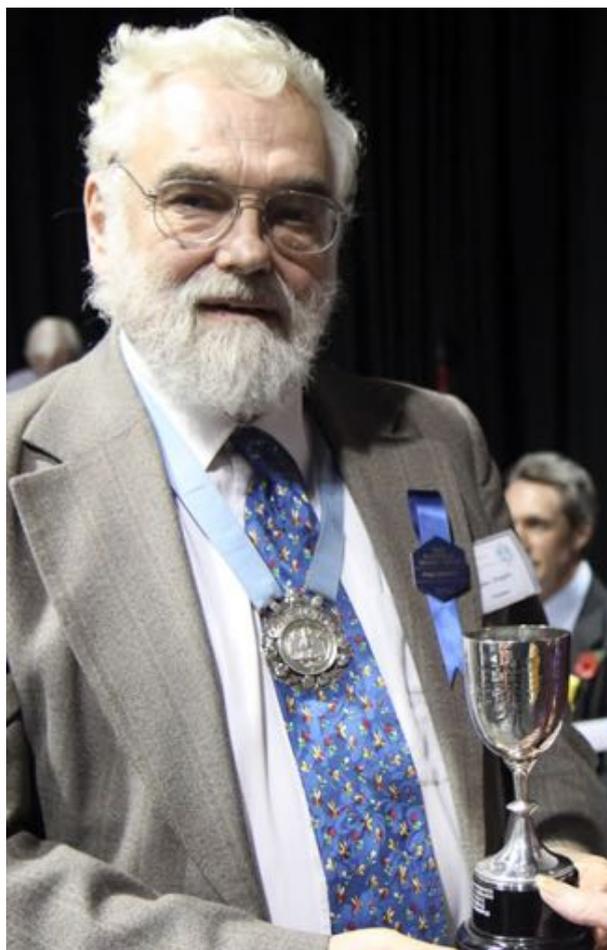
The **closing date for entries is 7th October** and you can deliver your entries from then until the day of the show.

This will coincide with our October Monthly Meeting, which we have **moved to this day and this location**, so we can do both on the same day in the same place!

National Honey Show

The 85th National Honey Show (<http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/>) will on **Thursday 27th to Saturday 29th October** at the new venue of **Sandown Park Racecourse** (Esher, Surrey, KT10 9AJ). As usual, there's a trade show, lectures, workshops and competitions.

For the competition, there are over 250 classes to enter. **We sponsor three classes** at this show: **two jars light or medium honey** (class 241), **two jars naturally crystallised or soft set honey** (class 242) and **one jar of liquid honey judged solely on taste, aroma and viscosity** (class 243). We strongly encourage our members to enter. In the spirit of openness, they are open to all, but it would be great if they were won by our members! Please consider entering, but do read the entry rules very carefully. **The deadline for registering your entries is 10th October 2016** or 17th October 2016 for late entries which often incur a fee. See <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/competitive-classes.php> for more details.



Former LBKA Chair, John Chapple, winning prizes last year at the National Honey Show.

[honeyshow.co.uk/competitive-classes.php](http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/competitive-classes.php) for more details.

Are you going? Are you able to volunteer to take members' entries on their behalf? That would be extremely appreciated and will be a great help. If you can, let Aidan know at services@lbka.org.uk.

Thanks to our mentors!

Tristram and the Committee would like to like to express their heartfelt thanks to our mentors for this year. These were **Ann Eatwell, Richard Glassborow, Petros Hahladakis, Jon Harris, Cerys Harrow, Howard Nichols, Ted Parks, Mark Patterson, Emily Scott, Aidan Slingsby, Paul Vagg, Roger Wharf, Angela Woods and Vlad Zemfir**. Our mentors are all members who volunteer their time to help make our offering to new beekeepers so valuable.

We hope that mentees will wish to continue next year. We are also looking for new mentors for next year. If you're still quite new to beekeeping, it might be a daunting prospect, but I'll almost certainly realise that you know a lot and can provide useful training. Please talk to Tristram (mentoring@lbka.org.uk) or any of this year's mentors.

Extractors

We have extractors that we hire out to members, for a small £5 fee plus £20 deposit (to cover the cost of maintenance and replacement) for up to 3-days. These are stored in our lock-up at Walworth Garden.

Please email David (treasurer@lbka.org.uk) or Tristram (mentoring@lbka.org.uk) if you'd like to book one. Sue Lee has also kindly offered to store and hire out one of our extractors.

Bees

For anyone with bees to sell, http://lbka.org.uk/swarm_list.html has a list of members looking for bees.

Queen of the Sun: What Are the Bees Telling Us?

Member Meetal Patel is organising a screening of **Queen of the Sun: What Are the Bees Telling Us?**, an "alternative look at the global bee crisis". This will be held at **Stepney City Farm**. More details and booking information can be found at <http://bit.ly/2aVjYdr>.

Apiary site opportunity

Mark R is a landscape gardener with some clients in **Hendon** who are interested in hosting a hive in their garden. If you're interested, contact services@lbka.org.uk.

Old announcements from July

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

Congratulations to **Vlad Zamfir, Mike True, Julie Bourguignon, Esben Hesketh, John Leiper, Elliot Hodges, Meetal Patel, Tue Sando, Eugene Fahy, Aby Sykes, Dean Forbes, Paul McCarthy, Frank Ryan, Abdul Miah** and **Vesko Starchikov** for passing their BBKA Bee Basic exams. Also, a big thank you to Howard Nichols for helping them get through the exams as he has done excellently for many years.

Old announcements from June

WhatsApp: If you'd like to be on one of our WhatsApp groups, contact Aidan on services@lbka.org.uk.

Pesticides: Dave Goulson is raising money to help screen for plants with high neonicotinoids – see <http://bit.ly/25wdu7v> for more information.

Apiary available: St Paul's Way trust school in Poplar are offering space within their school grounds for a

competent beekeeper to place 1-2 hives – contact [garylynch@spwt.net](mailto:garyllynch@spwt.net).

Old announcements from May

Assets to LBKA charity: members voted at our EGM to transfer our assets to the new LBKA charity.

Vlad Zamfir: The committee have co-opted Vlad Zamfir (vlad.zamfir@lbka.org.uk) onto the committee. He will help run our Mudchute apiary, web analytics and digital outreach.

Bee waiting list: Our bees/swarm/nucs waiting list is at http://lbka.org.uk/swarm_list.html. Aidan (services@lbka.org.uk) can add/remove you to/from this. Members can also use this list to offer bees to members.

Tesco Grant: We were awarded £8K by Tesco to help revive the Meadows at Mudchute.

Vicarage apiary site available: Next door to Fulham Palace.

Old announcements from March

Apiaries on offer: The London Fire Brigade are offering Wennington (RM13 9EE), Hornchurch (RM11 1SH), Woodford (IG8 0BS), Park Royal (NW10 7NU), Chiswick (W4 4JY), Biggin Hill (TN16 3UB) and Addington (CR0 0QA) as potential beekeeping sites; contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

£2500 donation: Neil's Yard Remedies have donated a further £2500 to LBKA through their "Bee Lovely Campaign" which we will use for our forage creation programme that Mark is running.

Members' area: Logon to the "members-only" section of the website at http://lbka.org.uk/members_area.html to check your details, read minutes and peruse opted-in members (if you are also opted-in).

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.

Bee of the month: Ivy Mining Bee

Mark's series on different types of non-honeybee.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

The **Ivy Mining Bee** (*Colletes hederæ*) feeds almost exclusively on Ivy. This attractive stripy bee is a relatively new addition to the British Isles. 40 years ago this was a very rare vagrant but in the past few decades it has expanded its territory north into the UK and is now increasingly common throughout southern England. This bee emerges from its 9 month hibernation in late August/early September and when it emerges it seeks out Ivy blooms to collect nectar and pollen to provisions its offspring. They nest underground in burrows often in large congregations. You can help map their expansion in the UK by submitting your sightings to the Bee Wasps and Ants Recording Society at <http://www.bwars.com/content/colletes-hederæ-mapping-project>.

Obituary: William "Billy" Ashton

Simon Wilks
 LBKA Member

Billy Ashton, a long-standing member of the LBKA, died suddenly at St Thomas' Hospital in mid-July. For over a dozen years Billy had kept bees in and around Walworth and the South Bank and regularly attended LBKA events.

Before that he served as a rifleman on National Service in Africa and the Middle East, spent time on trawlers and apprenticed in the building trade, becoming both a carpenter and a staunch member of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians.

His skills as a carpenter were notable, and in recent years he could be seen hauling a bicycle-trailer along the Dulwich Road to Brockwell Park, where he built the first apiary enclosure, as well as floors, stands and Snelgrove boards, from timber and perspex salvaged from a theatrical scenery maker. He was also a good woodworking tutor, and many beekeepers will have benefited from his advice on assembling hives and frames. A lifelong learner, he read widely around beekeeping and used his knowledge to design and build some of his own equipment, often combining old and new ideas in the same item.

He was an unapologetic socialist who was never afraid to stand up to authority on behalf of friends and neighbours that he felt were being treated unfairly. This didn't make him a universally popular figure, but many have a lot to thank him for.

Despite an occasionally prickly demeanour, he could be humorous, warm and generous, as well as an en-

gaging raconteur. A devoted husband, father and beekeeper, Billy was an unforgettable figure and will be much missed.

August's Monthly Meeting and Summer Social

What happened at last month's meeting.

The Committee tries its best to reflect members' wishes and aspirations on beekeeping matters. If you would like a particular beekeeping subject to be the topic for discussion at a monthly meeting in 2017 please ask a committee member.

Martin Hudson
 LBKA member

30 or so members (with numbers increasing as the start of the Social approached) gathered in pleasant weather for the August meeting on feeding bees followed by the Summer Social held as usual in the pleasant surroundings of Walworth Garden.

Because of a double booking by the Walworth Garden organisation, we were restricted to meeting outside in the garden which – apart from the very annoying noise of regular planes overhead which drowned out what Howard Nicholls was telling us – was fortunate, because the 'sunny spells' weather meant this was, otherwise, not too much of a problem.

First the usual monthly meeting: Howard went through the types of feed given to bees at different times in the annual cycle, and gave a demonstration of various types of feeders to use. As usual there were varying opinions on what sort of feed to use when, but basically there are three different types of feed:

- one-to-one sugar/water solution, to be administered when bees have the strength/capacity to evaporate the water from the solution but may be short of nectar;
- two parts sugar to one of water, which is used to encourage comb-building (eg after artificial swarms) and building up the colony; and
- (bakers) fondant, normally only fed during winter months, when emergency feeding may be required.

Colonies normally need about 35-40lbs (15-18kg) of stores to get them through a normal winter, but their use of these stores will depend very much on weather and temperature, forage availability in early Spring, and the strength of the colony. Some bee suppliers provide



Just before the Summer Social.

an inverted sugar solution (the process the bees otherwise must do if the solution is not inverted already), and this feed has the advantage of being less likely to go mouldy.

Howard described the various types of rapid or contact feeders – from what he described as the 'Rolls Royce of feeder' - the plastic 'English Feeder' – a rapid feeder holding 6 litres and fitting neatly into an empty super box – so suitable for out-apiaries – down to his own version of a contact feeder made with pin-holes through a take-away plastic container. There are also (even) more sophisticated versions available from bee equipment suppliers, such as Ashforth or Miller feeders, and also frame feeders for use in small colonies or nucleus boxes. Although there was a discussion about the relative merits of using contact or rapid feeders, I am afraid I am still none the wiser as to which is preferable, ex-

cept that I have a real fear of feed pouring out of an upturned but unsecured contact feeder lid, resulting in drowning the colony with feed and/or giving a robbing bonanza to neighbouring colonies near and far!

We moved on to the Social, with an excellent range of hot food and salads provided by the Chickpea Sisters, an imaginative social enterprise based in Tooting providing work opportunities for refugee and migrant women. There was plenty to go around, and the 'Sisters' were appropriately each presented with a jar of honey from the LBKA apiaries. The social gave us much more time to chat about all things bees with everyone who attended. If you were not able to be there, you missed a treat! Thanks to the usual suspects (Richard Emily, Jon, *et al*) who provided drinks, arranged chairs and ensured the smooth running of the event. I am sure that I speak for everyone who attended

by saying that it was thoroughly enjoyable occasion, and re-enforced the value of extended meetings, when informal discussions can take place after the formal educational 'bit'. Why don't we adjourn to a pub or such-like, after future meetings at Fairley House School?

September in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

The bee population will continue to decline in September but the new bees now being born will need to live through to next April, for 6 months instead of 6 weeks. They need to be healthy, free of Varroa mites and associated viruses and with plenty of stores. Those members who diligently applied Apiguard throughout August should now be the proud custodians of newly born healthy bees.

Feeding the colony

This is the main job for September. A full sized colony needs to have 35 lbs. of honey to see it through to next April. A National brood frame holds 5 lbs. and so the equivalent of 7 frames is needed. If, say, you estimate 5 frames of honey is currently in the hive then this is 25 lbs. and a further 10 lbs. is required. 1 lb. of sugar will make 1.25 lbs. of honey (honey is 80% sugars and 20% water). Therefore, using this example syrup should be made from 8 lbs. of sugar to complete the stores. Any surplus will not be wasted as it will be used by the bees next spring.

Feeding fondant in winter causes the cluster to break up and is an unnecessary disturbance. It is preferable to feed in September and so ensure that there are sufficient stores for the winter. Fondant in winter should only be used as an emergency feed, not part of a planned strategy. The best time for winter and spring feeding is in the preceding autumn!

If feeding is left until October then the bees may be unable to evaporate down the water content to less than 20% and then cap the stores. This is likely to lead to the syrup fermenting over the winter period. All feeding should be completed by the end of September.

Sugar must be white granulated sugar. Any other sugar is harmful to the bees. There is currently a surplus of sugar on the terminal markets and in some of the

discount supermarkets it is being sold at 45p per kgm. This is the lowest I have seen it for many years.

A stronger syrup should be used at this time of year as this means the bees have less work to do in evaporating off the water. This syrup is not for immediate consumption but for winter and early spring stores. 1kg of sugar dissolved in 660mls of warm water is the desired strength.

If the feeder needs to be topped up then it is essential to wear a veil. Bees may not appear to be very active if late in the month and cooler but they will surge through the feedhole if the feeder is disturbed or taken off.

Other action to be taken this month

Marking the queen. If the colony has a new queen born this summer then now is the best time to find and mark her. The colony is contracting with the brood limited to just a few frames and this makes it a much easier proposition. If the queen is marked then next season's swarm control will be so much easier.

Checking the hive. Hive body should be draught free and the roof should be waterproof. Now is the time to replace any defective or ill fitting equipment before the onset of winter.

Protecting against wasps and robbers. Entrance blocks must be in situ. Many beekeepers reduce the entrances to as little as 2 or 3 bee spaces. If a colony is being robbed it is extremely difficult to stop.

Fumigate supers. These should have been fumigated immediately after having been returned to the bees for cleaning. Fumigated supers should be put in a place secure from wax moth and vermin.

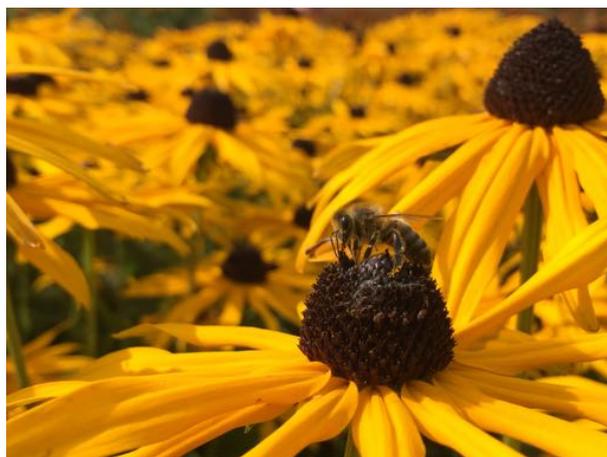
Mouseguards. If it starts to turn cold then these should be fitted late in the month or in early October.

Focus on Forage

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

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

After an abysmally wet late spring, summer turned out to be a good one for our bees. All the rain in May and June gave high ground moisture and this combined with the very warm weather in July nicely, to create ideal conditions for a good summer nectar flow.



The **limes** did exceptionally well with supers filling up fast in early July. Reports from beekeepers moving hives to the heather were equally good with an abundance of heather honey being produced. I've had my best summer in several years with some hives producing 7 supers of honey.

Wild flowers like **Knapweed**, **Wild Marjoram**, **Scabious** and **Bird's Foot Trefoil** have enjoyed a long flowering season thanks to the spring rain and have flowered continuously from late June right through to September.

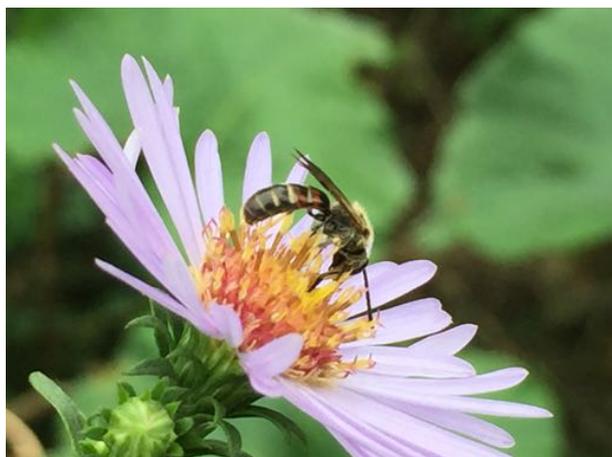
In urban areas **Chinese Chestnut**, **Chinese Privet** and **Indian Bean Tree** flowered slightly later than usual extending the summer nectar flow by several weeks. The **Chinese Privet** is still flowering right now down my street and attracting an abundance of honey bees.

As we enter September and the start of autumn, the summer flowers are now going over as they set seed and cease blooming. A few will persist into autumn but time is up for most of them. Replacing them will be an abundance of **Ivy**.

Ivy is one of the most important late season sources of forage for our pollinators and is greatly underrated. It's not just honey bees which rely on the Ivy blooms.

A whole host of insects rely upon the blooms to stock up before winter. **Bumblebee** and **social wasp** queens rely on Ivy flowers to fatten up before their long winter hibernation. **Hoverflies** and **butterflies** also rely on the Ivy to feed up before winter's sleep. **Honey bees** will bring back the nectar and store it as honey to feed on during the cold winter. Also, see the Bee of the Month on page 6.

Several of our pollinators are migratory and rely on Ivy to fuel their long autumn migration south to warmer climes. One of the most spectacular examples of autumn insect migration is that of the **Painted Lady Butterfly**. For decades their migration was a mystery and scientists assumed that butterflies migrating north in spring climaxed and then perished before they could return south leading to a dead end population. Thanks to advances in modern radar technology the mystery has now been solved. Using sophisticated radar, scientists have been able to track the butterfly's migration from central Africa through sub-Saharan Africa, across the Mediterranean and through Europe, where 6 million butterflies cross the English Channel into the UK. Some of these butterflies make it as far north as Greenland. Using the radar technology scientists were then able to track 29 million butterflies making the return journey south in late September. The butterflies fly at



an altitude of 500-1000 feet and are propelled south by high altitude wind currents enabling them to make the journey to Africa in under a month. The longest insect migration in the world is fuelled largely on Ivy nectar.

Providing autumn forage in our gardens

Whilst many of our native plants are beginning to cease blooming many north American plants are coming into their peak flowering period right now. North American prairie species make colourful and dramatic additions to the autumn garden and extend the flowering season providing food for our pollinators.

I recently visited the Sussex Prairies Garden near Brighton – <http://www.sussexprairies.co.uk/> – for autumn planting inspiration and have replanted part of my own garden with some of the varieties seen there. Some of the plants I've just planted in my garden include **Echinacea Magnus**, **Rudbeckia 'Prairie glow'**, **Rudbeckia 'Goldstrum'**, **Rudbeckia 'Little gold star'** and **Rudbeckia 'Summerina yellow'**. Alongside the Rudbeckia and Echinacea I have planted 3 varieties of **Heleniums** – one of the bees favourite flowers, **Aster Twilight** and **Kalimeris madiva**. These new additions to my garden will complement the existing **Helenium Autumnal**, **Solidago** and **Aster Amelia** I already had growing in the boarder. Hopefully they will spread and multiply to provide forage for bees in my garden for many years to come.

Now is also the time to plant spring bulbs. They will bloom from late winter through to mid spring. Some of the best spring bulbs for bees include **Crocus**, **Anemone blanda**, **Tulips**, **Winter aconite** and **Bluebells**. **Aliums** and **Camassia** are also great later in the season. Plant bulbs about twice as deep as they are tall in moist but free draining soil.

LBKA Apiaries: A season at Mudchute

Vlad has been looking after our Mudchute Apiary this year and he tells us how it's been going.

Vlad Zamfir
vlad@lbka.org.uk

Mudchute has been a bit of an adventure this year with some things going well and some not so well, proving that bees don't read books.

When I started looking after the apiary around June it only had one viable colony and one that had lost its queen and was slowly dying. Even adding a frame with eggs did not help. So in the end, the remaining bees had to be euthanized (in case they were disease vectors).

Richard came by on a number of occasions and helped with getting the apiary up and running again by helping me clean the equipment, sterilizing all the empty hives and then bringing in a couple of swarms to fill them up. Sadly, not everything went according to plan!

Richard and I decided to do a shook swarm on the old colony to refresh the comb and get rid of any possible pests and pathogens (e.g. varroa and nosema). The bees seemed not to like that very much and were slow to build up in the next few weeks. That was probably when the colony decided it would be great if they played with my nerves for the next couple of months. As this is a teaching apiary, I wanted to mark the queen to make her easier to spot for the mentees (as well as myself) but after I had put a white dot on her she probably thought she'd had enough of me and flew off, never to be seen again. So queen bees don't only fly when they need to mate and when they swarm – if they're in a bad mood, they also fly because they feel like it. What followed was a sequence of supercedes as the bees did not agree with the new queens that much. They also threw in some swarm preparations so I did an artificial swarm with the freshly mated queen. They then decided to supercede her so I had two hives that would just not stop superceding. They only calmed down after the summer nectar flow ended. Mudchute now has four hives and the queens in all of them are laying eggs (thankfully!) that are going to become winter bees. The swarms that were brought in are doing well but all colonies will need quite a bit of feeding to get them to survive the winter. I'm hopeful that next year the apiary will - with the planned forage planting at Mudchute – also produce lots of honey so that I can also show my mentees what honey extraction looks like. Now, onto planning the next beekeeping year.



Ivy flower.

How to take a crop of Ivy honey

Geoff tells us how to take a crop of Ivy honey. Not all will agree with his view that it is “nasty stuff” though!

Geoff Hood
LBKA member

Yes, a crop of Ivy Honey, that nasty tasting stuff that smells of cough mixture and set solid so it blocks the brood nest in spring and causes slow build up.

Why would you want to collect Ivy Honey, you say? Well the word on the street is that Ivy Honey is to become the next Manuka. I don't mean diluted or that it will be Chinese honey with added tea tree oil that many producers fraudulently sell as Manuka, but a new Super Honey. Current research seems to be coming to the conclusion that Ivy honey has similar health benefits to true Manuka honey, So watch those supermarket shelves and prepare for a late Honey crop.

But getting a usable crop of Ivy honey is not easy because:

- The ivy flow can start during your Varroa treatment.
- It sets in the comb faster than oil seed rape.
- It is too late to feed syrup after your harvest.
- It is the last flow of the year, used by bees to top up their winter stores with it.

But it is possible to collect it and you deal with the colony in a similar fashion to collecting Heather Honey:

- Choose a strong colony with a young queen that is a good honey producer

- Take off your honey supers by 15th August and force them all into one box
- Treat for Varroa with MAQS that is a 7 day treatment period not six weeks like Apiguard or Apistan
- Feed them a gallon of 2:1 or inverted sugar syrup like Ambrosia

Once the ivy flow and pollen starts to come in, add above a queen excluder a super of frames with only starter strips and the bees will draw it out and fill with Ivy honey

If you extract the Ivy honey as liquid honey but you will only have 30% liquid honey and the rest will be solid, it is therefore better to assume it will all be set, so you scrape all the comb out into a bucket and heat in a warming cabinet at 52c for 24hrs or until the ivy honey melts and the wax collects on top

Drain you Ivy honey off, strain it and let it cool to 32°C then seed it with 5% of a nice set honey and put it into warm jars

Then try and selling...

Facebook (In)digest(ion)

Eugene Fahy
LBKA Member

August is the holiday season and just as it is traditionally the “silly season” in the press, there has been a certain amount of levity in our Facebook contributions this month. Angela Woods posted an amusing photo of a red pillar box with a resident colony and a substantial amount of comb – far more than could have been drawn between normal Post Office collection intervals. Meanwhile Rory Fields had a surfeit of Cadbury's chocolate caramel spread and wondered if the bees would eat it if he left the jars in an empty super- - replies varied from the wryly humorous to the mildly disapproving.

With the fine weather, contributors seem to have been out and about and this resulted in quite a few photographs on the page. Harriet English posted a picture of an attractive red and white flower which she said was attracting large numbers of carders and other bees in her daughter's garden. A number of replies identified it as *Salvia microphylla* 'hot lips' and all agreed that salvia is a useful forage plant which in London can flower into December.

Geordy Mark posted pictures from the Sussex prairies gardens just north of Brighton. The garden is planted to look its best during late summer and autumn using mostly North American prairie plants – “loads of inspiration for late season bee friendly flowers”.

Lukasz Godlewski posted some rather disturbing photos from a honey farm, which appeared to show a pick-up truck laden with syrup which was being piped into hives. The truck door bore the logo of a very well-known honey producer which markets its produce as “a blend of EU and non-EU honey”.

There were a number of research and education related items. Karin Alton posted a link publicising the LASI workshop on Integrated Varroa Management taking place on Sept 2-4: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi/newsandevents/events/ivmworkshop>.

Norman Carreck of IBRA reported on research on winter losses in China. The study covered a three year period to 2013 and showed that losses were generally low but ranged between 7% and 12%. The authors speculate that the comparatively low level may be due to higher genetic diversity in Chinese bees, the small size of beekeeping operations with greater attention to varroa control and regular replacement of queens. The paper is free to view in the Journal of Apicultural Research: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00218839.2016.1193375>.

Yet another study linking neonicotinoid use and wild bee population decline was highlighted in posts from Andrew Tottenham and Geordy Mark. The 18 year study by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology covered 62 species of bee and found that wild bees that forage from oilseed rape crops treated with neonicotinoids are more likely to undergo long-term population declines than bees that forage from other sources. <http://bit.ly/2bi3Txv>.

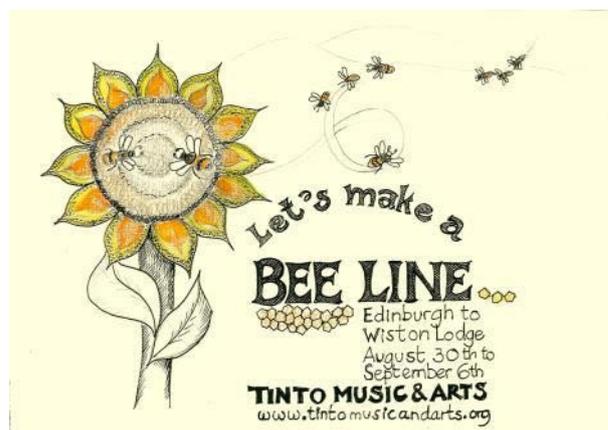
Paul McGuinness posted a link to a CBC news report on “zombie” honey bees in Canada, infected by parasitic maggots which makes them behave like zombies. The bees come out at night, stagger around and die after a few hours. Examination of the dead bees showed that they had been infected by *Apoccephalis borealis*.

Mike Gecewicz issued an invitation to a new Facebook group called Beekeeping Techniques which he started in mid-August and already has almost 3,000 members.

Finally, we had some queries and information sharing. Muntakimur Raza Chowdhury asked for suggestions on attracting a colony of bees from under his roof space to an empty hive in his back garden. Suggestions included a bee vac or baiting the hive with honey and then looking for the nest and moving the brood.

Eleanor Field asked if it is normal for bees to make practice cups in a super full of honey. Angela Woods replied that so long as the colony was queen right, there should not be a problem.

Jonathan Lingham shared his experience of cleaning strainers after honey extraction. As beeswax melts at 62°C, and polypropylene containers at over 100°C, he put them in a fan oven for a few minutes at 75c, and then wiped the melted wax with paper towels. Richard Glassborow and others opined that cold water is the



best way to remove waxy honey from equipment. The honey still dissolves easily but the wax doesn't soften and become sticky.

Jonathan also asked for advice as, having put extracted frames in the super for cleaning, he returned to find brood in them. Geordy Mark said that while some beekeepers reckon bees move eggs, they wouldn't move them in numbers great enough to fill the super with brood. It was more likely that the queen got above the excluder. The solution is to find her and put her back in the brood box, wait until the brood has hatched and then remove the super.

Mark also offered a useful tip for cleaning of supers – place them above the crown board with just enough space for one bee to get through the holes (remove the bee escapes and use a piece of slate or other suitable material to reduce the hole size). The bees will not recognise the space above the crown board as their home and will rob out any dregs of honey, leaving the box of combs dry and ready for winter storage.

Rory Fields asked if anyone knew about the Rowse Apprentice Beekeeper scheme, Geordy Mark and Simon Cavill said there were others who sponsored apprentices, including Bee Good.

Adventures in Beeland: Walking for bees

Another guest post from Emily's excellent blog – <http://adventuresinbeeland.com/>.

Emily Scott
LBKA member

Thanks to a comment left on my blog, I found out about a fun walking project being carried out by activist and gardener Meg Beresford, called 'Let's Make a Beeline'.

Meg is walking for 8 days between Aug 30th until Sept 6th – from Edinburgh Botanical Gardens to her home in Wiston Lodge, Scotland – to raise money for a bee-themed weekend gathering there. Each day she is covering 10 kilometres (6.2 miles), as bee expert Dave Goulson has found that a bumblebee can travel up to 10 kilometres to make its way home. At the gathering she plans to “bring together internationally renowned authors, speakers and academics to engage in bee conversation”, with bee themed workshops and music.

You can follow Meg’s adventures via her blog at <http://makeabeeline.org>, which she is updating daily. Along her route she is visiting gardens and other bee friendly projects to connect with other like minded folk. I am enjoying reading about her travels and seeing the beautiful scenery of Scotland. She also has a donations page (<https://www.gofundme.com/2cshbp3u>).

It cheers me up to know that other people are out there that care about nature, in a week when I’ve heard of depressing developments both locally and globally: in Ealing some of our treasured local allotments will be lost to a new housing project, while in South Carolina millions of bees have been killed by spraying (<https://badbeekeepingblog.com/2016/09/02/millions-dead/>), partly because inadequate prior warnings were given to beekeepers.

Members’ marketplace

This section is for members offering beekeeping items or services to members or requesting items. Items could include nucs, wax and honey. Email services@lbka.org.uk to add something here.

Meetal Patel: Looking for bulk quantities of (preferably unjarred) honey from in/around the London area. This will be used for either onward jarring or to use to brew as part of my honey beer project, where my own hives are no longer sufficient. Happy to answer questions if it helps! Contact meetal_patel@hotmail.com.

Eleanor Wyllie: I’m giving up beekeeping for the moment and am selling all my equipment and a colony: **two hives** (both 14×12 but one can be converted back to standard British national size); **one colony** (new queen from this year, quite strong, some stores but will likely need feeding with sugar syrup) **three supers** (one full set of super frames); **extra frames** (some 14×12 ones made up and some 14×12 and super not made up); **standard nuc box**; **hive tools** (×2); **bee suits:** one medium, one small; **leather gauntlets** (×1);

syrup feeders (×2), **entrance blocks and mouse guards** (×2); **fondant**; **smoker**; **tub for settling honey** (with tap); **queen cage**; **queen marker pen** (last year’s colour); **hive beetle strips**; and **varroa boards**. Please contact eleanorwyllie@gmail.com for more information.

Upcoming events

Sunday 11th September: Monthly meeting: Uniting colonies for winter.

11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY.

We’ll talk about the relative merits of uniting colonies or otherwise for winter, how to do it, and people’s experiences of this. This and other related topics will be followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat. Meetings are for members only, but you’re welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association.

Sunday, 25th September: Harvest Stomp

12:30-17:30 at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London E20 2ST.

We’ll have a stall at this annual community festival that celebrates food and the harvest. Enter your food into one of the competitions! More details at <http://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/london/Pages/harveststomp>.

Sunday 16th October: Monthly meeting: Bees on the move

11:00-13:00 at Lancaster London, Lancaster Terrace, London, W2 2TY

Everything you need to know about relocating colonies, plus and other related topics. Followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat. Meetings are for members only, but you’re welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association. Note the new date and new venue – this is so we can go to the London Honey Show afterwards!

Sunday 16th October: London Honey Show

11:30-16:00 at Lancaster London, Lancaster Terrace, London W2 2TY

The London Honey Show is at the Lancaster Hotel who have kindly allowed us to have our meeting there, after which we can head to the show. **The entry fee is £2.** We will have a stall at which members will sell honey. At this relatively new annual event, **you'll be able to enter their competitive classes:** Best Home Honey (honey from hives kept in your garden, allotment or own residential space), Best Rooftop Honey, Best honey from Hives kept at a Business or Educational site, Best Packaging and Battle of the Regions (North vs South). The **closing date for entries is 7th October** and you can deliver your entries from then until the day of the show. More details at <http://www.londonbees.com/>.

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:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Forage:** Mark Patterson, forage@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Emily Abbott, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Tristram Sutton, mentoring@lbka.org.uk
- **Vlad:** Vlad Zamfir, vlad.zamfir@lbka.org.uk

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

