



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

October, 2016

Welcome to this month's newsletter! There's a lot going on with LBKA at the moment. Do come along to this month's meeting at the Lancaster Hotel just before the London Honey Show there, at which we have a stall. We also have forage planting, course preparation classes and an AGM coming up. In this issue, we report on the Asian Hornet's arrival to UK, Mar recaps on last month's meeting (p4), David gives us some tips on honey labelling (p9), Emma reports on the bee awareness event we held with 38 Degrees (p9), Howard gives us our list of things to do in the apiary this month (p11), Natalie brings a recipe back from her holidays (p12) and tells us what's been going on on Facebook (p13). And Emily has been visiting her apiary (p13).

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A big thank you to all this month's contributors: **Natalie Cotton, Richard Glassborow, David Hankins, Martin Hudson, Howard Nichols, Mar Peláez-Muñoz and Emily Scott.**

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

Last month it was EFB, this month we are all following the Asian Hornet saga with acute interest. It has been a succession of bad news: a sighting was confirmed. Good news: almost incredibly the nest was found and destroyed. Bad news: another sighting has been confirmed. Not normally of a gloomy disposition, I do find myself thinking these pests are bound to get here, if not this time, sometime: we as a species just move stuff around the planet to much, careless of unintended consequences. So, we will have more equipment to buy sometime soon and new skills, setting



Honey from the LBKA training apiary run by Richard.

traps for hornets, to learn. But first we need to learn to recognise the enemy. I recommend you all visit <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=208> and download the ID sheet.

New pests aside, this is a time of the beekeeping year I always find doubts creep upon me. Is varroa under control? Do the colonies have enough supplies for winter? Are the empty supers clean and dry enough to store for winter? Of course we all know the theory but reality often changes rapidly, even when things are slowing down, or should be. I have been reasonably confident all my colonies are ready for winter, and, even though I am not sure the Apiguard has been effective the varroa drop remains low. But the bees in my garden apiary have been unusually busy for the time of year and I have noticed once again the unmistakable smell of honey production. That is a relief because only a couple of weeks ago some of them had eaten the super I had left on for the winter and I was preparing to feed them. Now, instead I am going to have to find out if they need those supers back on.

And, as I check the supers, I find a nest of wax moth larvae in one that still has acetic acid treatment on. They were not supposed to survive that but they did. So, I obviously have some adjustments to make with my technique.

Finally, do not forget this month's monthly meeting is next Sunday at the Lancaster Hotel, followed by The London Honey Show. The LBKA will have a stall at the show and we will be launching our new information leaflet about bees and the LBKA. Do come and visit us and see first hand what an LBKA stall entails. Hopefully more members will be encouraged to volunteer for shows next year and help the Association reach a wider public.

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

Like last year, the London Lancaster Hotel have kindly agreed to be the venue of our October monthly meeting. This is so that we can easily go to the London Honey Show afterwards (p2)!

We're going to try and have a honey tasting. Do you have some honey that you'd like to bring? It would be great to have a range of LBKA members' honeys to try!

The meeting will be **Sunday 16th October** (a week



The venue for October's monthly meeting for one month only!

The Buzz around Lancaster Gate

**LONDON
BEES.COM W2**

later than originally planned) at the **Lancaster London Hotel** (Lancaster Terrace, W2 2TY). Karin Courtman will lead the meeting, talking about Bees on the Move and other seasonal topics. Hot drinks will be provided... and maybe even some cake.

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). The entry fee is £2. 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/> and you need to deliver your entries to the hotel in advance.

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!

LBKA membership

The new membership year has just started, so now is the time that we ask those that want to remain mem-

bers of LBKA to **renew their membership**. All members have been sent an email with a renewal link.

If you want to take part in our AGM (see below), you'll need to be a fully-paid-up member.

Now we are a charity, there's the possibility for us to claim some tax back on money that we collect from members. If you're a UK taxpayer, you'll have the opportunity to agree to the Gift Aid agreement. This will authorise us to reclaim some of the tax you have paid at no extra cost to you.

There is also the possibility to volunteer to help us, particularly now we are a charity.

Thank you for supporting LBKA and do let us know if you have comments and suggestions about the year ahead.

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.

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.

AGM

Our annual General Meeting will be on **Wednesday 9th November at 18:30 for a 19:00 start at Roots and Shoots** (Walnut Tree Walk, SE11 6DN).

The whole committee and LBKA trustees will be up for election, there may be motions to vote on and there'll be the opportunity to discuss our plans and direction for the coming year and future, particularly in the light of our new Charity status.

All welcome, but only fully-paid up members are have voting rights. Followed by tea/coffee/biscuits.

Education Matters

Howard Nichols, LBKA's Education Officer, will be running sessions in the coming year to prepare LBKA members for **BBKA Basic**. We strongly recommend that all those who have kept bees for at least a year take this. There will also be sessions for **BBKA Module 1**. See page 5 for more details and do take advantage of this opportunity!

Asian Hornet found in UK

The Asian Hornet has been found in Gloucestershire – see page 6 for some more details.

LBKA Forage planting event

LBKA is organising a two-day forage-planting event at **Mudchute Farm & Park** as part of our ongoing £12,000 planting project. This will be on **Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd October**.

Over 1000 pot grown wild flowers need planting and **we need volunteers to help**.

We'll meet outside the farm cafe at **10am** both days. Hot drinks and biscuits provided please bring a packed lunch otherwise hot sandwiches are available from the farm cafe. All tools and gloves provided but please wear appropriate outdoor footwear and clothing.

The main entrance to the farm is on Pier Street, Isle of Dogs, E14 3HP. Unfortunately there is no on-site parking, but there is some meter parking on Pier Street and on some surrounding streets. There is also parking that can be paid for in the ASDA car park on EastFerry Road. If coming by DLR, exit Crossharbour Station, cross the road and walk through the ASDA carpark to the farm entrance at the southeast corner. Buses D3, D6 and 135 toward Crossharbour all stop at the ASDA supermarket on EastFerry Road, as above.

Contact Mark if you would like to volunteer forage@lbka.org.uk.

Finding a permanent home

Finding a permanent home is still high on the committee's agenda. Is anyone in a position to help us to this. In particular, is anyone able to give us legal advice on this? If so, please contact services@lbka.org.uk.

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** (this coming Monday!) or 17th October 2016 for late entries which often incur a fee. See <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/competitive-classes.php> for details of the classes and <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/rules-and-regulations.php> for the competition rules.

For those that want to enter their honey but can't attend, **Paul Vagg** (mrpvagg@yahoo.co.uk) has kindly offered to take members' entries to the **National Honey Show**. Note however, that **you are responsible** for entering and paying the entry fee (by 10th October, through their website). You then need to get your correctly-labelled entries to Paul (in Peckham) by 23rd. If you didn't pay your entry fee when you completed your entry, you'll need to give that to Paul when you drop off your jars otherwise he won't be able to submit them to the show.

Soap and wax produce courses

We were contacted by someone offering soap and wax product making courses – see <http://www.honeybeebeautiful.co.uk/store/c7/COURSES.html>.

Eggheads team?

We've been asked if we want to form a team of 6 beekeepers for the BBC 2 quiz show "Eggheads". I think they just want an interesting back-story to their teams. So if you're a beekeeper and good at general knowledge, now's your chance! Contact Emma on admin@lbka.org.uk.

Old announcements from September

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

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

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

Extractors: We have extractors that we hire out to members, stored at Walworth Garden. Please email

David (treasurer@lbka.org.uk) or Tristram (mentoring@lbka.org.uk) if you'd like to book one.

Thanks: A big thank you to our mentors: **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.**

Billy Ashton: We are sad to report that Billy Ashton died very suddenly in mid-July.

Old announcements from July

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 this year as he has done excellently for many years.

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.

Last month's Monthly Meeting

What happened last month.

Mar Peláez-Muñoz
LBKAmember

The monthly meeting took place in the usual venue, there were around 20 people and the topic was the very seasonal **combining hives for winter**. This meeting reminds us that although not all hives survive the winter, we can help increase the chances of this.

Check your hives. If you suspect that some of your hives have a poor queen or are too small to reliably survive, consider **combining** with a stronger hive to increase the chances of a successful overwintering. However, do ensure that both hives are healthy – you don't want to combine a healthy hive with an unhealthy one!

The "newspaper method" is extremely simple but very effective.

In the end, there will only be one queen in the newly-combined hive. If one of your queens is obviously de-

fective, you can remove it. But there was debate as to whether one should leave both queens in the hive to let them fight it out. Some beekeepers worry that the surviving queen will be damaged... others think that the "bees should decide".

For the "newspaper method", you will need a large broadsheet newspaper ("bees don't like tabloids!"). Have both hives close together, the smoker ready and something heavy to help keep the newspaper from blowing away. This process is much easier if you can get an extra pair of hands.

Put a sheet of newspaper on the top of the brood box of the stronger hive. Make a few small holes in the newspaper, and put the weaker brood box on top. In theory, the newspaper allows the bees to chew through at the right pace so that by the time they get through, both colonies have had time to get used to each other's scent, helping them integrate and accept each other without too much of a fight. Close up and let the bees combine.

Once you have your hives for overwintering, make sure that they are safe from vandalism or strong winds - tight straps or a heavy object on top will help. Make sure there is good ventilation, that mouse guards have been added. Clear the area to avoid falling branches.

Education Matters

Howard, LBKA's Education Officer, will be running sessions in the coming year to prepare LBKA members for BBKA qualifications. These are worth taking, particularly the first! Please do take advantage of this opportunity.

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

2017 BBKA Basic Assessment

Both the BBKA and London Beekeepers' Association encourages members to take the BBKA basic assessment where possible. The BBKA requirement for entry is that the applicant has been keeping bees for a minimum period of 1 year. The assessment is fairly straightforward and the syllabus can be downloaded free of charge from the BBKA website. Follow the dropdown menu for "Members" then "examinations and assessments".

London Beekeepers Association will organise and arrange these assessments for any of our members who want to take this in 2017. As part of our commitment to beekeeper education we will also run a revision course in the spring for members wishing to take the examina-

tion. This will be for 3 evenings (2 hours per evening) in March and early April. The assessment itself is both practical and simple oral questions. It lasts about 1 hour. We cover the theory on the revision nights and, for those wanting it, also offer a practical session at an apiary beforehand.

The assessment is not difficult, is within the capabilities of anyone who has been handling bees for 12 months and who is willing to download the syllabus and undertake some background reading. We also supply free course notes in electronic format.

Any LBKA member who has been keeping bees for a minimum of 12 months and wishes to take this assessment please confirm by email to education@lbka.org.uk. We will then be able to let you have some electronic course notes to read at your leisure over the winter months. The BBKA website should be sufficient to deal with any queries regarding the assessment. Alternatively, ask another LBKA member who has taken it. Preparation for the Basic is an interesting way of continuing your beekeeping activities through the winter months. Even if you have been keeping bees for several years but not previously taken the assessment then please do seriously consider taking it in 2017. It is well worth the effort. The assessments are likely to be conducted at different dates in May 2017.

Module 1 examination – March 2017

For those who have taken and passed the Basic then there is a series of written examinations, known as modules. Each one is 90 minutes and are held in March and November. Several members have expressed an interest in taking Module 1 in March 2017. For those wishing to take a modular examination then it will be necessary to undertake some form of study during the winter months. Such studies are not onerous (about 3 or 4 hours per week) and details, including all syllabi, are on the BBKA website. If there is sufficient demand (3 people or more) then I will arrange a revision course for module 1. This is likely to be for 3 nights in January and early February 2017. The course will be revision based and so it is essential that any person(s) who is interested undertake the 3 or 4 hours per week part time study in November and December. By far the best way to do this is to enrol on a BBKA correspondence course, which will lead you through the syllabus. The cost is modest and you will have the benefit of a tutor who will mark your answers and make helpful comments. It is not difficult but does require a little commitment and full details are on the BBKA website within the education section. The main benefit is that the beekeeper understands aspects of beekeeping they may not otherwise have the opportunity to encounter and so broaden and deepen their beekeeping knowledge. A subsidiary benefit is that the beekeeper continues to be actively involved with beekeeping matters during the winter.

Anyone wishing to enquire about taking the Module 1 examination next spring please do email me at education@lbka.org.uk or come along to the October Sunday meeting where I will try to answer your queries or allay your fears. This is the time of year that you should decide. It is likely to be too late to start learning in January. We have run this revision course several times in the past and it is focussed upon expanding and consolidating knowledge of the syllabus, not learning from first principles.

Asian Hornet found in UK

In September, the first confirmed UK sighting of the Asian hornet was found in Gloucester. The Asian hornet has become established in mainland Europe and has only just made it over here.

This invasive species is a serious threat to European honey bees that have poor natural defences against them. However, we don't know how they'll fare in our climate and those that have been caught have found to be related to those in France, so are probably breeding from a small genetic pool which may have caused some weakening. Nonetheless, DEFRA and BBKA are trying to ensure it doesn't get further.

A nest was found and destroyed by the National Bee Unit (NBU) who searched a 20km incident zone was around the hive. The nest was found at the top of a 55 foot conifer tree, and destroyed (<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/News/news.cfm#176>). Inspectors from the National Bee Unit are continuing to monitor the area for Asian hornets alongside local beekeepers.

However, this month, there has been another confirmed sighting in Somerset, north of the Mendip Hills. Work is underway to set up a three mile surveillance zone, deploy bee inspectors who will use infrared cameras and traps to locate any nests and readying nest disposal experts who will use pesticides to kill the hornets and destroy any nests.

See <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/News/news.cfm> for the latest news of this evolving situation.

So far every hornet found has been found by a beekeeper. BBKA's advice is:

- If you are not already registered on BeeBase, register now
- If you are already registered update your entry to ensure all your apiaries are included
- Send this email to every beekeeper who you know so they can do the same.



The Asian Hornet nest. Source: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/News/news.cfm#176>



Have you seen this insect?

ASIAN HORNET

Vespa velutina

What is it?

An invasive non-native hornet originally from Asia. Suspected records should be reported immediately. A highly aggressive predator of native insects, posing a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators. Accidentally introduced to France in 2004 where it spread rapidly. In 2016 the first UK sighting was confirmed in Gloucestershire.



Where might I see it?

Most likely to be seen close to bee hives - bee keepers should be alert. Active from February to November in suburban areas in the south of England and Wales, or around major ports.

What does it look like?

Distinctive hornet, smaller than our native species. A key feature is the almost entirely dark abdomen, except for the 4th segment which is yellow.

- Slightly smaller than native hornet
- Dark abdomen, 4th segment yellow
- Bright yellow tips to legs (native hornet dark)
- Entirely brown or black thorax (native hornet more orange)

Asian Hornet abdomen

Native Hornet abdomen



- Makes very large nests



- 'Hawks' outside honey bee colonies killing bees as they attempt to defend their hive

DANGER!
This hornet stings. Do not disturb an active nest. Seek advice using the details below.

For more information or to report any sightings please email:

alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk



- Please look through any wasp traps you have up to see if there are any hornets in there. You might want to put some traps up, the same as for wasps.

The Asian hornet is a very serious pest of honey bees. See the identification sheet and make sure every one else (not just beekeepers) are aware of what it looks like. . . remember yellow legs.

If you see an Asian hornet please do not try and find the nest, but report to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

Government announcement:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asian-hornet-identified-in-gloucestershire>

Alert Poster:
<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/downloadDocument.cfm?id=872>

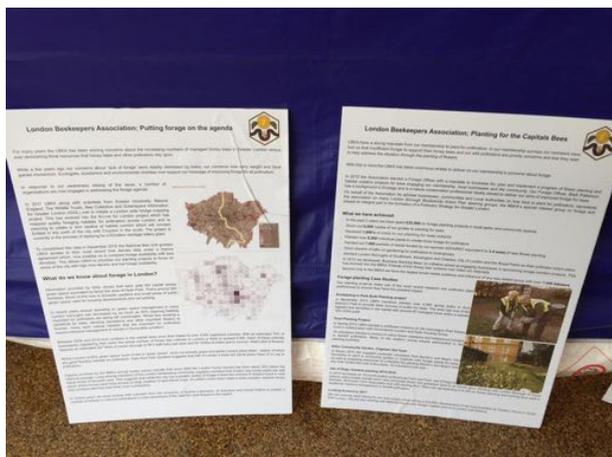


Harvest Stomp

We had a stall at the Harvest Stomp, a festival held at the Olympic Park in East London, that celebrates the harvest. Thanks to Mark for organising and designing the stall, Emily for coordinating the volunteers and to them and Cedar, Vlad, Richard and Aidan for helping man the stall.

We had a steady stream of people interested in our stall, whether they were interested in candle rolling, watching the bees in our observation hive, learning about which flowers to plant to help pollinators or to buy local honey from our members. After the rain of the early morning, the sun came out and it ended up being a nice Autumnal day!





Courses for bee campaigners

Emma Nye helped organise a couple of joint bee awareness events for members of the 38 Degree campaigning site. We are trying help inform the debate on bee declines, a debate with a fair bit of misunderstanding and misinformation. Thanks to Emma, Emily A, Richard, Vlad and Aidan for helping over the two sessions we ran. The income this generated will be used in projects designed to help achieve our charitable objectives.

Emma Nye
admin@lbka.org.uk

At the end of September we ran two courses for members of 38 Degrees, the online campaigning group. They've campaigned a lot on issues around bees, including pesticides and wanted to give their members a chance to hear from us on bees in the city. We used the opportunity to talk about how they can help bees by planting flowers, common myths about bees and the work of the LBKA. One participant came in a bee costume, glasses and all, so it's great to be able to spread our messages with people so passionate about the issue and educate them on what they can do! They especially loved our beekeeper Q&A and a chance to get hands on with some of the equipment that we use.

Packaging and labelling honey

David has scrutinised the honey labelling regulations and tells us what we need to know.

David Hankins
treasurer@lbka.org.uk

For beekeepers in England, the rules relating to honey labelling have been amended, revoked and amended again a number of times over the last couple of decades. Most of the current rules are to be found in "The Honey (England) Regulations 2015", which can be found at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/1348/introduction/made>.

What follows is a simplified guide to those regulations, applicable to the semi-commercial or hobby beekeeper wishing to sell his/her honey locally. This guidance is designed only for the labelling of honey produced by the beekeeper's own bees, and harvested and packaged by the beekeeper – it does not cover honey of uncertain provenance, or with known additives to the natural product.

The label must contain the word "honey"

This may be prefixed with additional wording to give what is termed the "reserved description" or "type" of honey, as follows: Baker's Honey; Blossom Honey; Chunk Honey; Comb Honey; Cut Comb in Honey; Drained Honey; Extracted Honey; Filtered Honey; Honeydew Honey; Nectar Honey; Pressed Honey.

Additional descriptive or clarifying words may also be used, providing they do not mislead. Examples might include "Natural Honey", "Pure Honey", "Hedgerow Honey" and "Wildflower Honey". If referencing particular plants or blossom, as in "Sweet Chestnut Honey", "White Clover Honey" or "Oilseed Rape Honey", the product must come wholly or mainly, (more than 75%), from that blossom or plant.

The label on Baker's Honey should also contain the words "intended for cooking only".

The label must contain the name and address of the producer/beekeeper

This is so that you can be traced in the event of a problem with the product you have sold. Looked at another way, it's also potentially a great tool for generating repeat business, so you might as well add your telephone number!



Emma talking to 38 Degrees members about bees (one of whom is dressed as a bee!)

The label must state the country of origin

“Produce of England”, “Produced in England” and “Harvested in England” would all be appropriate. Reference may also be made to a smaller geographic area, such as “Kent”, “London” or “Camden”, but if such a reference is made, the honey must come wholly from that place – a Trading Standards Inspector may frown on Haringey nectar found in Hackney honey, so use care if describing the geographic origin of your honey.

The label must have a “best before” date.

This date needs to consist of at least a month and year, such as “Best before end September 2018”, but what date should you choose? The best advice I found was “Two years from the date of bottling is reasonable”. Other advice suggests “A Best Before date is usually between two and five years”. There is no rule, and we all know that honey harvested carefully and stored well will keep for a lot longer than other foods, but to err on the side of caution is probably wise. (If anyone can find better guidance on this point, please let us all know.)

The label must state the net weight of the product.

This is the weight of honey, without packaging, in metric. To be certain of this net weight, weigh a sample jar, (or other form of packaging you use), before and

after filling, and subtract the empty weight from the full weight. And remember, jars sold for different fillings but quoting the same weight may well have different volumes, so check the net weight with the method described above before printing the weight on the label.

The label should have a “lot” mark.

This is to enable the product to be traced to an individual “batch” of honey, which is useful if batches were jarred at different times or sourced from different apiaries. For a small scale producer with a single apiary and harvest per year, and all produce jarred or otherwise packaged at the same time, the “best before” date with day, month and year may suffice – but a “lot” number on your labels may do no harm to people’s perception of you as a supplier!

Other things

That’s all the items that either must or should be on a honey label, but there are a few other things worth mentioning.

Firstly, under a voluntary scheme, all honey sold through large retailers includes a warning statement that honey is “unsuitable for children under 12 months”. This is a precautionary measure against possible infant botulism, which could potentially arise from the presence of *Clostridium botulinum* spores in honey.

Secondly, the labelling of honey as being “organic” may not always be advisable, given the lack of control bee-

keepers have over the foraging of their bees. There are detailed standards to be applied to the production of a food in order that it can be called organic, and we have no idea whether our bees are meeting those standards when foraging on someone else's allotment or on the other side of the tracks— just a thought.

The above is not a comprehensive guide to the regulations, but I hope it covers all the necessary points and offers just enough advice to be of interest, if not actually useful. If anyone spots any omissions or inaccuracies, please let me know – who knows how long I may have been “doing it wrong”.

October in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

Feeding syrup to the bees should have been completed by the end of September as the colony will now find it difficult to process and cap the syrup due to the colder temperatures. If left uncapped then there is the risk of fermentation and dysentery over the winter months. A colony should go into winter with at least 15kg (35lbs) of stores if possible. This will avoid the possibility of the bees dying of starvation in a cold spring or the necessity for the beekeeper to feed in spring..

The bees will start to cluster as temperatures fall. Clustering starts at about 18C, albeit very loose, and the cluster becomes smaller and more compact as temperatures continue to fall. They form a complete cluster at 13C. Other than this the colony will continue to operate as usual but on a much smaller scale. The queen will still be laying a few eggs, nurse bees nurturing a smaller amount of brood and bees should still be flying in the day throughout October. Bees should be foraging on Ivy, which is the last flowering plant of the year. If Apiguard was diligently applied in August and a feeding programme undertaken in September then the colony will be in optimum condition to face the harshness of the next few months. This leaves the beekeeper to make final preparations for winter. The objective is to put the bees in the best position to deal with winter by trying to do small things to tip the scales in their favour.

Hive stability

Check that hives are secure, straight and stable. If using a wooden floor then the colony should be slightly tilted slightly forward. Bees have evolved over millions of years to deal with cold temperatures and do this with relative ease. They cannot deal with damp and condensation. During winter they need to uncap and metabolise honey to keep warm. As a result of this, water vapour is produced. If the hive is not adequately ventilated then dampness will build up leading to fungi growth. It is essential that the hive interior remains dry throughout the winter. This is another advantage of using an open mesh floor.

Mouseguards

Once the night frosts commence then mice will look for a dark, warm place to hibernate. The smell and disturbance will upset the bees and, in more extreme instances, the colony can die out. Use of a mouseguard is essential as it is extremely effective but there must be no way the mice can bypass it.

Gardening measures

Check there are no branches grown up over summer and now overhanging the hive. If so then prune to remove. Also check that grass and weeds have not grown up around the hive as these will both reduce ventilation and promote damp. A quick trim with a strimmer or garden shears should be sufficient for the winter.

Other jobs

Make sure that spare brood and super boxes are cleaned and put away in a cold place for the winter to deter wax moth. Placing combs in a deep freeze for 24 hours if possible kills all 4 stages of wax moth. The bees put a lot of work and resources into making the comb. The beekeeper, as custodian over the winter months, has a duty of care to look after this valuable resource until returned to its rightful owners in the spring! Other equipment such as queen excluders, crownboards should also be cleaned and stored the same way.

National Honey Show

Finally, October is the month for the National Honey Show. This is the 85th year of this event and will be held at Sandown Racecourse, Esher, Surrey KT10 9AJ from Thursday, 27th October to Saturday, 29th October. If you are unsure about going then ask at the LBKA October monthly meeting. It is always more enjoyable to go with someone else if possible.

Focus on Forage

Mark will be taking a taking a break from writing this column in this less pollinatory season.

Recipe: Corsican canistrelli biscuits

Natalie brings us a recipe from Corsica.

Natalie Cotton
LBKA member

On a recent holiday to Corsica, every breakfast spread included a sample of one of the island's delicious, aromatic honeys, or Miel de Corse. Corsican honey owes its complex taste to its vast and ancient chestnut plantations, and to the naturally occurring maquis, a unique mix of spiky mediterranean aromatics – including myrtle, rosemary, arbutus, and curry plant - that covers around a third of the island.

The breakfasts usually included a selection of canistrelli, small and hard biscuits which were perfectly complimented by a smear of local honey. The owner of one of the guest houses gave me her recipe, possibly in recognition of the number I ate!

Hopefully these will be equally as tasty with London honey, and you can create your own urban flavourings. As an aside, none of our hosts were very interested when we said we were London beekeepers, as it's really not an unusual activity in Corsica!

Canistrelli base recipe

500g plain white flour
220g caster sugar
100g olive oil
100g white wine
7g baking powder
A pinch of salt

Combine all of the ingredients into an even dough. Shape the biscuits into small balls, no more than an inch across, and place on to a lined baking tray. Flatten each biscuit slightly, using your hands. Bake at 180°C or gas mark 6 for 15 to 20 minutes, until slightly browned. Leave to cool.



A Corsican breakfast spread including canistrelli, honey, and coffee served in a bowl for easier dunking.



Four jars of Corsican honey, ranging from the lighter spring honey to the darker autumn and chestnut honeys.

Some Corsican flavour variations

Lemon: replace the olive oil with sunflower oil, and add a glass of limoncello (or lemon rind for a less boozy option!).

Almond: replace the olive oil with sunflower oil, add 100g of chopped almonds and a few drops of almond essence.

Chocolate: add 45g of dark cocoa powder and some chocolate chips.

Anise: add a teaspoon of ground fennel seeds and a glass of pastis or an aniseed liquor.

Facebook (In)digest(ion)

Some of the highlights – and possibly lowlights – from the LBKA's public facing Facebook page.

*Natalie Cotton
LBKA Member*

This month, a large number of posts were naturally dedicated to keeping page visitors up to date with the latest information on Asian hornet sightings in the UK. Whilst all LBKA members are hopefully aware that a nest was found and destroyed in Tetbury (with Geordy Mark providing updates from the National Bee Unit), Angela Woods reminded us all to ensure our hives are registered on Beebase to aid efforts. She also shared a useful photo clearly showing the different colouring between the yellow and purple European hornet and the darker, brown Asian hornet – all beekeepers are encouraged to know the difference!

On a more upbeat note, Angela Woods also highlighted garden designer James Wong's excellent Radio 4 series *The Alternative Country Garden*, with insights in to Singaporean planning laws and their requirement for all buildings – even public loos – to have a proper horticultural element. Available on iplayer at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07v3314>.

LBKA volunteers ran a stall at the Harvest Stomp as part of London's Urban Food Fortnight. Geordy Mark shared photos of a successful day, where the team shared information on planting for pollinators, hosted an observation hive, sold honey and rolled candles.

Our social media community proved truly international when Kiyomi Roberts posted asking if her Japanese based beekeeping friends could observe the practices of fellow apiarists on a winter visit to London. Despite the time of year, many LBKA members got in touch to offer suggestions.

The page continues to be a helpful place for new beekeepers to seek advice from more experienced Association members. New LBKA member Mike Burnham asked for opinions on using a Flow Hive: respondents agreed (is that a first for beekeepers?!) that it's best to stick to a traditional design for your first hive. Claire Gardiner, a South London beekeeper, asked whether it's time to "close bees up for winter" as this had featured in other Facebook groups: discussion centred around when to feed fondant or syrup, with fondant being advised now that the temperature has dropped below double figures for most of the day.



Apiary benches

Adventures in Beeland: A long delayed visit to the bees

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

*Emily Scott
LBKA member*

I have been missing my bees. It is tricky visiting them as so far Tommy has refused to drink his milk from a bottle, meaning that I'm the only person who can feed him. It is easily a two hour round trip to the apiary by public transport and he usually feeds every 1-2 hours in the day. So you can see the difficulty. However on Saturday Drew drove us down and entertained him for a while, so that I could concentrate on a little beekeeping.

I was enchanted to find new comfy picnic tables and a much improved fence. Tea and cake at the apiary will taste even better now.

Emma and I have sold off a lot of equipment, Tom built us a lovely new equipment stand and Emma has done some tidying, so our once towering equipment empire is now much more manageable.

After several days of a freakishly warm September, in contrast Saturday was overcast and chilly. So I didn't inspect but did some tidying – removed the empty Apiguard trays and ekes, took out the varroa monitoring boards which were taped up for the Apiguard treatments and topped up the syrup feeders.

Melissa's colony is smaller than we would like, so I added a couple of dummy boards to help them keep warm. We may need to put them in a nuc over winter.



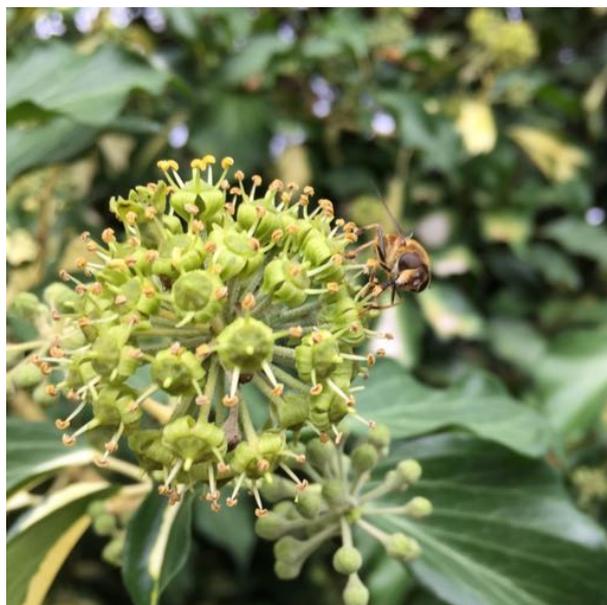
Equipment



Pink and white cyclamen



Pepper and Melissa hives



Hoverfly on ivy



Melissa's hive

It felt a bit painful visiting the bees, a reminder that I have been neglecting some parts of my life. But it was also nice to lose myself in the actions of caring for them. Lift the hive roof off, lay it down on the ground, gently lift off the feeder and prise off the crown board. Physical work is satisfying.

I spend a lot of time walking around to keep Tom entertained. In one of my local parks these pretty pink and white cyclamen are flowering. I noticed a little brown carder bee visiting them.

Ivy flowers are out now too – an important late source of forage for many pollinators. There's even a bee which specialises in visiting them, the Ivy bee, *Colletes hederæ*. It forages almost exclusively on ivy's delicate green and yellow flowers, flying only from September to mid-November. The Bees, Wasps & Ants Recording Society (BWARS) has a *Colletes hederæ* mapping project, so keep an eye out for these bees if you live in southern England or Wales. They were first recorded as new to Britain in 2001 when Ian Cross discovered specimens at Langton Matravers in Dorset.

A short visit but I hope to go again soon.

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 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 different 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). More details at <http://www.londonbees.com/>.

Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd October: Forage planting

10:00-16:00 at Mudchute Park and Farm, Pier St Isle of Dogs, London, E14 3HR

LBKA is organising a two-day forage-planting event at as part of our ongoing £12,000 planting project. We'll meet outside the farm cafe at 10am both days.

Hot drinks and biscuits provided please bring a packed lunch otherwise hot sandwiches are available from the farm cafe.

All tools and gloves provided but please wear appropriate outdoor footwear and clothing.

Please contact Mark on forage@lbka.org.uk.

Wednesday 9th November: Annual General Meeting

18:30 for 19:00 start at Roots and Shoots, Walnut Tree Walk, Kennington, SE11 6DN

Our Annual General Meeting which will include elections for new trustees and a new committee, votes on motions and discussions about what LBKA should be doing in the coming year. All welcome, but only fully-paid up members are have voting rights. Followed by tea/coffee/biscuits.

Sunday 13th November: Monthly meeting: Winter varroa treatment

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

How to do the winter varroa treatment and other related topics. We will also have oxalic acid to sell. 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.

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/>.

