



The London Beekeepers' Association LBKA News

November, 2016

In this month of our Annual General Meeting, our Chair Richard uses his monthly piece to review LBKA activities over the past year. Our education officer Howard summarises LBKA's education programme, then then kicks off next year's programme by offering microscopic classes (p8) and reminds us that he's running revision classes for the BBKA qualifications (p12) – do take advantage of these members' benefits. Our forage officer Mark represented LBKA at a pollinator summit (p12) and also reports on the Mudchute forage planting (p9) for which he organised both the funding and logistics! Thanks also for regular contributions from Howard, Natalie, Eugene and Emily (Scott).

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Thanks to this month's contributors: **Natalie Cotton, Eugene Fahy, Richard Glassborow, David Hankins, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, and Emily Scott.** Thanks to Martin Hudson for his proof-reading.

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

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From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
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This week we hold our AGM, so this is a good time to review the year just past. I once heard an old adage from the advertising industry (sorry, no pun intended), "if a thing is worth saying it is worth repeating... and then saying again!"

Some of you may already have read the Trustees Annual Report that was circulated with the AGM notification and some of you will hopefully be able to attend the AGM at which you will hear what our (our as in your) Association has been up to this past year. But, because I think it is worth it, I am going to say it again here, albeit in brief summary form.

LBKA's big news for this past year is of course that we are now registered as a Charity. On most day-to-day levels there will be no discernible difference. The



A sunny Autumn day, under a chestnut tree in Hyde Park.

organisation is still focused on its members and the craft of beekeeping.

The main driver for registering was related to our quest for a permanent home. As a charity the organisation becomes a legal entity with power to lease or buy property, makes us eligible for funding sources that would otherwise not be available and provides tax benefits for qualifying funds. This is a really empowering development.

Charitable status has also brought renewed clarity of purpose, as defined by the “objects”, a clear framework of governance and the not unreasonable responsibility of all members to act in a way most likely to further the aims of the charity.

The unexpected ease with which our registration was confirmed was in large part due to the particular skill and energy with which Tristram Sutton led the process for the committee. But I think it also reflects the fact that LBKA has already been on the right road for some time and already complied with most of the requirements. We continue to strive to improve our governance of course and the charitable framework is providing the committee with a very helpful guide.

So what has LBKA achieved in the last twelve months? The short answer is, a lot. So, of necessity, I will offer only a summary here, organised under the headings of member services, finance, resources, fund raising and giving, education, outreach (which includes shows and events), the London environment (which includes forage and our incipient activities into lobbying for environmental improvements in London). I think it should be readily apparent how all this activity fulfils our duty to further the aims of the charity.

The categories can be a bit rigid for, in reality, there is much overlap in what takes place and in particular in the way committee members contribute and collaborate.

Finance

The bedrock of any organisation is the state of its finances. Financial reports cannot be meaningfully compressed in a short column like this so you really will have to read those papers or attend the AGM. But suffice it to say that our finances are in good order. During the course of this year our treasurer, David Hankins, has moved our financial assets to a new bank which is able to provide us with internet banking (the old one wouldn't) and he has also been steadily preparing the financial systems and control in preparation for the kind of scrutiny that will come with, hopefully, larger income streams in the form of sponsorship and grants.

We owe much thanks to David... and apologies: sorry David, you thought you had retired but find yourself back at the old game, running a business.

Fundraising and giving

Thanks to the energy and abilities of Mark Patterson the Association has secured £10,500 in sponsorship for LBKA forage and outreach activities this year. More on forage later. Mark's proper hat is Forage Officer but he is very good at spotting and winning funds. This is an activity we hope to build on in the near future so the track record we are building up will have additional value in the future.

In accordance with a BBKA scheme, we have made a donation of £1 per full member (£139) towards the International Meeting of Young Beekeepers. As agreed at last year's AGM, we have made the first of a three year commitment to donate £300 towards the ReViVe varroa research project, topped up by a one off payment of £500.

Member services

As I said above, charitable status has not altered the main principle of the organisation – to benefit its members. Periodically the committee conducts a member survey and we routinely carry out an informal survey at membership renewal time. We try to listen, to process and to act on what we hear.

If you are reading this then you are partaking of a service that incorporates so much of what and how LBKA does things. The Newsletter communicates between members and between members and the committee. It is a reflection of the vitality of the association and most of its content is produced by members. That said, it doesn't happen by itself and a great deal of credit goes to Aidan Slingsby, our Member Services Officer, who has created it and who tirelessly orchestrates and edits the contributions and content every month. Aidan is also responsible for that other public manifestation of LBKA, our website. We know this is heavily visited and another committee member, Vlad Zamfir, is now contributing his professional digital analytics skills to provide us with more detailed insights and contributions to our digital strategies. And I haven't even begun to mention all the member and public enquiries handled and processed by Aidan and Emma Nye. There is a lot of work in that alone but it is a mark of the Association's success and high public profile that so many people come to us.

LBKA has always held monthly meetings and we have always recognised the challenge of providing seasonal topics that essentially repeat every year, inevitably, which has led to a tendency for members to drift away from these meetings as they become more experienced. This year, our education officer, Howard Nichols has gone to great lengths to enrich the content so that it appeals not only to beginner beekeepers but intermediary keepers too. We have also increased the length of the meetings to facilitate a Q&A exchange between beekeepers at all levels. We are hopeful that we can



Our new glossy and informative leaflets.

hold onto our more experienced members and maybe lure a few back.

The summer social this year felt particularly blessed. Walworth garden looked beautiful, the weather was perfect, the food, provided by The ChickPea Sisters, was very special indeed and the attendance was considerably higher than usual. We can't control the weather but the rest of those ingredients we can hopefully repeat next year.

Volunteers

Member services is two way at LBKA. More and more of our members are getting involved with activities as volunteers. LBKA policy is that we can only undertake what we do if we have people to do it.

We are lucky that many of our members do wish to help out. We ask members signing up whether they wish to volunteer for the association in various roles. We maintain lists of these people and use them when we need to recruit: e.g. helping at a stand (34 members), newsletter (22), helping at apiary (33), mentor (20), media (24), anything else (22). This constitutes an invaluable resource without which the Association would not be able to achieve all that we have.

As with everything else, nothing happens by itself. Our volunteers are recruited, organised and managed by Emily Abbott as part of her remit organising Events. Emily has a real knack of making anything so much fun!

Resources

Over recent years we have been buying more and more equipment to help deliver a better service to members. Traditionally, storage has always been a problem, relying mostly on committee members cluttering up their homes with LBKA boxes. For a while much, but not all of it was stored in one lockup, generously

provided by Paul Vagg. But this year for the first time we have established enough storage space at Walworth Garden to house all of it under one, easily accessible roof. The benefits and efficiencies are already proving immense.

Education

Education is a long established strength of LBKA, especially through the combination of Introductory Courses and Mentoring. Once again this year we delivered 2 Introductory courses and 2 Taster (non-training) courses for members of the public and a microscopy course, bee health day and a nosema "day" for members. We have continued to make improvements to the content and we continue to rely on a team of volunteers to present them.

Mentoring continues to be a very important and much in demand part of our training programme. We have 10 mentors this year, including 4 at our 4 teaching apiaries, providing for 51 mentees. It is not always easy to match mentees with mentors in convenient locations, especially as we do have some geographical gaps. But Tristram goes to great lengths to facilitate the best outcomes we can.

Mentoring is aligned to the BBKA Basic exam and this year Howard prepared 15 candidates for that exam. They all passed: a fitting tribute to Howard's teaching and commitment.

Outreach

The main components of our outreach programme include the website, Events and Shows (3 major ones this year), talks to schools and groups and printed literature. New leaflets and a contact card are under development courtesy of sponsorship from Neal's Yard Remedies. The first leaflet, "Helping honey bees and

other Pollinators' was launched at the London Honey Show in October.

This year we added to this two evenings hosting members of the campaign organisation, 38 Degrees. This was very much the initiative of Emma Nye and developed a programme designed not only to enthral 38 degree members with honeybee content but to bust some of the myths about bee decline and brief them on the more complex realities of habitat loss and pollinator health in London. The London environment: For some time, LBKA position has been that bees and flowers go together. This year Mark (with his proper forage hat on) has organised 4 forage planting events at Mudchute City Farm, involving the planting of thousands of wild flowers.

Forage

Our project at Mudchute is our most ambitious to date, creating new areas of forage, instructing Farm staff in meadow management, providing them with scything training, tools and machinery required to ensure the planted areas are maintained long into the future. Sustainability of our planting projects is crucial for long-term success. In addition to practical actions like this, LBKA has begun to explore the popularity of honey bees as a lever for political and environmental change. Emma has facilitated meetings of a group of members interested in developing political lobbying activities and we have also begun to develop a relationship with the London mayor's office at the London Assembly.

As part of this initiative we will also seek to influence land-owners, developers, planning authorities as well as local authorities and the public.

This has turned out to be a rather long contribution from the Chair and I apologise if you have already read the Trustees annual Report. But, as I said at the beginning (and for those who have not read it!), I think it is worth saying what our association is about.

Announcements

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

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. Nominations for all committee positions closed a couple of weeks ago and you'll have seen these



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

nominations in your email. There are no uncontested committee positions – members of the existing committee will be staying on and some new members will also be joining. No motions have been proposed.

The new committee will be able to co-opt members onto the committee as required, so there's still a chance to get involved if you like. Even if you're not on the committee, you can still get involved. Do talk to us about any ideas you have.

The AGM will be a good opportunity to discuss what we do as an association and as a charity in the coming year. It will also be a good opportunity to socialise, so do come and support our association.

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

Next Monthly Meeting

The next monthly meeting will be back at the usual venue – **Fairley House Junior School** (220 Lambeth Rd, SE1 7JY) on **Sunday 13th November at 11:00** on the subject of **winter varroa treatment**. A change in circumstances means that we now cannot use a generic oxalic acid preparation as we have in the past. Instead, we should use the oxalic-acid-based **Api-Bioxal** product. Richard and Howard will tell us how to do this.

We will also have twenty 35g sachets of Api-Bioxal for sale at the November monthly meeting. Each sachet is enough to feed 10 colonies but needs to be made up with sugar solution by the beekeeper before applying the treatment. This is substantially different from previous years as the usual ready made solution has now been withdrawn from use.

The **cost of each sachet is £10** and this includes a reusable syringe to apply the treatment. To ensure there is enough to meet members needs, **we'd like members with fewer than six colonies to share a packet with a friend** If you have 3 or fewer colonies you may be able to share with 2 other beekeeping friends.

Geoff Hood has offered to bring along a oxalic acid vaporiser and will explain that technique.

Next month's meeting will be on Sunday 11th December where **Jon Harris** will be doing his annual Christmas quiz. We'll have festival food and drinks to accompany it.

LBKA membership

I've just sent a reminder email out to all of our members who have not renewed their membership. If you didn't get a reminder, it's probably languishing in your 'spam' folder. If you wish to remain a member, please rejoin using the link I sent you. If you need any help, just email Aidan on services@lbka.org.uk.

Education matters

We have some new education offerings.

Richard and Howard will be running some **microscopy classes** – see page 8 for more details. These are excellent classes open to all members, but there are only limited places, so be quick!

Howard Nichols will be running sessions in the coming year to prepare LBKA members for **BBKA Basic** and **BBKA Module 1**. We encourage all our beekeepers to consider taking BBKA Basic. Contact education@lbka.org.uk for more information.

Finally, Howard gives us a round-up of last year **educational achievements** on page 11.

BBKA General Husbandry Assessment Preparation Training

The BBKA have secured DEFRA funding under the "Healthy Bees Plan" to support people who plan to take the General Husbandry Assessment in the near future.

The training will be in the January to April period and will be facilitated by a team of 14 Master Beekeepers who are also General Husbandry assessors. The programme of 20 hours will cover both practical and theoretical aspects of the General Husbandry assessment, aiming to give the participants an understanding of what the assessment entails and what they need to do in order to be successful.

Candidates are required to have taken the Basic certificate and be registered on BeeBase. The enrolment fee is £50. For more information or to subscribe contact Marin Anastassov at manastassov@aol.com.

Awards

LBKA members entered their honey into various competitions and had successes.

In the **National Honey Show**, we sponsor three categories for London honey. In **Class 241** ("two jars of light or medium honey"), member Geoff Hood's honey was "very highly commended" and member Sara

Ward's honey was "commended". In **Class 243** ("**one jar liquid honey**"), former LBKA Chair John Chapple won third prize and member Geoff Hood's honey was "highly commended". No awards were given for Class 242: ("two jars naturally crystallised or soft set honey"). LBKA members also had success in other categories, see the awards at <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/files/2016/national-honey-show-results-2016.pdf>.

In the **London Honey Show**, congratulations to members Jo Hemesley, Martin Hudson, Nicki Marani, Paul Vagg and Vlad Zemfir for winning prizes – more details on page 9.

Old announcements from October

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

Asian Hornet found in UK: See <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/index.cfm?id=4> and http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/press_office/press_releases.php for updates.

Finding a permanent home. Finding a permanent home is still high on the committee's agenda. If you can help and/or help provide legal advice, please contact services@lbka.org.uk.

Soap and wax produce courses: see <http://www.honeybeebeautiful.co.uk/store/c7/COURSES.html>.

Eggheads? Interested to form part of team of 6 beekeepers for the BBC 2 quiz show "Eggheads"? If so, contact services@lbka.org.uk.

Old announcements from September

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

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.

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. Photo: Paul Vagg

Last month's Monthly Meeting: Bees on the move and honey tasting

What happened last month.

Natalie Cotton
LBKA member

This month's busy monthly meeting preceded the London honey show at Lancaster Gate Hotel. Karin talked about moving bees, with her main warning being that moving bees carries the risk of spreading disease, so we as beekeepers need to mitigate that wherever possible.

Although most of us London beeks don't move our hives to follow the nectar flow, we are all involved in moving bees at some point. Moving queens, for example, can spread diseases - buying in queens from abroad particularly carries the risk of buying in disease.

When we do have an occasion to move hives, we should keep in mind the "three ft three mile rule". Bees can usually find a hive moved less than three feet / a metre in any direction per day. Move a hive three miles or over, and bees will orient to new site. If the distances are in between this amount, the bees will become disori-

ented and return to the old site. Richard has experience of rotating hives and recommends 20 to 30 degrees per day to find the entrance.

Bees navigate by following the earth's magnetism and polarisation of the sun. They can also recognise visual landmarks, pattern and colour. If moving hives, you can make it easier for them to reorientate by painting the hive or putting large branches outside.

Moving increases stress risk and therefore disease risk such as nosema. A healthy colony is less likely to be stressed. If you are moving a hive then check the bees for disease day before moving. If you're buying from another keeper, you can check for temperament by waving your hand over crown board and seeing reaction - aggressive bees will leap out on the attack. Check if the colony is disease free, they have a laying queen, and if the brood nest is a good shape. Checking that the colony hasn't been recently put together using frames from other hives (an irregular brood shape will help identify this). If colony is worth having, cage the queen ready for moving.

If the hive doesn't have an open mesh floor and you have a long car journey, put a travel screen on so the bees have air. Mist with water if it's a hot day.

It's possible to move a hive with supers if you have enough muscle power on the day and height room in car. If not, shake bees off the supers in to the brood box the day before and remove the supers.

Stuff entrance with foam or grass the night before or at dawn that day, to ensure the maximum number are in the hive. Strap the hive using good quality hive straps, to ensure nothing separates in your car - don't

use stretchy straps as this is likely to result in a car full of bees!

Karin recommends moving bees very early in the morning as it gives them a whole day to orientate. Ensure the new site is ready and accessible before you set off. It's best to move a heavy hive in a wheelbarrow so have one ready both ends.

When you load a hive in to a vehicle, frames should face the direction of travel so they don't bang together if you have to break suddenly. Secure the hive in the vehicle if you can – stretchy straps are useful here. Put your bee suit on, just in case of in transit issues! Experience has taught some members that it's worth checking mesh floors are pinned on all sides, for example, to stop bees pouring out mid journey. Some beekeepers suggest putting a sign saying live bees in transit on your vehicle.

Try and drive slowly and smoothly. Aircon isn't recommended as this can upset the bees, and keep a water spray handy if it's hot as they can die of overheating very quickly. If the bees start to escape, stop! You will have to wait until they go back in hive of their own accord (stop somewhere cool so you can close the window to prevent them beginning to forage).

Once at your new site, leave the bees shut in the hive for a full day and release the next, so they have chance to orientate.

If you do need to move a hive between three feet and three miles, the recommended method is to temporarily move it over three miles away from both the original and new location. After a three week period, move to the desired location.

The meeting was rounded off with the opportunity to sample the wide range of honey from LBKA keepers across London, so thanks to all who donated to that tasty activity.

November in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

Even with the extended period of warm weather this year, November is still not the most active of months for the beekeeper but a certain amount still needs to be done.

Tidy up: Final tidy up the apiary if not already done.



Former Chair, Karin Courtman, leading last month's meeting. Photo: Paul Vagg

Complete cleaning, sterilising and storing of equipment.

Check stored supers for evidence of wax moth infestation. The lifecycle of the wax moth is substantially different to that of the honey bee. A wax moth egg is temperature dependent and is able to stay as an egg then hatch after a few weeks or months. Supers should be stored in a cold and draughty place if possible but also checked during winter. If any evidence of wax moth is found the best way to deal with it is to place the frame(s) in a deep freeze cabinet for 48 hours. This will kill the wax moth in all 4 lifecycle stages.

Planning for further varroa treatment in December. December is the usual month for treating the colony with Oxalic Acid. Monitoring natural mitedrop in November is a useful diagnostic tool and precursor to actual treatment next month. Insertion of the varroa floor for 1 week in November will give useful information to the beekeeper.

Check the hive is secure and that the roof cannot blow off or be dislodged. Placing of heavy items such



Microscopy from a couple of years ago.

as a couple of housebricks on the roof is usually sufficient for a National with a well fitting flat roof. They are designed not to blow off. A hive with a gabled roof, such as a WBC, may need tethering with rope.

The mouseguards should already be on the hive entrances. The colony should not now be opened until Spring except for the Oxalic Acid treatment in late December.

For those who have not taken the BBKA Basic Assessment, please download the syllabus from the BBKA website and consider background reading with a view to taking the assessment next summer. The requirement is that you have kept bees for a minimum period of 1 year. LBKA will not pressurise anyone to take the assessment but will actively encourage and assist those wishing to do so. Reading about bees and beekeeping in the winter months is a useful way to spend our spare time and acts as a beekeeping bridge between the seasons.

Consider your approach to next season. Will you need an additional hive, nuc box or replacement frames? Most equipment suppliers have winter sales where they sell slight seconds. This is an excellent time to buy, especially if you search 2 or 3 websites for offers. If 2 or 3 people jointly purchase then you may even be able to save on the delivery charge.

LBKA Microscopy Course: Anatomy of the honey bee and pollen analysis

Howard, LBKA's Education Officer, gives us a roundup of LBKA's education programme over the past year

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

LBKA will run a detailed microscopy course for interested members during the winter months. This is the 3rd year this course will be run by our association and is likely to be 3 × 2 hour evening sessions organised and led by Howard Nichols and Richard Glassborow. It will concentrate on the use of microscopes for members to learn about both the pollen grain structure and the internal anatomy of the honey bee. It will be mainly hands on practical work and over the 3 weekly sessions we expect to deal with the following:

1. Simple theory of lenses, setting up of optical instruments and a summary of terminology used.
2. Investigation and analysis of pollen grains. How to prepare a slide. Use of negative and positive stains. Internal and external structure of a pollen grain and its features. Extraction of pollen grains from honey and analysis / identification of the flowers.
3. Embedding and dissection of the honey bee.

Item 3 will form the major part of the course with 2 full sessions covering this subject. Embedding, dissection of head, thorax and abdomen will all be separately dealt with. Did you know that a mammal is pinned on its back for dissection but a bee needs to be pinned face downwards?

All equipment will be supplied by LBKA. Numbers are limited to 8 people due to availability of equipment and to maintain a good pupil:teacher ratio. There is no charge – it is a members' benefit. The date to be decided but likely to be 3 evenings in late January and/or February 2017 at Walworth Garden Farm.

Please note this course is open to all LBKA members. The only entry requirement is an interest. Although specialised in form it is for anyone interested or curious about these aspects of beekeeping. Microscopy and dissection are "niche subjects" and so equally accessible by both very new and long standing beekeepers. It is not dependent upon length of beekeeping experience. It is truly a fascinating sub-optical world and exploration is an adventure.



Please register your interest by email to education@lbka.org.uk as soon as possible. This does not require you to commit at this stage but, if oversubscribed, we have to allocate places on a first come / first served basis. The last 2 years the event was oversubscribed within 24 hours of the newsletter being emailed to members.



Keep off the newly planted areas!

LBKA Forage Planting Update

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

On Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd October, LBKA hosted the latest in our series of planting projects at Mudchute farm, Isle of Dogs in East London. This is part of our £12,000 project to improve habitats on the farm for pollinators.

We mowed and raked the hay from a large area of grassland and planted over 1200 bespoke grown wildflower pot plants from 21 species around the horseshoe field. We've also sown several kilos of yellow rattle seed into the existing rough grass. This will create an area rich in flowers for pollinators in years to come.

I'd like to extend a big thank you to Tesco Bags of Help who funded the project and to our army of corporate volunteers from NOMURA bank, Costain, Cross Rail, Neal's Yard Remedies Covent Garden (who have also funded our fabulous new leaflets) and to member **Cedar Luo** for helping to supervise the volunteers and keep everyone organised. A tremendous effort by all.

Since the task took place we have been in talks with several of the corporates who sent along staff to help plant about further collaborations including sponsorship



of future planting events and interpretation signage to erect at the meadow and Mudchute Apiary.

London Honey Show

Jo organised the London Honey Show. It was also thanks to her that we were able to host our monthly meeting there last month. Thanks Jo! We had a very good turnout.

*Jo Hemesley
London Honey Show organiser
LBKA member*

This is the 6th year of the London Honey Show and once again it was a fantastic day celebrating all things bee! The London Honey Show was attended by almost 400 visitors – beekeepers, families, neighbours and the curious!

Talks

The talks were given by **Luke Dixon** and **Dale Gibson** and hugely enjoyed by the audience. Luke spoke about the fantastic charity – The Bee Friendly Trust and Dale gave a talk titled ‘Bees can’t eat kind words’ about the importance of forage in London. Dale also gave a seminar on the Asian Hornet – vital since the recent confirmation of its arrival in the UK.

Stalls

There were plenty of stall holders at the show selling some beautiful bee inspired goodies from jewellery by jeweller **Corrine Edwards** & beauty products by **Bee**



LBKA's stall at the London Honey Show with Karin, Richard, Mark, Angela and Paul (from left to right). Photo: Paul Vagg

Inspired to honey available from members of the **London Beekeeping Association** and beer by **Hiver**. The **Lancaster London**, organiser and host of the show also had a stall, showcasing the Lancaster London Honey Farm, located on the 2nd story rooftop of the hotel. In addition to the stalls **The Bee Friendly Trusts'** converted vintage Bedford Bambi mobile home was a focal point. The 'bee mobile' is a unique resource used to demonstrate the wonders of the beehive and explain the importance of pollinators both in the natural world and in the provision of food for human consumption. Enjoyed by kids and adults alike!

Charity

This year the London Honey Show donated over £600, to bee charity – **Bees Abroad**. They are a UK-registered charity who seek to reduce poverty through beekeeping. Volunteer Project Managers assess and support beekeeping projects in developing countries world wide.



Photo: friend of Karin Courtman's.

Crafts

Children were kept entertained in the craft area where they could create bee masks, colour in and complete puzzles. There was a beautiful display of art work from the children of **Hallfield Primary School**. The children and teachers had worked on a project about bees, their life cycle and why they are so important to the world we live in.

Competition

The highlight of the London Honey Show for many of the beekeepers was of course the honey competition! Judges **Sue Carter** and **Bill Fisher** tasted and deliberated over all of the entries before deciding on the winners from 4 categories: **Home**, **Rooftop** (business or educational) and **packaging**.

The first place winners were awarded a London Honey Show certificate.

The proud winners were (LBKA members marked by an asterisk):

Best honey from a home site: Nikki & Chris Bolton (first prize), Julie Hogarth (second prize) and Martin Hudson* (third prize).

Best honey from a rooftop site: Pilar Dell (first prize), Vlad Zamfir* (second prize), Julie Hogarth (third prize).

Best honey from a business or educational site: Jo Hemesley* (Lancaster London; first prize), Nicki

Marani* (Nottinghill Primary School; second prize) and Dr Paul Vagg* (third prize).

Best packaging: Dale Gibson.

The **Battle of the Regions – North vs South London** was decided by public vote – all visitors were invited to taste the honey and vote for their favourite. South London beekeeper **Dr Paul Vagg*** was victorious!

Finally, **Beekeeper of the Year** is awarded based on nominations of individuals who make an outstanding contribution to beekeeping. This year, it was awarded to **Dr Paul Vagg***, for the second year in a row. The plaque was donated by BeeCraft Magazine.

Congratulations to all involved!

2016's Education Summary

Howard, LBKA's Education Officer, gives us a roundup of LBKA's education programme over the past year

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

The beekeeping season has finished for 2016 and set out below is a summary of the education activities undertaken by the association for 2016. As an association, LBKA aims to produce competent and confident beekeepers. The 2016 education plan has tried to meet this aim.

Monthly meetings

Since 2013 we have tried to introduce different intermediate topics as the theme for the monthly meetings. These have included disease recognition, use of compound microscopes for Nosema testing, queen rearing for the small scale beekeeper. In addition many of the seasonal apiary tasks have also been covered such as varroa treatments and swarm control. We have tried to cover both seasonal and intermediate topics so that there is always something for everyone. Based upon member feedback the strategy seems to have been successful, although it is impossible to meet the aspirations of all the people all of the time. We introduced 5 new topics, all of which were dealt with comprehensively. These were:

- Wax Moth lifecycle and infestation in January.
- Dealing with a vicious colony in July.
- Feeding bees and different types of feeder in August.
- Combining colonies in September.

- Moving bees in October.

Anyone who would like a particular topic to be covered in 2017 please contact a committee member and we will see if it can be included.

Bee Health Day

In May we held a bee health day at the Holland Park apiary. At very late notice we were advised we could not open the bees on the roof due to structural and weight load issues. This severely curtailed the event. This was unfortunate as a lot of work had gone into the preparation of material but we concentrated on EFB / AFB, identification of different diseases and conditions and inspection of old frames. It is hoped to run this event at Walworth Garden Farm in 2017.

BBKA Module exams

There was insufficient demand and so the association did not provide tuition this year. We intend to run a Module 1 study group this winter. Anyone who is interested please contact education@lbka.org.uk.

BBKA Basic Assessment

We arranged tuition and the assessment for 15 members who took the BBKA Basic assessment in May and June 2017. It is hoped that we can do this for even more members in 2017. Anyone interested should email your details to me and I will forward electronic course material for winter reading. It does not require any commitment at this stage.

Winter lectures

We had 2 winter lectures and both of these were poorly attended.

Microscopy sessions

For the 2nd year we ran a 3 evening instruction course on the use of microscopes, identification of pollen and internal dissection of the honey bee. Feedback was very positive and attendees found it interesting and enjoyable.

Beginners Course

All the above events were free and included within the annual membership. We also ran our 2 usual beginners courses which is a fee paying event over a full Saturday and Sunday. During the course of each weekend a variety of LBKA members were involved, each speaking or demonstrating a single aspect of the course content and attending the course for half a day. The time freely given by all of these individuals is greatly appreciated.

Mentoring Programme

We have again been able to run our mentoring programme. This has been organised and monitored by Tristram and all appears to have been very successful. We intend to match all people attending the Beginners Course with a mentor (assuming they want a mentor), but subject to availability of mentors and appropriate geographical areas. Thank you to Tristram and all mentors who have taken part.

Preparation for BBKA Exams

Howard runs revision classes for the BBKA exams. If you've kept bees for at least a year, we **strongly encourage you to do BBKA Basic** and we'll even pay the fee for you to do it... as long as you pass. Note that Howard has 100% success rate getting people through the exams. Howard will also run sessions for other modules. **Do take advantage of this opportunity!**

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

2017 BBKA Basic Assessment

Both BBKA and LBKA encourage members to take the BBKA basic assessment where possible. The BBKA requirement for entry is that the applicant has been managing 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 examination. 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 managing 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.

Tackling the decline of pollinating insects in the UK

Our forage officer Mark Patterson represented LBKA at this annual conference held in Central London on 18th October.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

The purpose of the gathering was to inform attendees on the current state of UK pollinator declines and to inform them of strides being undertaken to address the issues.

This year's conference was chaired by Independent rural commentator Rob York with guest speakers including politicians, major conservation charity representatives and research institutions sharing their latest works and research findings. Among the delegates in the audience were representatives from Welsh farmers and beekeepers, beekeepers from Scotland, Ireland, Channel Islands, Northern Europe, conservation groups, local authorities, major land owners, agro-chemical companies and agronomists.

I took Simon Caville along with me as my 'plus one'. He's an LBKA member and founder of cosmetics company 'Bee Good' which gives 10% of its profits to urban planting projects and sponsors the bee farmers association apprentice scheme. Simon is also a BBKA trustee and strong supporter of the work LBKA is doing to plant for pollinators.

The day started with Huw Merriman MP and Chair of the Parliamentary Group on Bees chair. Huw's opening comments about the value that the public place on bees and other pollinators being far larger than the government had ever imagined was highlighted with an example which to me shone out when he said "MPs are receiving more correspondence from constituents on bee declines and the neonic debate than refugees, Brexit and immigration combined".

Huw gave an overview of the achievements of the Government's National Pollinator Strategy which to date has achieved very little outside of growing support for pollinator conservation and widening awareness. Very little government money or effort has yet gone into delivering outputs that the government pledged to deliver.

Huw then spoke about his parliamentary group's efforts to put bee conservation higher up on the government agenda and talked about his department's desire to host a hive on their rooftop in Westminster – something they



have asked LBKA about but we decided is not in the best interests of the bees. . . more on that later.

Following Huw we had a presentation from Paul De Zylva campaign manager for Friends of the Earth Bee Cause who gave an overview of the Bee Cause campaign and its achievements.

Following Paul we were give a very interesting presentation from Dr Thomas Ings from Anglia Ruskin University on the importance of urban habitats for solitary bees. Thomas showed us some interesting examples of how solitary bees often make their nests in large aggregations in very unusual and unsuspecting locations within towns and cities and that better understanding of nest site selection is needed to help conserve urban pollinators.

Margaret Ginman general secretary of the Bee Farmers Association then gave us an informal talk about the role of the bee farmers association in conserving British bees and the need for improvements in bee keeping. Margaret gave examples of how the bee farmers association works in partnership with other organisations to improve the environment for pollinators and how they are now delivering a bee farmer apprenticeship scheme to save the dying art of bee farming in the UK.

After a brief coffee break I was invited to take centre stage and give a presentation on the state of London's bees and the need for improved forage for London pollinators.

I began my talk by explaining that over half of the nation's 275 bee species can be found in the capital and that some of our better parks and gardens can attract up to 50 species. I explained that the city micro climate, reduction in pesticides and wide range of blooming plants creates a haven for pollinators but our ever increasing managed honey bee population and loss of green space to development means we need more flow-

ers to support these insects. I presented data and research which LBKA has undertaken with the assistance of the National Bee Unit and Green space information for Greater London.

I also took the opportunity to highlight the work LBKA is doing to address the issues by planting for bees and other pollinators and gave some impressive examples. In the last 3 years we have:

- Given out seed packets equivalent to 3.4 hectares of new planting
- Planted over 6500 individual pot plants
- Planted over 1000 bulbs
- Invested £22,500 in forage creation
- Handed out over 6000 copies of our how to help bees literature
- Advised many local councils and parks on pollinator planting schemes

I also took along with me an impressive display of our research and planting efforts which was mounted on display boards at the rear of the conference room and over lunch many delegates stopped to take in the information displayed and pick up a copy of our newly printed leaflets.

Next up was Vicky Kindemba conservation manager at Buglife. Kim gave a talk on the update of the charity's B-Lines program to establish corridors of flowers across the country to link pollinator populations and how they have been working closely with farmers and large landowners to achieve their ambitious goals.

We also had presentations from 2 researchers from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology – the UK's largest independent environmental research institution on the latest evidence that neonicotinoids are harmful to bees. One of the field studies showed that only about 5% of the current bee declines are attributable to pesti-

cides, the biggest influence was habitat loss and urbanisation. Evidence was presented showing that drastic bee declines had already begun prior to neonics being introduced. We were also shown research on the value of oil seed rape to pollinators and how treating with neonics had affected those pollinators.

The day concluded with an open floor discussion about the topics presented earlier and there was much debate about what need to happen going forward to ensure our National Pollinator strategy will be successfully implemented. There were several questions about how Brexit will effect agri-environmental subsidies and continued funding for research and monitoring of pollinator populations. It was an informative event and worth attending.

Facebook (In)digest(ion)

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

Eugene Fahy
LBKA Member

There was success at honey shows for a number of LBKA members at the National Honey Show and Paul Vagg who won London Beekeeper of the year the London Honey Show for the second year in a row.

Geordy Mark reported on the latest LBKA planting project at Mudchute Farm, where 1200 wildflower pot plants were planted and yellow rattle seed was sown in the rough grass. This will create a rich habitat for pollinators for many years to come. He also reported on representing LBKA at a symposium on “Halting declines of UK pollinators”. His presentation dealt with London’s bee populations, the state of our green spaces, the case for improved forage for London pollinators and what the LBKA is doing to lobby politicians, green space managers, businesses and the public to plant for bees. The attendees included beekeepers, farmers, ecologists, pesticide companies and conservationists from around the UK.

In his maiden post, Brian Kealy asked for advice on the equipment needed to start beekeeping. Replies emphasised the importance of attending a course and having mentoring but also suggestions for equipment, with Geordy Mark supplying an extensive list based on his own, Mary Poppins-like, tool bag.

Angela Woods posted a link to the BBKA Honey Harvest results which showed no change in Lon-

don from last year’s figure of 27lbs. <http://bit.ly/1QRdnzk>

Karen Alton posted a link to the LASI blog which discusses the link between hygienic behaviour and resistance to American Foulbrood. <http://bit.ly/2exwe10>.

A link to a Guardian article, entitled “Why don’t vegans eat honey?” posted by Angela Wood, prompted some discussion. Reasons for avoiding honey, included stressing the bees by removing honey and replacing it with syrup. The article claimed that syrup lacked the “antibiotic/antioxidant” properties of honey and left the bees more susceptible to disease. A number of members took issue with the accuracy of the information and felt the article was misleading. <http://bit.ly/2exD7Q2>.

Angela also posted a link highlighting the new Planet Earth series, particularly the last episode dealing with urban wildlife. Presenter, David Attenborough says Richmond, where he has lived for 65 years, is his favourite place on Earth and that London’s wildlife inspires him.

Annie Webster posted a link to a blog article by Prof. Dave Goulson of Sussex University on the case against neonicotinoids. The article was a response to a recent Society of Chemical Industry meeting which discussed the issue and where the argument was made that “we can’t be sure what harms bees” and the current ban is forcing famers to use older, more harmful chemicals that we know little about. Prof Goulson says neonics are widely used in agriculture, horticulture and flea treatments for pets. They are water soluble and are now found in streams and ponds and in the pollen and nectar of wildflowers growing near treated crops. He says “the case that neonics harm bumblebees is iron-clad”, the case that they cause harm honeybee colonies to seems highly likely but has not been proved beyond doubt. <http://bit.ly/2egtQ3c>

Peter Charlton told us about a device called the Apidictor, invented by a BBC sound engineer, Eddie Woods in 1964. Eddie had noticed that bees produce different sounds depending on what is happening in the hive. He identified a sound which indicated that the hive is queen-right and another which warned that bees were preparing to swarm. Tests could be done without opening the hive and the apidictor could regularly measure the sound level and identify when a hive inspection was needed. He claimed he could get up to three weeks warning of swarm preparations and an alert, ten days before queen cells were started. The device was patented and about 300 were sold.



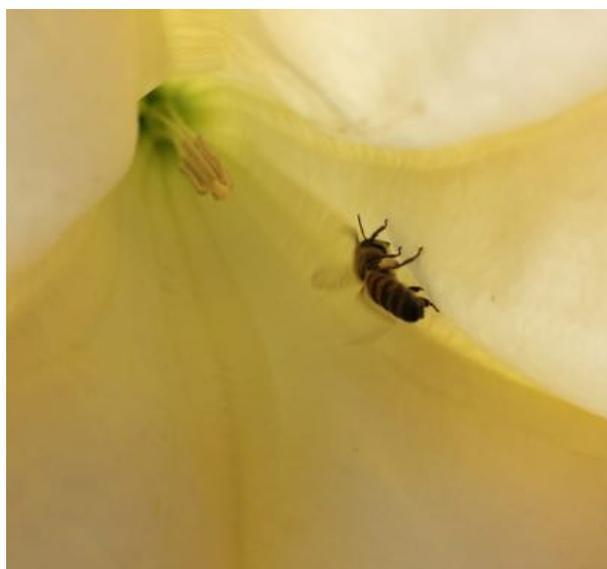
Adventures in Beeland: Cake testing time

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

Emily Scott
LBKA member

Autumn has come to the apiary. Crisp dry leaves litter the floor. Some flowers are still around – purple michaelmas daisies, ivy and the last of the himalayan balsam along canal banks. The bees come and go, but no longer in the same numbers or with the urgency they had earlier in the season. They are winding down, preparing for the long retreat.

I took Tommy for his first visit to the apiary. He seemed to enjoy the attention of being the youngest beekeeper there, even if he couldn't join in with the cake testing. He was asleep when I first got to the apiary but woke up just as I started topping up the feeders with syrup, so no time for further beekeeping! Luckily big Tom



Here's a little bee climbing up inside a lily.

was able to transfer our smallest colony into a poly nuc for winter. I have never overwintered a nuc so fingers crossed.

We had a triple whammy of sweet treats this week – Clare's chocolate and banana bread, Jones's lemon honey cake and my chocolate biscuits. Plus tea of course.

Jonesy was testing his lemon honey cake for the National Honey Show at the end of October. The recipe it has to be made to is on the National Honey Show website (class 85). Most of us thought the cake was very nice, moist and light, though not everyone agreed and he did also get some feedback that it was too dry! Does anyone have any tips for winning the cake class? I quite fancy making the honey fruit cake recipe.

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.

Upcoming events

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 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.

Sunday 11th December: Monthly meeting: Christmas quiz and social

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

Seasonal fun and games, with hot drinks, beer, wine, cake, mince pies and chat.

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/>.

