



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

## August, 2017

Welcome to August's (bumper) edition of the newsletter. This is the month of our social for LBKA members and their family & friends and we continue our 100% pass rate of members taking the BBKA Basic exam!

This month, we have regular features from the Chair (page 1), on what to do in the apiary (page 6), what bees are eating (page 7) and our apiaries (page 14). In addition, Geoff tells us of a beekeeping diploma on pollen & nutrition that he took with three other LBKA members (page 12), Natalie tells us about her holidays (page 12), the Lambeth Country Show (page 9), and Emily Scott reports on the 'pollinator day' she attended at Kew (page 15).

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Thanks to this month's contributors: **Natalie Cotton, Eugene Fahy, Richard Glassborow, Petros Hahladakis, Geoff Hood, Martin Kunz, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Emily Scott and Vlad Zamfir.** Thanks as usual to Martin Hudson for proof-reading it. Would you like to join the esteemed list of contributors above? If so, please contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

*Aidan Slingsby, Editor, [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)*

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## From our Chair

*Richard Glassborow*  
[chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk)

The highlight of our outreach activities in July was, as ever, the Lambeth Country Show. There is a full report of the LBKA stand in this issue of the News Letter but I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those members who volunteered their time to make our stand the success it was. Without you we cannot do what we do, so thank you. And of course this does not happen by accident: it was organised to the last detail by our Events Officer, Emily Abbott. Thank you Emily.



*Gatekeeper (or "Hedge Brown") butterfly on Ragwort.*  
*Photo: Aidan Slingsby.*

In addition to LBKA Apiaries and members being able to sell honey, this year we also had our new leaflets and new wild flower seed mix packets to distribute and sell. Over 200 hundred "Helping honey bees and other London pollinators" leaflets were eagerly snapped up by an appreciative public as well as around 100 "Who's Who of London Bees". This is a good step towards fulfilling our charitable objects of serving our members and improving public awareness and understanding of bees.

We are now trying to organise a presence at Harvest Stomp at Olympic Park in September. The organisers and procedures have changed there but we still hope to find a way to take part. Watch this space.

Meanwhile, back in the apiaries, the main honey flows are over and so begins the challenge of coordinating super removal, extraction, wet super cleaning, varroa treatment and build up of winter supplies. It always sounds so straightforward but it can be difficult to manage the sequence in practice: some supers may be relatively full but not capped (or ripe); instead of, or after cleaning wet supers above the crown board the bees re-fill them (because there is still nectar out there in some areas and they don't have enough room below yet); on top of that, many beekeepers are experiencing high levels of varroa already and early treatment is a priority. There is an NBU alert to that effect.

It is easy to underestimate or misunderstand the importance of this part of the beekeeping calendar. The priority looks like honey but in fact it is the welfare of our bees as the colonies prepare for winter.

Preparation for winter is not just about sufficient stores of food. The colony may be smaller but it still needs to be strong and healthy and the most probable threat to this is likely to come from varroa. Whatever your varroa management strategy is, this is the time of year when the mite population is growing exponentially to critical numbers just as the host colony size is contracting. Things can go badly wrong for the bees very suddenly if treatment is not timely. Most chemical treatments are incompatible with honey frames, which is why we harvest now even though there is still nectar to collect.

Honey labelling regulations and summer varroa treatment are the topics for the monthly meeting at Walworth Garden, before the Summer Social, Sunday August 13th. Apiguard will be on sale to members but hopefully the information, discussion and advice will be even more valuable in managing this most difficult and critical of beekeeping challenges.

And then of course there is the social event itself. If you have been before I hope you will need no persuading to come again this year. If you haven't been before, do please give it a go. It is a great opportunity to put faces to names you may have seen or heard of or just mingle with a crowd of people, confident you have at least one thing in common and a ready supply of introductory gambits to make new friends.



*Walworth Garden, the venue for August's monthly meeting (for this month only!)*

Walworth Garden is a beautiful venue and the food should be pretty good too. As last year, The Chickpea Sisters will be treating us to a selection of authentic North African and Middle Eastern cooking, including Baklava made with LBKA London honey. Catering will be well advanced by the time this edition of the News Letter comes out but if we can persuade you to come along at this late stage, please do let us know by adding yourself and any guests to the [Doodle poll](#) set up for this purpose. Equally, if you have already done this but now find you cannot come, please use the poll to remove yourself.

I look forward to seeing those of you who can make it.

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## Announcements

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

### Monthly Meeting and Summer Social

Our monthly meeting will be on **Sunday 13th August at 11:00** on the topical subject of **honey labelling regulations**. Instead of than our usual venue, we'll be at the beautiful **Walworth Garden** (Braganza St, [SE17 3BN](#)).

Howard has bought **Apiguard** and will be selling this at the Summer Social. It is £2.50 per sachet and 2

sachets are needed for a colony treatment. Will people try to bring the correct money (£5 per colony).

This will be followed by our **Spectacular Summer Social** – with food from the [Chickpea Sisters](#) – an event to remember! This is a **free event for members and their guests** but please add your name and those of your guests to [the attendance list](#) to indicate if you're coming. Please remove your name if you can no longer come, so we can plan the catering. We'll provide food and drink.

Please do take some photos and post to our Facebook Group or email them to [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) for inclusion in next month's newsletter. Last year, everyone had so much fun that they forgot to take photos!

The next monthly meeting is on 10th September – back at our usual venue – and is about preparing bees for winter.

## Honey sales opportunity

Fortnum & Masons have asked LBKA for supplies of top quality London honey, in 8oz jars, for their London Honey Festival which runs from September 28th until October 12th. They are looking for a limited number of suppliers (4-5), each one able to supply 120 units (60lb from each supplier) and fulfil a commitment to present a honey tasting session (day) on the shop floor during the festival (date to be agreed). Consignments will need to be delivered a week before the festival starts. Suppliers use their own jars and (compliant) labels and will apply barcodes supplied by F&M. LBKA is currently negotiating the price per unit.

If you can meet these criteria and wish to be considered, please contact [admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk) by August 25th.

## Nine (out of nine) LBKA members have passed BBKA Basic

Congratulations to Amit Desai, Peter Weller, Robin Yearwood, Daniel Stover, Hilton Sunday, Natalie Cotton, Gustaw Szermer, Jonathan Richards and Gilles Schlutig for passing their BBKA Basic Assessment (in the order in which they passed). Well done all! Thanks also to Howard for helping prepare them and for maintaining LBKA's 100% pass rate! See page 4 for more details.

We encourage all who have kept or managed bees for at least a year to consider taking this next year – contact [education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk) for more details.

## Walworth Garden 30th Birthday Party

The LBKA has a close friendship with Walworth Garden in Lambeth (it's the venue for our Summer Social, committee meetings and our recent bee health day)

so we were very pleased to be able to celebrate their thirty years of working in the community with them this month. LBKA resources officer Tristram Sutton runs the apiary there, and had an observation hive ready for the many interested guests. The opportunity to name the apiary was also one of the lots on offer in the highly successful fundraising auction. The opportunity to choose the name raised £80 for Walworth Garden.

## Hiring extractors

It will soon be time to think about planning for honey extraction. We have extractors which can be hired by members. We charge £10 to hire for up to 3 days and we ask for a £20 deposit (which you'll lose if you don't bring the extractor back clean!) Please email Tristram on [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk) for more information.

## Old announcements from July

**Check our [previous newsletters](#) or contact [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) for more details.**

**High varroa levels:** NBU warned that there have been reports of high varroa levels and suggested that we monitor levels, referring us to page 15 of the [Managing Varroa](#) booklet and the online [Varroa calculator](#). If levels are high, they suggest taking action to get numbers down.

## Old announcements from June

**Congratulations: Elliot Hodges and Vlad Zamfir** have both **passed BBKA's Module 1** exams, with Vlad passing with **distinction**.

**Discounts for members:** A few suppliers offer discounts for LBKA/BBKA members – see details in our members' area on the website. One such company is **French Flint** who give us a 40% discount on jars.

**LBKA swarm collection policy:** see [May's newsletter](#).

**Help on a documentary:** contact Dhruv Shah at [62244uk@saeinstitute.edu](mailto:62244uk@saeinstitute.edu).

## Old announcements from May

**Communicating with members:** Use our [Open Facebook group](#) (open to both members and non-members), [LBKA-forum](#) (open to members only; ask [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) if you need to be added) and the [Members' area](#) where you can see details of other members who've opted-in to sharing their details.

**Courses:** We've now run both our full beekeeping courses for this year and have 60 people starting on their beekeeping journey.



*Tristram, Walworth Garden's beekeeper.*

## Old announcements from April

**Do you want bees?** Sign up on up [http://lbka.org.uk/swarm\\_list.html](http://lbka.org.uk/swarm_list.html).

**Collecting swarms:** Email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) if you'd like to be added/removed to our WhatsApp list

**Guest blog?** Does any other member have a blog that they would like to feature here? Let me know on [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

## Old announcements from March

**New leaflets:** LBKA has two new leaflets, one on the types of bees found in London and one on how to help honey bees. They are available for [free download](#) and we can supply printed copies for public outreach activities.

**Surrey Shield:** LBKA has been awarded the Surrey Shield for outstanding performance in the 2016 BBKA Basic assessments. Last year we had the highest number of members as a proportion of membership passing this assessment.

## Do you have any announcements?

If you've any announcements for the next issue of LBKA News, please send to Aidan at [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

# BBKA Basic Assessments 2017

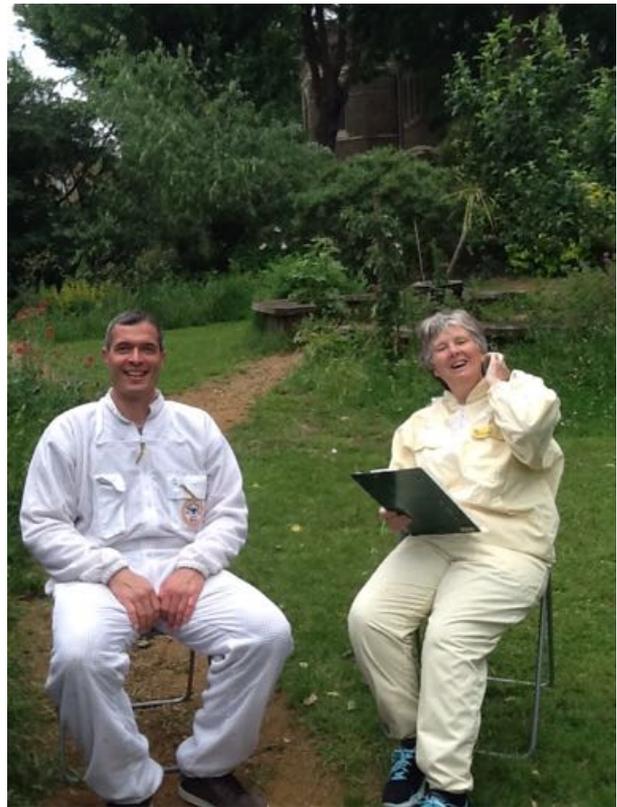
Our education officer on the BBKA Basic Assessments. See Natalie's article last month for a successful participant's perspective.

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

We have now completed all the Basic Assessments for 2017. Firstly, a big thank you to our 2 assessors who freely gave of their time to assess all candidates during May and June. A total of 9 LBKA members studied and worked towards this assessment. All 9 were successful! Well done to all.

## What the assessment involves

The BBKA Basic is both a practical and oral assessment and lasts about 1 hour. Each candidate is asked to assemble a frame, light the smoker (including observing health and safety issues) then open a colony and demonstrate to the examiner that he or she can control the bees whilst, at the same time, answering a few straightforward questions about the colony contents. After going through the brood frames, the candidate reassembles the hive and goes on to the 2nd part of the assessment which is answering a series of straightforward questions about beekeeping, bee biology, swarm control and bee diseases. The syllabus is broad in its range but not particularly deep. The full syllabus is available for download on the BBKA website and within the education section for anyone who



### How we all went about it

The process started back in November with potential candidates (those who had already expressed an interest) being given electronic course notes for light winter reading. These notes cover the syllabus from beginning to end. Formal study is not required, just a reading of the course notes at leisure over the winter months. In March and April we then had 3 x 2 hour revision sessions at Walworth Garden Farm and went through the syllabus item by item. There are lots of questions and answers during these sessions and it enables candidates to expand the breadth of their knowledge. Those candidates who wished for some additional practical instruction were also catered for. By the last session we had the assessment dates arranged with the assessors and each candidate was allocated a date and time.

So, on to the actual assessments. These were held over 3 separate days, 27th May and 10th June at my apiary in West Norwood and on 11th June at the LBKA Eden apiary in Clapham, south London. Each day 3 candidates were assessed. The assessors were Peter Bowbrick at West Norwood and Pat Allen at Eden. Both Richard and myself had done our best to ensure there were sufficient colonies with brood and laying queens to assess all candidates at the respective apiaries on the allotted dates – not always an easy task during swarming season. I had a drone laying queen, 2 colonies that had to be artificially swarmed a few days before the middle assessment and a colony that was in the process of superseding. We had a contingency plan to move colonies from 1 apiary to another if necessary but this did not need to be instigated. The assessments take place each

is interested. Both the BBKA and the LBKA actively encourage its members to take this assessment and it is recognised as a substantial step forward in beekeeper education. Many allotment committees and other public bodies also now require the beekeeper to have this certificate before they are allowed to keep bees on the establishment's land.

year during the swarming season and my responsibility is to ensure the colonies, assessors and candidates are all in place at the right time.

The first session was on Saturday, 27th May. The weather was good, no rain and warm sunshine. Candidates arrived and departed throughout the day; each candidate arriving 1 hour before the allotted time so ensuring the assessor would not be kept waiting if anyone was delayed. The first day commenced at 10.00am and finished about 3.00pm. It was repeated a further 2 times. There were no unforeseen hitches and we had dry weather for each session. Everything went smoothly.

## Meet the assessors

On behalf of the LBKA, I would like to introduce and thank both our assessors, Peter Bowbrick came from north Surrey on 2 separate occasions and Pat Allen who travelled from Essex. All travelled a considerable distance and freely gave of their time and expertise so that all candidates could be assessed. It is greatly appreciated by us.

As previously mentioned, all 9 candidates passed the assessment. A major reason for this success rate is undoubtedly due to the commitment of all candidates. Another significant reason is the LBKA mentoring programme. Each year more experienced members freely give of their time to teach new members the craft of beekeeping. The newer member (mentee) assists the more experienced beekeeper (mentor) over the course of the summer and so starts to learn a variety of skills during the course of a beekeeping season as they meet different situations. This provides a solid foundation to the newer beekeeper. The LBKA would like to thank all its mentors for participating in this invaluable service.

The successful candidates in order in which they took their assessment are:

- Amit Desai
- Peter Weller
- Robin Yearwood
- Daniel Stover
- Hilton Sunday
- Natalie Cotton
- Gustaw Szermer
- Jonathan Richards
- Gilles Schlutig

Finally, anyone who has kept bees or managed for a minimum period of 12 months and wishes to undertake this assessment in 2018 can register by giving his or her name and email address to any committee member or by sending an email to [education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk). Further details will be given in an autumn newsletter.

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## Last month's Monthly Meeting: Biology of the Honey Bee

What happened at our meeting last month.

*Unfortunately, I couldn't find anyone to write this up this month. Volunteers for subsequent months for subsequent months are welcome.*

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## August in the Apiary

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

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

The calendar year commences in January but many beekeepers view the new beekeeping year as commencing in August<sup>1</sup>. The honey has been taken off and the beekeeper is now starting to prepare the bees for winter. The objective for both August and September should be to put the bees in the best possible position to go into winter.

### Preparing the colony for winter

A significant risk to the colony in winter is having too many varroa mites in the hive. The most common form of treatment at this time of year is Apiguard. This needs to be in the colony for a minimum of 4 weeks and is most effective when the outside temperature is greater than 15°C. Early August is the optimum time to commence treatment as the honey has been removed and temperatures are still above 15°C until mid September. There are, of course, other miticides which are also suitable at this time of year. The time for non chemical treatments has now passed.

### Other winter preparations

#### Sound and stable hive

Hives can be checked that they are on a stable and level surface. There should be no leaks or gaps as the hive

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<sup>1</sup>The dead Roman poet, Ovid, was always grumbling and whinging that the new year should start in Spring, not January. He was not a beekeeper, unlike Virgil who was!

must be waterproof and draught proof to withstand the extremely testing conditions of winter. August is also a time of robbing by other bees as the nectar supply is becoming limited. Wasps may also be a nuisance and so there should not be any gaps in the woodwork where they may gain entry. There should only be one way in and out of a beehive.

### Strengthen colony with young bees

Worker bees produced from eggs laid in August and September need to live for up to 6 months rather than 6 weeks. A feed of sugar syrup after the honey has been removed can stimulate the queen into continuing her egg laying whereas, otherwise, she will be decreasing this activity.

### Other action to be taken this month

**Entrance blocks.** Use entrance blocks to help bees defend the colony against attacks from wasps and from robbing by other bees.

**Check stores.** Check that bees still have sufficient food reserves after the honey has been removed.

**Unite.** Unite colonies where appropriate. A large colony has a better chance of coming through the winter months than 2 small ones.

**Reunite.** If you successfully artificially swarmed a colony then the artificial swarm and colony of origin can be reunited.

**Old frames.** Old brood frames can be marked and moved to the flank of the broodbox. These will be easier to remove and replace next Spring. They should not be replaced for now as the bees will not draw out comb at this time of year.

**Wax moth.** Protect and store supers against wax moth. If you have the opportunity to put super frames in a deep freeze for 48 hours then this will kill all 4 stages of the Wax Moth lifecycle. Take care when removing the frames as they are very brittle until the wax reaches ambient room temperature again. Acetic acid may also be used but special care is required as it is corrosive. Burning of Sulphur strips is another method. These 3 methods may be summarised as follows:

- Freezing: effective against all 4 stages of Wax Moth
- Acetic Acid: effective against 3 stages of Wax Moth (not always against pupae)
- Sulphur strips: effective against 3 stages of Wax Moth (not against eggs)

My own viewpoint is that old brood combs should be burnt and that fumigation and retention is not compatible with running a modern day apiary. Conversely, super combs are an extremely valuable resource and the

beekeeper should make every effort to look after these on behalf of the bees until next spring.

This is only a synopsis of the type of matters needing to be dealt with in August (and September). Please do come along to our monthly August meeting and Summer Social at Walworth Garden on Sunday 13th August. You can discuss all of these and many other beekeeping matters during the course of the day.

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## Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year.

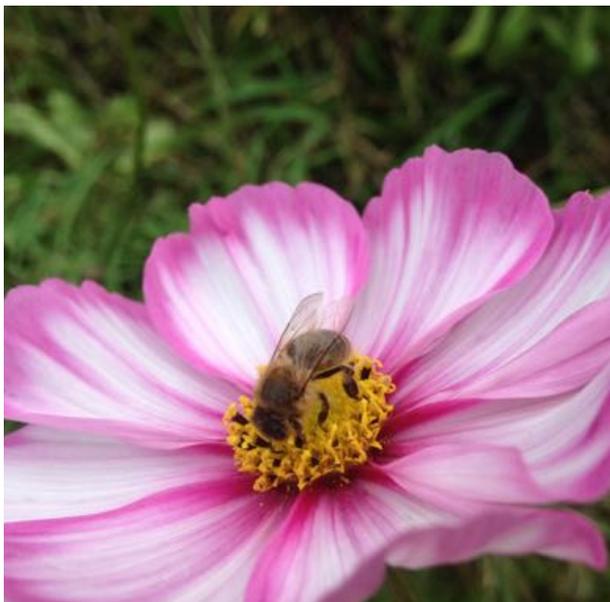
*Mark Patterson*  
[forage@lbka.org.uk](mailto:forage@lbka.org.uk)

Late summer for the bees is one of the most desperate times of the year when they can struggle the most to find enough food to eat. Many people find this fact difficult to believe as the weather is often hot and sunny and presumably great for the bees but it is in fact often one of the leanest times for the busy insects. At this time of year colonies are large with many mouths to feed and as the beekeeper has removed the honey crop the flowers are also diminishing in abundance meaning the bees can struggle to replace honey which has been taken off. For this reason it's crucial not to be over-greedy and take all the honey leaving the bees with no stores for themselves.

Come late summer the majority of our nectar rich native wild plants have ceased flowering and gone to seed, especially woodland and meadow flowers whose flowering period is in rhythm with the closing of the woodland canopy and cutting of meadows for hay. **Bramble** and all our native trees have also long since finished flowering and are now sporting fruits and seeds leaving little for the bees.

Away from **heather** moorland and **heath**, the only real bountiful sources of forage from native wild plants are **Greater willow herb, thistles, ragwort, bindweed** and **hogweed** – though many of these are early this year and already going over. Along water courses **purple loosestrife, marsh woundwort, water mint** and the invasive **Himalayan balsam** provide welcome relief but not everyone is in range of such localised sources of forage.

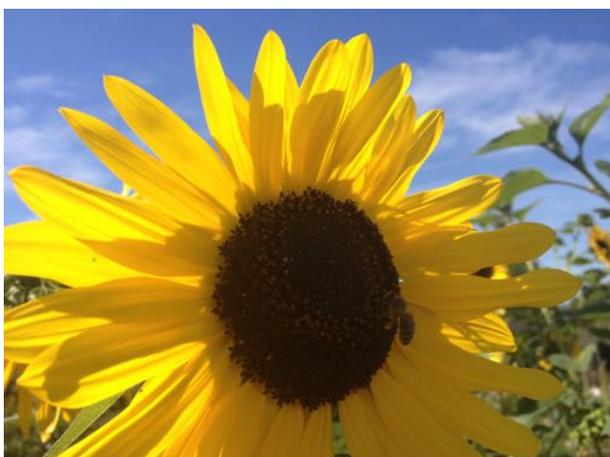
Late summer is one of the largest gaps in forage during the beekeeping season and ends with the brief glut of nectar provided by **ivy** flowering in the autumn. Ivy is the last opportunity for our bees to stock up for winter and for wild pollinators a chance to fuel migrations south to warmer climates or for females to fatten up in readiness for hibernation.



Cosmos.



Helenium.



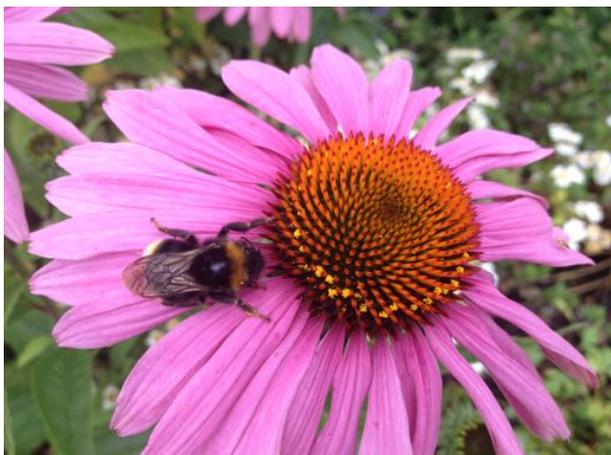
Sunflower.

Research conducted by our friends at the University of Sussex has demonstrated that honey bees fly furthest to find forage in late summer with record flights of 12km being undertaken in August. In the case of the Sussex research it was found that honey bees were flying 12km to visit gardens in town centres where domestic gardens and public parks planted with bee friendly summer flowers were providing much of their forage needs. This goes to show just how important our urban gardens are for bees at this time of the year.

Many garden plants that are great for bees in late summer originate from North America where they grow in prairie habitats and have evolved to flower late in the summer and autumn avoiding the extreme heat experienced earlier in the season. Some good examples include **rudbeckia**, **echinacea**, **solidago** (Golden Rod) of which there are hundreds of varieties, **gallardia**, **penstemons**, **helianthus** (perennial sunflowers), **verbena** – particularly the species *bonariensis* and *hastata*. Probably the most attractive of all the North American plants grown in gardens for bees are the **heleniums**. Known as sneezeworts these late summer flowering perennials come in a variety of colours ranging from yellows, orange and intense reds. They are a magnet for bees and very easy to grow even on relatively poor soils. If 'Chelsea-chopped' in June they can provide a succession of blooms from late July right through to the first frosts of autumn.

Other plants attractive to bees include the **South African Eucomis** or "Pineapple Lily". These plants are bulbous sporting a rosette of fleshy green leaves in summer followed by spikes of pineapple looking flowers in late summer and autumn. They come in a variety of colours from lime-green to pink and purple, some with flecks of red on the petals and flower stalk. Bees relish the pollen and nectar they provide and they are very easy to grow, being surprisingly hardy for such an exotic looking flower. Other South African plants attractive to bees include **knifophia** – the red hot pokers and Agapanthus. Knifophia have very long flower trumpets which have evolved to be pollinated by sunbirds. The flowers are hot shades of yellow, orange and red specifically to attract these birds which have very long bills and tongues equipped to pollinate the flowers. Whilst none of our native bees have the equipment needed to pollinate the blooms they can still extract the rich nectar from the flowers as it often drips and runs out of the flower trumpet and down the flower stem. **Agapanthus** are of limited usefulness to our native bees but the Common Carder Bumble Bee does seem to like them and I have often seen them foraging on Agapanthus in my own garden.

From South and Central America **cosmos**, **dahlias** and **zinnia** flowers are very attractive to bees providing nectar and pollen. The best varieties of course are the single open flowered types such as the Bishop series dahlias. My person favourite is "Bishop of Llandaff" with its bright red petals and dark centre covered in bright yellow pollen.



*Echinacea.*



*Golden rod.*



*Rudbeckia.*

From New Zealand one of the best garden plants this month and widely planted in amenity spaces are the shrubby veronicas we know as **hebe** bushes. Right now hebe “Great Orme” is in flower on housing estates all across London and you can seldom walk past a specimen that’s not covered in pollinators. Later on nearer autumn the variety “Autumn Glory” come into its own with its darker purple blooms that persist well beyond the first light frosts of autumn.

From China the *Sedum spectabile* “Autumn Joy” is a staple of gardens across the country in September when its cheerful pink heads of flowers brighten up the garden attracting bees, butterflies and hoverflies in abundance.

Another source of forage for bees in late summer comes in the form of overripe fruits. I have on several occasions witnessed honey bees sipping the sweet juices from bird damaged figs, **blackberries** and **plums** on my allotment alongside wasps and flies. This is probably not a widespread habit among honey bees nor a substantial source of forage for them but it’s interesting to see how the bees do take advantage of the most unsuspecting resources during lean times.

This past week whilst walking down a south London street I came across a tall **hibiscus** bush in bloom that was covered in foraging honey bees. This was the first and only time I’ve ever seen a bee on a hibiscus bush. I have a beautiful purple flowered variety planted in my garden (on the burial site of my long deceased parrot who had purple wings) which fails every year to attract any bees at all and elsewhere I’ve never seen any bees on hibiscus. This bush I saw the bees foraging on was a white coloured variety with semi double blooms. The bees appeared to be collecting nectar but were getting a good dusting of pale pollen at the same time.

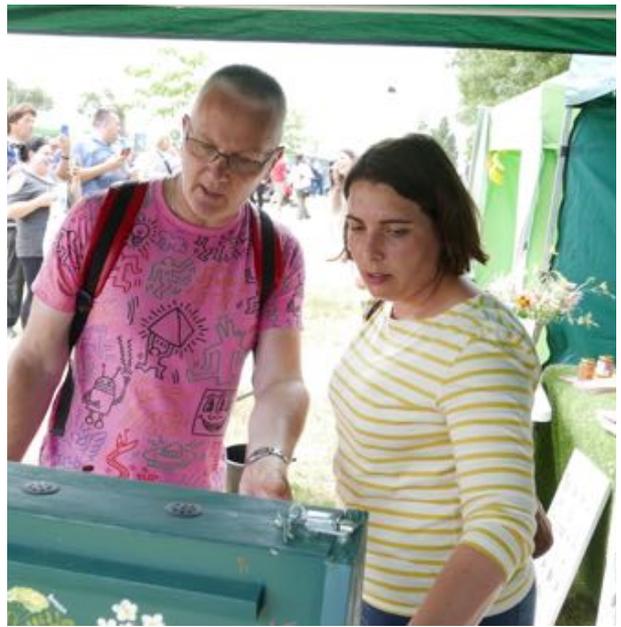
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## Lambeth Country Show

Our stall at the Lambeth Country Show.

*Aidan Slingsby with photographs by Martin Kunz*  
[services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

The Lambeth Country Show has been bringing a bit of rural life to London for 44 years. OK, it’s a rather ‘urban’ form of rural life, but nevertheless it’s a way for Londoners to see farm animals, live sheep shearing, horticultural shows, cake shows, sheep dog and owl displays, home grown vegetable and flower competitions, numerous craft and food stalls. The mix of dub, afro-beat, disco, folk, ska and soul music gives a distinct South London flavour to proceedings.





LBKA has been a regular fixture there in recent years and we were there last month on 21st and 22nd July. For us, it's our biggest and most important regular outreach activity. We have lots of information about bees, show people live bees in our observation hive (thanks Mark for setting it up), and offer candle-rolling. Our stall is always popular, demonstrating the huge amount of interest in bees and beekeeping.

Of course, this event cannot happen without the huge amount of time and organisation that went into it by the committee – particularly, Richard Glassborow, Mark Patterson and Emily Abbot – and help from our members including Jon Harris, Martin Hudson, Danyal Conn, Richard Armit, Angela Woods, James Bardolph, Peter Weller, Aidan Slingsby, Vlad Zamfir, Carla Midcap, Dominique Bernard, Jeni Lea, Mark Lyons, Lynny Turner, Leona Murdie, Martin Kunz, Petros Hahladakis, Sue Lee, Charles Codrington, Jochen Encke and Carole Wright (apologies if anyone has been missed off). Thanks very much for your help – it would have not been possible without you all.



*Short Course in Pollen & Nutrition*

## National Diploma in Beekeeping: Short Course in Pollen & Nutrition

*Geoffrye Hood  
LBKA (& BDBKA) member*

The last of this year's short courses which have been held at the National Trust Morden Hall Park by the National Diploma in Beekeeping was on pollen & nutrition on 29th/30th July with a fee of £85 (subsidised by DEFRA from £230).

Four LBKA members Emily Abbot, Lester Doman, Mary Walwyn and myself joined eight other beekeepers from as far afield as Ireland. The course covered why plants produce pollen, how bees use it and to how pollen can be used to identify the botanical source, and thereby locate where that honey was produced.

The Saturday morning session started with a quick botany lesson and instructions on how to use Rose's Floral Key to identify flowers. This was followed by

a practical where the floral key was used to identify a plant and then make up that flower's pollen slide under instruction. After lunch we practiced making more pollen slides from various flowers (I was glad I took my hay fever tablets with me).

The second day's morning sessions included talks on how bees collect and use pollen and why bees need to collect a diverse range of pollen to get all the various amino acids. In the session just before lunch we discussed techniques of honey analysis and how pollen is under or over represented and pollen coefficients for each type of honey. The afternoon session was devoted to the mellissopalynological properties of a sample of our own honey, That sounds technical and difficult doesn't it? But really we just took 10g samples of honey, diluted it with 35ml of water then centrifuged the samples to obtain the pollen within the honey. This pollen was used to make up a pollen slide. We were then able to determine what pollen our honey contained and to do this us we were each given a free box of pre-prepared slides of common pollens.

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## Slovenia: possibly the best holiday destination for beekeepers!

Natalie tells us about her beekeeping-themed holiday.

*Natalie Cotton  
[admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk)*

Slovenia may be one of Europe's youngest country but it has a long tradition of beekeeping. 90,000 of its two million inhabitants keep bees, so although I didn't intend bees to be part of my recent holiday there, it was an inevitable side effect.

Slovenia even has a museum of apiculture, where for a mere two euros you can watch the region's Carnolian bees in action and see some of the weird and wonderful hive designs and decorations used by Slovenian beekeepers over the past five centuries. Ninety percent of Slovenian beekeepers use the AZ beehive, where the ten frames per brood or super box are accessed and slid out horizontally from the rear of the hive. All frames are 41cm by 26cm. As Slovenian hives are traditionally stacked in to a 'bee house' the keeper can inspect even in wet conditions from the comfort of a covered corridor at the back of the house.

Later in our trip we stayed with a keen beekeeper near Lake Bohinj – he coincidentally mentioned his hives on



*Seriously, that's a beehive.*



*Slovenian hives are traditionally stacked in to a 'bee house'.*



*Bee House in action.*

Airbnb, rather than us booking a specialist tour! He showed me a bee house in action, but said he personally preferred his national style hives as it is easier to move frames within the box. He also offered an unusual form of natural therapy, 'apitherapy'. Visitors were invited to listen to the 'relaxing' sound of the beehives and inhale their scent – all via perspex screens and breathing apparatus. Even in a country as enthusiastic about beekeeping as Slovenia, I didn't see any takers during my stay!



Mudchute honey.



Bees cleaning cappings.

In August I'll be doing the full varroa treatment and feeding the bees as needed.

### Brockwell

*Petros Hahladakis*  
LBKA Apiary manager for Brockwell

It was a good June and in early July for the Brockwell community gardens apiary with lots of nectar flowing which also meant we were able to take a few supers off to harvest honey in time for the Lambeth county show ahead of our main extraction early August. This seems to have been a lucky move as with the change in weather over the last few weeks the bees have gone in and uncapped a number of supers we had been eyeing up! With the extraction dates tied into the community gardens summer school break activity days, it is not really possible to change them around so I may be left with a number of wet supers to store before starting the varroa treatment mid august and winter feeding in September.

We also need to take a decision on the number of hives we overwinter. Having come out of the winter with 2 following the EFB outbreak last year and one winter failure we are looking at going into winter with 3, from our current 4 by combining two of the swarms that we acquired in June. The decision to combine the swarms is because one has built up slowly and remains relatively small in size and the second seems to have a case of sac brood, so to resolve both problems we will merge

## LBKA Apiaries

News from LBKA's apiaries.

### Mudchute

*Vlad Zamfir*  
LBKA Apiaries Manager and Mudchute Apiary Manager

July was quite interesting for Mudchute this year as the nectar flow came to an abrupt end at the beginning of the month rather than the end. Nonetheless, the bees put some honey away and we managed to sell a few jars at the Lambeth Country Show.

Sadly, two of the hives also showed signs of high varroa load (i.e. deformed wing virus) so I treated with MAQS (the only treatment that can be used with supers on) using half a dose to knock them back.

the two together by keeping the queen from the smaller colony.

Lastly with a new queen having merged in the last month and Brockwell being a teaching apiary, we have taken the decision of clipping but not marking any new queens that come out. Being able to find an unmarked queen is a good skill to have, but one of the more challenging aspects of beekeeping.

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## Facebook (In)digest(ion)

*Some of the highlights from LBKA's [public facing Facebook page](#).*

*Eugene Fahy  
LBKA Member*

The month began with [yet more reports of out-apiaries being targeted by vandals](#); Corrine Edwards reported problems with intruders on allotments in SE London and Petros Hahladakis highlighted recent vandalism at Brockwell Park community gardens – despite the presence of CCTV cameras.

On a happier note Maria Devereaux reported that following last month's vandalism at her apiary, an inspection confirmed that both hives have laying queens with one colony looking very healthy although the other was much depleted.

Karin Alton posted a [link to an article](#) in "The Conversation" discussing a number of studies by herself and Prof. Francis Ratnieks. The first examined which common, summer-flowering, garden plants were preferred by pollinators. Top of the list for attracting bees, butterflies and other pollinators was marjoram also known as oregano (*origanum vulgare*) followed by *agastache*, a member of the hyssop family.

The research also looked at flowers grown in public parks and gardens. A survey of Southover Grange Garden in Lewes suggested it could be an insect paradise with 79 plant varieties in full bloom, it seems that only three of the varieties were highly attractive to pollinators. In a study of plants at five garden centres and one nursery in Sussex, the top performers were *cosmos bipinnatus* "Sonata Carmine" and *caryopteris × clandonensis* "Heavenly Blue" – a compact shrub with dark blue flowers.

About 7% of the plants examined were on the RHS "Perfect for Pollinators" list, however many plants on that list were not especially attractive to pollinators and it omitted some plants that were especially attractive. The authors suggest visiting a garden centre on a sunny

summer day and selecting plants in full bloom with at least five insects per square metre, but only if you also like the plant.

Emma Nye shared a Nifty Science video on how [wax moth larvae can eat through plastic](#).

As many of us prepare to treat our colonies for varroa, Geordy Mark reminded us to vary our treatments and that it is a legal requirement to keep records. He also posted a link to some useful resources on the [Beebase pages](#).

There were a number of requests for experience. Martin Hudson asked about [best way to keep full frames of comb until the Autumn Shows](#). Geoff Hood suggested using a show comb stand kept in an airing cupboard at 30°C.

On a less happy note, Jonathan Lingham [asked for advice on destroying an unacceptably aggressive colony](#). There was agreement that if bees have to be destroyed then sealing the entrance and pouring a half-cup of petrol through the opening in the crown board seems to be an efficient way of doing it. However, the post brought a number of offers of help in rehoming the bees in sites away from the public with Karin Cheetah first to the rescue.

Richard Glassborow [found a queen cell in a super](#) (above the queen excluder). Assuming that it was a supercedure cell, he moved it to the brood box. In Geoff Hood's view it might have been safer to have pulled down the queen cell as it may have been an unfertilised egg which had been moved up by the workers.

Ending on a culinary note, Angela Woods posted a [recipe for honey and rosemary roasted nuts](#).

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## Adventures in Beeland: Photos and bee notes from a pollinator day at Kew

*Another guest post from Emily's excellent blog – <http://adventuresinbeeland.com/>. This month, a day at Kew.*

*Emily Scott  
LBKA member*

A couple of weeks ago I had a day off while Tommy was at nursery. Time to myself! Trying not to feel guilty, I went to a 'Pollinator Day' on 20th July at Kew.



A model of a solitary bee nest (not life-sized!)

The day involved lots of talks by bee experts, along with display tables to visit, a chance to flutter between honey tasting to a nest of bumblebees to seeing hand pollination in action. My favourite honey was made from coffee flowers, a rich dark honey. You can see tweets from the day by looking at the #pollinatorday hashtag on Twitter. Kew were running a Twitter competition asking people to guess how much honey the average honey bee produces in her lifetime – as beekeepers reading this will know, it's a tiny  $\frac{1}{12}$  of a teaspoon.

## Bee hotels talk

An expert from the University of Reading gave a talk on creating solitary and bumblebee hotels. I learnt new things at this talk and was happy to hear people with gardens asking for advice on how to attract bees. We were advised that garden centre solitary bee hotels often use bamboo tubes that are too big. The tubes should be between 4-10mm in diameter to attract British bees, although there is one British species that will accept tubes up to 12mm in diameter.

Solitary bees have interesting life cycles. Each species is slightly different but their eggs are often laid in tube-shaped cavities which solitary bee hotels replicate – in the wild this might be holes in wood or dug in the ground. The females are laid first, as they are most valuable, followed by the more expendable males, which are laid closer to the entrance where predators are most likely to attack. The growing eggs are provided with food in the form of pollen and then each little chamber is sealed up by their mother with a wall of mud or chewed leaves. There might be 7-8 eggs inside each tube.

The adults only fly about 150 metres to forage, so having a good supply of flowers in that area is really important. The males hatch first and hang about the nest site waiting for the females to emerge. As soon as the poor females hatch out they are jumped upon by the eager males. Most of the females then stay in the area and lay eggs which will survive over the winter and hatch out the next spring. However around 30% of the females go into a 'dispersal phase' and fly further away to start nests in a new area. This presumably helps prevent in-breeding.

It was surprising to hear that the cocoons can survive a

bleach bath! Indeed they can survive most conditions apart from being squashed. At Reading university the bee team clean solitary bee cocoons to remove parasites and then put them back into the wild (you don't need to go this far with your own nests if you don't want to!).

We were also given advice on creating bumblebee nests. Avoid most of the commercial bumblebee nests as they don't get used. You can make your own using polystyrene and soft hamster bedding within a terracotta flowerpot. Bumbles in particular need to avoid moisture building up in their nests. Unlike honey bees they never collect water, as their nests create lots of condensation. They need somewhere cool and out of direct sunlight to nest but not somewhere damp or soggy. Their nests only last between 16-20 weeks.

- [How do I provide nesting sites for bumblebees?](#) A Bumblebee Conservation Trust easy guide to building nests.
- [How to make a bumblebee nest.](#) A video by bumblebee expert Dr Dave Goulson
- [How to make a solitary bee hotel.](#) Daily Telegraph article taken from [The Wildlife Gardener](#) by Kate Bradbury.

## Bee myths: Busted

I liked these snazzy postcards produced by the University of Reading, who had provided lots of the resources and displays available on the day.



I managed to spot plenty more pollinators on the way home – here's a little bee bottom poking out of himalayan balsam (see next page).



Preparation of bees for winter. 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.

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## 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](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) to add something here.

**Carole Wright.** Can I ask that people let me know if they're doing a split of a large overwintered colony so I can buy their Nuc. Give me a call on 07885 221964 if you can help.

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## Upcoming events

### Sunday 13th August: Monthly meeting: Honey labelling regulations and Summer Social

*11:00-16:00 at Walworth Garden, Braganza St, SE17 3BN*

Honey labelling regulations, followed by the spectacular Summer Social! You must book in advance. Members and their guests only please. Contact us for more information.

### Sunday 10th September: Monthly meeting: Preparation of bees for winter

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

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## Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions. We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, [chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk)
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, [treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk)
- **Secretary:** Natalie Cotton, [admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk)
- **Education:** Howard Nichols [education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk)
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)
- **Forage:** Mark Patterson, [forage@lbka.org.uk](mailto:forage@lbka.org.uk)
- **Events:** Emily Abbott, [events@lbka.org.uk](mailto:events@lbka.org.uk)
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- **Apiaries:** Vlad Zamfir, [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk)
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- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, [mentoring@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentoring@lbka.org.uk)

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/> and the pictures are in the same order as the names above.

