



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

## May, 2016

Welcome to this month's newsletter! We've a lot of announcements this month, so do take a look. Thanks to members who came to our AGM, they authorised the transfer of our assets to a the charity LBKA and helped discuss LBKA's future (p6). Budding beekeepers Philippa and Claire write about the course we ran last month (p7), Elliot's been drawing bees (p14), Ted's been reflecting on a mild winter and cold spring (p11) and Simon's been musing also (p11). Natalie again recounts last month's meeting (p6), Howard tells us what we should be doing in our apiaries (p8) and Mark tells us what's in flower (p9). And Emily (Scott) has had a baby.

<a href="#">From our Chair</a>	1
<a href="#">Announcements</a>	2
<a href="#">April's monthly meeting</a>	6
<a href="#">EGM</a>	6
<a href="#">LBKA's Introduction to Beekeeping course last month</a>	7
<a href="#">May in the Apiary</a>	8
<a href="#">Focus on Forage</a>	9
<a href="#">Here &amp; there</a>	11
<a href="#">Simon's musings: Number Puzzles</a>	11
<a href="#">April Facebook (In)digest(ion)</a>	12
<a href="#">Adventures in Beeland</a>	15
<a href="#">Upcoming events</a>	15
<a href="#">Committee</a>	15

A big thank you to all this month's contributors: **Emily Abbott, Sayma Chowdhury, Natalie Cotton, Richard Glassborow, Elliot Hodges, Howard Nichols, Ted Parks, Claire Parfoundry, Mark Patterson, Philippa Robb, Tristram Sutton and Simon Wilks.** Thanks for Martin Hudson for his patient and accurate proofreading.

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

*Aidan Slingsby*  
Editor  
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## From our Chair

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

I won't go into detail of our EGM here as the minutes are covered elsewhere. But I would just like to thank members who attended for doing so. General meetings are a necessary part of any organisation accountable to its membership. They are important but the agenda can be a little lacking in pulling power. We had considered providing a speaker, which is one way many organisations attract attendance, but we felt on this occasion an opportunity to debate our direction was more appropriate. So, thank you those who could make it.

The two items that seemed to create most interest were, our permanent home and raising awareness for a better environment for bees and other pollinators in London. On the question of a permanent home there remain essentially two options: as we are, roaming be-



*Sycamore blossom. Photograph by Mark Patterson.*

tween different locations for different occasions, perhaps with even more roaming; or putting down roots in one place, building up continuity, identity and perhaps able to offer members something more like a drop-in centre at designated times.

Though the roaming model has some potential to reach more widely across London the lack of continuity is a genuine concern. The prospect of members turning up at the wrong venue if we mix it up is all too real. The right kind of fixed abode on the other hand holds some obvious attractions but, given property in London, some obvious challenges too. But we recognise we would not need all of such a space all the time (apart from storage and an apiary), so sharing is a distinct possibility. And our new charitable status should open up possibilities legally and financially. What is difficult to gauge in the hunt is just how much we require. We know what we use now but would having somewhere permanent change those requirements, e.g., would more members attend some of our meetings, etc.?

On the topic of forage awareness the meeting was clear: yes, an improvement to London's open spaces and natural environments is something that would be a direct benefit to honeybees and beekeepers. And the meeting was clear that getting involved in active lobbying was part of achieving this. The meeting also had some useful insights and suggestions on how to go about this, who to approach, etc.

As an example, we had recently sent a briefing paper to all the mayoral candidates, urging action to stop London's decline in open space and calling for a strategy to improve open spaces and forage for pollinators. Parts of it are included below. The EGM was of course held before the mayoral elections. We had a response from two candidates: Sadiq Khan and Caroline Pidgeon.

Sadiq is now the new Mayor. What can he do for bees? Here is our briefing paper.

## The next mayor, honeybees and the London environment

Honeybees have a prominent place in the public imagination. As a semi-wild animal they are a symbolic and practical link with the natural world, especially in an urban environment like London.

Contrary to popular and media belief honeybees are not in decline in London but the habitats and forage upon which they depend are. London is losing an area of quality open space equivalent to Hyde Park every year (GiGL). And the trend is increasing. Reversing this trend immediately is essential, not only to bees and other pollinators but for Londoners too.

Bees and flowers began evolving together about 100 million years ago. They go together. If flowers disappear bees will follow. And beekeepers are likely to be the first to notice this decline.

The London Beekeepers' Association (LBKA) are working to raise awareness of this remarkable partnership between pollinators and flowers, the habitat and forage loss in London and to provide practical guidance on how it can be reversed.

All Londoners can help, at every level, individuals, communities, businesses, planners, developers and local authorities. Many initiatives are already underway but so much more could be achieved. What can the next Mayor of London do to help?

- Establish a pollinator policy.
- Implement the policy across all agencies under its jurisdiction.
- Promote, encourage and coordinate the policy across all other London authorities.
- Promote, encourage and provide incentives amongst developers and land holders.
- Help the London beekeeping community to raise public awareness of the link between honeybees and the natural environment and to provide practical guidance on how everyone can improve the environment.

What can the LBKA do to help the next London Mayor to help bees?

- Provide knowledge and expertise about bees and forage suitable for pollinators.
- Provide feedback on the London environment based on the status of managed honeybees

An environment good for bees is good for all.

This was a fairly opportunistic approach on our part and as was recognised at the EGM, power lies with land-owners, developers and planning authorities. But it's a start and we now have a mandate to build on getting this message out and trying to influence our local environment in favour of our bees. But as in all things, we are limited by our own resources, so if you think you have time, skills, relevant contacts that could help, please contact me on [chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk).

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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!



Ecology Centre, Holland Park – the venue for our Bee Health day.

## May's Monthly Meeting

May's monthly meeting happened last week, about Queen rearing for the small scale beekeeper. If someone who went could write this up for next month, that would be great – please let us know.

## Bee Health Day

Our June Monthly meeting will be replaced by Bee Health Day, 10:00-16:00 at the Ecology Centre, Holland Park, Kensington, W8 6LU. Howard, Richard, Mark and others will run this day which will be about brood diseases and how to recognise them, using bees from our Holland Park apiary. **This members' only event is limited to 40 people – please book your place from [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).**

## Transfer of our assets to the new LBKA charity

Members at our EGM unanimously voted to transfer LBKA's assets to the new LBKA charity (see page 6). We will transfer the assets at the end of the membership year.

Membership renewal in October will be to the new LBKA charity, but it will look very much like the current one to most members!

## Vlad Zamfir has joined the committee

The committee have co-opted Vlad Zamfir onto the committee and welcome him. Vlad will be helping run our Mudchute apiary and helping with web analytics and digital outreach. You can contact him on [vlad.zamfir@lbka.org.uk](mailto:vlad.zamfir@lbka.org.uk).

## WhatsApp groups

We are trialling use of a couple of "WhatsApp" groups. WhatsApp is a messaging app for smartphones which makes it easy to send instant messages to a group of people. We are trialling this to try to find good ways to help members contact each other more easily. There are two groups. If you'd like to join either of them, ask Aidan at [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

**LBKA-swarms:** This WhatsApp group is for both **swarm collectors** and **budding swarm collectors**. The idea is that when a swarm collector goes to collect a swarm, they can inform the group so that budding swarm collectors can come along and watch/help. Swarm collectors can also use this to coordinate themselves. Please only use this group for the purposes of coordinating swarm attendance!

**LBKA-demos:** This WhatsApp group is for **people who are happy to demonstrate some beekeeping** and for **people who want to come and watch**. The idea is that you're going to do something like an artificial swarm and are happy to interested members to come along, send a group message and invite people. Please only use this group if you have something to demonstrate.

These groups are trials and their success depends on how people use them. We hope that a mixture of new and experienced beekeepers will join these groups and that knowledge can be shared. We also always need new swarm collectors, so the more people who are comfortable doing it, the better! Also remember that all LBKA members are volunteers and have other pressures on their time

## Bee waiting list

If you'd like to be put in the waiting list for bees (swarms or nucs), contact Aidan on [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) and we'll put you on the list at [http://lbka.org.uk/swarm\\_list.html/](http://lbka.org.uk/swarm_list.html/).

Members can also use this list to offer bees to members.

## Tesco Grant

*Mark Patterson*

In November we applied for £12K from the Tesco "Bags of Help" scheme to fund an ambitious forage project at Mudchute Farm where we have a teaching apiary. The meadows at Mudchute have fallen into an unfavourable state over the years leading to a sharp decrease in the abundance of wild flowers. This project hopes to bring some of them back

We were shortlisted for a grant but due to stiff competition did not receive the full amount requested. We have secured £8K from Tesco and Mark is working hard to raise the outstanding funds needed.

The project will start in June with 3 staff from the Farm attending a residential scything instructor training course. Later this summer we will be holding some scything training workshops for interested volunteers to cut the meadows prior to planting in Autumn with pot-grown wild flowers. We'll also be stripping areas of turf to seed with a bespoke Mudchute wild flower mix formulated by our forage officer Mark and botanist John Swindel.

In June, as part of national pollinator week, we will be holding an open volunteering event where members will be welcome to help plant a formal bee garden outside the farm cafe.

Exact dates and timings will be posted nearer the time.

## Mudchute Farm Fundraising Summer Party

*Emily Abbott*

Mudchute Farm is a 32 hectare site in the Isle of Dogs and is a piece of East London Countryside! The Farm has animals, stables, fields, views of Canary Wharf and London's iconic skyline. It really is an extraordinary place with a worthwhile mission of supporting the local community, with a wide range of children's and educational services at its heart. The LBKA are very lucky to be partnering with Mudchute to bring pollinators and pollinator-friendly plants to the Farm. We have a mentoring apiary in one of the fields, safely tucked away from the hustle and bustle of farm life, and last year several LBKA members helped to plant bulbs to increase the forage in the area. We hope that together with the Farm we'll be able to plant even more in the future, as well as introduce Farm visitors to bees and our fabulous hobby!

It's of course no surprise that funds are tight for the Farm so each year they hold a fundraising Summer Party. I've been to them all – they're really good fun, amazing value and really memorable London evenings. You're all warmly invited to the Mudchute Summer Party on 29th June 2016. This is what you'll have in store:

The most farm fun you could ever possibly imagine, the perfect cocktail of summer farm festival frolics set on our oasis of countryside in East London. Traditionalists will be pleased that this year we're welcoming back our racing goats for early evening entertainment, while later on in the evening there will be chances to show your skills across a range of country pursuits in the quest for some quite unique prizes.

Tickets are just £50, with food and drink included. By custom the sun shines on the Mudchute, but whatever the weather we have a wonderful evening in store for you.

I am of course going, especially as I was in the winning tug of war team last year! It sounds like great family



fun – it's not, it's grown up fun, which is even better from 7pm-11pm.

For tickets please email [banquet@mudchute.org](mailto:banquet@mudchute.org) and they'll sort you out. Mudchute is easily reached by public transport, see details at <http://www.mudchute.org/plan-your-visit/getting-here>. Parking will also be available on the night.

## Calling East London Beekeepers!

Glasgow-based Andrew Shaw is doing research that compares the health of hives treated for varroa with those that haven't. This is obviously quite important research! He's looking for beekeepers in **East London** (near E5) who treat their hives in the **conventional way** (Apiguard in Summer; Oxalic Acid in Winter) who can give him some bee samples. If you can help, email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

## Vicarage apiary site available

The vicarage next door to Fulham Palace has offered their garden as a possible apiary site. If you'd like more information, contact [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

## Two stall opportunities: volunteers needed

**Joy Everley Jewellers:** BBKA can arrange for LBKA members to sell honey outside the Joy Everley Jewellers shop in Soho (W1F 7RF) on **23rd July between 12:00-17:00**. The shop will be specially dressed and a bee related competition will be running pre, during and post the event. They are Friends of the Honey Bee and as part of a Carnaby Street promotion.

**Joules Clothing Store:** BBKA have also asked if we'd like to set up a stall in the Joules Clothing Store in Clapham. It will be for **the week commencing 30th**

**May** (at half term). We'll be able to promote forage, talk to the public about bees, sell honey and have fun. The store will be dressed and there will be promotional giveaways all promoted locally and via social media.

We're looking for volunteers to help organise our presence at these places. Please contact Emily on [events@lbka.org.uk](mailto:events@lbka.org.uk) to find out more.

## Be(e) a steward?

The **South of England Show – Bees & Honey Marquee** needs stewards on 9th, 10th & 11th June. Stewards are allocated to either a morning or afternoon slot and have the other half of the day to look around the show.

Car parking is free, they get an entrance ticket for themselves, and a packed lunch, plus tea/coffee.

Many of their Stewards just do one day, but offers to do more will be welcome. Their Chief Steward – Bob Barnes – will do his best to allocate couples/friends together.

Volunteers are allocated to a specific duty such as information desk, honey sales, frame making, observation hives, live demos (only for those who wish). All of the duties simply require that you enjoy enthusing about bees and beekeeping! It's a great opportunity to spend a day talking to the public and other beekeepers.

To add yourself to our list of Stewards, please email [chief.steward@deodar.org.uk](mailto:chief.steward@deodar.org.uk) and provide:

- Date(s) of your availability (if necessary, include preference for AM or PM).
- Your postal address.
- A contact phone number.
- Any special dietary requirements.
- Willing to do bee demos?

## Bee Bonanza and Stepney City Farm

Stepney City Farm are planning a "bee bonanza" on the 25-26th June, have invited us to get involved. Anyone is interested running or helping run an LBKA stall should contact [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

## Beekeeping talk

There's a talk on beekeeping at **Oxleas Wood Honeybee Apiary** on **Thursday 26th May at 19:00**. Please see <http://www.largeassociates.com/cz1000/2016BeekeepingCourseApiaryDays/TalksVisits/Severndroog26May.html> for more details.

## Wild bee talk

The Hackney Biodiversity Partnership are organising a free talk by Russell Miller on 16th June, 18:00-20:00, in Stoke Newington. Book here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/free-bee-talk-with-russell-miller-tickets-25376843823>.

## East London Beekeepers

The East London Beekeepers are an informal collective of beekeepers who meet irregularly and infrequently. However the next meeting will be in Friday 27th May at one of its member's apiary which sounds an interesting place. More details at <http://thesundew.co.uk/el-beeks/>.

## Old announcements from April

**Check previous newsletters at** <http://lbka.org.uk/newsletters.html> **or contact** [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) **for more details.**

**Apiary site available:** A neighbourhood garden in Clapham (SW9) is offering an apiary site in their allotment area, with space for two or three hives. Contact [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) to find out more.

## Old announcements from March

**Be a mentor:** We're looking for mentors. Find out more from Tristram at [mentoring@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentoring@lbka.org.uk).

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

**New swarm apiary:** Can you help LBKA find a new swarm apiary? [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

**Political contacts:** Do you have any useful political contacts that we might be able to talk to about pollinator issues? If so, please talk to Richard on [chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk).

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

**LASI Workshops:** The Laboratory of Apiculture & Social Insects (LASI) is running a series of workshops this summer of interest to beekeepers. See <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi/newsandevents/events> for more details.

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

## Old announcements from February

'**The Hive**' at **Kew** is an aluminium installation that will draw visitors into the space via a wildflower meadow, as though they are worker bees returning to the hive; <http://www.wolfgangbuttreass.com/>.

**BBWear:** have a 20% discount for members on clothing and a 50% discount on some of their gloves. To take advantage of this, ask Aidan ([services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)) to confirm with them that you're a member and then order by phone. The discount is only available for phone orders.

**Honey wanted** Member Joe Fox is looking for honey to buy for use in a restaurant. Contact him on [joe@petershamnurseries.com](mailto:joe@petershamnurseries.com).

## 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](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

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## April's monthly meeting

What happened at last month's meeting.

*Natalie Cotton*  
LBKA member

### Nosema: a common disease under the microscope

Nosema is a common disease that can be hard to identify in our hives, so April's meeting gave LBKA members the chance to test their own bees using microscopy. We learnt how to prep slides for the microscope, what to look for, and what to do if nosema is present.

The nosema parasite is endemic in UK bee populations. Generally, a healthy beehive can manage its presence, but if it increases beyond a manageable level colonies can be severely weakened and lost. The parasite is carried in the bees' gut, and although there are no outward symptoms, it can often lead to the bees developing dysentery, particularly after they've been confined during the winter. Bees will only usually defecate outside, so streaks of yellow on frames can indicate dysentery and possibly nosema.

The microscopy test will identify whether nosema is present, explained Richard, but rather like a pregnancy

test it is simply a 'yes' or 'no' test – it wouldn't indicate the degree to which nosema had progressed or was causing an issue.

Elements of the informative, hands on session were not for the squeamish beekeeper! A successful test requires a sample of thirty bees, and over ten people had followed the instructions on gathering a sample of live bees then killing them – as humanely as possible – with a night in the freezer. Apparently some of 2015's sample bees were only stunned, and revived during the session, so thanks to Aidan for providing very clear instructions this year.

To prepare the sample, the bees' abdomens needed removing from their thorax. About thirty abdomens were placed in to freezer bags, to which we added a dribble of hot, clean water. Then, we were instructed to mush the freezer bag contents in to what is best described as 'bee soup'. Some of the samples produced a bright yellow 'soup', the result of the bees being well fed on pollen.

Prior to this meeting, the last thing I prepared for the microscope was a sliver of onion skin in 1994 as part of GCSE combined sciences, so this was quite a flashback! A tiny drop of the 'soup' had to be placed at the centre of a fragile glass slide, being careful not to contaminate one sample with another. To complete the slide, a square of glass is placed over the drop. Howard and Richard gave a reminder on how to focus in on the slide using microscopes. Nosema is visible at 400 times magnification, and looks like grains of rice. We all had the opportunity to look at slides containing nosema – and, in some cases, other unidentifiable bits of bee body part that had found their way on to the slides. Howard had also brought along slides of other pests and diseases, including the opportunity to look at the varroa mite up close.

For those hives where nosema is causing an issue, advice from the experienced is to ensure the hive is as clean and healthy as possible by completely changing frames and equipment. Chemical or biological treatments are not available in the UK, so good bee hygiene is essential.

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## EGM

Following our move to charity status, our EGM on 27 April at Roots and Shoots asked members to approve the transfer of assets from the existing LBKA (members' organisation) to the new LBKA charity and to discuss our charitable aims more generally.

*Tristram Sutton*  
[mentoring@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentoring@lbka.org.uk)

Thanks to all members who attended the recent EGM once the formalities of the vote were dealt with it really was a useful opportunity for members to discuss their views and make suggestions to the committee.

## Vote

The meeting was quorate ("at least 10% of the members of the Association, or ten members of the Association, whichever is the greater") with 22 members in attendance.

A brief explanation of the need for the vote was given including the statement that "In November 2015 LBKA Members approved: 'to establish and register a new charitable incorporated organisation with the name The London Beekeepers Association', with the constitution as hereby agreed subject to approval by the Charity Commission, and to call an EGM in or before September 2016 to propose dissolution of the LBKA and authorise the committee to transfer the assets of the LBKA to the new organisation." Accordingly Members were asked to authorise the committee to transfer the assets and liabilities of the association to The London Beekeepers Association (Registered Charity Number 1165736) on or before the end of the current financial year; and subsequently dissolve the unincorporated association of the same name.

Members voted unanimously in favour of the proposal. There were no abstentions and no votes against.

## Discussion

The two main topics discussed were: LBKA's role in improving honeybee forage in London, and LBKA's need for a permanent home.

### Forage

Members felt that the environment for pollinators was in decline and that the LBKA should do more to improve the environment for honeybees in London for instance by a more systematic lobbying of local authorities and developers.

The committee will consider how best to involve the membership in achieving this.

### Permanent Home

There was a brief discussion about the benefits of the LBKA having a permanent home. For instance the need for any permanent home to be affordable; easy for members to get to; provide secure storage for LBKA equipment; and have sufficient suitable space for teaching and the regular meetings of members and committee.

The committee will review the options available for a permanent home and report back to members.

# LBKA's Introduction to Beekeeping course last month

We ran our first weekend beekeeping course of the year last month. Philippa and Claire were participants and write up their experiences below.

## Saturday

*Philippa Robb aka [thebicyclingbeekeeper.co.uk](http://thebicyclingbeekeeper.co.uk) (website, like beekeeping skills, still being built!)*

It's not every weekend that one gets to spend time learning a fascinating craft amongst a bunch of fascinating people. The LBKA's Introduction to Beekeeping Course in late April was interesting and social with a good balance of theory and hands-on experience. I certainly came away really excited at the prospect of keeping bees after being mentored for a year.

We were welcomed on Day One with a cup of tea or coffee (prepared by a couple of jolly beekeepers, Brian and John) and a glossy copy of the beautifully photographed "BBKA Guide To Beekeeping". Once we'd all settled down, the course got underway with an overview about bees and the craft of keeping them by the LBKA's current Chair, Richard Glassborow. No need to write copious notes – each slide of every talk had been photocopied as a useful handout. What I found most fascinating about Richard's talk was the fact that bees have been evolving for around 35 million years old . . . about 34 million years longer than we humans have!

The morning moved along at a good pace with Emily Abbott keeping an eye on the clock as expert beekeepers tried in vain to keep to their allotted presentation times! Their enthusiasm and passion for both bees and the keeping of them was clearly evident and they were all very open about their various successes and failings which was comforting to those of us at the beginning of this journey.

Jon Harris told us about how the colony works (and in fact told us a lot more about keeping bees across the weekend!) before we split in to two groups to watch Martin Hudson pull apart a (bee-free) hive and show us how it works. Questions were encouraged the whole way through.

Karen Dillon told us about the importance of flowering plants to bees and I was particularly interested to learn about how essential flowering trees are to our honey-making friends. Oh, and as tempting as it sometimes might be to keep the ivy looking trim, Karen told us that bees love Ivy flowers – which only come out on

mature plants. So resist the temptation to keep your garden too tidy, if you can!

Lunch time was a great opportunity to chat with some of the other delegates, many of whom had very interesting reasons for being on the course. I was genuinely surprised to meet the CEO of the Duchy of Cornwall who was there in his personal capacity to learn more about the craft. After he's mentored, his bees will probably have the smartest hive address of any in London at Buckingham Gate!!! Zaffrin, the blogger behind the foodie-lovers' honeyhunter.uk was so much fun in her passion to "find honey, eat honey, live honey" and the daughter of one of Iraq's leading Apiologists was incredibly inspiring as she told me about her father's courageous decision to remain there as a University lecturer, despite the dangers, because he believes that the young need good teachers.

The afternoon was hands-on as we again split up in to groups to inspect hives and to learn how to assemble frames for supers (an achievable challenge involving a puzzle of woody bits, wax foundation, a hammer and 11 nails). And we had a chuckle at the amusing sight we must have made, strolling down Clapham's smart residential streets looking a little like astronauts in our beekeeping suits! It was a first for most of us as we watched LBKA-trained beekeepers open their hives to look for the Queen and to show her busily laying eggs as the workers were busily building up supplies.

All in all, it was a great weekend and I'd thoroughly recommend the course for anyone interested in either keeping bees or wanting to learn more about them. Now, on to the next bit which is the year-long mentoring – I really cannot wait for that to begin!

## Sunday

*Claire Parfoundry*

Sunday's session started pretty much like Saturday's introduction, with presentations in the morning followed by a show-and-tell and a more practical session in the afternoon. However, there was one part I was especially curious about: swarming.

I initially thought that swarming should be avoided at all costs, especially in an urban setting and if you don't want your neighbours screaming because a swarm decided to adopt their dog's kennel as a new home. But swarming is part of the natural cycle for colony reproduction – once it reaches a certain point and space becomes an issue (think the London underground during peak hours). As such, stopping the process is not an option – but understanding it is key in order to manage and mitigate it. The session also covered the trickier techniques of collecting and hiving a swarm via the age-old method of putting a dab of syrup inside the hive and luring the new colony inside.

Next, we went on to discuss what all beekeeper's fear – no, not bears, but diseases. For the most serious

ones, it's a case of calling the relevant local bee authorities, to prevent them from spreading and destroy local pollination services. However, other diseases, such as varroa, simply have to be monitored and treated. The session also covered pests (waxmoths, mice, woodpeckers, etc.) and how to reduce stress for bees, such as limiting the frequency and duration of inspections, so as to avoid disrupting the hive and to help it maintain its temperature. We finished with a talk on honey inspection, seeing how to use an extractor, and then tackled the seasonal chores of the average apiarist.

The course held one last surprise: before undertaking the practical session, we were invited to join the LBKA mentoring scheme, where old hands take 'new-bees' like my myself under their wing and show them the ropes.

Although I'm just an amateur enthusiast (albeit a regular honey consumer) who won't be considering a hive for a few years yet, I found this introductory course fascinating – and the only class where it's better to get a 'bee' than an 'A'. What's more, the opportunity to have my own 'bee mentor' and be part of this friendly community was a welcome and pleasant surprise.

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## May 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)

May (and June) is all about swarm control. Routine inspections should be made each 7 days to check for queen cells. If 2 brood boxes are used (brood and a half or double brood) then the bees nearly always build some of their queen cells between the 2 boxes. A simple routine check may be made by lifting / tilting the upper brood chamber to inspect the bottom of the frames in the upper box. It is not necessary to remove all frames using this quick method although it is not foolproof. The only way to be entirely sure is to remove each individual frame then carefully and systematically inspect each one. Even then a queen cell hidden behind bees may be missed.

Signs of swarming. Swarm control action is only needed when 1 or more queen cells are seen. Build up of drones or drone brood is not a sign of swarm preparations. Neither is the building of queen cups unless containing larva and royal jelly.

Action to be taken. Quick but not immediate action is required. Do not feel intimidated into taking immediate action. There is time to close up the colony, think matters through and collate necessary equipment. Do



not attempt to destroy the queen cells, as this will not remove the swarming impulse. Best solution is Artificial Swarm method but this does depend upon finding the queen. Most beekeeping textbooks cover this method. Jon Harris also kindly shared his approach to swarm control in the April newsletter.

### What if the queen is not marked?

If the queen is unmarked and you cannot find her then shook swarm is an option. An empty (no frames in it) spare brood box is needed. All bees on the brood frames are shaken into the empty brood box on the same site. A queen excluder is then placed above the empty brood box (now containing all the bees) and the original brood box with frames and brood is placed above the queen excluder, then crownboard and roof as usual. A couple of hours later the bees have reorganised themselves with the queen and some bees below the queen excluder and brood and some bees above the queen excluder. The 2 elements can then be separated. It is disruptive for the bees but not harmful. Again, textbooks cover this method.

Other action to be taken this month includes the following:

**Brood disease inspection.** A specific brood disease inspection should be carried out if not already done in April. This should involve shaking all the bees from each brood frame, one frame at a time, into the bottom of the hive and carefully checking each brood frame for signs of abnormality. As with any disease or pathogen, the sooner it is detected and a course of rectification commenced then the more the likelihood of a successful outcome.

**Add supers.** Add supers as necessary, adding another in advance of it being needed by the bees. A super may be required either below the queen excluder or above it.

**Make the most of the nectar flow.** Use May nectar flow to draw out some foundation into drawn frames.

**Varroa.** Check varroa mite drop if not done in April.

**Equipment.** Make sure you have sufficient spare equipment for swarm control.

**Most of all** enjoy your May month of beekeeping!



*Rowan blooms.*



*Ceonothus up close.*

## Focus on Forage

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

As we enter May we've left the more unpredictable weather of April behind us and at last we're experiencing some proper sunny weather.

Bees struggling to build up in April should now have an easier time as the spring nectar flow improves. One or two of my colonies are not doing so well this year whilst others are booming. The good weather and improved availability of forage is helping them to recover



*Honey bees visiting my apples.*



*Bird cherry.*



*Green alkanet.*

– though I will be unlikely to get a honey crop from these recovering colonies this year.

Plants important to bees this month include **Horse Chestnut** (dark red pollen), **Sycamore** (pale yellow pollen), Sorbus trees such as white beam and **Mountain Ash** (pictured), **Bird Cherry** (pictured) and **Elder**. In parks, gardens and municipal areas **Choisia**, **Cotoneaster**, **Ceanothus** and **prunus laurocerasus 'lunken'** are all shrubs visited by bees.

Herbaceous perennial plants important to bees this month include **Dandelions** which are coming to the end of their main flowering period in London, **Green Alkanet** (pictured; now at its peak), **Forget-me-nots** and **Spanish Blue bells** with their green-blue pollen.

Starting to make an appearance are the first of the summer flowers which will become much more important later in the season when the trees have ceased blooming. These include **Scabious**, **Knapweeds**, **Centurea**, **Valerian**, **thistles**, **milkweeds** and the simple flower of **umbellifers** and composite flowers.

Right now in my garden the bees are visiting my **Bowles mauve wall flowers**, **apple blossom**, **Pulmonaria** and **strawberries**.

As we transition from spring into early summer the flowers change guard and so do the wild bees.

Many of the early emerging solitary bees will by now have built nests, provisioned for their offspring and are beginning to die. Their offspring will emerge next March to begin the cycle again. Some are bivoltine meaning they have a second generation later in the summer but for many including the hairy footed flower bees their time for this season is coming to an end, the makes now bleached grey by the sun instead of their fresh gingery blonde.

As the early *Andrena* bees and flower bees disappear, a new batch of pollinators will take over, equipped to forage on a different set of later emerging plants. Soon we'll see the yellow faced bees, wool carder bees and leaf cutters visiting the flowers in our gardens.

## Jobs to do in the garden

- Dead head spring flowering bulbs
- Plant out non hardy plants such as **tomato**, **runner beans**, **cucurbits** and **peppers**.
- Continuous weeding
- Water if dry
- Sow biennials now to ensure you have flowering plants for next spring. These include **foxglove**, **honesty** and **echiums**.

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## Here & there

Ted continues with his monthly thoughts inspired by difference in beekeeping in this country with that of his native Canada.

*Ted Parkes*  
LBKA member

It's amazing how quickly the months go by. Not only is it time for the next instalment here but also the month of May is upon us. I missed contributing last month while I was back in Canada for work but I was able to attend the Ontario Beekeepers Association's spring meeting. The weather this Spring dominated the coffee break discussion as a very mild winter has been followed by slow rainy Spring. Interestingly the average April temperatures for London and Toronto are very similar. The meetings were dominated by all of the same topics that are being discussed and dealt with here in the UK. The difference being how they are prioritized. For example Small Hive Beetle is the greatest concern. For several years now there has been an area in the South West of Ontario that has been quarantined due to the SHB. It first established itself along the southern boarder with the United States. Large US commercial beekeeper often have northern summer retreats for their bees after the pollination season in the south. Every effort has been made to contain this pest but they have now shown up in a few other areas along the Canadian and US border. If had been thought that the beetle couldn't withstand the cold Canadian winter but we have to remember that it's nice and warm inside the hive all year long. The climate may be helping in controlling the spread but it seems inevitable now that SHB will be the reality for Ontario Beekeepers. So the OBA is busy educating and preparing its members. Luckily it's not something London beekeepers have to concern themselves with at present. Fingers crossed it stays that way.

The topic of forage has quickly moved up on the importance list in Ontario. As more research and better statistics become available we are learning that despite the vast amount of rural land and green space, the quality and amount of forage for the bees can still be an issue. This is the first time I felt the topic of forage has been of real importance to Ontario Beekeepers. The city of Toronto has just received "Bee City" status. A public commitment to creating a sustainable pollinator habitat. At the very least it's a great first step in public awareness. Here in London you are way ahead on this issue in regards to awareness and the efforts made to educate the public. That's understandable being an urban association and I applaud the ongoing efforts to influence planning and development of pollinator space and forage.

Rounding out the top three is last years hotly debated

topic and of greatest concern for many Ontario Beekeepers, Neonicotinoids. Just this morning, BBC radio's "Farming Today" featured a story on Neonicotinoids and a study done by the University of Dundee showing that not all Neonicotinoids are created equal. So the topic is not far from the public eye. With the tireless efforts of the OBA, prominent supporters, and a new environmentally friendly Provincial Government, the use of Neonicotinoids has been greatly restricted and all but banned. Farmers must now apply for a special permit and show just cause for use. The real victory here is that the government has realised the impact of neonicotinoids on bees is real and has taken steps to help. Hopefully with more and more countries restricting the use of Neonicotinoids the pharmaceutical companies will be forced to make changes. So the issues and concerns of beekeepers are similar where ever you go.

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## Simon's musings: Number Puzzles

Simon makes a welcome return to his musings. This month, it's about which box is which.

*Simon Wilks*  
LBKA member

Setting up an apiary is easy. All you need do is lay out concrete slabs in a careful, geometric pattern, aligned with the morning sun in a location suffused with dappled shade, free of harsh winds, out of frost pockets, away from prying eyes and deemed auspicious by the spirit level. Then, once the stands are installed and the hives heaved on top, the beekeeper can stand back with rightful pride and gaze at a sparkling vista of neat joinery and clean paintwork, knowing at a glance what's happening in each and every hive.

Sadly, this idyllic state of idleness cannot last. Once beekeeping starts to happen, we find we're supposed to be keeping notes. And in order to keep notes we have to know which hive is which.

When I started up a little apiary, almost a decade ago, I began with just one hive. For a while, note-taking was easy. Then I got another hive. But, with exquisite foresight, I had armed myself with a second tin of paint and, for several weeks, could happily list my observations under the headings of Green Hive and White Hive and believe my life was perfect.

Next, I added a nucleus box, for swarm control or something. And a Snelgrove board for fun. Which meant, in theory, that my little two-hive apiary could host up to five colonies (if I Demareed the one that wasn't Snel-

groved). And, though I have yet to reach that heady number, inevitable bouts of box-juggling ensued with the result that some of the green-painted boxes migrated to the White Hive and white-painted boxes migrated to the Green Hive and I faced the real threat of possible confusion.

To head off potential disaster, I needed a better system. So I numbered the brood boxes, Green 1 and 2 and White 1 and 2, according to which was lowermost and what colour the box was, and called the nuc the nuc. But, before much more time had passed, I was faced with the existential question of what makes a colony a colony? Is it the same colony if it has a different queen? If so, what happens to a hive if you introduce a new queen? Is it the same colony, or does that depend on what happens to the old queen? If you split a colony, which is the new colony, which the old, and how should you number them? Is the one on the new site the old colony, or the one with the new queen? Was it uppermost, or lowermost? And, if I did another split, would I be forced to use fractions?

I could have ducked the issue. I did hope to reunite the splits later, so the confusion would resolve itself in the long run. But previous experience, my life's oppressive stockpile of disappointments and regrets, has taught me that hope is never a sound basis for a bureaucratic regimen. I thus sought the counsel of books, and eventually decided that what makes a colony is the queen, and that any colony-numbering system should be based on the queen, rather than a box or place. Except in cases of supersedure, re-queening or un-artificial swarming.

That was fine in theory, but I still had the problem of remembering which box had which queen it it, or which queen was in which box. In a very real sense, I was back where I started. Painting the boxes different colours was still an idea, but in practice would have been slow, expensive and impractical. I thought about other apiaries I've been to. I've different numbers, patches of different colours, pretty pictures and inspiring slogans used to mark slabs, boxes or roofs. I've seen metal numbers, identifying bricks and painted slates, pinned to boxes, leant against stands or simply marked on charts. But none of these solutions seemed ideal in a world where splits happen, or where hives or boxes can be moved.

To cut a long story short, the answer was found, as so many answers are, at the pub. Or, rather, just outside it where, since time immemorial, the dubious delights of the beer garden have been advertised on a persistent, if collapsible, board in letters of blurry chalk. Chalk it seemed, as well as making an impermanent mark, could stand a little rain. And that was exactly what I wanted. Certainly, the marks need renewing from time to time, but that's the work of a moment compared with painting a brick or ordering a new number from the factory.

So that's what I've been doing for the last half-dozen

years. And, as well as numbering the brood boxes with chalk, and marking any with queen cells, I make annotations on my supers – when they were put on, whether they're for extraction or not, how many frames to the box, whether they're wired or for cut-comb, how full they were at last inspection – all things it's nice to know before you start taking a heavy stack apart.

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## April Facebook (In)digest(ion)

*A quick roundup of was happening on our open Facebook page last month.*

*Sayma Chowdhury*  
*LBKA member*

One of the best places to interact with other beekeepers, ask questions, share interesting photos of hives and bees and obtain useful tips or advice, is the Facebook page for London Beekeepers Association.

### Useful links

Each month we round up all the information. Some of the more useful links to leading research on the study of bees and beekeeping shared in April is as follows.

Norman Carreck, science director at International Bee Research Association ('IBRA'), shared the following links:

- Paper on: "Potential for virus transfer between the honey bees *Apis mellifera* and *A. cerana*" by Orlando Yañez, Huo-Qing Zheng, Xiao-Ling Su, Fu-Liang Hu, Peter Neumann & Vincent is available here (free to view): <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00218839.2015.1128145#.VzDpMoQrLIU>. This paper is based on new research published in the Journal of Apicultural Research showing that transfers of viruses between the Western honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) and the Eastern honey bee (*Apis cerana*) are rare, even if honey bees of the two species are kept together. The study is useful for understanding bee health.
- British Beekeepers Association Spring Convention held at Harper Adams University, Shropshire on 8 – 10 April: [http://www.bbka.org.uk/news\\_and\\_events/spring\\_convention\\_](http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention_)
- Issue 92(2) of Bee World is now available online. It includes a range of topical articles including reports on Apimondia and updates on the small hive beetle. It is available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tbee20/current>

- Determining the foraging potential of oilseed rape to honey bees using aerial surveys and simulations: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00218839.2015.1108144#.VzDxU4QrLIU>
- Issue 54(3) of the Journal of Apicultural Research is now published on the website: <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tjar20/current>. This issue features 18 papers on a variety of topics, including: honey, propolis, viruses, nosema, varroa, the small hive beetle, bee forage, dwarf honey bees and stingless bees, and pesticides.
- 'Varroa Mites and Associated Honey Bee Diseases More Severe than Previously Thought' from Entomology Today. The full article can be found at <http://bit.ly/26ugCSE>.

Vlatko Kostoski shared the following links from Planet Sci Tech:

- 'Do you know how honey is produced by bees: <http://planetstech.com/bees-produce-honey/>.
- 'Scientific Research for Save the Bees Colonies': <http://planetstech.com/save-the-bees-colonies/>.

Mark shared the following links:

- An enjoyable read from New York Post: 'City's beekeeping organizations fighting over similar names in New York', link available here: <http://nyp.st/1sbpDkb>.
- Beekeeping & Gardening for Bees & Other Pollinators training course held on 29 and 30 April by Walworth Garden Farm in Southwark. The course was free for those living in the London Borough of Southwark. For beginners or anyone interested in beekeeping, it may be worth watching their website for additional courses during the rest of the year.

Thomas Ed and Dragica Pesankova shared the post on: Cannabis honey produced by the bees for the first time in France. Link can be found here: [http://planetstech.com/bees-collect-cannabis-honey/?fb\\_action\\_ids=175190156208275&fb\\_action\\_types=news.publishes](http://planetstech.com/bees-collect-cannabis-honey/?fb_action_ids=175190156208275&fb_action_types=news.publishes)

Gary Fawcett posted the link for: 'The Honeybee Removal King? JP the Beeman' - <http://kiwimana.co.nz/the-honeybee-removal-king-jp-the-beeman-km090/>. JP is a Bee Removal expert from New Orleans. Jeff explains his philosophy to keeping bees and why he produces his video.

Megan Anastasie Wisdom Gimber posted the following link for: 'Do Honeybees Feel? Scientists are Entertaining the Idea' from - <https://richarddawkins.net/2016/04/do-honeybees-feel-scientists-are-entertaining-the-idea/>. Andrew B. Barron, a cognitive scientist, and Colin Klein, a philosopher, at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, propose in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that insects have the capacity for consciousness. They say that rather than wonder

how consciousness arises, one should look at where we know it exists and go from there to where else it might exist. They conclude that it is an inherent property of physical systems in which information moves around in a certain way – and that could include some kinds of artificial intelligence and even naturally occurring non-living matter.

## Q&As and Top Tips

Members always come forward to assist whenever other members require advice on specific issues they are facing. Other members may find these useful. Some questions that were raised on the LBKA Facebook page in April that were addressed by other members are listed below along with helpful tips:

**Karin Alton posted the following top tip:** LASI is pleased to announce the new exciting LASI Queen Bees project. Supplying LASI queens reared from gentle, productive, near black, fully hygienically-tested queens. The 'LASI Queen Bees' website containing more information will be in operation shortly.

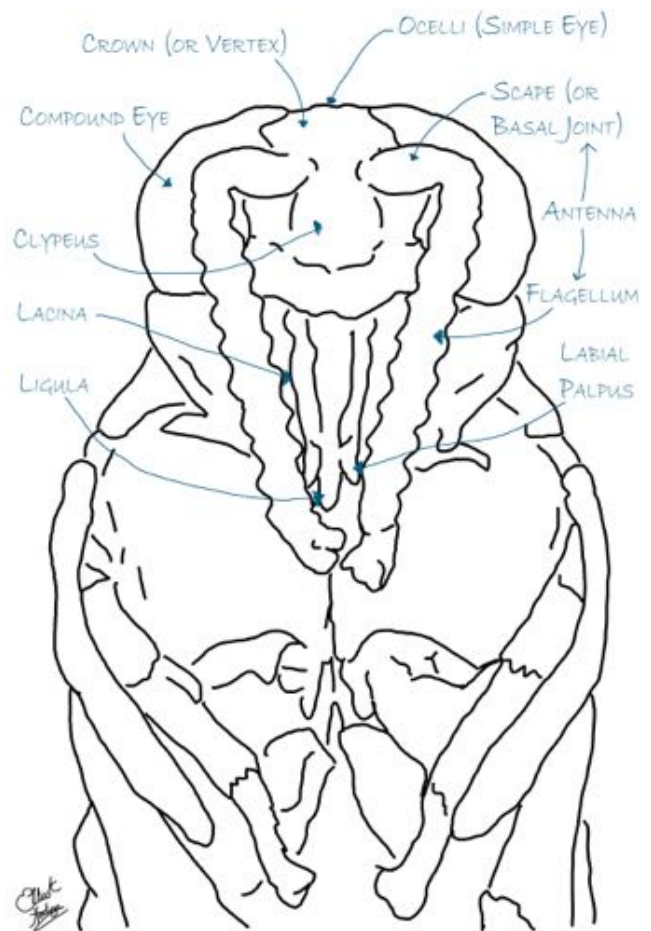
**Question from Frank Ryan:** I want to move two colonies. New site is a mile directly from the old site. Will I get away with that distance or will my bees fly back to the old site? Help me decide. **Best Answer** from Jan Upasaka: Many will come back. I would first move the hives to a place longer away, and then after some time move them to the new site. Put some hindrance in front of the entrance and cause the bees to re-orient before they leave the hive.

**Top tip from Mark:** Check hives weekly to ensure that bees do not catch you out with a swarm. Now is the time to sow your LBKA pollinator mix seeds!

**Question from Jon Harris:** Any recommendations on where to get a good mated queen from at this time of the year? **Best answer** from Angela Woods and Martin Hudson: Peter Little (Exmoor Bees)

**Question from Eleanor Field:** Opened my hive in Ealing today - overwintered nuc with 3.5 frames full of bees transferred into hive two weeks ago. Have been feeding them sugar syrup but they're not drawing out comb on any new frames. Have switched to a bucket feeder today - any tips on what else I could do to help them draw it out? **Best answer from Mark:** To encourage them to draw combs, revive them by giving the frames foundation a gentle blow over with a hair dryer set to hot. If the wax has gone stale/developed bloom the bees will be reluctant to draw it out. You can also try spraying a light syrup with an atomiser onto the foundation to encourage them to work it.

Members and non-members who attended the training day arranged by the LBKA praised the course and thanked all those involved in arranging the day. One of the attendees, Zaffrin O'Sullivan, found it 'brilliantly organised, highly informative and very entertaining'. Her blog post in appreciation of the training day can be



**Sometimes drawing something is the best way to learn something!** Elliot's been drawing bees: "My reference source was 'The Anatomy, Physiology and Natural History of the Honey Bee' by William Herrod Hemsall. An old but good book – I might write a review of it in the future. The photograph was taken on a Pentax digital SLR using a macro lens with extension tubes and 3 No. flashes. Background was a sheet of white A4 paper.

read in full here: <http://honeyhunter.uk/2016/04/29/learning-about-bees-with-the-london-beekeepers-association>.

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## Adventures in Beeland

Congratulations to Emily Scott for giving birth to her first baby – or as she prefers to refer to him – a new drone. You can read about him on her blog: <https://adventuresinbeeland.com/2016/04/26/a-new-drone/>.

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## Upcoming events

### Sunday 12th June: Monthly meeting: Bee health day

10:00-16:00 at The Ecology Centre, Holland Park, Kensington, W8 6LU.

Howard, Richard, Mark and others will run this day about brood diseases including how to inspect bees for signs of disease using bees from our Holland Park apiary. Bring your own lunch, but tea and biscuits are provided. **Members only and limited to 40 places on a first-come-first-served basis. Email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) to book your place.**

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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 (and offers of help)! 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:** Emma Nye, [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)
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