



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

## May, 2018

Welcome to the May Newsletter. It's suddenly become busy in the beekeeping world, so this edition is a bit lighter than usual as everyone's running around catching swarms.

June Monthly Meeting will be Bee Health Day, where we'll be running identical morning and afternoon sessions for 20 people each. Please make sure you [sign up for this](#) as places are limited.

As ever, more contributors for the newsletter are always welcome. We'd like the newsletter to reflect the membership of LBKA as well as possible. Perhaps you have some beekeeping experience that might entertain and/or inform us, some reflections on beekeeping news or practice ... or even just some nice photos of some bees!

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Thanks to this month's contributors: **Paul Connelly, Natalie Cotton, Richard Glassborow, Petros Hahladakis, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Vlad Zamfir.**

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)*

## From our Chair

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

On behalf of the LBKA I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the sixty new members who have just completed our Introduction to Beekeeping training courses. You are currently being assigned to a mentor, with whom the learning continues, and we hope that you will enjoy the year ahead and beyond as you build on your interest, gaining knowledge, skills, and experience.

We hope too that you make use of your membership, as an information resource, and a support & social network. We try to keep direct email to a minimum but information about what is available, going on and coming up can be found on the [website](#), the members'-only [LBKA Forum](#) Facebook group (email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) for an invitation to join), and in this monthly newsletter. If you haven't already found



*Sycamore blossom. Photograph by Mark Patterson.*

it, there is also an open (to non-association members) Facebook group, [London Beekeepers Association](#).

I would like particularly to draw attention to our Monthly Meetings, held (usually) on the second Sunday of every month, which combine a semi-formal educational talk on a seasonal topic and social get-together. We try to facilitate for all levels, new beekeepers, intermediate and experienced. We hope it is a good platform for questions and answers, with a broad range of views and a wealth of curiosity, knowledge, and experience. Details and venue on the home page of the website.

There is also a relatively newly introduced monthly social meeting, held in a different pub every fourth Tuesday of the month. There is no agenda, just enjoy. But it is a good place to float, test and develop tentative ideas as well as clarify more established thinking. Again, details can be found on the home page.

All this of course applies equally to time serving members.

Back to the Introduction to Beekeeping training courses for a moment: a huge thank you to the many volunteers who helped the Association deliver these. The LBKA cannot do anything without people who are prepared and able to give their time. Whilst it can be hard work, we hope you all find it rewarding and enjoyable enough to continue to support us. This year we had several new volunteers joining regular contributors presenting and supporting. This is a good and important trend for the long term success of the association. This is not a place for lists but I would like to name two: Emily Abbott, for once again recruiting, planning and managing the team and the programme; and Alan Bezzant, who to my certain knowledge has been contributing his knowledge, charm, and wit every year for over 10 years (Alan was my mentor after I did the course that many years ago). Thank you all of you.

I would also like to thank another group of members who recently gave up a Monday evening to contribute to a workshop exploring a burgeoning team visiting Schools. This is early days, but we are developing a programme for school visits in conjunction with the charity, School Food Matters. There have been 25 expressions of interest for 6 places on the pilot programme next month. This will represent a big step up in delivery of one of our charitable objects, education and public awareness.

Still on the theme of volunteering, we are always looking for new mentors, particularly north of the river. You do not have to be an advanced beekeeper to be a good mentor. It is not onerous, it's fun and it's help! Most, if not all mentors will tell you they become better beekeepers themselves, quicker, by mentoring trainees than they otherwise might have done. If you have bees and Basic Assessment or equivalent experience, please consider becoming a mentor. Do contact Elliot Hodges, our mentoring officer, [mentor@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentor@lbka.org.uk) or talk to



*The venue for our monthly meeting – the white door on the left.*

other mentors or anyone on the committee to find out more.

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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!

### May Monthly Meeting: Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle

Our next Monthly meeting will be on **Sunday 13th May at 11:00** where we'll be finding out all about **the Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle**. We will be at our usual venue of Fairley House Junior School, [220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY](#).

This month, Jeni Harris will be providing cake – thanks Jeni!

### Bee Health Day

Next month, **Bee Health Day** will replace the monthly meeting on 10th June, with identical morning and afternoon sessions. It will see Mark, Howard and Richard talking about recognising and mitigating against bee diseases. It will include inspection of a hive and inspection of other comb.

Due to the hands-on nature of the day, we require people to [register in advance](#). We will run the same session in the morning and the afternoon and are limiting numbers to 20 per session, prioritising those who have bees. Please indicate your availability and we will let you know if/when you have a place. Members-only please (yet another members' benefit!)

### Monthly cake

We try to have homemade cake at our monthly meetings. If you would like to bake cake for an LBKA a monthly meeting, please let Aidan know on [services@](mailto:services@)

[lbka.org.uk](http://lbka.org.uk). Of course, you're welcome to bring along cake on a whim. But it makes sense to also coordinate a bit so that there's at least some cake every month!

## Monthly Tuesday Social

Our next Tuesday Social will be on **Tuesday, 29th May** at **The Wheatsheaf** (25 Rathbone Place, Fitzrovia, W1T 1JB). We will book an area for us.

Monthly Tuesday Socials will be held in a different (food serving) pub each month. Any suggestions should be emailed to [admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk).

## New teaching apiary in North London?

LBKA is exploring the possibility to establish a new teaching apiary in North London. Our apiaries currently cover all the other cardinal points so the North is a gap.

Before we start looking at sites, we need to make sure there is one or more beekeepers who can manage the apiary. So, if you would like to take this on and have passed the Bee Basic, please send an email to [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk) indicating your interest and which area of North London you would feel comfortable with travelling to.

## Correction from Irish Beekeepers Association

In April's edition, our Facebook (In)Digestion included a link to a quiz that we incorrectly attributed to the Irish Beekeepers' Association. We were delighted to learn that the Irish Beekeepers' Association are readers of LBKA's newsletter, and got in touch to say it was not their quiz – particularly important as the quiz contained an error!

In the spirit of sharing, [here is a link to the Irish Beekeepers' Association's newsletter](#). They run a series of webinars on beekeeping related topics that LBKA members are welcome to join.

## Old announcements from April

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

**Richard Tinkler.** We're sad to report the passing of Richard Tinkler.

**Nucs and swarms.** To be added to [here](#) or to be added to the swarms WhatsApp group, email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

**Sow your wild flower mixes.** Now is the time to start sowing any wildflower seed mixtures you might have, for

a good display of flowers for the rest of the year. We have some suggested suppliers on our [website](#).

**Possible Central London apiary opportunity.** If you're interested, email [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk).

## Old announcements from March

**Development Update:** Simon Saville updated us with LBKA's input to consultation on the Mayor's New London Plan.

**BBKA's "Positive Thinking" Newsletter:** World Bee Day on 20th May, two new BBKA shows (Chatsworth and Blenheim Palace, International Meeting of Young Beekeepers (IMYB) near Bordeaux, and some suggested text to write to our councillors to push for more forage creation.

**Annetta Pedretti:** We are sad to report the passing of Annetta Pedretti

**Wax supplies wanted:** Fiona is looking for beeswax. Members should contact her by email if they can help: [envelopdesigns@gmail.com](mailto:envelopdesigns@gmail.com).

**Citizen science Bee research project:** see <https://goo.gl/forms/w4AUJHwZnTpwQHNe2>.

**Apiary space in Harrow:** someone is offering their garden in Harrow as an apiary – contact [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

**Build your own nuc box:** Contact [elliott.hodges@lbka.org.uk](mailto:elliott.hodges@lbka.org.uk) for further information.

## Old announcements from February

**BBKA swarm list:** Contact Aidan ([services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)) if you'd like to be on BBKA's swarm list this year, confirming the postcode and phone number you'd like to be listed. These will be listed on a public page (currently "under construction"). This is an important public service that beekeepers can provide, but may result in many phone calls.

**LBKA Swarms WhatsApp group:** Internally, we coordinate swarm collection through a WhatsApp group. You should join this group if you're a swarm collector, want to learn to be a swarm collector or want a swarm. Contact Aidan on [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) or Vlad on [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk).

## 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).





Preparing to meet the bees. Photograph by course attendee, Paul Connelly.



Meeting the bees 1. Photograph by course attendee, Paul Connelly.

## Beekeeping Courses

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

Last month, we ran our two flagship beekeeping courses and 60 people have started the journey to being a beekeeper. With as many people on the waiting list as those that are on the course, these courses are still incredibly popular. Thanks for all the nice feedback we have got from those that took part!

Although the course is packed with lots of detail, the real learning will commence when participants start their mentoring. As well as the apiary managers of our teaching apiaries, a good deal of our mentoring capacity comes from ordinary LBKA members. If you can help out, please drop Elliot a line on [mentor@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentor@lbka.org.uk).

## 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)

### Swarm control

May (and June) is all about swarm control. Routine inspections should now 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 but neither is it 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.



Meeting the bees 2. Photograph by course attendee, Paul Connelly.

**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 the 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.

**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

**Brood disease inspection.** A specific brood disease inspection should be carried out if not already done

in April. This involves 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 any 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.

**Draw out foundation.** Use May nectar flow to draw out some foundation into drawn frames.

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

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

**Enjoy.** Most of all – enjoy your May month of beekeeping. It is quite an intense month.

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## May in the Forage Patch

Mark's regular update on what things are in flower that bees like. Mark's busy at the moment, so this is his piece from two years ago.

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

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 – 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 **Choysia**, **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





*Rowan blooms.*



*Honey bees visiting my apples.*



*Ceonothus up close.*



*Bird cherry.*

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.



*Green alkanet.*



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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# LBKA Apiaries

News from LBKA's apiaries.

## Mudchute

*Vlad Zamfir*

*LBKA Apiaries Manager and Mudchute Apiary Manager*

After the weather settled at the beginning of the month, I could inspect the colonies and check on how they fared the winter. This included the 3 colonies from last season and the 0 new hives which were donated. All 5 had survived the winter but one of the hives had a bit of a problem with building up - brood was present but only a small patch.

The other 4 colonies were all doing well and has plenty of stores but 3 showed signs of high varroa load (i.e. deformed wing virus or DWV) so I decided I will shook swarm them. Now, I thought I had enough frames made up for the shook swarm procedure but discovered I was about 20 frames short. So I had to get frames for the procedure quickly and thankfully we had quite a few made-up frames in the Walworth Garden storage. See the pictures of me preparing to cycle to Mudchute (over the touristy Tower Bridge) on a Sunday afternoon, with 10 frames strung around my backpack and another 10



*Vlad preparing to cycle to Mudchute with 10 frames.*

inside it. The good news is that I didn't lose any on the way.

As soon as the weather was warm enough and a flow was on, I performed the shook swarms and left a frame of open brood in each hive. Once capped, this frame was destroyed (the mites on the adult bees had nowhere to go except in the bait frame of open brood so by destroying it after it was capped, I had removed most of the varroa from the colony). The colonies are all doing well and I've even had to add supers to them. Maybe I'll get some spring honey from Mudchute, if I can keep the colonies from swarming.

## Brockwell

*Petros Hahladakis*

*LBKA Apiary manager for Brockwell*

Winter was a hard time for the bees at Brockwell where we lost 2 of the 3 hives we were overwintering. One of the losses was due to a small colony not making it through (they were Ok when we applied the oxalic late December) and the other emerging with a drone laying queen. Although I had doubts about the drone laying queen, as she emerged mid autumn and I had closed up the hive for winter so didn't check if she was properly mated. My thinking at the time was I have another 2 hives, so at least this queen will keep the bees in place until spring when I could sort out any issues.

After realising that my plan had become less feasible over the last few weeks we have performed the following manipulations. Firstly we removed the drone laying queen and provided they hive with a frame of eggs from the one that was left. The bees here created some queen cells and from our last check it looks like a queen has come out, so we are now hoping she is mated successfully and we will see her laying shortly. Secondly, after letting the queen get her brood back up after losing a frame of eggs, we performed a split on the colony. We are now hoping to see some queen cells in the split hive.

Our fingers and toes are now crossed as we have moved from one strong colony to 3 relatively small ones, albeit at the start of spring, with the hope that they should have enough time to build up for the main nectar flow in the park during July.

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## Facebook (In)digest(ion)

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

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

"April showers bring May flowers" goes the proverb, but beekeepers know that the changeable month of April also brings swarms. This year was no exception, and our social media pages provided the opportunity to share some fantastic images and videos of the lesser seen sides of swarming behaviour.

Richard Glassborow shared a video clip of a swarm returning to one of his hives, after he'd found and returned the clipped queen. Graham Preston shared a clip of what may be a virgin queen returning to a nuc after her mating flight ([available here if you want to judge for yourself](#)).

At this time of year, our swarm collectors often receive calls to remove established colonies that have become active. Graham Preston shared images of an extensive colony in a roof cavity that he was preparing to cut out.

Petros Hahladakis posted a photo of what appears to be a wingless queen in what he thought was a queenless hive, prompting a discussion on what might have caused this. A bad clipping causing the bees to chew off the wings or transmission of DWV to the queen were put forward as theories.

Geordy Mark gave some useful advice on keeping bees on allotments, following a discussion between new beekeepers Chris Mortenson and Chris Dreyfus-Gibson. The BBKA's guide to allotment beekeeping is a good starting point, and many allotment associations expect a risk assessment, a written agreement and the Bee Basic certificate. The LBKA can support members with risk assessments.

Whilst other beekeepers were sensibly doing their first inspections, I shared a picture of beehives in the north of Vietnam. It was a risky time to holiday, and predictably enough my bees were ready to swarm the day I returned. Lesson learnt for future years!

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## Guest Blog

I'd like to feature a guest blog article from a member every month here. If you write a blog, I'd love to be able to reuse your content here (no extra effort for you!) Please let me know on [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

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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.

**Christine Green:** An adult full bee suit, a half bee suit, gloves and smoker, 2 empty national hives and supers, and some new frames/ wax sheets. If anyone would be interested in taking all of this (rather than splitting) please contact [admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk). Asking price £60 o.n.o. and any proceeds will be donated to LBKA/Eden community project.

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## Upcoming events

### Sunday 13th May: Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle

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

This month, the subjects will be the Asian Hornet and Small Hive Beetle. 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.

### Tuesday 29th May: Monthly Social

*from 18:30 at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Pl, Fitzrovia, London W1T 1JB.*

Our May Social will be at [The Wheatsheaf](#). We will book an area for us. Monthly Tuesday Socials will be held in a different (food serving) pub each month.



## Sunday 10th June: Monthly meeting: Bee health day

10:00-13:00 and 14:00-17:00 at [Walworth Garden](#) (206 Manor PI, Braganza St, SE17 3BN)

Our special Bee Health Day will see Mark, Howard and Richard talking about recognising and mitigating against bee diseases. It will include inspection of a hive and inspection of other comb. Due to the hands-on nature of the day, we require people to register in advance (members will have got an email about this). We will run the same session in the morning and the afternoon and are limiting numbers to 20 per session, prioritising those who have bees. Members-only please.

## 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)
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- **Events:** Emily Abbott, [events@lbka.org.uk](mailto:events@lbka.org.uk)
- **Resources:** Tristram Sutton, [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk)
- **Apiaries:** Vlad Zamfir, [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk)
- **Development:** Simon Saville, [development@lbka.org.uk](mailto:development@lbka.org.uk)
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, [mentor@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentor@lbka.org.uk)

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

