



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

May, 2019

Welcome to the May newsletter! In the newsletter this month, we have a report from the beekeeping course we did last weekend 4), Mark gives us the lowdown on frame types (p12) and also updates us on LBKA's risk assessment thinking (p14), Geoff gives some advice as to what to do in a swarming situation when you can't find the queen (p13), Howard reveals what happens at a beekeeping auction (p10) and we incorporate BBKA's "Positive Thinking" newsletter. Thanks also to regular contributors Richard (p1), Howard (p8) and Eugene (p17). And Jeni for finding a nice beekeeping cartoon from Viz and trying to get their permission to publish it here. . . maybe next month.

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A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Eugene Fahy, Richard Glassborow, Geoff Hood, Martin Hudson, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Zaffrin Saffron, and Margaret Wilson.** Thanks to **Martin Hudson** for proof-reading it. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

Aidan Slingsby, Editor, services@lbka.org.uk

From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

This year, the LBKA training courses are being held on the first two weekends of May, followed up, of course, by a year of mentoring for those who want to turn theory into practice and become responsible urban beekeepers, whether they already have bees or intend to get them.

As well as the offer of mentoring, those who sign up for our courses also become members of LBKA so I



Bee on Borage. Photo: Aidan Slingsby.

would like to take this opportunity of extending a warm welcome to all our new members. I trust you will find LBKA a friendly and supportive community whatever your level of interest and experience. We hope to see you in person at our monthly Sunday meet (second Sunday of every month, except December), our monthly pub social meeting (last Tuesday of every month) – details on the [website home page](#) in both cases – and/or at some of the events we attend, like the Lambeth Country Show. We also “meet” on social media. Increasingly, the platform of choice is our Bee Banter WhatsApp group which is proving to be a very lively, informative and at times entertaining forum and knowledge exchange for members at all levels of beekeeping. The group has some 80 members and growing. I recommend it to any who have not already discovered it: ask Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk for an invitation to join.

Whilst touching on knowledge exchange and prompted by two recent events I was fortunate to attend, I would like also to mention for all our members, new or long-standing, some opportunities to hear world-class bee related talks and seminars at annual events like the [Spring Meeting of the Central Association of Beekeepers](#), the BBKA Spring Convention, and the National Honey Show in October.

CABK is specifically focussed on bringing science to beekeeping and this year we heard from leading research scientists from around the world on subjects such as the healing and anti-bacterial properties of honey, modelling for pollinator survival in a changing world, and the use of technology in the hunt for Asian hornet nests.

The Spring Convention, for those who do not know of it, is a 3 day beekeeping mind-soak. If you book early, there are some very good training courses on all kinds of beekeeping topics, all reasonably priced or free. The range of lectures is staggering. To give you a flavour, this year I attended talks on subjects including Metamorphosis, Queen quality certification, The National Honey Monitoring scheme, Tropilaelaps, the use of Pollen to monitor pollution in the environment, and many BBKA funded research programmes. But for me, the highlight of the weekend was Dr Samuel Ramsey’s “talk” (performance might be a better word) on his research published last year that makes an overwhelming case for varroa feeding not primarily on bee haemolymph but on the fat bodies (a critical organ sort of equivalent to the liver). This is a game changer and all the books on varroa are going to have to be re-written. In short, *Varroa destructor* is far more destructive to bee adults as well as larvae than had been thought. For those thus minded, see [the article](#). A faster track into his work can be seen in his prize-winning [3 minute thesis](#).

If you haven’t experienced what is going on in the scientific community working on bees, CABK and/or the Spring Convention are well worth exploring.



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

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

This month’s meeting is on **Sunday 12th May** at 11:00-13:00 at the **usual location** of Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, SE1 7JY. It will be on the new topic of **queen raising from queen cells**, led by Geoff Hood. As usual, there will be hot drinks, cake and chat and a chance to meet and talk to other London beekeepers of all levels of experience.

June’s Bee Health Day will replace our Monthly Meeting on **9th June** at **Walworth Garden**. Knowing about bee diseases and apiary hygiene has never been more important, given the bees disease outbreaks we experienced last year and are continuing to have this year. There will be a morning session and an afternoon session which you’ll need to sign up for in advance. Details will be available nearer to the time.

See [our webpage](#) for upcoming meetings and events.

Natalie’s pub pick

The Pub Social will be heading back south of the river on **Tuesday 28th May**, from 18:30. The [Trinity Arms](#) (45 Trinity Gardens, Brixton, [SW9 8DR](#)) is a beautifully refurbished pub on a quiet residential square between Brixton and Clapham North.

Summer Social will be 18th August

Just some advance warning. . . August’s Monthly Meeting – which incorporates our Spectacular Summer Social – will be on Sunday 18th August at Walworth Garden. Please put this date in your diaries (as it’s not on the usual second Sunday of the month).

NNSS
Non-Native Species Secretariat
www.nonnativespecies.org

Produced by Lucy Curran, Cliff Bony (NNSS), Guy Martin, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Hara, National Biodiversity Data Centre (Ireland) Stuart Roberts (BBSAG)

Asian Hornet

Alert! Report sightings of this species to: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Species Description


Scientific name: *Vespa velutina*
AKA: Yellow-legged Hornet
Native to: Asia
Habitat: Nests usually high in trees and man-made structures, sometimes closer to the ground; hunts honey bees, other insects and also feeds on fruit and flowers.

Not easily confused with any other species. Dark brown or black velvety body. Characteristically dark abdomen and yellow tipped legs. Smaller than the native European Hornet.

Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. In 2016 the first UK sighting was confirmed in Gloucestershire. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, or kiln untreated timber. The possibility that it could fly across the Channel has not been ruled out.

A highly aggressive predator of native insects. Poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators.

Do not disturb an active nest. Members of the public who suspect they have found an Asian Hornet should send a photo to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.



Key ID Features

Asian Hornet Queen
 Queens up to 30 mm, workers up to 25 mm long
 Entirely dark brown or black when fully developed with a fine yellow sand
 Leg brown with characteristic yellow ends

Asian Hornet vs **European Hornet**
 Asian Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for with abdominal segment

Asian hornet 'hovering' for honey bee prey

Photos from: J. Haszard, Rachel Scopes and Nigel Jones, Richard Bell

Similar Species

Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) for comparison
 Actual size
 • Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 25mm long
 • Legs yellow at the ends
 • Dark brown / black abdomen with a yellow / orange band on 4th segment
 • Head dark from above, orange from front
 • Dark coloured antennae
 • Entirely black velvety thorax
 • Never active at night

European hornet (*Vespa crabro*)
 Actual size
 • Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 30mm long
 • Legs brown at the ends
 • Yellow abdomen marked with brown on the upper part, not banded
 • Head yellow from above, yellow from front
 • Yellow antennae
 • Thorax black with extensive brown markings
 • May be active at night

Giant woodwasp (*Dacnusa gigas*)
 Actual size
 • Larger than Asian hornet, female up to 45mm long
 • Legs yellow
 • Distinctive yellow and black banded abdomen
 • Long cylindrical body unlike Asian hornet which has an obvious waist
 • Long yellow antennae
 • Female has an obvious long sting-like appendage (ovipositor) which it uses to lay eggs in trees

Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Vespa velutina*)
 Actual size
 • Abdomen has more yellow stripes than Asian hornet
 • Legs darker than Asian hornets
 • Only one pair of wings (hornets and wasps have two pairs)
 • Large, globular eyes

Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)
 Actual size
 • More extensive yellow and orange colouration on abdominal segments than Asian hornet
 • Yellow markings on thorax unlike Asian hornet

Field Signs

Active April-November (peak August/September). Mated queens over winter singly or in groups, in various natural and man-made harbours – underneath tree bark in cavities left by beetle larvae, in soil, on ceramic plant pots – potentially any small, well-insulated refuge. Makes very large nests in tall trees in urban and rural areas, but avoids pure stands of conifers. Will use man-made structures (garages, sheds etc.) as nesting sites.

For more information visit:
www.nonnativespecies.org
www.nationalbeehiveunit.com

Alert! Report sightings of this species to: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk



Holly Warburton brought a couple of Asian Hornets captured in France were brought to last month's Pub Social. Note the yellow legs!

"Buzzin project"

Do you know any young people in Hackney, Islington, Tower Hamlets or City of London aged 10-21 years old who are not in full time work or education and/or suffer from mental health problems?

If so Mark Patterson is looking for such people to recruit onto a **free** therapeutic beekeeping project he is delivering in Hackney with a local wellbeing charity funded by the Mayor's Office. Participants will be learning about bees at a well equipped teaching apiary located at an outdoor therapy centre in Hoxton as well as gaining horticultural skills and being offered paid work placements manning the charity's Borough market stall and visiting corporate clients' roof-top bee hives. The project aims to help young people with poor mental health and wellbeing to develop new skills, gain confidence and improve their employment prospects. If you know anyone please refer them to info@apicultural.co.uk.

Bee-vac

Many thanks to **Jon Harris** for his donation of a Bee-vac, which has been added to the list of equipment that LBKA members can hire.

Old announcements from April

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

BBKA Swarm list. If you'd like to be listed as a swarm collector on **BBKA's swarm list**, contact services@lbka.org.uk.

Helping at LBKA events. LBKA's Events Co-ordinator – Martin Hudson – is always looking for help at our events. If you can offer help with any of these events that we are running, please contact events@lbka.org.uk.

Holland Park apiary. Our Holland Park apiary has finally moved from the roof (on which we weren't allowed to bring many people) to a lovely field (where we can). We can now use it as a teaching apiary!

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: [BBKA website](#).

Old announcements from March

BBKA Basic Assessment. If you'd like to do this, please contact Howard at education@lbka.org.uk.

Members wanting bees If you want bees, please join the LBKA Bee Banter WhatsApp group (join using the [link listed here](#)) or the members-only [LBKA-Forum](#) Facebook page (ask services@lbka.org.uk to add you if you don't have access). If you want a swarm, join the LBKA-swarms WhatsApp group (join using the [link listed here](#)).

Old announcements from February

Torben Schiffer talk? If anyone would be interested in a talk by Torben Schiffer (University of Wurzburg) on his research on the varroa mite, contact shaywill@fastmail.co.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.

LBKA's Beekeeping Course

We ran our first weekend beekeeping course last weekend with 29 attendees. Zaffrin took some photos.

*Aidan Slingsby and Zaffrin Saffron
LBKA members*

We ran our first weekend beekeeping course last weekend with 29 attendees. Participants came with varying levels of experience and a surprising number already

An introduction to beekeeping

Sunday 5th May 2019

LONDON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION 

*better beekeeping
better public understanding of bees
better environment for bees and Londoners*

The first slide



Establishing a presence



Setting up



Looking at bees



More looking at bees



Geoff talking about pests



Richard presenting



End of Saturday Q&A



Richard talking about honey extraction



Sylviya talking about the highs and lows of her first full year as a beekeeper

had acquired bees. The really learning some from the mentoring from now on, but hopefully the course is helping deal with the Baptism of Fire of getting their first bees.

The weather was a colder and wilder than we hoped, but we managed to show bees to participants on both days (though the first day was between showers). We are also grateful to LBKA members Alan and Amanda for letting us show their bees. All the hives were quite different from each other, so participants saw a range of colonies in different states. On Sunday, some were even treated to the emergence of a queen.

The course was supported and delivered by fifteen or so LBKA volunteers and was run by Martin Hudson – thanks to everyone involved. We had good feedback from participants.

We're now ready to deliver our second course this weekend and will report on this in the newsletter. Thanks to Zaffrin for taking pictures.

March's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discuss at our monthly committee meetings (and what keeps us awake at night). Let us know if you can help or have any suggestions that might help.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk

There was quite a lot of governance to deal with this month. A series of new policy documents were approved by the committee: the Bank Card Usage Policy, the Bank Card Use Agreement, the Risk of Financial Crime, the Membership Conduct, the Committee Code of Conduct, and the Managing Volunteers Policy. Also, our Annual Accounts and Charity Commission Submission were approved.

The committee's move to the G-Suite IT platform is slow, but some progress is being made.

To ensure we have enough help to move equipment about, some more people will be added to LBKA's Zip-Car account and be given access to our storage facility.

The date of the Summer Social was agreed as 18th August at Walworth Garden. This is a week later than our usual Monthly Meetings, but Walworth Garden is not available in the week before. It was also confirmed that Bee Health Day on 9th June will be at Walworth Garden. It clashes with the Basic Assessments – both events require an apiary. The Basic Assessments will use Eden.

We are in the final stages of purchasing some new gazebos for use at our shows. There has been debate about



Howard demonstrating how to do an Artificial Swarm at the Monthly Meeting. The frame with the picture of the crown on it is Howard moving the queen from the old hive in the new location to the new hive in the old location.

whether we should shun gazebos made of PVC due to its environment impact even though they are more expensive. We have decided to do this, but will produce an Environmental Policy to guide us in future.

Last month's Monthly Meeting:

What happened at our meeting last month.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk

We were very pleased to hold last month's meeting at Hackney City Farm in East London, hosted by LBKA member Ken Haynes. It was a beautiful day at a packed meeting (which wasn't the easiest to find).

The meeting was led by Howard on swarm control, always one of our most well-attended meetings. We advocate responsible beekeeping, which in densely built-up areas means taking measure to prevent bees from swarming so as to minimise public nuisance. Swarms on shop fronts, on overhead lines or colonies being established in chimneys is inconvenient and may be expensive. In addition, a swarmed hive will produce much less honey because the number of foragers is usually lower than otherwise during the main nectar flow.

Howard firstly distinguished between "swarm prevention" (pre-emptive) and "swarm control" (reactive to what the bees do). Swarm prevention includes doing things like selecting queens from colonies that don't tend to swarm, pre-emptive splits and removing swarm triggers, e.g. giving them plenty of space. Swarm control involves waiting for bees to make preparations to swarm and then intervening before they do, with the Artificial Swarm being the recommended procedure. This requires inspecting bees weekly in April, May and June. All these methods usually involve lots of spare equipment, so it's important that beekeepers have lots of spare equipment. Colonies are less likely to swarm before April, after July, with this year's queen, when the weather is poor and when there is a dearth of nectar.

Swarming requires a queen, brood and flying bees. Take one of these things away and hives are unlikely to swarm. Swarm control involve taking one or more of these away.

Taking away brood. If you take the brood away before the bees have started making queen cells, the colony is forced back into the state which it had in early spring, and will not swarm before completing its brood nest for a second time. The "Demaree Method" puts a queen excluder between the brood and the queen in a box of foundation, giving the queen lots of space to lay. This reduces the swarming urge but it is still important to check for queen cells.

Taking away the queen. If you remove the queen when the colony produces queen cells, the colony cannot swarm. In the "Nucleus Method", the queen is removed and places in a nuc with some other bees to

'bank' her so you have a queen if something goes wrong. The colony will then raise new queens, but you'll need to reduce the queen cells down to one or two so that you don't get a succession of cast swarms. The advantage of this approach is that you don't lose the workforce, it's cheaper to buy a brood box than a complete hive, and that you've 'banked' the original queen in case the new queen doesn't work out. Disadvantages are that some beekeepers find it hard to find the queen, there'll be a break in the laying cycle, and queenless bees don't work as hard and may be more aggressive until they are queenright.

Artificial Swarm. The "artificial swarm" is one of the more reliable methods that creates the conditions after which a swarm has happened: 2 colonies, one with the original queen, flying bees and no brood, and the other with brood, nurse bees and queen cells. Basically, you set the old hive aside, set up a new hive in the old location, put the old queen in and close up. Over a short space of time, the foragers will return to the old location, leaving a the original hive with no flying bees and no queen, but with a queen on the way. This will gradually become a new colony whilst the other one will continue as before except they suddenly have no brood and loads of space. They need to get to work, building more comb, and the queen needs to get to work to lay eggs to produce brood.

The meeting focussed on the general principles. For more details, chat to some beekeepers and read up about it online and in books.

Next month, we're back at the usual venue.

May in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

May is all about swarm control. For many of us, myself included, April has already been all about swarm control due to the early onset of spring. For those of us whose colonies have not already swarmed or tried to swarm then May should be a busy, interesting and exciting month. Daylight hours are continuing to increase, a continual supply of new flowers is emerging and healthy bee colonies are expanding.

For colonies which have not yet swarmed or attempted to swarm then 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 often build some of their queen cells between the 2 boxes, attached to the upper box. A simple routine check may

be made by removing supers then lifting/tilting the upper brood chamber to inspect the bottom of the frames in the upper brood box. This quick method is not fool-proof. 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. However, either of these events should put us on "amber alert".

Action to be taken. Quick but not immediate action is required. Do not feel intimidated or panicked into taking immediate action. There is time to close up the colony, think matters through and collate all necessary equipment. Do not simply 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. Swarm control was the topic at the April LBKA monthly meeting. Most beekeeping 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 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.

Get bees to draw some new frames. Use May nectar flow to draw out some foundation into drawn frames.

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

Equipment audit. Make sure you have sufficient spare equipment for swarm control. This includes having either spare drawn comb or made up frames with foundation.

Know your Asian Hornet. Spend a few minutes in the apiary to specifically look for the Asian Hornet. It is a good idea to have your mobile phone with you so that you can take a picture if you think you see one.

Enjoy! Most of all – enjoy your May month of beekeeping!



Rowan blooms.



Honey bees visiting my apples.



Ceanothus up close.



Bird cherry.

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is an extract reprinted from three years ago.

Mark Patterson
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



Green alkanet.

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 **Choisya**, **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 males 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**.



A Day at the Auction

What happens at a beekeeping auction? Howard recently went to one and he tells us all about it.

Howard Nichols
[Howard Nichols](#)

On Saturday, 4th May I went to the Meon Valley 40th Annual auction of beekeeping equipment and bees. It is held at Greatham Village Hall on the Surrey/Hampshire border, a simple 1 hour drive down the A3 from south London. I had been to this auction several times before but not for about 5 years.

Bee auctions bear little resemblance to what we see on sitcoms and comedy films. An inadvertent touch of the ear will not mean you have bought a state of the art digital extractor. However, there are a few things an auction goer should know so to get the most for their money with the least anxiety. It's great fun and you will



meet lots of other beekeepers from different beekeeping associations. Socially it is an entirely different world to the anonymous searching and bidding on eBay. People-watching opportunities and light hearted conversations abound as we all follow the auctioneer around the field.

The day started a few days before by my logging on to the Meon Valley Beekeepers website to download the free catalogue. I have an old WBC hive that has seen better days and I was interested in buying a replacement. I was surprised that no WBC hives were in this year's auction but, never mind, I went anyway.

The auction is held in a large field next to Greatham Village Hall. The field is not a cow field so no need to mind your step but equivalent to a village green with a large play area for children to one side. The village hall is most pleasant with disabled access and MVBKA serve refreshments and light snacks throughout the day. It is well organised. All items for auction are set out in rows in the field and, being larger items of relatively low value, handling is allowed as part of the inspection process. The auction lots include live bees but these are kept to one side well away from the main group for obvious reasons. The bees have been inspected by a

bee inspector and reported upon. Some colonies had minor brood diseases such as a few cells of chalkbrood but nothing to worry about. It goes without question that if one of the foulbroods were present then the item would not be sold. A couple of colonies had open queen cells but this was all made clear by the auctioneer and accompanying bee inspector.

We could register and start to view items any time after 11.30am with the auction starting promptly at 1.00pm. At registration you are given a "paddle" with a number on to hold up when bidding. Take a pen with you to mark the numbers you intend to bid for on your catalogue. Some equipment may be homemade so taking a tape measure is also a good idea, just to check that the homemade National brood box is indeed 460mm x 460mm square!

The auction commenced promptly at 1.00pm as advertised and people started to follow the auctioneer around the field as bidding commenced. There are lots of ways to bid, some sensible and others quite ridiculous. To keep your hand in the air with a view to intimidating other bidders does not work. I once saw someone so carried away that she was continually bidding against herself and the auctioneer had to keep telling her so.

The auctioneer names a starting price but actual closing price may be even lower than the starting price so do not immediately bid. If no one bids at the starting price, it will go down until it becomes irresistible then start to go up again. If you do bid then simply hold your paddle high, making sure the auctioneer sees it. He will indicate this to you, usually by a nod or pointing, followed by an increase in bidding price.

My own tips:

- **Be prepared.** For those of you previously in the Scouts or Guides this should not be a problem but it is surprising how many people bid for an item they have not properly inspected.
- **Caveat emptor.** Let the buyer beware. I have been to quite a few beekeeping equipment auctions and have always found items to be accurately described, with the auctioneer often stating known faults. However, descriptive mistakes do happen, however unintentional.
- **Do not get carried away.** Let the head lead the heart.
- **Have some fun anyway.**
- **If an outdoor auction then bring an umbrella.** It is just as useful as a sunshade!

Did I buy anything? The answer is “no”. Not this time but, then again, there was nothing I specifically needed for the prices being bid. About 8 or 10 years ago I went to this same auction and bought, inter alia, 3 National supers for £10. I still have them and they have served me (and my bees) well. This year a lot of 5 National supers went for £115. The prices seemed high this year but this is the nature of supply and demand. However, I did have a pleasant day out, met another beekeeper I had not seen for many years and talked to others I had never met before. The main topic of conversation among the beekeepers, virtually the entire topics of conversation, were queen cells and dealing with swarming. Not surprising for the 1st week of May in an early onset of the season.

Bee Hive Frames

Mark tells us about the different types of beehive frames, adapted from material from the Newcastle Beekeepers.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

Most beekeepers in the UK keep bees on national hives/frames and are content using DN4s and SN4s. It's reasonable balance of self spacing and cost.

The first element of frame code is the **depth** of the frame: S = shallow (super), or D = deep (brood box).

This is followed by the letter N which stands for National (L = Langstroth, D = Dadante, C = commercial, S = Smith). This is followed by the numbers 1-5, except that number 3 seems to have got lost somewhere along the way(!) The number relates to the type of spacing the frame uses.

Spacing – how the right gap (bee space) between frames is achieved

Self spacing is easy, but others require plastic ends or metal castellated frame spacers.

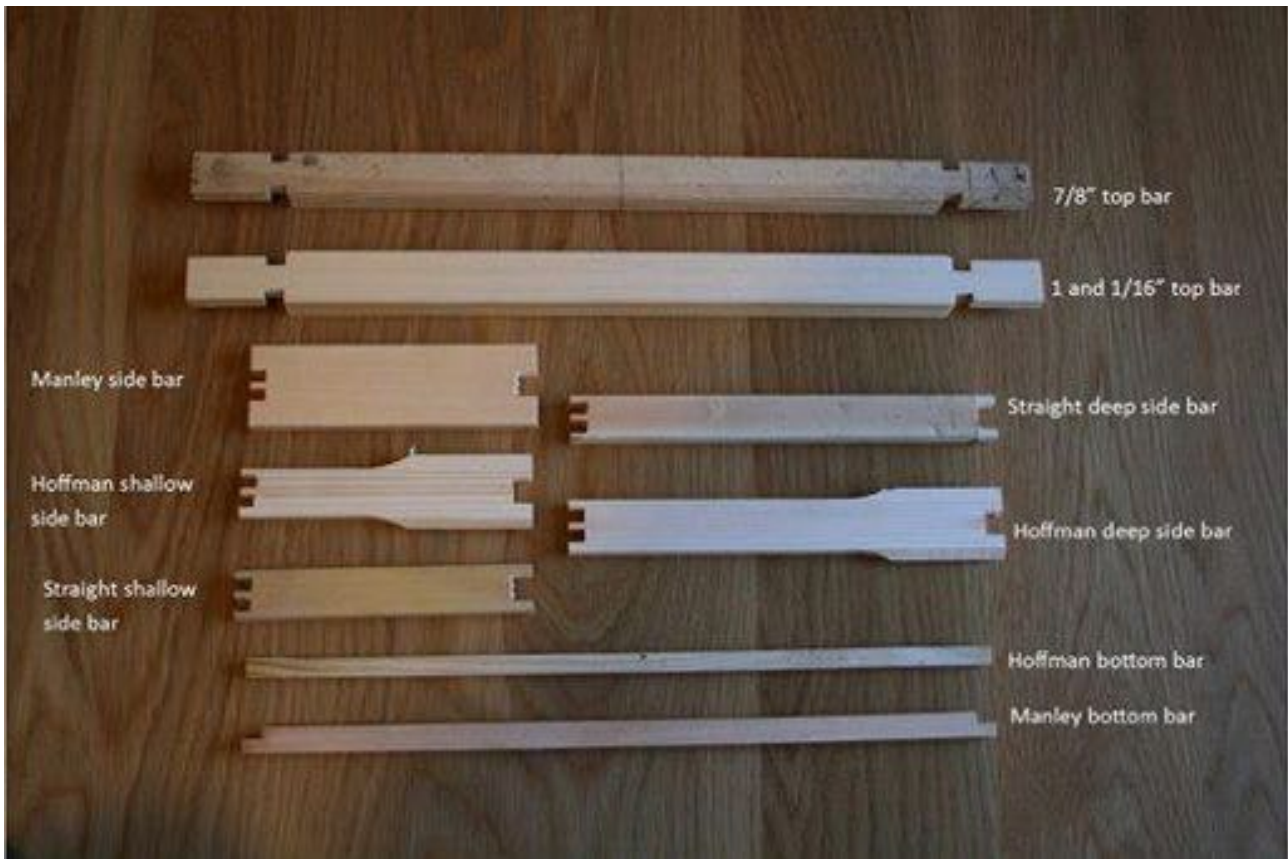
- SN1 and DN1 are **not** self spacing. Because they are cheaper they often come as starter kits - frames have 7/8 inch top bars and (plain) 7/8 inch side-bars. They need castellated spacers. They are not good in the brood box as the bee space is not correct for brood comb and the bees will make bridge and brace comb making inspections difficult. They are fine for supers though.
- SN2 and DN2 are **not** self spacing. Frames have wider 1 1/16 inch top-bars but the same 7/8 inch plain side-bars. As above, they either need castellated spacers or plastic/metal spacers. The added spacers are more likely to crush bees, provide hiding places for pests like wax moth. They also encourage excess propolis.
- SN4 and DN4 **are** self spacing, with 35mm self-spacing Hoffmann side-bars and 7/8 inch top-bars.
- SN5 and DN5 **are** self spacing, with 35mm self-spacing Hoffmann side-bars, but the top-bars have the wider 1 1/16 top bars.
- A wider side-bar, called a Manley, can be fitted to any of these frames. Manley frames can be more stable if transporting hives for migratory beekeeping.

Frames can come wired or unwired. If unwired you will need wired foundation. If wired you will need wireless foundation.

Foundation

The same letter-based codes are used as above, but you will also have to choose between:

- **Wired:** adds strength especially to brood frames, handy during extraction when frames can “blow out”
- **Unwired:** you guessed, no wires.
- **Thin:** often used for cut comb, less chewy.
- **Standard:** thicker and stronger than thin
- **Premium:** often used as a term for higher quality wax
- **Small Cell:** suggested as a varroa treatment, but little evidence of effectiveness
- **Plastic:** A “Marmite” choice



Other Tips

Bees like fresh foundation, older wax may not be drawn out well. Keep foundation sealed and put into frames near to the time of use. **Gently** heating older wax with a hairdryer can refresh it. Cool wax is a lot easier to put into frames than warm wax that’s been sitting in the sun. Foundation sometimes needs a tiny (1mm) trim to get it to fit without bowing.

Be cautious of very cheap wax on internet auction sites, sometimes it includes paraffin wax and that badly affects colonies.

“Help! I cannot find the queen and have open queen cells!”

Geoff answers a Frequently Asked Question.

Geoff Hood
LBKA Member

“Help! I cannot find the queen and have open queen cells!” This is a question I often hear in May and early

June every year and it is not something that is often taught on beginners course. The recommended Pagden Artificial Swarm requires finding the queen. Here are a few tips on what to do if you can’t find the queen.

A hive needs **brood, queen and workers** to swarm. Swarm control is the removal of one of these component that renders the hive (temporarily) unable to swarm. The methods here involve **removing the brood**.

Quite a few members of LBKA use a shook swarm to pre-empt queen cells being made. However, a shook swarm can be used instead of a Pagden Artificial Swarm. Put two frames of eggs and brood at the centre of the new box of foundation (with the queen excluder under the new box for 7 days). Shake all the bees off the other 9 frames into the centre of the box of undrawn frames on the old site Then take the old box and beeless brood frames away. Put another queen excluder on the new brood box and place the supers above the queen excluder. The two frames of eggs and brood are required so that the workers can make queen cells if you haven’t got a queen in the box. The problem is that you lose nine frames of brood and although an early shook swarmed hive can recover fast from a shook swarm in May, your summer foraging work-force will be diminished.

An alternative way to separate the queen from the brood (assuming you know she’s there, e.g. if you see eggs and assuming there are queen cells), is to create a Pagden-style artificial swarm using a shook swarm as above. Go through the usual shook swarm steps. But



Our new boiler being used to Boil used frames sterile for reuse.

instead of discarding the old brood box, place it on top of the new box, with a queen excluder between. Go and have a long lunch. After one or two hours, the nurse bees will have gone through the queen excluder to the brood frames will cover them, leaving the queen in the box below. Select one good queen cell in the top box for the nurse bees to raise and destroy all others. Place it 3ft from the main hive, and it will make a queen (as a Pagden does) as long as you feed it. You now have a similar situation as with a Pagden Artificial Swarm: one new box on the original location with the original queen and foragers in, and the old box in a new location full of nurse bees and with a new queen on the way.

Updating LBKA's Apiary Risk Assessments

Mark reveals the important work that's going on in the background at LBKA's apiaries.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

As reported in the previous newsletter we have had to recently relocate the Holland Park apiary from the roof of the old park buildings to a paddock in the wooded part of the park. This was necessary as the structural integrity of the roof was falling into further uncertainty and the weight strain on the roof needed to be reduced meaning that we couldn't use it as a practical teaching apiary.

Prior to moving the bees to the new location we were asked to risk assess the new site and this task fell to



Cleaned frames.

me. As some of you will be aware I have been a full time professional beekeeper for the past 4 years, running my own beekeeping business as well as working for the NBU. I have considerable experience of risk assessing beekeeping activities and prior to this in my role as a project manager for a large charity gained significant experience of carrying out risk assessments in various workplace environments and was responsible for managing and maintaining a legally compliant COSHH (see later) secure store.

Our apiary risk assessment covers all the usual risk associated with beekeeping; stings, risk to the public, anaphylactic shock from being stung, slips trips and falls in and around the apiary, the need to practice safe lifting to avoid back injuries etc.

Our risk assessment also included risks such as "wind blown trees" because the apiary is surrounded by some very large and unstable mature trees. As part of the risk assessment I've had to draw up contingency plans which lay out a set of procedures which would be followed should a tree come down and hit one or more of the hives. Similar contingency plans were drawn up for dealing with stings, anaphylactic shock and what we would do in the event of a notifiable disease outbreak.

One thing I always include on all my Beekeeping risk assessments but something which the association has never included up until now is how to deal with COSHH items. COSHH stands for 'Control of Substances Hazardous to Human Health' and is mandatory requirement for all workplaces and organisations. To be neglectful



Our new gas gun.



Richard sporting the flame retardant jumpsuit and gauntlets we've purchased as part of our PPE.

of COSHH requirements can lead to breaches of the Health and Safety at Work Act and lead to prosecution for negligence in the workplace. Whilst LBKA is not an employer its volunteers are covered under such legislation and it was time we tackled this area of responsibility. It's another example of an area of governance where we've had to tighten up on since becoming a registered Charity.

COSHH legislation covers any item, chemical or material that is potentially harmful to health. As beekeepers we use many items covered under COSHH and as individuals keeping bees at home as a hobby this need not concern us, but as an association, beekeeping professionals or as a hobbyist beekeeper keeping bees on allotments, schools, any place of work or public parks we must be compliant.

COSHH items frequently used in beekeeping include:

- Washing soda in your tool bucket, it's corrosive to skin and eyes
- Gas bottle and flame gun used for scorching hive bodies, it's flammable,
- Compressed gas, it could explode

- Bleach used to clean poly hives, it's corrosive to skin, eyes and toxic if ingested.
- Apiguard, it contains vapours which are a health risk if inhaled
- Organic acid treatments like apibioxal and MAQS, give off harmful vapours and/or are corrosive
- Hive cleaners/sterilisers

The legislation requires that you include all these potentially hazardous chemicals in your risk assessment. You must state what they are used for, why they must be used and an alternative can't be used instead, how it will be used, how it will be stored and how it will be disposed of safely once no longer needed. You must also hold a product safety data sheet for each substance covered under COSHH - these are available from the manufacturer or the supplier.

Most people store their COSHH items in a locked metal cabinet with shelving. However beekeeping COSHH items include several organic acids which are corrosive to metal so you should store your COSHH items in sealed plastic or polypropylene boxes with lock down lids which are in turn stood on a polypropylene drip tray in case they should leak. Liquids should be stored on the ground or lower shelves where if they were to leak they cannot drip onto other chemicals stored below which could result in a hazardous chemical reaction producing toxic vapours. Your containers housing the COSHH items must also be clearly labelled. We've written the contents in black permanent marker on all the plastic boxes and they are marked with EC hazard pictograms - this is also mandatory requirement.

In addition to the COSHH items, the association has had to improve its fire safety aspects of the risk assessments. This was particularly called for at Holland Park where the Royal Borough is still recovering from the terrible Grenfell Tower fire of 2017. In addition to buying storage crates, drip trays and hazard warning signs, we have now purchased red metal fire buckets filled with sand to extinguish smoker contents into and bought metal smoker boxes to store the smokers inside. Fire extinguishers and fire blankets have also been sourced. We've also bought better storage containers for storing sugar feeds to avoid attracting vermin to the store.

We have had to have all our electrical equipment PAT tested. This includes or chargers, tablets, laptops, wax recovery equipment and boiler for cleaning frames. These all have to be regularly re-tested and certified fit for usage.

Additionally we have had to buy a new gas gun and gas cylinders for use in scorching hive bodies. As part of the risk assessment any members wishing to use the gas gun equipment must undergo a brief induction given by myself since I am a GAS safety certified person. We have also bought flame retardant protective boiler suits, goggles and gloves which must be worn when using the gas gun or frame boiling equipment.

This has been quite a big undertaking and is now be-

ing replicated at all the association apiary sites to raise standards of health and safety as we have a duty of care to our members using the teaching apiaries. We've had to invest almost £1000 in equipment to enable us to become fully health and safety compliant.

Having gone through this process at Holland Park we have now begun sterilising all the spare kit at this site and been busy recycling mountains of used frames and recovering the wax. This has taken our volunteers many days of hot work steaming and boiling frames in the green houses and labouring over a hot gas gun. We are trying to set a higher standard of apiary hygiene in the wake of last year's widespread EFB outbreaks.

We have risk assessment templates should members need help risk assessing their own apiary sites, and we are happy to share them. They have already been posted in the files and documents area of our Facebook page and we intend to include them on the member's area of the website. Whilst we have COSHH data sheets for all our chemicals we intend to use, we must use the sheet supplied by the manufacturer or supplier we purchase from.

Positive Thinking (issue 20)

This is this month's edition of BBKA's "Positive thinking" newsletter, within our newsletter! Find out the latest news at BBKA.

Margaret Wilson
BBKA Chair

CIO

We have communicated again with the solicitor on some minor points and they have informed us that after those small changes the documents will go off to the Charity Commission for authorisation. Rather later than we wanted, but hopefully, that will not make any difference to the eventual timing.

Funding

The Defra funding has been extended to cover this year and we are consequently able to support GH and AH training once again. That is a real bonus for our members and areas will be published as soon as possible.

Special Editions

The new 'Queen Rearing Special Edition' was available at the Spring Convention and it certainly flew off the shelf! We will also be giving information on the proposed queen-rearing programme as soon as this is completed. It will go a good way for allowing us to be self sufficient as far as queen availability goes. Hopefully after the candidates receive their training, they can go back to their branches and spread the knowledge to other beekeepers.

We have more Special Editions in the course of production, 'Wax' will be the next one printed.

Shows

Once again the Shows Committee will be pulling out all the stops at the Chatsworth Show on June 5th to the 9th 2019, and again at Countryfile Live at Blenheim on the 1st to the 4th August 2019. So if you are attending these shows, come along and meet the people who organise and give their time to the events.

The Hive Experience is a great attraction and we are pleased that some of the associations are using this to give a wonderful experience to non- beekeepers at their own shows. If you have not seen it, here is an opportunity for you to have the 'experience' yourself if you go to either show.

Stoneleigh Building

We applied for planning permission to provide toilets for people with a disability and cloakroom facilities within the footprint of our site at Stoneleigh. This was originally refused as there was concern about parking. However, after an appeal we did get planning permission. The first part of the work has to be the re siting of the oil storage tanks and I have just been informed that this will take place over the Easter break. We will then be in a position to proceed with the remainder of the building works.

If you were at the Spring Convention you would have had the opportunity of looking at some of the designs for the out apiary at Stoneleigh. They are the work of the first year students at Pershore College who volunteered to do these as part of their projects at the college. It is amazing that they all received the same brief but all had vastly different ideas for the site. The final design has not as yet been decided but the apiary is now well managed and hopefully, we will have bees for all the required events for the coming season.

Capitation

By now, most associations will have received their capitation invoices on the new system. Let us hope that this year the information on the head office database is compatible with the associations' information. If this is

successful, this will make life much easier for the treasurers of each branch and association. Fingers crossed it all works wonderfully well.

Spring Convention 2019

Concerns have been raised with me that in the recent 'Positive Thinking' number for March 2019 I may have inadvertently denigrated the excellent BBKA Spring Convention. This was certainly not my intention and I apologise both for the poor timing of that message and for any offence it may have caused. The questionnaire included has been withdrawn and there will shortly be a new request for feedback developed with and agreed by the dedicated members of the BBKA Spring Convention Committee.

I would like to go on to say that the Spring Convention this year was very busy. We were privileged to speak to many members who visited the BBKA stand, in some cases it was good to put a face to a name but in all cases it was great to hear your opinions of the Convention and of course the BBKA. The Trustees who attended dedicated their time to covering the BBKA stand and helping where required introducing speakers etc., in fact that is probably the only speaker they got to hear, as the rest of the time they were working on the stand and communicating with you, our members. By now the Spring Convention Committee who organise this will already be trying to close off this year's event and making plans for the 2020 Convention. Like all volunteers for the BBKA, they all give their time freely. I am always amazed that within the BBKA we have so many people who do this without a single thought of reward, so I hope you will join me in giving a huge 'thank you' to both the Committee members and the stewards who worked so hard at the event.

Research

There was an afternoon at the Spring Convention dedicated to the research projects that we have funded recently. This was well attended and the four groups gave excellent presentations describing the work they have completed with the funding from BBKA. More details of the various projects will be put on the website (look for 'Research' on a pull-down menu on the front page).

In addition, Pam Hunter gave a short presentation outlining the EU PoshBee project. Currently (during April – May) our volunteer beekeepers have 24 colonies on apple orchards in Kent and the staff from Reading University will be collecting various samples from the colonies. Updates again will be posted on our website.

Facebook (In)digest(ion)

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

Eugene Fahy
LBKA Member

This month's literary allusion comes "just so" in the title of a [link shared by Angela Woods](#) – ?How the bumble bee got its stripes? reports that researchers at Penn State have discovered a gene that drives the red and black colour differences on the bumble bee, *Bombus melanopygus*.

Angela Woods also [shared a post about a shareholder revolt at Bayer](#) over the glyphosate litigation it inherited with its acquisition of Monsanto. Two recent US court decisions held that the weedkiller Roundup could cause cancer. The decisions have been appealed but they have sparked a further 13,400 claims.

In another pesticide related item, Carreck Consultancy [posted information about INSIGNIA](#), an EU funded, citizen science project. The aim is to monitor pesticides and pollen diversity by enlisting beekeepers to take bi-weekly pollen samples from honeybee colonies.

Chris Palavestra shared a link to a [YouTube video on creamed honey making](#).

Becka Marsh [asked about black bees coming down the chimney into her house](#). Mark Anthony Patterson suggested they could be solitary bees nesting in the brickwork and emerging in spring.

Candida Williamson [shared news of an event](#), "The bees in my garden". Dave Goulson from Sussex University and Sarah Wyndham Lewis of Bermondsey Bees and author of "Planting for Honeybees" are giving a talk at The Exchange in Twickenham on Wed 15 May.

Finally, the internet adage that "things once seen can not be unseen" is a useful warning to anyone about to view the [Learn with LaVi post](#) shared by Mark Anthony Patterson. Two bare-torsoed men exhort us to learn about honeybee mating with their song "I Gotta Have Drones". However, having viewed it twice, I am convinced the real star is the bumblebee puppet.

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.

Members' marketplace

This section is for members offering beekeeping items or services to members or requesting items. Items could include nucs, wax and honey. Email services@lbka.org.uk to add something here.

Caroline Nursey: 3 unused national supers (without frames) available free to collect from Kennington Rd near Roots and Shoots.

Caroline Nursey: Unused one and half size WBC brood box plus frames available free to collect from Kennington Rd near Roots and Shoots. I've decided it will be too heavy for me!

Emily Abbott: I run Hive & Keeper Ltd a company that sells single apiary/harvest honeys from small scale beekeepers around the country. Jars are labelled with the honey's main flavour, the name of the beekeeper and where the apiary is. Hive & Keeper currently works with about 30 keepers and your honey would be enjoyed by people across the country. Let me know if you have honey you want to sell, but don't want to jar and sell it yourself. We buy 30lb buckets (a minimum of 3). Check out <http://www.hiveandkeeper.com/> or email emily@hiveandkeeper.com.

Kyle Moreland: I have 2 empty hives I am looking to fill if anyone has a swarm or colony to split; I am looking to get a colony/nuc started. I can travel/collect as needed and am home during the day. Contact me on kyle@marmionroad.plus.com.

Upcoming events

Sunday 12th May: Monthly meeting: Queen raising from queen cells

11:00-13:00 at *Fairley House Junior School, 218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, London, SE1 7JY*

New topic, where we will learn about how to raise queens from queen cells. 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 28th May: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at *The Trinity Arms, 45 Trinity Gardens, Brixton, SW9 8DR*

Our monthly trip to the pub will be heading back south of the river to the *Trinity Arms*, a beautifully refurbished pub on a quiet residential square between Brixton and Clapham North. Catch up with all the latest news over a pint in a nice food-serving pub.

Sunday 9th June: Monthly meeting: Bee Health Day

10:00-13:00 or 14:00-17:00 at *Walworth Garden (206 Manor Pl, Braganza St, SE17 3BN)*

This special event that replaces the normal monthly meeting will include practical work on how to check colonies for both minor and major brood diseases and also statutory matters about notifiable diseases and pests. Note the venue is different to usual and you will need to sign up - details to follow.

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
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary:** Natalie Cotton, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Tristram Sutton, resources@lbka.org.uk
- **Development:** Simon Saville, development@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Martin Hudson, events@lbka.org.uk

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

