



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

## September, 2020

Richard's been digging into the publicly-available data on EFB and he draws worrying conclusions. As part of our efforts to understand the extent of the problem, we're asking **all beekeeping members** to anonymously tell us whether they had EFB/ABU diagnosed this year, even if they haven't. If you have colonies, please submit your answer to this [anonymous form](#), whether or not you've had the disease in your apiaries. Please also remember to do your own detailed brood inspection a few times throughout the season as outlined in the Bee Health Monthly meeting a few months ago.

This month, we have an article from Geoff about buying budget hives and photos of him assembling one and more photographs from Sally. Thanks to regular contributors Richard (p1), Howard (7), Mark (8) for their contributions and Martin for proof-reading.

<a href="#">From our Chair</a>	1
<a href="#">Announcements</a>	3
<a href="#">September's Committee meeting</a>	6
<a href="#">Last month's Monthly Meeting</a>	7
<a href="#">September in the Apiary</a>	7
<a href="#">Focus on Forage</a>	8
<a href="#">Buying hive on a budget</a>	10
<a href="#">Members' marketplace</a>	14
<a href="#">Upcoming events</a>	14
<a href="#">Committee</a>	15

A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Richard Glassborow, Sally Haywill, David Hankins, Martin Hudson, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Sergio Ramos**. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, do contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

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

## From our Chair

### "Euston, we have a problem".

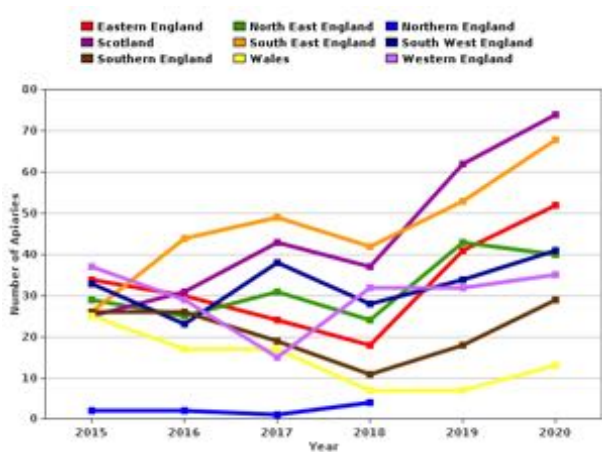
Some of you may recognise I am misquoting – or more accurately, misspelling – the understated situation alert from the pilot of Apollo 13 to NASA Mission control in Houston, Texas.

Well, I am using 'Euston', London as a stand-in for the whole of London and the alert concerns the levels of EFB and AFB recorded so far this year.

While AFB may be regarded as the more serious of the two notifiable brood diseases it is much less prevalent than EFB and it is not showing the same order of up-



Red tail bumblebee on dandelion. Photo: Sergio Ramos.



Apiaries with disease. Source: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/BeeDiseases/apiaryTrends.cfm>

ward trend so I am only going to concentrate on EFB in this article.

Why the concern? Here is a summary of the NBU records for the number of different apiaries in London affected by EFB for each of the last 4 years:

YEAR	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Apiaries with EFB	6	16	19	39
Colonies with EFB		29	47	86

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/BeeDiseases/diseaseIncidenceMaps.cfm>. \*2020 figures at time of writing

It is not just London. NBU data shows a sharp increase in the south east region, though of course it is possible that that is the impact London is having on the wider region. That is a question to ask.

London is our manor: this is not good. If we are going to do something about it we need to understand it better. We need a disease supplement to the London Bee Situation Report.

First of all, you may remember one of the conclusions of the report was that London is not homogenous. Blanket statistics for London as a whole can hide what is actually going on. So question 1 has to be, where exactly are these outbreaks?

As some of you know, the committee has been asking members to let us know when they receive a disease alert notice from the NBU as part of our policy of evidence-based beekeeping in London. The response from members who are on the WhatsApp group has been terrific. It is not, of course intended to be a definitive list with pinpoint accuracy. It doesn't have to be – the NBU already know the exact location of each infected hive discovered but, understandably they will not publicly release the information for obvious reasons of confidentiality.

The anecdotal information we have collected from members, together with information that is publicly

available on BeeBase, has given us some insight into the scale of the problem and this has prompted us to ask ourselves if there is more we can do to help bring these diseases under better control. Of course, we are just one of 14 BKAs in London and our 167 beekeeping members (or at least the ones of our 280 members who have BDI) are a very small fraction of the estimated 1,500 beekeepers in London overall, including bee farmers. Obviously, to be effective, examining these additional questions will require collaboration across all beekeepers, and NBU.

It would also help us if we knew more about the scale to which our members are currently directly affected. We have set up an [anonymous survey](#). No names are requested but we ask **all** members to answer yes or no to the question “has EFB or AFB been confirmed in one or more of your apiaries in 2020?” We need members who have not had disease to answer “no” because the information will be incomplete so more sense can be made of it if we have both responses. Please help.

What do we know so far and what do we need to find out?

Already, we can see there appears to be a correlation between two areas with high registered colony density and high incidence of brood disease, TQ29 & TQ37.

At this point I would like to stress the LBKA is determined to avoid this situation developing into finger pointing or any kind of blame culture. Blame culture encourages defensive behaviour and resistance to change. It inhibits openness and the timely sharing of information and networks of mutual support. Early detection and thorough tracing and follow-up inspections are vital in suppressing these diseases and it is not going to help if beekeepers are reluctant to register and/or to seek help.

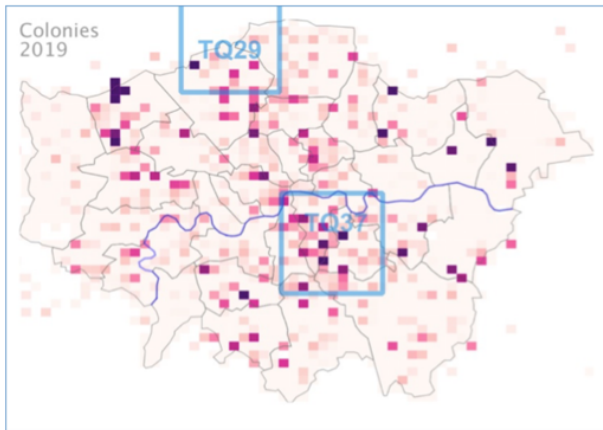
In any case, although bad practice undoubtedly can be a factor, you don't have to be a bad beekeeper to fall victim to foulbrood. That said, disease control is complex and for most of us takes years of ongoing learning and practice. Whilst the Association already has quite a focus on education and better beekeeping, this trend in EFB in particular, is causing us to wonder whether we could do more to help our members or perhaps be more effective in what we are already doing by way of support and education.

To help us gain a better understanding of what is going on we have asked the NBU for more detailed information than is currently publicly available. This includes higher resolution of the distribution of outbreaks; the total number of beekeepers in London (including BFA members) and the number (not identity) of LBKA members who have cases of infection. This last may tell us if collectively our members are over, under or averagely represented in the outbreaks and hence possibly give an indication of whether we need to provide more, or more effective education and support.

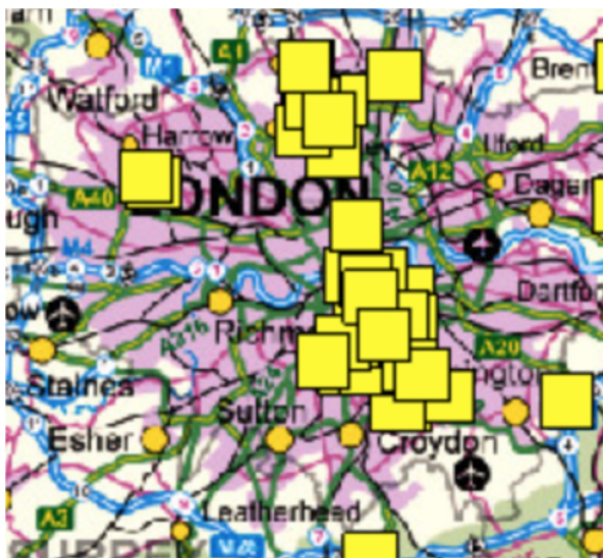
Whilst beekeepers are always a potential vector. There

EFB occurrence by 10KM squares 2020				Year 2020
County	10 km Squares EFB Found	Area Name	Number of Positive EFB Diagnoses (including recurrences)	Month EFB Found
Greater London	TQ29	BARNET & FINCHLEY	3	April
Greater London	TQ29	BARNET & FINCHLEY	9	May
Greater London	TQ29	BARNET & FINCHLEY	4	June
Greater London	TQ29	BARNET & FINCHLEY	4	July
Greater London	TQ29	BARNET & FINCHLEY	6	August
Greater London	TQ36	CROYDON	3	April
Greater London	TQ36	CROYDON	1	June
Greater London	TQ36	CROYDON	2	July
Greater London	TQ36	CROYDON	4	August
Greater London	TQ36	CROYDON	1	September
Greater London	TQ37	S.E. LONDON	6	April
Greater London	TQ37	S.E. LONDON	13	May
Greater London	TQ37	S.E. LONDON	7	June
Greater London	TQ37	S.E. LONDON	11	July
Greater London	TQ38	N.E. LONDON	3	June
Greater London	TQ38	N.E. LONDON	1	August
Greater London	TQ39	ENFIELD	1	July
Greater London	TQ39	ENFIELD	3	August
Greater London	TQ56	SWANLEY & KINGSDOWN	1	July
Greater London	TQ58	ROMFORD & RAINHAM	1	August

London figures. Source: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/public/BeeDiseases/efbReport.cfm>



Registered colonies in London last year. There have been high levels of EFB in grid squares TQ29 & TQ37. Data: Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). Map: LBKA.



EFB inspections in London in 2020 (to end of August). Source: <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/maps/map.cfm>

are other things to look into. Do we simply have a lot of cases because we have a lot of bees or does high density play a part? Is the number of cases proportionally more than might have been expected? Are the infections spreading horizontally (from hive to neighbouring hive)? How many strains are involved? Are there any clues and theories as to the origins and behaviour of the main vectors?

The big underlying question brings us right back to our report, The London Bee Situation: Might colony density be a factor?

Finally, on a practical note, a reminder of the importance of adequate insurance: BDI asks you how many colonies you wish to insure. This is declared in the winter months when you are likely to have only your overwintering colony numbers. By the time the inspector calls you may have a couple of colonies you have had to artificially swarm, one or two nucleus colonies, a couple of queen rearing colonies and a split you have made for a friend. Some may be small but they are all colonies and the number may be two or three times higher than what you registered. You must anticipate and insure your full capacity colony numbers or update when you exceed what you have insured. If the inspector finds one colony more than you have insured, your whole policy could be void and you get nothing.

## Announcements

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

### September's online Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

Our next Monthly Meeting will be on Sunday 13th September on the subject of "Preparation of bees for winter, including what, when and how to feed" at 11:00-13:00 via Zoom. From now on, we will use the same link each month which is in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email.

Next month's meeting on 11th October will feature Frank Ryan showing how to build flat-pack hives.

Our **Pub Social** will be via **Zoom** again on **Tuesday 29th September** from 18:30. We will use the same link each month which is in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email.



*"More than just honey bees": "This...er... Praying Mantis(?) ... in my orchard in France. Interestingly there are hardly any insects at all – a dramatic difference from even 6 weeks ago. But the flock of Swallows, plus the now departed huge noisy flock of Bee Eaters, some 50 of them that were around for at least a week, will have hoovered up anything that had survived the surrounding industrial agriculture.".* Photo by Sally Haywill.

## Join the committee

We will have our AGM on Wednesday 4th November. The AGM is a chance to find out what the Association has been doing over the past year, to ask questions, make suggestions, and vote in a new committee. This year, we also plan to formally establish our London Bee Situation position, based on the discussions we have at last month's Monthly Meeting and at other times. The AGM will be conducted online this year.

Please consider standing for the committee and make a difference. Please talk to any committee member if you'd like to know more. Details and deadline for nominating members for committee positions will be provided in advance.

## Don't risk being underinsured

A warning from BDI – those of us have bee disease insurance as part of our BBKA member should ensure we cover all our colonies. The insurance may be void if it turns out we have more colonies that declared. Under this circumstance we may not be able to claim.

For non-disease insurance, BBKA use a broker called 'Aston Lark Insurance' based in Manchester (previously Buckland Harvester Insurance) to provide affordable additional apiary equipment insurance (for theft and public liability, but not loss due to disease), insuring up to £5,000 of equipment for an annual premium of £12.

## Beekeeping opportunity in Camberwell

A retired lady has asked whether a member of LBKA would like to take over her bees.

She says that "it would be an opportunity for someone without bees to find out what it's like to run an apiary". There isn't direct access to her garden, but Jenny is



*"More than just honey bees": "Incredibly beautiful tiny moth, in France again. No idea what kind.'.* Photo by Sally Haywill.

home most of the time, so it shouldn't be difficult to arrange access.

She has two good-tempered colonies – one a strong one, the second she says might not make it through the winter. They are on 14×12 National frames. The forage in the area is poor, so it would be for the experience rather than lots of honey. The only stipulations would be that the bees are managed to avoid swarming, and the number of colonies would not expand beyond four.

Details are to be agreed with Jenny directly. If interested, please contact Simon Saville on 07572 612722.

## Help needed with our Social Media

We need a hand with our various social media outputs and would love to talk to you, particularly if you're able to help and have experience in this area. Please contact Aidan at [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).



*"More than just honey bees": "You can just about see the Bee Eater perched on top of the Willow. In France they are called 'Guepier'. . . but I suspect they'll gobble anything. This of course doesn't do justice to their vivid plumage. Turquoise green tummies, bright yellow heads. . . flashes of pinky red through their wings as they fly against the sun.'. Photo by Sally Haywill.*

## National Honey Show

The [National Honey Show](#) will be online this year on 22nd–24th October, with planned pre-recorded demonstration workshops and lectures with live questions and answers during the day and online social events in the evenings.

## Why we all need to learn to love insects

See Dave Goulson's talk on "[why we all need to learn to love insects](#)" and so send to people you know who need reminding! He gave our best-attended LBKA Winter Lecture last year.

## Honey for sale?

Ask [service@lbka.org.uk](mailto:service@lbka.org.uk) if you'd like it to be added to our [honey page](#).

## Old announcements from August

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

**New Resources Officer:** Our new Resources Officer is Will Fry and you can contact him on [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk).

**Hiring extractors:** We have extractors which can be hired by members – £10 for up to 3 days with a £20 deposit – email [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk) for more information.

**Apiary that needs a beekeeper:** If you're interested in



*Spotted by Martin: "This lovely Jersey Tiger Moth came into our living room one evening, and while trying to let it out again it flew into the uplighter, and frizzled! Such a shame. Photo by Martin Hudson.*

an apiary site near Wandsworth Road Station, contact [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk).

**No in-person summer social this year:** the restrictions rules on social gatherings will make this too difficult to organise.

## Old announcements from July


**Photographer:** Jack is portrait photographer based in Charlton (SE7) is looking to photograph a series of beekeepers for his portfolio). See his work on [his website](#) and contact him on [jackcmcguire@gmail.com](mailto:jackcmcguire@gmail.com).

## Old announcements from June

**Help needed at our East London apiary:** email [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk) if you might be able to help.

**Summer lecture programme.** Advanced Beekeeping Courses have a **summer webinar programme** by Ken and Dan Basterfield on specialist topics. [See the programme here.](#)

**Bee part of the A-Team.** If you'd like to be part of LBKA's [Asian Hornet Action Team](#), contact Elliot on [mentor@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentor@lbka.org.uk).



www.nonnativespecies.org

Produced by Lucy Curran, Cliff Bony (NNS), Guy Harris, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Hara, National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) Stuart Roberts (BKAUK)

## Asian Hornet

**Alert!** Report sightings of this species to: [alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alernnonnative@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 other 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 [alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk).



---

### Key ID Features


**Asian Hornet Queen**

Queens up to 30 mm long, workers up to 25 mm long


Entirely dark brown or black when fully developed with a fine yellow band

Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends

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




Asian Hornet



European Hornet

Asian Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4th abdominal segment




Asian hornet hovering for honey bee prey

---

### Similar Species

**Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) for comparison**

- 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




© Rhone

---

**European hornet (*Vespa crabro*)**

- 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




Roger Burgess

---

**Giant woodwasp (*Dacnusa gigas*)**

- 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




© Rhone

---

**Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Vilurcula zonaria*)**

- 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




Dider Deconinck

---

**Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)**

- More extensive yellow and orange colouration on abdominal segments than Asian hornet
- Yellow markings on thorax unlike Asian hornet




© Rhone

---

### 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](http://www.nonnativespecies.org)  
[www.nationalbeehiveunit.com](http://www.nationalbeehiveunit.com)

**Alert!** Report sightings of this species to:  
[alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alernnonnative@ceh.ac.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).

# September'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.

*David Hankins*  
[treasurer@lbka.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lbka.org.uk)

As has been the case over the last few months, most time was spent at this meeting discussing how LBKA and its committee of trustees should operate in the Covid era.

Contents of the Chair's letter for this month's newsletter, and LBKA's response to Foul Brood outbreaks in London headed the agenda, with agreement to seek more information from members on EFB & AFB in their apiaries. Also agreed there is a need to ask members how we can get the bee health message to a wider audience, to help reduce infection rates.

Gearing up for remote delivery of school visits in partnership with School Food Matters charity was discussed, together with the need for a few volunteers to assist with Zoom or other conferencing platform sessions this academic term.

Preparation for the AGM in November has started, with the event to be held on-line. Detailed planning to be carried out over the next few weeks, with notices to be emailed to members in early October. The Trustees Annual report is currently being drafted and will be presented at the AGM.

A schedule of Winter Lectures was discussed, the first of which we hope to deliver via Zoom before the AGM – exact details to be forwarded at a later date.

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: [BKA website](http://BKA website).

## Last month's Monthly Meeting: Pollen and Pollination

What happened at our meeting last month.

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

The subject matter of the August meeting was "Pollen and Pollination... It was prepared and led by Vlad Zamfir via zoom. Vlad began with an overview of pollen and an explanation that not all pollen is the same. The nutritional content varies and this is why monocultures are not good for bees. After covering nutritional value in some depth together with its importance to larvae and young bees we then moved onto pollination itself, the difference between pollination and fertilisation, different pollinating insects and methods of both cross-pollination and self-pollination. Plants have developed a variety of strategies to ensure cross-pollination where possible and Vlad led us through some of these methods. Finally, we looked at a few interesting facts about bees and pollination.

The synergy between bees and flowers/pollination is enormous which made this such an interesting and relevant subject. From the outset it was obvious that Vlad had thought about the direction of this monthly meeting and had thoroughly researched and prepared the material. I found it extremely informative and interesting. The LBKA education programme has been severely interrupted due to Covid 19 (as has the BBKA programme) but we are trying our best to deliver what we can for our members during these difficult times. It is hoped that as many members as possible will make the effort and commitment to join us for our monthly meetings via zoom until we are able to start meeting again as a group. Thank you to everyone who attended and an extra thanks to Vlad for such a detailed presentation.

## September in the Apiary

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

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

The bee population will continue to decline in September but the new bees now being born will need to live through to next April, for up to 6 months instead of 6 weeks. They need to be healthy, free of varroa mites and associated viruses and with plenty of stores. Those members who diligently applied Apiguard or another approved varroacide throughout August should now be the proud custodians of newly born healthy bees which are in a good position to withstand winter.

### Feeding the colony

This is the main job for September. Unless you have your bees close to a large ivy source then it must be assumed that they have now ceased to be in a position to forage any surplus and so feeding syrup is the only option to ensure they go into winter with sufficient resources. A full sized colony needs to have 35lb of honey to see it through to next April. A National brood frame holds 5lb and so the equivalent of 7 frames is needed. A single brood box will be insufficient for a National or WBC hive which means that these colonies should be overwintered on either a brood and a half or a double brood.

Feeding fondant in winter causes the cluster to break up and is an unnecessary disturbance. It is far better to feed syrup in September and so ensure there are sufficient stores for the winter. Fondant in winter should only be used as an emergency feed, not part of a planned strategy. The best time for winter and spring feeding is always in the preceding September!

If feeding is left until October then the bees may be unable to evaporate down the water content to less than 20% and then cap the stores. This is likely to lead to the syrup fermenting over the winter period. All feeding should be completed by the end of September as the colder it gets then the less active the bees become.

Sugar must be white granulated sugar. Any other sugar is harmful to the bees. Sugar prices in the discount supermarkets are about 65p per kilo which is more expensive than previous years (2016 was 45p and 2017 was 50p, 2018 and 2019 were 60p).

A stronger syrup should be used at this time of year as this means the bees have less work to do in evaporating

off the water. This syrup is not for their immediate consumption but for winter and early spring stores. 1Kg of sugar dissolved in 660ml of warm water is the desired strength.

If the feeder needs to be topped up then it is essential to wear a veil. Bees may not appear to be very active if late in the month when cooler but they will surge through the feedhole if the feeder is disturbed or taken off.

## Other action to be taken this month

**Mark the queen:** If the colony has a new queen born this summer then now is the best time to find and mark her. The colony is contracting with the brood limited to just a few frames so this makes it a much easier proposition. If the queen is marked then next season's swarm control will be so much easier. You may have had a marked queen in the summer but she could now be superseded which means marking is necessary.

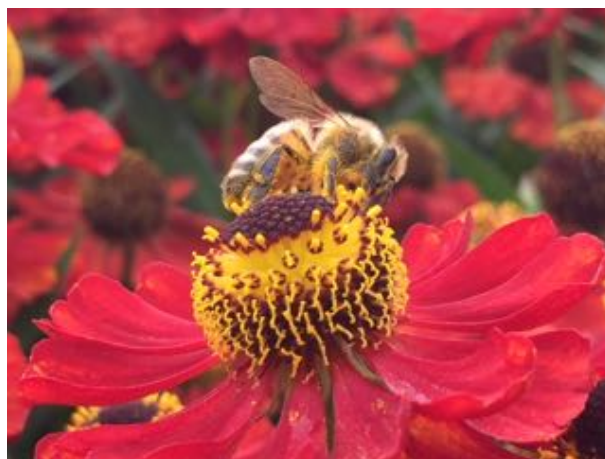
**Check the hive:** The hive body should be draught free and the roof should be waterproof. Now is the time to replace any defective or ill-fitting equipment before the onset of winter.

**Protect against wasps and robbers** Entrance blocks must be *in situ*. Many beekeepers reduce the entrances to as little as 2 or 3 bee spaces at this time of year. If a colony is being robbed it is extremely difficult to stop other than moving it to a new site more than 3 miles away.

**Fumigate supers** These should be fumigated if not already done. Fumigated supers should be put in a place secure from wax moth and vermin.

**Asian Hornet** Each time you visit your bees it is now important to be vigilant to the possibility that these are in your locality. September is the month they are likely to be more active and "hawking" bees if in the UK. Take the trouble to spend a few minutes observing the colony entrances and underneath the hive to check for their existence. As beekeepers we are now in the front line of the UK's defence against this invader.

I always find September a month with many tasks but without the stresses of, say, May when we need to deal with swarm control. In September there is still a lot to do before it gets cold. I find it an easy and interesting beekeeping month but nonetheless tinged with sadness as the season is closing. I hope that all our members use September to prepare well for the winter and that their bees survive and emerge with vigour in the spring.



*Helianthus.*



*Aster.*

## Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is the one we used last year.

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

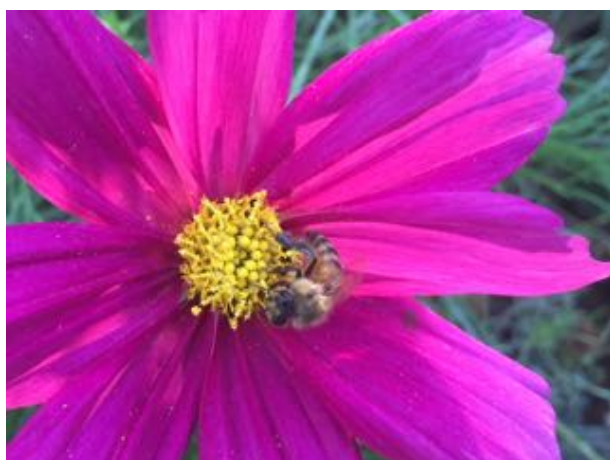
After a scorching hot summer where the mercury rose to record levels for record lengths of time, our efforts now shift to preparing our bees for winter. It's been a mixed summer for beekeepers. Travelling on my rounds across Greater London I've witnessed a few beekeepers whose hives have brought in bumper crops but the majority seem to be down on their luck this year.

We often assume that prolonged hot sunny weather must be great for the bees but it can actually be counter-productive if the hot spells last too long. During the intense heatwave this summer many summer flowering plants failed to yield much nectar as they simply couldn't afford to lose the precious moisture need to secrete nectar. This has meant many hives have failed to bring in a big crop of honey and many (especially if supers have been taken off for harvest) now require ur-





*Hebe.*

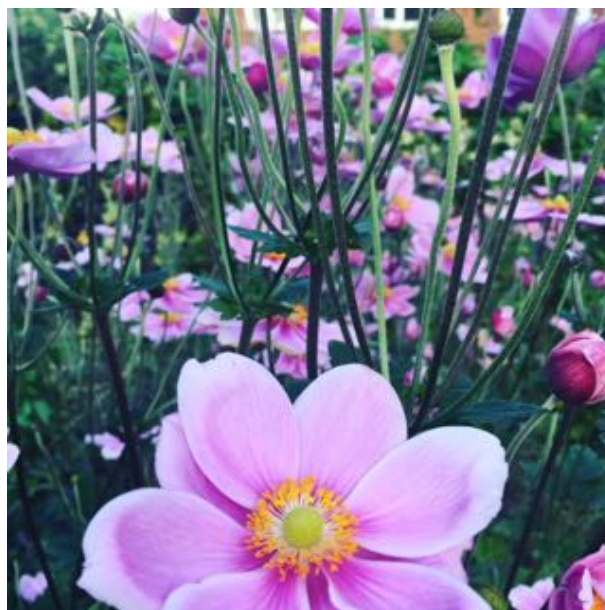


*Cosmos.*

gent feeding to bulk up their food reserves before winter arrives.

This year I have had a 70% reduction on the previous year's honey crop. I'm having to feed all but a handful of my colonies. Many of my Langstroth colonies have recently had £30 worth of feed given to them each. I've been giving them inverted fructose sugar syrup. This is much easier for the bees to handle and turn into storable honey as the sugars are easier for them to process being already inverted. Other colonies I have had to mix syrup with hot water and granulated white sugar. Most of my colonies did not have any honey removed from them this year. After recent rain and the arrival of cooler weather I'm hoping that we will get some mild sunny weather this autumn to allow the bees a last opportunity to top up the stores I've given them with some real nectar.

Flowers out this month include many North American prairies species. Many varieties of **Rudbeckia** are in flower. Rudbeckia 'Prairie glow', Rudbeckia speciosa, Rudbeckia 'Goldstrum', Rudbeckia 'Little gold star' and Rudbeckia 'Summerina yellow' are just a few of the varieties which are great for bees. Similar in appearance to Rudbeckia and equally attractive are the **coneflowers** in the genus Echinacea. Varieties 'Magnus', 'Pur-



*Anemone.*

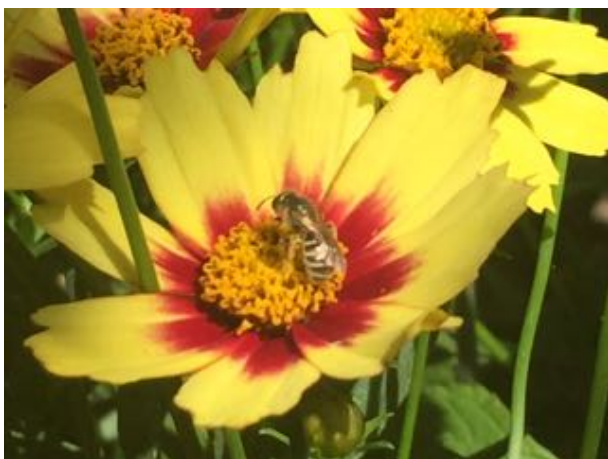


*Ivy bee on ivy blooms.*

pureae', 'Flame Thrower' and 'Sundown' are among my favourites.

In scientific trials the **North American daisy** (Helenium) regularly comes out on top as the best garden bee plant for late summer and into autumn. The variety 'Autumnal' is the best but 'Moerhiem beauty', 'Gold', 'Sahins Early' and 'Chelsea' are also very good. Other good bee plants for autumn include Aster Twilight, Aster 'Amelia', Most of the Solidago Golden rods are good for bees particularly solitary bees, any of the single flowered Coreopsis, Kalimeris madiva, Sedum 'Spectable' and Sedum 'Purple Emperor,' Saffron Crocus, Japanese Anemones, Hebe 'Autumn Joy,' and Symphyotrichum novi-belgii.

By far the most important flower for pollinators this season is **ivy** (*Hedera helix*). It is one of the most important late season sources of forage for our pollinators and is greatly underrated. It's not just honey bees which rely on the ivy blooms, a whole host of insects rely upon the them to stock up before winter. Bumblebees and social wasp queens rely on ivy flowers to



Coreopsis.



Sunflower.

fatten up before their long winter hibernation, Hoverflies and butterflies also rely on the ivy to feed up before their winter sleep. Honey bees will bring back the nectar and store it as honey to feed on during the cold winter.

Several of our pollinators are migratory and rely on ivy to fuel their long autumn migration south to warmer climes. One of the most spectacular examples of autumn insect migration is that of the Painted Lady Butterfly. For decades their migration was a mystery and scientists assumed that butterflies migrating north in spring climaxed and then perished before they could return south leading to a dead end population. Thanks to advances in modern radar technology the mystery has now been solved. Using sophisticated radar, scientists have been able to track the butterfly's migration from central Africa through sub-Saharan Africa, across the Mediterranean and through Europe where 6 million butterflies cross the English Channel into the UK. Some of these butterflies make it as far north as Greenland. Using radar technology, scientists were then able to track 29 million butterflies making the return journey south in late September. The butterflies fly at an altitude of 500-1000 feet and are propelled south by high altitude wind currents enabling them to make the journey to

Africa in under a month. The longest insect migration in the world is fuelled largely on ivy nectar.

Another insect which relies almost exclusively on ivy is the Ivy Mining Bee (*Colletes hederæ*). This attractive stripy bee is a relatively new addition to the British Isles. 40 years ago this was a very rare vagrant but in the past few decades it has expanded its territory north into the UK and is now increasingly common throughout southern England. This bee emerges from its 9 month hibernation in late August/early September and when it emerges it seeks out ivy blooms to collect nectar and pollen to provide for its offspring. They nest underground in burrows often in large congregations. You can help map their expansion in the UK by [submitting your sightings](#) to the Bee Wasps and Ants Recording Society

Whilst ivy is loved by many of our pollinators, it is not universally loved by beekeepers. Ivy honey is rich in Glucose sugars which means it readily granulates and can turn very hard as set honey in the comb. It can be difficult to extract. It also has a flavour which is unpalatable to many but to a few who find the strange flavour a welcome change. Personally I quite like ivy honey, once it has aged a little the flavours mellow and it's much nicer to eat. It makes good seed honey for creaming.

---

## Buying hive on a budget

Geoff's advice for buying hives on a budget.

*Geoffrye Hood*  
LBKA (& BDBKA) member

Beekeeping can be a very expensive hobby. This is especially true if you do not plan properly and need to buy extra equipment in the height of the honey season.

Many retailers sell second-quality budget hives. Although your ideal hive is probably a double wall white painted WBC nestling in your country cottage garden (see picture of mine in my garden), for the purposes of this article I am concentrating on the larger variant of the National square box hive – the 14x12.

If you are a beginner, then there is nothing wrong with purchasing a budget hive (also called second-quality hive) as the savings can be quite significant. And the only real difference between first-quality and second-quality is that the second-quality has a few more knots and made of irregular grained wood. After five years of



*Geoff's idyllic WBC nestling in his garden.*



*Geoff's frames.*

rain, sun, pollution, cleaning and torching the inside, you are unlikely to notice the difference.

Hives usually come with a roof, a crown board, two supers, plastic queen excluder, brood box and open mesh floor (with varroa monitor board and entrance block). You will also need a hive stand and frames/foundation, unless these are supplied.

However, this is not enough. Two supers will be inadequate in most areas of London. Assume you'll need at least four supers (I need six in good forage areas). I would also change the flat plastic queen excluder for an £18 wire queen excluder with bee space, as you will kill fewer bees and therefore you get less annoyed about bees trying to sting you.

British Standard and WBC hives are the hives you see advertised most often. However, these can be too small for London mongrel bees and the warmer micro climate we get here. I would recommend a larger type such as the 14×12 National, 16×10 Commercial or the Langstroth. Each has its own pro and cons, but some people find the deeper frames difficult to lift vertically without proper lugs. The Commercial and Langstroth both have small frame lugs making frames more difficult to lift. They also have small indented lifting handholds



*Flat-pack hive super.*

on the outside of the boxes, making their larger full supers difficult to lift. I therefore normally recommend the 14×12 National and we will use this hive plus two extra supers with frames for price comparisons.

The cost of a 14×12 hive assembled by the manufacturer of first quality from a major retailer with all boxes and frames made up varies. £500 plus two extra supers at £110 and 20 SN4 frames at £90 comes to £700 just for one hive! Frightening isn't it? Especially as another retailer sells the same for 10% more.

You can reduce this cost by assembling the hive yourself. It takes me half a day to make up a hive and 40 frames. But allow at least a full weekend if you haven't made one before and need help and advice.

The cost of a flat-packed first-quality 14×12 hive from a major retailer with all boxes and frames comes to £330, plus two extra flat pack supers, 20 SN4 frames with foundation at £165, plus two extra flat pack supers and 20 SN4 frames with foundation at £165. Total cost of £495.

The budget 14×12 hive flat pack comes with a plastic queen excluder for £185. Once we will add two extra flat-pack supers and 20 SN4 frames with foundation at £165, the total cost is £350. . . getting better!

And for the final price check, all items are from Thornes' sale on 1st–14th September, with similar pricing from their New Year sale, Maisemore Apiaries (sales in October) and Beetradox Kenilworth (sales in March).



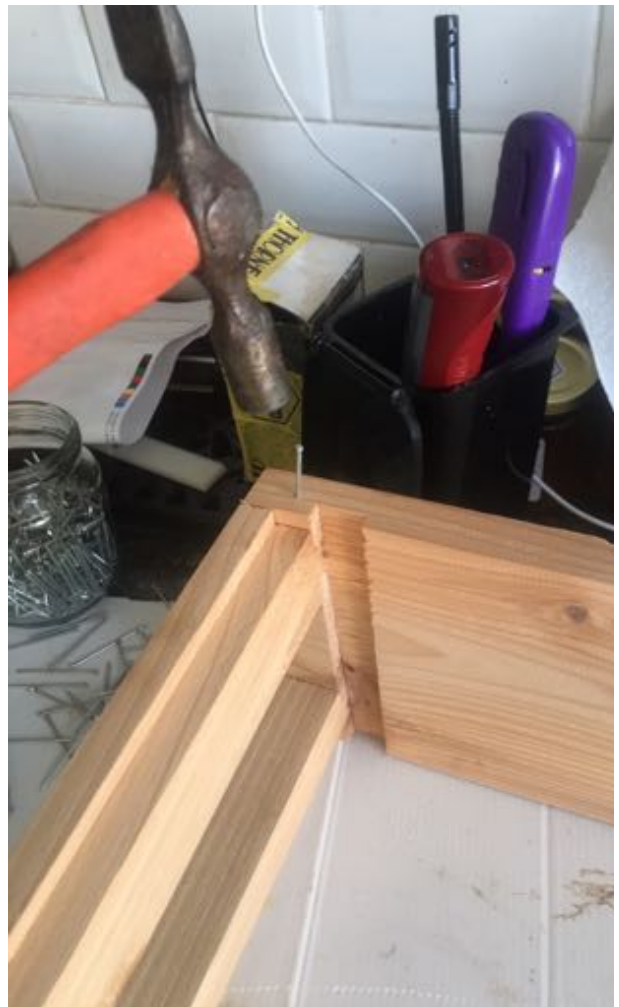
*Unpacking*



*Assembling.*



*Gluing*



*Nailing.*



*Sanding the corners so the panel slots in.*



*More nailing.*



*Slotting in the side panels*



*Even more nailing.*

Item	Cost
4" flat roof	£18
Crown board	£6
14×12 Brood	£27
Open Mesh Floor	£14
4 Supers	13×4=£52
50 SN4 frames (2 spares)	£24
50 14×12 frames (39 spare)	£30
Foundation Super 50 sheets	£30
Foundation brood 10 sheets	£23.15
Dummy Board	£6
Frame nails	£1.50
Plastic excluder	£2.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>£233.15</b>



*Finished.*

The price is still quite high. In your first year you could get away with buying only two supers which would reduce the cost by £26 for supers and £15 for wax to a reduced total of £202.65. . . and buy the supers in next year's sales.

So the moral is buy in the sales and be prepared. Oh. . . and you might need another hive for your swarm in your neighbour's garden. And if you still want a WBC, I would suggest you buy a gabled roof for £58 and paint and the 14×12 boxes white because a fully assembled WBC plus two super and lifts will cost you nearly £900.

---

## 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.

**Frank Ryan:** I make beehive stands from strong premium-grade materials, painted an attractive holly colour using bee-friendly paint. Each stand is made to measure a for comfortable working height and has the option to expand from a single stand to a double. The dimension allow for ratchet-strapping. Contact Frank on 07877388933 or [frankryan60@hotmail.com](mailto:frankryan60@hotmail.com).

**Emma Powell:** I was gifted from Loughborough Junction Farm what I think is a dadant beehive, which I am not planning to use anymore. I would love it if someone could make use of it, and was hoping to include it in



*Frank's hive stands.*

the marketplace part of the newsletter? It was given to me and I would like to give it to someone else, but perhaps they would consider a small donation to the farm? Contact me on [leopowell@gmail.com](mailto:leopowell@gmail.com).

---

## Upcoming events

**Sunday 13th September: Monthly meeting: Preparation of bees for winter and feeding**

*11:00-13:00 via Zoom (see your email for a link)*

This month will be about preparing bees for winter, including feeding. Bring your own coffee and cake!

**Tuesday, 29th September: Pub Social**

*18:30 onwards at via Zoom (see your email for a link)*

Our ONLINE pub social in the historical surroundings of your own home. Bring your own beer. See email for a link.

---

## 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)
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, [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)
- **Events:** Martin Hudson, [events@lbka.org.uk](mailto:events@lbka.org.uk)
- **Resources:** Will Fry, [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk)

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

