



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

July, 2021

It's a summer of mixed weather so far. Hope all is well with your beekeeping. Uncertainty around Covid-safety has pushed back our August Social to September and the "LBKA Taste and Buy" Honey Event at Holland Park – at short notice – to 31st July. Anyone interested to help out, please contact chair@lbka.org.uk, as soon as you can.

This month, we have a nice article from Alison on her first year of beekeeping (p8), one from Janet reporting on a School Food Matters session (p5) and Kathy continues her tour around LBKA's apiaries (p11) with Eden this month. We also have some photos from George and Antonio. Thanks to the regular contributors for their regular contributions, including from Richard (p1), Howard (p6) and Mark (p10).

We are still in desperate need of help on the committee, so if you can volunteer some time, please do contact us. We need volunteers who are reliable, enthusiastic, good organisers, good at writing, and/or good with people.

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Thank you to this month's contributors: **Janet Evans, George Kozobolis, Richard Glassborow, Martin Hudson, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Antonio Rebordao, Kathy Stevenson and Alison Wareham.** 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

My apologies in advance: this is going to be a very short from the chair. The school visits programme is great fun and I think I can say, very popular and well worth doing. I estimate that we are reaching approximately 5,000 London families, raising awareness and understanding of bees. But the fast-track legacy of the winter lockdown has meant that delivery has fallen to a relatively small number of volunteers, so it is squeezing our time capacity somewhat.

I know not all our members are on the WhatsApp group and or use Twitter, but I would just like to share with those who are not that if you are experiencing a difficult season with the bees, it seems you are not alone. The most common themes seem to be, lack of nectar,



Honeybee foraging on a vibrant wild malva silvestris flower.
Photo: George Kozobolis.

repeated queen failure and of course another bad year for EFB.

The general consensus for the first two of these would seem to be that both are weather related: we had a warm winter, very cold April and very wet May. I certainly have never experienced such a bad year and we are now past the summer solstice so our attention must turn to preparation for winter. I don't usually feed my bees, just leave enough of their hard-earned honey to see them comfortably through. But this year I suspect I may have to.

More worrying and not so easy to correct is the quality of the queens. I have seen and heard about a lot of spotty brood, drone laying and complete failure/disappearance. Only since the fine spell in June have I managed to rear queens capable of rapid expansion and good brood patterns. But I am not yet confident that all my colonies have queens capable of producing a colony to survive winter.

I will just leave that thought out there. Sorry that is all I have time for this month.

Stay well.

Announcements

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

July's online Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

This month's Monthly Meeting will be on **Sunday 11th July** at 11:00 on the topic of **glandular development of honey bees and how understanding this can make us better beekeepers**. Worker bees have several different glands with different functions. These develop and become functional at different times of their lives which enable them to undertake different duties; for example, the wax and sting glands are not functioning when the bee is born. Howard will tell us how knowing and understanding this can make us better beekeepers. The meeting will be at the usual Zoom link (in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email).

The **Pub Social** will be on **Tuesday 27th July** from 18:30 (Zoom link in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email).

August's Monthly Meeting will be on Sunday 8th August on the important topic of subject of **bee-stings and anaphylaxis**. We'd be interested to hear from any members that have undergone bee venom desensitisation.



Welcome Stuart Kennon

LBKA Taste and Buy rearranged for 31st July

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, having had to cancel the Apiary open day and "LBKA Taste and Buy" Honey Event (AKA sales opportunity for members) in Holland Park on 4th of July have now decided they would like to organise it for 31st July. Clearly very short notice. Anyone interested please contact me ASAP on chair@lbka.org.uk – we haven't committed yet but if the experience of School visits to the apiary is anything to go by, the public interest is massive.

Summer Social

We have decided to postpone the Summer Social. This is because of a lack of indoor space where we can be Covid-safe in case of bad weather (we also had quite a low response rate from members when asked about it). More details soon.

Hiring extractors

We have extractors which can be borrowed by members. We charge £10 to hire for up to 3 days and we ask for a £20 deposit which you'll lose if you don't bring the extractor back clean!

Please email resources@lbka.org.uk for more information.

Welcome Stuart Kennon!

The committee is pleased to announce the co-option of Stuart Kennon onto the committee.

After beekeeping as an activity at his primary school, he took a 20 year break, and re-started keeping bees five years ago. He started with the LBKA beginners' course

at Eden, and has a small apiary in South Park, Fulham, in a community garden. He's looking forward to helping LBKA with their teaching in schools programme, in partnership with School Food matters.

Log your NBU disease notifications and swarm collections!

We're collecting data to help build a better picture of what's going on in London. Please save and use the following links:

- **NBU EFB/AFB notifications:** Please log the EFB/AFB notifications from NBU so help us understand the geographical spread of bee diseases: <https://tinyurl.com/4vxszk8n>
- **Swarm collections:** Tell us where and when you collect a swarm, so we can compare swarming seasons across years: <https://bit.ly/2RvbXzx>

These data will be kept anonymous and will only be published as highly aggregated data with no personally-identifiable data.

Join the committee!

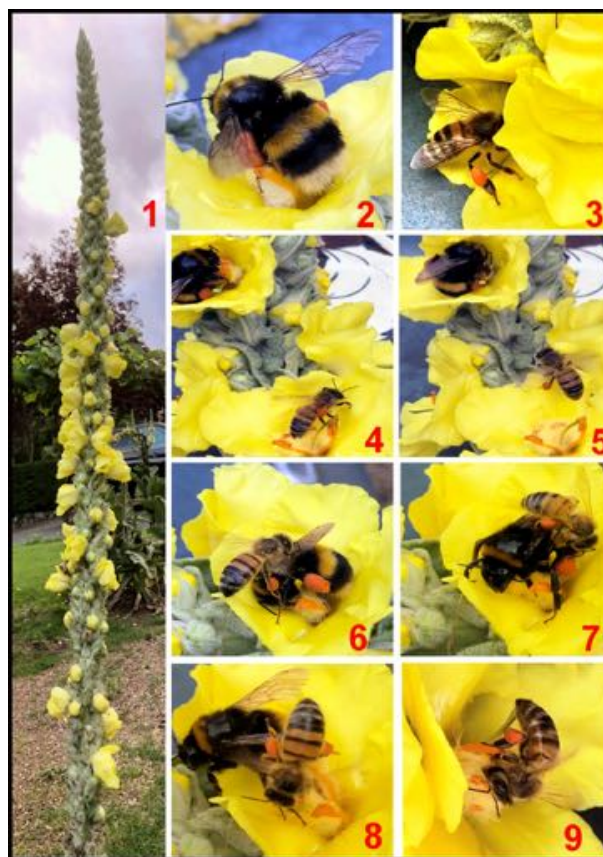
LBKA is a reasonably-sized organisation with (currently) over 200 members that is building a good reputation for its stance on beekeeping, the quality of its outreach activities and the quality of its advice. We need more committee members to enable us to do more. Don't worry if you don't know quite what role you might be able to fill. You'll find your place! Please contact any member of the committee (see back page) for a chat.

Willing to be interviewed for a research project at UCL about Varroa?

A postgraduate student at UCL is seeking urban beekeepers to take part in Zoom interviews for her dissertation research. The research is particularly focussed on the relationship between beekeepers and Varroa mites e.g. perspectives on different Varroa management methods, emotive responses to losing colonies to Varroa or their vectored viruses, etc. The Zoom interviews are around 1 hour long and are audio-recorded. All participation will be kept strictly confidential, and participants will be anonymised in the final write-up. If you are interested in taking part, please get in touch with sophie.shao.20@ucl.ac.uk for more information. Beekeepers with all levels of experience and apiary size are welcome to apply.

Paid opportunities for members

Every now and then opportunities for paid work relating to beekeeping come to the committee's attention. It is policy to make these opportunities available to all members. However, from experience, the process of advertising the opportunities in the monthly Newsletter is not always timely for the work required. We are therefore proposing to use a "framework agreement" type process to identify members who are interested, able



Spotted by George:

- 1: Wild verbascum plant in blossom. Its flowers provide a prolific supply of pollen and nectar and are therefore irresistible to bumble bees as well as honey bees.
- 2: A bumble bee forages on one of its flowers taking its time collecting a load of pollen and drinking its delicious fragrant nectar.
- 3: A honey bee is very busy collecting its share of pollen and nectar on another flower some distance away.
- 4: The honey bee hurries to another flower much closer to where the bumble bee is.
- 5: Whilst the bumble bee is still in the same position, the honey bee takes off again...
- 6: She is now hovers over and lands on the bumble bee itself! I thought it was a mistake but I soon realised that she wanted the bumble bee out of her way!
- 7: She sure knows what this creature is and walks around over the body of the bumble bee, then goes towards its abdomen and tries to get to the pollen and nectar under the bumble bee or even pinch the pollen from the bumble bee's legs.
- 8: She perseveres and soon after the bumble bee is off without a struggle!
- 9: Now the honey bee is enjoying the spoils feeling happier that she got a better deal!! Personally, I was worried that there would be a fight but it seems that bees have their own rules and ways of sorting things out and judging by the load of the beautiful orange pollen on her legs it was certainly worth the effort! Photo and caption: George Kozobolis.



Spotted by Antonio: A prime swarm. Photo: Antonio Re-bordao.

and have the relevant experience, skills/qualifications and resources (including insurances where relevant) to respond to different categories of services required on a hypothetical basis in advance of real opportunities arising. This will allow a more appropriate response time when specific requests for services come in but retain the openness and fairness to potential member suppliers.

In the first instance we are therefore inviting “expressions of interest” from members for the following categories of paid services should they be requested by potential client businesses, organisations (potentially including the LBKA), or individuals:

- Beekeeping, apiary management, consultancy and delivery, etc.
- Bee related ecological, environmental, land management, planting consultancy, design and delivery services
- Bee related educational consultancy and support, including content development and supply, etc

Any member wishing to respond to this invitation please contact Simon Saville in writing to development@lbka.org.uk, clearly stating which category/categories you are interested in and a brief CV of relevant experience and or qualification and any insurances held (if relevant). You may then be invited to respond in further detail to specific hypothetical requirements.



Beekeeping US style. According to a [recent survey](#), Utah has lost 51.9% of its colonies in 2020-2001. Photo and caption provided by Martin Kunz.

Beekeepers wanted to try a feed supplement

“Diversity Honeys” (Martin Kunz) is looking for one or two beekeepers, with a few hives each, ideally near W3 (or at least in easy public transport distance from W3), to try out a novel bee feed supplement from the US which has been shown to increase colony health and resilience and as an alternative to smoking. If you are interested, please contact m.kunz@beefriendlybeesuits.com.

Are you “good” with social media?

If you are good at communicating with social media, then you could help LBKA!

LBKA has a presence on all the main social media channels - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram - but we aren’t currently using these channels as effectively as we could. We are looking for a Social Media Officer to take the lead in how these channels are used. Ideally, we would co-opt you onto the committee so that you’re up-to-date with the latest discussions on key topics of interest.

Our social media channels already have an impressive reach, but we aren’t using them very proactively to manage our communications. This is a good opportunity to help develop a profile of a local charity and its charitable objectives.

- Twitter: [@LondonBeeKeeper](https://twitter.com/LondonBeeKeeper)
“Serving bee keepers & conservation enthusiasts in London”
7,000+ followers
5,000+ tweets since 2012
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/londonbeekeepersassociation/>
Recently set up; little activity so far
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2512721609/> (open site)
“Welcome to the open group London Beekeepers Association page. This page is not an official

LBKA page but is managed by LBKA members as a means of public engagement, sharing of information and for discussion about beekeeping in London."

Public group, 2,800+ members

These channels have excellent potential to help us get our messages to key audiences, especially to non-members who have an interest in bees and beekeeping. Along with our excellent website, they are the public face of the Association – who we are, what we do, and what we stand for.

Please get in touch with Simon if you have an interest in getting involved: development@lbka.org.uk and 07572 612722.

Contribute to the Newsletter

You'll see a few gaps in our regular contributions. If you can help with any of these (not necessarily every month) please drop me line. We'd welcome contributions from more members and would love it if you could propose a new regular feature. We usually end up with 300 or so members and the newsletters are [available to all on our website](#). Do email me if you can contribute anything including articles, photos and recipes.

We're looking for members to summarise the issues discussed in a digestible way. Please contact services@lbka.org.uk if you may be able to help in some months.

Old announcements from June

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

Would you like to review a book? LBKA member Martin Kunz recently translated the book "Keeping Bees Simply and Respectfully" (from German) by Johannes Wirz and Norbert Poeplau. He is willing to give a review copy away to an LBKA member willing to write a review for the LBKA News. Email m.kunz@beefriendlybeesuits.com if you're interested.

Old announcements from May

Winter Lectures. Members can catch up on our Winter Lectures at [available here](#).

Old announcements from April

LBKA Pollinator Fund: still inviting members to apply for grants to help support small community groups to improve their local environment for the benefit of bees and other pollinators. For comprehensive guidance on the application process, and an application form, please contact treasurer@lbka.org.uk.

Do you have any announcements?

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



July'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.

We had to postpone the committee meeting this month until next week.

Back to school: Bee Education Days at Charles Dickens School and Strand on the Green Infants and Nursery School

In conjunction with School Food Matters, LBKA have been visiting London schools and talking to children about bees. Janet is one of the volunteers and she's kindly prepared a "school report".

*Janet Evans
LBKA member*

I volunteered in June to help out on the bee education programme organised and sponsored by charity School Food Matters and delivered by LBKA. I wasn't too sure what it involved, but having lost my bees over the win-



ter I needed something positive to lift my bee spirits. My trepidation was quickly dispelled. What a great experience for us adults to see the enthusiasm and energy generated by 5 to 8 year olds when told they are going to see live bees!

It is a hectic programme, usually run much earlier in the year; spread over several weeks delivered to 20 London schools. This year, because of Covid restrictions, the programme has been squeezed into a tighter schedule, resulting in a more frenetic period for the team from LBKA.

On the day, Richard arrives with a demonstration hive full of bees and various props packed into his car: flowers, flowering and fruiting plants plus a basket of interestingly large fresh vegetables, tinned baked beans, canned meat, the LBKA flag, whiteboard, honey, of course, and very very many taster sticks. We set up and prepare under a gazebo, outside and as Covid-safe as possible.

Dressed in a bee suit for the drama rather than necessity Richard delivers an informative and entertaining but unscripted "show", with a little help from his assistants, me – also in a bee suit, Ruth from School Food Matters and the children. Combining questions, answers and "facts" shared by the class, he tells a connecting story of dinosaurs, bees, flowers and food which culminates in the "great reveal" of the bees in their glass-fronted hive. Finally, a honey tasting session – a slightly drippy,

licky, sticky, but generally enjoyable, and extremely well behaved experience.

Of course, the audience participation adds fun for the children. Richard tailors the talk to the age of the children but when the last reception group arrived in the afternoon rain, just before going-home time, we cut straight to the bees. Sadly we had to skip the honey tasting; standing in a wet queue is not conducive to forming a great memory for kids. But they did all see the queen bee in the hive, helpfully marked with a white "crown".

The teachers enjoyed the sessions just as much as the children and, despite the sudden appearance of a noisy helicopter clattering above our heads at Charles Dickens, and the heavy downpour at Strand on the Green, nothing seems to dampen everyone's enthusiasm.

Children do seem to love bees, most of them love honey too; they also love telling us things they know and sharing their own "facts" about bees and flowers. They knew a lot about bees before we started, they all know about stings and most are certain the queen bee is in control of the hive, and were quite puzzled when Richard gently said no, the worker bees are in charge.

Some "facts" for us: for these two schools there were 9 classes over 2 days – over 200 children and their teachers taking part. The full programme is over 5 weeks; around 2400 families will have been reached with the message "Bees and Flowers go together." Richard and the team need a few more volunteers to help out, it really is a great thing to be involved in. Come on, join in the buzz!

[School Food Matters](#) is the charity that organises the programme. Their mission is to teach children about food and to improve children's access to healthy sustainable food during their time at school. See their [HoneyBee Programme](#).

July in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

July beekeeping work has 2 distinct parts. These are dealing with the early July nectar flow then, at the end of the month, removal of honey.

During May and June the bees utilise this period to build up their numbers and to swarm. There is now a lot less inclination to swarm and the bees direct their attention towards capturing the flowing nectar from the

summer flowers. When they do this then supers can quickly fill and it is important that the beekeeper has sufficient frames and supers in advance of the flow. There will not be time to buy extra supers and to make up frames. Nor can the beekeeper extract the honey and return the super to the same colony as the honey is unlikely to be ripened until after the flow ceases.

Nectar flow

The exact timing of the nectar flow depends upon weather and locality but is usually mid June and early July in London if it takes place.

How do I know when it has started?

The coming and going at the colony entrance becomes a lot more purposeful when the nectar flow starts, bees leave the hive entrance in a determined and focussed way. They have the appearance of knowing exactly what they are doing and where they are going. As the nectar flow progresses then, of course, the supers also become heavier but, by this time, the flow is well underway.

Adding supers

Regular inspections are still needed but the beekeeper's attention should now be directed towards checking there is enough room in the supers. A cursory glance in the top super should be sufficient. When the frames in the top super are covered with bees then it is time to add another. Many beekeepers move the frames around a little by putting a few combs of honey and nectar into the newly added top super as this encourages bees to continue onwards and upwards. The nectar flow can also be used to draw out new combs from foundation.

Removing honey from the hive

A comb of honey should only be removed when it is at least 75% sealed by the bees. This is to avoid fermentation of the final product. There are several methods of clearing bees from the supers. These can be grouped into physical methods (bee escapes, etc), chemical methods (repellents available for purchase from bee equipment suppliers) and mechanical methods (blowers which blow the bees off the frames). Some beekeepers have concerns relating to the use of chemicals and mechanical methods are more akin to commercial beekeeping, not hobbyists. It is only the physical methods detailed here. The 2 most common physical methods are Porter bee escapes and shaking the bees off the frames.

Porter bee escapes

Most of us use Porter bee escapes incorporated into a clearing board. This works well provided they are used properly and the metal spring escapes are clean, not stuck with propolis. After about 48 hours most of the bees have gone down through the one-way valve and there are relatively few bees in the super. Better to use

a crownboard with 2 bee escapes. If 1 malfunctions then the other is still in use.

Make sure there is plenty of space for the bees below the supers. If necessary then insert another empty super with frames below to house the bees. Ensure the bees cannot come back up into the supers being cleared. Ill fitting, non bee spaced equipment or defective Porter bee escapes are the usual reasons for failure.

Shake and brush

Another method is shaking the individual frames to remove as many bees as possible then brushing off the remainder. An extra super is needed to hold the shaken frames and this should be placed on the upturned hive roof and covered with a sheet or large cloth.

This method causes a certain amount of disturbance to the bees and may not be suitable for a hive in close proximity to people. Its advantage is that it is quick and only involves 1 visit to the apiary.

Other action to be taken this month

Reduced swarming. Once the nectar flow starts then most colonies abandon the idea of swarming as it is now not in their interests to do so. There is still a small risk of swarming and this is increased if the bees do not have enough room to store nectar. Another reason to ensure that enough supers are on the hive.

Disease inspection. The nectar flow is a golden opportunity to undertake a brood disease inspection. As the bees are so busy with the nectar they have little time to remove dead larvae until the flow ceases. Leaving the brood disease inspection until autumn may leave insufficient time to take corrective action. Optimum times for a specific brood disease inspection are early spring and in summer whilst the nectar flow is in progress.

Reduce colony entrances. Reduce colony entrances when the nectar flow ceases to minimise robbing.

Varroa. Plan your varroa treatment for next month. Decide your strategy and buy any supplies you will need.

Extractor. Reserve your use of an extractor next month if you usually hire LBKA equipment. Email Will on resources@lbka.org.uk.

Beekeeping in the Back Garden

Alison describes her first year of keeping bees in her London garden. She is trying to make her family as eco-conscious and nature-friendly as possible. She wrote this a while ago for the Green Parent magazine (as part of a competition, in which she was a runner-up), which they published last September.

Alison Wareham
LBKA member

Ever since we bought our house in the heart of South London, we've been on a mission to make it as green as possible. One of our dreams was to grow our own fruit and veg with the help of our children, but we have had to pretty much admit defeat as the shade from the beautiful old apple trees slows everything down and even when plants grow, armies of slugs and snails devour them.

But we have always talked about keeping bees and eventually took the plunge, by enrolling onto a beekeeping course, held in a parish hall in Hampshire. This weekend workshop wasn't just an introduction into beekeeping but also into the ways of beekeepers, truly a unique bunch. So many terms, anecdotes and rules literally flew over our heads as we sat in equal parts bemused and enthralled. Yet, inspecting a beehive for the first time, and hearing how one woman had successfully kept bees on a Covent Garden rooftop, inspired us with confidence that we too could become urban beekeepers.

Several trips to bee equipment suppliers later, we had built and installed our first hive in the corner of the garden where the morning sun would hit it (honey bees are sleepyheads and need a good dose of warmth to get flying). I would like to say that the DIY and building skills involved had enticed the children into our new venture but mainly they looked on with a sceptical teenage eye as we hammered, nailed, and gradually prepared ourselves. We also visited our new mentor regularly – a lifelong beekeeper with a hive in his back garden in Brixton – who generously shared coffee, anecdotes and the art of beekeeping with us.

And what an art it is! There is definitely more to it than meets the eye and I often felt quite daunted after our visits. Keeping bees in a densely populated city, we have to be really careful to guard against swarms (not popular with the locals) and disease, one of the main problems for honeybees. We attended another beekeeper workshop, held in a secret garden behind Oval tube station, where we saw at first-hand the ravages of diseases such as foul brood, deformed wing and varroa mites. It all sounded so scary! I have to admit at this point I was ready to put my lovely pink bee suit

in the loft and return to planting cabbages for the slugs to feast on.

But my husband was undeterred. He joined a WhatsApp group that notified beekeepers of swarms in the area – collect them and they're yours. As this was May, it wasn't long before a suitable swarm had been spotted. Off drove my husband in his plumber's van, bee suit, smoker and bee box at the ready. I think the return journey across Tower Bridge with a box of bees buzzing on the front seat was one of the most nerve-racking trips he's ever made. However, swarms are actually very placid as the bees have filled their tummies with honey and have nothing to defend, so are unlikely to sting anyone. Still, you wouldn't like to take the risk!

We were like new parents for those first few weeks and we even made the same basic error we made with our firstborn – didn't feed enough! We hadn't realised that there is a June gap; while bees need lots of water and nectar to build new honeycomb, if this coincides with a gap between spring and summer blossom, then you have to feed them. The children were brilliant at stirring the syrup made of granulated sugar diluted with water and placing it on the special feeder tray in the hive, watching fascinated as the bees crawled up to gorge on syrup.

Anxiously, we inspected weekly and soon noticed that there didn't seem to be any new baby bees. We had learnt early on to monitor levels of "brood", that is eggs, tiny specks practically invisible to the naked and untrained eye, larvae and capped cells, under which the larvae are pupating into bees. Our ever patient mentor explained that our queen bee was either not laying or had never actually returned from her mating flight. Now what to do? Order another one, of course! She duly arrived in a jiffy bag, entourage of worker bees and stores of fondant at the ready. We gently inserted her into the hive with a sheet of newspaper between her little cage and the rest of the hive, so that by the time she had gnawed through the paper, our existing bees had got used to her smell and welcomed her into her new home.

Could we finally relax? New eggs, brood and emerging bees were rapidly appearing. The children were brilliant at spotting baby bees and laughing as they gradually ate their way out of their nursery cells. But then disaster struck again!

One Sunday as we were inspecting a bit more confidently than before, we came across cells filled with a grey sticky substance. Remember the disease workshop we attended? It came lurching back to my mind. Oh no! Was this European Foul Brood – recognisable by a grey sticky coating on brood cells and deformed larvae below? Visions of having to destroy the bees, dig a hole and burn the hive under the strict eye of the bee inspector came to mind. My calmer husband sent a photo to our long-suffering mentor, whose one-word text hid depths of despair at our panic – "pollen"! Yes,

pollen comes in a huge spectrum of colours from white, yellow, green, brown to almost black. Who knew? We did now.

Fast Forward 12 Months

Winter passed quickly with our only duties being to keep the bees topped up with fondant (they had produced very little honey that first summer, which we had simply left in the hive) and keeping the roof on to keep them warm and increase their chances of survival. On a sunny afternoon in early March, I first noticed activity around the hive. They were alive and flying out to forage. The term busy bee has never seemed more apt. It was entrancing and relaxing to sit on the bench watching them. In really warm sunshine, the end of the garden resembled Heathrow's flight path (before it fell silent due to this year's events). And so began our spring of beekeeping, checking weekly to ensure the hive was "queen right" and free of disease.

You might remember that I mentioned how letting your bees swarm is an absolute no-no in the urban beekeeper's world. It is a natural instinct that drives bees to split a colony by breeding a new queen. They then fly off with her to find a new home, leaving a depleted colony behind in your hive. Not only does it mean you have fewer bees but that your neighbour might be the unhappy recipient of new ones. But how do you stop them? The only way is to keep an eagle eye out for the notorious queen cell – a peanut-shaped object often hanging at the bottom of a frame. This will hold the beginnings of a new queen bee complete with royal jelly and a spacious chamber. If you spot one of these, you have to divide your hive so that the bees think they've swarmed and settle back down to collecting nectar and bringing up normal worker honey bees.

This is as tricky as it sounds. We didn't want to upset our bees or destroy either the old or emerging queen. We all got to work duly building a new hive (you have to react quickly to bees) and a day or two later we set about carefully transferring the frame with the queen cell, plus entourage, to their new home.

Cue more watching and waiting with fingers crossed. We left the bees in peace and two weeks later were rewarded with the sight of a brand new queen bee calmly wandering over the comb, laying eggs and buzzing to her loyal fans.

Another sigh of relief and as the summer progressed, our son became a regular member of the team, adding to his Duke of Edinburgh skills. Both children have learnt not to be scared of bees anymore; that they rarely sting and if they do, it'll be OK. My son has been very interested in the hive and making its components, so has developed woodworking skills, while his sharp eyes have helped us spot our elusive queens during inspections.

Honey Harvest

As the bees continued to forage successfully within their three-mile radius of our house, visiting neighbouring gardens and the huge variety of trees on our local common, we added extra boxes with the frames that bees fill with comb and honey, so that by the end of July, we had five layers on each hive, full of fragrant honey, safely sealed in its wax chamber. It was time to take some of these boxes off before the hive toppled over.

So, time to tackle the equipment and lore of honey harvesting. This became a full family affair. Dad brought the frames in, making sure all the doors and windows were shut to avoid being chased by cross bees; the children carefully uncapped the honey with a breadknife and we all watched spellbound as the extractor spun the honey out of its combs. Once it was all at the bottom of the drum, we opened a tap and out poured this delicious, amber syrup fragrant with the scent of blossom. Then followed the sticky process of filtering the honey through sieves of different sizes to remove all traces of comb and insect, ripening (letting it sit for 48 hours so that the air bubbles disperse) and then finally the super proud moment of pouring honey into sparkling glass jars ready to be spread on toast, used as a cold remedy, or in my case, simply eaten directly by the spoon! There is no real way to thank our bees but we have of course left them with a box full of honey on each hive to see them through the winter.

Honey and beeswax production has inspired our children in many creative ways. One made a beautiful hand-painted design for our labels which proudly adorn all the jars. They both helped pour and weigh out the honey and have been enthusiastic vendors, carefully counting the proceeds and planning what to do with it. We have also ventured into processing the beeswax which has entailed researching cosmetic recipes and candle-making, as well as some very sticky pans.

Beekeeping really has been a family adventure, even if the children were sometimes sceptical observers. They have learnt a lot about animal husbandry and it has made us all more aware of the changing seasons, the way our local plants can sustain bees, as well as different species of bees, hoverflies and wasps. In our built-up urban environment, I am really pleased that the beehive has given them a glimpse of a more traditional, rural pursuit in tune with the seasons and nature's lifecycle.



Privet

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is reprinted from last year.

Mark Patterson
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As we pass from June into July, all our hopes for a decent harvest now rely upon the **Lime** trees. Limes are blooming. There are 3 species of limes native to the UK: Large Leaved Lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*), Small Leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) and a naturally occurring hybrid of the before mentioned two (*Tilia* × *europaea*). The small leaved Lime is common throughout England but in the south west it is largely replaced by the large leaved lime which thrives better on the lime-rich soils.

Be aware of the Silver Lime (*Tilia tormentosa*) which is an exotic introduction and flowers a bit later than our native limes. Its nectar is toxic to bees and when there is a dearth in forage the bees may mistakenly collect its nectar and in the process become intoxicated before falling comatose beneath the tree.

Limes are capable of producing copious volumes of nectar but only if the weather conditions are just right. High soil moisture content from spring rains followed by very warm sultry weather is needed to trigger a good Lime flow.



Bird's Foot Trefoil

Lime honey is highly sought after as it has a minty aftertaste and tangy tone to it. It's also high in fructose sugars and low in glucose meaning it stays liquid for a long time and resists crystallisation prolonging its shelf life and makes an attractive looking jar of honey for the sales stall.

We are fortunate in urban areas to have an abundance of lime trees growing in our parks and side streets. In London limes represent our biggest potential for a bumper honey crop but as mentioned earlier this only becomes a reality when the weather conditions come together at the right time. During a strong lime flow a healthy colony of honey bees can fill a super in a matter of days so it's important you have spare boxes at the ready.

Other plants which are important for our bees this month include **bramble** which should now be in peak flower. Like lime nectar, bramble is mostly fructose which leads to a light fruity honey which seldom crystallises. I am lucky that all my apiaries are bordering over ground railway lines which have an abundance of bramble growing along the sidings.

Around water and damp ground **Himalayan Balsam** is now flowering and will continue to do so right up until late August. Balsam is loved by many Beekeepers for its flowers providing forage in bulk at a time when there is often little else around. It's a contentious plant though, being a non-native plant and highly invasive. It's listed under schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as illegal to plant, knowingly aiding it, or allowing it to spread. The penalty if found guilty can exceed a £5000 fine and a criminal record. So please beware of those beekeepers on Internet forums advocating its spread as a plant good for bees! Far better plants suited to damp ground include Water Mint, Purple Loosestrife and Hemp Agrimony which are all loved by bees.

Other good sources of forage joining the summer flow this month include **Tree of Heaven** (*Ailanthus altissima*), **Indian Chestnut** (*Aesculus indica*), **Chinese Privet tree** (*Ligustrum sinense*) and **Indian bean tree** (*Catalpa Bignoniodes*). All are abundant in urban parks

and provide pollen and nectar after all our native trees have ceased flowering. Last year one of our members in north London had their honey analysed by a forensics lab and most of the pollen was from Tree of Heaven.

In urban areas shrubs including **Choisya**, **Cotoneaster**, **Privet**, **Philadelphus**, **Escalonia**, **Abelia**, **Santolina** and **Hebe** will continue to attract bees.

Elder is just coming to an end along with **Dog Rose** meaning few native shrubs continue to flower into July.

As July progresses our bees become more and more reliant on ground level flora for their forage. Wildflowers like **Bugloss**, **Birds Foot Trefoil**, **Vetches**, **Knapweeds**, **Thistle**, **wild Thyme**, **wild Marjoram**, **Scabious**, **Teasel** and **Umbellifers**. Plants which many of us associate as 'weeds' and try our best to eradicate are often plants important to bees in high summer – among them **Ragwort**.

July and August are the months of the year when most Beekeepers remove their honey harvest but it is also the time of year when our honey bees are flying the furthest to find profitable flower patches. Research undertaken at Sussex University has shown that during July and August Honey Bees are regularly flying as far as 12 km away to forage and their decoded waggle dances indicated that the bees were making a bee line for nearby towns and villages where they can find abundant blooms in our domestic gardens.

We can all help make life a little easier for the bees in late summer by making better plant selections in our gardens. You can find planting suggestions on my website <http://www.apicultural.co.uk/> along with some good suggestions for plants suitable for balconies and window boxes.

LBKA Apiaries

What's happening in LBKA's apiaries.

Kathy Stevenson
LBKA member

This month I looked forward to visiting the Eden apiary in Clapham, just to sit in the lush Community Garden. With its wildlife pond and wood benches, it's an ideal quiet spot for reading bee books. However, the apiary suffered from EFB and is currently in a stand-down position, which made visiting impossible.

The history of the Eden Community Garden and LBKA's first teaching apiary has been a very pleasant discovery, nonetheless. Through the Clapham Society, I was gobsmacked to learn how a group of dedicated

volunteers turned a bit of waste land into the haven it is today. Eden apiary was started in 2008 and has been managed by Richard Glassborow since 2014. In 'normal times' the site is used for mentoring up to 10 trainees per year, introductory courses and basic assessments. Generally, four colonies are overwintered. Fingers crossed for the bee team's every success in bringing the health back to Eden's colonies this season. I can highly recommend a visit to the surrounding community gardens in the meantime. Read on for a tale of true grit and community spirit. . .

What follows is an article by [The Clapham Society](#) reprinted from their newsletter with their kind permission.

February 2021 Eden Community Garden Celebrates 20 Years

As this tranquil – and aptly named – haven adjacent to St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove marks its 20th anniversary, key players who took part in its early story look back on its creation. Kate Paul reports:

"Matrimony Place was dangerous to walk through at night", recalls Julian Lush, who helped raise funds to renovate the steep alleyway that ran alongside St Paul's. "It also had horrible mesh netting strung between concrete pillars, placed there at the start of World War II when the railings were removed as part of the war effort. It was decided to install new lighting, to replace the whole path – which was very uneven – and to put in the good cast-iron railings that are there today."

Justine Allain Chapman, the vicar of St Paul's at the time, had the idea to transform the waste ground beside Matrimony Place. "The space was being used by dog walkers as a shorter walk out, so it was pretty disgusting. I wanted to make that whole area more lovely. For me it was about the Five Marks of Mission, the fifth being about treasuring the earth."

"It took two years to clear the space, parts of which were waist deep in fly-tipped stuff, and to work out our next step and who we could get funding from" says Katie Isbester. "I think one of the great lessons of Eden's 20th anniversary has been the huge number of people who have been involved in it. The teamwork is moving. We brought in people from the community, we listened to each other, and we've been recognised at a national level for what we have achieved. We are a 16-times Green Flag Award Community Winner".

Philippa Gould, Chair of Eden since 2008, reflects, 'During this year of lockdowns we've been discovered by so many people: locals have been just slack jawed walking into this space round the corner from where they live, yet which they had no idea existed. There's as much passion now as there was at the start. Benny Hawksbee, Eden's current gardener has a real vision for the garden and we have a wonderful community of volunteers. It's a good thing.'



Frank's hive stands.

To learn more about Eden Community Garden, to donate or to help as a volunteer when the restrictions lift, please visit edengardenclapham.org.

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.

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 dimensions allow for ratchet-strapping. Contact Frank on 07877388933 or frankryan60@hotmail.com.

Upcoming events

Sunday 11th July: Monthly meeting: Glandular development of honey bees

11:00-13:00 at Same zoom link as usual (in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email).

This month's Monthly Meeting will be on the topic of glandular development of honey bees and how understanding this can make us better beekeepers. Worker bees have several different glands with different func-

tions. These develop and become functional at different times of their lives which enable them to undertake different duties; for example, the wax and sting glands are not functioning when the bee is born. Howard will tell us how knowing and understanding this can make us better beekeepers.

Tuesday, 27th July: 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. Using the usual Pub Social Zoom link in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email.

Saturday 31st July : Apiary Open Day and Honey Market

All day at Holland Park (Ilchester Pl, London, W8 6LU)

Rearranged at short notice from earlier this month, this is an opportunity for LBKA to show and tell the public about bees and also offer honey for sale.

Sunday 8th August: Monthly meeting: Bee stings and anaphylaxis

11:00-13:00 at Same zoom link as usual (in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email).

This month's Monthly Meeting will be on the topic of bee stings and anaphylaxis.

Tuesday, 31st August: 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. Using the usual Pub Social Zoom link in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email.

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/Events:** Annie McGeoch, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- **Development:** Simon Saville, development@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Will Fry, resources@lbka.org.uk
- Stuart Kennon, stuart.kennon@lbka.org.uk

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

