



# LBKA NEWS

## Well done LBKA!

The 2013 beekeeping season draws to a close with only a few jobs to be done to help our colonies survive the winter (see Howard's 'This month in the apiary' for a reminder). For our bees it's been a season of two halves; a dreadful spring with many colonies not pulling through, to a glorious summer and good harvests. But for us beekeepers and the LBKA it's been a great year and I wanted to thank you all for everything you have done for the LBKA to make 2013 a winner.

**Here's my selection of highlights** (I bet there are loads of others, so please send them in to me and I'll continue my celebration of 2013 next month: [communications@lbka.org.uk](mailto:communications@lbka.org.uk))

### We supplied Fortnum & Masons!

With Jon as the central co-ordinator, LBKA members sold £10,000 worth of honey to the discerning Fortnum and Mason shoppers. Thank you to all those who went in to talk about their bees and London honey.



It was such a success that they want to do it again next year. Fingers crossed for a bumper crop ...

Thank you to Philip Clarkson for these photos

### The volunteers

This year 60 members answered my desperate pleas for help to man our stall and run the courses. You all mucked in; making cups of tea and cake, candle making with children, talking bees and forage with the public, rattling collection tins for Bees for Development and helping lifting, carrying and storing. Thank you all so much, and I look forward to seeing you all again in 2014!



### The membership survey

A very personal highlight; but I am a market researcher... The survey showed us how important education is to our members, and how we all want to learn – whatever stage we're at in our beekeeping career. So this year we've been experimenting with the monthly meeting format so that more experienced beekeepers can learn too with 'stretch subjects' included. With time for tea and cake the monthly meetings are becoming more sociable, supportive and educational. We're a growing Association (up 25% this year) – all are welcome at our monthly meetings to share and ask advice, or join our 500 Facebook members for online support and discussions if making meetings is difficult.



# LBKA successes at the Honey Show 2013

Lots of members took part this year, with Abby transporting many of the entries down to Addlestone for them (thank you Abby – your help wasn't in vain – look what we won!)

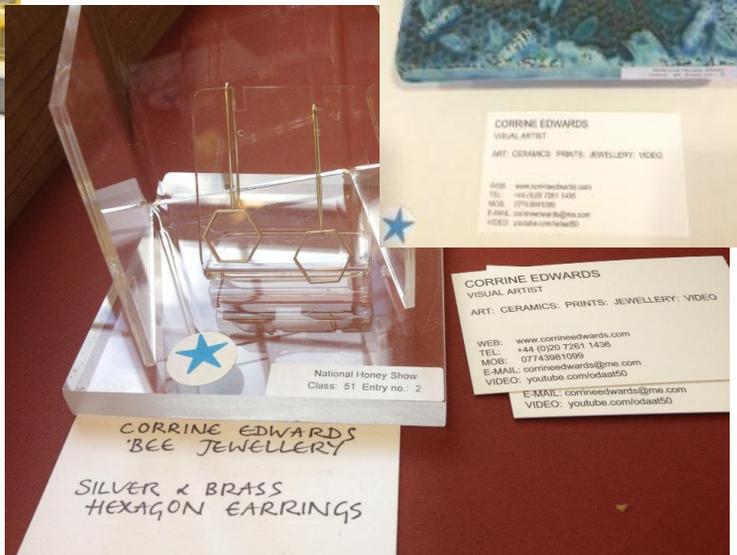
- **Mark Patterson** (1st prize ) 243 Best Honey Within M25, from his Fulham Palace apiary, and **John Chapple** taking 3rd place.
- **Corrine Edwards** took 2nd prize for her hexagonal earrings and won another 2<sup>nd</sup> prize for her ceramic bee tile
- **Iain Judge** 1st prize for his honey cakes, and commended for his candles.
- **Petros's** honey from the LBKA Brockwell apiary was commended
- **Hannah Rhodes'** Hiver Beer won a prize too
- **Fiona Shannon** best home honey award



Class 34  
2 Molded Models



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Many thanks to Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Tristram Sutton and Philip Clarkson for all their contributions this month



## NOVEMBER IN THE APIARY

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

November is not the most active of months for the beekeeper but a certain amount still needs to be done.

Tidy up the apiary if not already done. Complete cleaning, sterilising and storing of equipment.

**Check stored supers for evidence of wax moth infestation.** The lifecycle of the wax moth is substantially different to that of the honey bee. A wax moth egg is temperature dependent and is able to stay as an egg then hatch after a few weeks or months. Supers should be stored in a cold and draughty place if possible but also checked during winter. If any evidence of wax moth is found the best way to deal with it is to place the frame(s) in a deep freeze cabinet for 48 hours. This will kill the wax moth in all 4 lifecycle stages.

**Consideration of and planning for further varroa treatment in December.** December is the usual month for treating the colony with either oxalic acid. Monitoring natural mitedrop in November is a useful diagnostic tool and precursor to actual treatment next month. Insertion of the varroa floor for 1 week in November will give useful information to the beekeeper.

**Check the hive is secure and that the roof cannot blow off or be dislodged.** Placing of heavy items such as a couple of housebricks on the roof is usually sufficient for a National with a well fitting flat roof. They are designed not to blow off. A hive with a gabled roof, such as a WBC, may need tethering with rope.

**Quick check behind the mouseguard** is useful as dead bees and other debris can build up. It should not be necessary to remove the mouseguard to inspect, only if debris has accumulated. Debris can then be removed by simply inserting a ruler, piece of wood, etc and brushing away. The colony should not be opened.

For those who have not taken the BBKA Basic Assessment, please download the syllabus from the BBKA website and consider background reading with a view to taking the assessment next summer. The requirement is that you have kept bees for a minimum period of 1 year. LBKA will not pressurise anyone to take the assessment but will actively encourage and assist those wishing to do so. Reading about bees and beekeeping in the winter months is a useful way to spend our spare time and acts as a beekeeping bridge between the seasons.

**Consider your approach to next season.** Will you need an additional hive, nuc box or replacement frames? Most equipment suppliers have winter sales where they sell slight seconds. This is an excellent time to buy, especially if you search 2 or 3 websites for offers. If 2 or 3 people jointly purchase then you may even be able to save on the delivery charge.

Howard Nichols

## Beekeepers' Quarterly magazine

If you subscribed to BBKA Beekeepers' Quarterly magazine when you renewed your LBKA membership through our website, then you'll be pleased to hear you're due a rebate of £10. You should have already been emailed about it by David our membership officer, but if not then please do contact him or Jon to sort it out. The rebate is due as we've learnt we're entitled to a 1/3 discount.



## The BBKA Basic exam: an insider's view

A long time ago I promised myself I would never take an exam again and, not surprisingly, it had been an easy promise to keep. In fact, so easy for so long that my defences were low when I was offered and accepted the chance to take the BBKA Basic exam.

The offer followed a hectic first year of beekeeping and I welcomed it as a chance to consolidate the vast range of information I had picked up from my mentor, LBKA meeting lectures and LBKA and BBKA monthly news sheets and magazines.

In practice the preparation for the exam was positively enjoyable and not accompanied by the stresses of my earlier efforts to cram the necessary information to have something, just anything, to say during the exam. Howard (more on him later) gave all the applicants a list of topics in the syllabus and a recommendation to read Ted Hooper's book "Bees and Honey" over the Christmas holiday.

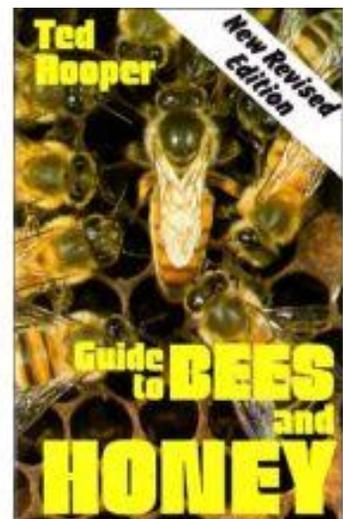
Ted Hooper is authoritative and clear on most subjects so this reading alone resolved some of the varied advice I had picked up. Not to say that the advice was wrong, there are many alternative ways of managing bees, it was just very helpful and reassuring for a novice beekeeper to be given a single authoritative opinion.

But for me the best part of the process was the series of revision classes held by Howard Nichols for those taking the exam. At these meetings Howard took us through the syllabus section by section and answered any questions we had on aspects of beekeeping both on and off the syllabus.

The style in which Howard did this was more Question Time than University Challenge as he would let the discussion run before patiently bringing us back to the syllabus topic. It was a very good learning environment. For example, I am sure Howard's way is the only way I could have remembered the days taken for each type of bee to develop, and I could only have learned how to manage an artificial swarm by moving Howard's frames and brood boxes from side to side across the desk. Memorable also was a detailed discussion on forage lead by Mark Patterson which was fascinating although way beyond the BBKA syllabus!

The exam itself was very "un-exam-like", no writing, no clock on the wall, no sounds of life going on outside the exam room. Instead we were the ones outside in the corner of a beautiful allotment, first of all, inspecting one of Howard's colonies and then sitting under a willow answering questions about beekeeping in a conversation with the examiner.

**Tristram Sutton**





## NOVEMBER IN THE FORAGE PATCH

As autumn turns towards winter there becomes increasingly less forage available for our honey bees and other pollinators to feed on. However there is still plenty we can do now and over the winter to ensure our gardens are a feast for pollinators next year. Jobs to do include planting spring bulbs and planting autumn crocus sativus (saffron) in the green now as they are flowering. Other tasks suitable for the time of year include planting shrubs and trees which prefer to be planted whilst they are dormant and should establish well come spring. Take mature cuttings from garden plants that are popular with the bees and propagate over winter to provide you with additional plants come spring. At this time of year I cut back my heleniums and divide the crowns and replant ready for them to grow again in spring. You may also want to cut back dahlias and other less hardy plants later this month and either lift tubers to store indoors in boxes of sharp sand or leave insitu and mulch heavily with straw and a covering of tarpaulin to protect from frosts.

If like me you grew some LBKA flower mix seeds this year then once they finish flowering you can start cutting them back and begin clearing the ground ready to re-sow next spring.

Right now Ivy is still in flower, but not for much longer. Soon there will be little for our pollinators to feed on but there are a few gems that provide mainly pollen but also some nectar all through the winter. Viburnum tinus is flowering now and will do right through till about March. It's small highly scented off white flowers provide both pollen and nectar. Mahonia is also in flower now and will also flower through to March. It's flowers are an important pollen and nectar source particularly to Buff Tailed Bumble bees which in London are able to establish new colonies in autumn and be active on mild days in winter thanks to the wide planting of Mahonia shrubs in parks and gardens. 75% of winter flower visitations by bees are to Mahonia alone making it a very important urban forage plant. Other good mid winter sources of forage include the hellebores often called 'Christmas rose' and wall flower Bowles mauve. Both of these plants provide pollen to bees in winter though rarely secret nectar during these cold temperatures.

**Mark Patterson**

**Viburnum tinus**



**Mahonia**





## Small Hive beetle in Georgia; from Mark's US trip

In Georgia I visited the Atlanta Botanical Gardens where a recently restored native prairie meadow has been established. This was heaving with all manner of bees and butterflies and some very colourful wasps. Whilst at the botanical gardens I attended the Metro Atlanta Beekeeping Association monthly meeting followed by an informative lecture. Here I got to meet up with long time beekeeping pen pals i met via facebook and was introduced to some of the associations senior beekeepers. One of their master beekeepers is a 17 year old lad who's mom ( also a master beekeeper of 10 years) was that evenings guest speaker. It was a great opportunity to hear how beekeeping there differs from here in the UK and meet so many people enthusiastic about bees.

Over the course of the next few days I got to visit some local beekeepers apiaries where I was able to get hands on with some very gentle and placid bees. Veteran keeper Jerry Wallace kindly took me to a garden with several hives which he manages for an executive at the Coca Cola company. Here I got first hand experience of small hive beetle, and I was not prepared for the extent of which these little beetles can infect a hive. Upon removing the lid and crown board we could see beetles scurrying everywhere making a line for the dark corners of the brood box. Upon removing a frame we could see dozens of beetles with their heads in the cells feasting upon pollen and honey the bees had worked so hard to gather. Jerry explained that the beetles are prolific in the south where the long and very hot summers suit the beetles breeding cycle. The bees are active in Georgia from late January, with the first swarms not uncommon in February and the season continues right through until November. There is a large gap in forage June to September when the weather is very hot and dry and the bees brood nest temporarily shrinks, with autumn rains and an abundance of late season flowers they then become more active again and some keepers even get a late season honey crop from the goldenrod and other flowers. At the height of summer when bees are struggling the most the beetles are breeding at their most prolific rate as they relish the hot dry weather.

After completing the inspection of the Coca cola hives we then went on to visit several more apiaries where we saw more hive beetles. Some hives appeared to cope well even with high infestations whilst others teetered on the brink of collapse. I noticed these infected hives contained alot more propolis and were difficult to open. Jerry explained the bees often run the beetles into corners and then propolis them in as they are physically unable to grasp them and remove them due to their smooth carapaces. We saw one hive with very few bees and the frames were crawling with hive beetle larva. Jerry removed these frames and placed in the freezer to kill the beetle larva just as we do to wax moths. He explained he'd later return the frames to the bees which would then clean and repair the frames.

**Small hive beetle**



**Small hive beetle larvae**





## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### November Monthly Meeting: Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November

11am at [Fairley House Junior School](#), 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

Tips on preparing colonies for the long winter months followed by chat with coffee and cake.

### Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November: Bulb planting following on from the monthly meeting (1.30pm)

LBKA needs your help to plant 4,000 pollen rich spring flowering bulbs which will benefit the bees of Lambeth North. Come along and join in the big bulb plant which will be fun, beneficial to our struggling bees and a great social occasion for those involved.

(meet at Fairley primary school 218 Lambeth Road from 1.30pm) we will then make our way to the planting area at 2pm.

LBKA will provide tools, gloves and refreshments but please wear sturdy footwear and warm comfortable clothing suitable for outdoor activity.

we will be planting a mixture of early and late flowering Crocus, Native narcissus, Native Tulip, Snow drop and wood Anemones - all great sources of pollen for bumble and honey bees.

Nearest Tube is Lambeth North. Buses 2,59,159 all stop nearby

### Wednesday, 13th November: Annual General Meeting and Elections

18:45 at [Roots & Shoots](#), Walnut Tree Walk, London, SE11 6DN.

Annual elections, Chairman's statement and our headline speaker **Ken Thompson from Sheffield University who unlocks the secrets on wildlife in urban back gardens**. A talk that partners his well known book "No Nettles Required". LBKA members only.

### Friday, 15th November: Butterflies: from tattoos to transects.

18:30-20:00 at Birkbeck main building (room B33, downstairs, use entrance off [Torrington Square](#)).

Talk organised by the Ecology and Conservation Studies Society by Richard Fox (Butterfly Conservation) as part of Birkbeck's Autumn lecture series: "Invertebrates and us - the good the bad and the ugly."

Many thanks to Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Tristram Sutton and Philip Clarkson for all their contributions this month