



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

April, 2015

As well as the usual excellent contributions, we have details of last month's activities including our big forage planting event (p10), a web-based debate on forage (p13) and a talk at a local school as part of our outreach (p4). We also have advice on record keeping (p14), a book review (p20) and even some poetry from our very own Paul Vagg (p22)... and many other gems.

From our Chair	1
Announcements	2
Out and about	4
March's Monthly Meeting: Microscopy	4
April in the Apiary	5
April in the Forage Patch	6
LBKA's Apiaries	9
Meeting a Maker of Mead	10
The Great LBKA/Nando's Planting Event	10
BBKA's stand at the Edible Garden Show	12
BeeCraft Web Debate	13
Record keeping	14
The Bulgarian Beekeeper	15
March's Facebook (In)digest(ion)	18
Adventures in Beeland: A box full of bees	19
Book review: Bees in the City	20
Poetry corner	22
Upcoming events	22
Committee	23

Thanks to all this month's contributors: Liz Gill, Richard Glassborow, Cerys Harrow, Martin Hudson, Barbara Linder, Petros Hahladakis, Callie Nell, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Emily Scott, Vesko Starchikov, Tristram Sutton, Paul Vagg and Angela Woods. Thanks to Martin Hudson for offering (and doing) much-needed proof-reading.

We're always looking for new and interesting contributions – please contact me if you're interested.

Aidan Slingsby
Editor
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From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

As the long spell of cool weather persists it is easy to be fooled into thinking that spring is postponed. But those of us who have been able to take advantage of the rare opportunities of a warm day to make full inspections have found the bees have been getting on with it regardless. Certainly we may not be seeing the kind of build up experienced after the warm winter and spring of 2014 but most of our colonies are never the less now well advanced, including drone brood, and some of us are already putting on supers to keep the workers busy and their hive mind off swarm preparation.

Hopefully, the varroa monitoring is not showing high levels in your colonies but even modest presence at this time of year can be a severe infestation by the time the honey is harvested at the end of July. For this and other health reasons I personally favour carrying out a shook swarm at this time of year to get the colonies onto clean equipment as quickly as possible. And a varroa trap frame of open brood is a not-to-be-missed refinement – it is considered one of the most efficient ways of controlling varroa and there are no chemicals involved.

But timing is important. The colony has to be strong



enough, and that plenty of fresh adult workers are bringing in forage and drawing new comb. Feeding with syrup is essential, as they will suddenly be deprived of even a daily buffer of food. But it is also important there is forage to provide nectar and pollen and that the weather is warm enough (preferably day and night) to make drawing new comb feasible and easy – i.e. quick. Sacrificing all the brood with a shook swarm sounds and is drastic. There are of course risks: your colony may not have been strong enough or had enough new season workers; they may already be struggling to build up because of disease such as nosema; the weather may turn bad and suppress forage and laying; the queen may not be fertile or vigorous enough to replenish the colony at speed. . . that's beekeeping!

But a shook swarm really stimulates the colony. As well as the bee health benefits, or perhaps because of them, it is generally recognised that a shook swarmed colony will produce a good honey crop. If all goes well they can be back to full strength in as little as 3-4 weeks. But they don't stop there and we still have to watch out just as much for natural swarm preparations.

And talking of swarm prevention and control, that is the subject of the monthly meeting at Fairly House on Sunday 12th. Do join us if you can.

Announcements

April Monthly Meeting

This month's monthly meeting is on **Sunday 12th April at 11:00** at **Fairley House Junior School** (SE1 7JY) and will be on the subject of **swarm control and management**. The art of swarm control and management is especially important in built-up areas like London. Details of the Artificial Swarm and Snelgrove Board methods will be provided and discussed. As usual, there will be tea/coffee and cake and non-members are welcome if they want to find out more about LBKA.

Next month, Angela and Jon will lead the Monthly Meeting on swarm collection. Don't forget to email services@lbka.org.uk if you're interested in coming along to some swarm collections during the season.

Swarm coordinator needed

We're still looking for a swarm coordinator. It's a demanding role but an important one. It would involve you having an LBKA mobile phone, taking calls from the public about swarms, helping determine that they are indeed honey bees and then contacting one



Where we have our Monthly Meetings – the white door on the left. Source: <https://goo.gl/maps/dbB8a>

of our swarm collectors to come and collect. Contact services@lbka.org.uk to find out more.

Offers of apiary space

If you're interested in any of these apiary sites, please contact services@lbka.org.uk. We have not assessed the sites for suitability but we can help you do so if you like.

Blackheath (SE3): Hannah is interested in starting beekeeping one day, has some equipment and would be pleased if someone local kept bees in her large garden who could also help her learn about beekeeping. The garden has access via a side gate.

Stockwell: Julia is offering space in their garden or in a local park near Stockwell next to Larkhall Park.

North Kensington (W10): Lisa is offering space for hives in the grounds of a children's nursery.

Photographs of members' apiaries

It would be nice to showcase some of our member's apiaries in the newsletter and on the website. Email pictures to services@lbka.org.uk or post on Facebook and I will collate and we'll feature them if there's enough interest.

Volunteers needed for outreach activities

We are increasingly being asked to give talks to groups and schools and **welcome volunteers** to help deliver this important educational and outreach work. Please contact forage@lbka.org.uk if you would like to get involved, no experience is necessary as we can provide some training.

Want to help research about the effects of urbanisation on honeybees?

Urbanisation is rapidly increasing, but we still do not know what effect living in a city has on bees. With the global bee decline becoming more apparent, it is important to compare pressures on urban and rural bees

Bees in the City



What impact does urbanisation have on honeybees?



Royal Holloway, University of London is carrying out a study comparing the three main threats to bees...

- pesticides
- disease
- foraging

...between urban and rural hives, to see whether cities really are a haven for honeybees.



Are you a beekeeper based in the countryside, suburbs or city in London or the surrounding region? Would you be happy to provide basic data from your hives and for us to visit your hives this summer to take some samples?

If you are interested, please contact Liz Samuelson on:

✉ elizabeth.samuelson.2014@live.rhul.ac.uk

☎ 07799674336



Want to help research about the effects of urbanisation on honeybees?

as it may be that cities provide a sanctuary for bees – or, alternatively, pose a risk. Elizabeth Samuelson's research focusses on the three major threats to bees: pesticides, disease and lack of forage.

Elizabeth – a researcher at Royal Holloway, University of London – is looking for beekeepers in the city, suburbs and countryside around London who would be happy to provide some basic data and for her to visit their hives this summer to take small samples. This will include Nosema and DWV screening, pollen analysis for foraging habits, and pesticide screening.

The data collected would be anonymous, but she would be happy to share the final results with anyone who takes part.

If you are interested and want to know more, please contact Elizabeth on Elizabeth.samuelson.2014@live.rhul.ac.uk or give her a call on 07799674336.

Bee Market and Auction

The West Sussex Beekeepers' Association is again organising a Bee Market and Auction for the benefit of its members and non members with beekeepers attending to buy and sell from a very wide area. The event will again take place at **Chichester College's Brinsbury Campus** in Pulborough, West Sussex on **Saturday 25th April**. Auction details, Guidance Notes and the Entry Form are available to download from the WS-BKA website - <http://www.westsussexbeekeepers.org>.

[uk/auction](http://lbka.org.uk/auction). The Auction catalogue will be published online after 21st April.

Old announcements from March

Check previous newsletters at <http://lbka.org.uk/newsletters.html> or contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

Forage-planting suggestions? Contact forage@lbka.org.uk if you have any suggestions

Want to be a mentor? Sounds daunting, but it needn't be – contact Tristram on mentoring@lbka.org.uk for more information.

Selling unpackaged honey to a London restaurant: contact Barbara barbaratager@gmail.com for more details.

Potential apiaries in North London: forage@lbka.org.uk for more details.

Queen rearing courses: run by the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders' Association (BIBBA), the first of which will be held at **Glan-yr-afon, Corwen, LL21 0HA** in North Wales on 14th–15th April and 16th–17th May. More details from steve-rose@bibba.com or <http://www.bibba.com/>.

Thorne's at Spring shows: pre-orders for sale items can be made on their website for collection at these events – <http://www.thorne.co.uk/www.thorne.co.uk/2015-spring-shows>.

Old announcements from February

Check previous newsletters or contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

BBKA Spring Convention: Harper Adams University, Newport, Shropshire on 17th-19th April. http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention.php.

Bees for members: Members interested in purchasing should contact Paul on resources@lbka.org.uk or on 079 0301 8351. Nucs cost £140 (plus a £40 deposit) and you'll need an appropriate level of experience. Please also let us know if you'd like to sell bees.

Learning to collect swarms: if you're interested in learning to collect swarms, contact Emma on admin@lbka.org.uk.

Honey for Stepney City Farm are still looking for more London Honey to sell in their farm shop – contact services@lbka.org.uk for more information.

Help for school bee club in Barnes? Anyone interested in helping our a keen 17-year old school pupil set up a beekeeping club at his school in Barnes should email services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

Do you have any announcements?

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

Out and about

Some of our outreach activities.

Mark Patterson and Tristram Sutton

Recently the committee has been busy behind the scenes promoting our pro-forage message. We have held a very successful forage planting event, planning our spring introduction courses and organising our presence at forthcoming summer events such as Lambeth Show.

Mark and Tristram have been busy delivering outreach to several groups including the Abbey centre in Westminster and Beckford primary school in West Hampstead. All have received talks about bees, beekeeping and gardening for bees. We have also given away 100 packets of our bee friendly seed mix among these groups to encourage them to plant for bees in their garden.

"We wanted to say a big 'thank you' for coming to our nursery to give your bee talk on Tuesday. The children and staff found it all really interesting and have come away with lots of fantastic facts and a greater understanding of how important the bees are for us all!"

This is the very welcome feedback received by Mark and Tristram following a talk they were invited to give at Beckford School in Camden on 24th March. Armed only with a giant flower, a bee-suit, bee costume, an empty brood box, and a jars of bee products the intrepid duo kept the attention of about 35 primary school children and their 5 teachers for an hour and a half. We think this might be a world record!

The session covered: information about pollination; the life cycle of the bee; the different types of bee; and division of labour within the colony. The presentation included plenty of Q and A and role playing, notably a "find the flower" game involving a child wearing the bee costume while another child, the "beekeeper", watched while sitting down wearing the bee-suit this was followed by honey tasting for the whole class and hand creams for the teachers. A fitting example of the division of work in the real world.

Mark's demonstration of the waggle dance was particularly well received!



Tristram showing them (and us) what beekeepers should look like.

All in all a very worthwhile, entertaining and satisfying visit.

March's Monthly Meeting: Microscopy

Cerys' regular update of what happened at last month's meeting.

Cerys Harrow
LBKA member

Last month's meeting was a hands on session for nosema testing under microscopes. Nosema is a fungal disease affecting the bee's gut. It can be symptomless but sometimes explains why a colony is failing to thrive and build up numbers in the spring. Examining a sample under a microscope is the only way to identify its presence in a colony.

Quite a few people had brought in samples of 30 flying bees. There was a quick check to be sure that no one had brought in bees that were still alive. (It has happened before!) Then Richard showed us how to prepare a slide. First the bees had to be turned into a sort of soup using the abdomens mixed up with a few drops of water and squashed. A small amount of this then is dropped onto the slide.

After some essential basic information on using the mi-



A sample of bees waiting to be crushed up.



Looking for signs of the nosema spores.

microscopes we were let loose to examine our slides. Fortunately there were experienced eyes to help the novices among us distinguish mysterious shapes that turned out to be air bubbles from fragments of more substance. There was relief and disappointment in equal measure if your sample was clear. Obviously no one wanted to find nosema in their colony, but on the other hand it would have been interesting to see some.

However, small bits of bee - the odd bit of leg or a hair – plus some beautiful pollen specimens gave many of us a taste of how amazing microscopy can be and left us looking forward to the next time the LBKA runs a microscopy course. Several people were still glued to the eyepieces observing slides until well after 12.30.

Many thanks to Richard and Howard for their patient supervision and guidance and for enabling us to get to use such high quality microscopes for the morning.

April in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

It is in April that colony populations substantially increase and drones start to appear. There should normally be sufficient available forage for the bees to be self-sufficient if the weather holds good. This is far from reality at the time of writing at the end of March. The most important job for the beekeeper this April, given the weather, is to ensure that the colony is not starving. If it is still too cold for a proper inspection – if in doubt then feed.

Jobs this month

Assuming that the cold snap will come to an end and the weather will pick up then other action to be taken this month normally should include the following:

Remove mouseguards and replace with a clean, sterilised entrance block.

Mark the queen. If the queen is unmarked then this is an ideal time to find and mark her. The colony is now going to continue to expand in numbers up until July whereupon it will start to contract. Swarm control will be considerably easier with a marked queen.

Colony build up. Is the colony continuing to build up? A significant benefit of keeping colony records is that the number of frames of brood is recorded.

Varroa. Check mite drop if not already done in March.

First full inspection

If not done in March then the first full inspection and spring cleaning of the hive should be carried out. From then on regular inspections should be made.

When inspecting a colony, 5 questions should be asked and actions taken if appropriate.

Is the queen present and laying? You do not need to find the queen. If there are eggs and these are only 1 egg per cell, or newly hatched larvae, then this is evidence that she was in the hive and laying 3 or 4 days ago.

Has the colony enough room? This is a 2-part question, being enough room for the queen to continue to lay eggs and enough room for the colony to store nectar. If not then provide room by adding a super.

Are there any queen cells? Queen cups are to be expected and should normally be ignored unless containing an egg or larva. Queen cells require swarm control action by the beekeeper. If the bees have sufficient space then swarm control should not normally be an issue until early May. If there is insufficient space in the hive, leading to congestion and inhibition of the circulation of queen substance, then swarming can be an April problem. Therefore, ensure that the colony has sufficient space. Add a super if necessary.

Are there signs of disease? This is a comprehensive question but the strategy is best approached by being familiar with healthy brood. Anything that does not fit this description is, *prima facie*, suspicious. Healthy unsealed brood is pearly white in colour, evenly laid, segmented and lies in a "C" shape in the cell. Healthy sealed brood is light brown in colour, evenly laid and with slightly raised dome cappings.

Are there enough stores until the next inspection? The equivalent of 2 full National brood frames is regarded as more than sufficient at this time of year, even if there is a serious and prolonged downward turn in the weather. Nectar does not usually rise in the UK until the temperature reaches 18C. So, beware of low stores.

Happy beekeeping for 2015!



Hairy footed flower bee on white dead nettle.

April in the Forage Patch

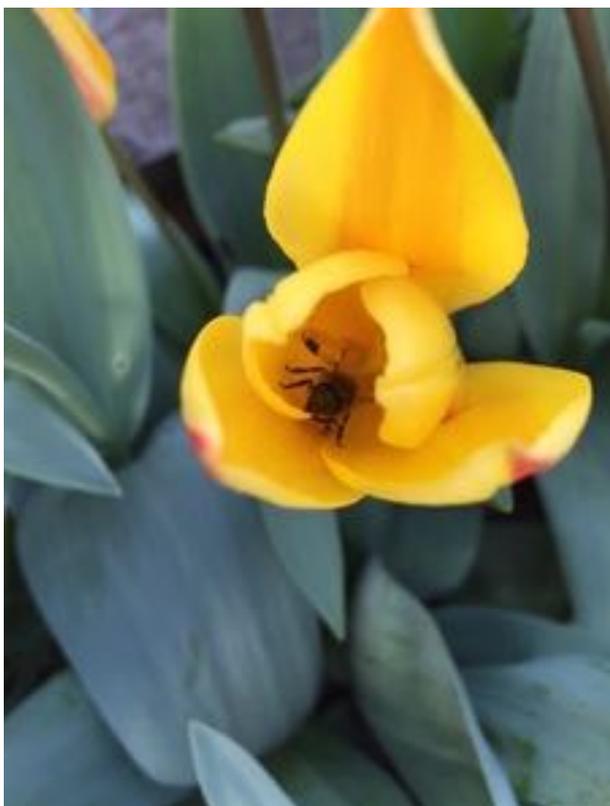
Mark's regular update on what things are in flower that bees like.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

By now the weather should be starting to get much warmer and our bees becoming much more active. During March on warm days I often noticed my bees making short trips to the garden pond to fetch water. They appeared to be visiting the pond a lot more this year both in terms of frequency and numbers of bees making trips to carry water. I suspect this is due to the vast amounts of Ivy honey the colonies put away in winter. Ivy honey sets rock hard and it takes a great deal of diluting with water to make it palatable for the bees to digest and use.

During March I also noted my bees frantically visiting the crocus blooms, wall flowers and the fading **mahonia** and **viburnum** flowers. This year they seemed to have completely ignored the **anemones** which they worked keenly last spring. It does amaze me how some years they choose to ignore one plant whilst other years they favour the same blooms.

As I travel around the city I'm noticing a lot of **damson**, **cherry** and **wild plum** in bloom. The blackthorn is now over – blackthorn flowers very early in the season when it's often too cold for our honey bees to take advantage of it unless we get a warm day and it's growing very close by. It's a shame because there are acres of the stuff not far from my main apiary.



Bee collecting pollen on tulip.

Right now in the community garden where I keep most of my bees, **wall flowers** are coming into full bloom, the **muscari grape hyacinths** are at their best and both honey bees and hairy footed flower bees are busy working them. Also in the garden are a fantastic display of **tulips** which both honey and bumble bees are visiting keenly to collect pollen. The **anemones** are also putting on a good display and **flowering currant** is now dripping with dark pink blossom. The currant bushes are popular with early, common carder and buff tailed bumble bees as well as my honey bees. **Hybrid hellebores** continue to flower, attracting bees for its pollen. The hazel catkins have long since gone over but the **willows** around the pond are now coming into their own and the bees will work their large fluffy catkins for pollen. Last year whilst at Palmstead Nursery in March I saw lots of bees on their willows for sale so I bought one. I hope my bees appreciate the expensive price tag.

Pulmonaria, **winter heliotrope**, **green alkanet**, **comfrey** and **marsh marigolds** are also being worked.

Elsewhere in the garden our orchard is starting to bloom. **Peach**, **nectarine**, **plum**, **pear** and **apple** are all in blossom and the blooms are being visited by a variety of bees and other pollinators. Soon our herb garden will start to bloom and the bees will have **rosemary**, **lavender**, **thyme**, **sage** and **chives** to add to their foraging sources.

In the centre of the city where forage is scarce bees won't have access to the same range of flowers as



Flowering currant.



Stinking hellebore.

my own bees have. I have noticed lots of honey and bumble bees in more central London areas frequenting **hebe**, **mahonia** and some very desperate bees visiting **polyanthus primrose** – my bees completely ignore primrose in our garden.

This month in my garden I shall be busy continuing to sow seeds of perennial plants in the green house and on my windowsill at home. I shall also be planting out or potting into larger pots **wall flower**, **gazania** and **hardy geraniums** I propagated from cuttings last autumn. Now is also not too late to divide some of those hardy perennials in the garden that are outgrowing their space. **Helleniums**, **echinacea**, **rudbeckia** and **sedum spectabile** all benefit from occasional lifting and being divided to give them more room.

Last month we held our first forage planting project of the year at Eden community garden in Clapham. The garden hosts our Clapham teaching apiary and is the venue for all our intro courses. Several thousand pounds worth of plants have been invested here to help feed our bees and we have specifically planted a range



Early bumblebee queen on hebe.



White dead nettle, an important bumblebee plant.



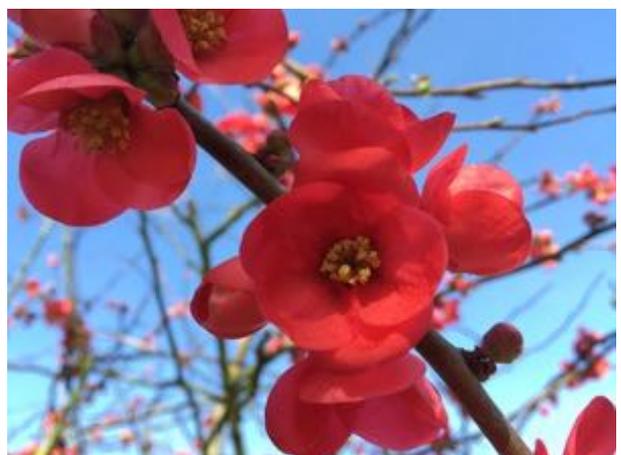
Peach blossom.

of flowers to benefit our bees late in the season when forage becomes more scarce. Our plant selections came from a variety of bee friendly suppliers offering the association a good discount and the plant types selected based on the latest research on bees flower preferences by the LASI lab at Sussex university.

The committee has recently acquired detailed information supplied by the National Bee Unit on numbers of registered hives in the capital and how they are distributed. Armed with this information we can now clearly see which parts of the city have the highest concentrations of hives. We are then able to overlay this information with data maps produced by Green Space Information for Greater London (GIGL) showing bee



Winter heliotrope.



Flowering quince.

foraging habitat quality and distribution across the region. What is obviously clear is that many parts of the city hosting very high densities of hives are the least greenest and offer little forage for bees. This is particularly so in the northern parts of Lambeth and Southwark, all of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, lower part of Camden and Northern parts of Lewisham. Elsewhere where hive numbers are in high numbers there is much more green space and good quality foraging habitat for bees.

We would like to organise and deliver more of these forage planting events in future and hopefully they can become a regular activity for the association and its members. We would ideally like to focus these forage planting efforts in the above mentioned areas where we recognise there to be a shortage of forage. **Please send me any ideas you have for green spaces you think could use some improved planting action.**

There are a number of small grants available in several of these boroughs which we can tap into to help fund such planting activities and we also hope to gain the support of more London businesses to participate in such events. Our recent planting day was funded by **Nando's** and **Neils Yard Remedies**.

LBKA's Apiaries

News from LBKA's three teaching apiaries: Eden, Brockwell and Mudchute.

Richard Glassborow, Petros Hahladakis and Barbara Linder

Our apiaries have awoken!

Well, of course they never went to sleep: it just seems like it. And after last year's demands it has to be said the down time has been welcome.

Eden

Eden has four out of four colonies surviving. Even though one is very small, it looks like it is building up well. The others are thriving. Overwintered hives have been shuffled about so that they are now all facing outwards, making a much better arrangement for teaching, i.e. we can all easily stand behind the hives. One observed lesson here: if you are rotating hives during winter (cold) you have to do it very gradually or flying bees are stranded on the wrong side of the corner. If you are advancing a hive down the flight path without any rotation you can move quite a long way without bees missing the entrance.

Plans are to shook swarm the three strong hives a.s.a.p.

I will try and notify should anyone be interested to join us but it is a juggle with weather conditions.

Thanks to help from mentees, frames are all ready to go. A note here: it is easy to underestimate the skill in building frames. All trainees get to build one frame on the Introductory course. But building 50 as we need for starters at Eden is different. I need the help, trainees need to develop skills. So well done and thank you those who took part (you are now on the radar as trained helpers for the future!)

Brockwell

Brockwell teaching apiary reports they have moved 3 out of the 4 hives up to the new apiary. The new apiary has created a mystery: reports are that it feels more cramped than the previous one even though it is larger! Supers have already been placed on two of the hives as the brood box was full of stores and there were bees crawling all over the top.

Petros also reports that the new location is a lot sunnier. Around 5pm on Sunday there were still bees coming in/out of the hives in the new apiary but the one hive left behind was all but shut down for the evening.

The last two weeks have been spent getting all the equipment ready. We now have four brood boxes full of new frames, so one spare brood for each of the hives, ready for when we no doubt have to start performing artificial swarms.

Mudchute

Mudchute bees have been in the excellent hands of apiary assistants Geoff Remington and Nick Gallagher for the past several months whilst apiary manager, Barbara Linder has been MIA (missing in action).

Nick is a freelance Interim Manager for not for profit organisations and his partner Geoff is a lawyer heading up online services for Simmons & Simmons. They both have "real" jobs but spend a lot of their time working out bee logistics for their visits at Mudchute every weekend. They recently carried out a shook swarm on one hive this past weekend and have spent many cold weekends out at Mudchute feeding bees, building frames and repairing hives.

Barbara met Geoff and Nick in the dismal Cross Harbour Asda Parking lot last summer ready to come on board as LBKA helpers and they have proven to be excellent and committed beekeepers. LBKA is very lucky to have Geoff and Nick and we thank them very much for their hard work this past winter. Truth be told, they have never missed a weekend checking on the hives and carrying out whatever task was necessary.

Mudchute requires vision and hope. Geoff and Nick have both, lucky for LBKA plus enormous sense of hu-

mour which is a necessary survival instinct working out at Mudchute.

We invite you to meet Nick and Geoff on any Saturday morning at Mudchute. They will proudly show you their work and introduce you to Tom, Dick and Harry, our three hives wrapped nicely in well repaired WBCs.

Note from chair and Apiary Officer of LBKA

I would just like to add my thanks to **Petros, Barbara, Nick, Geoff** and also to **Karin Courtman** who still oversees Brockwell and the Nuc apiary. The LBKA is a membership organisation and it **only functions through the involvement of its members**. We all owe them our thanks and our support (so that it is fun and not a chore).

Meeting a Maker of Mead

Ann Eatwell kindly arranged a visit to a mead maker and invited us through this very newsletter a couple of months ago. Liz was one of those that went and she reports back below.

Liz Gill
LBKA member

During the winter, a group of us got chatting about making our own mead and last month, LBKA member Ann Eatwell kindly arranged for us to visit commercial mead maker Tom Gosnell at his brewery in Peckham (www.gosnells.co.uk) to see how it's done.

Tom gave us a warm welcome and explained how his introduction to mead came during a trip to the US. He was already keen on home brewing and decided to have a go at making mead himself. He experimented for a couple of years in his kitchen before taking the plunge and setting up a commercial brewery.

Tom very generously shared his methods with us. He uses orange blossom honey from Spain, which ensures him a regular supply and, very importantly, consistency of taste. The honey is mixed with boiling water in huge kettles, cooled, poured into fermenting tanks and the yeast is added. Instead of the usual wine or champagne yeast, Tom uses a lager yeast. The alcohol level is checked twice a day until it reaches 5.5%, which takes about two weeks. The mead is then bottled and further fermentation is stopped by pasteurising the sealed bottles in a water bath.



Gosnell's mead

This is a very quick method compared to the usual long fermentations which produce stronger and heavier meads at around 16-17%. The use of lager yeast and stopped fermentation results in a lighter, slightly sparkling drink. The samples Tom gave us were delicious, quite refreshing with citrusy notes from the honey. It is certainly proving popular – Tom has taken on a business partner and they are expanding into larger premises and hoping to set up a pop-up bar attached to the brewery in the summer. Meanwhile, their mead is available at various high end outlets.

The Great LBKA/Nando's Planting Event

Forage creation is one of LBKA missions and often encourage organisations who want to help bees to fund our forage-creation programmes. Last month, Mark organised a major forage planting day on 15th March, supported by **Nando's** and **Neil's Yard Remedies**. Angela reports on the successful day of planting.

Angela Woods
LBKA member

Members will know we have a long and happy association with St Paul's and the gem that is Eden Community Gardens in Clapham. We've seen through about 300 course attendees for beekeeping and Richard Glassborow has mentored at the teaching apiary there for some time now. Many of our members have their own apiaries nearby. So it made perfect sense to use our physical and financial resources to spruce up the gardens when Nando's approached the LBKA asking how they could help bees. They happily took our advice that the best way to support our bees in our city is



The plants before the big day.



to plant for them. About 25 volunteers from Nando's stores across SW London gave up a day of their time together with others from Neals Yard Remedies who also donated time and manpower to help improve this oasis. They cheerily set up a gazebo and at the end of the day Nando's had set up a mobile grill and the hungry workers all enjoyed really good chicken sandwiches.

Mark Patterson worked hard to devise the scheme with planting to provide year round forage for at bees at its heart. We planted across three different parts of the garden with all of those combining to supply forage from this summer onwards. Nearest to the LBKA apiary volunteers from Neals Yard Remedies and Nando's with the help of their children planted spring flowering woodland plants including muscari, stinking hellebores, primroses, pulmonaria and foxgloves. We took up a 12 sqm section of turf midway up the garden and planted and herbaceous border to be at its best in the late summer. Everything planted reflected the findings of studies by the Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects (university of Sussex) that identified which plants were most attractive to bees. Here we planted lavenders (edelweiss and gross blue, heleniums, rudbeckia, echinacea, sedums, golden rod, catmint and many salvias. At the top end, nearest the church, we clipped back some ivy to reveal a sunny corner into which mahonias and flowering currant for winter food were planted. It has been shown that 75% of plant visitations by bees are to the bold yellow mahonia. The Planting for Bees section on our site gives even broader suggestions for what you might plant in your garden for bees.

For those who don't know it, Eden Community Garden is a tranquil green space in the middle of Clapham Old Town. It was founded in 2000 on the site of an ancient burial ground for parishioners who died from the plague and then followed by Roundhead soldiers killed in the Civil War battle for Battersea Marshes. The garden holds summer solstice and autumn celebrations. Volunteering days are on Saturdays throughout the year. The garden has won a Green Pennant for eight years running and four Green Flags, and received an 'thriving' commendation in the London in Bloom competition, 2014.

The work was back breaking but we were a happy crew and thanks go out to all that helped. It won't just be the bees that benefit since Eden is on the map for the Open Garden Squares weekend 13th/14th of June 2015 where visitors will see the fruits of our labours. The end result was really satisfying and Neals Yard Remedies have already pledged support for an autumn LBKA planting event where we shall provide forage at our East London teaching apiary at Mudchute Farm so do sign up to help if getting dirt under your fingernails is your thing.



The forage planting team.

BBKA's stand at the Edible Garden Show

BBKA asked us to help run their information stall at the Edible Garden Show. We provided some information leaflets and seeds to give away. Martin was one of those who volunteered from LBKA and he writes about the event below.

Martin Hudson
LBKA member

The BBKA Stall at the Edible Garden Show was at Alexandra Palace, 20th-22th March. Living fairly close to 'Ally Pally' – I volunteered to help out when the call went out in the last LBKA Newsletter for volunteers to join other North London and Warwickshire beekeepers looking after this interesting BBKA stand for two days of the three.

BBKA supplied a massive stand - with two versions of giant beehives which rather swamped the space, but the stand included:

- honey production from flower to jar - with a flower-bed supplied by Nottcutts, a (demo) hive, a beau-



Urban garden.

tiful frame of capped honey, an extractor and settling tank - and six jars of honey.

- skep-making - including 6 straw bales!
- candle-making (using foundation)
- microscopy – in which little was shown
- and a membership table (even less!)

No wonder they needed volunteers!

While I was there there, volunteers came from Barnet, Enfield, North London and London BKAs, as well as a team from the Warwickshire BKAs who had staffed the Exhibition in previous years at Stoneleigh. There were usually plenty of helpers enticing curious exhibition-browsers onto the stand. The most exciting – and busy – time was during school hours on the Friday when



From hive (right) to honey (left).



A 'hive' with video projection images of bees on the comb with a massive bee above the entrance (just out of view; called Henrietta). (The sinister-looking beekeeper is a dummy).

probably fifty parties of schoolchildren (20-40 in each!) from all over North London visited the stand - and they all wanted to 'have a go' with the (manual) extractor on display. It was interesting that when the teacher expressed an interest, their children usually did also. I was impressed that the children's knowledge about bees - and/or their inquiring questions - were usually far greater and more perceptive than that shown by the adults. Maybe they do teach good subjects in schools these days after all!

The rest of the exhibition was not as interesting as the BBKA stand (of course!), and many other exhibitors (such as the lady selling magnetic jewellery, and the 'home made pie' man!) had only marginal significance - if any - to 'edible gardens'. A commercial seed merchant had a small 'bumblebee hive' (with live bees including an enormous queen) on the stall for the whole of the three days. That made me realise that if we had tried to have an observation hive there, it would have been difficult to manage - which is probably why we didn't! Even so, the 'Bee Stand' was probably one of the most popular stands at the Show.

The Middlesex Federation has been asked to take over

staffing the stand at the Show next year. I think the most popular sections of the stand - the 'flower to jar' demo and the skep- and candle-making - could have been accommodated on a more compact site. Plenty of volunteers (including setting up on the day before) will be needed, and it will be a good opportunity for 'keepers around London to meet others from neighbouring areas.

So be ready to volunteer next year!

Becraft Web Debate

Becraft magazine recently started a regular monthly live web debate programme. Each month the magazine marketing officer (James Dearsely) hosts a debate on a particular topic. Last month, Mak was part of the debate on the topic of forage and natural beekeeping.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

Recent debates have included Small hive beetle and other exotic pests and diseases. James does his best to invite participation from known experts in each months particular topic theme and members of the public and subscribers are invited to email, tweet or join the discussion live on air to pose questions to the panel.

The March debate was on forage and natural beekeeping. On the Panel were Dale Gibson, myself, Phil Chandler of the Natural beekeeping movement, Mrs W Dale, and a Mrs Asin from Becraft.

The debate opened with a report from Dale who had recently visited Germany and met beekeepers there who



BeeCraft debate 'Google Hangout'

are envious of the UK's pollinator action plan. Dale reported they are not as yet as well organised as we are and have yet to create a bee action plan for Germany but there is a movement in Berlin to plant for pollinators and help bees at a local level. Dale mentioned that Berlin has had over half of German bee species recorded there - some thing which has appeared in numerous academic studies in recent years and highlights the importance of urban habitats for wild bee populations. Unlike the UK, Germany has very strict building regulations and it is mandatory for any new building with a roof area greater than 100m² to have a green roof. All these low level green roof habitats are of course beneficial to bees. Dale also mentioned that the most abundant pollen grains found in Berlin Honey was Forget-me-not. This humble flower often appears well represented in honeys since its pollen grains are one of the smallest in the plant world and they often make their way into the honey. On the back of this news Mark mentioned that LBKA honey from Brockwell park in Brixton had recently been found to contain a high proportion of Eucalyptus pollen despite there not being many Eucalyptus trees in the area pointing out that some pollens are often over represented in honey samples.

Moving forward questions were received from subscribers about what is being done in London. Mark talked about the pro-forage work the LBKA is doing, our program of planting events creating forage for bees with support of local authorities and housing associations and the plantings being part funded by corporates wishing to help bees. Emphasis was placed on the good will and cooperation of landlords in providing habitats for bees within the city.

Questions were also asked about which plants are best for bees, what can people grow around ponds and damp places to provide for bees. Dale mentioned **Himalayan Balsam** – which while beneficial to bees is actually illegal to plant being highly invasive. Mark suggested **water mint** and **purple loosestrife** both of which flower in late summer and provide nectar at a time of the year when forage is scarce because many plants have dried up.

The debate then moved over to Phil Chandler who an-

swered questions about natural beekeeping. First off Phil answered a question about the definition of natural beekeeping. Phil explained the entire spectrum of bee keeping practices and natural beekeeping being the one end where there is less intervention, less emphasis on the honey crop and more attention to the bees' natural way of living. Phil dispelled some myths about natural beekeeping – they don't all keep bees in sun hives, skeps and top bar hives. He also answered questions about the control of swarms in urban areas if using natural beekeeping methods. He was very clear to point out that allowing swarms in build up environments was not wise and discussed compromises between non intervention and intervening enough to control swarming.

Unfortunately the whole show was plagued by intermittent technical problems so at time the broadcast was not very clear and Phil especially had an issue with his microphone meaning he couldn't join the conversation until late in the show. BeeCraft have promised a whole hour on the topic of natural beekeeping in the near future and hope to have a broad range of people on the panel for that broadcast.

You can watch the entire show on Youtube – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKGL4aNM1JY>

Record keeping

Angela shows that recordkeeping is as important as beekeeping.

Angela Woods
LBKA member

As a novice I had enough trouble keeping everything I was learning about bees in my head let alone making coherent notes about it all too. So for the first two seasons I simply did not get around to keeping records of my hive inspections. But I do now as a matter of course. I have been around enough beekeepers to see that everyone has their own way with their scribbles, grids, spreadsheets, notes stuffed in plastic bags under hive roofs and apps. I even heard about a commercial keeper who chalked notes on the side of each of his 200 hives. And another who colour coded the six sides of a brick placed on the hive roof, with each colour denoting a particular condition and making for an easy visual reminder for someone with lots of hives. The idiosyncrasy is yours and should be bound only by a few simple rules.

Firstly, remember there is a reason in law that you should keep records especially if you sell your honey. You must keep a note of any medications administered to your bees (batch numbers and where they were pur-

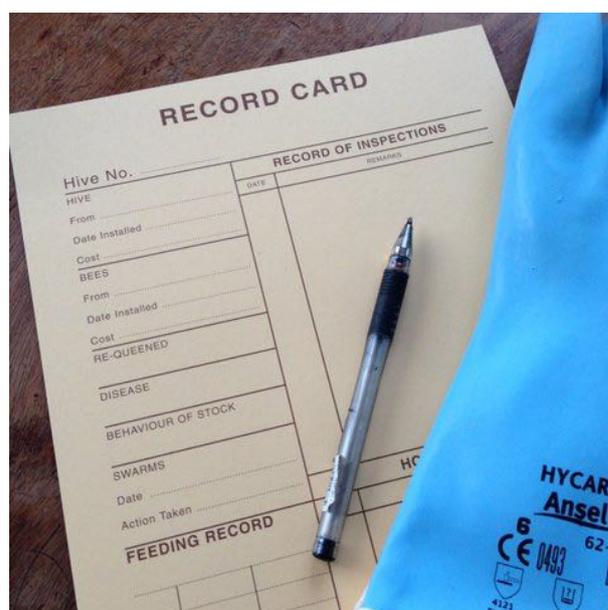
chased) so that if you get Food Standards snooping about your honey extraction/bottling setup, they will be able to check for possible contaminants from your records. If your apiary is ever struck by a notifiable disease your Seasonal Bee Inspector will be thankful if you have kept a record of where you bought your bees and from whom. And if you have passed or sold bees to another keeper who that person was? Or if you requeen away from using your own stock make a note of where it came from.

For those partial to qualifications the BBKA General Husbandry exam demands that you can show at least twelve month's worth of records and that these will be scrutinised. . . so joined up writing please! The importance placed on keeping notes by the BBKA tells us that record keeping is part of best practice and we should all do it.

My bees were moved away from my roof terrace last season and running an out apiary made me more aware than ever that good record keeping is crucial. Not only can I record what I did but what needs to be done at my next visit meaning I avoid the annoyance of forgetting some piece of kit. My notes on what my next inspection will be about act as an invaluable aide memoir for next time. Do not look at all colonies and then go to make records .. unless you are very clever you will have forgotten everything so mark your card after each hive is done.

The things you will more regularly note revolve around the Queen, the health of the brood, stores and then the seasonal stuff like spring build up, swarm preparations and prevention, feeding, notes on disease, temperament and so on. I have seen grids where ticks are put against the presence of the Queen; SB for sealed brood; E & L for eggs and larvae and numbers against columns headed 'brood across 'x' number of frames' keeps track of colony growth; or 'stores on 'x' number of frames'. Find your own way but make it a method that is consistent and that can be done quickly on the hoof. Remember you may hand your records to a bee buddy who babysits your bees if you go away or are ill so make them legible. Leaving a space for freehand notes is also a good idea. The one thing beekeepers say if they have the misfortune to lose a colony you must retrace your steps. . . having records will give you all the clues you need allowing you to learn from mistakes. Also, if you are keeping a hive with other beekeepers as a collective good record keeping is vital. . . forming an online group or using something like dropbox means records can be accessed and updated by all.

I use a Thorne template (PDF in the 'files' section of <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2512721609/>) and there are plenty of others easily found online. If you are registered on the NBU site then you can keep your records on their site. For the techies, a whole raft of apps some of which seem to last no longer than a drone in summer, have appeared. The ones worth looking at seem to be Bee Tight (free for up to 6 hives), Hive Tracks, Hive Manager and Beekeeper Lite. Read-



Example record-keeping form.

ing reviews I could see that most reverted back to the old school pen and paper after realising that expensive ipads and iphones do not mix well with propolis.

If you know any other beekeepers or have a mentor then ask to see how they keep their records. In any event, if you don't keep records make this the season to start. Happy beekeeping.

The Bulgarian Beekeeper

Vesko continues his month-by-month series writing about his beekeeping back in his native Bulgaria.

*Vesko Starchikov
LBKA member*

April is a typical spring month with frequent and sudden changes in weather. Cold air masses in April often bring unpleasant surprises with sharp drops in temperatures and snow, though these are often short-lived. Days become longer, the sun comes out more and the main sources of nutrients necessary for the development of bees begin to bloom in April.

Condition of bee colonies

The winter cluster has now broken up, the queen has increased her egg production and the bee population is growing, due to the growing influx of pollen and nectar, the warmer weather and increasing number of newly hatched young bees.



External pollen trap.



Internal pollen trap.

By now, strong colonies will be across 5-7 frames and food consumption increases. In the absence of a regular flow of nectar, colonies can consume 4-5 kg of their honey stores. At the end of the month, old wintered bees die which have already replaced with newly young bees. The first drone brood begins to appear. Conditions are conducive for production of the wax. We can see that there is an extension and whitening of the walls of the cells in the upper part of the combs, where bees make large wreaths with fresh nectar around the brood.

April is one of the months when the work of the beekeeper in the apiary is most intensive. If the beekeeper has not done the main spring review in March, he must do it in early April. He monitors the development of bee colonies, expanding the space if necessary. This should be done carefully, because there may be frosts and brood can succumb to disease. There is no need to hurry with the expansion of the bees' nest. Bees are stimulated back to work by their feeding with sugar syrup. If there is not enough pollen, it is better to add a protein supplement. The bees' ability to produce wax affects progress on building their nest. The beekeeper starts building frames for helping wax production and fighting against varroaosis. They take measures against cultivation of bee drones and against loss of strong families in a swarm. When colonies have suffered from chalk or stone brood, they are usually treated

in early spring with appropriate antifungal preparations which are not antibiotics.

In spite of the care taken in the spring, some colonies may be weak because of failing queens. In these cases we combine them, removing the queens, spraying the bees with a mixture of brandy, lavender, lemon balm to mask the individual colony smells and introducing a new queen from a queen cage. Hopefully, this creates a thriving colony. If the beekeeper does not unite the weak colonies their time and hard work will be wasted and they will not be able to build up to the main nectar flow. At the right time the beekeeper will make new families to recover their population.

Collecting pollen

In April the weather conditions are most suitable for collecting pollen. Bee pollen is being collected using



Harvested pollen.



Bee with pollen in its pollen sacs.

pollen traps. Pollen traps are placed in hives when there are reserves of 3-4 frames with fresh pollen. The collection of a large amount of pollen affects the yield of honey because bees need to collect more pollen at the expense of nectar.

There are two types of pollen trap. **External** traps are placed in front of the entrance of the hive and **Internal** traps are placed inside the hive at the entryway. When bees fly back loaded with pollen, they are forced to pass through the grid of pollen traps. Its holes are precisely calibrated with a diameter of 5–5.3 mm. This removed pollen from the legs, which falls through a specially adapted grid 3.5–4mm and it is collected in specially adapted boxes like drawers. Pollen must be collected daily from the hives and dried in special dryers. They must be treated with infra-red lamps at a temperature not higher than 40 °C. For smaller amounts, drying can be done in cardboard boxes covered with a cotton cloth. The boxes are placed in a warm place, but should not be exposed to direct sunlight. Their content should be stirred occasionally until it is dry. The level of humidity should be 8-10%. Dried pollen is packed in glass jars with tightly closed caps which can be vacuumed. The mixture of pollen stores in a dark place at a temperature of 0–14°C. For one's own use, pollen can be stored in liquid honey in the ratio 1:1 or 1:2 pollen:honey.

Pollen

Bee pollen is a compound consisting of pollen, which bee-workers mix with secretions from their salivary glands and nectar. They roll it in honey and make granules (pellets) with a size of 1–2 mm and a weight 5-6mg. Bees use pollen as food, for rearing larvae and to produce wax and royal jelly. People use it as a food supplement.

Besides the health benefits, bee pollen has some healing properties and can help to strengthen bones in the human body.

Pollen can help protect against various diseases of the circulatory system by stimulating the formation of red blood cells and strengthening the walls of blood vessels. It also strengthens the heart and normalises high blood pressure. Pollen is very rich in selenium, which acts prophylactically in some types of cancer. Bee pollen helps to boost the immune system and can help reduce allergic reactions. The suggested daily usage of bee pollen is about 15–20g within a period not exceeding three months. Doctors recommend taking bee pollen mainly during change of season (winter to spring). People who want to eat healthily use bee pollen precisely because it contains a wealth of minerals (zinc, manganese, potassium, copper, chromium, calcium, silver etc.) It is also rich in vitamins such as A, B1, B2, B5, B8, C, D, E.

Healing properties

Bee pollen has a therapeutic effect and its adoption helps the bone system. The presence of vitamin E has a positive effect on potency. Routine use can strengthen blood cells, reduce bleeding, help regulate the heart and normalise high blood pressure by reducing blood flow. Pollen can also help normalise lipid metabolism and thus helps weight regulation. Pollen is very rich in selenium, which acts prophylactically in some cancers, helps the organism in the release of heavy metals.

Dosage and Administration

The daily dosage for adults is 15–20g dried pollen for 1 to 3 months. It is recommended to be taken at the changing of seasons: autumn-winter and spring-summer. The daily recommended dose for children aged 3–5 is 5-10g and for children aged 6–12, it's 10-15g.

March's Facebook (In)digest(ion)

LBKA's open Facebook page is an active community of over 1000 from around London and other parts of the UK and world. Lots of interesting material gets posted, but here's a mere glimpse of what you might have missed.

Callie Nell
LBKA member

The first quick looks after the winter have brought both good and bad news, and my heart goes out to people that have opened hives to dead colonies

Sjef van der Steen, respected honey bee scientist was going to test on Dutch TV which sting hurts the most a wasp or a bee?

An interesting article in the Pacific Standard see here the link: <http://bit.ly/1GkHpoU>

Preparations for the swarming season seem to be well underway

Mark Patterson took a great photo for his 2016 Calendar.



Shook swarms was discussed as a method of Varroa control.

Membership of the Facebook Group seem to be growing, with members all the way from Pakistan, it is also great to see members welcoming and accommodating visitors from across the pond.

Manuka honey farmers in New Zealand are fighting fraudsters selling fake Manuka honey, see article: <http://ab.co/1Nrn7yl>. I always fancied starting Manuka Orchards here in the UK. Will they grow here?

And of more import a link was posted to research Karin Alton was collaborating on about Urban Bees and forage shortage in London try the link here https://www.facebook.com/download/845954652114769/urban_beekeeping_the%20biologist.pdf

QD Stores are selling wildflower seed mixes for a good price although it was pointed out that though the box says "wildflowers" they are not necessarily native to the UK, so be careful where they are sown.

It was remembered that some members sent samples of honey to be tested for pollen types. It turned out that they were looking for carbon isotope decay rates which will help the food standards agency build a profile for London honey so the authorities can sniff out the dodgy stuff that makes it onto shop shelves. The way they went about getting support from beekeepers were thought to be a little fishy.

Mid March and it looked like colonies are building up fast, supers added already on some hives.

March 15th and the planting day was a stonking success (page 10).

BBC Click has started an on-going series looking at tech in beekeeping and on the allotment you can find the first show on iPlayer: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b05qnzfk/click-04042015>

A researcher at Royal Holloway, University of London is looking to recruit beekeepers in London and the surrounding countryside to participate in a study on the effects of urbanisation on honeybees – see page 2.

The first swarm call out went out the 17th from a garage being demolished.

Bee Farmers Association is looking for an apprentice! See <http://beefarmers.co.uk/apprenticeships>.

A petition was posted through 38degrees to ban the import of Italian Bees: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/ban-importation-of-honeybees-from-italy>

BeeCraft Magazine is regularly hanging out at google with live discussions on subjects from small hive beetle to urban forage: <http://www.bee-craft.com/beekeeping/hangouts>. See last month's newsletter, to which Mark contributed (page 13).

Some found the fact that Bayer has launched a Feed a Bee campaign in the USA slightly ironic. The good news is that they want to plant 50 million flowers though: <http://bit.ly/1JAuuhD>

Are the interactions of neonics, Nosema ceranae and miticides overstated? This study is done in the field rather than in the lab <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1462-2920.12825/abstract>

Mark posted a photo of the bee world's equivalent to Hobbits, a Hairy Footed Flower Bee.

Now at the end of the month it looks like colonies are building up very fast across most of London, peo-



Super of bees.



Brood box.

ple were reminded to make sure bees have enough food.

And that looks like its all for the month folks.

Adventures in Beeland: A box full of bees

*Emily's regular guest article from her excellent blog: <http://adventuresinbeeland.com/>. This month, she reviews the book: **Bees in the City**.*

*Emily Scott
LBKA member*

My complaining about the weather worked – it has responded by sending sunshine and warmth our way. It has actually been so bonny that I have been walking around without my coat on! And thinking about getting my sunglasses out!

?This has coincided with some holiday time I had booked, so I've been able to inspect the allotment bees for the first time this year. I felt strangely apprehensive when I opened up the hive, partly because it's been so long since I've properly looked at them. Early October was probably my last inspection.

There were a **lot** of bees. A sight we have been longing to see in our hives at Perivale. And below it was another box full of bees, because I left them on a brood box with a super on top over winter. I decided not to use my smoker, as I dislike disturbing the bees too much by blowing smoke in their sensitive eyes. The bees look daunting at first, so you move slow and gentle. A couple were buzzing round my head, but you hold your nerve and before you know it twenty-two frames later you've inspected the lot, no smoke and no stings either.



Stag beetle.

Nearly every single frame of the super had young brood or eggs in it. Below is the brood box stacked underneath the super, which is also packed with bees. Inside I found older brood and wonderful golden rainbow walls of pollen. My only worry is they are quite low on nectar/honey compared to the amount of pollen they have. And in a hive this big, with drone brood and drones walking the frames, they will be thinking of swarming soon.

Part of the reason I took time off was to get a hive delivered from Thornes. So I have a spare brood box now, plus eleven frames of foundation, all ready to do a Bailey comb change to get them to draw out new clean frames of comb. That should take their minds off swarming. The only problem is I have to get the brood box and frames down to the allotment, which will take a taxi and probably also the help of Drew when he gets back at the weekend.

Would appreciate thoughts from other beekeepers on how to do a Bailey comb change with a brood-and-a-half (as a brood box plus a super containing brood is known). Should I place the foundation frames above both boxes? Or in-between the brood box and the super for extra warmth to draw the combs out? I have two queen excluders.

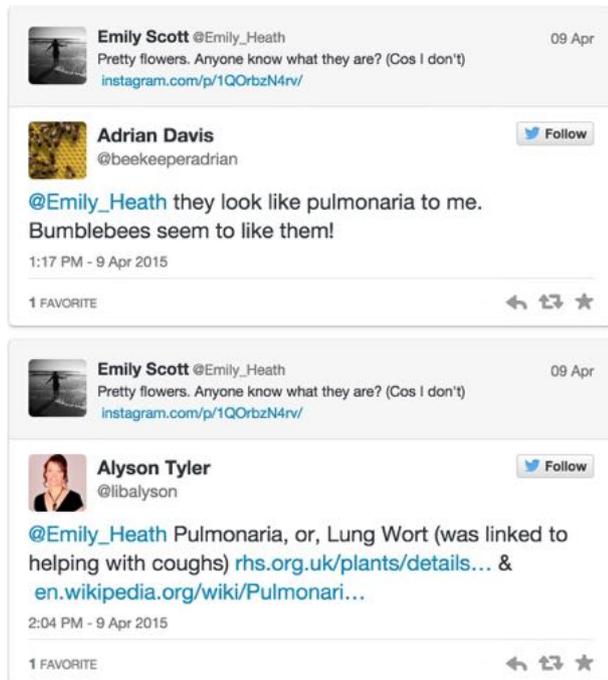
Just as I was finishing the inspection, an old man approached behind the fence. He asked me the usual questions about whether I get stung and how much honey I get, telling me he finds the bees interesting.



Red deadnettle.



Pulmonaria, also known as common Lungwort.



Twitter help.



Magnolia tree, Walpole park.

know what they are because some kind people on Twitter told me.

A magnolia on Tuesday evening in Walpole Park. Drew and I were walking home, having had our first after-work picnic of the year. It's lovely to enjoy spending time outdoors again.

"I'm glad you like them" I said. "Oh no", he replied, "I don't like them! I got stung once and I've never forgot it". As he was saying this, I noticed with dread a little worker climbing on his hair. I froze – wondered whether to tell him – the bee flew off. Such as a relief as when bees climb on your hair they have a tendency to burrow in and get stuck. I have received some of my nastiest stings from bees doing this, because the skin is quite thin on your scalp. He walked away unaware of the bee's investigations.

As I left he shouted out "You're a better man than me" across the allotments. Thanks, I think!

I also found a stag beetle – dead – but proof that stag beetles roam the allotments.

The warmth has brought the flowers out. The bees like red deadnettle.

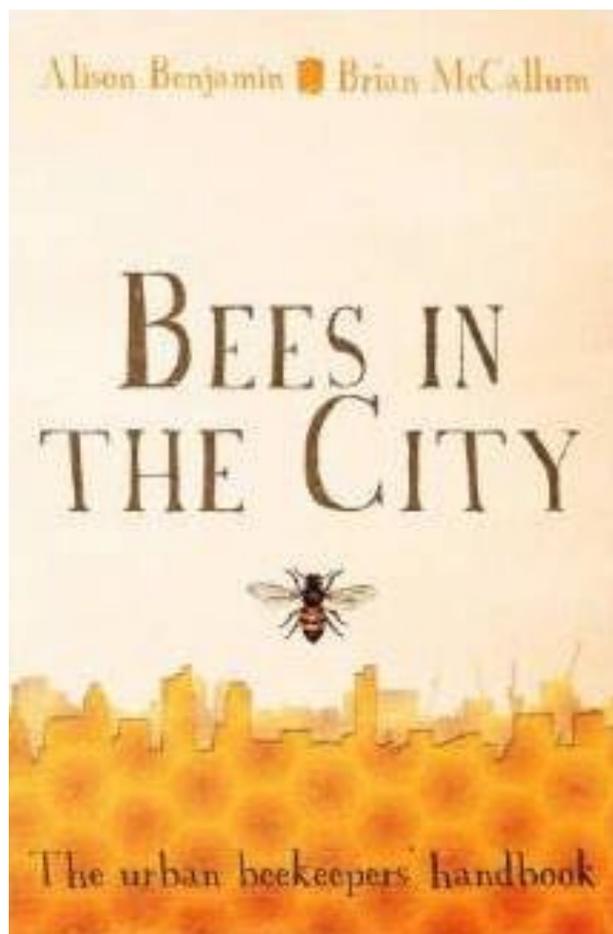
And I was excited to find a pinky/purple pulmonaria, also known as common lungwort, on our plot. I only

Book review: Bees in the City

This review by Emily was originally published on her blog – <http://adventuresinbeeland.com6>. Thanks Emily for letting us republish this.

Emily Scott
LBKA member

It's been a while since I did a bee book-review. Partly this is down to lack of time and partly because I've been busy reading lots of other books, as I've been catching



Bees in the City.

up with new ones by several of my favourite authors, like Alexander McCall Smith, Kate Mosse and Donna Tartt.

Whilst looking in my local library, I was surprised to come across a bee book I hadn't read! Alison Benjamin and Brian McCallum are a double-act who have also written the better known **A World without Bees** and **Keeping Bees and Making Honey**.

Bees in the City: The Urban Beekeepers' Handbook is a book of three parts.

Part 1: The urban beekeeping revolution

Part I, 'The urban beekeeping revolution', introduces us to several different types of British urban beekeepers, including 'The school beekeepers', 'The rehabilitation beekeepers' and 'The office beekeepers'. Our very own Ealing treasure John Chapple pops up as early as page 9! Their interviews give an insight into the wonderful variety of people keeping bees in cities – it certainly isn't only old men with beards.

The reasons people get into beekeeping vary too. Some individuals are interested in bees as pollinators, some in the honey, while schools find the bees can bring out the best in previously difficult pupils and companies often

want hives to encourage team-building and to fit with their brand values and reputation.

Part 2: Making our urban environment more bee friendly

Part 2, 'Making our urban environment more bee friendly', focuses on the important question of whether our bees have enough to eat. John Chapple features in this part too, telling the authors how his honey yields are at a low compared with twenty years ago. He found two of his hives at Regents Park (he keeps several hives in different London locations) suffered dramatically when another beekeeper installed 40 hives nearby.

Other urban beekeepers are more optimistic and there has been no definitive research produced yet into how many hives London can support. Alison and Brian say in this chapter "two thirds of London [is] given over to green spaces", which I expect is a wild over-estimation. Part of the challenge is assessing how bee-friendly a green space is, in a rapidly changing city where front gardens are constantly being concreted over. A lawn is technically a "green space" but if kept cropped short and dandelion-free can be entirely useless for bees.

This may be a good point to mention research recently published by Professor Dave Goulson and others in *Science*: Bee declines driven by combined stress from parasites, pesticides, and lack of flowers – thanks to <http://honeymedic.wordpress.com/> for leaving me a comment about this. Interesting sentence from this on changes during the past 50 years – "Global honey bee stocks have increased while wild bees appear to have declined substantially, as evidenced by data for bumblebees and very scant data for other bee species." Also, "there is evidence that high concentrations of domestic honey bee hives can displace wild bumblebees from their preferred foodplants and from whole areas if hive densities are sufficiently high". Any keeper of honey bees who thinks they are 'saving the bees' is sadly mistaken. The European honey bee *Apis mellifera* is not endangered and its presence in large numbers could actually be a bad thing for local bumbles.

Some hopeful projects are mentioned, like the North London River of Flowers, which is expanding to other cities, Brighton & Hove council's planting of wild flowers along roadsides and the 4,000 semi-mature trees planted in the Olympic Park. An organisation called the Bee Guardian Foundation is mentioned as doing good work, but sadly I fear they may be a goner since the book was written, as their website no longer works and their Facebook page was last updated in 2013.

Part 3: How you can become an urban beekeeper

Finally 'Part III, How you can become an urban beekeeper', turns to the practicalities of keeping bees in



Image of gardeners on London tube from url <http://www.riverofflowers.org>

urban areas. This is not so different to keeping bees in the countryside, but extra considerations like increased potential for disputes with neighbours and keeping hives in very restricted spaces are mentioned. The advice is sensible and I agree with their preferences for replacing old comb each spring and keeping good-tempered local bees rather than importing bees from abroad.

Poetry corner

It turns out that Paul is quite a poet!

Paul Vagg
resources@lbka.org.uk

The Honey Bee's Reward

Upon a summer early morn,
 The sun dazzling like gemstones through the trees,
 It's warming glow follows the chill of dawn,
 I hear the forest whisper in the gentle breeze.

When from the corner of my eye,
 Upon a thicket I did see,
 A spiders web outlined by dew,
 Thereupon a struggling honey bee!

Excuse me sir! To my surprise,
 The little worker bee did say,
 Might you assist with my predicament?
 Before I become the spiders prey.

Why certainly mam! I'd be happy to,
 As I gently set her free,

And sat upon the dampened ground,
 To rest her perched upon my knee.

She fanned her wings, Why thank you sir,
 Your reward it shall be great,
 I bestow on you my treasure trove of gold,
 But a short while you must wait!

While Her words still echoed she was gone,
 Busily buzzing about her way,
 I pondered though what she had said,
 In anticipation of that day.

Upon the summer seasons end,
 I duly raised my roof and board,
 To see frame upon frame of glistening gold,
 The little bees reward!

Upcoming events

Friday 17th - Sunday 19th April: BBKA Spring Convention

at Harper Adams University, Newport, Shropshire,
 TF10 8NB

The British Beekeeping Association Spring Convention is probably Europe's biggest national beekeeping event. With more than 30 lectures from international and leading UK speakers and well as over 40 workshops and courses during the 3 day event, there is something for everyone, expert, improver, beginner and non-beekeeper.

Sunday 10th May: Monthly meeting: Swarm Collection

11:00-12:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

Angela Woods and Jon Harris will describe, demonstrate and answer questions about swarm collection. No doubt, there'll be lots of other expertise, anecdotes and collective experience in the room!

Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions (and offers of help)! We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, chair@lbka.org.uk
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary:** Emma Nye, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership services:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Forage:** Mark Patterson, forage@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Paul Vagg, resources@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Emily Abbott, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Tristram Sutton, mentoring@lbka.org.uk

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/>.

