



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

June, 2017

Welcome to June's newsletter! This month, Richard juxtaposes forage creation with wax extraction (thankfully, only juxtaposed in the article), Eugene writes up our incredibly useful Bee Health Day (page 5), Sara gives us a word and photographic summary of our May beekeeping course, Emily juxtaposes pollen, nosema and missing queens (page 12), and there's the usual regular contributions including news from our apiaries, what to do in your apiary at the moment (page 7) and what's in flower now (page 7).

From our Chair	1
Announcements	3
Last month's Monthly Meeting: Bee Health Day	5
May in the Apiary	7
Focus on Forage	7
LBKA Apiaries	8
May Beekeeping Course	10
Facebook (In)digest(ion)	12
Adventures in Beeland: Pollen, nosema and the case of three missing queens	12
Members' marketplace	15
Upcoming events	15
Committee	16

Thanks to this month's contributors: **Eugene Fahy, Richard Glassborow, Petros Hahladakis, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Ted Parkes, Emily Scott, Sara Valenti and Vlad Zamfir**. Thanks as usual to Martin Hudson for proof-reading it.

Would you like to join the esteemed list of contributors above? If so, please contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

Aidan Slingsby
Editor, services@lbka.org.uk

From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

Most of what we do as beekeepers is pretty universal to all beekeeping. But there are some aspects of beekeeping in an urban environment like London that can be a challenge and do require at least a change of emphasis. I thought I would share two examples that have occurred in the last two weeks.

The first concerns the uneven distribution of forage across our city and the continuing trend of habitat loss. Some of you will already have seen a post on the London Beekeepers Facebook page showing some early results from our pollinator-friendly seed-mix initiative. This year we have already distributed 1,500 packets of these seeds to individuals, schools, community groups and commercial organisations. We asked that they send us evidence of the results and first to do so has been the Tooting Community Garden, SW17.

Seeds were also distributed to the Alexandra Road Park Tenants Association event as part of the park's restoration project funded by Heritage Lottery Fund and Camden Council purchased a supply of our leaflet, "Helping honeybees and other London pollinators" for distribution to residents.

We urge anyone who has been involved in our seed



Hoverfly on bramble.



project to send us photos. We are ordering more seeds and being able to show the results will help encourage more people and groups to plant flowers next year.

Meanwhile, at the other end of beekeeping, I have long felt urban beekeeping poses a particular challenge when it comes to the question of disposal of apiary waste – old brood frames in particular. I replace all of mine every year when I carry out shook swarms as the major part of my varroa control strategy. That’s a lot of frames. I have tried burning them. That works alright but is distinctly antisocial – a bit like a mini oil field fire.

Sealing in heavy duty plastic bags works for a while but the wooden frames mean you don’t get many in a bag and it is not long before the wood punctures the plastic and bees get access. And this is most certainly going to happen when you take them to the tip.

Last year I bought a steam wax extractor, primarily to



see what it could offer by way of hygienic frame disposal but of course there is also the wax recycling aspect too. I have used solar extractors before but they have a very limited capacity and I also found that, because by their very nature they are being used in warm sunny weather, just when the bees are flying, it is difficult to keep the bees off the residual goo when cleaning. Steam extractors can be used on dull days even during winter and they have a high capacity too. The temperature is

supposedly 110°C, so presumably everything, including the residue, comes out sterilised. You will want to do this outside.

It is a lot of work but I have found that as well as the Thornes wax trade-in, many of the frames are reusable without too much trouble so if you are well organised you might even approach the minimum wage. The main gain for me is a more comfortable feeling about the small number of heavy plastic bags of sterile glupe that go to the tip. I have yet to try burning it but those frames that are beyond reuse do make excellent kindling for our wood-burning stove.

But here's a variation if you want to try this before the outlay on a steam recycler. I was helping a fellow beekeeper dispose of a lot of frames. We cut the comb out with a large cook's knife and added it to a large pan of simmering water (acidified with vinegar). The improvised heat source was a gas barbeque (in this case, the neighbour's – with their kind permission). Do not use uncontrollable charcoal and the proximity of melted wax and a naked gas flame requires extreme caution. Keep the level well below the pan lip and, I stress, the water only needs a gentle simmer to melt the wax. We used a holey spoon to remove the "brood stew". When it has cooled, the solid wax can be separated from the liquor. You can go further and strain the melted wax through muslin. The boiled larvae and chitin residue can be bagged but I suspect it might burn, though, I am not yet sure how sociably.

As I said at the beginning, in an urban environment this aspect of beekeeping is a challenge. It would be interesting to know how rural beekeepers deal with it.

Announcements

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

Next Monthly Meeting



This month, on Sunday 11th June, we'll be at our usual venue for a **new** Monthly Meeting topic – making up

nuclei – run by our education officer Howard Nichols and LBKA member Geoff Hood.

Next month's meeting – on 9th July – will be another new topic – the biology of the honey bee – led by Howard Nichols.

Elliot and Vlad pass Module 1

We are pleased to announce that **Elliot Hodges** and **Vlad Zamfir** have both **passed BBKA's Module 1** exams, with Vlad passing with **distinction** (good to see that LBKA's apiaries are in good hands)! Passing Module 1 requires a great deal of commitment and studying, so very well done to both!

LBKA receives the "Surrey Shield"

As reported in March, LBKA was awarded the Surrey Shield for outstanding performance in the 2016 BBKA Basic assessments, with the highest number of members as a proportion of membership passing this assessment. It's nice to see LBKA's emphasis and support on good beekeeping training being recognised and Howard deserves a significant amount of credit for this.

Lambeth Country Show

As usual, we'll be at the [Lambeth Country Show](#) – our biggest outreach activity of the year – on the weekend of 15th and 16th July at Brockwell Park. We'll be in the "Farm Zone". Come and visit our stall! If you can volunteer to help, please email Emily at events@lbka.org.uk.

Discounts for members

A few suppliers offer discounts for LBKA/BBKA members. See details in our members' area on the website. If anyone can help us negotiate discounts with other suppliers, please let us know.

French Flint are one such company that give us a 40% discount on jars. They have now moved premises to The Gallery, Springalls Wharf, 25a Bermondsey Wall West, SE16 4TH. There is no proper parking at this location and the surrounding streets are all double yellow lines or resident permit parking only. On the plus side, they are no longer within the congestion zone.

LBKA swarm collection policy

This is still relevant, see last [month's newsletter](#).

Bee Garden Party Invitation

Martha Kearney and Bill Turnbull invite you to join them at this year's Bee Garden Party: 5-8pm on Thursday 29 June in the gardens of Marlborough House, in London's Mall. With kind permission from the household of HM The Queen, and in the presence of the



LBKA with the Surrey Shield.

Commonwealth Secretary-General, Baroness Scotland. It will be a fun evening focussed on bees, with fabulous food and wine, and raising funds to support Bees for Development. Please buy your tickets [here](#) or call 01600 714848.



Urban Bee Conservationist Documentary

Dhruv Shah is part of a group of film students at SAE Institute London, interested in producing a short documentary about an urban bee conservationist and what motivates them to do the work that they do. They'd like to focus on personal aspects of their motivations but will touch on the environmental side as well.

As part of a two year undergraduate degree programme – the documentary will be part of their coursework – they'll be looking to shoot over 1-2 days in late June. Anyone willing to take part? If so, please email Dhruv at 62244uk@saeinstitute.edu.

Old announcements from May

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

Communicating with members: Use our [Open Facebook group](#) (open to both members and non-members), [LBKA-forum](#) (open to members only; ask services@lbka.org.uk

lbka.org.uk if you need to be added) and the [Members' area](#) where you can see details of other members who've opted-in to sharing them.

Courses: We've now run both our full beekeeping courses for this year and have 60 people starting on their beekeeping journey.

Old announcements from April

Mentoring: Mentoring season will be starting shortly. If you are interested in becoming a mentor please contact Elliot at mentoring@lbka.org.uk. Full support provided.

Survey of UK beekeepers: https://ljmbusiness.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_BIRNZbOdqJBL7xP.

Do you want bees? Sign up on up http://lbka.org.uk/swarm_list.html.

Collecting swarms: Email services@lbka.org.uk if you'd like to be added/removed to our WhatsApp list

Guest blog? Does any other member have a blog that they would like to feature here? Let me know on services@lbka.org.uk

Old announcements from March

Beekeeper wanted: A Community Garden in Fulham is looking for a beekeeper to look after their two hives. Contact admin@lbka.org.uk if you can help.

New leaflets: LBKA has two new leaflets, one on the types of bees found in London and one on how to help honey bees. They are available for [free download](#) and we can supply printed copies for public outreach activities.

Engraved hive tool: We presented Howard with a hive

tool to commemorate his achievement of becoming a Master Beekeeper.

Surrey Shield: LBKA has been awarded the Surrey Shield for outstanding performance in the 2016 BBKA Basic assessments. Last year we had the highest number of members as a proportion of membership passing this assessment.

Old announcements from February

Howard is a Master Beekeeper, the highest of the BBKA qualifications.

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.

Last month's Monthly Meeting: Bee Health Day

What happened last month.

Eugene Fahy
LBKA member

Our May meeting was a departure from the usual format. The session was run twice, morning and afternoon and numbers restricted to a maximum of twenty per session, so that everyone had a chance to benefit from the practical parts of the day. On a glorious Sunday, about 15 of us gathered at Walworth Gardens for the afternoon session and divided into three groups and rotated through three practical sessions.

Howard gave a concise and informative demonstration of how to conduct a disease inspection. The key points were:

- Disease inspections should be done twice a year, in early Spring and in July/August
- When doing a disease inspection, do not worry about anything else such as finding the queen, focus on looking for signs of disease; and
- Look at the frames twice - having removed the frame, check if there is evidence of deformed wing virus. Secondly, having shaken the bees from the frame into the brood box, examine the comb. The best way to spot anything abnormal is to know what normal brood and brood pattern looks like.



Walworth Garden's apiary.

Richard delivered the next session on varroa management. Despite all of the lurid newspaper stories about threats to honeybees from Asian hornets, by far the biggest threat comes from the varroa mite. Having described the life cycle and reproductive behaviour of the mites, where a single female can have 200 offspring in a three month cycle, Richard said that we should be looking for treatments with 98% efficacy. Having looked at the various chemical and biotechnical control options, we discussed a shook swarm in March/April when there are at least five frames of brood and plenty of young spring bees coupled with an oxalic acid treatment in winter when the hive is broodless. In London, this is a very short period and it seems the amount of daylight may be more influential than temperature. LASI suggest treating in the period from 10th-18th December. Richard pointed out that a shook swarm at the right time could be used for swarm control as well as varroa management. When asked when was the "right time", his answer was "about now - probably". Richard also demonstrated the queen-trapping method, another chemical-free technique in which the queen is trapped onto a frame to force her to lay there until the larvae are capped. Since these will be the only cells being capped,



Richard demonstrating the "queen trapping" method of varroa control.



Healthy and not-so-healthy comb for inspection.



Mark, covering pest and disease recognition.

the theory is that most of the varroa will go there to multiply and so taking out the frame and destroying it will remove a lot of varroa. The technique relies on quite precise timings and manipulations.

The final session was in the classroom with Mark and covered pest and disease recognition. We looked at both adult and brood pests and diseases. Some points to note from this session were that both European Foul Brood and American Foul brood are very rare, the former because varroa treatment helps to prevent it. Mark said that small hive beetle has spread from southern Italy to Sicily because a beekeeper took an infected hive to the island and the feeling is that it is only a matter of time before it is spread to northern Italy and infected bees are imported to the UK. On the subject of Asian

hornet traps, Mark said that the hornets have continental tastes and do not like English beer but a couple of chopped up prawns make very effective bait.

BeeBase has produced a number of helpful leaflets on bee health and disease recognition and treatment, they can be downloaded from the [website](#).

As LBKA members, we are very fortunate in having access to this practical advice. We are especially fortunate in having some particularly knowledgeable and dedicated committee members who provide training and support for the rest of us. Thank you to Richard, Howard, Mark for delivering the sessions, to Tristram who kept us all to time and ensured the sessions ran smoothly, to the staff at Walworth Garden for hosting us and to everyone involved in making the day such a success.

May in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

Swarm control

This is still the main priority if the colony has not yet swarmed. Routine inspections should be made every 7 days to check for queen cells. Make sure you have sufficient spare equipment for swarm control. Upon finding queen cells, you have sufficient time to close up the colony, go home to think things through and collate equipment. You are unlikely to have time to order equipment from a supplier, have it delivered and make it up. For anyone with access to Ted Hooper's Guide to Bees and Honey then Artificial Swarm method is covered extremely well on pages 138 to 140. The National Bee Unit also has a helpsheet for free download on the Beebase website.

Removing honey

Another seasonal task in early June is removing and processing the spring honey brought in by the bees. This year we have had a fairly good spring and some members are reporting spring honey. If spring honey is removed then keep a watch on stores within the hive.

Collecting swarms

If your bees do swarm or you are called out to collect another swarm then personal and public safety should always be the overriding priority. Do not attempt to climb trees or use ladders beyond your capabilities. A simple order of action may be as follows:

- Make sure they are honeybees.
- If on someone else's land then obtain permission to enter from the landowner. If a branch of the tree needs to be cut then, again, make sure you have permission.
- Ensure any bystanders are moved away to a safe place.
- Put on bee suit and light smoker. Spraying the swarm with a fine mist of water is a refinement which will help keep the swarm in a cluster.
- Place a large sheet (an old bedsheet is ideal) on the ground underneath the swarm.
- After making sure that you are safe then deposit as much of the swarm as you can in a box or large bucket. Try to aim for 90% of the bees as you then have a 90% chance of including the queen.

- Turn box or bucket containing most of the collected swarm upside down on top of the middle of the sheet with a stone or piece of wood wedged between the box (or bucket) and the sheet. This allows access for the remaining bees.
- Come back at dusk to collect up the swarm by removing the stone and tying the sheet around the box. It can then be hived.

Other actions

Add supers as necessary, adding another in advance of it being needed by the bees. This may be either a brood super or a honey super, depending upon circumstances.

Check varroa mite drop if not done in April or May. The Beebase varroa calculator is a useful diagnostic tool.

Carry out a specific brood disease inspection. The essence of this is to know what is normal and healthy and so to look out for anything that deviates from this.

Ensure you have sufficient frames to deal with the honey flow when it arrives. It is a lot easier to simply add a super than having to extract a super and put it back in the middle of the honey flow.

Enjoy your June beekeeping activities. It is a short season and June is an integral part of the season.

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

Early summer, June in particular, is a time of the year which brings uncertainty for many a beekeeper, and especially for those in rural areas. June is the beginning of the summer season when the spring flowering plants and trees shed their blooms having been pollinated and now begin to form seeds, but the main flow of summer flowering blooms has yet to begin. Beekeepers refer to this period of change as the "June Gap".

At this time of year Honey bee colonies are approaching their peak in worker population in readiness for the summer flow, queens are laying at a prolific rate and colonies have many larva to feed. A reduction in incoming nectar and pollen as the spring flowers cease but the summer flowers are yet to peak can leave large colonies struggling to feed themselves or fill supers with surplus honey for the beekeeper.

In urban areas the June Gap is rarely felt because our towns and cities contain an abundance of exotic plants which bloom throughout June, filling the gap in forage availability.

This spring has not been at all typical though so I'm not anticipating much of a June gap. March was very warm and colonies built up fast in response to the abundance of flowering plants being far ahead of the curve. April was then cool and overcast, whilst May has been mostly very hot and dry. The warm start to the season has meant that many plants have flowered far earlier than normal and this spring everything seems to have bloomed simultaneously leaving our bees spoilt for choice. So far most of my colonies now have 3-4 supers of honey on them which are now being capped. The problem with everything flowering early and all at once is that there is now a real danger that from end of July onwards there may be little for our bees to forage on.

Early summer flowers like **lime**, **sweet chestnut**, **oriental chestnut**, **pseudo acacia**, **bramble** and many of our flowering hedgerow herbs and meadow flowers have already begun to bloom. During the last week of May I saw lime trees in full bloom in Tower Hamlets, Greenwich and the City. This tree, our biggest potential for a bumper honey crop in the city is flowering 5-6 weeks ahead of its more usual blooming time of late June and early July. The problem is that the spring this year was dry – unlike the summer of 2016 when the limes yielded huge nectar flow – that they are unlikely to yield much nectar this summer. Limes require plenty of rain in the spring to prime them for a good nectar flow followed by hot and sultry weather at their time of blooming. The recent downpours of rain have come too late for the limes this year and I don't expect much of a nectar flow from them.

In urban parks and gardens **privet** hedges are coming into bloom. Beekeepers loath privet because its nectar produces a bitter tasting honey that is unpalatable to most but for the bees, privet is a good source of forage. Other garden shrubs important as sources of nectar in urban areas include **hebe**, **choisya**, **pyracantha** and **cotoneaster** – all are popular with bees and are widely planted in urban car parks, and amenity areas around housing developments. The latter two have by-and-large finished flowering now but choisya and hebe often have a second flush of blossom and will continue to bloom well into summer.

Urban areas contain many exotic trees which flower after our native species have ceased flowering. These include **sweet chestnut**, **pseudo acacia**, and **tree of heaven** but again this season these trees have begun flowering early. Tree of heaven was in full bloom across many parts of London during May and the later flowering chestnuts are in bloom now leaving me wondering what the bees will forage on during July and into August. Along railway embankments **fire weed**, **thistles** and **teasel** are also already blooming far earlier than normal.

In my small meadow in west London many of the summer flowering flowers are already producing seeds.

This summer more than ever I think our bees will be reliant on our park and garden flowers to see them through lean times when their usual sources of food may have already finished blooming as a result of the early start to the season.

Right now in my garden **nepeta**, **geraniums**, **campanulas**, **thyme**, **sage**, **valerian**, **perennial corn flower**, **wall flowers**, **escalonia**, **osteospermums**, **teucrium**, **lamb's lugs**, **oriental poppy**, **knifophia**, **eremus** and **giant echiums** are in bloom attracting large numbers of bees. Soon the **lavender**, **echinops**, **cardoon** and **echinacea** should follow – all much earlier than usual.

Because of the advanced growing season and potential risk that everything may flower at once leaving nothing for the bees later in the season (and for me to appreciate with my eyes) I have begun Chelsea chopping many of my herbaceous perennials.

Plants like **helenium**, **helianthus**, **golden rod** (solidago), **asters**, **dahlias** and **leucanthemum** can be chopped back by about half. This will encourage multiple new flowering shoots from lower down the stem producing a larger mass of slightly smaller flowers later in the season, extending the forage for the bees and ensuring there is colour in your garden late in the season.

Other plants like **perennial cornflower**, **oriental poppy**, **cat mint**, **sages** and **teucrium** can be chopped back very close to the ground once flowered, fed, watered and mulched they often produce a second later flush of new growth and later flowering blooms. Other plants can be encouraged to continue flowering for longer by simply dead heading – removing the fading flowers before they have an opportunity to set seed. The plants desire is to reproduce so it will keep on sprouting new blooms until it does so or the season ends.

LBKA Apiaries

News from LBKA's four apiaries. Thanks Vlad for helping compile these.

Mudchute

Vlad Zamfir
LBKA Apiaries manager and apiary manager for Mudchute

May has been largely quiet at Mudchute with only a mi-

nor scare that one of my queens failed to mate. Thankfully, one week later the queen was laying (I think the cold snap in April made her less than eager to mate)! The bees in this hive are very eager to have baby bees so they filled up the pantry before the queen got mated: 75% of the whole brood chamber was full of pollen. Has anyone heard the term pollen bound?

For most of May, the hives had at least 2 supers on them (to alleviate congestion + provide space for ripening spring nectar). Only one of the supers filled up, reflecting that forage is a bit precious in the area in spring.

Brockwell

Petros Hahladakis

Apiary manager for Brockwell

After performing a shock swarm from nationals into a 14x12 brood box in early May, it has been a relatively quiet month up at Brockwell. The two hives that made it through winter now have 3 supers on them each, and after today's inspection it looks likely we will be adding a fourth soon. Although we have enough capped frames to perform an extraction, from previous experiences we tend to have a small June gap in the forage so we leave all the honey on for the bees until our standard early August extraction date. The worst of these June breaks saw the bees uncap a full super of honey during the period.

Brockwell was also lucky enough to receive 2 swarms during the month which brought the Apiary back up to four hives. The swarms arrived in standard 5 frame nuc boxes which after a week, we transferred into a national brood box using a dummy board to mark the end of the hive for the bees. It is remarkable to see the difference between the two swarms with one having expanded to a full 11 frame national brood with a super on top over the month, whereas the second we have expanded out to 8 frames in the same amount of time. The first swarm is also showing some aggressive tendencies, so perhaps there is something to the adage that bad tempered bees bring in more honey.

We are expecting more of the same for the next two months as we already start to start to chase our tails with super frame making, and hopefully a good honey harvest in August. The main thing for us is that we have almost finished our Spring spring-cleaning.

Holland Park

Ted Parkes

Apiary manager for Holland Park

It's been mostly a good month for the bees at Holland Park. The hives are all coming around fairly well with the introduction of nice weather. A big part of that was the help of Vlad Zamfir to help inspect the hives. I think we marked 4 queens that day. At the moment most hives are in good shape. We did have one hive



Eden Community Garden's 30th anniversary garden party.

stand collapse toppling over a double hive. Unfortunately the queen was lost in the accident and we are waiting the outcome of a couple of queens cells that have since hatched out. Hopefully we will see signs of a new queen in the next week or so. A frame with capped brood, open brood and eggs has been introduced to the hive that was drone laying in hopes they nurture a new queen. If not I will introduce a queen cell from one of the other hives when it becomes available. The swarms collected last month are doing well and building nicely. All in all progress has been made and the apiary is in good shape.

Eden

Richard Glassborow

Apiary manager for Eden

April and May are busy times at the Eden apiary as we weave a programme of shook swarming all the colonies as the main varroa control strategy with swarm control and making sure that there are always enough full colonies to demonstrate for the succession of Introductory and Taster courses. We made it!

On top of that we are starting to harvest honey, just in time to replenish stocks from last year. Demand for Eden honey is rising as its reputation for exceptional flavour spreads and we have established some consistent outlets. The main priority, however, remains as a teaching apiary and we are about to take on a new cohort of mentees from this year's courses.

Meanwhile, our hosts, the Eden Community Garden, celebrated their 30th anniversary with a garden party on May 12. They were lucky with the weather. Having spent the last month of drought praying for rain the garden desperately needed, the rains came with impeccable timing on the 12th! But someone obviously had a word and the evening cleared up and was indeed all the more beautiful for a good soaking.



Frame-making components.



May Beekeeping Course

Last month, we ran our second full beekeeping course of the year. Thanks to course attendee Sara for writing up her experiences and taking lots of photographs.

Sara Valenti
LBKA Member

Who knew that the beekeeping world would be so fascinating, fun and full of surprises? Bees are a wonder of nature: many believe that they are essential to the survival of life on our planet and for this reason we must protect and support them at all costs.

My partner and I took part in the two days long LBKA beekeeping course in May. We learnt so much about bees, like how they are incredibly organised and industrious but also how fragile and vulnerable they can be. We've always been fans of bees but now we can say that we admire and respect them even more than before.

One of the first concepts presented to us is that a bee hive should be considered a 'super organism' formed by thousands of cells, where each bee is a cell. And just like in any other living organism, each cell (or group of cells) has its own specific task and it's cyclically re-

placed by a new one. Thinking of bees as cells rather than individuals gave me a whole new perspective on these creatures.

Another fun fact we learnt is that 'bees do not read the same books as beekeepers': no matter how many books or years of experience one has, bees always seem to manage to find a way to outsmart and take their humans by surprise!

Inspecting the bee hives; watching the worker bees do the 'waggle dance' (a technique they use to give their sisters directions to the delicious flowers they've just come back from); hearing all about the bees' obsession with hygiene; spotting the queen amongst hundreds of worker bees and drones; standing in the middle of an apiary, surrounded by buzzing bees swirling all around us; wearing a beekeeper suit for the first time and feeling like a spacewoman, these were just some of the highlights of this great weekend course.

We learnt about swarms: the reasons behind this annual urge bees have to create a new colony and the 'tricks' beekeepers have come up with to try and prevent them. But also the challenges beekeepers face when half of their bees decide they just 'gotta go anyway' and end up landing somewhere inevitably absurd and hard to reach.



Martin instructing on frame-making.



Honey tasting.



Frames made by attendees.

Not everything about bees is pleasant or fun unfortunately: they're affected by parasites and can catch diseases that can decimate them and destroy their colonies. So we learnt about the treatments that are currently available to beekeepers to make sure their bees are as healthy as possible.

We even got to practice our DIY skills to build beehive frames and, at the end of the last day, we were rewarded with a taste of some delicious local honeys.

We can't wait to be paired with our mentor now, so that we can continue to find out more weird and wonderful



A swarm – “bees that just decide they ‘gotta go anyway’ ”



Mating nuc.



Inspection.



things about these amazing creatures in the year ahead and, who knows, maybe one day we’ll also get our very own first beehive!

Facebook (In)digest(ion)

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

Nothing this month. Anyone willing to help write this in future months?

Adventures in Beeland: Pollen, nosema and the case of three missing queens

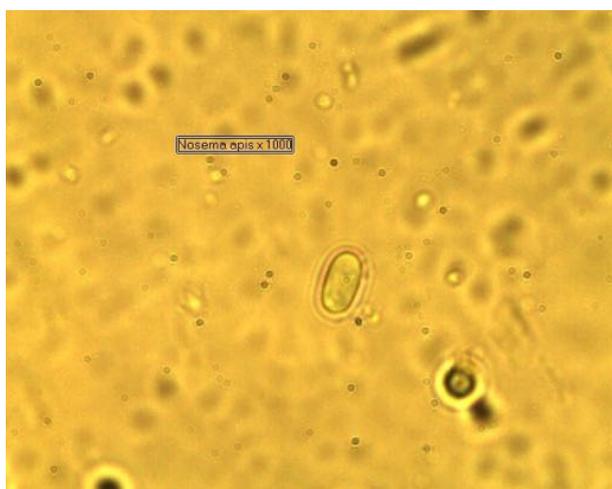
Another guest post from Emily’s excellent blog – <http://adventuresinbeeland.com/>. This month, nosema and microscopy feature – this will be familiar from one of our monthly meetings earlier this year.

Emily Scott
LBKA member

This Saturday Tom ran a nosema ID-ing demo at the apiary. He had a microscope attached to his laptop so that he could show us what he was seeing on the screen and even take photos. After finding zero nosema in two samples, including one from a small colony that was



Tom diligently removing the heads.



Nosema apis under microscope $\times 1000$. Crown copyright 2017

being slow to build up, he finally hit the jackpot in a third sample and was able to show us the small rice-like cells of nosema.

One of the pictures shows Tom diligently removing the heads, as just the abdomens are needed for the sample. The abdomens are then ground up using a pestle and mortar and placed on a slide with a drop of water. The water makes the nosema cells appear to swim but that is just the movement of the water on the slide!

Nosema apis and *Nosema ceranae* are extremely common spore-producing fungus parasites that live inside a honey bee's gut. *Nosema* spores enter via the mouth parts of a bee as she feeds or cleans and travel into her mid-gut, where they invade her digestive cells. The spores germinate and feed happily away on the content of these cells, rapidly multiplying by cell division until the gut contains 30-50 million nosema spores once the infection is fully developed. As you might expect, this significantly shortens the bee's lifespan (sources disagree on how much, with various books/websites quoting 50%, 10-50% and up to 78% – the earlier the bee picks up the spores, the more dramatically its lifespan is likely to be shortened).



Tom checking out a sample.

And lots of pollen. I wanted to try and ID the pollens using a book I own – or at least I used to own – but now I can't find it. It was "The pollen grain drawings of Dorothy Hodges" (IBRA, 2009), which I used to draw the pollens in my 2015 post 'An evening spent peering at sexual material'. Perhaps I lent it to someone, or maybe I'll discover it hiding somewhere. Anyway, if any palynologists out there can identify these, that would be great. Is the small round one forget-me-not?

Biologist and fantastic blogger "Standingoutinmyfield" commented:

Unfortunately, most of those pollen grains are damaged, so will be impossible to identify. This can happen when the osmotic balance of the solution is too high or low – probably if you used pure water, the pollen grains swelled until they exploded. However, I can tell you forget me not pollen is the smallest pollen known to man, at just 2 microns. It's not round, though, it's shaped like little dumb-bells.

As for the three missing queens, well unfortunately Emma and I appear to have mislaid them. We did a split on Hope's hive on Saturday 6th May as it contained queen cells, but it's possible the colony had already swarmed as the cells were sealed and there was no sign of Hope herself. Emma also donated some queen cells from Hope's hive to our other hive, Patience, as there was no sign of Queen Patience and the colony was grumpy.



As well as spotting nosema Tom also found a bee hair – isn't it beautiful? It reminded us of a tree.



Buff-tailed bumblebee



Pollen grains – photo by Thomas Bickerdike.



Fairy cakes



Cake



Honey bee.

When we checked on Sunday 14th May, the queen cells were hatched but there was no sign of any eggs yet – probably too early. That was still the case when I visited on Saturday 20th May. So we wait, and hope, for eggs. The virgin queens must successfully mate in the sky and return safely to their hives. It is a perilous and weather-dependent business. We have had a lot of cold days and some rain lately but I have my fingers crossed that surely at least one colony will reward us with a laying queen soon!

I'll end with some photos of bees and birthday cakes – it was my birthday recently. It happens to be May 20th; the Slovenians are my new favourite nation as they have named May 20th World Bee Day. What better present could a beekeeper ask for?!

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.

Alan Bezzant. Available to a good home – a Dartington long hive complete with supers. Been used for last 5 years or so in Eden garden. In exchange for an appropriate donation to Bees for Development. Contact Alan on 07802 635007 or alanb@mcs-europe.co.uk.

Carole Wright. Can I ask that people let me know if they're doing a split of a large overwintered colony so I can buy their Nuc. Give me a call on 07885 221964 if you can help.

Philippe Sigal. I'm relocating to Lisbon in July and it is unlikely that I will have access to a garden or space where I could keep bees. As a result, I am selling two National Hives, complete with sloping hive stand, Happykeeper floor, brood box with 11 DN4 frames, stainless steel framed Queen Excluder, 3 supers each with 10 SN1 frames with castellated spacers and wired foundation, crownboard with 2 plastic porter bee escapes, 4" roof (Thorne product code = N9991OM), quick feeder, hive tool, smoker and two bee suits. Bought and assembled 3 years ago. Price £500 (reduced and negotiable). Give me a call on 0776 6070 688 if you're interested. I'm in SW15.

Emily Abbott. I've got loads of 30lb buckets that I need to shift! Happy to donate them to anyone who could use them. They're all buckets that I bought for honey, so they're food grade, I've given them a quick rinse, and have got writing on them so I'm definitely

recycling them, rather than offering brand new buckets! emilyabbott@virginmedia.com.

Upcoming events

Sunday 11th June: Monthly meeting: Making up nuclei

11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

All about making up nuclei. Followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat. Meetings are for members only, but you're welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association.

Sunday 9th July: Monthly meeting: Biology of the honey bee

11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

All about the biology of the honey bee. Followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat. Meetings are for members only, but you're welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association.

Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th July: Lambeth Country Show

12:00-20:00 at Brockwell Park, Norwood Rd, London SE24 9BJ

Come and see our stall at the Lambeth Country Show, one of the biggest public events in the UK. We'll be in the Farm Zone.

Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions. We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, chair@lbka.org.uk
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary:** Natalie Cotton, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Forage:** Mark Patterson, forage@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Emily Abbott, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Tristram Sutton, resources@lbka.org.uk
- **Apiaries:** Vlad Zamfir, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- **Emma:** Emma Nye, emma.nye@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentoring@lbka.org.uk

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

