



# The London Beekeepers' Association LBKA News

## July, 2017

Welcome to July's newsletter! Now it's properly summer, we're looking ahead to LBKA's regular summer activities. . . like our spectacular Summer Social, for LBKA members and their family & friends – see page 3.

This month, Richard gives us news of LBKA's recent activities, Geoff reminds us what he told us at the Monthly Meeting (page 4), Natalie tells us what doing the 'Bee Basic' Assessment is like (page 6), Emily Abbott gives us a taste of a Garden Party (page 6), Howard tells us what we should be doing now (page 7), Mark tells us what the bees are eating (page 9), Vlad updates us on our apiaries (page 10), Eugene trawls a month of Facebook (page 10) and Emily Scott talks about a multi-function crown board (page 11).

<a href="#">From our Chair</a>	1
<a href="#">Announcements</a>	3
<a href="#">Last month's Monthly Meeting: Making up Nucs</a>	4
<a href="#">"Bee Basic": basically making you a better bee-keeper</a>	6
<a href="#">Garden partying</a>	7
<a href="#">July in the Apiary</a>	7
<a href="#">Focus on Forage</a>	9
<a href="#">LBKA Apiaries</a>	10
<a href="#">Facebook (In)digest(ion)</a>	10
<a href="#">Adventures in Beeland: Bee equipment review: National multi function crown board</a>	11
<a href="#">Members' marketplace</a>	13
<a href="#">Upcoming events</a>	13
<a href="#">Committee</a>	14

Thanks to this month's contributors: **Emily Abbott, Natalie Cotton, Eugene Fahy, Richard Glassborow, Geoff Hood, Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson, Emily Scott 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](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

## From our Chair

*Richard Glassborow*  
[chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk)

I thought I would take this opportunity to welcome another group of new beekeepers to the LBKA – the Ritz London Bee Club.

Establishing an apiary on the roof of this iconic hotel was the "dream" of Executive Sous Chef, Guillaume Brard, and the hotel Green Committee went with it and made it happen. The LBKA were consulted and have provided training for the 12 members of the group. They will be mentored by Guillaume, who is already an experienced beekeeper, and the LBKA will continue to provide support. We are impressed by the hotel's commitment to high standards of beekeeping practice (well, it is the Ritz so maybe we shouldn't be surprised) as well as their awareness of the social and environmental context of urban beekeeping.

Some of you may already have met Guillaume and Ben



*Lime in flower. Photo: Mark Patterson.*



*Apiary on the roof of the Ritz.*

Heke as they both came to the June monthly meeting. Ben was so taken with the swarm collection WhatsApp group that he had himself enrolled as a learner there and then. By the following Tuesday he joined me for his first experience of collecting a swarm. And I was very glad to have him with me – it turned out to be less than straightforward and would have been very difficult on my own.

This anecdote is a neat segue into talking about this WhatsApp group. It is now in its second year but seems to have really taken off this year. My own experiences of it have been very positive but I would like to hear from other users and not-yet-users how it is, or is not working for them.

To recap on how it works: we all know that best practice is to bring swarms to a quarantine apiary. But finding such a site and resourcing and managing it is not easy for a small organisation such as ours. In addition, one quarantine apiary does not adequately serve NW, N, E, SE and SW London. So we set up the WhatsApp group for swarm collectors, beekeepers who want a swarm and beekeepers who would like to learn how to collect a swarm. When a collector receives a call from a member of the public they post on WhatsApp that they are going to collect a swarm in postcode whatever, does anyone want a swarm, does anyone want experience? My experience has been that responses are almost immediate and arrangements can be made and modified spontaneously, which is a big advantage with something like swarm collection that can be unpredictable and disruptive enough already.

From the collection point of view it seems to be very efficient. If the first collector can't do it, they can post on WhatsApp and it reaches all the collectors at the same time, whereas the member of the public has to work their way down the BBKA list one at a time.

From the point of view of members wanting to receive swarms, you are sort of vetted when you join to ascertain that you are experienced enough to handle the risks. We don't recommend new beekeepers get swarms.

When swarms are posted as available, receivers have to be quick – very quick; typically a few minutes. From a collectors point of view this is attractive, but is it working for people who want a swarm? Please let me know.

From the perspective of someone wanting to learn how to collect a swarm, helping an experienced collector actually collect has to be the best way. I hope Ben's experience was positive (actually, I dare to be confident it was) and that others are learning the tricks too. London needs more swarm collectors.

Finally on this subject, a reminder to all that the BBKA (who operate the national swarm collection list which originates most of our calls), have rules that swarms cannot be sold (for insurance reasons). Our arrangement is that collectors can charge the receiver a flat rate of £20 for expenses. This is an arrangement between the two parties we recommend it is made clear and agreed from the outset. The LBKA is not involved unless LBKA nuc hives are being used in the transfer.. Then there is a £40 deposit, returnable on receipt of clean (scorched) box with same number of new frames as when supplied.

Anyone who has been or would like to be involved in this group and has any experiences or suggestions they would like to share, please do get in touch with me at [chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk).

I would just like to finish this month's column with an update on the LBKA wild flower seed mix programme that I wrote about last month. We have just ordered a new batch and have upgraded the package design in response to feedback from recipients wanting to see what the flowers will look like. Inevitably this has meant a move to full colour and we hope you like the new packets. They have a QR code which will lead to a new page on the website (not live yet) where you can find out more about the scheme, the flowers and see all the photos being sent in by community groups who have been planting them. We have also designed a space for additional, retrofitted graphics from sponsors who would like to support the scheme.

# 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 9th July at 11:00**, we'll be at our usual venue for a **new** Monthly Meeting topic – **the biology of the honey bee** – led by Howard Nichols.

Next month, our Monthly Meeting on **Honey labelling regulations** is on **13th August at 11:00** at **Walworth Garden** because... it will be followed by our spectacular annual Summer Social!

## Lambeth Country Show

As usual, we'll be at the **Lambeth Country Show** – our biggest outreach activity of the year – on the weekend of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> July at Brockwell Park. We'll be in the "Farm Zone". **Come and visit our stall!**

## Sell honey and hive products at the Lambeth Country Show

Members can sell their honey and other hive products at our stall. People come to our stall to find local honey from various parts of London, so it's good when we can meet that demand! If you'd like to sell something, please **bring it along to the show** or to this Sunday's **monthly meeting**.

We will be selling honey for a fixed price on the stall: 8oz for £7.50, 12oz for £10 and 16oz for £12. You must have an inventory of how many jars and of which sizes. You should verify this with whoever you deliver this to.

## Summer Social by the Chickpea Sisters

As last year our **spectacular annual Summer Social** will be on **13th August at Walworth Garden**, right after the monthly meeting. This event is for **members**

**and their guests** and will be **free of charge**. However, for planning purposes, it's very important to know how many people are coming.

Please add/remove your name to the list [here](#). We hope that by 6th August, the list will reflect the number of people who turn up on the day. Please help us ensure it does!

## Hiring extractors

It will be soon time to think about planning for honey extraction. We have extractors which can be hired by members. We charge £10 to hire for up to 3 days and we ask for a £20 deposit (which you'll lose if you don't bring the extractor back clean!) Please email Tristram on [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk) for more information.

## NBU warning: high varroa levels

NBU have sent a message out – which most of us will have got – that high levels of the Varroa mites have been reported in UK, with wing deformities and perforated cappings being amongst the effect. They suggest monitoring colony mite populations and information, referring us to page 15 of the [Managing Varroa](#) booklet and using online [Varroa calculator](#). If levels are high, they suggest taking action to get numbers down.

## Old announcements from June

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

**Congratulations: Elliot Hodges and Vlad Zamfir** have both **passed BBKA's Module 1** exams, with Vlad passing with **distinction**.

**Discounts for members:** A few suppliers offer discounts for LBKA/BBKA members – see details in our members' area on the website. One such company is **French Flint** who give us a 40% discount on jars.

**LBKA swarm collection policy:** see [May's newsletter](#).

**Help on a documentary:** contact Dhruv Shah at [62244uk@saeinstitute.edu](mailto:62244uk@saeinstitute.edu).

## Old announcements from May

**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](mailto:services@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

**Do you want bees?** Sign up on up [http://lbka.org.uk/swarm\\_list.html](http://lbka.org.uk/swarm_list.html).

**Collecting swarms:** Email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

## Old announcements from March

**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.

**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.

## Do you have any announcements?

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

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# Last month's Monthly Meeting: Making up Nucs

Geoff Hood – LBKA member and Education officer of Barnet & District BKA – led this meeting and was good enough to write up the contents too!

*Geoffrye Hood*  
LBKA (& BDBKA) member

At the June monthly meeting, I led the meeting on "How to Make up a Nuc". I am an LBKA member but am also the Education officer of Barnet & District BKA (BDBKA), which is part of the Federation of Middlesex BKAs. Barnet's a long way away and the meeting started half an hour late, due to my being delayed by road closures in Central London. That was a good start! I understand that Richard led a question and answer session with the record number of members present, while they waited.



Geoff leading the meeting with Richard.

I first asked the meeting what type of hives they use, because BDBKA members mainly use 14×12. I also asked whether they had nucs themselves. This was in order to tailor my talk to those at the meeting, I then showed a light fixed floor Maisemore polystyrene national Nuc that was converted to a 14×12 nuc, and compared it to a removable floor 14×12 plywood nuc. Both need painting but the plywood hives were heavier and don't include a feeder. We had a short discussion on the many uses a nuc might have. Here's my list:

1. Increase colony numbers for sale or self
2. Swarm control
3. Collecting and/or housing a swarm
4. Introducing a new queen
5. Retired or insurance queen
6. Temporary holding box
7. Observation hive (education and training)
8. Mating nuc (2 or 3 frame & mini nucs)
9. Breeder queens and queen cell rearing
10. Over-wintering spare queens
11. Drawing foundation
12. Boosting a colony for a crop (OSR, Heather, etc.)
13. Production hive (14×12 or Commercial)

## Make the Queen Safe

I explained that before we start any manipulation, we must make the queen safe. I showed the meeting how to catch a queen, lifting her from a frame by her wings and placing her - 'sting-first' - into a small travel or butler cage. I suggested practising first with drones



*We had good attendance this month.*

(that don't sting!), but if we are worried about picking up a queen, we could make her safe by placing her in a Nuc - moving the frame she is found on into the nuc as a temporary holding box.

## Making Increase

Next, I discussed making up a nuc for increase, and emphasised that we need to have one frame of foundation, one frame of stores and two frames of capped/emerging brood to support the queen. If not using the old queen that was made safe earlier, then a new queen needs to be introduced in a travel or butler cage with a fondant plug. Stores in the nuc must be adequate and should include liquid honey/nectar as well as capped honey and pollen, so I showed the meeting a typical store frame used for this purpose.

Even though the frames we use may look full of bees, half the colony's bees are out foraging, so we need to balance the nuc and shake more bees into it. If the nuc is being taken away at least 2 or 3 miles, it is appropriate to shake two frames of bees from brood comb (that's why we need to make the queen safe), but if the nuc is to be kept in the apiary, we need to jiggle all frames lightly so that older (foraging) bees fly off, leaving only nurse bees, then shake in a further four jiggled frames instead of just two. The reason for this is that any older bees will return to their old hive, depleting the nuc. They may also rob out the nuc, as they know it has stores, and they smell the same as each other and therefore become silent robbers of the nuc.

## Swarm control

Using a nuc for swarm control is similar to using it for increase, but this time the two brood frames should contain both capped and open brood. The old queen is added and the old hive has foundation added and queen cells reduced to one or two open cells. These are marked with a drawing pin on the top bar, and reduced to one a week later after destroying any newer emergency queen cells. The nuc minus the old queen



*Geoff showing us the queen.*

can be combined back with newspaper once the new queen is laying and is fecund laying.

## Swarm collecting

I use a 14×12 poly nuc with foundation frames to collect swarms, rather than a skep or cardboard box, as the poly nuc is light and usually easier to hold under a swarm. Once the bees and swarm queen are inside, I quickly close up and move to a quarantine site to assess them.

## Queen Rearing

I showed the meeting an Apidea mini nuc box. This can raise a new mated queen from a sealed Queen cell with just a cup of bees (300 bees). I also use nucs to raise queens which are made up of just one 14×12 frame of emerging brood and a stores frame plus a shake of bees to raise queen cells. I often overwinter these queens to support my spring hives, either with brood or new queens. I passed round a queen cell grafting bar for raising new queen cells. If we split the queen into a holding nuc with two frames and a store frame, the remaining bees can be "forced to occupy" a nuc on the old site which is queen-less and can become very congested, but it will raise good queen cells on the grafted larvae on the grafting bar.

## An Observation Hive

Finally, I showed the meeting my observation hive, which fits on the top of a (wooden) nuc. The night before it is being shown, the queen is located on her frame, and that frame is placed in the top behind the glass screen, and the space below contains a frame feeder filled with water and other brood frames. I then showed the meeting how I get school children to find the queen!

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# “Bee Basic”: basically making you a better beekeeper

“Bee Basic” is BBKA’s entry-level beekeeping qualification. We encourage all members who’ve kept bees for at least a year to take it. We offer support and we even pay your entry fee – if you pass – but LBKA members have an extremely good record of passing. Look out for announcements of next year’s revision classes which take place in Spring.

*Natalie Cotton*  
[admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk)

This June I travelled to Howard’s apiary near West Norwood to undergo the Bee Basic assessment and exams. This is the first in a long line of assessments offered by the British Beekeeping Association, and a qualification that the London Beekeepers Association encourages all beekeepers to undertake.

Now, I was a star student at school, taking exams in my stride. But as I travelled to Howard’s apiary earlier in June, it struck me that (a) school was a very long time ago and (b) none of the examinations I’d previously undertaken involved any kind of live animals, let alone bees. I was really quite nervous!

As preparation for the exam, London Beekeepers’ Association’s education officer Howard had run three evening revision sessions where he had calmly and thoroughly taken us through what was expected for the assessment. We would be required to undertake a practical element including making a frame, lighting our smoker, opening up a hive and doing a basic inspection; we’d then have an oral assessment where we are asked a variety of questions about the honey bee and apiary management, swarm control and disease management. Nothing that someone who’s been keeping bees for a year (and attending the LBKA monthly meetings!) wouldn’t reasonably be expected to be able to demonstrate.

My nerves were slightly alleviated by the beautiful setting. Howard’s apiary is in the wonderful Biggin Hill allotments, which sports an incredible view over the surrounding area. I had been asked to arrive whilst the previous assessment was taking place, so as I suited up and made my frame I could hear murmurings of a fellow student talking to the assessor. The frame making was a challenge due to the heat of the day, as the wax was warm and ready to melt. It was a relief to get it out of the way and produce something useable!

The first task in front of the assessor was lighting the smoker. In my opinion, not something you should attempt in public unless you are very, very good at it. After a bit of fumbling I managed to get mine alight, but certainly won’t be hurrying to do it again!

Then to the apiary to open up a hive. The assessor – a highly experienced beekeeper and ex bee inspector himself – asked questions about what I was doing at each stage as I opened up the hive, smoked the bees and removed the first frame. I found it quite disconcerting to have to talk and explain whilst manipulating unfamiliar bees, but was reassured by the calm nature of Howard’s Carniolan bees. I also realised that the assessor was also there to offer his own experience and insight into beekeeping. He would prompt me until I got to the answer he was looking for, such as methods of varroa trapping, and he also answered questions that sprung to my mind such as whether there are advantages to the cold- or warm-way set up. I couldn’t see any eggs in the hive however, and that did worry me – had I missed them, or was there no queen? I hope that the notes from the assessor might answer that mystery!

With the hive closed up (and the smoker having gone out of its own accord... which ideally wouldn’t have happened), we adjourned to a shaded area for the oral assessment. This was still a fairly daunting experience but really gave me the opportunity to think and reflect about where the areas of strength and weakness were in my own beekeeping knowledge. I surprised myself by stumbling a fair amount over swarm collection, something I had seen in action but have not yet done myself. I realised that I was a lot more confident when I’d carried out an action unsupervised, being forced to put my theoretical knowledge into action. In contrast, I was able to talk at length and with confidence about apiary set up, as I keep my hives in a confined space very close to flats. The assessor was always encouraging, helping find a way to the right answer and always clarifying if I had a question for him. He tried as much as possible to make it feel like a conversation (although one he had to mark on a clipboard throughout). We also have to make up a frame in front of the assessor, using the correct number of nails.

Rather like at school, I initially kicked myself for not revising harder and what I didn’t know. After a little reflection in the glorious sunshine however, I realised that – regardless of the result – the Bee Basic had given me an opportunity to find out where I was as a beginner beekeeper and where I needed to focus on im-

proving. Beekeeping is not a subject that can be learnt from books or crammed the day before an exam, as it takes years of practical experience to gain meaningful knowledge. It also struck me that I'd had the opportunity to learn from two very experienced beekeepers – the assessor and our own Howard – who, having gained those years of experience, are willing to spend their time and energy passing it on to others. I'd encourage all of our beginner beeks to take the basic!

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## Garden partying

As announced in last month's newsletter, Martha Kearney and Bill Turnbull fronted this year's Bee Garden Party on 29th June Marlborough House gardens. It was a "fun evening focussed on bees, with fabulous food and wine, and raising funds to support Bees for Development". Emily Abbot was one of many who went.

*Emily Abbott*  
[events@lbka.org.uk](mailto:events@lbka.org.uk)

The Bee Garden Party was held in the gardens of Marlborough House, St James', an imposing red brick building built by the Duke of Marlborough and now used as the Commonwealth Office's headquarters. The Bee Garden Party is a fundraising event for Bees for Development, and opened by Martha Kearney. There was a good display of hives from the national to these that hang from trees and really are beautiful – but would put me off beekeeping! Honey from the coffee, cashew and mango plants to taste and art installations inside beehives to peer into. It was a fun evening, with drinks donated and absolutely delicious canapés which I made a bee-line for. . . And everywhere I looked I'd spy a fellow LBKA-er!

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## July in the Apiary

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

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

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

During May and June the bees utilise this period to build up their numbers and to swarm. There is now a



lot less inclination to swarm and the bees direct their attention towards capturing the flowing nectar from the summer flowers. When they do this, supers can fill quickly and it is important that the beekeeper has sufficient frames and supers in advance of the flow. There will not be time to buy extra supers and to make up frames. Nor can the beekeeper extract the honey and return the super to the same colony as the honey is unlikely to be ripened until after the flow ceases.

## Nectar flow

**Timing.** The exact timing of the nectar flow depends upon weather and locality but is usually mid June and early July in London.

**How do I know when it has started?** There are at least 2 ways. The first is to keep in contact with other local beekeepers and association members. This is one reason to join an Association – you become part of a pool of knowledge and experience. The second is to watch the colony entrance. The coming and going becomes a lot more purposeful when the nectar flow starts, bees leave the hive entrance in a determined and focussed way. They have the appearance of knowing exactly what they are doing and where they are going. As the nectar flow progresses then, of course, the supers also become heavier but, by this time, the flow is well underway.

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

## Removing honey from the hive

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

### Porter bee escapes

Most of us use Porter bee escapes incorporated into a clearing board. These work well provided they are used properly and the metal escapes are clean and not stuck with propolis. After about 48 hours most of the bees have gone down through the valve and there are relatively few bees in the super. Better to use a crownboard with 2 bee escapes. If 1 malfunctions then the other is still in use.

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

### Shake and brush

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

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

## Other action to be taken this month

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

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

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

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

**Extractor.** Reserve your use of an extractor next month if you usually hire LBKA equipment. Contact Tristram on [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk). Equipment is usually for pickup at Walworth Garden.



Privet

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## Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. Mark's been busy this month, so I've used last year's article.

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

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

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

Limes are capable of producing copious volumes of nectar but only if the weather conditions are just right. High soil moisture content from spring rains followed



Bird's Foot Trefoil

by very warm sultry weather is needed to trigger a good Lime flow.

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

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

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

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

Other good sources of forage joining the summer flow this month include **Tree of Heaven** (*Ailanthus altissima*), **Indian Chestnut** (*Aesculus indica*), **Chinese**

**Privet tree** (*Ligustrum sinense*) and **Indian bean tree** (*Catalpa Bignoniodes*). All are abundant in urban parks and provide pollen and nectar after all our native trees have ceased flowering. Last year one of our members in north London had their honey analysed by a forensics lab and most of the pollen was from Tree of Heaven.

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

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

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

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

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

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## LBKA Apiaries

News from LBKA's apiaries.

### Mudchute

*Vlad Zamfir*

*LBKA Apiaries manager and apiary manager for Mudchute*

The hives at Mudchute have been doing very well during June, even though before the warm spell I was worried one of the colonies might starve (the bramble was out but the limes hadn't started flowering yet) as they

had used up most of their stores to expand the brood. However, the following week, they pleasantly surprised me with 2 full supers of nectar. At the end of June, the three colonies had collected 9 supers of honey which are in the process of being capped. I've added another two to the hives that didn't have much space left.

I also noticed that two of the hives (one was artificially swarmed) have DWV which is a sign of high varroa count. I've also received a warning from the NBU that high varroa counts have been observed in colonies at this time. I'll be monitoring the hives and treating as soon as possible to minimise their impact on the colony.

On the non-honeybee front, there's a bumblebee nest under the slab of one of the hives but they've been very placid even though my mentees and I have been stomping around the hive when doing inspections. I've also recently found a beautiful solitary bee trapped underneath the roof of a hive. I've been told it's a wool carder bee.

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## Facebook (In)digest(ion)

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

*Eugene Fahy  
LBKA Member*

During the month, Geordy Mark updated the Facebook group photo and group description. The description concisely explains the purpose and membership of the open group and also gives a good summary of the LBKA's purposes.

He also made a number of other posts, mentioning the [starvation alert issued by the NBU](#) and a link to a story in the Guardian about Tory MEPs attempting to block a full ban on neonicotinoid use, apart from in greenhouses. [This post attracted some trenchant comments](#) and a follow-up comment from Duke Mellington confirmed that Julie Girling MEP's proposal was rejected by 43 votes to 8 with 7 abstentions.

Neonics were also in the news later in the month and a three country study, funded by Syngenta and Bayer, concluded that they affect bee health. The study was discussed at length in a [special edition of Farming Today on BBC Radio 4](#). Karin Alton [shared a link to FlowerScapes and a study by Prof Dave Goulson](#) which found no effect on the solitary bee *Osmia bicornis* from realistic doses of neonics.

Emily Scott posted [a link to the Welsh honeybee re-](#)



Wool Carder bee

[search project](#) which is trying to discover what bees across the UK have been foraging on this year. If you send them a honey sample, they will give you the results for your colony. On a similar theme Geordy Mark posted a link from Vlad Stefan Zamfir illustrating the top 25 nectar plants in the UK.

Maria Devereaux [posted some disheartening news](#) about her community project hives at Wild Cat Wilderness in Catford being vandalised. As well as damaging the hives, the vandals tried to drown the bees. The

post brought generous offers of help from LBKA members.

Llyr Jones at Kew Gardens reminded us of why we should check the queen excluder when we remove it from the hive. He [posted a picture of a queen](#) camouflaged among propolis on the underside of an excluder.

Geordy Mark [posted some photos from his trip to Atlanta](#) showing a hive beetle and their effect on a hive. As hive beetle thrives in a hot climate, he reckons it is unlikely to be a serious threat in London as our summers are not long or hot enough. Some members might question that view of London summers, judging by comments from Richard Glassborow and others about the [joys of working in a bee suit in temperatures of up to 33°](#)

Mariusz Chudy [shared a link with photos of a home-made pollen trap](#).

Finally, Geordy Mark passed on the sad news that former LBKA member, Will Smith has died. Before moving back to Newcastle, Will supplied bees to LBKA members at Fulham Palace and kept bees in Camberwell. He had studied at Kew Gardens and had hoped to return there to work; there is a fundraising appeal to dedicate a memorial bench to him at Kew.

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## Adventures in Beeland: Bee equipment review: National multi function crown board

Another guest post from Emily's excellent blog – <http://adventuresinbeeland.com/>. This month, a beekeeping equipment review.

Emily Scott  
LBKA member

I've been lucky enough to be sent a special crown board to review by [Bee Equipment Ltd](#). As well as selling beekeeping equipment online they also keep around 300 hives in the Kent area and sell nucs and queens.

As its name suggests, their multi function crown board (£16.65) can be used for several purposes: feeding, treatments and swarm control.

**Feeding.** Rapid top feeders fit easily onto this crown board. The depth allows shallow feeders.

**Treatments.** Treatments can be carried out when you



Multi-function crown board.

turn the board over – so that there's room for Apiguard trays, for instance.

### Swarm Control

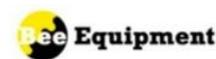
1. Firstly find all the queen cells and allow to reduce to a single visible queen cell. Using the normal position, cover the hole in the Multi Function Crown Board.
  2. Find the queen! (easy, right?)...
  3. Place two frames of brood in a brood box above the Multi Function Crown Board and shake as many bees as you can from the box. Fill the bottom box with frames or replace existing ones.
  4. Release the queen into the bottom box, put the Multi Function Crown Board on followed by the second box full of bees with the yellow cap facing the opposite direction to the bottom box (there is a hole with a yellow cap on the side of the crown board).
  5. Take out the yellow cap, place the Multi Function Crown Board on top and close.
  6. Flying and foraging bees will leave the top box with only nurse bees remaining. Leave for approximately two weeks for the cell in the top box to hatch, and hopefully your queen will be laying.
- Multi-function crown board

The swarm control idea is pretty exciting... especially if you are stuck for space and want to be able to do swarm control vertically. It's too late for us to try it out this year, but I shall have a go next year if I can. Think it's a similar concept to the Horsley Board.

I can't review the swarm control function properly yet, but I can review their customer service – and I have to say their delivery service was maybe the best I've ever had from any company.

First I received an email to say the delivery date, giving a 1 hour delivery time slot and the option to change

the delivery date, collect from a pick up point, deliver to a neighbour or have the order delivered to a safe place at my address. In a matter of seconds I was able to change the delivery date to a day I'd be at home. Brilliant!



**Your Bee Equipment Limited order is due for delivery on Friday 16th June**

On the morning of Friday 16th June you'll receive a 1 hour delivery time slot and you'll be able to live track your order on its way to you. Please ensure that someone is available to sign for your delivery at:



If you'll be out, it's not a problem: you have a range of 'in-flight' options such as changing your delivery date, collecting from your nearest DPD Pickup Shop, asking us to deliver to your preferred neighbour or arranging to have your order delivered to a safe place at your address. Just click below to choose:

[Change my delivery now](#)

### Bee equipment order

On the delivery day I was sent another email giving me a 1 hour delivery slot – and it was delivered during that slot.

So useful! There's been so many times I've had to stay in for hours waiting for orders from companies because their delivery time slot was all day. Especially not fun when you're with an extremely active, easily bored toddler.

### Order delivery

**Your Bee Equipment Limited order will be delivered today between 13:03-14:03**

Your Bee Equipment Limited order will be delivered today by Michael, your DPD Local driver. Please ensure that someone is available to sign for your delivery at:



If you'll be out, it's not a problem: you have a range of 'in-flight' options such as changing your delivery date, collecting from your nearest DPD Pickup Shop, asking us to deliver to your preferred neighbour or arranging to have your order delivered to a safe place at your address. Just click below to choose:

[Change my delivery now](#)

Why not click below to see exactly where Michael is with your order and we'll regularly update the page so you can see your final 15 minute delivery time slot.

[Follow my parcel now](#)

Thank you for your order.  
Bee Equipment Limited

The product itself feels sturdy and well made. It's good to support small local companies so if you want excellent customer service and competitive prices, plus a

wide range of products, why not give Bee Equipment a try?

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## Members' marketplace

This section is for members offering beekeeping items or services to members or requesting items. Items could include nucs, wax and honey. Email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) to add something here.

**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](mailto: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.

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## Upcoming events

### 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.

### Sunday 13th August: Monthly meeting: Honey labelling regulations and Summer Social

*11:00-16:00 at Walworth Garden, Braganza St, SE17 3BN*

Honey labelling regulations, followed by the spectacular Summer Social! You must book in advance. Members and their guests only please. Contact us for more information.

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## Committee

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

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

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

