



# The London Beekeepers' Association

# LBKA News

## November, 2019

Welcome to November's newsletter! We've just had the AGM at which we reviewed what LBKA has done in the past year, presented certificates to those who passed exams, and voted for a new committee which is unchanged from last year. This month we've got the writeup of last November's meeting on the topic of hive insulation (p8) which is both interesting and useful (like all good things), and an offer of woollen insulation for Warré hives from Martin Kunz (p10). Then we have usual regular contributions: Richard shares his thoughts with us as Chair, Howard provides us with monthly tips on what to do in the apiary (p5), Geoff tells us about the National Honey Show and Mark on what bees are eating (p7) at this time of year.

<a href="#">From our Chair</a>	1
<a href="#">Announcements</a>	2
<a href="#">Annual General Meeting</a>	4
<a href="#">National Honey Show</a>	4
<a href="#">Last month's Monthly Meeting</a>	5
<a href="#">November in the Apiary</a>	5
<a href="#">Focus on Forage</a>	7
<a href="#">Thermoregulation and insulation</a>	8
<a href="#">Looking for a Warré Hive owner to test hive insulation</a>	10
<a href="#">Facebook (In)digest(ion)</a>	10
<a href="#">Members' marketplace</a>	11
<a href="#">Upcoming events</a>	11
<a href="#">Committee</a>	12

A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Natalie Cotton, Eugene Fahy, Richard Glassborow, Geoff Hood, Martin Kunz, Howard Nichols and Mark Patterson.** Thanks to **Martin Hudson** for proof-reading it. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, do contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

*Aidan Slingsby, Editor, [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)*

## From our Chair

It's Autumn, which, in LBKA calendar terms, means beekeeping is slowing down, memberships are being renewed, we hold our AGM, elect Trustees, and set our sights for the year ahead.

I hope it has been a good year for all our members and of course for your bees. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the increasing number of members who have volunteered their time, energy, and skills to help LBKA deliver its objectives. We are a voluntary organisation and without volunteers we would amount to nothing. So it is all credit to the membership that this Association is as active as it is and hopefully recognised as an effective, open and friendly organisation.

I would particularly like to thank the board of Trustees



*Ivy bee on an ivy flower on a photo taken by Daniel Spruytenburg, and identified by Mark Patterson on our Whatsapp Group.*



*The venue for our monthly meeting – the white door on the left.*

who double as the executive committee. You put in so much work and thought and you are a fun bunch of people to work with. Long may it continue.

Because this is the time when the year ahead is reviewed by the incoming committee this is a good time for any members to send any ideas, concerns, complaints, etc. That's not to say that we aren't open to hear from you at any time of year, just that it is a particularly opportune moment. Please contact [chair@lbka.org.uk](mailto:chair@lbka.org.uk) or [admin@lbka.org.uk](mailto:admin@lbka.org.uk).

---

## Announcements

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

### November Monthly Meeting: Glandular development of bees and natural history.

**November's** Monthly meeting will be on the new topic of **glandular development of bees and natural history** and will be at **11:00 on 10th November** at **Fairley Junior School Hall** (218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, SE1 7JY). We will learn about the development of the various glands in the bee's body. As usual, there will be tea, coffee and chat afterwards.

December's Monthly Meeting will be our annual festival **Christmas quiz and social** on **8th December**.

### Natalie's pub pick

This month's Pub Social will be at the **The Lamb** (94 Lamb's Conduit St, Bloomsbury, WC1N 3LZ) from **18:30 on Tuesday 26th November**. Nice traditional pub with no music so more chat. Last time we looked, they had Hiver (honey beer).

## Winter Lecture: European Foulbrood

We're pleased to announce our first winter lecture on **Thursday 5th December** at **Roots & Shoots** (Walnut Tree Walk, Kennington, SE11 6DN) at 18:30 for a 19:00 start. The talk will be given by **Dr Kirsty Stainton**, a scientist specialising in bee health. She will provide us with a deep dive into European Foulbrood, a topic that London beekeepers have heard a lot about in the last season.

Kirsty and FERA are at the forefront of research in to EFB. FERA has identified at least 15 different strain types of EFB in the UK, and has been able to analyse their disease dynamics. In a number of examples, this information has been used to track the source of a new outbreak of EFB in one area of the UK as coming from another specific region in the UK (often identified as being caused by the sale of infected material between beekeepers). In another example, this information was used to identify a new EFB infection in the UK and identified the potential source as an import from another EU country. This data has also suggested that certain strain types are more virulent than others, which may in future be used to direct a more stringent disease management policy.

## 2020 Dates for LBKA Volunteers' Diaries

This is a call for our wonderful and intrepid team of LBKA volunteers. Our beekeeping courses and taster sessions (soon to be advertised) will be on **18-19 April**, **2-3 May**, **30 May** and **5 July**. Please put these dates in your diaries if you can help. Also note that the Lambeth Country Show – our most exciting and productive flagship publicity event – will be held over the weekend of **18-19 July** in Brockwell Park, Lambeth. We did very well in getting lots of help for each of these events this year, but I know that diaries do get booked up rapidly – so do please make a note of these dates. More details in future Newsletters.

## Membership renewals

Our membership year has ended, so you will need to renew your membership if you wish to continue being a member of LBKA. All of last year's members have been sent a personalised renewal email that tells you how to renew your membership. All prices have been kept the same this year. Thanks for the 174 people who have renewed so far!

If you haven't got your renewal email, please email [services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk) for it to be resent.

## Register your bees!

Following Tom Bickerdike's request, as our NBU Seasonal Bee Inspector, to remind us to update our apiary

records, those of us who are registered will have got a reminder from BeeBase. They have provided more details as to [why this is important](#).

## Register for our BBKA Basic Assessment preparation sessions

Both BBKA and LBKA encourage members to take the BBKA basic assessment where possible. The BBKA requirement for entry is that the applicant has been managing bees for a minimum period of 1 year. The assessment is fairly straightforward and the syllabus can be [accessed from their website](#). The cost is £20 and [entry forms can also be downloaded](#) although they do not need to be sent off until next Spring.

London Beekeepers Association will run a revision course in the spring for members wishing to take the assessment. This is likely to last for 3 evenings (2 hours per evening) in early April. The assessment is both practical and simple oral questions. It lasts about 1 hour. We cover the theory on the revision nights and, for those wanting it, also offer a practical session at an apiary beforehand.

The assessment is not difficult, is within the capabilities of anyone who has been handling bees for 12 months and who is willing to download the syllabus and undertake some background reading. We also supply free course notes in electronic format.

Any LBKA member who has been managing bees for a minimum of 12 months and wishes to take this assessment please confirm by email to [education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk). We will then be able to let you have some electronic course notes to read at your leisure over the winter months. Several members have already notified their interest. The BBKA website should be sufficient to deal with any queries regarding the assessment. Alternatively, ask another LBKA member who has taken it. Preparation for the Basic is an interesting way of continuing your beekeeping activities through the winter months. Even if you have been managing bees for several years but not previously taken the assessment then please do seriously consider taking it in 2020. It is well worth the effort.

## Forthcoming Winter Courses

We will be running the following winter courses:

- **Microscopy course**, concentrating on the use of microscopes for members to learn about both the pollen grain structure and the internal anatomy of the honey bee. It will be mainly hands on practical work and over the 3 weekly sessions.
- **Module 1**, the BBKA modular examination which covers Honey Bee Management and a natural progression from the Basic syllabus. If a minimum of 4 people are interested then we will run this over 3 evenings in January and/or February.

Email [education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk) if you're interested in either.

## Old announcements from October

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

**LBKA wins award for its championing of bees:** delighted to have won a DEFRA Bees Needs Champions Award as part of the Year of Green Action.

**Thanks for bee suit donations:** We thank Partizan and adam&eveDDB for donating 5 beesuits to us.

**Mark McDonnell has joined the committee:** We welcome Mark McDonnell, our newest committee member, who has taken on the role of Resources Officer ([resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk)) responsible for managing our equipment).

## Old announcements from September

**Research on beekeeping practice:** contact Tom Moody ([tom.moody@chch.ox.ac.uk](mailto:tom.moody@chch.ox.ac.uk)) if you'd like to take part in his research.

## Old announcements from August

**BBKA exam success.** Frank Ryan passed the BBKA Module 2 examination and Robin Yearwood passed the BBKA Module 3 examination. Mark Patterson passed the BBKA General Husbandry. Well done all!

## Old announcements from July

**Congratulations to Andrew Slade, Alison Kings, Adela Vavrecka, Annie McGeoch, Kathy Jo Stevenson, Raphael Larizza, Jeremy Rosie and Rosemary Danielian** for passing their BBKA Basic 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).

# Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting

Aidan Slingsby  
[services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

The Annual General Meeting was well-attended this year, with about 25 attendees.

Richard gave a summary that reviewed LBKA achievements over the past year, framing our activities as supporting one of more of the elements of our mantra: Better Beekeeping (training, support networks, guidelines & good practice), Better Public Awareness of Bees (shows, school visits), and Better environment for Bees and Londoners (raising awareness about lack of forage, talking to local authorities and talking to businesses). Richard noted that we always need more help and would welcome anyone you might like to volunteer or join the committee.

All members of the outgoing committee were standing for election again. None of the posts were contested and the new committee was unanimously approved by the meeting.

There was some discussion about the "Guidelines for Responsible Urban Beekeeping" that LBKA are starting to draft, in the light of the increasing numbers of swarms that need to be collected in Central London.

Howard presented certificates and badges to members who'd passed exams over the past year. These are Andrew Slade, Alison Kings, Adela Vavrecka, Annie McGeoch, Kathy Jo Stevenson, Raphael Larizza, Jeremy Rosie and Rosemary Danielian for their BBKA Basic Assessment and Mark Patterson for BBKA General Husbandary. Congratulations to them!

There was some more discussion, followed by tea/coffee/beer/wine.

# National Honey Show

The National Honey Show took place last month.

Geoff Hood  
 LBKA member



www.nonnativespecies.org

Produced by Lucy Curran, Cliff Bony (NNS), Guy Martin, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Hara, National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBS) Stuart Roberts (BBKA)

## Asian Hornet

Alert!

Report sightings of this species to: [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk)

### Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Vespa velutina*  
**AKA:** Yellow-legged Hornet  
**Native to:** Asia  
**Habitat:** Nests usually high in trees and man-made structures, sometimes closer to the ground; hunts honey bees, other insects and also feeds on fruit and flowers.

Not easily confused with any other species. Dark brown or black velvety body. Characteristically dark abdomen and yellow tipped legs. Smaller than the native European Hornet.

Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. In 2016 the first UK sighting was confirmed in Gloucestershire. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, or kiln untreated timber. The possibility that it could fly across the Channel has not been ruled out.

A highly aggressive predator of native insects. Poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators.

Do not disturb an active nest. Members of the public who suspect they have found an Asian Hornet should send a photo to [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk).



---

### Key ID Features

**Asian Hornet Queen**



Queens up to 30mm, workers up to 25mm long

Entirely dark brown or black when fully developed with a fine yellow band

Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends

Photos from: J. Haszard, Rachel Scopes and Nigel Jones, Richard Bell

Asian Hornet



European Hornet



Asian Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4th abdominal segment



Asian hornet 'honeying' for honey bees only

---

### Similar Species

**Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) for comparison**

- Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 25mm long
- Legs yellow at the ends
- Dark brown / black abdomen with a yellow / orange band on 4th segment
- Head dark from above, orange from front
- Dark coloured antennae
- Entirely black velvety thorax
- Never active at night



© Florie

---

**European hornet (*Vespa crabro*)**

- Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 30mm long
- Legs brown at the ends
- Yellow abdomen marked with brown on the upper part, not banded
- Head yellow from above, yellow from front
- Yellow antennae
- Thorax black with extensive brown markings
- May be active at night



Roger Burgess

---

**Giant woodwasp (*Ducerus gigas*)**

- Larger than Asian hornet, female up to 45mm long
- Legs yellow
- Distinctive yellow and black banded abdomen
- Long cylindrical body unlike Asian hornet which has an obvious waist
- Long yellow antennae
- Female has an obvious long sting-like appendage (ovipositor) which it uses to lay eggs in trees



© Florie

---

**Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Vilurcula zonaria*)**

- Abdomen has more yellow stripes than Asian hornet
- Legs darker than Asian hornets
- Only one pair of wings (hornets and wasps have two pairs)
- Large, globular eyes



Drew Deacon

---

**Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)**

- More extensive yellow and orange colouration on abdominal segments than Asian hornet
- Yellow markings on thorax unlike Asian hornet



© Florie

---

### Field Signs

Active April-November (peak August/September). Mated queens over winter singly or in groups, in various natural and man-made harbours – underneath tree bark in cavities left by beetle larvae, in soil, on ceramic plant pots – potentially any small, well-insulated refuge. Makes very large nests in tall trees in urban and rural areas, but avoids pure stands of conifers. Will use man-made structures (garages, sheds etc.) as nesting sites.



For more information visit:  
[www.nonnativespecies.org](http://www.nonnativespecies.org)  
[www.nationalbeehiveunit.com](http://www.nationalbeehiveunit.com)

Alert!

Report sightings of this species to:  
[alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk)

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: BBKA website.



Entries to LBKA's class 323, in which novelty of container is one of the judging criteria. Unfortunately for Geoff Hood, his bulb container didn't win it for him.

The National Honey Show was held on 24th–26th October at Sandown Racecourse in Esher. Congratulations to the winners, particularly for the classes we sponsor. Few of them were LBKA members. Do consider entering next year! It only costs £1 per entry. Contact Geoffrye Hood for more information.

## Last month's Monthly Meeting: Pollen analysis

What happened at our meeting last month.

This month was our popular microscopy meeting run by Howard and Richard. Attendees were able to create their own slides from flowers they brought, using purple dye. It's a taste of what Howard and Richard's evening microscopy sessions are like.



Entries to LBKA's Class 321: Two Jars Urban Honey, judged solely on taste and aroma

## November in the Apiary

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

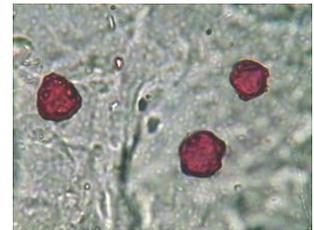
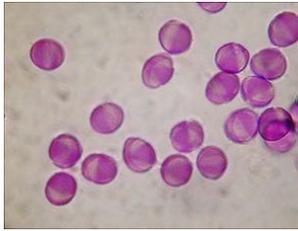
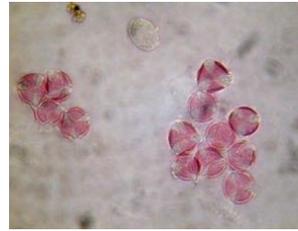
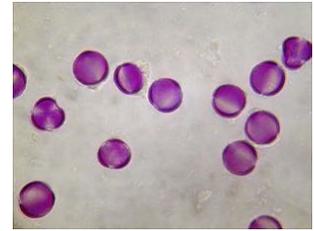
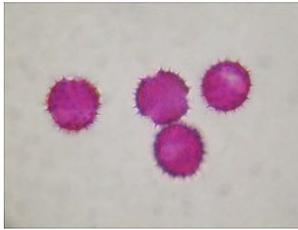
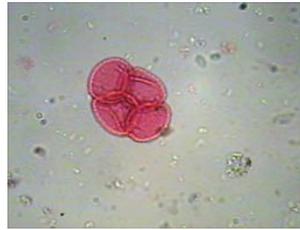
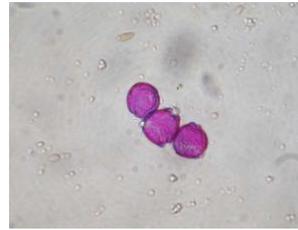
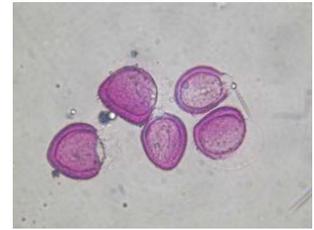
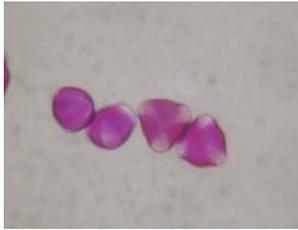
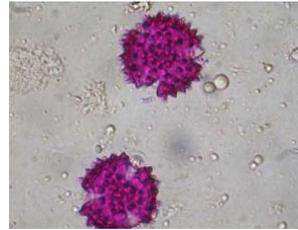
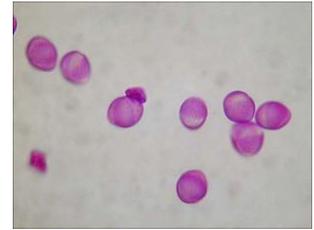
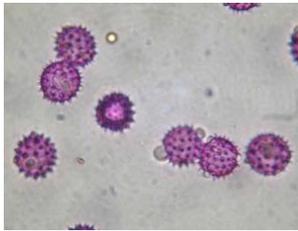
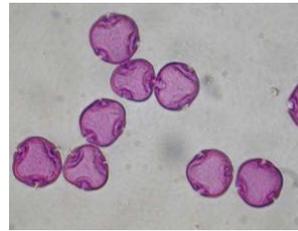
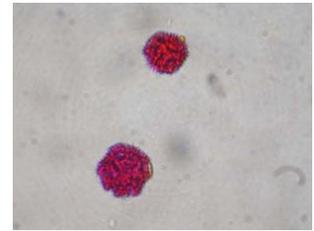
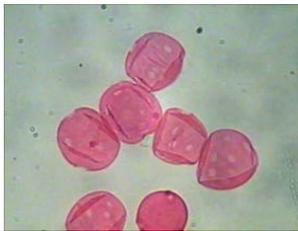
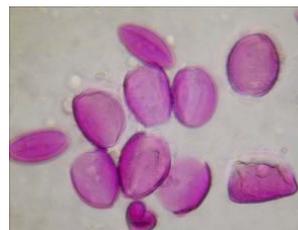
Howard Nichols  
[education@lbka.org.uk](mailto:education@lbka.org.uk)

The beekeeping season is now over until February or March. Even with the extended period of warm weather this year, November is still an inactive month for the beekeeper and it is now too late for feeding as the bees will be unable to process the syrup. However, a certain amount still needs to be done.

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

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

**Plan varroa treatment:** Planning for further varroa treatment in December. December is the usual month for treating the colony with Oxalic Acid. Monitoring natural mitedrop in November is a useful diagnostic tool and precursor to actual treatment next month. Insertion of the varroa floor for 1 week in November will give useful information to the beekeeper. If Autumn treatment with Apiguard or other such authorised product was successful then mite drop should be very low.

*Aesculus hippocastanum* (Horse chestnut)*Allium ampeloprasum* (Leek)*Bellis perennis* (Daisy)*Betula pendula* (Silver birch)*Lamium album* (Deadnettle)*Borago officinalis* (Borage)*Brassica oleracea* (Broccoli)*Brassica rapa* (Oil seed rape)*Calendula officinalis* (Marigold)*Calluna vulgaris* (Heather)*Capsicum annuum* (Sweet pepper)*Hyacinthus orientalis* (Hyacinth)*Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn)*Cucubita pepo* (Courgette)*Cynara scolymus* (Globe artichoke)*Digitalis purpurea* (Foxglove)*Helianthus annuus* (Sunflower)*Platanus hybrida* (Plane)*Tilia x europaea* (Lime)*Taraxacum officinale* (Dandelion)*Ribes nigrum* (flowering currant)*Quercus robur* (English oak)*Galanthus elwesii* (Snowdrop)*Hedera helix* (Ivy)*Lonicera periclymerium* (Honeysuckle)*Castanea sativa* (Sweet chestnut)*Narcissus* (Daffodil)*Papaver fauriei* (Poppy)

Pollen comes in all shapes and sizes. Pollen itself is colourless – the colours come from the various oils it contains. When preparing pollen for mounting on a slide, we wash away the oil and dye purple. These photographs are just a small selection from <http://www.saps.plantsci.cam.ac.uk/pollen/index.htm>. Well worth a browse.

If mite drop is high then the treatment has not been as successful as anticipated and the beekeeper should re-evaluate the Autumn methodology.

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

**Study:** For those who have not taken the BBKA Basic Assessment, please download the syllabus from the BBKA website and consider background reading with a view to taking the assessment next summer. The requirement is that you have kept bees for a minimum period of 1 year. LBKA will not pressurise anyone to take the assessment but does actively encourage and assist those wishing to do so. Later in November we will send electronic course notes to those LBKA members who wish to take the assessment next year. Reading about bees and beekeeping in the winter months is a useful way to spend our spare time and acts as a beekeeping bridge between the seasons. LBKA is also offering a microscopy course in January and a Module 1 course in February.

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

**Keep in touch:** Finally, do stay in touch with your beekeeping association. We continue with our usual monthly meetings and will also have 2 mid-week winter lectures.

---

## Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article reprinted from 2015.

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

Only the most hardy of flowers are still in bloom in my garden as whilst the days have been mild it has on occasion been very cold at night. My **pumpkins**, **courgettes** and **nasturtiums** are already keeling over due to the cold nights, only my **cosmos** and **sunflowers** persist out of the garden annuals I have flowering. Quite a few of my herbaceous perennials are struggling on however with **Cat Mint**, **Helenium**, **Rudbeckia**, **Asters**, **Golden rod** and **Penstemon** still in bloom.



Away from my own garden I've spotted **Abelia**, **Choisya**, **Hebe (Autumn Joy)** and **Escalonia** pushing out a late flush of second blooms, though not in sufficient abundance to entice honey bees to visit.

The ivy flow is now coming to an end with most of the blooms already fading and the signs of the first berries appearing. These will ripen in time for late winter and

will provide a feast for over wintering thrushes and wood pigeons after the red berries of **hawthorn**, **cotoneaster** and **sorbus** have all been polished off.

I've been busy in the greenhouse this past week, cleaning the green house firstly to evict slugs and snails hiding in stacks of empty pots and cleaning algae and moss from the windows to ensure over wintering plants receive as much light as possible through the dimly lit winter. Having been cleaned I am now busy propagating cuttings from my favourite aromatic shrubs including **lavender**, **sage**, **rosemary** and cuttings from **flowering currant**, **Escalonia** and **Hebe**. I've also been cutting down fading stems from herbaceous plants and lifting and dividing them to propagate for next year. This week I've done this to **marjoram**, **mints**, **cat-mint** and next on my list are the **Heleniums**, **Asters** and **Kniphofia**.

My bulbs are now all in the ground including an additional 200 **Saffron Crocus**. The ones I planted last year are just beginning to flower offering pollen to the bees on warm days and soon **Saffron** for my kitchen!

Other tasks to be getting on with in the garden include collecting fallen leaves to make leaf mulch for the garden – this is great as a top dressing for suppressing weeds and feeding the plants.

---

## Thermoregulation and insulation

This article taken from the writeup of last year's November meeting, on the important and interesting issue of insulating beehives.

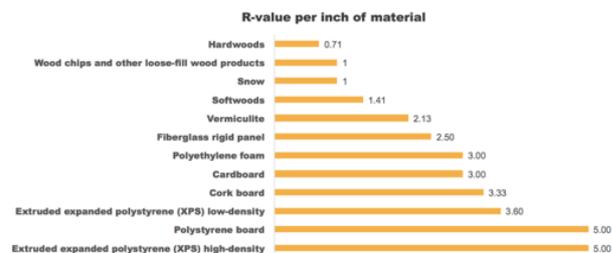
*Aidan Slingsby*  
[services@lbka.org.uk](mailto:services@lbka.org.uk)

This is a writeup of last year's November meeting. Vlad Zamfir led the first half of the meeting, presenting the results of the research he carried out (for this meeting), on how bees regulate the temperature of their colony, how they do it in Winter and how insulation might help. Geoff Hood then explained how and why he has insulated his hives over the last few years.

### Thermoregulation of the colony

Vlad explained how the colony thermoregulates itself during winter. Bees need to keep their thoracic temperature above 10°C, otherwise they cannot move and will die via a 'chill coma'. Also, certain metabolic processes only occur within a certain temperature range above 10°C.

### SOME INSULTATING MATERIALS



*Vlad's graph comparing the insulating qualities of different materials.*

If bees relied on their metabolic processes alone, they would be able to keep the temperature at around 10°C for a short time. Their furry bodies are good at keeping the heat in. However, they vibrate their flight muscles to generate heat, which can push their thoracic temperature to around 43°C. If they ingest anything cold (e.g. water) their body temperature will drop.

When temperatures drop below 18°C, they start to cluster. This enables them to keep the colony warm more efficiently as the ratio of number of bees to cluster surface area is high. Honey is the fuel for heating the cluster; besides energy, metabolising honey produces CO<sup>2</sup> and water. The cluster will move around the hive as a unit, towards honey stores (almost always upwards or slightly sideways, nearly never down). If cleansing flights need to take place, the cluster may temporarily extend towards the entrance. Empty combs conduct less heat than combs filled with honey, so the core of the cluster prefers to occupy empty cells while the edge of the cluster (top/sides) will be in contact with honey. The bees will determine how much heat (and water vapour) should be removed from the cluster. Consuming 1kg of honey will produce 0.68kg of water.

At below 14°C, the cluster forms a distinct structure, with the 'core' surrounded by the 'mantle'. The Mantle (outer shell) is the coldest layer, with an edge temperature of around 8°C. This rises to 13°C for the bees just inside the mantle. Here, the bees are tightly packed with their abdomens pointing outwards, heads inwards, and thorax hairs interlaced. This layer can contract or expand, regulating how much water & heat escape. At -10°C, the layer reaches its maximum contraction. The Core doesn't change in size, no matter the temperature outside. Its minimum temperature is around 20°C when there's no brood. Its maximum temperature is 35°C when there's brood. Bees circulate throughout the cluster on a 24 hour cycle, but not at night. The relative humidity in the core is 50-85%.

Propolis and water both play a role. Propolis repels water, is used to coat the interior surface of the cavity and is used to seal cracks, and reduce the entrance, for some subspecies of honey bees. Water is needed for climate control in the hive, hydration and diluting honey (honey bees can only metabolise 50% sugar solutions). Brood food can be 90%+ water.



Geoff showing us how to insulate our hives.

If the hive is warm but the crown board is cold, condensation will form on the underside and cold water will rain onto the cluster. If it's frosty outside, this condensation may be very cold. If there is insulation on the crown board but not the side, the condensation will be on the vertical walls of the hive, so won't rain down on the colony.

If there is ventilation below the crown board, warm air will be lost and the resulting chimney effect may cool the hive and make honey consumption go up by about 12%.

## How to insulate

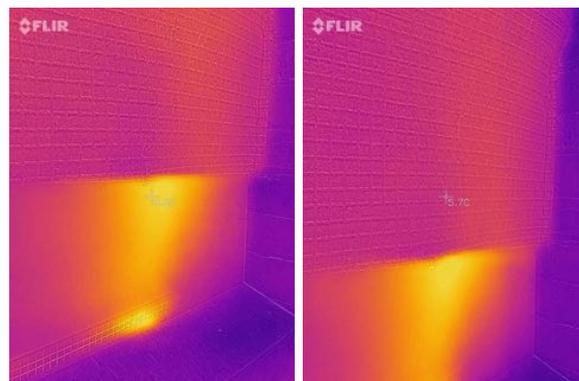
Geoff Hood introduced the topic of insulation, its history and how he does it.

It turns out that before the Second World War, beekeepers routinely insulated their hives, by putting old blankets, sacking or straw under the roof of their hives. In addition, most hives were double-walled (like the WBC) with a single entrance at the bottom and no ventilation at the top. This mimics the natural location in a tree with a thick wall and roof with no top ventilation.

So why is the advice in most beekeeping books that one shouldn't insulate and should vent the top of the hive?

Geoff thinks that this can be traced back to rationing, where beekeepers had to preserve resources, particularly as beekeeping was widely promoted by the Government due to sugar shortages. Single-walled hives with no insulation saved resources. The problem wasn't the cold, but the condensation that results in cold water raining down on the bees in the colony due to condensation from poor insulation.

The Rothamsted Bee unit (predecessor of the NBU) was asked to find a way of keeping bees alive without using valuable wood, cloth or wool insulation. They found that colonies in uninsulated hives could survive with a small amount of top ventilation. The recommendation was to crack the propolised crown board in early winter and to place pennies or matchsticks under the crownboard.



Martin Kunz's temperature comparison of hive and insulated hive

Since then, this beekeeping practice remains the orthodox.

Geoff explained that ventilation was only promoted as a way of increasing the chances of uninsulated hives surviving. Now we have the resources to insulate hives, he thinks we should be doing that.

He recommends:

- Placing insulation (e.g. Kingspan, polystyrene or wool) in the roof just above the crownboard.
- Ensuring there is no ventilation below the crown board as warm air will escape and will draw in cold air due to the chimney effect (the roof should be ventilated).
- Reducing the entrance block
- Using an open mesh floor, with varroa board out, and the back of floor sealed up
- In exposed places, an empty super can be placed under the floor to create still air

He then talked about the importance of not bending ones back. He suggested that everyone should have taller hive stands, so that when your arm is by your side, your knuckles are level with the top of the brood box. The empty super under the floor helps in this respect.

Many thanks to Vlad and Geoff for their preparation and insights. This meeting may lead to quite a few people rethinking their winter hive setup.



*Martin Kunz's hives, with and without insulation.*

## Looking for a Warré Hive owner to test hive insulation

Martin is looking to a volunteer to help test hive insulation.

*Martin Kunz*  
*LBKA member*

I recently wrote about an article on LBKA-forum about an article by Torsten Schiffer titled 'Beekeeping(R)evolution – a species protection programme?' that has recently been published in *Natural Bee Husbandry*. The title of the blog: "Food for Thought – eh – Bees".

One key argument of Torsten Schiffer is that modern hives lose an extreme amount of heat (compared to tree cavities) – and he has figures to show the impact. Naturally(!) not everyone can or will want to change his/her hives, even if Schiffer's figures are convincing.

So I asked a colleague of mine in India to produce a hive cover to help the bees keep the bees inside. The cover is made from felted certified organic wool (from tough Himalayan sheep), with a thin rubber coating against rain.

I have just put the first such cover onto one of my Einraumbeute ('Golden Hive', small colony inside on the right side) in my W-London garden during a recent cold spell. The ambient ambient temperature that morning was 3.6°C. The hive front temperature on the wood was: 9.5°C Which dropped to 5.9°C after putting the

cover (an affair of five mins - although there will need to be improvements.

The reason for sharing this information: I have a spare prototype cover that is made to fit a Warré hive (two boxes), and I am looking for a volunteer to test this on his/her Warré-hived bees. First come first served.

Please contact me at [m.kunz@phonecoop.coop](mailto:m.kunz@phonecoop.coop).

## Facebook (In)digest(ion)

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

*Eugene Fahy*  
*LBKA Member*

An early posting by Mark Anthony Patterson (MAP) shared the good news that LBKA received a [Bees Need Champions award from DEFRA and the Bee Farmers' Association](#) for their work in raising public awareness and helping bees and other pollinators in London. This recognises the efforts of LBKA members visiting schools, attending public events and working with local businesses on forage planting projects.

Jon Monnick asked if air conditioning plant and gas boilers near beehives would [disrupt bees' ability to communicate](#). Khalil Attan and MAP both said they had kept hives in such environments and had not experienced any problems.

Norman Carreck [shared a post about a primary Asian hornet nest near Christchurch in Dorset](#), close to where a previous nest was found and destroyed at the beginning of October.

*And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease*

Whatever flowers Keats had in mind, it was unlikely to be Goldenrod, which was suggested as a late summer nectar source for bees. The plant is common in North America and MAP describes [the honey has having an aroma of sweaty socks](#). A more likely candidate is Mahonia "winter sun" identified by MAP in a picture posted by Rae Simcoe.

---

## 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.

**Emily Abbott:** I run Hive & Keeper Ltd a company that sells single apiary/harvest honeys from small scale beekeepers around the country. Jars are labelled with the honey's main flavour, the name of the beekeeper and where the apiary is. Hive & Keeper currently works with about 30 keepers and your honey would be enjoyed by people across the country. Let me know if you have honey you want to sell, but don't want to jar and sell it yourself. We buy 30lb buckets (a minimum of 3). Check out <http://www.hiveandkeeper.com/> or email [emily@hiveandkeeper.com](mailto:emily@hiveandkeeper.com).

---

## Upcoming events

Sunday 10th November: Monthly meeting: Glandular development of bees and natural history.

*11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, London, SE1 7JY*

New topic, where we learn about the development of the various glands in the bee's body. Followed by the usual hot drinks, cake and chat. Meetings are for mem-

bers only, but you're welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association.

Tuesday 26th November: Pub social

*18:30-22:30 at The Lamb (94 Lamb's Conduit St, Bloomsbury, WC1N 3LZ)*

Our monthly trip to the pub. Catch up with all the latest news over a pint in a nice food-serving pub. Nice traditional pub with no music so more chat. Last time we looked, they had Hiver (honey beer).

Sunday 8th December: Monthly meeting: Christmas quiz and social

*11:00-13:00 at Fairley House Junior School, 218 Lambeth Rd, Lambeth, London, SE1 7JY*

The annual Christmas Quiz, 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.

---

## 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)
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, [apiaries@lbka.org.uk](mailto:apiaries@lbka.org.uk)
- **Development:** Simon Saville, [development@lbka.org.uk](mailto:development@lbka.org.uk)
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, [mentor@lbka.org.uk](mailto:mentor@lbka.org.uk)
- **Events:** Martin Hudson, [events@lbka.org.uk](mailto:events@lbka.org.uk)
- **Resources:** Mark McDonnell, [resources@lbka.org.uk](mailto:resources@lbka.org.uk)

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

