



Image: Connie Smith

North London Beekeepers Annual Review 2023



North London
Beekeepers

Annual summary

The year 2023 marked another vibrant and eventful chapter in the journey of NLB. We embarked on an exciting new venture with the re-establishment of a flourishing apiary at Highgate Wood. In response to the looming challenge of Asian Hornets threatening the UK's bee population, we formed a dedicated Asian Hornet team and have been proactively identifying opportunities for members to support efforts to contain the Asian Hornet.

As the season unfolded, we revitalised our apiaries with a site-clearing session at Highgate Wood, setting the stage for the bees' arrival. A shook-swarm at Ally Pally produced nice new frames for the bees. Our 'Big Help Out Day' saw the Kenwood team infuse new life into our space by giving the shed a fresh coat of paint. The bees, mirroring our enthusiasm, flourished remarkably throughout the season. This period was highlighted by successful queen rearing at Kenwood, clean bills of health from the bee inspector, and abundant honey harvests across all three apiaries.

In our efforts to spread the joy and knowledge of beekeeping, we hosted a beginners' course, welcoming new enthusiasts, several of whom have stayed on as apiary volunteers. We also nourished the growth of our existing members with members' days, focusing on artificial swarms and queen clipping and marking techniques. The Middlesex Federation ran a highly educational Bee Health Day, which allowed members to view examples of European and American foul brood in a biosafe environment. Gillespie Park proved an excellent new venue for the NLB Honey Show, where members shared a potluck supper and entries were judged by Sue Lang of the Bedfordshire Beekeepers Association. The series of insightful winter talks we have been conducting continues to enrich our knowledge.

Our engagement with the community remained a central focus this year, as we participated in various local events such as the Highgate Fair in the Square, Alexandra Palace Allotment Open Day, Highgate Wood Heritage Festival, and York Rise Street Party. These events not only allowed us to educate the public about helping honey bees, they also supported our apiaries through honey sales.

On the organisational front, Julie Parker, as chair, was a driving force behind many of the activities highlighted above. In September, Julie stepped down from her role, and we extend our gratitude for her invaluable contributions and dedicated efforts.

Amanda Hayes once again provided invaluable guidance as she oversaw the efforts of members taking the BBKA Basic Assessment, and once again we had a 100 percent pass rate – thank you, Amanda!

Peter Williams' commendable efforts in steering NLB towards charitable status also deserve special mention. After consultation with our members, the committee decided to pursue charitable status for the association once a new committee has bedded in. Meanwhile, Amanda's pioneering efforts in establishing the NLB research and support group for healthy bees will lay a solid foundation for flourishing bees in a London context.

2023 was indeed a year of growth, learning, and community for NLB, as we continued to nurture our love of beekeeping and make meaningful contributions.

Vicky Clayton

Co-opted by the committee

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Apiary Report

Alexandra Palace

We started the season in the Spring by shook-swarming all the hives. All the old frames were burnt and all the super and brood boxes were scorched with the aim being to eliminate any lingering signs of EFB. The hives built up quite quickly and we were able to extract 150 jars' worth of honey in late Summer. The hives were paid a visit by the bee inspector in early Autumn and no problems were found. The three hives are due another inspection in early Spring 2024.

Our priorities at Ally Pally have always been to maintain the wellbeing and welfare of the bees and at the same time, continuing to develop our knowledge and practical experience of beekeeping. I want to say a big thank you to the Ally Pally team (Roddy, Kevin, Colleen, Sam and Jo) for the support and hard work you all put in this season. I look forward to our meetups on Saturday mornings. After we've made sure all's well with the bees, there's always time for a chat and if we are very lucky Kevin might have baked one of his delicious cakes!

Gio Esposito

Alexandra Palace Apiary Manager

December 2023



Ally Pally team 2023

Highgate Wood

It has been a great year at the apiary, reintroducing bees to the wood and we had an abundant first harvest. Starting the season with two nucs, the bees had to build up from foundation – they had a lot of work to do – but they have been industrious, producing three full supers from two hives.

We held a queen marking and clipping session and hope to have more demonstrations at the apiary in 2024. Our apiary was visited by the Bee Inspector in June and given a clean bill of health.

The rangers at Highgate Wood have been very accommodating, not just with hosting our hives on the site, but also letting us use their kitchen for honey extraction and inviting us to their annual Community Heritage Day where we sold Highgate Wood honey. It was a great day and an opportunity to share our passion for beekeeping with the community.

Big thanks to all the Highgate Wood team for all their efforts in helping to get the apiary up and running. We have had to build hive parts and frames between inspections, keeping up with the bees! All this hard work will put us in a great position next year with supers full of drawn-out frames.

*Adam Armstrong
Apiary Manager
December 2023*



Highgate Wood team 2023

Kenwood

We began the 2023 season with six strong colonies and finished the season with five colonies. This year we have hosted the beginners' course sessions, a day for the Basic Examination, four members' open days, and a members' shed party. An enthusiastic team worked hard to get the big shed prepped and completely repainted on The Big Help Out Day on the coronation weekend. We carried out some queen rearing using grafting.

We were able to take 18 supers of honey from the hives (split between early summer and late summer). Some of this was sold at the York Rise Street Party, some is being sold in a shop in St John's Wood and some will be held back to sell at events in 2024. Our honey was sampled by a Bee Inspector at the end of August and the results came back with no issues. We would like to thank the regular team who come every week to help out at the apiary. Without them we couldn't manage to keep everything running so smoothly. Recently, they fearlessly took on the task of cleaning up the pond, which turned out to be a much bigger job than anticipated! We would also like to thank those of you who came and helped out at the teaching and members' days – your time, knowledge and patience is very much appreciated.

*Helen Rogers & Giuliano Sacchi
Kenwood Apiary Co-Managers
December 2023*



Kenwood team 2023

Membership Report

By the end of 2023 NLB had 115 members. These were: 100 Full members, 10 Partner members, 4 Associate members and 1 Junior member. 115 is significantly down from 151, which was the number of members for the year ending in December 2022.

Renewal of Membership has been open since 1st January 2024 on WebCollect.

After a vote at the 2023 AGM it was decided that fees would increase to the following:

Renewing Full Beekeeping Member before 1st March:	£34
Renewing Full Beekeeping Member after 1st March:	£44
New Full Beekeeping Member:	£44
Partner Member:	£17
Associate Member:	£24
Junior Member:	£9

A reminder of the different membership classes offered by NLB:

- A Full Member is an active beekeeper. As part of this membership the person is insured via the BBKA for Public Liability and Bee Diseases.
- A Partner Member is a partner of a Full Member, who shares the same postal address.
- An Associate Member is someone who is a member of another Beekeeping Association who chooses to also be a member of NLB (for example people who have a second place of residence).
- A Junior Member is a member of under 18 years of age.

Each year when you renew your membership, the fee is divided up to cover BBKA membership including magazine subscription, BDI hive insurance and Middlesex Federation admin fees. The remainder of that fee goes towards NLB to cover apiary maintenance, speaker fees, events etc.

Fee subscription breakdown for 2023:

Total Membership Renewal: £30.00

BBKA Fee: £21.00

BDI Fee: £2.00

Middlesex Federation Fee: 1.00

NLB Fee: £6.00

Sarah-Louise Ball

Membership Secretary

December 2023



Members at the beginners' course 2023

Education report

This year we ran a beginners' course with a theory-packed weekend at the beginning of June, followed by two practical sessions at the Kenwood Apiary. The weekend started at Kenwood, orienting the beginners to the bees and the hive before lunch in the lovely eco garden. After a leisurely walk down to the Highgate Society Hall, the theory sessions began in earnest. The theory course covered the lifecycle of the honey bee, bee hives and frames, bee health, swarming, foraging and honey extraction, as well as the beekeeping year, with plenty of anecdotes of beekeeping adventures to break up the sessions. Beginners then had the opportunity to follow up the theory with practical sessions: inspecting hives, building frames, extracting honey and scorching equipment to get a feel for beekeeping life! Many thanks to Julie Parker for spearheading the organisation and to Helen and Giuliano for hosting the beginners at Kenwood, as well as all the volunteers who made the course possible, sharing their knowledge and love for bees.

We did not host a taster course this year but focused efforts on supporting existing members to develop their skills and confidence, including an artificial swarm demonstration at Kenwood and a queen clipping workshop at Highgate Woods (many thanks Amanda and Helen!). Middlesex Federation also held the Bee Health Day which was attended by several NLB members. This all-day event included sessions on identifying EFB and AFB on infected combs; discovering more about how to monitor and treat Varroa; an excellent Asian Hornet workshop, plus a detailed and fascinating round-up of the work done by the National Bee Unit.

Three members also passed their Basic Assessment with the support of Dr Amanda Hayes. Many thanks to Amanda for preparing the candidates and coordinating with the assessor.

Vicky Clayton
Co-opted into the committee
December 2023



Beginners' course 2023

Events Report

It was lovely to see a good turnout at our start-of-the-season shed party at the Kenwood apiary in April. The June sunshine brought out the crowds at the Fair in the Square in Highgate, where our observation nuc and honey were as popular as ever.

In July, our Alexandra Palace apiary team welcomed the public to the Ally Pally Allotment Open Day. Apiary Manager Gio Esposito explained the vital role bees play in our ecosystem, and we sold out of honey!

August saw the return of NLB to the Highgate Wood Community Heritage Day, where our recent crop of hyper-local honey from the Highgate Wood apiary went down a storm.

Warm and sunny weather also helped to ensure that September's York Rise Street Party in Dartmouth Park was very well attended. Once again NLB had a stall at this event, selling honey from members as well as from our association apiaries.

At all these events, we handed out educational leaflets and posters, including details of how to identify Asian Hornets, helping to increase public awareness of this new threat. A very big thank-you to everyone who gave up their time to help!

November marked the start of our online Winter Talks, with Professor James Nieh of the University of California speaking about the importance of social learning for honey bees and how they learn waggle dance moves as youngsters.

In December, Clare Densley and Martin Hann of Buckfast Abbey talked about pheromone communication among bees, and we held our festive get-together at the Gatehouse in Highgate.

Sue Lang joins us at our AGM in January with a talk on the history of beekeeping, and our online talks continue in early 2024 with Nigel Semmence on Asian Hornets, Kirsty Stainton on Varroa management, and Marla Spivak on bee social immunity and propolis. Lots to look forward to!

Ed Rendell
Events Manager
December 2023



Painting the shed at Kenwood



Ally Pally Open Day 2023



Fair in the Square 2023

Honey Show Report

Date: Thursday 5th October 2023

Venue: Islington Ecology Centre, 191 Drayton Park, London N5

Judge: Sue Lang, Bedfordshire Beekeepers Association

We took the Honey Show to a new venue in 2023, the Islington Ecology Centre in Drayton Park (special thanks to Peter Buckoke for the introduction!). Once again Sue Lang of Bedfordshire donned her judge's hat and shared insights on the preparation of honey, beeswax and candles for showing. Thank you to everyone who helped on the day – your efforts are much appreciated!

The results are as follows:

Class	1st	2nd	3rd	Highly Commended
A Light Honey	Adam Armstrong	Helen Rogers	John Hauxwell	-
B Medium Honey	Helen Rogers	Adam Armstrong	Highgate Wood Team	-
C Dark Honey	Helen Rogers	Peter Buckoke	-	-
D Set Honey	John Hauxwell	Kenwood Team	-	-
F Honey Cake	Giuliano Saachi	-	-	-
G Beeswax Block	Adam Armstrong	Helen Rogers	John Hauxwell	-
H 3 Beeswax Blocks	Adam Armstrong	John Hauxwell	Helen Rogers	-
I Cut Comb	John Hauxwell	-	-	-
J Frame for Extraction	Kenwood Team	Helen Rogers	Alexandra Palace Team	John Hauxwell
K Mead	Helen Rogers	-	Adam Armstrong	-
L Instructive exhibit	John Hauxwell	-	-	-
M Candles	John Hauxwell	-	-	-
N Photograph	John Hauxwell	Adam Armstrong	Peter Buckoke	-
P Label Design	-	Peter Buckoke	-	-
Q Honey tasting	Helen Rogers	Highgate Wood Team / Peter Buckoke	Adam Armstrong / Kenwood Team	-

The Challenge Cup (Best Honey in Show): Helen Rogers
The Riley Cup (Best Frame for Extraction): Kenwood Team
The Marsh Cup (Best Beeswax): Adam Armstrong
Mrs Assheton Clegg Cup for best-tasting honey: Helen Rogers

*Ed Rendell
Events Manager
December 2023*



NLB Honey Show 2023

Asian Hornet Action Team Report

This year we saw a large increase in the number of Asian Hornet nests found in the UK. Between 2016 and 2022, 13 nests were found in 11 locations, but in 2023 alone, 72 nests were found and destroyed in 56 locations, including London. We can't be sure of the reasons for this sudden jump in Asian Hornet nests, but we can be sure there will be further nests found next year – and we need to be prepared.

In September 2023, two nests were found in London, one of which was in Hackney. The NLB Asian Hornet Action Team was asked to help the National Bee Unit monitor sites in Hackney after an Asian Hornet sighting in a residential street was reported by a member of the public. During this operation, we were able to observe the hawking behaviour of the hornet and see the nest.

We currently have 16 NLB members who have joined the Asian Hornet Action Team but it's important that more members get involved. We really need the participation of all members to help to raise public awareness of the threat posed by Asian Hornets and to place and monitor traps.

Our first NLB AHAT meeting will be held on Tuesday 23rd January, following on from the Winter Talk on Asian Hornets by Nigel Semmence of the National Bee Unit. At the meeting we will discuss the practical preparations we can make ahead of the possible arrival of the Asian Hornet in North London in the Spring.

We were able to offer our members a discount on the Gard'Apis Asian Hornet traps as part of a bulk purchase with the Middlesex Federation. Thanks to an extra reduction funded by NLB for AHAT members, these traps were reduced from £23.99 to £15, and 28 were ordered by members.

We are helping to raise public awareness by providing Asian Hornet ID posters to garden centres and local councils to display at allotment sites, but we have much more to do.

If you have yet to complete the BBKA Asian Hornet Exercise, we encourage you to do so. It only takes a few minutes and means you are insured by the BBKA as a registered AHAT member. This exercise will also give you some idea of what to do if you are asked to support the surveillance of the Asian Hornet in North London should a sighting occur.

Adam Armstrong & Caroline Washington
Asian Hornet Action Team Coordinators
December 2023

Treasurer's report

NLB accounts for 2023 show a small loss for the year. NLB's inability to pass on promptly higher capitation and BDI costs, higher apiary expenditure driven by set-up costs for Highgate Wood, a smaller beginners' course, and insufficient volunteering capacity to run a taster course all contributed. As a one-off this is by no means a threat to the financial position of the association, but it does highlight two things: first and foremost the value of the time members give up to run courses and secondly, the importance of ensuring NLB has the appropriate mechanisms in place to pass on its costs.

Statement of Account for 2023

North London Beekeepers				
Statement of Account for 2023				
2022	INCOME			2023
£4,070.14	Subscriptions & BDI			£2,947.49
£1,717.83	Sale of Association honey			£3,141.31
£1,719.67	Sale of Members' honey (and other products)			£1,612.51
£1.88	Bank interest			£44.64
£5,625.00	Beginners' Course			£3,510.00
£780.00	Taster Courses			£0.00
£2,552.36	Jar and Syrup Sales & extractor rent			£3,698.00
£16,466.88				£14,953.95
	EXPENDITURE			
£1,273.08	Events, Speakers, Meetings			£1,391.09
£16.20	Secretarial, Publicity, Mailings			£0.00
£343.84	Classes, Presentation, Teaching			£953.09
£2,252.49	Apiary			£3,357.27
£383.75	Bee Disease Insurance			£308.05

	(BDI)			
£2,961.50	Capitation BBKA and Middx. Fed			£2,345.00
£2,600.76	Honey Jars, Syrup & labels			£5,369.82
£218.00	Miscellaneous one off items			£0.00
£1,633.69	Cost of Members' honey (and other products)			£1,532.38
£535.57	Web Site			£114.63
£857.16	Payment and Subscription Services: Webcollect, Eventbrite, Paypal, SumUp			£416.54
£337.50	Donations			£0.00
£13,413.54				£15,787.87
£3,053.34	Excess of Operating Income over Expenditure			(£833.92)
	ASSETS			
at 31.12 2023				at 31.12 2023
£3,771.87	Santander Current Account			£5,804.01
£17,001.88	Santander Reserve Account			£17,046.52
£2,956.70	PayPal Balance			£46.00
£23,730.45				£22,896.53
	Financed by			
£20,677.11	Members funds (from previous year's total)			£23,730.45
£3,053.34	Operating Surplus for year			-£833.92
£23,730.45				£22,896.53

The Association owns certain sheds, teaching aids, trophies, books, observation & other hives, apiary equipment, jars, honey, bee medicaments & other items. These are listed separately.



Christoph Benkert,
Honorary Treasurer

I have audited the above accounts which are in accordance with the Association's books and records as at 31 Dec 2023.



Hamish Johnston Stewart,
Honorary Auditor

1 Jan 2024

Events Calendar

January

- 11 Jan: Winter Talk: Nigel Semmence on Asian Hornets in England, and how beekeepers can help (7.30pm, Zoom)
- 15 Jan: Middlesex Microscopy Group, Middlesex University, The Burroughs, Hendon, NW4 4BT, 7pm for a 7.30pm start
- 16 Jan: BBKA Asian Hornet Briefing Update (7pm, Zoom)
- 23 Jan: NLB Asian Hornet Action Team meeting, Highgate Society Hall, 7.15pm
- 28 Jan: NLB AGM, Highgate Society Hall, 3pm. Guest speaker: Sue Lang on the history of beekeeping

February

- 13 Feb: Jackie Aucott, AHAT coordinator for Kent district (Time TBC, Zoom)
- 15 Feb: Winter Talk: Kirsty Stainton on Varroa management (7.30pm, Zoom)
- 17 Feb: Federation of Middlesex Beekeepers' Day, Oak Hill College, Chase Side, Southgate, London N14 4PS. From 10am
- 17 Feb: BBKA Asian Hornet Conference (Details to come. This event will be recorded and made available online)
- 19 Feb: Middlesex Microscopy Group, Middlesex University, The Burroughs, Hendon, NW4 4BT, 7pm for a 7.30pm start

March

- 14 Mar: Winter Talk: Marla Spivak on bee social immunity and propolis (7.30pm, Zoom)
- 18 Mar: Middlesex Microscopy Group, Middlesex University, The Burroughs, Hendon, NW4 4BT, 7pm for a 7.30pm start
- 23 Mar: BBKA Module Exams

April

- 12-14 Apr: BBKA Spring Convention
- 15 Apr: Middlesex Microscopy Group, Middlesex University, The Burroughs, Hendon, NW4 4BT, 7pm for a 7.30pm start

October

- 24-26 Oct: The National Honey Show