



## **BATH BEEKEEPERS SPRING 2020 NEWSLETTER**

Welcome to the Bath Beekeepers Spring 2020 Newsletter. In this edition there is advice from Defra regarding inspection of beehives in the current coronavirus climate, announcements, an article on April in the apiary, tales of international honeybees, announcements, bee news and bits and bobs.

I hope that your bees have managed to get through winter and the strange and varied weather we experienced in February and March; warm days interspersed with hard cold frosts and weird weather brought in by Storms Brendan, Ciara and Dennis respectively. The days have been punctuated by bright sun, rain, hailstorms and whipping winds, notwithstanding the storms that have occurred whenever and wherever there is a toilet roll to be had.....

### **COVID - 19**

So, to address the elephant in the room, we are living in an altered world at the moment courtesy of Covid-19 also known (as if you didn't) as coronavirus. Some of you may have been wondering if you can inspect your bees. Hopefully DEFRA has published guidelines set out in full below. It is recommended that you print a copy and take it with you when inspecting your hives. Link to print;

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadNews.cfm?id=170>

### ***COVID-19 and Beekeeping***

*As beekeepers, please be aware of the following guidance when looking after your honey bees. Updates to this guidance will be provided where necessary. You should keep up to date with the latest guidance issued by the Government as it is subject to regular change.*

*Defra, Scottish Government and the Welsh Government ask you as beekeepers to be responsible and to ensure that you continue good beekeeping practices, effective*

*stock management and health checks whilst observing the Government's guidance on COVID-19.*

*You should follow Public Health guidance on social distancing. Everyone, including beekeepers, should avoid gatherings of more than two people and this includes at your apiary. You should maintain a distance of 2 metres between yourself and others to limit the spread of COVID-19.*

*General advice for beekeepers is as follows:*

- *You should continue to work and care for your animals in the normal manner, as far as possible. You should not take measures that compromise the welfare of the animals in your care.*
- *You should maintain good biosecurity at your apiary.*
- *You should not share beekeeping equipment with other beekeepers, particularly hive tools and other handheld devices and protective clothing.*
- *In line with the general advice on COVID-19, you should wash your hands for at least 20 seconds using soap and hot water before and after you come into contact with any animal. Use hand sanitiser if that's all you have access to.*
- *There are currently no restrictions on the movements of bee colonies – for example, moving bees to fulfil pollination contracts. However, you should observe the public health guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when carrying out these activities, including the guidance on social distancing.*
- *If you are required to visit premises other than your own, you should familiarise yourself with the public health guidance on infection prevention and control and take measures to minimise the risks from contaminated surfaces.*
- *If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or are displaying symptoms of COVID 19, however mild, you should be self-isolating at home and should not be visiting other premises. Ideally, another beekeeper should take on this duty wherever possible. We are suggesting that local associations consider how they can support those confined or unable to attend their bees at this difficult time for all of us.*
- *If your bees are due an inspection by a government inspector, you should be aware that this may be subject to a delay depending on available resources within the inspectorate.*
- *If your bees are due an inspection by a government inspector, and you are in a high-risk group, or are showing symptoms of COVID-19, you must let your inspector know ahead of the inspection. Arrangements will be made that will limit the chance of COVID-19 being spread. This may include the inspection proceeding without the beekeeper being present or delaying the inspection.*
- *For all inspections, 2 metre social distancing will be considered the minimum and so the beekeeper will not be able to stand at the hive side with the inspector while the inspection takes place.*

- *Imports of bees are still permitted. There is no evidence to support restrictions to international movement or trade in bees, and the UK has no additional rules for bee imports with respect to COVID-19.*
- *You should report any suspicion of notifiable diseases or pests to the authorities in the usual way – please see the bee health page on gov.uk for further information. You should use husbandry techniques to minimise swarming. If you have to respond to collect a swarm you need to ensure that you use the guidelines on social distancing when collecting the swarm. If that is not possible, then the swarm then should not be collected. Therefore trying in the usual way – please see the bee health page on gov.uk for further information.*
- *You should use husbandry techniques to minimise swarming. If you have to respond to collect a swarm you need to ensure that you use the guidelines on social distancing when collecting the swarm. If that is not possible, then the swarm then should not be collected. Therefore trying to prevent swarms is the best approach*

Otherwise the Bath Beekeepers Committee send their best wishes to all of you and hope that you and your loved ones are safe and well. When it is over the partying won't stop....

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mW1dbiD\\_zDk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mW1dbiD_zDk)

On a lighter note, seen in a New Zealand supermarket

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8154585/Shoppers-seen-wearing-BEEKEEPING-suits-supermarket-protect-coronavirus.html#i-c946bcd1971f1cd8>

## **IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Avon Beekeepers Association - AGM - Saturday 28th March at 2.00pm - Bath Beekeepers Teaching Apiary - This has been postponed until further notice

The Royal Bath and West Show - 28th-30th May - This has been postponed to 31st July - 2nd August 2020

You will be kept updated as soon as any new information becomes available.

**CAN YOU HELP?**

The BBKA have asked branches to set up a team to assist with local identification of the Asian Hornet.

We are looking for a Bath Beekeeper to act as our Asian Hornet Action Team Coordinator (with the exciting moniker AHAT). Are you interested in:

Educating others,  
Identification and tracking insects,  
Organizing a team, and  
Working with SBI / National Bee Unit

If you are interested in helping, or feel you can contribute, please contact: -  
Jason at [Bathbka.treas@gmail.com](mailto:Bathbka.treas@gmail.com)

## **APRIL IN THE APIARY**

Provided your bees have survived the winter April is said to be one of the best months in the year as the queen will have been laying eggs from as early as February and now she will be increasing her laying. There are also plenty of plants for the bees to forage from for nectar and pollen so that the increasing brood can be fed.

Beekeepers can feed their bees with a light syrup to feed the queen in order to encourage her to lay more eggs. If it seems that there is not enough pollen in the hive pollen patties can be used to feed the brood with enough protein.

April is the month to carry out the first proper inspection of your hive this year. Provided it is warm enough (said to be if you can wear shirtsleeves) then a full inspection can be carried out. This is the most important inspection of the year as you are checking that; the queen is alive and healthy, what the pattern of brood is like, i.e. the presence of eggs and larvae, the proportions of worker to drone brood, with signs of disease, the general wear and tear of the hive as well as any damage and to if sufficient food stores are present - you may of course have already made a cursory check of the food stores in your hive earlier in March and they should be building up by now. If the hive is full of honey you will need to add a new super as the bees need to store nectar otherwise they may swarm because they don't have sufficient room and the queen will need more room to lay - remember that honey bees do not detect that there is enough honey in the hive they just keep on making it!

It is necessary to shake the bees off each frame in order to carry out your inspection. In order to do this safely, ensure that there is a good gap between the other frames. Lower the frame gently and then shake the bees off in the gap. This will give you a

clear view of the frame and the ability to check the factors set out above. In terms of disease there are several to look out for, i.e. varroa mite, nosema, European Foul Brood and American Foul Brood. See below a link to BeeBase giving information on these diseases;

<http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?sectionid=24>

If you are in any doubt at all call a member of the Bath Beekeepers (contact details on the website). If you haven't already, register on BeeBase, where you can obtain details of local bee inspectors for advice.

Check the state of the frames as well. If any are dark, have large holes, are damaged or broken, full of old solid honey and old pollen, now is the time to replace them with new frames and foundation. This is important as the old frames may contain pathogens. The recommended method is the Bailey Frame Change. Link as to how to do this below;

<https://www.thorne.co.uk/image/data/Documents/Bailey%20Frame%20Change%201.pdf>

It is a good idea to plan ahead and make some decisions as to what you want to do with your bees this spring and summer. If your bees are at all vulnerable (low numbers, dead queen, failure to thrive) the spring is the best time to ensure that they recover. You may want to requeen them, split hives or go on the Bath Beekeepers swarm list! If you wait until later in the season you will not have the luxury of warm weather to help your bees along as they become stronger.

If you haven't already it is a good idea to prepare equipment so that you are ready for the continuing expansion of bees that will happen as the weather gets warmer. It is advisable to prepare clean brood boxes, a super or two, all with new frames and fresh foundation. A nucleus box (referred to as a "nuc" in bee parlance) is also handy (a nucleus contains five frames and can accommodate a queen and brood; one frame of honey can be included as one of the five frames). If you have bees in a nuc, once the brood becomes stronger you can move these bees into a brood box. A nucleus can also be used to house a swarm later in the season.

The equipment can ensure that you are ready if you need to add supers when your queen needs more room to lay, to gather your own honey, to use your chosen method of frame change or to split your hive and establish a new one. It is also a good idea to review all of your beekeeping equipment to ensure that it is clean, sterile and in good repair as well as washing your bee suit and taking care of any holes because, I can assure you, a bee will find it and you will have a little helper inside your suit before you know it, with attendant pain, swelling and embarrassment! Good Luck!!!

## INTERNATIONAL HONEYBEES

THE GOLDEN BEE, CHIANG MAI, THAILAND





My husband and I were fortunate enough to spend a holiday in Thailand last November. We stayed in Bangkok for four days and then travelled North to Chiang

`Mai (meaning "New City" in Thai) which was founded in 1296. We stayed in what was the old city which is still surrounded by the old ruined city walls and moat which exist today. During our sojourns around the city we were seduced by the sun, the people (not literally!!!) the food, the peace and.....The Golden Bee.

The Golden Bee is a shop and cafe selling all manner of goods produced from Phatthanakit Bee Farm, which is situated outside the city.

Here are pictures of the beekeepers (note the lack of bee suits including those not worn by children - those bees must be docile!), the goods sold in the shop, quirky bee models and information about the bee farm.







The walls and floors were also decorated with honeycomb patterned tiles.

Here are some of the products we bought (the black bar of soap is made with propolis).



My loyalty card.



Link to The Phatthanakit Bee Farm website;

<http://www.phatthanakit.net/Home/56011cc9739870404f9fac95>

We also enjoyed the cakes served in the cafe, one of which was called Japanese cheesecake which I had never come across before. It is a very light sponge served with fruit compote. I attempted to make it when I got back to Old Blighty. You will not be surprised to learn (after my attempt at honey cake, complete with pastry brush bristles, that I entered in the Honey Show) that it did not quite turn out as the delectable version I had eaten (several times) in The Golden Bee. Link to the cake recipe (a word to the wise - use a large or very large mixing bowl at the last mixing stage otherwise you might find that you have a overflow of cake batter);

<https://www.biggerbolderbaking.com/japanese-cheesecake/>

## **BULGARIAN BEES**

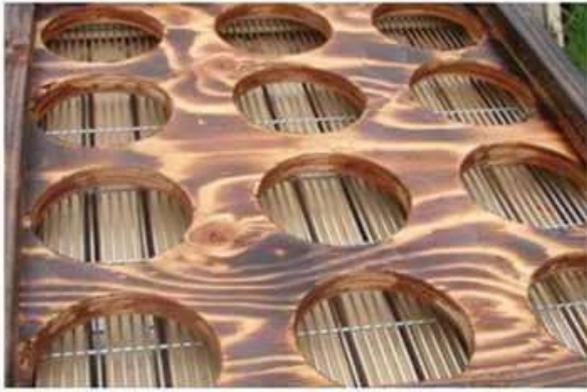
I have been party to these photographs from a Bulgarian beekeeper.



The apiary



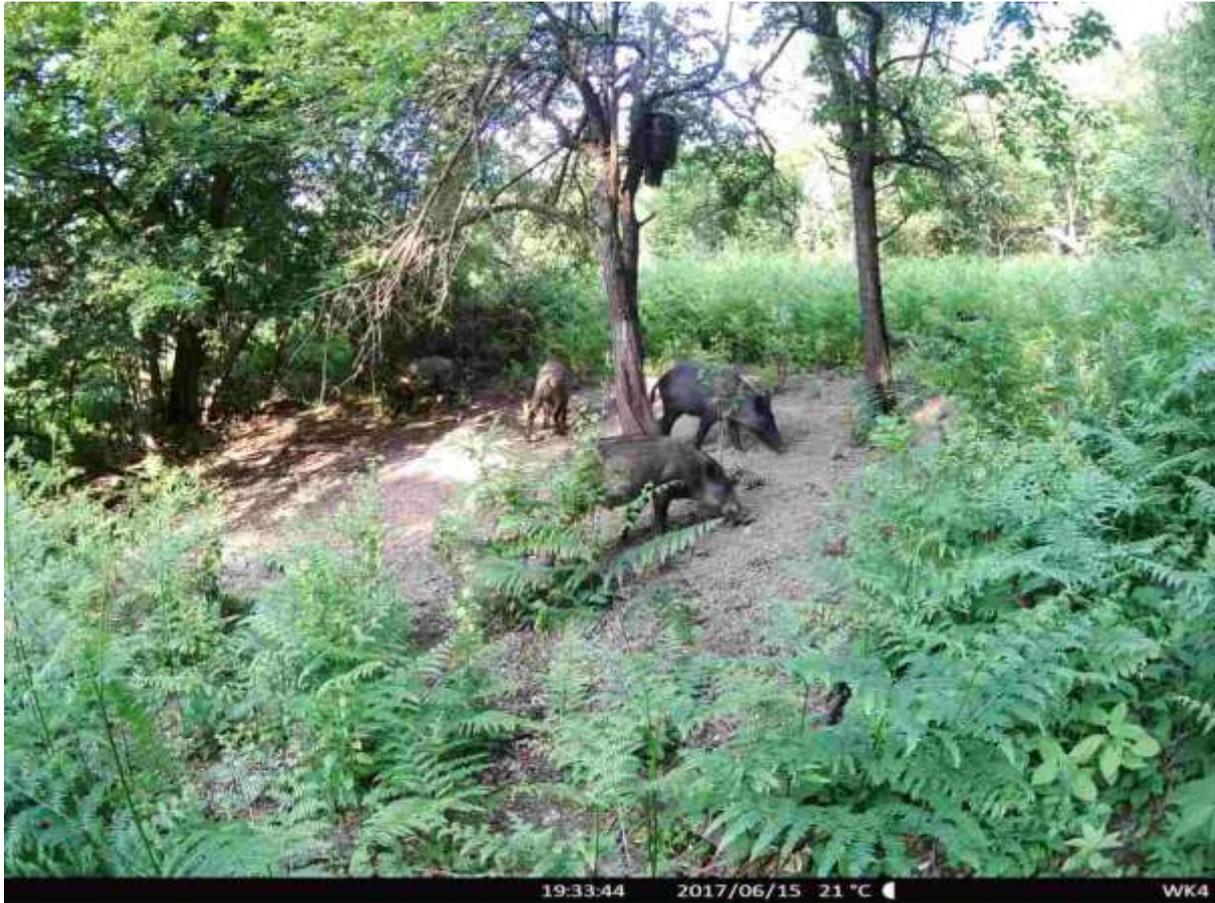
Note the unusual site (or perhaps not as they go wherever they want) where bees have swarmed (and the photo's weird perspective - perhaps the photographer should have gone to a famous high street optician?),



Photos showing a method of making bees produce honeycomb in a jar (perhaps a new class for the Honey Show?).



The stupendous crop!



The wild boars which forage near the apiary.

## **THE HONEYBEES OF MOROCCO - INZERKI APIARY**

A truly astounding apiary can be found at the Inzerki apiary in Morocco. Built in 1850 it is the world's largest apiary. It is made of mud, plaited reeds, wood and palm which is constantly being renewed and rebuilt. The beekeepers are from local families who have tended the bees through successive generations. There are 250 hives and each beekeeper owns 15-20.



Whilst I'd love to write reams about it there is a lot of excellent information to be found on the Net. Here is a link to a lovely soothing film of the apiary and its context. Note how the unique and unusual individual beehives and how they are made. You might be interested to know that, when the current madness is over, you can holiday in Morocco and visit the apiary.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=155TLN7AxhI>

## **THE HONEYBEES OF ALEXANDER McQUEEN**

Alexander McQueen's honeycomb dress



Copyright Iris Molloy



Furthermore the Regs state that a person must not place any product on the market as “honey” unless it meets the above criteria. Sanctions include a fine...

## A Metaphor for our Times

When I was a kid I spent family holidays in a narrow boat on the canal system in the UK. It was sometimes necessary to travel through long tunnels. There was one in particular which was very long and pitch black when entering as there was a bend in it so the opening at the other end could not be seen. As we travelled along the tunnel the boat would eventually turn along the bend. We would see a tiny spot of light which got larger and larger and then we would finally emerge into the light.

I like to think of this in the times to come.

*Let us linger a while in the wonderful old Lilac walk. It is a glory of tender green and shaded amethyst and the grateful hum of bees, the very voice of Spring.*

**Alice Morse Earle**

***And finally...***

## ***Meet our new Treasurer, Jason Brabham***

I was asked to write about myself for the spring newsletter. Who you are, what you do? How you became interested in bees? etc. etc So here goes.....

Husband, cyclist, gardener, reader of books, film and TV viewer, and coming soon, beekeeper!

Growing up in rural Appalachia I was immersed in the natural world. That connection has always remained strong with me. I've always loved being outdoors and exposed to what nature has to show me.

I work in IT and spend my weekdays staring into screens. That, combined with the realities of modern life in urban England, and that connection to our natural world becomes stretched. I find myself looking for new ways to strengthen that bond. So, when we began planning changes to the bottom half of our terraced garden, an apiary was at the heart of the designs.

Over the past year of deconstruction and garden redesign I've also been preparing for bee husbandry. My efforts have been to read and learn not just about honeybees but also bumbles and solitary bees. We're offering habits and food for them all. And if they don't like our garden best I'll be devastated.

Beekeeping is after all extreme gardening. There's risk of life, safety equipment, we've even got our own liability insurance. We are basically the snowboarders of the horticultural world. OMG, did I mention the trophy for best honey? Epic!

I'm equally excited about my role as treasurer for Bath Beekeepers. This is an equally epic organization that is bringing education, learning, and collaboration to something amazing. I am grateful to have the opportunity to give back to something I feel so passionate about.

This is me so if you see me at the club, please say "Hi!"

