



Gwent Beekeepers

Gwent Beekeepers CIO

THE ENCOURAGEMENT, IMPROVEMENT AND ADVANCEMENT OF THE CRAFT OF BEEKEEPING FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT.

APRIL 2020

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Things to Think About.

Covid-19 has changed every aspect of our lives in the short term, not least of all, our beekeeping. What for many of us has been a team event is now reduced to a lone task or, at best, something to only be enjoyed with our nearest and dearest. However, the active

beekeeping season is upon us, and the honeybees need our help and support. So, there is still much to look forward to this spring and summer while we struggle with self-isolation and social distancing.

One of the most challenging aspects in compiling this month's edition has been obtaining the local news stories that are so important to share across the membership.

So, apologies for being a little later than normal. I am particularly grateful to all of you who have sent me material for this month's edition. If you have any interesting stories to tell about any new beekeeping challenges that you have had to face in the current crisis then please send them in for the May edition.

Ed.

Events for Your Calendar

As you are aware most events are cancelled for the foreseeable future and we will keep you informed of plans for apiary sessions etc. once the restrictions are lifted. In the meantime, here is something to watch:

BBKA Spring Convention Videos

Many of you have asked for videos of the lectures you would have seen at the Spring Convention. BBKA is grateful to both the C.B.Dennis Trust and the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers for generous sponsorship of all three recordings below. These have been provided by Professor Tom Seeley, of Cornell University, who was to have been a speaker at the Convention. We hope you enjoy them!

See: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/spring-convention-videos>

Any contributions or ideas for future editions:

please email to: newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk



Letter from the President of BBKA

Dear All

April 2020 and the country is in the grip of the Covid 19 disease, so what is positive about this you might ask.

Looking at the positives is what we should all be doing, we have extra time in our homes to tend gardens and bees, the weather has improved and at least we can see some sunshine, the majority of people are following the rules and isolating themselves, our National Health service proves again how lucky we are to have such dedicated people working to keep us all safe and healthy and in the extreme to give comfort to those who succumb to the disease.

The BBKA office staff are mainly working from home, thanks to modern technology so the wheels are still turning, and we are still providing a service to our members.

We have the Police and the Armed Forces working with Nurses and Doctors who have managed to create a 2000 bed hospital within two weeks with other regional mass hospitals following.

We saw a plea for 25000 volunteers and over 70000 applied to help. Family neighbours and friends making sure that there is food in your house from the local supermarkets.

On other levels, as in the BBKA the staff have started to work from home, still keeping business moving in the right direction.

We do have some negatives, of course we do, money problems for many people, jobs going, retail and leisure businesses struggling.

On a personal level we are unable to help with this, but we can do our best by supporting the retailers by purchasing on the internet where it is possible, and we are told that the Government will offer support to companies wherever possible.

It is like a war, but look at the positives, there are no bombs dropping on us and we have the technology to fight this disease by working and discovering vaccines for future generations.

As I said, this is a positive thinking letter, but we must remember that into every life a little rain must fall, let's just hope for some umbrellas for future rainfall.



Please keep safe,

Margaret Wilson

COVID-19 and Beekeeping - Defra Advice



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

As beekeepers, please be aware of the following guidance when looking after your honeybees. 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 us all.
- 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.

Cont.

- 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 to prevent swarms is the best approach.

STAY AT HOME

PROTECT THE NHS

save lives

In the News

New Apiary & Study Centre – Update

The Completion of Phase 1 and Planning

Roy Watkins, who we are employing to assist with the build, is continuing to work on his own, in line with government guidelines, in order to complete as much of the roofing, flooring, electrical first fix, insulation and plaster boarding as he can with the materials available. He will also plumb-in the toilets. When he has needed help with the slates his son who lives with him has joined him. The weather has been good which has helped. The roof is finished apart from ventilation under the ridge tiles yet to be delivered. We are also waiting for a plumbing roof vent- the close down of suppliers has meant going online and there are many difficulties - items are not



available. The order for plasterboard was cancelled 2 days before it was due to be delivered. Rockwool are trying hard to deliver the wall insulation now promised for next week. The ceiling insulation is stationary in Robert Price. We have spent many hours trying to secure what we can at the best possible price. Roy has done the flooring, and dealt with a problem with the French windows - water inflow underneath. The slab is was not dead level which caused him a problem that he has resolved.



It seems such a shame that this build which was meant to foster more social interaction has happened at a time when our volunteers have not been able to participate other than when they were essential. We were very impressed by their enthusiasm. Hopefully it will come in again in the future. Dave Barrell has put photos of the heroic efforts to erect the panels on a miserably wet day on the website. He has also included a list of the organisations that have donated to our cause. The fencing of the inset entrance with the new gates and fencing around the apiary has also been completed.

We look to have a fantastic facility taking shape. Our aim was to have a facility that would encourage and sustain beekeeping in the future; encourage beekeepers to keep in touch and also to make it easier for veteran beekeepers to continue with teaching roles and running of the apiary without the prospect being an off putting burden.

Once again, I want to thank all of you who have been able to contribute to the work done so far but in particular I wish to thank my husband John, whose financial help and expertise has been instrumental in getting this project this far. John is stepping back from leading our project after phase 1.

John prepared our application for CIO status, assisted us with opening on-line banking, HMRC gift aid and guided Russ through financial transfer from GBKA to GBK. He prepared 2 Welsh Assembly grant funding claims each of about £500k - major projects with myself and John Holden involving detailed building costings, collaboration with Cardiff Uni, support from 20 local schools and local environmental groups and research on resilient bio-diverse ecosystems. When these were not successful, he prepared applications to over a score of environmental funds for grants between £5k and £20k to raise over £50k in total for the project. Recently he has assisted me in our planning applications and amendments for a smaller build and then a major exercise to locate prefab building structures and estimate groundworks costs of concrete slab, septic tank., road surfacing material and quantity and construction cost of roofing, insulation and plaster board, sanitary ware, wiring, plumbing and erection. He has also been working with JH on stock proof fencing, orchard planting, the oak avenue and procuring new hedging. He has prepared the budgets for the whole operation. He is not a beekeeper – he tolerates and assists with the whims of this beekeeper. I and others have been working on this project for many years – we would not have got this far without his input.

Janet Bromley

Work on Phase 2.

To keep you all in the loop we have a planning amendment in the system - this was required for our apiary and for the amended location of our building.

We have had helpful feedback from the planners, and we await their decision. Given the need to follow the strict government guidelines we have decided that once we have done as much work on phase 1 as possible, we will secure the site and stop work on the building until restrictions are lifted.



Obviously, we do not know how long this will be and is very disappointing but unfortunately, I am sure you all agree, necessary. On the positive side this will allow us time to write out to builders merchants and suppliers to see if they are happy to donate materials that we need.

Once the restrictions are lifted then it will require another combined effort to complete the Phase 2 fitting out of the building.

We are particularly grateful to Philip Selby (one of our beginners) is a retired (non-registered) electrician with a great deal of experience in wiring new buildings has agreed to supervise the electrical installation part of the work in

phase 2. Richard Bowman (also Beginner) who is a plumber and has agreed to plumb in the kitchen. If you are able to help with these or any other activities, then once things become clearer, we will be making another call for volunteers.

Thanks to Ceri and Janet for the above update



A Message from Ceri

I hope this note finds you all well and coping with the temporary isolation!! Please find below information to keep you all up to date.

The appointment of Mr Verdun Hall as our Accounts Examiner

As you know, John Bromley, is stepping back from his role as auditor/accounts examiner. We have been asking about for a while as we hoped to find somebody who would carry out the role unpaid. Mr Verdun Hall, who is a retired accounts manager with the DVLA in Swansea (and the father of one of Matt and Nicky's neighbours) has agreed to undertake this role. He has experience of examining accounts for many other charitable organisations. We are not above the government's threshold where we need our accounts audited by a professionally qualified auditor. He does not expect financial recompense for this role. Thanks to Matt and Nicky who have managed to secure this offer for us.

Cont.

Vice Chair and Events Secretary

As you know, sadly, last month Dan Baxter resigned.

Graham Evans has kindly agreed to take on Events Secretary, obviously 2020 will be an unusual year we may find that there are no events to attend but this will give us time to sort our kit and plan for the future.

As of yet we have not appointed a replacement for Vice Chair.

Our Bees

The bees from Ochran are on Miriam's property along with all the kit from the Ochran store. The bees are being looked after by her there.

We will need to wait until there is adequate fencing and screening at the new apiary and for the government restrictions to be lifted before moving them to our new site. Also, it will take a minimum of 5 people to do it safely. Miriam is happy to look after them at her property and has a group of volunteers who she can call to action as soon as restrictions are lifted. We will move them as soon as conditions are right to do so.

The Bees at Usk have, this week, been looked at and fed by Shaun who kindly agreed to go and check up on them. I plan to go over when the weather improves again and carry out an inspection as we have been told by the NBU and APHA via BBKA that we are allowed to travel to look after them. Miriam has also booked a disease inspection at Rhadyr with Adam Parker. He will get to them as soon as he can.

2020 Beginners Course and Newbees 19

At the request of the group we are continuing with the classroom lectures using the various on line platforms available to us - the lectures are being sent out to the group with supporting notes via e mail, we are then holding three webinars with groups of 8 to go through the details and take any questions.

NewBee20s are also maintaining and active dialogue with each other through WhatsApp. Newbee19s are being supported through their WhatsApp group.

Stay safe, sending you all very best wishes

Ceri x

This Month's Article:

Asian Hornet Conference - 8th February

The following is reproduced courtesy of West Sussex Beekeepers' Association

The first BBKA conference on the Asian hornet was attended by Harry Boxall (Chichester) who reviewed the event for the County News.

The Conference was held at Myton school in Warwick and was well attended by over 200 country-wide AH Co-ordinators. It comprised a series of complimentary talks by Asian hornet experts:

- Professor Steven Martin – Life History and current research.
- Xesus Feas - Asian hornet research in Spain and Portugal.
- Alistair Christie - The Jersey experience in 2019.
- Peter Kennedy - Research in 2020.
- Belinda Philipson and Sandra Gray - NBU update on 2019 and policy moving forward.
- Anne Rowberry - Gaining Recognition for your position as AHAT Co-ordinator and Team members.

The conference was ended with a lively Question and Answer Session.

Plenty of new information came from experiences in both Jersey and Galicia, Spain. In particular, the economic impact of AHs is becoming noticeable. They have been destroying fruit crops – grape harvests in some vineyards have been literally wiped out and in orchards, apples, pears and other soft fruits have been spoiled. In addition, human harvesters' risk being stung by the foraging AHs. The cost of treating



AH hornet stings worldwide in a 5-year period was more than €5m. In Galicia €4.5m has been lost in honey production and 65% of bee colonies have been wiped out. In 4 years, the number of AH nests found there has risen from 2 to over 10,000 (2016). In 2019 more than 25,000 nests destroyed. AHs are found now to be nesting everywhere including the ground, caves in cliff faces and on the outside of high-rise buildings. They are doing very well in cities and even nesting in cavity walls inside houses. Queens have been found overwintering in the upper parts of secondary nests as well as in beehives.

AH is rapidly spreading across the globe. In Europe it is established in Italy, Spain, France and the Channel Islands and more recently in Belgium, Holland and Germany. In the east it is to be found in China from where it originated, Korea and throughout the Japanese Islands. In the west it has spread well across Canada and the north USA as well as throughout the east coast USA states. It is forming an ever-widening belt around the southern part of the northern hemisphere. New Zealand is investing a lot of money in using nematodes to limit any future invasion.

There are AH research projects going on in many countries. Exeter University is involved in several, one of which is Atlantic Positive (EU funded) involving 5 Atlantic coastal countries (incl. UK). Its objectives are to prevent further AH expansion and minimise impact on eco-systems and develop trans-national policies. This includes apiary management techniques, traps and their impact on pollinator communities and testing radio telemetry method to locate nests. Once developed, users will be trained in conjunction with educational campaigns for instructors, beekeepers and the public. Targeted trapping is also being developed to avoid killing other insects as well as research into what chemicals will kill AHs but no other insects. AH pheromones are being developed as a tool in order to catch males or confuse males seeking to mate.

Anne Rowberry, the conference chairperson gave a short talk about a planned AH certification qualification. Each association can have up to 15 members insured as long as they are certificated by the BBKA. This would be roughly the same cover as provided for swarm collectors. Each must successfully complete an online test. A person cannot move on to the next question until they have successfully answered the previous question. The test can be suspended as often as required while the person breaks off to find the information that allows the question to be answered correctly. Some delegates thought this reduced the validity of the test but the BBKA is heeding the advice from Jersey, namely that more AHAT volunteers than you think are needed. All beekeepers can play a role in an AHAT since what's needed are: verifiers, tracking directors, trappers, bait station managers, observers / spotters and not a well-qualified team of AH experts.

Delegates were concerned about what they saw as a lack of policy and coordinated action by the BBKA. The NBU addressed this stating Defra will develop a policy this year on how to work with AHATs. It was confirmed that Brexit will not change anything as previous legislation is now enshrined in UK law. The NBU will monitor and take action against any AH incursions working with local AHATs. Findings for 2020 will be reviewed in the winter, ministers will be briefed, and any required changes presented. Stephen Martin said the UK needs to play for time to allow research to bring in solutions. He urged the audience to support the NBU as his opinion was that AH will establish in the UK.

A detailed account of the conference can be found on the BBKA website:
www.bbka.org.uk/news/first-asian-hornet-conference-held

Asian Hornet Image reproduced courtesy of Gloucestershire Beekeepers Association

Other News

Sad News from Swindon

Many of you will remember that we had Ron Hoskins from Swindon to give a talk on his work on varroa resistance at our AGM a couple of years ago. Sadly, Ron's sheds, a greenhouse and equipment were vandalised in mid-March. Ron (now aged 89) has spent 20 years attempting to breed a super-bee that was able to survive attacks from the varroa mite.

His son David said:

'On Monday March 16 some lowlife burned down his sheds and greenhouses and kicked over a lot of his beehives, doing thousands of pounds worth of damage. This included generators, microscopic equipment and over 20 bee suits for training future beekeepers and so much more. They also smashed up and burned his greenhouse.'

Ron was devastated when he discovered the damage to his beehives. This mindless act of vandalism has destroyed the life's work of an enthusiast who has conducted some world-renowned work in the field of beekeeping. On the positive side, nearly a month later and a fundraising page has already raised £24,000 to help him rebuild.



Trustees of Gwent Beekeepers *(Put Faces to Names)*



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Coordinator

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Vice Chair

Position to be Filled

tbc



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