

# NEWSLETTER

---

Summer 2021



## A Word From Our (New) Chairman;

---

Welcome to GBK's first Newsletter in nearly a year. A lot has changed in that year and with the COVID-19 restrictions, it has been a year of some serious challenges for us.

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself, Dave Barrell, as your new Chair. Ceri did a fantastic job as Chair and led the organisation through some unique challenges but virtual zoom meetings were just a step too far. Thank you Ceri for all your hard work, patience and commitment to GBKCIO. You'll be a hard act to follow.

I'm a second generation beekeeper after my father Ted Barrell, who was a member of the GBK Association, which is how I was introduced to Beekeeping. After my father's passing, I took on his small holding, where it seemed a logical step to bring back the bees. In 2017 I was asked what I would like for Christmas, and I suggested a GBK Membership! I did the beginners course shortly after, and joined the Committee where I was quickly put to work redesigning the website. As part of the COVID effect on the economy, I was made redundant from my job with Hewlett Packard, so I have seen a major change in my work life from IT Support to Beekeeping. I know which I prefer!

Other significant changes in the Committee has seen Graham Bent stand down from his job as Newsletter Editor for personal reasons, and we thank him for all his excellent work over the years. Please join me in welcoming Cyrene Powell into this role. If you have articles, photos or adverts then Cyrene will be glad to hear from you at [socialmedia@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:socialmedia@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk).

Ken Key has decided that after many years as Swarm Liaison Officer, it is time to hang up his white sheet. Ken has co-ordinated many Beekeepers' swarm collections and we thank him for his long dedicated support and advice. This position is now currently vacant and as we are in Swarm Season, we urge you to get in touch if you'd like to help with this important task.

**With the softening of COVID restrictions, I'm really looking forward to this being the year we can all meet up at our new and fantastic Study Centre and Holden Apiary. I can confirm the new kettle does work, and tea and biscuits are available on tap. See you soon!**

*Dave Barrell*



(Page 1 of 8)



Gwent Beekeepers CIO  
The Holden Apiary & Study Centre  
Llanfair Kilgeddin  
Abergavenny  
NP7 9DY

[Secretary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Secretary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)  
[Membership@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Membership@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)  
[Newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)



## In this newsletter;

- Letter from our Chair.....(Page 1)
- Dates for your diary.....(Page 2)
- Wanted: Swarm Liaison Officer.....(Page 2)
- Season's To Do List.....(Page 2)
- First Apiary Inspections - April.....(Page 3)
- Taster and Beginner Sessions.....(Page 5)
- Easy Swarm Capturing.....(Page 6)
- Bees in the News.....(Page 6)
- Contact the Committee.....(Page 7)
- Ask a Beekeeper.....(Page 8)
- Adverts.....(Page 8)

## Wanted: Swarm Liaison Officer;

This voluntary post would suit a retired beekeeper. Duties include:

- 1) Keeping the Swarm Collectors registry for Gwent up to date.
- 2) Receiving calls from the public and diagnosing real swarms from congregations of other bees.
- 3) Ringing the nearest and next available Swarm Collector to collect the swarm.

If you're interested, please email [newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

## Dates for your diary;

WEEKEND TRAINING COURSE  
12TH & 13TH JUNE | THE HOLDEN APIARY  
Full details on page 5.

TBC | USK SHOW  
More details coming soon.

TBC | MEMBER SESSIONS  
As covid restrictions ease, we'll be hosting sessions to welcome you for the first time ever to our new member sessions and meetings at our brand new Study Centre.

If you'd like to help out at any events, or provide a talk for future session - get in touch at [newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

## This season's to do list;

ENSURE YOUR BEES HAVE STORES  
The June Gap is soon upon us, and forage will be sparse for a few weeks. They may need feeding to help them get through it.

CHECK FOR QUEEN CELLS  
Be prepared for swarming. Take action appropriate to your method of beekeeping, e.g shook swarm.

DON'T OVERTIDY YOUR APIARY  
Remove any dropped beeswax or propolis, but do not cut back too much flora. Extra foliage can provide shading from the hot sun, and cover from hunting wasps. Only cut back anything that makes access difficult to your hives.



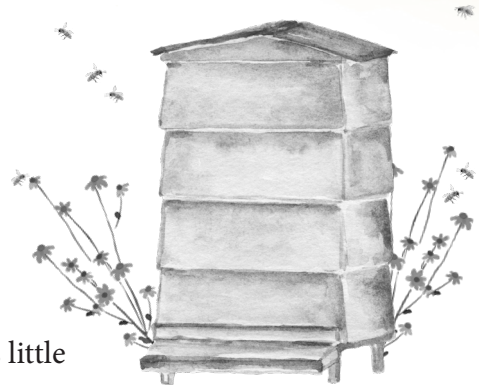


## First Apiary Inspections in April;

Written by Miriam Knight, GBK's Apiary Manager.

As a rule, I sit on my hands and wait for Ribes Sanguineum (flowering current) to begin flowering before I open hives for their first inspection.

This is usually in March; however, this year has been different. March came and went, my blossoms refused to show. I hefted the hives and fed them, the bees had cleared their stores and there was little forage available when it was above 10°C and warm enough to fly.



One amazing day, the temperature soared and I peaked through all my home bees. I discovered that the bees are more aware than I am as to what is ahead. I expected colonies to be bursting at the seams but they weren't! At most I had two frames of brood, the rest were broodless. I could see the queen in most cases, so carefully closed up and waited. When Ribes Sanguineum began to bloom, I opened all the colonies only to find what brood had been around was also gone, queens still present and looking well.

April 26th became the first opportunity to inspect the colonies at Rhadyr. The Apiary team were already prepared and kit was stacked in the apiary, next to colonies. We redefined our criteria for first inspection:

- Count frames of bees
- Count frames of brood
- Are they queened right?
- How much cleaning will we need to do, ie: floor, broodbox, shook swarm etc
- Do they have stores?
- Does the queen have space?

You will note that disease was not in the list and left for the second inspection. At the second inspection that is all that will be checked.

Two hives had overwintered with large colonies and were showing signs of needing attention. One was 'demareed', she also had her drone brood removed as she is an undesirable breeder. Every year, she is the first to swarm and she is not good natured. The second queen is descended from the Hygienic LASI queen we bought in some years ago, the bees appear to have lost their hygienic traits but are still gentle to work with. She had built up well and had a few drones wandering around so we made up three nucs. Two food, two brood and two space. We came to another very quiet colony which was building well, so we decided to take a nuc from her too. Having inspected only half the colonies it was time to leave to catch up with Newbee21s. Hurriedly, three of the four nucs were packed into the truck and we closed up the apiary after a very long day and a long list of jobs.

(Continued on the next page)



(Page 3 of 8)



Gwent Beekeepers CIO  
The Holden Apiary & Study Centre  
Llanfair Kilgeddin  
Abergavenny  
NP7 9DY

Secretary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk

Membership@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk

Newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk



## First Apiary Inspections in April (Continued);

I was meeting the Newbees at the Holden Apiary so rushed in to the apiary, dropped off the nucs to be ready to attend to other jobs. Holden Apiary is not yet registered on the National Bee Unit data base (its new!) and our Seasonal Bee Inspector, Dan Baxter arranged to visit us early in the season. I had also raised concerns about the bees we had there as they have been unhappy after all their moves, especially as they were now in a different forage area. They have moved from woodland and mountain heather to arable pasture. Four large colonies didn't make it through winter, interestingly the young queens bred in 2020 and over wintered in poly nucs appeared to be well. Dan went through all the colonies and found no glaring issues.

Next were the three nucs from Rhadyr.

Imagine my consternation when Dan said he was sorry! He pulled his tweezers out of the cell he was poking and the rope trailed behind 25mm gloopy brown! American Foul Brood! We closed the three colonies that came from Rhadyr that evening, Dan granted a movement licence on the grounds that there has not been any previous report of AFB in this locality; the colony was on site for less than twenty four hours and was populated with none foraging, nurse bees the previous evening. Rhadyr, where they came from, has a history of AFB and is already set up for colony destruction. The nucs were duly returned that evening.

Before SBI/Dan inspected the colonies at Rhadyr, Andy, Dex and I back tracked through our memory and notes to identify the parent colony. I was convinced it was top left corner madam! She was closest to a previous outbreak site. Due to shortage of time, I had rushed to go through her on the last visit, paying little attention to the quality of cappings. But Andy reminded me that we take notes, good ones! At every inspection! He told me the nuc had come from the quiet colony. Undeterred, I informed Dan it was Horrid Girl! So both hives were left for last as were the nucs.

Dan looked at the frames of 'Quiet Girl' and found several contaminated cells. So early on in the development of the disease that the cappings were merely slightly changed in colour or shape. One or two had pin prick perforations but I would have still missed it. But the now familiar Lateral Flow Device (LFD) confirmed the diagnosis.

Two beekeepers began digging the hole. 600mm x 600mm x 600mm. Large enough to drop a hole hive in. We are a teaching apiary and the standards have to be impeccable.

On each occasion, I have destroyed all the wooden equipment so there is no possibility of any pathogen being transferred to future colonies. I knew Dan's next task would be to track and trace the source of the contamination. But in this instance, there were no old boxes left. They had all been burnt. With the previous case, the SBI has supervised the burning of kit and scorching of woodwork. The poly nuc cannot be burnt but will have a seriously healthy, cleansing bath in sodium hypochlorite (NaOCl) solution (bleach).

(Continued on the next page)



(Page 4 of 8)



Gwent Beekeepers CIO  
The Holden Apiary & Study Centre  
Llanfair Kilgeddin  
Abergavenny  
NP7 9DY

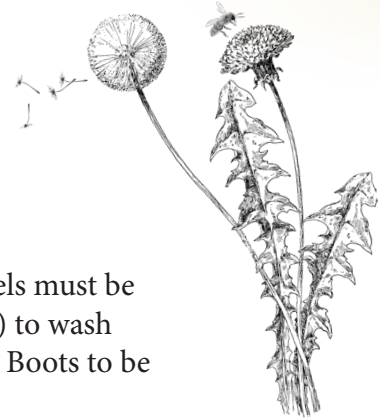
Secretary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk  
Membership@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk  
Newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk



## First Apiary Inspections in April (Continued);

Even though the nuc had been on site for less than 24 hrs there is a 'Stand Still' notice on both apiaries. Nothing can leave the sites for six weeks after which the SBI will inspect all the colonies again to see if there are any further outbreaks. If there are none the 'Stand Still' can be lifted.

In the meantime, the bees still need looking after weekly. But hygiene levels must be kept high at all times. 20% soda solution (Sodium carbonate decahydrate) to wash hands and tools between colony inspections. Sealed box for waste matter. Boots to be cleaned before leaving, beesuits to be washed with soda after every visit.



All neighbouring beekeepers within a 3km radius will be flagged up for an SBI inspection of their colonies to be on the safe side. The burden of managing the restriction can weigh heavily as one feels very responsible. New research has shown that most outbreaks are instigated by beekeeper error and all our actions over the last three years need to be reviewed. For those HA callers on that fateful Tuesday, if I was less than welcoming, I apologise!

Luckily all our kit is apiary specific, this is a planned management strategy to address the possibility of future outbreaks of AFB. As we raise young colonies for beginners we aim to minimise possible cross contamination. Swarms are isolated away from breeder colonies for the same reason, we are very grateful for the recent offer of a new isolation apiary. We have found it difficult without Ochran Apiary.

Lastly, Andy was right. It is important to keep good notes weekly, I am pleased to say our notes are to be relied on, my emotional desire to blame is totally wrong! We still have Horrid Girl! New plans need to be hatched!

### Taster and beginner sessions;

This course is a full two day event, on  
**Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th June 2021**  
between 9.30am and 5pm.

The course consists of lectures and practical visits to the bees - weather permitting.

The **course fee is £175** and includes:

- BBKA Guide to Beekeeping (paperback)
- Gwent Beekeepers CIO Membership for 2021
- BBKA Membership for 2021
- Bee Disease Insurance for 2021

**Limited spots available. Get in touch with Eva at**  
[beginners.admin@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:beginners.admin@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)



(Page 5 of 8)



Gwent Beekeepers CIO  
The Holden Apiary & Study Centre  
Llanfair Kilgeddin  
Abergavenny  
NP7 9DY

[Secretary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Secretary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)  
[Membership@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Membership@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)  
[Newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)



## Easy Swarm Capturing;

Photo by Andy Coles.

Andy has been on alert for GBK the past few weeks, attending to swarms. To make capturing easy, he's set up a bait hive - a nuc complete with frames inside - high up on this pergola, to invite swarms to capture themselves! He'll be checking every week to see if a colony has taken residence, where he'll then move them to a more appropriate site.

**Try one yourself and let us know the results.**

## Bees in the News;

It's never too late to learn something new. Here's a few articles you may be interested in:

MEASURING AND MANAGING THE EMERGING THREAT OF ASIAN HORNETS  
(EXETER.AC.UK)

<https://bit.ly/3c5Tnbv>

FUNGUS FIGHTS MITES THAT HARM HONEYBEES (PHYS.ORG)

<https://bit.ly/34zfYJk>

HONEYBEES ARE ACCUMULATING AIRBORNE MICROPLASTICS ON THEIR BODIES  
(NAT GEO)

<https://on.natgeo.com/34v0mGy>

TRACKING DRONES FOR TWO YEARS TO FIND HOW THEY MATE  
(THECONVERSATION.COM)

<https://bit.ly/3yRYGoE>



(Page 6 of 8)



Gwent Beekeepers CIO  
The Holden Apiary & Study Centre  
Llanfair Kilgeddin  
Abergavenny  
NP7 9DY

Secretary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk  
Membership@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk  
Newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk



## Thank you for being a part of Gwent Beekeepers CIO;

We've grown to nearly 250 members, covering all areas of Gwent. Thanks to your continual support, we're able to do so much for our honeybees and we're training and educating more and more people of all ages.

How can you contribute to GBK? We'd love to see your pictures, hear your beekeeping experiences or enjoy your tea-making skills at our next events. Please get in touch with us at [newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk). Thank you!

## Contact the Committee;



Chairman | **Dave Barrell**  
[Chair@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Chair@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

Secretary | **Peter Maloney**  
[Secretary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Secretary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

Treasurer | **Nicola Williams**  
[Treasurer@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Treasurer@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

Membership Secretary | **Matt Williams**  
[Membership@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Membership@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

Apiary Manager | **Miriam Knight**  
[Apiary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Apiary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

Events Officer | **Graham Evans**  
[grahamjevans@gmail.com](mailto:grahamjevans@gmail.com)

Swarm Liaison Officer | **Position Vacant**

Beginners Administrator | **Eva Lindhe**  
[Beginners.admin@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Beginners.admin@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

Website Administrator | **Dave Barrell**  
[Webadmin@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Webadmin@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

Newsletter Officer | **Cyrene Powell**  
[Newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)



(Page 7 of 8)



Gwent Beekeepers CIO  
The Holden Apiary & Study Centre  
Llanfair Kilgeddin  
Abergavenny  
NP7 9DY

[Secretary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Secretary@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

[Membership@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Membership@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)

[Newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:Newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk)



## Ask a beekeeper;



Do you have a question about beekeeping that you're too shy to ask us? Well now you can ask and your identity will be kept anonymous - hooray!

Send us your questions to [newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@gwentbeekeepers.co.uk) and we'll answer you honestly and to the best of our knowledge.

**Adopt a Hive**  
WITH GWENT BEEKEEPERS CIO

HELP OUR HARD-WORKING BEES  
SUPPORT LOCAL BEEKEEPERS  
BECOME AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER  
GET A JAR OF LOCAL HONEY!

VISIT [WWW.GWENTBEEKEEPERS.CO.UK](http://WWW.GWENTBEEKEEPERS.CO.UK)

AN ETHICAL GIFT - SUPPORT LOCAL



Known locally as **The Bee Shop**, we are Monmouthshire's favourite Beekeeping shop. We sell fondant and foundation, and are your local Thorne's stockist.

### Bees for Development

1 Agincourt Street  
Monmouth  
NP25 3DZ

01600 714848 [www.beesfordevelopment.org](http://www.beesfordevelopment.org)

All revenue from our shop supports work with beekeepers in the world's poorest nations. UK Charity 1078803.

