

# Beemaster

The Newsletter of the  
Nottinghamshire Beekeepers' Association  
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June 2020  
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*Please note:*

Beemaster is published monthly. Contributions by 25<sup>th</sup> of prior month, please, to the Editor. Copy received after this date may have to be held over to the next Beemaster. The Editor retains the right to amend submitted articles or to reject articles which appear, in his opinion, to be unsuitable. Views expressed in Beemaster articles are not necessarily those of the Editor and may not reflect the opinions of the Council of the Nottinghamshire Beekeepers' Association.

## Diary dates

Please refer to the NBKA website for latest updates

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Inevitably, the meetings schedule is a bit sparse at the moment, but members should keep an eye on the excellent **NBKA website** which is regularly updated by Griff Dixon.

[www.nottsbees.org.uk](http://www.nottsbees.org.uk)

Essentially, as at the time of writing, Nottingham region meetings are cancelled until further notice, Newark region have started holding meetings by Zoom; likewise the NBKA Council meeting on 18 June will be held by Zoom.

The website contains back issues of *Beemaster* from January 2019 onward.

As a follow-up to one 'meeting' that did take place, Anne Mason reports that the **Bees Abroad** 'Big Birthday Pub Quiz' held (virtually, of course) on 6 May raised an amazing £2,000, money that is extremely welcome to the charity, especially at the present time. The evening was very enjoyable, although apparently Anne and Rob left a lot to be desired! Professor Adam Hart excelled as the quizmaster and even suggested that Bees Abroad run another one, maybe at Christmas...

## From the Editor

**Stuart Humphreys** welcomes you to this month's newsletter

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I'm not quite sure where May went, but the monthly deadline for editing the newsletter has rolled round again, so welcome to June's *Beemaster*!

Firstly, just a quick word on you-know-what. The last two editions of *Beemaster* contained the National Bee Unit's guidance on COVID-19 and Beekeeping. As there have been no updates since 3 April, I have not included it this time.

So to this month's newsletter. Thanks go, as ever, to members who have kindly contributed...

Fresh from helping to raise £2,000 for Bees Abroad, **Anne Mason** has designed a colourful way to thank our NHS Heroes who are helping fight the coronavirus, amongst other things.

**Griff Dixon** reflects on a hectic month of May, some tentative steps taken at rearing queens (not wholly successful but he won't be deterred), and looks forward to the forthcoming Council meeting on 18 June.

**Penny Forsyth** expects June will be as busy as ever. As well as looking out for the 'June gap' and giving us a handy checklist of jobs in our apiaries, Penny reminds us to enjoy our beekeeping! (Not always easy, but that's important.) Also, she keeps us up-to-date on the Asian Hornet Action Team.

**Alan Moulton** describes the difficulty of managing an out apiary during lockdown and with limited public transport, but finds help from an unexpected quarter.

**Tim Axe** and Anne celebrate World Bee Day (virtually) at the Canalside Heritage Centre. Continuing the *Bees in my garden* feature started by Anne last month, I have written a few words on the Buff-tailed Bumblebee. I hope to receive your contributions for future editions editions of *Beemaster*.

I would particularly draw your attention to the *Beelines* articles supplied by **Mick Flower** and Anne. Mick is on the BBKA Swarm List and is looking for help to re-house swarms he has collected. He is prepared to coordinate matters and has included his contact number for any member who can assist. Anne is hoping to find volunteers to knit blankets for an 'end of life' ward at the QMC; donations of wool would also be most welcome.

Last but not least, **Linda Jordan** tempts us with Honey, Nut & Polenta Cake. And for the second month running we have a lockdown bonus recipe, as **Maurice Jordan** reveals the secret to his life-affirming mead; he even quotes Brother Adam, so it must be good!

I hope you enjoy the read. And stay safe and alert.

## Rainbow bees

Anne Mason has a colourful way of thanking our NHS Heroes

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I have created a new knitting pattern for a 'Rainbow Bee' and given the bees (with a chocolate inside) as gifts to NHS workers on my street, family and friends.



If you would like to create your own Rainbow Bees, the pattern is available on the **Bees Abroad** website ([www.beesabroad.org.uk](http://www.beesabroad.org.uk)) via the online shop, with a request for a donation to Bees Abroad. For those wishing to knit some bees and sell them to raise money for Bees Abroad, £3.00 per bee (including a chocolate) is the suggested price.

Many thanks.

# Notes from Norwell

By **Griff Dixon**, including his Honorary Secretary's report

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## Wall-to-wall beekeeping

May 2020 has been Beekeeping, More Beekeeping, and Even More Beekeeping. It's almost been wall-to-wall Beekeeping. And I expect the same in June.

For the first time I have been inspecting regularly, and like to think I have been that bit ahead of the bees as, so far, mine have not swarmed.

I have had no swarms to collect in the Newark area and have dealt with loads of NBKA Contact enquiries regarding bees in walls, roofs, under decking, etc., but no easy hanging ones. At least two enquiries a day. I did attend to some bees reported in a hive discarded outside Newark in a layby next to a burger van. By the time I got there the hive had been burnt, with the remaining bees surviving in the embers and surrounding undergrowth. I managed to scoop what I could into a nuc but, alas, they have dwindled and were eventually merged into another nuc.

I got called out to bumblebees this morning, and have been dealing with honeybees in a wall in my own village which we have been trying to coax out with a nuc and old comb.

It seems Nottingham have been swamped with swarms and Mick Flower has been looking for takers (please see his note under *Beelines* on page 17).

## In the apiary

I did start queen rearing as planned, having an initial go at grafting and putting in nucs which was an abysmal failure. Turning my attention to the Cloake Board method under the general guidance of Maurice Jordan and Neil Pont supplying his breeder queen eggs in a nuc for me, I managed to get 2 out of 20. I think I had not stocked the double brood with enough bees so they were spread a bit thin. I think a few more goes should do the trick and I can tick that bit off the list of things to accomplish.



The pictures above are of a Buckfast queen laying pattern on both sides of a national frame!

## **Getting to & from the apiary**

The van I got early last year has taken a hammering on the farm tracks I have to negotiate to get to my main apiary. It has been in for a new exhaust, having reversed into a low soil embankment and breaking the tail pipe off followed by a similar action which snapped the exhaust at the first expansion box. It sounded like a tank on the way home. It's now in for its service and MOT with the power steering pipework leaking and a ball joint completely shot: no wonder it was making a grinding noise when turning the steering wheel. Should be all fixed before the end of the month. Perhaps a 4 x 4 would be better in future.

Having spent so much lockdown time beekeeping it was a bit of a shock when business project enquiries started to roll in today and I was faced with deciding what I would prefer to be doing most. So the project was passed out to another local company who, I hope, have a sharper pencil than me.

## **NBKA matters**

Now that lockdown is easing and things look like getting back to some semblance of normality, there is the completion of the beginners courses, auction and other events to have a think about if they can get started again in some form with social distancing to consider.

I have been circulated with the new Bee Farmers training scheme to help those beekeepers that want to move into commercial business – a bit like my suggested 'Bees for Business'. There is to be some form of Zoom web meeting to discuss the proposals which I can report back to the Council/Membership to those that are interested. I am hoping that the next Council Meeting due on 18 June will be Zoom attended, and I will be circulating details to Council members in due course.

Stay safe and healthy.

## View from the Vale (of Belvoir)

How bees are faring in the south-eastern corner of Notts by **Stuart Humphreys**

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Our first inspection of the month was 10 days after the last one in April – although the intervening cold spell seems like a very distant memory now. Fortunately, none of our colonies had taken advantage of the extra three days' grace. In fact, they started the month remarkably well-behaved; for the most part that has lasted...

Of course, May has been incredibly warm and dry. During this period – and even more than we recall from previous years – our bees have made full use of our pond to collect water. This photo shows some of them gathered at their favourite watering-hole.



Last month I mentioned (only half-jokingly) that we have Andrew Barber on speed dial. Thus it was that on encountering the first signs of swarm preparation in the second week of May, Andrew was on hand to recommend, with reassuring calmness, the Demaree method. Obvious you might think but, honestly, seeing the first queen cell of the year always seems to turn my mind to mush (Is the Answer... A: Remove the queen cell(s), B: Pagden, C: Snelgrove, D: Demaree, E: None of the above? Fortunately, I 'phone a friend'...)

Curiously, although our colonies seem to be about three weeks ahead of where they were this time last year (based, that is on the size of brood nests and quantity of honey produced), they have been about a month later in producing any queen cells.



I like to think that giving the colonies supers before they necessarily need them – and, for the first time, under-supering them – has helped. But it is just a likely that having broken all records for swarming last year, they are just having a little break before resuming what comes naturally... (I'll touch wood nonetheless.)

Following each inspection we check our records to see whether the number of frames of brood is increasing, holding level or decreasing; we study this as avidly as we do all those COVID-19 charts that are presented at the daily press conferences...

I mentioned last time the downside of having a garden apiary; that is, when the bees 'misbehave' you have no escape. Over the last few weeks we've experienced this in a couple of ways. First of all, one of our colonies reacted very nastily to being inspected, attacking my veil and making all manner of attempts to sting me. They were queenright – 16 frames of brood at all stages in a double brood box – but very much took exception to me. I scored them an all-time low 2 out of 10 for 'temper'. With a back-up plan of splitting the colony, initially we gave them more supers for space, left them alone for two weeks and generally tip-toed around the garden during that time so avoid upsetting them further. Lo and behold, at the two subsequent inspections they were a delight and scored 10 out of 10. Maybe it was lack of space, or maybe the queen was getting through some sperm from a bad tempered drone. Who knows?

The second example is a bit more disconcerting. Across our six colonies we must have well in excess of a quarter of a million bees. But one bee (at least I assume it's the same one) has taken to buzzing us when we are minding our own business a reasonable distance away from the hives. Obviously, the notion that parts of our garden might become off-limits wasn't part of the game plan when we started out. It's not clear which hive the errant bee belongs to, so we'll have to see if she settles down in the days & weeks ahead...

On the plus side, our bees are healthy, the gardens in our village are full of flowers for them to forage upon and pollinate, and the 'honey factory' as we affectionately call it (albeit one that would probably breach the Factories Act because of the noise generated by the bees) is going full pelt. It's just a pity that the places where we normally sell the honey are closed for the time being. Not that we keep bees to make money – far from it – but all that extra equipment gratefully received from Thornes doesn't come cheap! At least we know the honey won't go off.

Finally, believe it or not we do try and learn from our mistakes. For instance, I know to return around dusk extracted supers for the bees to clean or re-use; on one occasion last year I did this late afternoon... for the next couple of hours the garden was a maelstrom of flying bees looking for their new-found source of nectar. This year (last week in fact) my schoolboy error was to return the extracted supers without bothering to take a smoker. The colony concerned apparently didn't appreciate being disturbed in the evening; perhaps they realised that I was returning the mere remnants of honey I had 'stolen' from them!

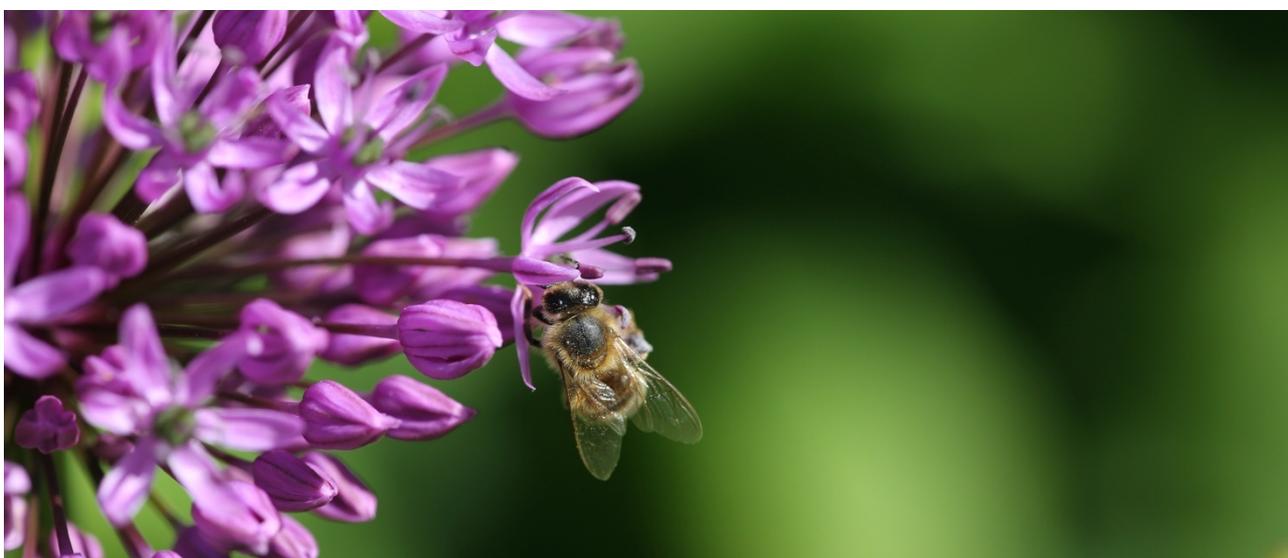
## This month in your apiary: June

**Penny Forsyth** tells us what to watch out for as summer approaches

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June should be a beautiful, sunny month with plentiful forage to help our colonies build up well and fill supers – time to book the extractor and order extra jars and labels! Well yes, but the hot, dry and windy weather in May brought everything forward and the bees have been busy and have built up fast, meaning honey aplenty (and nowhere to sell it) and swarming to match. Oh, the joys of beekeeping under lockdown!

With no mowing of verges and public spaces, restricted access to the countryside, and a dramatic reduction in road traffic and pollution, the natural world has had a chance to flourish and to recover a little, plants and pollinators alike. Also, vastly reduced freight and tourist traffic from the Continent means less risk of Asian hornet incursion into the UK, although we should continue to monitor for their presence.



June can bring abundance and anxiety in equal measure... we have all heard of the ‘June gap’. In some areas there may still be a gap in flowering between the spring flowers such as sycamore, blackthorn, hawthorn and oilseed rape, and the start of the summer flowers such as lime, clover, blackberry and sweet chestnut. There is a strong chance that we will see a proper June gap this year and beekeepers need to be vigilant, as always, that there is sufficient food in the hive to carry the colony through, especially if we have a spell of bad weather. This is a particularly important consideration when deciding to take off honey: last year colonies were left starving when poor weather prevented them from replenishing stores after the oilseed rape honey harvest was taken off. Please be mindful of forage and weather conditions and leave some honey for the bees.

Expanding colonies mean more brood to host varroa so be sure to monitor any fall.

Despite our best efforts to prevent or control swarming our colonies may still swarm if we haven’t at least kept up with the need for more space for the bees to store nectar during a strong flow. If there has been any appreciable acreage of oilseed rape in the vicinity of your hives you will need to extract the honey before it sets in the comb.

Those of us on the swarm collectors list will have our skeps and swarm collecting kit permanently in our vehicles. June’s a busy month!

## Jobs for June



Continue weekly inspections and undertake swarm control if required.



If inspections reveal that food stores are low, feed 1:1 syrup in a contact feeder, if there are no supers on, or fondant. Remember to only feed in the evening and to reduce the hive entrance to avoid robbing.



Add another super when the current one is almost full of bees, not honey.



Extract oilseed rape honey as soon as the bees start capping it and if no droplets fly out of uncapped cells when you quickly shake the frame.



Mark any new queens – blue is this year's colour.



Monitor for varroa: an average daily mite fall of 10 or more means the colony is in trouble and needs treating. MAQS can be used with honey supers on.



Continue monitoring for Asian hornets in your apiary: baits should now be protein-based and offered in an open dish to avoid bycatch; weight the dish with a pebble.

And finally... Enjoy your beekeeping and be ready to learn from the bees... Remember the Green Cross Code? Stop, look and listen! It's a good one to apply each time you visit your apiary...

**Stop** and ask yourself what your intention is today: have you got the right equipment with you, enough time and the right conditions to carry it out?

**Look** at your hives, your bees and the surroundings – does everything look normal, are the bees flying, taking in pollen, forming a blanket on the front of the hive?

**Listen** to the sounds – contented humming or angry buzzing? Time spent observing your bees is even more valuable than reading about them – as any experienced beekeeper will tell you, the bees don't read the books...

# NBKA Asian Hornet Action Team news

**Penny Forsyth** reports on the current UK situation

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There have been no reported sightings of Asian hornets in the UK to date. I have received one query from a member of the public accompanied by a photograph and which I was able to identify as a giant wood wasp. In the Channel Isles, 35 queens and 7 primary nests have been spotted since the beginning of the year compared with 50 queens and 12 nests during the same period in 2019. Numbers are slowly going up and will rise but they are significantly less than last year: the reason for the reduction is unknown but it is good news so early in the season. Although Asian hornet monitoring activity has been greatly curtailed during lockdown, it has not had a noticeable effect on monitoring or control: members of the public are well-informed and have been extremely vigilant.

Although the greatly reduced amount of freight traffic from Continental Europe and the wider world reduces the risk of Asian hornet incursions, we should continue to be alert for their presence in and around our apiaries and gardens and in the wider environment: we cannot yet be certain that we have had no overwintering queens on mainland UK. Since any such queens will now be busy in their nests, monitoring traps now should be targeted at emerging workers and should therefore have protein-based baits such as small scraps of meat, fish or prawns on an open dish placed where it can be easily monitored. As the lockdown is gradually relaxed and we venture further afield we should maintain our vigilance for hornets and nests. It goes without saying that we should check regularly our own sheds, porches, garages, carports, house eaves, and stacks of old hive boxes, etc.

The coronavirus crisis is, quite naturally, at the forefront of everyone's mind and it will inevitably impact upon the fight to contain the Asian hornet threat to this country. The nationwide lockdown and tight restrictions on movement will greatly hamper response to sightings and tracking and this will impact on nest destruction. It remains to be seen if restrictions will be lifted or reduced once sightings begin to come in. In the meantime, AHAT Co-ordinators will continue to function as points of contact and conduits for information. As always, vigilance is key.

The BBKA has launched an interactive map on its website giving the locations, names and contact details of AHAT members across the country. This works in the same way as the Swarm Map and is drawing data in real time from the information in the eR2 database. Anyone requiring help or advice about a suspected sighting simply enters their postcode and the relevant section of the map comes up showing coloured pins: blue for the co-ordinator, red for verifiers. Clicking on the pin gives the name and contact details. NBKA makes a good showing with 10 members visible: you will find the map via the Asian Hornet tab on the BBKA website.

Don't forget..... **See it, Snap it, Send it!** Non-Native Species Secretariat

<http://www.nonnativespecies.org> If you think you see an Asian hornet or nest be sure to report it immediately, preferably with a photo, via the Asian Hornet Watch app, downloadable for smartphones, or email details to: [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk) and please let me know. Finally, if you would like to be involved in the NBKA Asian Hornet Action Team please contact me at [pennyforsyth16@mail.com](mailto:pennyforsyth16@mail.com).

## Force of circumstance

**Alan Moulton** receives unexpected help in managing his out apiary during lockdown

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At a meeting of the NBKA about three years ago an old friend of my daughter reintroduced herself as a new beekeeper. She had a colony in her garden, I would help her with any advice, and she would be able to use my spinner (as you do).

Then I got an eye problem which stopped me driving; it was remediable but would take time. Since I now need the laser procedure, that time period has been extended somewhat because of the coronavirus lockdown.

To get from home in Ravenshead to my out apiary at Normanton I had started using the bus and occasional lift. The problem now is that the use of public transport is discouraged by government edict and lifts and taxis are avoided to maintain social distancing.

At the beginning of the current crisis the aforementioned daughter's schoolfriend sent me an email to offer any local help to us, her surrogate parents. That is, us, the old ones who wish to stay independent. But force of circumstance has dictated that we at least did some minimal beekeeping in the apiary and it turns out my daughter's friend's husband was in fact the new beekeeper...

So I have developed a reciprocal relationship: transport to and from my out apiary in exchange for knowledge and ideas, at least until the end of lockdown. Of course, this might still be some time off, by which time my eyes might be better or maybe the buses will be running again.

It may even be that the out apiary could be taken over by my new friend, say, next year. I would have a couple of colonies here at home now that all the neighbours' lofts are clear of feral bees, and I can hide my hives from prying eyes and can then become a secret beekeeper.

# World Bee Day

**Anne Mason and Tim Axe** celebrate the third World Bee Day

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*The montage of Anne Mason's Rainbow Bee photos on page 6 was used by Bees Abroad to publicise both the charity and the third United Nations designated World Bee Day on Wednesday, 20 March.*

*Tim Axe, the lead beekeeper for the Canalside Heritage Centre (CHC) at Beeston Lock, and Anne had planned a full day the following Sunday to celebrate World Bee Day at the CHC. Instead they had to settle for publishing the short article below on social media.*

\* \* \*

Here at the CHC we were due to celebrate the third year of World Bee Day this Sunday, 24 May. Officially the date designated by the United Nations is 20 May when we are encouraged to think about the world's 20,000 species of bees and the 250 species in particular that live in the UK (225 solitary, 24 bumblebee species and, of course, the one species of honeybee).

At CHC a hive of bees was installed in our special apiary in the early days of the Heritage Centre and it is both used as an educational facility for the visiting public and a place where beekeeping training may take place. This means that some would-be beekeepers with no suitable garden themselves can get involved in this fascinating hobby.

Our bees have the added spin-off of producing an income both from any (surplus to requirements) honey they produce that we sell in the gift shop and their beeswax which has been used in our candle-making workshops.

Alongside our apiary, the CHC has an amazing garden that has many plants and flowers especially chosen to attract pollinating insects of all kinds. Local beekeepers meet at CHC regularly and also help with events such as the World Bee Day, as well as providing bee-related activities through the year including workshops for groups, schools and the public.

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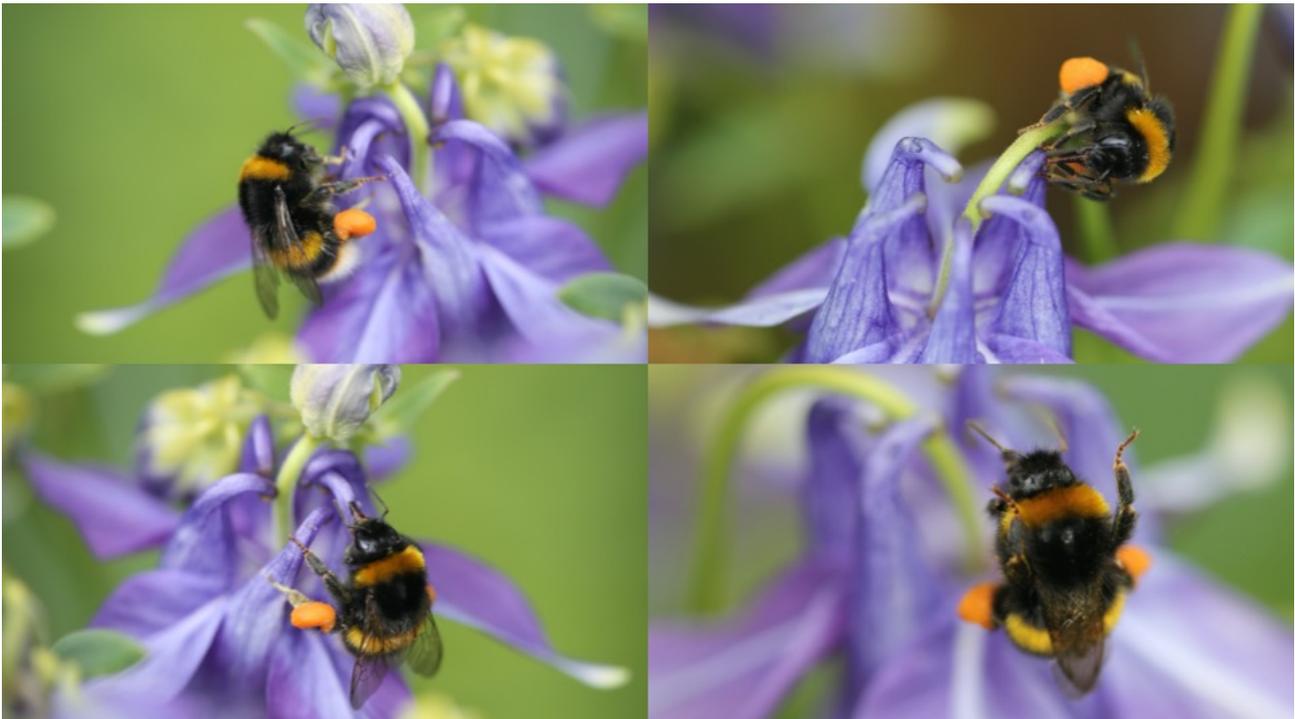
# Bees in my garden: Buff-tailed bumblebee

Stuart Humphreys admires one of our most common bumblebees

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Since we established our garden apiary nine years ago, my wife and I are convinced that the number of bees of all varieties in our garden has increased exponentially. So, inspired by Anne Mason's article last month on the Ashy Mining Bee, I thought I would try my luck at identifying a common garden bee other than that of the honey variety.

In early May I was photographing some honey bees when I noticed this very beautiful bumblebee on an aquilegia. I particularly liked the acrobatics involved when it took flight from the flower (see bottom right photo).



But what kind of bumblebee? Well, the internet is a wonderful thing and this led me to a bee identification guide on the website of Friends of the Earth.

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/bees/bee-identification-guide>

My conclusion: a buff-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*) on account of the dark yellow, almost orange banding. (If I have got that wrong, then in my defence I note that the Bumblebee Conservation Trust states that buff-tailed 'workers are practically indistinguishable in the field from the [various] white-tailed bumblebee[s], and DNA testing is the only reliable way to accurately identify many specimens.')

One of the earliest bumblebees to emerge in February, apparently it is now becoming winter-active, with nest establishment in October-November and workers flying all winter, feeding particularly on mahonia. Certainly, all of us will recognize how hardy and hard-working bumblebees such as this are: they are up and about first thing in the morning and late into the evening, burning the candle at both ends unlike our beloved *Apis mellifera*.

# Beelines

Notices, views and news

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## **From Mick Flower, who is looking for help in re-house swarms he has collected**

I'm on the BBKA Swarm List and at the time of writing (27 May) I have collected ten swarms. My phone takes three or four calls a day, the majority of which tend to be about bumblebees, and my wife can often be heard saying, "No, that sounds like you've got bumble bees," when she gets to the phone first!

I have made good use of the swarms I have collected and, as far as I know, the ones I have given away are doing well. The two I have kept are settled and building comb for England.

My concern now is what to do with the next dozen swarms I am asked to collect.

I understand there is a little capacity at the Woodthorpe Apiary but I'm soon going to have more bees than I know what to do with.

My feeling about swarms is that, as a beekeeper, I have a civic duty to try and support non-beekeepers when they have several thousand unwelcome guests in their gardens.

I also get lots of phone calls where bees have colonised a chimney or a flat roof.

Clearly, in those circumstances there is nothing I can do other than suggest a possible course of action involving a builder and scaffolding. Equally, I think it is important that we do not stop responding to requests for help when we have collected enough bees for our own needs. This will just increase the number of phone calls that other beekeepers on the list receive.

As an association, I think the subject of swarming is something we need to discuss. On the one hand it is a great source of free bees. If they can be isolated for a period, I cannot see a problem with using swarms to replace winter losses and or increase stock. Unfortunately we do not have a current method of contacting each other to register a need for bees.

I am happy to act as coordinator for the rest of this season; so please give me a ring if you have some spare capacity. My home number is 0115 912 0932.

## **From Anne Mason, an urgent request to knitters, crocheters or anyone with spare wool!**

I have received word from the QMC that knitted or crocheted knee blankets (70 x 88cm in size) are urgently needed for patients on an 'end of life' ward. So, if you have time on your hands, please feel free to make a blanket or two (they get through rather a lot of them).

I will find out how to send them to the hospital when they are finished. Please email me and I will let you know what the arrangements are ([anne.mason3@btinternet.com](mailto:anne.mason3@btinternet.com)).

Alternatively, if you are not able to make a blanket but do have some double knitting wool in bright colours that you would like to donate to a would-be crocheter or knitter please contact me.

Thank you.

## In the news

### Stuart Humphreys marvels at a recent scientific discovery

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Once again I thought I would steer clear from the really depressing news – **Giant** Asian Hornets (the ‘Murder Hornet’) on the Pacific West Coast for goodness sake – and theories, unproven as far as I am aware, that bee sting may provide some protection against coronavirus (it’s all to do with T-cells apparently).

Instead (and continuing the theme of bumblebees from the earlier article) the day after World Bee Day I was drawn to the following article in *The Times*:

**‘How Starving Bumblebees Make Plants Flower’** (21 May):

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/how-starving-bumblebees-make-plants-flower-hcn9gdln>

Basically, researchers have found that when pollen is in short supply, bumblebees can, by nibbling the leaves of flowerless plants, cause the plants to accelerate the production of new flowers by up to 30 days. Ingenious.

It would, however, be remiss of me not to mention this article from *The Guardian*:

**‘Alarm Over Death of Bees from Rapidly Spreading Viral Disease’** (1 May):

[https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/01/alarm-over-deaths-of-bees-from-rapidly-spreading-viral-disease?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/01/alarm-over-deaths-of-bees-from-rapidly-spreading-viral-disease?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

Here, researchers have looked at honey bee health inspection records from England & Wales and determined that the number of cases of chronic bee has increased exponentially since first being identified in Lincolnshire in 2007. Hence, it is classified as an emergent disease. As risk factors include the scale of beekeeping operation and history of honey bee imports, this may be of greater concern to bee farmers than hobbyists, but certainly something to be aware of.

# Recipe of the month: Honey, Nut & Polenta Cake

Courtesy of **Linda Jordan**

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Makes 10-12 slices

## Ingredients:

140g (4½oz) butter, softened

150g (5oz) icing sugar, sieved

2 eggs

3 tblsp clear honey

Sieve together: 140g (4½oz) plain flour  
and 1 tsp baking powder and a large pinch  
of bicarbonate of soda

100ml (3½ fl oz) full fat milk

50g (2oz) brazil nuts, finely chopped

65g (2½ oz) polenta

## Cooking method:

1. Cream the butter and icing sugar together until light in colour and fluffy.
2. Beat in the eggs.
3. Fold in the flour, baking powder and bicarbonate of soda.
4. Stir in the milk.
5. Stir in the nuts, honey and polenta, mixing well.
6. Spoon the mixture into a lightly greased and floured 20cm (8-inch) tube tin.
7. Bake at gas mark 5/electric oven 190 C/ fan oven 170 C for 40-50 minutes until pale golden in colour, firm to the touch, and a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean.
8. Leave the cake in the tin for 15 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack to cool completely.
9. Wrap tightly in foil and leave for two days before serving.

## Lockdown bonus recipe: Maurice's Mead

With the pubs still closed, **Maurice Jordan** helps us cope

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I cannot go to the pub – it's shut.

I can't go to the supermarket to buy a bottle of wine – it's too dangerous for us crinklies, there's a virus about.

I have read two books, I have been to look at my bees, what next to fill in the time?  
I know I will make some mead...

I have made mead for many years but in the past I always struggled to find the time. The main ingredient (honey) I have plenty of and at no cost. So why don't you give it a try? If you have tried shop-bought mead (which is sickly sweet) the homemade variety is much better.

You will need a bit of equipment and ingredients from a wine making shop. I use *Love Brewing*: they have a shop on Chesterfield Road, Chesterfield. I pass it on the way up the heather moor every year; they also do on-line deliveries. If you can get out, Wilco's sell a lot of ingredients and equipment.

This is the recipe I use...

### Ingredients:

3 to 3 ½lb honey  
½oz citric acid  
½ tsp tannin  
2 tsp yeast nutrient  
Packet of dried yeast  
¼ tsp Marmite or vitamin B tablet  
Water to 1 gal

### Cooking method:

1. Warm the honey in three times its own volume of water until dissolved.
2. Bring to the simmer – do not boil or you will lose some of the flavours.
3. When cool, transfer to a sterilised demijohn.
4. Top up with cold water to a gallon.
5. Add the yeast, nutrient, tannin and acid.
6. Fit the airlock.
7. When the mead begins to clear, decant into a second demijohn using a length of plastic tubing.
8. When a deposit of sediment has formed on the bottom of the demijohn, decant again. (You may need to decant again if more sediment forms.)
9. It should be OK to bottle at this stage.

Brother Adam, the famous beekeeping monk, suggested leaving for seven years before drinking. I have never managed that, but it will improve after a year. Cheers!

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