

# March – Belt and Braces!

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So this may well cause a few comments, on what or what not to do, so please be kind, I am a newbie after all...

With such an opening line I you know you're wondering just what has Chris done. Well, a few meetings ago we were all chatting at the end of session about feeding the bees. Getting the bees through the winter when it was remarked that March is one of the hardest months as the bees are starting to warm up and become "more" active. The weather however, especially in these parts of Southern Scotland can be very changeable from warm spring like to cold snowy and mid winter like in just a few hours. "Many a beekeeper has lost their colony in March due to the bees starving!"

This single sentence has caused my internal anxiety dial to move up to high! Now, you know that I have feed the bee's 1kg fondant and after that two full frames of capped honey. Which brings this blog right up to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March and now I have a choice to make. The weather is now more changeable than the bloke on the Met Office YouTube updates tie (they must of draws of them).

Anyway so with "those" words still dinging around my head I'm now wondering what to do. Should I feed the bees with more fondant, as that is all I have left or leave them to forage when they can between the cold bits of weather? There is after all plenty of willow pollen and gorse and the sycamores are just coming into to flower. The bees might be okay, this colony is strong and has so far made it through well. I'm sure they will be fine nothing to worry about..... "**Might??**"

Still in a quandary, I asked three wise and experienced beekeepers. You know when you take your car into the garage because there is a tiny annoying squeak and the mechanic opens the bonnet and then makes that sound of drawing in breath loudly. "Hmm yes this time of year can be tricky." "You know they say keeping bees in Scotland is the hardest place in the UK." "Well if fondant is all you have then it's better than losing all your bees!"

I decided to check a few beekeeping books and I didn't really find any definitive answer and maybe that's just the point. There is no real definitive answer and as a beekeeper you have to make that decision based on what you have observed at your hive and with your bees.

So what did I do, my Bee Mentor did say the bees will only draw it down if they need it. There is nothing wrong with the belt and braces approach. The bees now have another kilogram of fondant, if "they" decide they need it.

After all of that I would like to quickly share with you one of those moments in beekeeping that makes this a special endeavour. On the Monday the 18<sup>th</sup> of March it was a very pleasant day, warm and sunny with the temperature nearing 16c. I took my usual walk down to the hive and it was alive with bees flying around it. With a closer look I could see there was plenty of yellow pollen being taken in. I knelt next to the hive (a safe enough distance) and just watched the bees going about their business. The sound of the buzzing and scent in the air made my heart sing. Spring is well and truly here and this little moment was fantastic. I was beaming from ear to ear.

Take care now and Bee safe.