

Gary

Today's tale involves a beetle called Gary, a misunderstanding, loud retching sounds and an enormous amount of bribery and corruption. Gary is a Goliath Beetle or, will be given time, but more of that later 😊.

First a bit of background. Goliath Beetles are one of the biggest insects in the world. They are also rather strong and can lift loads close to 850 times heavier than themselves. When they're adults they can fly. In fact, they have a big pair of wings hidden under their wing-cases. However. Like many insects they have a number of stages in their life cycle. The first being a larvae stage. Not surprisingly their larvae are big, like very big maggots with legs and a head. Luckily for me at this stage they live under the soil. Adult male Goliath Beetles have a Y-shaped horn on their head, which they use for fighting.

It started so well

As you may remember over the past few years, we've been trying to reduce the size of the menagerie we'd developed over the years, and through a system of natural wastage – not replacing things when they die – we've reduced it to a couple of snakes and two tree frogs. We buy food for the snakes in bulk as it's frozen and much cheaper, but the tree frogs need live locusts, so we have to get those every week.

Since our mate Carl had to get himself, a proper job teaching instead of just collecting weird but interesting animals and pretending he was doing it as a business, we've found a shop run by a couple of young lads who are really making a go of it and doing things properly. Sadly, they know my weak spot which is currently insects.

I was duly dispatched to get the weekly locusts and things were going so well until I entered the shop and from behind the counter came a voice which said "Oh hi, I think I've got something you'll be interested in. And that, as they say, is where it all started to go downhill.

How do I explain this FFS?

I left the shop with the locusts but also with a Goliath Beetle. However, a Goliath Beetle in its larvae stage. This is Gary. You can see my thumb in the bottom left hand corner to give you a sense of the scale.



This is phase 1 of the larvae stage and they have 2 more getting bigger each time! Fantastically Gary was buried under the soil – well mulch really – when I got home so I was able to announce that I'd invested in a Goliath Beetle in the safe knowledge that it couldn't be seen.

I waxed lyrical about them and how beautiful it would be and interesting and how 'not dangerous they were, just really interesting. That got me up the stairs and the time to set up a container with mulch and transfer it out of the small carton into its new home.

Bugger it's shed and my subterfuge is discovered

They don't take much looking after at this stage, just keep the mulch damp and let them get on with it.

So, we'd all nearly forgotten about Gary.

The terrible day dawned with a cry from Chris who was passing my workstation and had paused to take a quick look in the container that was Gary's new home.



Oh dear, this is what she had seen lying on the top of the mulch. I think it is fair to say she was not impressed.

Things didn't improve much when she then posed a very direct question "What the hell (it wasn't hell it began with an 'F') is living in that?"

With a mixture of dread and glee, I offered to see if I could dig Gary out so she could see what was, in fact, living in that [container].

And after a bit of rooting around this is what I pulled out and laid in the old container so it could be seen better. This is where the retching came in.



Bribery and corruption

There followed a very short and brutal process of negotiation. Well, it was certainly short and brutal, and I suppose it was a process of a sorts, but it did not conform to any definition of negotiation I recognised 😊

Needless to say I still bear the scars but Gary is still with us and in fact things have gone so well that it has a name. For the time being Gary will have to remain and 'it' as we've absolutely no idea what its sex is nor frankly how we'll tell even when it emerges as a Beetle. There's time to look that up and no doubt suck Carl into the game as he will not be able to keep away.

Anyway, all has settled down for now and just to show you what the end game is here is what Gary will look like when the Larvae becomes an insect.

How fantastic is that – I can hardly wait 😊

