



BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

THE SUMMER IS BLOOMING

July's Plant of the Month is the Kiftsgate Rose (*Rosa filipes*). Generally, bees don't forage on roses because most are too complex with interlapping petals obscuring the stamens. However, one stand-out variety beloved by our girls is the extraordinary *Rosa filipes*, better known as the Kiftsgate rose. It is a vigorous rambler and in June is covered in great clouds or "corymbs" of white flowers. The delicate little five-petalled flowers readily offer up their bright yellow pollen to the bees. In the early morning sun, it is wonderful to hear hundreds of happy bees collecting their breakfast (as I've been able to this summer with a Kiftsgate adorning the side of our house).

The name originates from it being first recognised by the RHS in the gardens of Kiftsgate Court, near Hidcote, in the Cotswolds, where it can be seen climbing to great heights in the trees.

Fun fact – the original Kiftsgate is thought to be the largest



Maggie's Kiftsgate at her front door, which at this time of year is full of bees and means her hives are full of bright yellow pollen

rose in England, measuring some 90ft across and 50ft high. So be warned if you are thinking of planting one, they need vicious pruning, or your house and garden will be overwhelmed!

Maggie Curley

BRANCH HONEY SHOW: 23RD SEPT

We all know our honey is amazing but have you ever stopped to think that it may be award winning? Well, ponder no more!

Branch Honey Show on 23rd September at Kingshill Autumn Fayre

The Branch Honey Show is fun, informative and a great way to learn about the things to look for in a top quality hive product.

An essential if you are or are planning to sell your honey.

Have a look at the schedule on the WLBK website and decide which classes to enter.

There is plenty of time to perfect your entries so go on, have a go!

WLBK CHAIR'S JULY MESSAGE

Summer truly is in full swing, with many full supers already and lots of forage. Was there a June gap this year? Not where I'm sitting!

That's just part of the positive side of beekeeping this year. I have to report though, that not all is hunky dory in the Warwick and Leamington Bee Keepers (WLBK) world.

The first issue is that the recent swarm season was beyond hectic for volunteer swarm collectors, verging on the overwhelming. This was not just difficult for the Warwick and Leamington area – it affected the whole country. Many factors came into play – the late winter, the heavy rain followed by the very warm late spring and early summer...

As a result, the swarm collectors who had volunteered and were registered on the BBKA website (as well as other experienced beekeepers who were not 'official' swarm collectors) were extremely busy and finding it hard to manage the sheer number of requests they received.

The swarm season is now largely over, and demand is back to a reasonable level. The BBKA have arranged a meeting by Zoom for volunteer swarm collectors to reflect on the season. The intention is to manage demand in 2024. The WLBK committee are also thinking about options for next year. Please can you consider how you might play a part too? At some time in our beekeeping lives there will be a swarm to collect, on our property, or perhaps our bees may swarm at a nearby location. Having some expertise and confidence, as well as the very simple kit required, will help you to look after your bees well. Could you offer your skills more widely?

Secondly, it seems WLBK is a victim of its success. The branch shows team (a valiant band of 6 volunteer) will be at a large number of shows over the summer. We put out calls for volunteers to help on our stand at these events, but more volunteers would be truly welcome. It's a really rewarding way to spend a morning, afternoon or full day. Volunteers do get a break to look round, and expenses. The level of interest in beekeeping keeps growing and visitors to the stand are very keen to hear about bees and beekeeping. If you can help to set up at the start of the day, break down at the end of the event, or volunteer for a few hours if not all day, please do get in touch with Chris Price on chris@btinternet.com

Let's end on a high note. The branch barbecue will be held at King's Hill Nursery on **Saturday 12 August** from 3pm-7pm. Bring enough food (and chairs) for your party, and a little bit extra.

Here's to making the most of the summer.

Suzanne Bennett, WLBK Chair



BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH

The nights are drawing in....

After a swarmy spring, but a good spring crop, we have passed the equinox and gone straight into summer. The days getting shorter and the summer forage is all around us. If there was a June gap it was so quick that I missed it! The season is speed-by and there is still a lot of beekeeping to enjoy.

- Make sure you do a brood disease inspection- particularly important as we have EFB in the area. This means shaking the bees off EVERY brood comb and looking at EVERY cell.
- You will need to do fewer inspections as the month goes on, but there is still time for swarming- though you'd be lucky to get a new queen mated now.
- As we go through the month we are hoping for a plentiful flow- keep supering and extracting - if you are lucky you might need the space.
- As the month goes on the wasps will become active - reduce entrances before they find your weakest colony.
- Be really careful not to leave hives open longer than you have to- at this time of year it is SO easy to start a robbing frenzy- but almost impossible to stop.

Jane Medwell



WE NEED A HONEY SHOW SECRETARY

One of the highlights of the beekeeping year is the Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers Annual Honey Show, which this year is being held on **23rd**

September (see page 1). As a branch we are very keen to continue with the tradition amongst beekeepers of having a show as we are aware that in many beekeeping groups this event is no longer held.

It is an event where beekeepers can “show-off their wares”, where they are subject to external scrutiny (and advice) and by holding it at Kings Hill Nurseries at the same time as their own craft fayre educate the visiting public. By doing this we are also actively demonstrating meeting our charitable objectives for the Charity Commission.

Over the last few years we have been in the fortunate position of having Helen Essex as our Honey Show Secretary. However, this year she has a significant family commitment and is unable to be at Kings Hill on the day.

As a result, we are looking for a member, or maybe two, who can take on the role(s) on the Saturday. We are lucky that Helen has offered to prepare the ground by undertaking all the pre-work to ensure a successful event. Helen is a great champion of Honey Shows and she is very keen that one should be held. Helen already has in hand the schedule of classes, ordering the award certificates and contacting suitable judges, etc. Helen has also worked up a methodology for managing entries “on the day”.

The “on the day” role may appear onerous but Helen has offered to work through her approach to managing the entries, recording the judges’ decisions, completing the judges certificates and aggregating results for the end of show awards. The Show Manager will act as your runner to smooth out issues and offer any additional assistance if in fact it is needed.

If you are interested in taking on this fundamental activity for a successful Honey Show on Saturday 23rd September please contact one of the committee or email secretary@warleambees.org.uk so we can follow up your interest and put you in touch with Helen.

Chris Cox

WLBK Secretary



The Honey Secretary at work



DALEHOUSE LANE UPDATE

Many of you will have encountered the road closures around our Dalehouse Lane Apiary site over the past few months. The re-alignment works of Dalehouse Lane itself and the new roundabout outside our former entrance are both operational and so too is our new entrance. Directly off Dalehouse Lane, this is so much better than the previous entrance where the blind bend and accelerating traffic leaving the old roundabout resulted in many heart-stopping moments as we made our exit. It also has a deep apron in front of the gate providing a safer pull-in.

On the site itself the perimeter fencing has been installed so we now know the full extent of the area we will occupy. Although a

fraction of the area of our former site it is still useable and much easier to manage. We can now get down to start detailed planning how we will put it to best use.

Preparation of the verges in readiness to be sown with a wildflower mix is well in hand. Ultimately much of the residual land associated with the works will receive a similar treatment.

We still don't have a completion date for the roadworks or for our unfettered access but we live in hope that we can start using it next season.

Please note: the A46 Stoneleigh exits, both east and west, will be closed from 3rd July. Access to Kings Hill Nurseries can still be made from Dalehouse Lane via Kenilworth town centre.

Bernard Brown

EDUCATION NEWS



Barry, who is also WLBK's resident bee photographer, took this fantastic photo of a bee foraging on asparagus

Despite all the swarms it's BASICally been a good year! The Branch has had a bumper year for candidates for the practically assessed BBKA 'Basic' Certificate.

Of our ten candidates nine were assessed to have reached the standard required to pass – of whom three gained distinctions and four gained credits. We still have one person awaiting assessment – they know who they are and there's no pressure!

'The Basic' is the entry-level qualification of those offered by the BBKA and is designed "To provide new beekeepers with a goal which will give them a measure of their achievement in the basic skills and knowledge of the craft. It is hoped that it will be a springboard from which to launch into the more demanding assessments."

(<https://www.bbka.org.uk/basic-assessment>).

The main criterion for the assessment is that a candidate should have had experience of managing a colony of bees for at least a year. The assessment, carried out by an experienced and qualified beekeeper (from a nearby Branch) comprises a practical inspection of a working hive and a discussion of a candidate's experience and their knowledge of the year cycle of a colony including swarming. It also includes the making of a frame, the safe lighting and use of a smoker and an awareness of notifiable diseases.

Graduates of the 'Introduction to Beekeeping' programme and who have regularly attended 'bee club' sessions on Tuesday evenings will be well on their way to attaining the standards needed. In addition we will run a 'Towards the Basic' (TTB) programme comprising both theory and practical sessions leading up to the assessments which are likely to be run in May next year.

Why take 'The Basic'?

- Because it is a formal and nationally recognised qualification that opens the door to other BBKA assessments such as Honey Bee Health and General Husbandry;
- Because by doing TTB there are opportunities to share, discuss and learn from experiences, problems and successes with other members;
- And, of course, because cake features in most of our get togethers!

Details of the application process and for TTB 2024 will be posted in a future edition of BeeTalk.

Barry Meatyard

Education Coordinator WLBK



JULY BEE SAFARI

The July Safari will be held at the BBKA apiary at the NAEC Stoneleigh on **20th July, at 7pm** with the kind agreement of the BBKA Apiarists, Sarah and Andrew Heath.

Please book via our website in the usual way. You will need to agree the terms and conditions before you can book – it goes without saying that you should read these first!

Hygiene is very important so those going on safari must have clean kit. Each person on safari needs to sign up because numbers are limited.

Judith Masson

SUMMER BBQ

Our summer BBQ will be held at Kings Hill Nursery (beyond the 'apiary' car park, by the lake) on **Saturday 12th August, 3 – 7 pm**

Bring your own food to barbeque, plate and cutlery etc and something to share – salad, dessert etc. and drink. Friends and family welcome.

Let's hope we can dodge any rain showers and bring with a lovey (but early) close to summer foraging. Friends and family all welcome.

WLBK Committee

UN/WANTED SPLITS

It's the time of year when the success or otherwise of our swarm control splits becomes apparent, and whilst some members are reluctant to increase the number of their stocks, others are looking to add to theirs. As last year, we are running a match making service putting each in contact with each other. To register your interest in this scheme please click on the following [link](#).

Some members seek to sell their splits, others are prepared to pass them on in return for a donation to Bees Abroad and some let them go free of charge.

WLBK acts purely as an intermediary in this exercise and does not accept any responsibility for the quality of the splits nor for any financial transaction negotiated between the supplier and recipient.

KENILWORTH SHOW

I was asked if I wanted to help on the Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers (WLBK) stall at the Kenilworth Agricultural show. I did not know what

to expect but passed exhibitors, trade stands and the main arena showing livestock on my way to the beekeepers marquee.

I joined WLBK in March, went on a two day training course and have attended the training apiary for two hours each week since then. So, even as a novice beekeeper I was assured that I had sufficient knowledge to answer the public's questions.

The marquee was very busy with honey tasting and sales, an observation hive, skep making and various activities for children on the Little Buzzers table. Everyone was busy learning about the lifecycle of the bee, producing a fantastic frame of decorated hexagons, taking part in a quiz and word search to be rewarded with a packet of bee friendly flower seeds. I was kept busy candle rolling and we managed to send show goers home with beautifully decorated candles. We ran out of wax just as the show finished.

The flying bees display drew the crowds. This was an inventive and informative way of showing the public hive inspections. Two hives and beekeepers were enclosed in a net tent whilst another beekeeper gave a commentary and answered questions from the enthusiastic onlookers. Betty our 9 year old beekeeper was star of the show.

Everyone who came to the stall was interested to find out more about bees and one woman enquired about the course that had started me on this fascinating journey, as she hoped to join the next course.

I left the show, after spending a lovely afternoon with the knowledgeable and enthusiastic beekeepers, inspired to take my next step in the beekeeping adventure-getting my own hive.

Sue Cooper



SKEP MAKING DAY



Skep Making Day

Saturday 21st October 2023

BBKA HQ Stoneleigh Park

£40

"I would love to make one of those" has been the reaction to my skep making demonstrations at Branch Shows and in response this course has been arranged.

As well as the satisfaction in making your own skep you will be one of a handful of people keeping this craft alive and supporting the Heritage Craft Association which has skep making on their list of endangered crafts.

The Branch and Clive Joyce are supporting the HCA with the new apiary at Kenilworth Castle featuring bees in skeps.

You will make your own beautifully crafted skep in a style unchanged for centuries and today still an ideal container for swarm collection.

Please go to our website www.warleambees.org.uk and complete the form on our home page. When I have received your payment, I will confirm your place. Places are limited to 15 delegates.

Val Dillon

MIND THE GAP

The Gap is Closing! Analysis of this years' membership shows a 47% /53% female/Male gender split – up on last year's 44% female total. The figures also show that, at the end of last year our membership numbers totalled 275. Since then, 36 members didn't renew in 2023, but we now have a membership of 285, meaning we have gained 46 new members.

Of these 46 new members, 27 joined after taking our Taster Day or Introduction to Beekeeping courses this year. Of the remaining 19 new members, 4 had no experience of beekeeping and the remaining 15 were either related to one of our existing beekeepers, or had moved into the area, or had kept bees previously.

We currently have 229 Registered [full] members, 22 Partner members, 12 Junior members and 22 Local members [associates].

Our youngest member is Joseph Buckley who is 4 years old and our oldest is Peter Spencer who is in his eighties.

Things are looking good.

Val Dillon

OUT APIARIES

We have just received offers of two Out Apiaries, one is a farm located on the edge of Kenilworth and the other is a farm just outside Napton on the Hill. Both sites are still to be assessed and full details will be available shortly. In the meantime, if you are interested in either of these sites then please contact Alistair Walker

alistair.walker@btinternet.com

Alistair Walker

BEE SAFARI AT A BEE FARM

We were treated to an amazing insight into the commercial beekeeping life of David Stott.

He shared his passion and extensive knowledge of beekeeping, we heard about the pollination contracts for pears, apples and cherry, with visits to the heather and later in the season for ivy.

We saw first-hand a queen rearing demonstration with Neil trying his hand too. The prepared cell bar was then introduced into a queenless raiser brood colony, with another cell bar removed with queen cells already beautifully drawn out. These were to be incubated prior to hatching.

The removal of two supers using the 'blower' method made speedy work of clearing the bees from the supers.

The Extraction room was like Aladdin's cavern with different extractors, large warming cabinet and lots of supers ready for processing. A real working and efficient environment.

David's work is not a 9-5 job, but he has obviously combined his love of beekeeping into a working business life. His talents also extended to

delicious homemade cakes and juice to round the evening off.

We all enjoyed the evening on his farm and appreciative of his hospitality and generosity.

Nicky Maritz



Photo courtesy of Lee Franklin

TAKE YOUR BEESUIT ON HOLIDAY

Beekeepers- take your suit on holiday as you might just get some beekeeping experience. I found myself in a holiday home recently here the owner's son was a beekeeper and he was happy to let me help! My husband was a bit surprised to find I had my bee suit and wellies in the car (but I'm sure that's why car manufacturers put in those cavities under the boot floor!) I learnt a good deal. There are some things that are different in France.

- Dadant frames are very large and heavy, with tiny lugs- I found them really hard work.
- The roofs of his Dadant hives were unlined tin - just thin metal. I asked how Nicholas put the supers on them to inspect the brood and he said he never went into the brood box when there were supers on.
- The main sources of forage were the trees- chestnut and acacia- but he moved the bees regularly.
- I saw my first (live) Asian hornet, and Nicolas said he just moved the apiary away when they arrived, as many more will follow.

Some things are just the same. We marked and introduced queens, empathised about swarming this spring and moaned about the concentration of beekeepers locally! I think the thing is most enjoyed was seeing where he kept his smoker- on a special bracket at the back of his little lorry. Oh, and I'd love a little lorry!

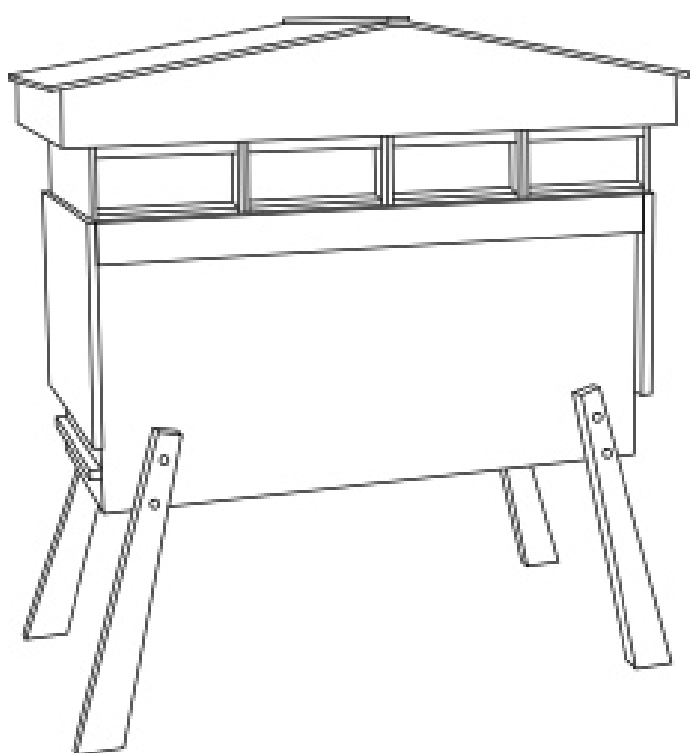
Jane Medwell



EXOTIC HIVES SERIES – DARTINGTON

The Dartington long deep hive was developed in 1975 by Robin Dartington, an engineer. The hives are intended for use in gardens and on roof top locations, not for commercial or migratory beekeeping. They are designed to keep the weight of individual parts below 7kg (16 lbs), which observes the safety guidance issued by the UK Health & Safety Executive. The hive is therefore safe for use by everyone. The design is derived from classic log hives used around the world where honey is stored by the bees at the back of the cavity away from the entrance. However, the system is very flexible as the brood chamber can be divided to house two or more colonies plus honey boxes may be added above the brood chamber to provide as much honey storage as required.

HIVE DATA	NATIONAL 14x12	DARTINGTON	BEEHAUS
Brood frame	14" x 12"	14" x 12"	14" x 12"
Super frame	14" x 5½"	14" x 5½"	14" x 5½"
Frames / brood box	11	21	22
Cells / brood box	80,000	80,000	80,000
Lug length	1½"	1½"	1½"



The construction uses widely available modern materials such as plywood. Essentially, the hive is a rectangular brood chamber based on the National 14 x 12 frame with top bee space.

The hive holds 21 frames (14" wide x 12" deep) with an insulated dummy board front and back. The body is raised to a convenient working height on long legs and supports four or more honey-boxes above the brood chamber each holding five Manley frames or six National shallow frames (14" x 5½").

A fifth honey-box is provided to allow exchange of a full box for an empty one or it can be used as a queen mating hive.

Accessories include two carry-boxes, each holding six 14 x 12 frames for winter storage. A carry-box can also be used in summer as a nucleus hive using the fifth cover board as a roof.

The Dartington comes with a division board to split the body into two separate compartments, enabling effective swarm control.

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THE GENTLE PASTIME OF BEEKEEPING (WINK!)

Elizabeth Holding contacted Bernard Brown recently and it sparked his memory of a hilarious article she wrote as a new beekeeper for BeeTalk back in 2012. Bernard managed to retrieve a copy and found it has lost none of its impact nor relevance to the experiences of many of us (especially in this very 'swarmy' season we've just had), so here it is. Enjoy and feel the relief that it's not just you!

Life has been ticking along in the beehive with lots of bees, plenty of brood, queen in residence (although she is a shy thing and runs away from me - nearly always in the furthest or second furthest frame). Checked them on Tuesday 8th May, two 'play cups' - empty. No worries. Spare hive all ready for anything.

Friday 11th May collected swarm from Tim Foden that he had kindly put in a box for me. Popped into lovely new hive.

Too busy or too wet/cold to check original hive until Weds 16th May, only 8 days, had a quick half hour before school pick-up.

Aargh - panic! Lots and lots of queen cells, on top, sides and bottom of frames and one really big capped one! Lots of bees - or so it seemed to me, but who am I to know? No sign of queeny.

Close up and rush to phone to try and contact anyone who might know what to do - mind goes completely blank on books read and training had. Off to school pick-ups with head spinning on what next to do - have they swarmed? Have they not gone yet? If so need to do artificial swarm pronto - BUT just used up spare hive!

Back from school. Children ordered to stay inside while I go to bees. By this time I assume they have swarmed, will go through hive, take off all queen cells except two which have larva and royal jelly in, both pref on same frame, nice strong ones. Bees not happy about being opened up again so soon - my first sting! Swiftly followed by second in same place - smoke it - no, smoker gone out, re-light it. Calm down.

Go through frames, take off queen cells, shake off most of bees so can see what is going on. Bees really not happy. Decide that as they are p'd off anyway might as well go the whole hog so take off all the extra free comb - mostly drones I think - that is hanging on the bottom of the frames. Bees, bodies, larva, wax all over the place. Second last frame (I should have known) and there is the queen - wandering about quite unconcerned as far as I could tell. Aaargh. Now what? Close up and run back to the house, grabbing bee stuff as I go.

Have two rough ekes, decide to put together. Fix with gaffer tape. Two pieces of wood, one for floor, one for roof. Balance ekes on bits of wood to make entrance, fill gaps with more bits. But where are spare frames - knew I should have put them together earlier in the year. Half an hour until I need to get to my tennis league. Call in no. 1 son - find hammer, nails, get building. Son needs to ring Dad to find out where hammer is. Phone is not working. Fix phone. Find hammer. Make some very unprofessional frames in minutes. Hammer nail into kitchen table. Discover son has hammered several nails into kitchen table. Oops.

Gather all together, rush down to bees. Cobble together hive. Find queeny (hurrah) and put her on the frame, plus one frame of stores, all hopefully with no queen cells. Fill rest of brood box with new brood frames, not quite enough - but end with dummy board and a gap. Stick on roof. Breathe sigh of relief.

Go through all other frames looking for queen cells. Shake off some of the worker bees into the box with the queen (decide shouldn't have done that but too late now!) Sky and ground and outside of my suit full of bees. Heaven knows what the new swarm sitting right next door are thinking (do bees think?). All done. Second sign of relief.

Aargh - forgot to swap hives over, so queeny is now not where she started! So her flying bees won't go back to her. Swear, quite a lot. Shift one lot sideways, queeny and botch hive back into place, other one in new site. No time even for sighs of relief - run to house, discard bee suit (and accompanying bees - sorry babysitter). Boys have let babysitter in, shout instructions as no. 1 son gets my tennis stuff and I rush off to tennis.

Win my matches - no idea how but a change of focus is always good.

Back at 11.30pm creeping round hives with torch, removing scene of drone destruction, and gaffer taping up gaps in botch hive. Note to self - do not use ekes, there is nowhere for frame lugs to sit so they sit up, and make a gap when you put the super on top.

Note to chickens - glad you like the drone brood, really sorry about the accompanying bee that stung you on the leg - oops.

..... and relax.

So, a week has passed since the last inspection and all that went with it. In the meantime I have a lovely new hive (ordered Thursday afternoon, delivered Friday - thanks Maisemore), much hammering has gone on and the hive has been painted on the outside with green fence paint and filled with lovely new frames.

Wednesday morning was spent finishing off the frames, and inserting some very warm and rather soft wax sheets, closely observed by several bees. So closely that in the end I gave up and went indoors - they were very persistent. Am guessing they are attracted to the smell of the wax, but that dint justify buzzing me quite so aggressively. Despite temperatures of 26 degrees, on went the bee suit, rubber gloves and wellies and off I went, smoker in hand.

I set out all the new equipment first, so I knew what was going where. This time I will be organised.

Firstly the 'parent' hive containing queen cells and most of the frames from my first hive. Put up its new stand (put together by husband at 11.30pm last night, and then painted this morning). Big crisis of conscience about the paint - should it have gone on the top, will the smell affect the bees? In the end I couldn't face telling husband that all his late night work had been in vain, so hope they are not all gassed in the morning.

Moved the hive to the other side of the 'artificial swarm' hive, so that all the flying bees will go back to the artificial swarm and the queen (ha ha - see later). Took off the second queen cell, now capped, plus two more I found! How did I miss them last time? Hopefully there is now just one there. Quite a few bees, busy, seemed settled, lots of stores.

All going well.

My other hive with the swarm from Leamington was busy with stores but no sign of the queen and no sign of any eggs! Surely she should be laying? Quite a shock when I spotted a few cells that looked like they were filled with blood! Pollen, according to my chart, probably from the lovely rockrose in next door's garden, or plum/wild cherry? (Advice received later from Mike T - this means it was probably a cast. Leave it for 3 weeks from time of collection. Virgin queen could have got lost or killed. At worse could combine with another queenright lot).

On to the main one - opened the 'artificial swarm' hive - arrgh - full of new uncapped queen cells and two capped ones !!!! How can this be? Have only left it a week. I can't find the queen, is she hiding as usual? Bit difficult to tell as this is the 'botch' hive and frames keep falling off the edges and I get stuck on the gaffer tape, plus I have to transfer the frames into my new brood box. Searched the whole thing twice, fearing that she has fallen out onto the floor, but then think maybe she has gone and actually there don't seem to be many bees, although there are some eggs which seem to be standing up. Has she gone today?

How ungrateful is she? What about her nice new hive?

Oh well, started getting rid of the uncapped cells, then thought maybe I should leave something, so left the two capped cells, they are right next to each other. Should I get rid of one? Or will they both hatch out and fight to the death - survival of the fittest and all that. At least I remembered to replace new brood box exactly where hive was.

Two supers - quite full. Nice of them to leave a bit for the others.

Beginning to think this is all too difficult! I only wanted one hive, and then maybe just one more, and well, if I have three ... but now not even sure if I have one that is going to work. Depressed and very hot and sweaty - marigolds and wellies should not be out in the midday sun. Home for a shower, cold drink and then email lots of questions to Mike and Mike, my cheerful and very helpful 'bee friends'.

Tune in for the second installment next month.

Hint: Calm lasted for about an hour before she received a call from the local churchwarden about a swarm....was it hers? Very probably.

HINTS & TIPS

- If you replace wet supers directly on the colony after extracting the bees will probably put most of the honey in the bottom super above the brood nest. To avoid this take a piece of thickish polythene, such as an animal food bag, and cut it slightly larger than the outside dimensions of the brood chamber. Cut a small hole in it just large enough to get your finger in, and place that over the brood chamber before replacing the supers. The bees will think they are divorced from the honey and will clear it from the supers. Make sure the hole isn't covered up by the frames below, and do it at dusk to avoid excitement.
- Bee stings can be avoided best by having gentle bees, choosing sensible times and weather to open the hives, correct use of smoke and gentle handling. Frequent washing of bee suits and gloves will remove any residual sting pheromone and reduce the likelihood of subsequent bee stings. Sometimes a bee will sting through the bee suit or gloves. Then it only takes a moment to shift the clothing and dislodge the sting, smoke the area and remove the sting from the clothing.
- Once it becomes known that you keep bees you inevitably become an expert in the eyes of others! I have had five frantic calls to 'come and do something with a swarm'. They all turned out to be one of the 30 types of Bumble bees that live in the UK! Bumblebee nests are in much smaller cavities because the colony is smaller and they need more insulation, as the queen bee is alone in cold weather without workers to help maintain the temperature. Queen Bumble bees look for places that already have bedding material, such as old mouse nests, in the ground or under sheds or, in compost heaps made of fibrous plant material. They sometimes use old bird's nesting boxes.
- Propolis is readily available and is used by the bees, so why not make use of it? Warm the propolis in your hand and roll it until it's pliable. Leaks in roofs can be plugged up easily by placing the propolis over the hole, working it well, and smearing over the area.

HELEN ESSEX

If you have any hints or tips that you would like to share, please send them to Helen on h.essex211@gmail.com



The editor of Bee Talk is Tanya Weaver.
Please send content for the newsletter to her by the 28th of each month:
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