Issue 2, May 2016

BDBKA News

www.barnetbeekeepers.org.uk

Note from the Chair

Hello again Barnet Beekeepers. Welcome to the second issue of our Newsletter. We have decided to issue it every other month for the first year and see how it goes. Do you have an interesting topic that you would like to write about or do you have something you would like someone else to write about? Suggestions and comments can be sent to Steve Leveridge and/or myself. This is your Newsletter let us know what you feel it should cover.

The season has got off to a slow start for many of us with a late cold snap after a relatively mild but wet winter. There have been a significant number

Apiary Tips - May

Ivy Honey

It is often said that Bees do not eat ivy honey. But that is not entirely true, the solid ivy honey makes it difficult for the bees to remove the cappings and they leave it until last and even don't touch it if you bruise the capping, This means that sometimes three or four solid ivy honey frames can restrict the nest area and your bees will swarm early

So at your first inspection in March (a warm day) if you have three or four solid ivy honey frames in the brood box, remove one frame of ivy honey and add a frame of fresh foundation then scrape the capping off the another solid ivy honey frames with the flat of your hive tool to expose the solid Ivy honey for

of winter losses both locally and across the country, possibly due to poor mating last year, high varroa counts with accompanying viral disease and the weather. Despite this some colonies have forged ahead and have been producing queen cells, making manipulations in less than ideal weather necessary in some cases. Don't be caught out with the increasing temperatures now, the bees will be looking to swarm very soon so swarm preparations at the ready! We are promised a hot summer when it arrives so honey crops may yet be good.

There will be a nosema testing day Saturday 14th May 11am at Whalebones. This is a good chance to get your testing done, learn a bit about it and have a good chat. We do expect that all those on Association apiaries will test their colonies and this is an ideal chance get it done and share experiences and results. Do come along with bee samples (see below). I also hope to see you all at the Middlesex Federation Disease Day 21st May.

This month we have an excellent article on carrying out an artificial swarm written by Steve Leveridge. Thanks to him for a really great piece of work which will be of help to us all in the coming weeks.

Best wishes for a good summer of beekeeping.

Pat Morgan

the bees to eat, repeat with the other capped ivy frames when the foundation frame is drawn.
Geoffrye Hood

Heavy Lifting
Do you get backache when beekeeping? It is often the case that beekeepers suffer from bad backs and it is normally said it is due the lifting of all those heavy supers full of honey, ha-ha-ha. However, it can also be that your hive stand is too low, Some suppliers stands are extremely low. The BBKA recommend that the top of a brood box should be at the knuckle height of the Beekeeper while standing up right and hands to his side. Try it with your hive, I think you will be surprised how low most of your stands are.
Geoffrye Hood

Honey Flow
Because spring was a month or more late our bees have had to make do with the prunus and apple nectar flow instead of the sycamore as well. Both sycamore and horse chestnut are about to flower at the same time so our hives will need those extra supers. Some people take spring honey off but be warned of a late June gap this year!
Clive Cohen

Collecting Bees For Nosema Testing

Is your hive building up well or is it a bit slow? Do you get lots of drowning bees in your winter rapid feeder? Do you have a lower yield of Honey compared to other local beekeepers? If the answer is yes to any of these questions It could be that your Bees are infected with Nosema apis.

Nosema used to be called Spring Dwindle and was associated with winter diarrhoea but we now have a new disease Nosema Ceranae which does not show that symptom. The main reason for infections may be a build-up of Nosema spores on old brood comb. The National Bee Unit recommends you replace either a third of your brood frames each year or replace all your Brood frames by shook swarm or Bailey comb change every second or third year.

On the 14th May we will be testing for Nosema at Whalebones and all you need to take part is thirty of your older flying bees. Collecting older bees is best done by blocking up the front entrance for ten minutes so the returning foragers collect around the entrance. You can then scoop about 30 bees into a large cooking match box, plastic box or 1lb glass honey Jar. You then need to kill the bees by placing them in the freezer over night.

If you cannot collect your bees until the morning of the 14th, then so long as they are caught in a 1lb glass jar we will have a method of killing them quickly. Don't have the time time to wait for foragers, well a less accurate way to collect foragers is to place a 1lb jar over the entrance reduced down to 1”, when you have a buzzing jar, quickly put on a lid.

Please come along with your samples.

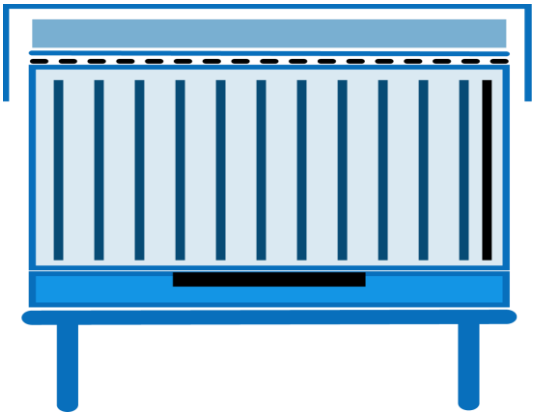
Geoff Hood

Doing An Artificial Swarm (AS)

by Steve Leveridge

You will need a spare:

- Brood box filled with frames of foundation or sterilized comb and a dummy board
- Roof
- Crownboard (with covers for the holes)
- Insulation (if you use it)
- Queen Excluder
- Floor with entrance reducer



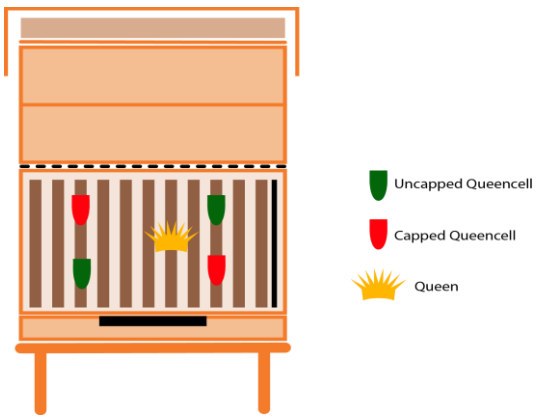
A New Hive in Blue

- Stand

If you don't have a strong flow on, then you'll need Syrup and a feeder for the Artificial swarm (and if there's little stores in the brood box, you'll probably need one for that too.) As one of the major things you have to do to perform an AS is to find and move the queen, it would be wise to have a queencage, press in cage or a Nuc to keep her in.

When you inspect a colony at this time of year you should especially be on the lookout for Queencells. Remember, you're looking for a cell with brood food and a larva in it. Not a queen cup (sometimes called a "play cup") which will look dry inside. If play cups have an egg in them or there are white spots of fresh wax on the outside, then you're on a warning that in all likelihood you'll find Queencells next time you inspect. If you have difficulty seeing eggs, wear your reading glasses or use a magnifier and/or some extra illumination (particularly if the weather's dull).

On finding a queencell often the first impulse is to knock it down. Don't! You have to know what's happening in the hive before you do anything rash. Carry on your inspection, noting each frame you find queencells on and what state they're at (mark the frame with a drawing pin, a pen or whatever, but do mark it in some way). This is important since finding capped queencells dramatically reduces the likelihood that the queen is still present. She may well be, especially if she's clipped or the weather's been bad, but until you see her, it's hard to be sure she's still there (or she isn't!) The other thing you've got to check for is eggs. If you go knocking down queencells and there are no eggs or young larvae in the hive, you'll have doomed your colony to queenlessness without the means to bring on a new queen.



Original Hive in Orange

If you find the queen along the way – all well and good. Take her out and keep her safely in a queencage or pop the frame she's on in a spare nuc. There are lots of tips to finding the queen out on the net and that subject is worth a whole article on its own, but for this piece, let's assume for now that you find her.

Step 1

Place a new stand a minimum of three feet away (more if you can) but at the side of the hive.

Step 2

If the hive has supers on, lift these off and place on the upturned roof as if you're doing a normal inspection.

Step 3

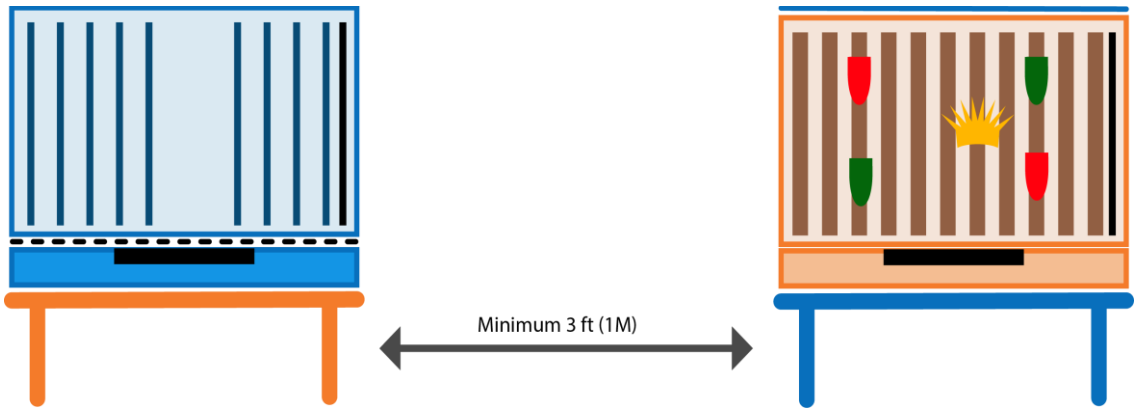
Pop on the new crownboard to keep the bees as calm as possible and move the old hive (brood box and floor, etc.) onto the new stand.

Step 4

On the original stand, set-up the new hive with a queen excluder between the brood box and the floor. This is important. If you've caught the hive with its swarming preparations well advanced the colony will be ready to go and might well abscond from the AS. The Queen excluder stops them accomplishing this.

Step 5

Remove a frame of foundation (or even two) from the centre of the new hive and set aside.



New Hive - **Old Stand**

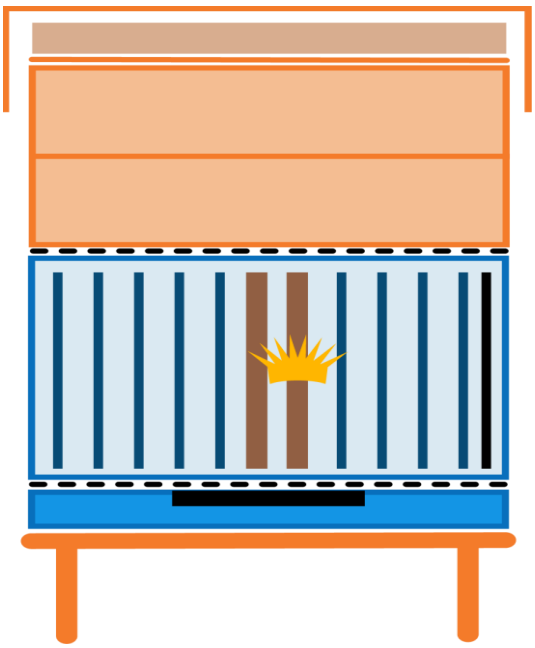
Original Hive - **New Stand**

Step 6

Go to the old hive and find the frame with the queen on it (if you didn't find her on your initial inspection). Very carefully, check this frame to make sure it hasn't got any queencells on it. If there are any there, you can knock these down, but only if there are others (or better ones) on other frames. This is why its important to keep the queen safely stored away if you can – you've got to check this frame thoroughly and you can accomplish this much faster if you're not worrying about where the queen is all the time.

Step 7

Carefully place this frame in the new hive in the centre. Choose another queencell free frame of brood and place that next to the first frame. If the queen is isolated in a queen cage or press in cage, you can now release her into the seam between the two frames from her original hive.



Step 8

Place the supers (and excluder, crownboard, insulation and roof) on the new hive – you're done with this one now.

Step 9

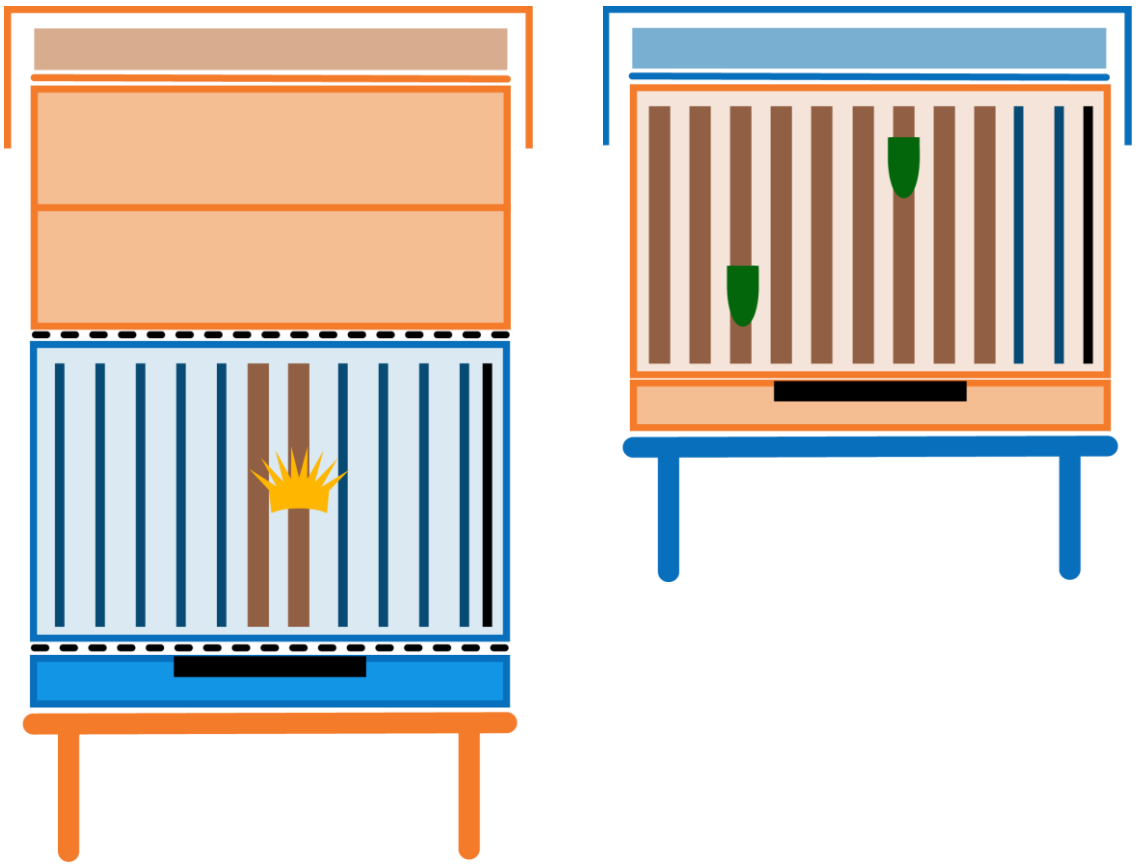
Turning your attention back to the old hive, choose your favourite queencell(s). These should be nicely modelled, OPEN queencells that are well attended by the bees and full of brood food. Some keepers will only leave one, some two. I am always wary of cells found in drone brood and choose cells only next to or within worker brood.

You'll be going back to this colony again in 5-7 days, so at this stage it doesn't matter if it's one or two, but you MUST mark the frame(s) so you can identify these cells again. This is where drawing pins win over markers – you'll want to leave the hive with only the queencell(s) you've chosen marked and with drawing pins, you remove the ones you don't want - easy.

Step 10

Tidy-up the frames and fill the space with the foundation frame(s) you set aside in Step 4, then lever everything tight using the dummy board and close up the hive.

So, what do we have now?



A queenright colony (left) with lots of stores, foraging bees, but little comb and little brood on the original stand. On the new stand (right) we have a queenless colony with few foragers, lots of comb with brood, but few stores and no queen. One part is like a swarm (in its new home) and the other is like the swarmed colony.

Remember, if there's no flow on or the weather's bad and there are little stores in the box (less than say 15lbs of capped and liquid stores) you should feed the old hive (on the new stand). Likewise, if you didn't have any supers on the colony in the first place and conditions aren't good for foraging, you'd be wise to feed the AS side as well. I know I'm repeating this, but it is important.

Now wait 7 days.

In this time, the original hive will depopulate as foraging bees that have located on the old stand return

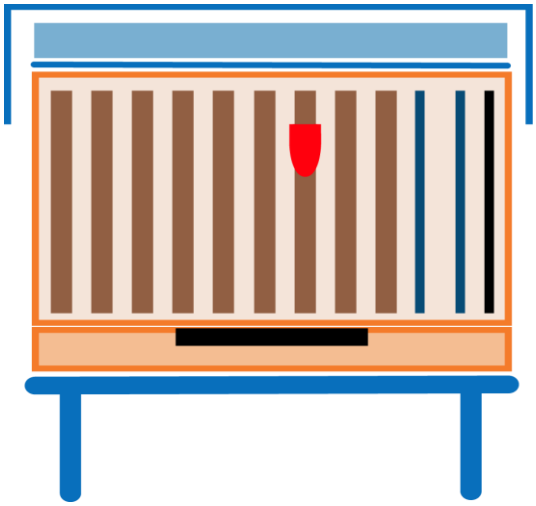
there. As brood in the old hive is capped off, nurse bees that don't have any more brood to feed will be promoted to foraging duties and locate on their new position in the apiary. So, when you come back you should see foraging from both colonies. All this should lessen the likelihood of the original hive issuing a cast swarm (headed by a virgin queen) if you can't get back to the colony in 7 days (max).

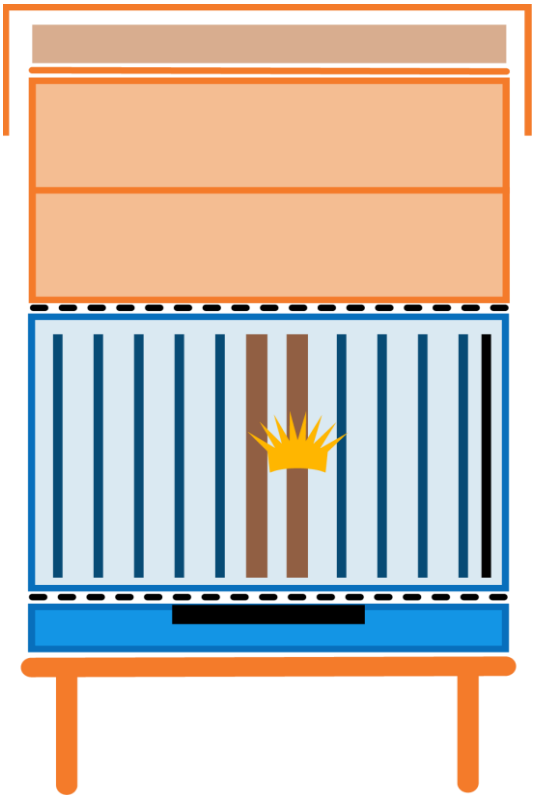
When you go back in to the original hive, you'll see your chosen queencell(s) are capped, but you'll also find a few to lots of emergency queencells that have been produced in the absence of the queen (shown here in yellow).

Unless you have a eidetic memory, you'll be glad you marked the frame(s) with your chosen queencell(s) as there could be capped (emergency) cells all over the place! You must take all these emergency queencells down. This means shaking all the bees off the frames (other than the ones with your chosen queencell(s) on them!) Shaking is by far the quickest and most efficient method of clearing the frames of bees. Emergency cells often aren't nicely modelled like a swarm cell and sometimes look as inconspicuous as wonky drone brood cells poking out of a plane of capped worker brood. Don't be fooled - if you're not sure about any cell, take it out to be sure.

Under no circumstances should you shake frame(s) with your chosen queencell(s) on them. These must be carefully brushed clear of bees (a handful on long grass or a goose feather is far and away better than the brushes from the suppliers.) Before you clear these, check your chosen queencells and choose your favourite – watch the bees, which one are they paying the most attention to? If you can't make up your mind, why not carefully take that frame, a frame of stores and a couple of shakes of bees (from other frames) and make-up a nuc? Then you can raise two queens (potentially) and choose the best one later. Close up and feed as necessary.

To reduce the chance of cast swarming even more, especially if you're unsure whether you've culled down all the emergency queencells, you could move the original hive to the otherside of the queenright colony, again with a minimum of 3 feet between them (more if you can.)



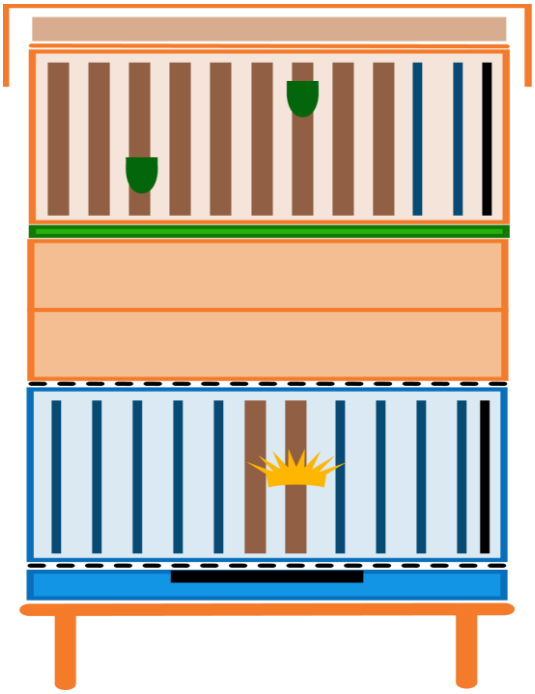


In the other hive, check that the queen's back in lay and bees are drawing the foundation. If they are, you can carefully remove the excluder from underneath the brood box and release any drones from that hive. From now on inspect this hive as normal.

Leave the other hive for two or three weeks to allow your chosen queen to hatch and get mated. If you took a cell out in a nuc, then keep an eye on this nuc as well. You'll probably find, given that the weather plays ball, the nuc will get mated quicker than the bigger hive. This is normal. But be patient, a queen usually gets mated and back into lay around two weeks after she hatched, but it can be as much as four weeks.

With a new box of comb being drawn in the AS, you're doing a comb change at the same time as an artificial swarm. Once the queen is laying throughout the full box, you can begin to move the brood frames that came from the original hive to the outside edges ready for removal. However, the later your bees try to swarm, the less likely it will be that you'll be able to remove those frames this season. So, make it your mission to move them as far to the outside as you can, so that they're easy to remove next year.

Not enough space in the apiary? With some form of split board (Snelgrove or whatever - shown here in green) you could do all the above on one stand, putting the original hive on top of the new one and the supers. That is if you like lots of lifting! Frankly, I've tried this and it's a pain (in more ways that one) so by far the easiest method is to have enough space between all your hives (and of course the kit) to perform the manipulations as outlined above.



What do you do now? Well you could run two colonies or unite them back, but that's another story!

BBKA Membership and Association Benefits

As you will know by now, Beekeeping can be expensive, but as a member of the BBKA there are offers available to you. BBKA have partnered with companies to provide members with money saving opportunities in both beekeeping to aspects of day to day life.

Click Here For BBKA Membership Benefits

B.B.Wear are offering a discount to association members. The discount is for 20% off of all clothing which includes suits, jackets, smocks, trousers, and gauntlets, and then 50% off of gloves (free gloves is a retail offer only as associations don't like members in leather gloves at the apiary).

B.B.Wear Discount 20% Click for more details.....

B.J. Sheriff bee suit sale finished in April but we have negotiated a deal for a 10% discount for Barnet Beekeepers. The 10% Discount code to be used when purchasing online is barn10bee, but does have

limited usage. Customers can claim a pair of Free GL2 Gloves which is not possible over the telephone as it is an online offer only.

B.J.Sherriff 10% Discount Code - barn10bee (online only)

Diary Dates

14th May - Nosema Testing

We will be testing bee samples for nosema on Saturday at Whalebones. See Geoffs article 'collecting Bees for Nosema Testing'. Please email Pat if you would like to test your colonies.

21st May - Bee Health Day

The School Hall, Broomfield School, Wilmer Way, N14 7HY. Starting at 10:00am. Middlesex Beekeeper's Association in conjunction with the National Bee Unit. Our regional Bee Inspector Diane Steele will be giving talks about bee pests and diseases. The day is now fully booked.

www.barnetbeekeepers.org.uk