



Photo: Garnons Hill from Woodfield Barn Coppice by Belinda Dale

July 2019

WVBKA Charity Registration
Number: 517008

Opportunity to Learn with Dave

As most of you know Dave, Duncan, Claire and Geoff are now looking after the association apiary. There are times when there is a lot going on in the management of the hives on the site and it is keeping this team pretty busy. If anyone would like to join the team then Dave is looking for extra volunteers to come along and help out. You will get the opportunity to work with Dave in a hands-on situation and learn from his experience. If you are interested give him a ring on 01981 550320

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STOP PRESS

Apiary Meeting Re-schedule

As the Bee Safari has been cancelled, the committee and apiary team are proposing a meeting at Shenmore at 3pm on Sunday 14th July. Topics to be decided with a Tea Party to follow. Details will be notified via Duncan's WhatsApp group. If you wish to join the group, contact is via a mobile phone. Anyone willing and able to provide refreshments please let June know. See you there!

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Queen Colour of the Year
2019 is: **GREEN**



Apiary session follow on

After the apiary session on Friday night I thought it might be helpful if I wrote up a few notes. There is no doubt that the swarming of bees provokes a great deal of debate amongst beekeepers and that is entirely understandable, having worked to get your bees in the position to gather a nice crop of honey, they decide to do what is natural to them. It is not entirely conducive to the aims of the beekeeper. This is a natural occurrence which happens to bees periodically and any beekeeper shouldn't be too embarrassed or worried about this phenomenon, it is quite natural and what most bees do from time to time. There are those amongst us who say 'oh my bees don't swarm' – in a nutshell ladies and gentlemen I simply do not believe you.

Colony division

We talked about different ways of splitting or making an artificial swarm. During the conversation I outlined a number of different approaches to this subject, all leading to the same end, namely division of the colony which is what they are going to do naturally. The only difference is that it is done under the beekeeper's supervision rather than letting them do it themselves.

Timing

I illustrated how important it was for beekeepers to choose the correct time to carry these procedures out, sooner rather than later is most important as it enables the beekeeper to carry out the procedure without too much difficulty.

Queen finding

It isn't necessary to find the queen. However, in most cases it is desirable to see the queen as the outcome of the procedure which you are carrying out is much more predictable if you can locate her.

Different methods

It doesn't matter what method the beekeeper uses as long as he or she understands what they are trying to achieve. The bees are going to reproduce anyway so it's better for the beekeeper to be in control, rather than the other way round. The methods which I described are simple and easy and in most cases are achievable. Timing is most important and it involves the beekeeper having sufficient knowledge to be able to gauge when this is about to take place. When you see eggs in play cups, it is usually 8½ to 9 days later for a prime swarm to issue. That is the natural process taking place. The easiest time to carry out a split or division, or whatever you like to call it, is to carry it out when you first see the eggs in the cups, and I really do mean eggs.

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- Vacant

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- Duncan Penkey
- Andy Strangeway
- June Williams
- Peter Woodward

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Spare equipment is essential

You cannot hope to carry any procedure out without spare equipment, so it's necessary for the beekeeper to plan and prepare in advance so they have extra equipment on hand. In addition, we also spoke about catching a swarm and how to do it. Once again, there is no right or wrong way to do this but if the swarm is handy it shouldn't be a problem for most beekeepers. We also talked about putting 'bait hives' in the vicinity to catch any swarms, this again is a useful tool to employ.

Under control

Whatever you do and say, you'll never be in full control of what bees will naturally do. The main thing to remember is that you do the best you can.



Premature investigation

This isn't fully understood by many beekeepers. It's almost a necessity to leave things to nature once they have carried out their initial swarming activity. If you study the life-cycle you will come to a better understanding of why it's essential to leave things well alone until the allotted time has passed. In most cases, it will take up to one calendar month to get a nice, young queen laying. You will have failures and you will have successes – don't be disheartened it's quite natural but be prepared to carry out a rescue operation.

I hear you say 'how?'

Putting a frame of eggs from a queen-right colony will suffice in most cases – this is what is called a test frame. You must of course make sure in all cases that you aren't transferring disease from one hive to another. As I've mentioned before on many occasions, you should look for disease in your colonies at least twice a year, in the spring and in the autumn will give you a measure of control.

Dave

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