



BURTON and District BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Bee Cut-out by *Suzanne King*

In early June Dave Coates asked me to help Malcolm Whiteland with a 'cut out'. This means honey bees have established a colony in a building and part of the building needs to be removed in order to access the comb and colony for removal.

Dave had been contacted by a couple who had recently moved to the area. They had bought an old farm house and outbuildings of which there were several. The plan was to renovate the farm house as a home for themselves and develop some of the outbuildings into offices to be let, but also for use as a work office space. They had been told by the previous owners that there had been bats in the roof of one of the outbuildings, but soon discovered there were other residents – honey bees!

They had been in contact with several beekeepers that declined the removal, but then came across Dave. Unfortunately Dave was not quite fully fit after his hip operation to deal with cut outs, so enlisted Malcolm's help, and then me. Luckily as the couple were doing lots of

building works to the house, they had some scaffolding where the honey bees were seen to be entering the outbuilding.

Malcolm did a 'recky' visit a couple of days before, which was very useful, as he estimated there were likely three colonies not just one, so more equipment was collected. We met up on a cool and slightly wet morning, Malcolm bringing along another newish beekeeper (a retired builder), Pat, to help.

The building where the bees had taken up residence was an old pheasant rearing shed, mostly wooden with plasterboard interior. We briefly dreamed of honey extraction rooms and storage facilities.... then set to work. There were numerous perfectly sized holes on the outside where the wood knots had fallen out. On the inside you could feel the warmth of the colonies within on the plasterboard. This place was a swarm haven!

Malcolm had all the gizmos – a small circular saw and a crowbar. He had also borrowed a bee vac from Alan Ambler just in case. We had lots of thick elastic bands, lots of empty frames and new hives.

Up on the inside scaffolding Malc cut through the plasterboard and eased it away with the small crowbar, to reveal the first colony. The comb was dark, and there were a lot of stores. Malc used a large breadknife to cut the comb away, passed it to Pat who passed it to me on the floor.

Bee Cut-out (continued)

Comb with stores went into a collecting bucket for later extraction, empty comb went into a 'rubbish' bucket destined for the solar wax extractor and any comb with brood in was cobbled into a frame with elastic bands.

Luckily the queen was spotted, not huge, quite dark, so we were confident other bees would follow. We propped the hive up on wood near to the exit/entrance hole to collect the foragers.

We did get very sticky and were very glad of a bucket of water to rinse our gloves and tools frequently. Then on to the next colony..... Malc cut down the slats and revealed some beautiful fresh looking comb (see photo opposite). This was much harder to handle though, being less rigid and strong.

Pat spotted the queen – conveniently marked with a yellow dot! So some nearby beekeeper had lost a swarm recently, and this was either a 2017 queen, or a beekeeper who liked yellow. The queen was a bit of an escape artist though, as when we attempted to collect her into a queen clip to make sure we put her into the hive, she dropped down like a stone through a



Beautiful slabs of honeycomb were revealed

wet paper bag. Fortunately she didn't have far to go and we soon found her again, thanks to her mark, and safely transferred her to the hive.

At this point we felt quite pleased with ourselves, two cut-outs done, two queens spotted and brood comb and stores set up in hives close to the entrance/exit holes.

The third colony was higher up on the original wall, luckily still accessible by the scaffolding. Malc set his saw going again. The comb this time was very, very black, there was not much to be seen, no brood and fewer bees, so we decided to combine what was there with one of the earlier hives.

We finished about mid afternoon, advising the owners to fill as many of the empty knot holes as soon as possible, or more bees would come. Malc returned very early next morning, before the flyers would be flying, meeting Rob Boswell there who would transport the colonies to their new home. The colonies are destined for the training apiary, but whilst that is

being set up they were moved to an excellent temporary location available to Rob.

Luckily Malc still had the beevac in the car as there were still bees hanging on the outside of one of the smaller boxes (a travel nuc). These were soon vacuumed up and added to the main box.

And finally – bees will be bees, and after a couple of weeks at their new temporary location, all three colonies are changing their queens. Hopefully they'll get themselves sorted before the autumn and maybe the training apiary will be ready to accept them. Fingers crossed.



Apiary Update

After many weeks of frustration due to appalling weather conditions, followed by Covid lockdown, I am very pleased to report that last week we made some excellent progress on the Training Apiary at the RSPCA Site in Stretton.

The access road and compound area were mown and the hedge trimmed. Our groundworks contractor then did a great job in constructing the road and laying a hardcore pad within the compound ready for the container and eventually the building.

We are now in the process of arranging delivery of the storage container followed by erection of the perimeter fence, which hopefully will be in the next two or three weeks. Not long now!

Richard Matkin, on behalf of the Training Apiary Sub Committee.

To Do List for July

- Carry out inspections on any strong colonies which have not yet been split.
- Have ready the equipment needed to prevent them swarming away.
- Check the natural varroa drop. A daily count of more than ten would indicate that immediate treatment is advisable.
- With good weather, before the top super is full of bees and nectar, add another.
- Keep an eye out for Asian hornets.

Who's Who

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Diary: All meetings are cancelled due to the Corona virus pandemic.