



BURTON and District BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Bees in a Tree

Sam Hampton

Last Wednesday Margaret Cowley took a call from a resident of Aston, just south of Derby. The caller, Steve, had tried several places to find somebody who was prepared to come out and give him advice regarding some bees that were nesting in a tree that he had cut down. Not being too handy with a chainsaw, Margaret emailed me and asked if I was interested in helping.

I'm always up for a bit of a challenge, and after a preliminary conversation on the phone with Steve, I agreed to visit the site, to see whether we could help. I asked Suzanne if she was interested in coming along (coincidentally her mum lives quite close by), and she agreed to come with me. I filled my Land Rover up with all the kit I thought I might need and went round the following morning.

In the past, I've dealt with several "bees in trees" problems. They've all been old hollow trees which, when felled, split apart leaving the bees' nest open to the elements. They've been quite a mess, the bees have been difficult to coax out of their nest and survival prospects have



been grim because of the state of the tree after felling. One of the main threats has been rain getting into the nest.

It turned out that Steve had recently retired and, being a keen gardener, had acquired a very large plot of ground at the rear and to the side of his home. He had embarked on an ambitious project to clear this ground, dredge a lake in the centre of the plot with a view to it ultimately becoming a maintained wildlife area which local people in Aston can visit. Naturally he was keen to ensure the bees' survival, but was concerned because excavating machines were booked to begin the dredging work three days after Suzanne and I visited, and the tree was in the middle of the area which was going to be worked by the machines.

Unlike my previous experiences, the felled tree was extremely sound, and the nest was fully intact. When we examined it closely, the nest entrance was very heavily propolised (see photo below), and it looked like the nest itself extended for at least five feet in height below the nest entrance.

Despite the cold weather (it was about 6 degrees C that day) bees were coming and going regularly. Fortunately the entrance was on the side of the trunk and therefore pretty much protected from rainwater, yet still a good two feet off the ground, and therefore not vulnerable from pest attack.

It was pretty obvious that the colony's chance of survival, if it was just simply left there, was really quite good, whereas at this stage of the season, if we were to try to extract it with a chainsaw, the most likely outcome would be complete destruction. Steve agreed that the best course of action would be to work around it. So I lent him a bee suit for the excavator driver to wear if there was a need to move the trunk.

Suzanne and I are very interested in this colony. It certainly looks like it has been there for several years undisturbed.



Tom' Seeley in his recent book *The Lives of Bees* concludes that wild bees can survive without human intervention because rapid selection favours varroa tolerance in parts of America over the 10 to 15 years since varroa had spread across the country.

More specifically, these wild bees have various mechanisms for dealing with mites eg, they were biting off the legs of the varroa which were infesting their colonies, or were uncapping brood cells where larvae had been parasitised.

In the light of this knowledge, and the probability that this colony has been in residence in this tree for many years, Suzanne and I are wondering whether it might also be varroa tolerant. We have asked Steve if we can set up a bait hive in the vicinity to see if we can catch an emerging swarm in the early summer. (see photo below).

If we do, then this story will continue..... §



Sites for Bees

A couple of weeks ago we were contacted by a new member who has moved from the Cotswolds to Packington to ask if we knew of potential apiary sites in the nearby area.

A few of us on the committee agreed that, as an association, we should be more active in looking for potential sites for both new and more longstanding members.

Hamish Lowe thought he would try floating the question on social media. He therefore joined the *Ashby de la Zouch Community Group* on Facebook, posted a question, and the next day was given the telephone number of someone in Packington who had an acre or so of land and was keen to have some beehives located there. Next day our member visited the site, literally only a few hundred yards round the corner from his house, spoke to the owner and struck a deal on the spot. His bees will be in transit later this month.

Whether you are a long standing member and the need is for an additional site for expansion or quarantine, or you are newer and looking for your first site; our experience in this case is valuable. Wherever you live, we imagine there will be an equivalent to the *Ashby Community Group* to be found on Facebook. We strongly suggest members post on such pages to find suitable sites for their bees. If you get a response, and for some reason you are not able to make use of the site which you are offered, please let us know. Another member may find that site just right for their needs. §

AGM

At the Committee meeting which was held on 11th February, we unanimously agreed that we want to hold the AGM at the earliest date it can be held face to face. A major reason for taking this view is that holding a Zoom meeting would effectively exclude a number of members who are not technophiles.

We are now hoping to hold the AGM at the Training Apiary on 17th May outside, early in the evening, prior to a short demonstration as yet to be decided. This will be confirmed in Mid-April when the restrictions situation is clearer.

To Do List for March

- Monitor for varroa mites and treat if needed.
- Check that there are sufficient stores during mild weather. Provide fondant if needed.
- Plan how to replace old queens. Will you rear some new ones?
- Add a super or two if the weather is good.

Items available to buy from the association shop:

HIVE PARTS:	
NATIONAL SUPER FLAT PACK	£19.50
NATIONAL BROOD FLAT PACK	£24
14 X 12 BROOD FLAT PACK	£35
4" ROOF FLAT PACK	£36
CROWN BOARD	£13.50
FRAMED WIRE QUEEN EXCLUDER	£18
MESH FLOOR	£32
BUDGET OPEN MESH FLOOR	£16
SLOPING HIVE STAND	£27
PLASTIC NARROW ENDS	£6.50
NUCLEUS HIVE	£82.85
FLAT PACK HIVE, STAND & ONE SUPER	£235
10 SPACE CASTELLATIONS (PAIR)	£3.44
11 SPACE CASTELLATIONS (PAIR)	£3.44
STEEL FRAME RUNNERS – PAIR	£1.60

FRAMES & WAX:

SN4 SUPER FRAMES 10 PACK	£10
SN4 SUPER FRAMES 50 PACK	£33.00
DN4 BROOD FRAMES 10 PACK	£10.00
DN4 BROOD FRAMES 50 PACK	£33.00
14 X 12 BROOD FRAMES 10 PACK	£16.24
SUPER WAX FOUNDATION 10 PACK	£8.00
BROOD WAX FOUNDATION 10 PACK	£11.50
14 X 12 BROOD WAX 10 PACK	£18.00
NATIONAL DUMMY BOARD (PLASTIC)	£7.50
NATIONAL DUMMY BOARD (WOOD)	£7.00

QUEEN MARKING:

CROWN OF THORNS	£6.00
QUEEN CLIP	£4.50
MARKER PENS - ASSORTED COLOURS	£5.00
BEE BRUSH	£4.00

FEEDERS & FEEDING:

ENGLISH FEEDER	£9.50
RAPID FEEDER	£4.50
NUC FEEDER	£6

SMALL MILLER TYPE FEEDER	£1.00
FEEDER EKE	£7.00

HONEY & WAX EXTRACTING:

STAINLESS STEEL DOUBLE STRAINER	£21.00
STRAINING CLOTH	£3.50
30 LB PLASTIC BUCKET	£3.50
BAIN MARIE	£14
NYLON HONEY BUCKET VALVE	£8.50
30LB PLASTIC TAP BUCKET	£15.00

GENERAL BEEKEEPING:

SMOKER	£35.80
HIVE STRAPS	£6.50
HIVE TOOL	£7.00
PIN HAMMER	£3.50
BEE DISEASE ID CHARTS	£6.00
FRAME NAILS 500G	£2.88
POLLEN ID CHARTS	£6.00

Shop Update

The shop will be open from 13th March every Saturday from 10am to 12 noon.

We will not be opening on Wednesday night until the hour changes and the demand for equipment increases. If you would like to purchase equipment, please contact Dave to check if the items you seek are in stock. Please bring your own buckets if you would like to buy sugar.

Dave's email : dave.coates32@gmail.com

Phone number : 07721 646274

The address is:

Hillfield Animal Shelter.

Hillfield Lane.

Stretton.

Staffordshire.

DE130 BN