

East Lancs BKA Weekly Hive Opening Report 23rd/24th May 2018

This was the first visit to the Offshoots Apiary following a two-week break and was intended to be a check on the new colony, donated by an ELBKA member, that was installed in the apiary at the end of April. However, on arrival at Offshoots, I was made aware that a swarm had formed on the table inside the apiary near the door.



Collecting the swarm

I first collected a nuc (one of our poly nucs from Maisemore Nurseries) plus 6 frames, an empty super for the nuc, a poly crown board, feeder and roof plus a litre of 1:1 syrup. Having all these ready, on hand, is what you need when looking after bees - be ready for anything! Add to this a piece of scrap cardboard and a cream sheet and Pat Smith from Offshoots and I were ready to collect the swarm.

Placing the nuc (without its frames) under the swarm, I scooped the bees off the table (top and bottom) using the piece of cardboard as a scoop into the nuc. As we did this, more bees congregated on and under the table, so we continued to scoop them into the nuc. We had the entrance fully open and more bees were now going in through the entrance than were coming out. A few bees were sitting around the entrance and fanning. This works to spread the queen pheromones out to attract the other bees. We guessed that we had managed to capture the queen in the nuc.



We then put the frames back in the nuc, put the crown board on, the empty super, empty feeder and roof. To encourage the remaining bees to enter the hive, we laid out the sheet from the entrance and under the table. Soon after we'd done this, we could see the bees slowly making their way across the sheet and into the entrance.



We left them to get on with this whilst we took a look at the new hive that I've labelled D1. By the time we'd done this, the swarm was almost all into the nuc and we moved it to the centre of the apiary. The entrance was set to the queen excluder to stop them swarming again and the feeder was filled with syrup. This hive is called Hive C2 (for no particular reason than we had a spare label thus marked!)

Hive D1

The colony in Hive D1 had been given to us late last year by one of our members, and had been kept over the winter by a committee member before being brought into Offshoots towards the end of April this year.

The hive consisted of just a floor, brood box, crown board and roof. It had been suggested that the comb would need changing so this inspection was to confirm that, check there was a queen and brood, and fit a new brood box over the existing one, that would eventually replace it.

Removing the roof and crown board, we could see that there are 11 frames tightly packed and at ninety degrees to the entrance - the cold way.

A quick inspecting of the frames showed 7 frames with brood (at all stages) and a queen marked white - this does not necessarily mean she's a 2016 queen as some beekeepers only use a white marker. The remaining four frames had stored honey, nectar and pollen.

We placed the new brood box on top, then the crown board, a feeder with 1:1 syrup, and finally the roof.

Sentinel checks

Next Tuesday, 29th May, John Zamorski, the Seasonal Bee Inspector will be visiting the Offshoots and Dyneley Apiaries to carry out sentinel checks for disease.

In preparation for this, four of the hives at Offshoots (A1, A3, A10 and D1) have had dry (not greased) Varroa boards inserted in the floors below the mesh screens to collect droppings from the hives which will be collected by John and taken away for analysis. Three of the hives (A1, A3 and D1) have had Small Hive Beetle (SHB) traps inserted on the floors of the hives. Again, John will take the content of these away for analysis. In the photograph below of Hive D1 you may be able to see the black tab of the SHB trap protruding out under the entrance block on the left.



Next Time

Next week, I will report on John Zamorski's visit and will check the status of all the hives.

Dave Parker
Apiary Manager