

East Lancs BKA Weekly Hive Opening Report 12th August 2018

With open Apiary Sessions suspended through most of July so we could host 7 candidates through their BBKA Basic Assessments, we had our first open session two weeks ago on Sunday 29th July. On that day we had to stay indoors because of the rain but we had a good turnout so we set about frame making and Dave Heaton came along to lend a hand and answer the usual round of questions from new beekeepers.

Dave Heaton also volunteered to lead this Sunday's Apiary Session.

The weather wasn't great but it stayed dry throughout the session so that the eight people who turned up got some hands on experience under Dave's careful guidance. For the majority this was their first time handling frames of bees.

Hive A1

This is a good hive for beginners. It was one of the colonies used in the Basic Assessments and the student remarked that the queen in this hive is a real showoff and she didn't disappoint turning up on the frame next to the one Dave predicted she'd be on!

The super was quite full of capped honey so we got another. empty super ready to place on top of this one. The brood box had five frames of brood, in all stages - eggs, larvae, and capped - and the yellow marked queen (2017) was there on the next to last frame of brood.

The surplus wax was scrapped off the queen excluder and collected in a box. Collected wax should be either burnt or melted down and not be left on the floor of the apiary as it can contaminate other hives. It's a good idea to clean your hive tool in washing soda after doing this before you use the tool in another hive.

Before the supers were put back, Dave interspersed some of the used frames with new ones to encourage the bees to draw them out.

Hive A1 now has a brood and two supers.

Hive A3B

Next we took a quick look at this nuc which was a small split off Hive A3. I had noted that there was no queen in here and one frame had a few drone brood.

I asked Dave to confirm that this colony is not viable, which he did. Later he shook all the bees out of this hive (less than a hundred) and we took the empty hive and it's frames out of the apiary for cleaning and sterilising.

Hive A3

This colony was the original one from which Hive A3A and A3B were split at the end of May.

We just needed to confirm there was BIAS (bees in all stages - eggs, larvae and capped) and Dave did this by pulling out a single frame from the brood box and checking it. Although the queen wasn't seen, this indicates she's there and is laying.

There were 5 or 6 frames of brood and this is good considering the colony was queenless not long after the split. A frame of brood (including eggs) was added (from Hive D1) in the middle of June and this has now borne fruit (bees, actually).

One of the frames in brood box was swapped out for a new one as the old one look quite dirty.

Again, this hive had a full super so another was added.

Hive A3 also now has a brood box and two supers.

General Points

Dave demonstrated, and stressed, the importance of hygiene, washing off his boots before entering the apiary and washing out the hive tools and gloves between hives in washing soda solution.

He brought along a pair of "door hangers" that make cheap but very practical frame hangers. They can be picked up from DIY stores (his came from either Tesco or Poundland) and it's to hand the frames on the hive rather than on the ground where they may get forgotten (and may get contaminated).

As noted above, it's always good to have a tub for collecting bits of brace comb and propolis that you scrape off. An empty butter tub and lid is useful for this.

Dave Parker
Apiary Manager