The Nucleus method of swarm control

I really use this method because it simple and you only need a limited amount of extra equipment. It also has the bonus that queen is kept safe in case things go wrong in the original colony. Almost all the foraging bees are left with the original colony, so the nectar-gathering capacity is not significantly reduced.

On finding queen cells in the colony….

Day 1 - with the Nucleus hive

- Place a nucleus hive near the colony and shut or block the entrance to the nuc.
- Remove a frame from the colony with plenty of stores and transfer to the nucleus
- Find the queen hopefully on a frame of sealed and emerging brood but no queen cells and transfer to the nuc.
- Push these 2 frames to one side and shake a further two frames of bees into the space and add another frame of comb, again with no queen cells.
- Fill rest of the box with frames of foundation and either move to another location or block entrance with some grass if it is staying in the same apiary. If you are keeping the nuc in the same apiary you may need to top up with bees.
- Hopefully this queen will start laying and carry on as normal.

Day 1 - At the original now queenless colony

- Destroy all large queen cells and ones that are sealed.
- Only leave open queen cells containing very small larvae. Mark the frames

A week later at the original colony

- Select one queen cell to keep. Just one! Which one you ask? Choose one that is large, well-shaped and has a sculptured exterior. These cells will have received a lot of attention from the workers and so presumably contain a well-fed and good quality queen.
- Destroy all the other queen cells on this frame. All of them!

Just leave this colony alone now and let nature take its course. Don’t be tempted to have a look, just leave for 3 to 4 weeks, and then watch for pollen coming into the hive. If the weather is poor remember you may need to top up both colonies with stores.