



# Darlington BKA

Dear Members

I hope that you are all keeping safe and well, and that your bees are thriving.

As lockdown continues, here is DBKA Newsletter Issue 2, with information and guidance to help you with your beekeeping - and with an update on how our Apiary is progressing in these strange times. (Just a reminder that there is also valuable information/guidance available to you on the BBKA and Bee Base websites.) Please continue to follow government guidelines and look after yourselves and your bees.

BEE SAFE

Annette McGaughey (Chairman)

## The Apiary

Weekly inspections are in place and most colonies are expanding, with some requiring supers to be put on. The Inside/Outside group bees are still in the apiary as their site has been delayed. The group had a Flowhive donated to them. One of their colonies was a suitable size for the hive and was shook swarmed into it (necessary as the frame size was different). The only foundation available in the Langstroth size was black plastic type, so another experiment is underway! After 2 weeks from foundation only the hive has now 4 frames of brood in all stages and the specialist super frames have been put on. The Flow hive is designed to let you harvest honey without removing the supers but has mixed reviews in this country as some of our honeys set e.g. Oilseed Rape, Field bean, and Heather. We will let you know how it goes.



## Swarm Prevention

It is particularly important with the current circumstances that we all try to PREVENT swarms. Below is a little reminder and the PDF that accompanies the newsletter summarises the methods you can use. Why not print it out double sided and have it with you when you inspect your bees.

Weekly inspections should allow you to prevent/control swarming

<p><i>Pre conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build-up of colony to large size</li> <li>Good nectar flow</li> <li>Weather conducive</li> </ul>
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<p><i>Process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Q cells laid up and developed</li> <li>Q slimmed down ready to fly, lay rate decreases</li> <li>Colony readied to leave, stores, brood, nurse bees present.</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that your bees have sufficient room</li> <li>ADD supers or even another brood box</li> <li>Have extra kit available</li> <li>Look for signs at every inspection once drones are about like NOW</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Know how to carry out the manipulations</li> <li>Laminated cheat sheets are good use the provided pdf</li> <li>Do not hesitate you are on the bee's timeline!</li> <li>Just knocking down Q cells will NOT prevent swarming</li> </ul>
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# Collecting a swarm

If you are asked to collect a swarm, please remember the following

- First establish that it is a swarm, pictures help.
- You need permission from the property owner to enter to collect a swarm, the person you talk to may not be the owner.
- Observe all the Guidelines on social distancing etc. There is a letter from the NBU on the BBKA website explaining that if you are beekeeping you can travel. Have a copy with you.  
<https://www.bbka.org.uk/tending-hives-during-covid-19>
- Your BBKA insurance is Liability insurance and does not cover you for falling off a ladder! Etc.
- If the bees have gone into a building cavity etc there is little you can do, you are not required to take any action. <https://www.bbka.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=bbee6581-dd54-4906-8e17-417e44c1332e>
- Risk assess your ability to SAFELY collect the swarm, walk away rather than get injured.
- BBKA leaflet is good reading <https://www.bbka.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=c7437b1a-d9aa-4168-96b6-6ea4c0f5851b>
- Big swarms can be heavy be prepared.
- Once collected ensure that the swarm and container (cardboard box, Skep, Nucleus box etc is laid on a sheet/cloth with access for the bees to fly. If possible, barrier the area to prevent curious people interfering.
- Return to collect the Swarm after bees stop flying, or the scout bees will return to the site and become a nuisance, close up container entrance and wrap in sheet before moving the container.
- Isolate swarm from your other bees if possible
- When hiving the swarm provide foundation rather than comb so they use up honey they have in their honey sacs,
- for first 2 days do not feed (feed if weather poor only).
- Check for Varroa load, you can treat with an approved Oxalic treatment if you do it before brood is sealed.

## The Apiary Garden

The garden is being maintained by a few couples, and it is looking good at present. The grass is growing requiring weekly cuts and the wildflower meadow has given its first flush of flowers now being followed by others. The large number of passing people, many times stop to look and ask questions through the fence. If you have any wildflower plants/plugs these would be very welcome to increase the flowers in the beds and meadow. Please contact a member of the committee so they can be collected safely or drop them at the Apiary gate when gardening is ongoing on Tuesdays between 10 and 12. Thank you.



**HELP** if you need assistance or advice please email or call a Committee member Happy Beekeeping!

If you would like any subjects covered in a future issue please email the Secretary