

Lesson 2 12th and 14th May

Why Open a Beehive

If you never open a beehive the bees may survive for a couple of years.

They will swarm and will normally requeen themselves.

With the arrival of varroa (1992) they will eventually die out in a year or two unless they are treated annually (ideally twice a year) for the pest. The varroa transmits viruses that kill the bees.

In poor foraging weather (April/May 2012!) they may also die of starvation or die in the winter if stores are inadequate:-

but you are less likely to get stung!

Opening a beehive

You may need reading glasses

When you open a hive you can check the colony of food, the status of the queen, space and eventually bee diseases and therefore help the colony to survive. You will also see bee biology and behaviour close up.

How to open the hive

Without your veil in front of your face

Light your smoker and fill it with fuel before touching your hive. Then put on your veil. Put the nozzle of the smoker right up against the hive and blow six good puffs of smoke into the hive entrance.

Wait a couple of minutes but move either to the side or ideally the back of the hive so that foraging bees can return to the hive uninterrupted.

When working with bees work slowly and try to avoid sudden movements like flapping your hands. Bees respond negatively to fast movements but do not detect slow movements.

If you get stung scrape out the sting as soon as possible with your hive tool and blow the site of the sting with smoke to mask bee sting pheromones. You may be able to smell pear drops or bananas - posh name isopentyl acetate - a bee sting pheromone

Your hive will have a roof, crown, super(s), queen excluder brood chamber and OMFloor.

Having smoked the colony remove the roof and place it beside the hive, turn it upside down and use it as a stand.

The super should not contain anything of interest except possibly honey.

Leave the crownboard on it and remove it standing it on the roof - I rotate it 90° so it stands on the edges of the roof.

Smoke the queen excluder gently and peel it off, **turn it upside down** and look at it carefully for your queen.

Remove the dummy board if there is one, then the outside frame check it for the queen and if the queen is not on it stand it in front of the hive.

Now go through the remaining frames looking for the things in the table below.

Put each frame back into the hive where the last frame was removed.

Finally put frame one back in the last gap.

Uncap the odd cell if you are not sure what is underneath the cappings!!!!

Close up the hive

Sealed Honey	
Unsealed honey/nectar	
Pollen	
Sealed worker brood	
Sealed Drone brood	
Unsealed brood	
Eggs	
The Queen - Marked? Colour?	
Workers	
Drones	
Queen cells	

Why do all the above matter to the colony?

What could a beekeeper do if there is a problem?

Tea/coffee

John's slot -

What is a nuc?

What you should get if you buy one.

Discuss the table above

Swarming Notes