



“The Leeds Beekeeper”

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Bee with Allium

This month has been all about queen rearing, queen rearing and more queen rearing- well as the saying goes “If at first you don’t succeed.....” I have managed a bit of honey extraction, but yield so far this year is down on last.

Having decided that two hives was enough for the bottom of the garden, the collection has somewhat increased in recent weeks and the forthcoming heather trip will allow me to send the ladies away from the summer and undertake some reorganisation ready for the winter, whilst I get myself sorted with an out apiary.

CHAIRMAN’S NOTES

June is the month when beekeepers are busiest ensuring that their colonies build up to the maximum strength without swarming. This is important as the Colony that has swarmed will not be strong enough to take advantage of the main summer nectar flow. This is also the time when the bees are in the right state to allow Queen rearing, at this time of the year there are two important things to consider when you inspect the hive.

- 1) Are the bees getting ready to swarm?
- 2) Have the bees enough room to store nectar

You must also be conscious of the June gap this "June gap" occurs because there are few flowers for bees to forage on as the spring flowers die off and the summer flowers have yet to open There is no doubt that the bees temper is influenced by the quantity of nectar available so this June gap can also affect colony temperament

Swarm prevention examinations will be ongoing but smaller beekeepers in particular should consider the chances of having winter losses. Making up nucs can help in swarm management

and many beekeepers successfully take 5 frame nucs through the winter? New beekeepers often wonder when to add supers the best advice I have is that it is good to over super in spring and under super in June/July this means that once April is over put on a queen excluder and a super as soon as this super is half full with nectar add a second super this will ensure that your bees have plenty of space in the hive. The other concern is where to put the new supers should they be on top of the super on the hive or just on top of the brood nest above the Queen excluder I am sure there are many theories but I find the way that works for me depends on whether the super has frames of drawn wax or foundation if it is foundation I like to put the box just above the Queen excluder the heat rising from the brood nest help the bees that cluster to produce wax to draw out the comb. If the comb is drawn I usually put the super above the other supers.

Before I finish I would just like to thank the volunteers who are giving up their spare time for the spring course and for the weekend course. The weekend course which has just taken place was I believe an outstanding success so thank you all!

So until next time happy beekeeping.

Duncan

BEE IN THE CITY

A colony of giant Bee sculptures is winging its way to the streets of Manchester this summer. Wild in Art and Manchester City Council are bringing all of Manchester's communities together for Bee in the City, one of the most spectacular public art events the city has ever seen.

Over 100 Bees are waiting to be discovered on this free, family-fun trail, taking in the city's landmarks and undiscovered gems. Each Bee has been designed by a different artist and celebrates the unique buzz of Manchester, from its industrial heritage to its vibrant music scene. An inspirational learning project will give schools, colleges and community groups the chance to take part.

Join the trail from 23 July until 23 September

<https://www.visitmanchester.com/ideas-and-inspiration/bee-in-the-city>

ALLOTMENT OPPORTUNITY

I have taken my hive off an allotment site in Kippax because I am downsizing due to taking on extra employment. Sue Coates who's allotment it is, likes having bees and so if anyone is interested in having a hive of bees on her site please contact her on 07951 779367

Sally Mortimer

BEES TO THE HEATHER 2018

LBKA has a good heather site available to members.

Each year an increasing number of beekeepers are making the “annual pilgrimage” to the moors, to set their bees the task of bring in some of the fantastic heather honey. The taste is second to none.

The site is about five miles north of Otley. It’s relatively easy to find as there are accurate detailed directions to the site to be found on web collect. That said most of the beekeepers going choose to meet in the Sainsbury’s car park in Otley on a pre-arranged day/ time (see below) and travel up together in convoy. The final bit of the route is a farm track and needs slow navigation for both bees and car :-)

For many beekeepers (bar those enjoying a crop from Water Balsam) the local forage is ended for the year, so the availability of going to the heather creates the opportunity for an extra crop of Honey. I’d say that you pretty much always get enough honey to supply the bees needs over winter - without the need to feed them syrup. And usually there’s a surplus in the supers to give you 30+ lb for you too.

We have an agreement with the farmer that we pay him £5 per colony and LBKA collect that in advance and organise things.

The timing of the flowering of heather is variable, but it’s usually about 12 August and it lasts about four weeks.

Heather is an unusual honey. It is a gel and can’t be spun out in a centrifuge. Instead, the honey is scraped from frames and is then pressed out (using something like an apple press) before bottling. LBKA has two of these presses available for free hire.

This year we have provisionally decided that the group convoy will meet in Sainsbury’s car park in Otley at 0800 hours on Saturday 4th August. It will take about half an hour from there to the heather site. There will be plenty of beekeepers there and doubtless will be happy to help unload and position hives if you need a helping hand. The return leg tends to be more of by individual arrangement rather than a collective return. If you need help getting them lifted into your car then you’d need to agree to go up there when someone else was planning to go to bring their bees home.

If you’ve been before then you will “know the ropes”. But if you’re new to going to the heather and are going or even thinking of going for the first time, then perhaps you’d like to join a “Master Class” on this subject? There are all sorts of tips and tricks that you can employ to maximise your first crop of Heather Honey. This class will take place at the Temple Newsam apiary on Wednesday 18th July starting at 18:30.

All bookings via Web Collect please for both the [Master Class](#) and/ or your intention of [taking your bees to the heather](#) site.

HOW BIG IS THAT SWARM?

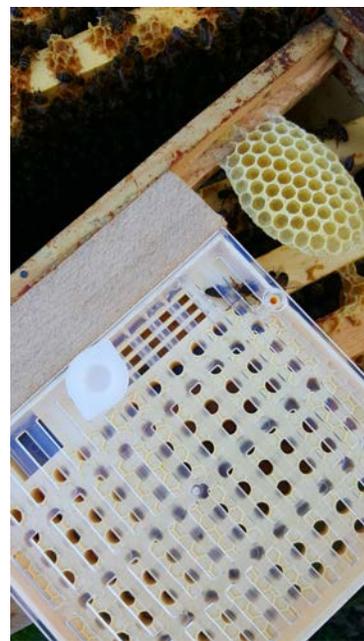
Well in the words of Father Ted “Is that a very small swarm or is it just very far away?” Dave Barrett has been through his swarming archive and found some of the high (and low) lights of recent years, but the question is How big was the swarm? So just for a bit of fun put these four swarms in order of size (answers at the back)



ROYAL ASCENSION

Last year I was not in a position to take part in Dave Barrett's excellently received queen rearing course, but I had decided that the creation of Queen Elizabeth and Queen Flora (and indeed as many more letters of the alphabet as required) was a key aim for this beekeeping year. There became somewhat of a pressing need when Queen Deirdre disappeared from hive Beemoral – what became of her remains a mystery as they certainly hadn't swarmed.

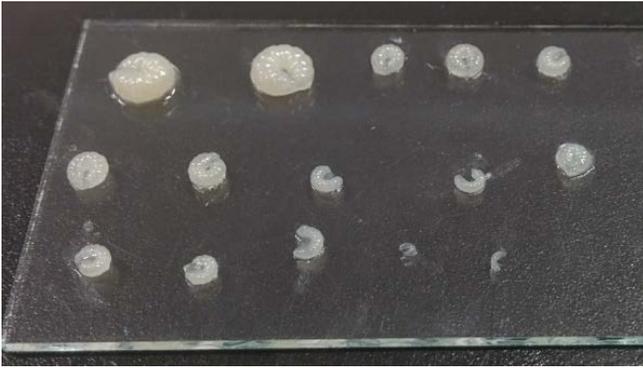
Anyway a Spring sale at the right time from one of the beekeeping suppliers offered a very cheap Nicot queen rearing kit, which was duly purchased and arrived a few days later. A standard brood frame was modified to allow the Nicot box to be fitted and this was added to the hive to allow the bees to become accustomed to the new smell before the queen was entrapped within it. Queen Camilla was carefully manipulated into the Nicot box, which has around 100 cells prefabricated into it, upon which you place a small queen cup. The theory is the queen lays directly into the cup thinking it is a normal cell, then along comes the beekeeper and removes the cells placing them onto the cream cell bar cups which allow the bees the chance to fill the cell with royal jelly and to further draw out the queen cell.



Queen in Nicot cage

Well that is the theory..... the practice is a bit fiddly..... Now I am sure I can already hear several of you shouting about the virtues of grafting..... we will get there eventually..... Once the queen was relocated to the Nicot it took her three days sussing it out before she actually started laying. From the colony point of view that is three days when she is not laying eggs to replace bees. So assuming 1500 eggs per day I missed out on about 4400 bees to get my 100 cups filled! The queen was released from her cage and allowed to go back about her royal business and on day 4 I returned to select 10 cells to be attached to the cream cell cups to continue their journey to royalty. The cells were mounted on a second modified brood frame and placed into a nuc with nurse bees, brood, honey and pollen. On day five I returned to the nuc to check on progress to find there hadn't been any, after filling some of the cells with a sneeze worth of royal jelly the bees seemed to have lost interest in the potential queens. Round 1 a failure!

To see if I was missing a trick I dropped Chris Barlow a message and he invited me up to his apiary to show me how he goes about creating his queens. He prefers to use grafting to select the larvae. In this case you find a frame with some young larvae on and using a Chinese grafting tool or similar (each beekeeper seems to prefer something slightly different so you will see paintbrushes, pieces of wire and a whole range of other things been used). A frame of suitably aged larvae was selected from one of his plethora of hives and removed to the rear of the car; where a beekeeper can sit comfortably against the bumper, frame on knee, grafting tool in one hand torch in the other.



Larvae of correct age in bottom right

© Chris Vernon

The Chinese grafting tool is slid down the side of the cell and the flexible part slides beneath the larvae such that upon removal both larvae and its puddle of royal jelly are retained on the end of the flexible nib. The nib is then placed into one of the Nicot queen cell cups and the small plunger depressed which causes a small scraper to slide across the surface of the nib depositing both larvae and jelly into the cup. This process was repeated multiple times until all the cells on the bar were full. The charged bar was then placed in a queenless cell

breeder colony to begin their journey to royalty.

Having seen how Chris bred his queens and armed with a spare Chinese grafting tool from Chris, I returned home ready to try again. Having my apiary at home meant that grafting could take place in the kitchen rather than against the car bumper. So head torch on, tool in hand and ten more potential queens were selected. This time they went into my queenless colony for royal jelly to be added and cell drawing to commence. A check later in the week revealed five had taken and been drawn out into decent sized queen cells, with a subsequent inspection once they had been sealed to cover four of the cells with hair roller cages – the idea been if they emerged early they would not kill each other (or the remaining uncaged queen who was to be the new ruler)

So in conclusion I would not recommend using the Nicot kit in its entirety – grafting seems to be much simpler from my experience, the key is being able to recognise and remove the correct age larvae. The preformed cells and cell cup holders than make the subsequent manipulations comparatively easy.

So as I write this Queen Elizabee is heading up Beemoral and laying nicely, another two virgins are in charge of a couple of my nucs (an article on these will follow next month) and another virgin has taken charge of hive 3 (They don't get a name until I see some eggs!). A third batch of grafts will be moved into my mini nucs at the weekend and depending on successes I may do one more round before my hives head to the heather for summer.

MASTERCLASSES

A reminder that we still have 3 masterclasses remaining this summer:

- 4th July - Artificial Swarm by the Demaree Method
- 18th July - Heather Masterclass
- 15th August - Preparing your Bees for the Winter

If you wish to attend any, please book on using WebCollect.

DAHNT'APIARY

We have a thriving apiary at Temple Newsam. Its purpose is to enable us to teach beekeeping - both basic and advanced. We don't expect them to create a surplus of honey as they're pulled to pieces regularly. Not only that but individual inspections, of necessity, take some time while course leaders talk and demonstrate to groups. Last year though, the bees DID create a surplus of about 150 lb.

Sadly, we lost one colony during winter, but seven survived. That was pretty good as 30% - 50% losses were far from uncommon.

I'd given all seven survivors a pollen patty in March 18 to try to boost egg laying. Some took it rapidly; others were less keen. I'm far from convinced giving these patties results in any meaningful boost, but it's worth trying these things. I'll give it another go this September and again in early Spring 19 and will continue to monitor outcomes.

It's been an odd year for all our bees hasn't it? Those two awful cold snaps hit them hard. This was true for the Temple Newsam bees too. Some were really weak and are only just now building up into decent sized colonies.

One of the weakest colony was selected to go into the observation hive and was moved, still in its own hive, into position in early May. It was installed in the glass hive in early June when the weather was warm enough for them to survive. Life in an observation hive is a pretty tough for bees. Despite starting out weak, it had grown some before its "promotion" into the observation hive (which houses just three frames). The spare frames full of brood went into another weaker colony - giving them a welcome boost. The resulting observation hive, managed by Dawn, is the best we've had in years. Just the right amount of bees, plenty of food, and a nice big Queen marked yellow.

It's also been a peculiar season for inbound swarms. We have had three swarms / casts fly into the apiary. Two had flown into brood boxes that had been stacked and stored over winter. One of these had been moved slowly (so as not to breach the "three feet" limit) until it was alongside another colony. It was then successfully merged (through newspaper). The other two are also now adjacent to each other and are ready to merge. One of these two was found by Angela, while she was conducting inspections with her Spring Course group. It was small (the bees not the group) - so a cast for sure. It was hanging onto the outside of an empty stack of brood boxes. It'd been there a while as it had drawn new comb.

Are you keeping up? I know I'm not! But once all these mergers are completed we will have eight - or is it nine? - colonies and one in the observation hive.

No one can ever say that beekeeping is all straightforward and routine can they!!

Dave Barrett

TEACHING DAHN T'APIARY

June sees the Spring course get into full swing and also our ever popular weekend course

Wednesday 6th June was a busy affair at the apiary. The Spring course was underway with Chris Barlow demonstrating practical tips for making brood boxes, supers and frames - all very relevant at this time of year as the swarms are plentiful and the nucs are arriving for the new beekeepers. Some beginners were hastily preparing their brood boxes on site ready to house their nuc at the apiary for a few weeks of guidance whilst their confidence develops. More experienced members were on hand to guide those looking for a helping hand.



"When I nod my head, you hit it"



Chris B demonstrating frame construction

The weekend of the 9th and 10th June in the midst of a lovely sunny patch of weather saw over 20 prospective beekeepers take part in the LBKA weekend course two actually flying in from Europe! Straight from the plane into the apiary (well via the airport, but I think you get the idea...). The fabulously sunny day kept most of the bees happy however one or two suffered stings - a good introduction to beekeeping perhaps!

The second day of the course had an equally full turn out of eager new members. In the morning participants explored the different products that could be made from hive ingredients ie candles and beauty products. They also looked at the effects on a hive of disease.

The warm, dry weather over the last couple of weeks has given a real boost to the colonies, increasing brood to near maximum levels. The shop was busy with members purchasing hive parts to be ready for carrying out artificial swarms as soon as queen cells appear in their colonies..

As the evening was dry and relatively warm some were able to just relax and enjoy the Spring evening at the apiary taking in the aroma of the rhododendrons on the other side of the fence whilst enjoying a good natter.



Participants making frames

hive ingredients ie candles and beauty

After a picnic lunch bathed in glorious sunshine the students suited up and went into the Apiary with experienced bee keepers to examine a colony of bees and identify a drone and mark it with a coloured pen. Duncan gave a talk on honey extraction and demonstrated the different extractors and techniques. David Barrett was impressed by the 'intelligent questioning' (his words to the audience!) he had to answer after discussing swarm control with the group.

Michelle Priestley and Cath Graham



Participants making frames

But what could be better than some feedback from one of our course participants;

This course was just amazing! Most often, intensive courses are lengthy, overwhelming and boring, but LBKA did it right with a perfect balance of lectures, practicals, and breaks. Everyone involved in this course, including the staff, volunteers, and students were so passionate which made the course all the more enjoyable. The staff were so knowledgeable and adapt to teaching that I felt inspired and couldn't wait to start. The volunteers approached you upon arrival in the mornings and during the breaks to answer questions, share their experiences, and just share their passion for bees. I strongly recommend this class to anyone interested in keeping bees or just furthering their knowledge and I can honestly say that I feel confident to go away and start my own hive.

Ashlie Maack



IT'S A BIT SWARM IN HERE!

“There are some bees in the greenhouse” was the call that came from my husband one lunchtime last week.... Well where else would a swarm want to go on a hot sunny June day?! Upon finishing work, the bees were quickly moved with the help of a box and a sheet to somewhere more appropriate apparently no worse for their afternoon baking. I think there may be a few “scout bee” vacancies available in this hive fairly soon.....

Helen Lowry

Blimey it is a bit warm in here!

SWARMS

Spring is in full swing and thoughts begin to turn to swarms and once again I am asking you to step up to the mark to help in this very busy and important time. The only way we can collect swarms within the local area is with your help. For the uninitiated this is how it works:

I will ring you with all the information as to where it is postcodes etc you pick a time convenient for you to collect and then you go and retrieve it. I will have sorted the donation of £30.00 before you go, of which you get £10.00 for your out of pocket expenses, the remaining £20.00 goes to LBKA and of course you keep the bees so really it is a no brainer. All you need to do is e-mail thebeeman@hotmail.co.uk with your contact phone number and the postcode(s) you wish to collect from and I will do the rest.



Can you catch a swarm?

The one rule I have is that you must have kept bees for at least 12 months. If you have never collected a swarm before don't worry as I will get an experienced beekeeper to show you and make sure the swarm is easy and accessible (No cherry pickers required).

Looking forward to hearing from all of you.

Duncan Brearley – Swarm Coordinator

SNIFFER BEES TO THE RESCUE

A twenty-first century solution to the removal of landmines from Yugoslavia using both drones and bees and offer an alternative to the traditional canine approach. Honeybees were trained to recognise TNT by being fed syrup tainted with the explosive substance for several days before release. In such a way the bees begin to associate TNT with food and so when released into the environment they then seek out TNT hoping for a meal. The researchers then use drones to track the bees and see where they are heading to locate the mines and then send in teams to disarm them.

The bees are much more plentiful and cheaper to use than dogs however they do need retraining every three days.....

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-5843835/Sniffer-BEES-successfully-spotted-explosives-former-Yugoslavian-warzone.html>

Ask The Beekeeper

Have you got a burning beekeeping question that you want an answer to? Then please send it to editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk and we will do our best to find you an answer!

I have been beekeeping for 9 years so not a novice but still bamboozled sometimes. This weekend after finding a charged but not yet sealed queen cell in one colony I performed a standard AS (pagden method). I left the old queen on the old site on a single frame of brood with no queen cells in a new hive, otherwise filled with new undrawn foundation. I also added a few frames of honey in a super above. The old hive was moved aside and has the queen cell and the nurse bees.

Today the bees with the old queen swarmed or absconded - the queen is clipped so they eventually returned but I am puzzled as to why they went. I checked the one frame again to make sure I had not missed any queen cells on it and its completely clear. So why would they leave? Its not a swarm as there is no viable colony left behind so must be absconding?

I found the bees clustered underneath the hive and have re-hived them in the same hive - I have to assume the clipped queen was with the cluster and is now in the hive, I didn't see her but unless they take off again I will check later. But what should I do to prevent them absconding again?

Advice gratefully received!

Juliet Parkinson

Oh Wow - after 9 years you clearly know what's what, and your bees are as intent on bamboozling you as mine are with me 😊.

I really don't know exactly why they do such things, but here goes with some best guesses.

1) Let's start with the single queen cell you found. I've come across this in one of my own hives and in two of the Temple Newsam colonies. I don't think that it's a signal that they're planning to swarm and I have not conducted artificial swarms on these three colonies. I decided that they were planning on superseding their queen as they thought she was failing and have left them completely alone. These colonies will not be inspected for four weeks. I'd then expect to find brood at all stages and no marked queen. The daughter will have emerged, mated and taken over the colony. She'll have killed her mother either upon emergence or shortly after mating. One or two queen cells are just not compatible with the swarming instinct. With swarming you get 10 to (sometimes) up to 30 queen cells. So I'd not have created an artificial swarm on your colony I'd have left it.

2) But we are where we are, and you want to know why they've absconded. Now it becomes really foggy and the answer down to best guesses.

The single queen cell you found sounds to have been very advanced and at the point of capping. If they HAD been planning to swarm (and I know that this is not compatible with the above) then the

queen would have been starved to get her weight down so she was able to fly. So perhaps they were a bit OCD and, having set the collective mind that they were going to swarm, they did just that. Despite your artificial swarm. They wanted to go and blow you and your plans! Perhaps her failure to join her swarm was due to certainly due to clipping, but also because she hadn't been slimmed down as they'd have done if it was a "proper" swarm and she was also just too heavy to fly. A double whammy.

You did the right thing by transferring a single frame with brood, but don't say at what stage of development the brood was at. Bees / swarms are said to be extremely reluctant to abscond when there is open brood in their hive. In this open brood the larvae give off a pheromone saying "I'm hungry - feed me" which the bees simply can't ignore and leave. If the frame you gave them was largely sealed brood then this pheromone would be absent and the bees would have no compunction abandoning.

3) Finally what do you do to stop them absconding again.

I'm with you completely that the swarm will have re-joined the clipped queen. These will be what you found clustered underneath the hive. Complete with their much loved clipped queen. Perhaps they've got the message that she can't fly / leave? Or perhaps they'll try again and, I'd bet, re-cluster underneath again.

I'd say it had gone beyond simply adding a frame of open brood. You need to physically restrain them.

A few years ago I went through a spate of collecting and then hiving pretty good swarms (from all over Leeds - not locals) only to find when I went to see how they'd fared (out apiaries) that they'd gone. Absconded. I then tried pinching a frame of open brood from another colony when I hives swarms. This helped (thus proving the above) but not always (thus disproving the above). Perhaps they weren't keen on being adoptive parents!

So now I take a more radical, and time consuming method. I simply put a queen excluder on top of the floor - in between the floor and brood box, before hiving the swarm directly into the brood box. I acknowledge that there's a risk that a slimmed down / ready to fly queen might be thin enough to get through a queen excluder, but so far they haven't. I return after 24/48 hours and remove that bottom queen excluder. And it works.

So, having gone on a bit, I'd say to do what you've done - re hive your swarm with a clipped queen, but with a bottom queen excluder to thwart their desire and ability to abscond.

Phew. Bees certainly make you think sometimes. But in many ways that's good. It would be so boring if they always did things by the book wouldn't it?

Dave Barrett

I would think that with only one queen cell present, that the bees were wanting to supersede the existing queen and not swarm.

It's difficult at this time of year to trust them to supersede rather than to swarm, particularly if it's a large colony, so an artificial swarm was probably a good idea.

To be wise after the event. One frame of brood and the rest foundation is not to the liking of bees not wishing to swarm. Two or three of brood and three or four of drawn comb with plenty of stores would have been more to their liking.

If she hadn't been clipped they would all have gone back into the parent hive providing it was close enough.

IMHO queens are best left unclipped.

Regards

David Haigh

SWARM ANSWERS HOW WELL DID YOU DO?

1) The biggest by far was picture D. It was plastered on a wall about 3m high. Bit of a balancing act on extending ladders to reach. It is perhaps misleading in that the cluster was a good few centimetres deep in bees, and it covered a large area of wall. A few sweeps of my trusty goose wing soon had them in the skep. And it was HUGE. When I went back to collect them at dusk, having by then caught the stragglers, it almost filled the skep. Over the years this must rank amongst the largest I've collected.

2) The second largest was picture A. It was pitched on both sides of a netting fence, about two metres high. It wasn't the easiest swarm to collect as I had to negotiate a wobbly ladder (again). I had to do one side of the netting first, sweeping into skep with goose wing, then move the ladder to the other side to collect the rest. As you can imagine, there were a good number of airborne bees at this stage. However, I must have caught the queen as soon they were fanning. By dusk all the bees left flying / still on the netting, had found and joined the queen. job done.

3) The third largest was picture B; a doddle. Shoulder height and in a holly bush. A little judicious pruning soon had the bees exposed and shaken into the skep. As it was in a prominent spot in the garden I left the skep on the floor and went back at dusk when they'd all gone in and were finished flying for the day. I wasn't sure if it was a large cast or small swarm. However, when I checked it, now housed on drawn comb, a few days later the queen was laying. This meant that it was a small swarm and not a cast. Had it been a cast, headed by a virgin queen, she wouldn't have been laying so quickly. She'd have needed a) to orient herself before b) flying to mate, then c) be fed and put on some weight/ grow up a bit before starting to lay.

4) And finally to the booby prize picture C! And miles away from home. This might have started off as a decent swarm. This was the place the swarm had first pitched. They'd then sent out the scout bees to find their new, permanent home. Having found this "des res" they'd gone. Leaving behind those few poor souls who'd been out flying (either scout bees or foragers) when they'd left. They'd come back only to find the queen and swarm had gone and they were abandoned! This then was the residue, the leftovers, from what sounded to have once been a decent sized swarm. It would barely fill a large cup /mug (take a closer look and you'll see it's about as long as one of the laurel leaves). It was quickly gathered in the skep and relocated.

Hope you did well. The different sizes of swarm, and wildly different locations makes swarm gathering so interesting. Quite a challenge. And you usually get a new stock of bees.....

Dave Barrett

12OZ HEXAGONAL JARS

Hopefully your bees have been busy and you now have lots of honey and not enough jars to put it in.... fear not LBKA have the answer! 12oz (340 g) hexagonal jars with lids are available in the shop at a bargain price of 23p each, they come loose so you can buy as many as you require. Please bring a cardboard box to carry them home in. If you require a large quantity, please email Duncan thebeeman@hotmail.co.uk or ring him on 07855 308143

Got an article for the next edition? Please email to editor@leedsbeekeeper.org.uk by 30th June

PUTTING YOUR BEES TO BED FOR THE WINTER?

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

June

Saturday 9th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Saturday 9th/Sunday 10th – Weekend Course

July

Wednesday 4th – Masterclass – Demeree method

Saturday 7th - Apiary Day – 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon

Tuesday 10th – Thursday 12th – Great Yorkshire Show

Wednesday 18th – Masterclass – Going to the Heather