

Bee Removal from a Farningham House.



This was the entry point for the bees.



The bees had taken up residence between the lathe & plaster wall as shown below.



On October 19th 2020, I received a call from our club swarm coordinator asking whether I was available and willing to try my hand at another removal of bees located within a house in the Darenth valley. The owner advised he was undergoing a complete roof replacement with rendered wall repair. According to the owner, his roofers were getting rather excited about the number of bees flying around them as they tried to work.

I agreed to go along and take a look with no promises given I would tackle the job once I had seen what was involved. As it happens the old building was covered in scaffolding to facilitate complete external decoration and roof renewal, so access to the bee entrance hole on the second floor was simple and safe. The owner also agreed cutting through the external plaster wall was not a problem as there was a lot of the wall needing to be repaired anyway, so another small hole made little difference.

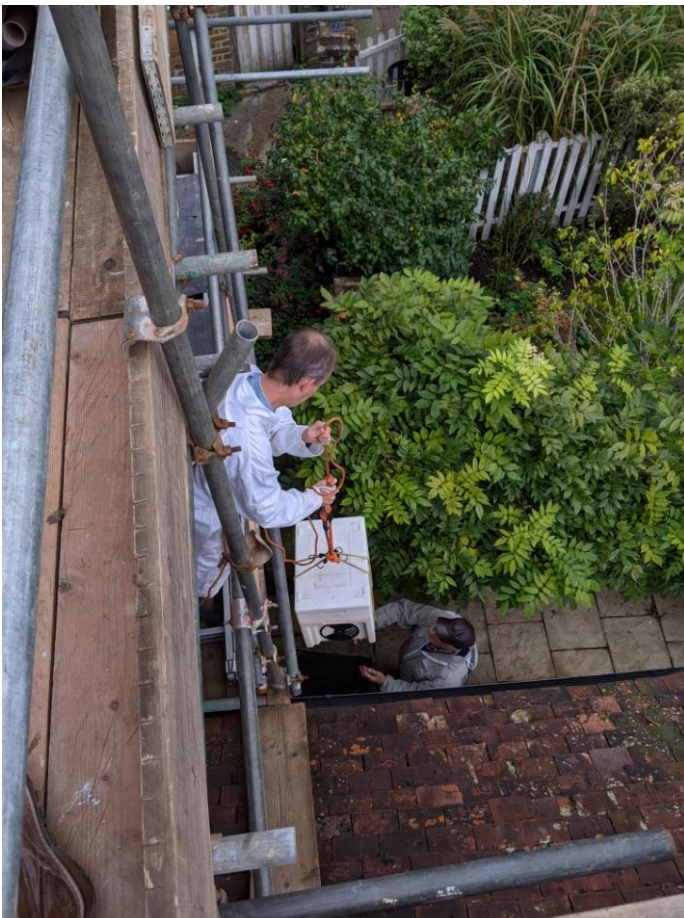
It was not an ideal time to remove bees as Peter Hutton recently mentioned in the Club's newsletter, but building work continues all year round and rather than see the bees poisoned or the entrance simply blocked up causing them to starve over a long period of time, I agreed to undertake the job. Armed with my nuc box, a few tools and my son as an assistant, we agreed to return the next morning to start extraction. The roofers wisely confirmed they'd work on another part of the house for the day!

The following morning was dry with a little wind, but not too warm at about 12 C. We found the bees had taken up residence between the inner and outer lathe and plaster walls, with access via a 4 to 5 cm old waste water pipe hole left after a plumber had removed the pipe some years previously whilst renewing a bathroom. He had not blocked the external hole presumably because being two floors up it was in the "too difficult to get to" category so quietly forgot about it.

Cutting the outer plaster went well and we soon found the nest behind wooden lathes and started to expose the full extent of comb between two wooden studs. What was a surprise was the gap they had occupied, being no more than about 6 to 7 cm deep. As a result the nest stretched from up in a tight corner down the cavity, a space of over half a metre.



A little more of the bees nest revealed.



Tim lowering the nucleus after the remaining bees had been successfully vacuumed up by the bee-vac.

Carefully cutting combs out we gradually exposed the nest and discovered very little brood as expected but, surprisingly, very little stored honey and pollen. The brood was fitted into brood frames to place in the nuc, along with most of the stores and a lot of the bees. With the lid back on the nuc, we soon had bees fanning pheromones out at the nuc entrance to encourage the rest to join them. We waited and watched.

There continued a fair amount of activity around the old nest site and the nuc entrance, but we concluded there were more bees going in the nuc than coming out so left them for the rest of the day. We returned at dusk, only to find a clump of bees at the top of the cavity, presumably clustered around the queen?

After a conversation with John Farrow it was time to revert to Plan B the next morning.

Back to the house early the next morning and carrying John's bee vac, we set up our equipment and soon had the wall cavity cleared of bees and hopefully including the queen.

I use modified commercial bee hives so unfortunately my nuc box holds commercial sized frames whilst John's bee vac uses national frames, so I ended up with two boxes of bees to take home and sort out. Fine weather continued that day so by early afternoon I had both nucs emptied into one of my own hives that contained a small late swarm. I gave them food before closing up and will keep a close eye on them and have my fingers crossed they make it through to spring next year.

Tim has uploaded this short video on YouTube giving an overview of this extraction, finishing with the successful use of the bee-vac to remove the remaining bees and hopefully the queen?

Click on:

<https://youtu.be/Tnmh4VbihaQ>

Tim Johnston October 2020