

## How to get bees from a National to a Langstroth hive



One of our apiaries is at Kinmount Estate the other being at Beeswing Dumfriesshire. This is within the no longer used walled garden; an unused fruit tree orchard, ornamental trees and unploughed pasture surround it. This picture shows the second stage of the operation with the nationals on top of the langstroth boxes. The green hives on the left are polystyrene. The bees wintered well and built up quickly in the spring.

We purchased three national hives of bees from a friend who was not able to take care of her bees due to health problems. Here started the first problem, Christine and I have Langstroth Jumbo hives and these were Nationals hive, so having done this operation some years ago when we had an apiary at Milland nr Petersfield we started the operation at the beginning of May this year.

It is easy to do all you need is patience; good weather and strong nectar flow or substitute with sugar syrup or ambrosia syrup (not the tinned rice pudding) and very little smoke so as to not put too many bees in the air. Firstly I made a converter board to the outside dimensions of the langstroth and then cut a hole to the inside measurements of the national. We prepared frames - four with foundation and one frame with nothing in which will hold the national frame and cable ties. So having everything ready we set about the task, the weather was sunny, temperature at 17 degrees C, a good spring flow of nectar. Firstly we opened the national hive, found and caged the queen with a crown of thorns pressed on to the frame, closed up the national brood frames. We then fixed the national frame into the langstroth frame and secured with cable ties - two at the top bar and one at the bottom to stabilize frame. We needed to trim one of the lugs to fit the langstroth. The converter board was set onto the national hive, then a langstroth excluder, brood box and the frame with the queen on into the centre of the langstroth box with two frames of foundation either side. The rest of the box was filled with dummy boards to stop wild comb being built. By doing this it centralizes over the existing brood and will maintain the heat from the bottom hive. A feeder with syrup was added, the hive closed up and left alone for three or four days.

At the next visit the top box, with the roof, queen excluder and converter board in place so as to not lose the queen, was lifted onto a spare up turned roof. The bottom box was checked for queen cells, and any present were cut out. The hive was reassembled, the top box checked to make sure they had plenty of food and that they were starting to draw out the wax and the queen was present. The operation was repeated four days later checking the bottom box for queen cells and destroying any present.

The operation was then reversed by placing the langstroth hive at the bottom, having added more frames of foundation to it, and the national above the queen excluder and converter board. The bees had drawn the new combs and built drone comb around the national frame set into the langstroth frame. The cable ties were cut and the national frame put back in the national box. The drone brood left on the jumbo frame was checked for varroa and then destroyed..

When we checked on the 13<sup>th</sup> May everything was going to plan and they needed a super, but now on the 16<sup>th</sup> May we have cold winds and rain, but we are hoping for a weather window to do a further check this weekend. When the sealed brood emerged the national box was removed and the bees shaken off the combs. It might seem a formidable task, but as you will see by the accompanying photographs it is easy to do and very enjoyable beekeeping. In addition, we have managed a comb change too.



The converter board on top of the langstroth hive



National brood frame set into the Langstroth jumbo frame



The drawn foundation with sealed worker brood at 10 days