

# Talks for beekeeping groups by Ken Basterfield, NDB and Dan Basterfield, NDB

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Ken and Dan Basterfield regularly give popular lectures on practical and thought-provoking beekeeping topics. They lecture across the UK and Ireland, from local association meetings to national and international conferences.

The only father and son team to ever have been awarded the National Diploma in Beekeeping (the highest UK qualification), they run around 120 colonies commercially together, based at Blackbury Honey Farm in Devon. They set up *Advanced Beekeeping Courses* in 2020 to offer practical and hands-on courses aimed at beekeepers with 3-5 years of experience, using the purpose built teaching and laboratory facilities at Blackbury Honey Farm.

## Arranging a talk

You can check availability and request a talk online using the calendar tool available at:

[www.advancedbeekeeping.org.uk/talks](http://www.advancedbeekeeping.org.uk/talks)

Evening talks are generally from 7:30pm – 9pm on a weekday and can be done in-person or by Zoom; daytime talks in person (e.g. at a conference or AGM) can be booked for morning or afternoon at weekends.

This is linked to Ken and Dan's calendars and allows you to directly check and reserve their availability for evening or weekend talks. Not only does this save a lot of to-and-fro with emails, but more importantly, emails can get overlooked in the busy beekeeping months of May – July when many requests for talks come in. This online system allows you to make a reservation in their calendars for your chosen topic and emails them immediately for confirmation.

You can reserve either speaker for any topic on this list, or if you have a particular topic in mind that is not listed, you can add details and they will discuss this with you. Ken and Dan enjoy putting together new talks around interesting topics, so do not be afraid to ask!

Alternatively, you can email them at [daniel@basterfield.com](mailto:daniel@basterfield.com) or [ken@basterfield.com](mailto:ken@basterfield.com).

## Fees

A daytime or evening talk by Zoom is £50; there are no travel expenses.

An evening talk in person is £80 plus return mileage from EX24 6JF at 50p/mile.

A daytime event (two talks) in person is £160 plus return mileage from EX24 6JF at 50p/mile.

If your venue for a daytime or evening talk is more than an hour and a half away from Blackbury Honey Farm, we would ask that you arrange accommodation to ease the travelling.

## About the speakers

### Ken Basterfield



Ken was first introduced to bees at 6 years old, but began beekeeping upon graduating in 1971. He increased in numbers until running 150 colonies by 1979, running these as a semi-commercial outfit in parallel with his day job. Ken took his BBKA Preliminary, Intermediate, Senior, and Senior Practical certificates, before obtaining his National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB) in 1996. During that time, he completed a wide range of beekeeping including stock selection and breeding from the best

locally-adapted performers & extensive queen raising. Ken has tried out most of the management techniques on large scale trials leading to 'best fit' tools and techniques for his own beekeeping environment.

Ken is a member of Devon BKA, and has held various positions such as Apiary Manager, Branch Secretary, and County Show Chairman. He was a founder member of the Devon Apicultural Research Group (DARG) in 1979, and for many years has been an examiner for BBKA Basic, General & Advanced Husbandry, and for the National Diploma in Beekeeping. He has been a member of the BBKA Examination board, a BBKA Trustee, and a member of the NDB board since 1998.

As NDB Course Director, Ken has run the well respected annual residential NDB Advanced Course since 1998. He also sought the funding for and created the NDB's Short Course programme, which ran 2-day beekeeping courses around the UK from 2011-2019.

### Dan Basterfield



Dan grew up with beekeeping around him, earning pocket money by clipping and marking queens. Having spent 15 years working in large companies, he returned to the family beekeeping business in Devon in 2005, and with his father expanded the business and built a brand new Honey Farm as the centre of their honey production, queen raising, and teaching activities.

Dan holds the National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB), is a BBKA Master Beekeeper, and is an examiner for the BBKA and NDB examinations. He is a regular lecturer around the UK on practical beekeeping topics. Daniel wrote some of the BBKA's Course in a Case training courses, has contributed to the BBKA's *Liquid Gold* and *Swarming* videos, and co-authored the BBKA's *Healthy Hive Guide* book. He has just published *Using Apideas*, a manual for queen mating nucs.

He is a member of the Bee Farmers Association, and has been a Trustee and Chairman of the International Bee Research Association (IBRA), and Chairman of the NDB Examination Board.

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# Beekeeping skills

## Preparations for a Better Season

*Dan Basterfield*

Beekeepers are natural optimists – starting each season with the hope that this year will be that perfect season where everything comes right. The cyclical seasonal nature of beekeeping makes it possible to broadly predict what equipment and interventions may be needed and when, but how many of us still play catch up with the bees? We review various key tasks and preparations as one season ends and the next begins, and look at some of the key skills that underpin confident and successful beekeeping.

## Handling Skills

*Ken Basterfield or Dan Basterfield*

Poor handling of honey bee colonies results in a beekeeper muddling through despite grumpy bees; in a different set of hands those colonies could be a pleasure to work with. Practical beekeeping skills are learnt mostly from others, yet a lot of what is taught is clumsy or ill-considered, however well-intentioned.

Using pictures and videos we will discuss and demonstrate some of the underlying skills for handling honey bee colonies. Our approach has been honed through many years of managing large numbers of colonies, and we aim to be sympathetic, efficient, and instinctive in our ways. From simple principles of how to move, hold, shake, and replace frames, to effective use of smoker and tools, we will extend into more complex inspections and manipulations, and discuss safe techniques for holding, marking, and caging queens without using gadgets.

## Reading Bees

*Ken Basterfield or Dan Basterfield*

'Reading bees' refers to the ability to look at a previously unknown colony of bees, to understand what has happened before, what is happening now, and to suggest appropriate 'next steps' by balancing the (sometimes conflicting!) priorities of the bees and the beekeeper. Reading bees is often wrongly treated as a black art, when in reality we start reading bees from our earliest encounters with them. This lecture uses practical examples to discuss how this reading can be expanded and refined through better observation, improving our knowledge of bees, and by always asking the question "what would the bees do next?"

## Double Brood Chamber working

*Ken Basterfield or Dan Basterfield*

Since the 1980's, I have been running colonies on double brood chambers, having realised early in my beekeeping career that the traditional single deep box offers too little brood space for colonies. Whilst this is common practice in much of the world, in the UK it is viewed with suspicion. Few realise how compressed colonies are in a single National brood box, resulting in excessive swarming. Instead, add more brood space and work with the bees rather than

against them. I will discuss general management, swarm control, wintering, and the transition to double brood from a single brood or brood and a half.

## Managing common diseases and disorders

*Dan Basterfield*

Whilst varroa, hornets, and foul brood receive a lot of attention, it is easy to overlook the impact of the more mundane (but arguably more damaging) diseases and disorders. We will look at three common problems: nosema, chalkbrood, and queen failures (both drone layers and laying workers), and discuss how to spot them, and what to do if we find them. The emphasis is on practical colony management, and the session is aimed at both beginners and those with a few years of beekeeping experience.

## Queenright and Broodright?

*Dan Basterfield*

Colony cohesion comes from having a queen and brood. In the absence of either, things can begin to break down, perhaps ultimately ending up with a doomed colony with laying workers. This lecture looks to explain the contribution that either queen or brood pheromones make to colony well-being, how to spot early when problems are developing, and how to help problematically queenless or broodless colonies recover in good time. This lecture is aimed at the more novice beekeepers and is grounded in observation and practice.

## Making and using nucs

*Ken Basterfield or Dan Basterfield*

In colony management, the nucleus is truly the 'Swiss Army knife', useful in so many situations. Wedmore wrote in the 1930's "*Almost every emergency of management can be met forthwith by putting something into or taking something out of a nucleus, while nuclei themselves seldom present emergencies.*"

We will look at how to make up nucs for various purposes, and the uses that nucs commonly have - such as making increase, queen mating and introduction, swarm control, bees for sale, and so on.

## Vertical split swarm control

*Ken Basterfield or Dan Basterfield*

The 'Pagden type' of artificial swarm is well known and commonly used. In practice it requires a lot of spare equipment at precisely the time when equipment is most in demand. A vertical artificial swarm requires only an extra brood box and a modified crown board as a split board, and was a technique we learnt from Australian commercial beekeepers. This lecture also includes aspects of managing double brood box beehives - by having the extra brood box already in place in all colonies, swarm control is a quick and easy part of routine inspections.

## Out apiaries

*Ken Basterfield*

For many beekeepers, a major milestone in their beekeeping journey is the establishment of a second 'out apiary' away from home. For others, circumstances dictate that they must start their beekeeping with hives on a remote site. Some out apiaries are permanent, others can be temporary, yet all bring a mixture of benefits and challenges.

Ken Basterfield has had numerous out apiaries over the past fifty years, in all sorts of locations. From this experience he will share his tips on how to find, establish, and manage an out apiary of your own.

# Queen raising

## Queen raising overview

*Dan Basterfield*

Queen raising is a straightforward and rewarding part of beekeeping. It can be undertaken on any scale, with varying levels of complexity, but the basics are well known and it can be started with minimal equipment. We will explore the "how?" and "why?" of queen raising, compare the various approaches (including the Miller method, Jenter/Cupkit systems, and grafting) and equipment used (e.g. nucs or mini-nucs). We will consider what is realistic and achievable for a hobbyist beekeeper or beekeeping association.

## Simple queen raising

*Dan Basterfield*

The bees can do it, so can you! Aiming to raise perhaps half a dozen queens to use for re-queening or making splits, we look at three very straightforward approaches that require little fiddling or additional equipment: making queenless nucs, the Demaree method, and the Miller method.

## The Importance of Drones

*Dan Basterfield*

Given the chance, colonies will enthusiastically raise large numbers of drones. But beekeepers tend to think of drones as a burden on a colony, and cut out or discourage drone comb. Worse, we often overlook that for good queen raising, we need good drone raising too. We explore simple methods of encouraging colonies to raise the numbers of drones that they desire, how to align this with breeding and stock selection, and of course the problem of drone brood being 'varroa incubators'.

## Managing Apideas

*Dan Basterfield*

Apideas (and similar polystyrene mini mating nucs) provide a small and effective means of mating queens, far less demanding of resources than traditional 3- or 5-frame mating nuclei.

Having used Apideas since the early 1980's, we will review how to establish, manage, maintain, and close down these small seasonal colonies.

Includes some general tips on queen raising.

## Tools and Equipment

### Moving Bees and Small Scale Migration

*Ken Basterfield*

Many of you will need to move your hives of bees, whether for the pleasure of new forage crops and out apiary working, or in the distressing situation of having to minimise the risks of stinging with a vicious colony whilst it is being re-queened to a more moderate temper. This talk covers the tools, timing and techniques to enable you to move bees safely and efficiently whether it is one hive or 20.

### Dealing with Pollen Clogged Combs

*Ken Basterfield*

Whether it is good and nutritious pickled pollen ('bee bread' as the Americans seem to call it) or mouldy pollen that is clogging your brood combs and putting them beyond use in the brood nest, I can show you how to store and clear those combs for reuse without having to destroy them in the solar extractor and re-waxing with new foundation. Pollen mite is your best friend.

### Tools and Techniques for Making Beekeeping Easier

*Ken Basterfield*

My background in engineering and science, along practical and fabricating skills, has developed and honed a number of techniques and pieces of equipment in my 50 years of beekeeping to make life simpler for the beekeeper. I will cover in a series of show & tell snapshots of many of these ideas whether for migration, lifting and shifting, simple selective queen raising, warming honey, feeding, foundation making, mead and honey vinegar, etc. Come and enjoy, it is quite a romp.

### Sterilising Hives and Combs

*Ken Basterfield*

Hive hygiene is particular importance in minimising the risks of re-infection by hive pathogens and pests such as Nosema, Amoeba, Chalk Brood, EFB and Wax Moth carried over from previous colony use. Sterilising hive equipment has long been the practice of the wise and knowledgeable beekeeper. The techniques and materials are covered in detail to enable you to give the best start each year, unburdened by debilitating agents.



# Understanding bees

## Foraging behaviour

*Dan Basterfield*

Honey bees have evolved a fascinating range of behaviours and communication that allow a colony to efficiently harvest the natural resources available to it in order to ensure winter survival. This ability of a colony of tens of thousands of individuals to coordinate their efforts for the good of the group has fascinated and inspired humans for centuries. These tiny creatures with brains the size of a varroa mite exhibit amazing levels of individual and collective intelligence, aided by simple but highly effective 'tricks' to help with foraging, navigation, and communication.

## Pollen - nutrition for honeybees

*Dan Basterfield*

Whilst nectar or honey give bees the energy they need, pollen satisfies virtually every other dietary requirement. We will look at the constituents and nutritional content of pollen from a non-chemist, non-biologist perspective, trying to make sense of what is in pollen, why it is such a rich foodstuff, and why a varied pollen diet is so important to bees and other pollinators.

## New findings in honeybee dance language

*Dan Basterfield*

Since the Nobel prize-winning work of von Frisch, we have understood that honeybees use three dances to advertise and communicate sources of food. More recent research, using modern video equipment, challenges the accepted view of these dances. This lecture reviews the original work of von Frisch and his contemporaries, and that of current researchers such as Seeley, to look at how our understanding of this fascinating aspect of bee behaviour is changing.

## Dissecting bees explained

*Dan Basterfield*

Using a series of videos recorded during honey bee dissections, we will look inside the honeybee and understand what makes her tick. Insect anatomy has many differences to familiar mammalian anatomy, but with a steady hand and a basic microscope it makes for fascinating investigation. Part 'how to' and part 'show and tell', we will learn a little more about our bees and how we can see them from a whole new perspective.

## Microscopy for beekeepers

*Dan Basterfield*

The microscope can bring fascinating insights into beekeeping in three key areas: disease confirmation, pollen identification in honey, and study of honey bee anatomy. With good quality microscopes now available for a few hundred pounds, many beekeepers are investing some of their 'honey money' in one.

Having taught microscopy to beekeepers at all levels for over ten years, and as a BBKA Microscopy certificate examiner, Dan Basterfield will give an overview of the uses of the microscope for the beekeeper, what you need to get started, and useful references and information to help you achieve a basic level of competence and avoid some of the frustrations you might encounter.

## Commercial aspects

### Bees for honey and money

*Dan Basterfield*

This lecture conveys my experiences and the observations of other small scale commercial beekeepers looking to make a living from 50-250 colonies. Beekeeping on a larger scale is all about managing bottlenecks, and prioritising time input against reward. At the end of the day, it's got to keep a roof over your head without working you into the ground. There is no silver bullet – no 'Commercial Beekeeping Approach' that is imparted in hushed tones to the chosen few. Unlike the indulgences of hobby beekeeping, it must be undertaken with an eye to efficiency and the bottom line, but that does not mean it has to be cynical or unsympathetic.

### Developing a beekeeping business

*Dan Basterfield*

Beekeeping as a hobby has a tendency to grow. It is always tempting to try to recoup some of the expenditure (particularly from the Spring Convention sales!) by selling honey, nucs, or other hive products. In this session we look at the potential to grow your hobby, covering: realities and logistics of beekeeping, choosing between generalising or specialising, marketing and presentation, sales channels, regulations & red tape, support and funding, training and apprenticeships.

## Hive produce

### Beeswax processing for the small scale beekeeper

*Ken Basterfield*

Beeswax is a valuable product to the beekeeper, and when one looks at the effort involved for the bees in secreting this wonderful substance, it is truly amazing that we beekeepers benefit in quantity from so many tiny wax scales secreted by busy bees. I for one am truly grateful for their bounty. Beeswax processing is something not generally dealt with well in most texts, and I propose to look at methods of benefit to small scale beekeeping. Beginning with raw wax recovery from cappings and old combs, through cleaning and refining processes, and on to value added applications like cosmetics, wax polishes, candles and foundation making. I am a practical beekeeper by nature and devise my own tools and methods of working in all aspects of beekeeping, none more so that with beeswax. I will "show and tell".

### Processing run honey

*Ken Basterfield*

There is nothing intrinsically difficult about producing high-quality run honey in jars - honey that should bring you repeat customers - and yet one still sees an abundance of poorly presented honey in shops. All that needs to be understood and controlled are the straightforward processes of liquefying, straining, settling, and conditioning.

Ken Basterfield has been bottling and selling his honey since the 1970's and draws upon this experience to give a clear and logical description of each part of the process of producing high-quality run honey for sale.

### Processing set honey

*Ken Basterfield*

Many beekeepers are confused by the terms 'soft set honey' and 'seeded honey', thinking they are the same or misunderstanding what the two processes entail. Soft set honey is a variant of hard set honey that has had its crystalline structure broken up to form a spreadable paste; seeded honey is usually a coarse-setting honey that has had its texture changed by adding an amount of fine-setting honey.

Ken Basterfield has been bottling and selling his honey since the 1970's and draws upon this experience to give a clear and logical description of each part of the processes of producing high-quality set and soft set honey for sale.

## Beekeeping study

### The joys of learning beekeeping

*Dan Basterfield*

Experienced beekeepers will know that your confidence in the craft follows a cyclical pattern: first the uncertainty, then growing confidence, then something unexpected happens, uncertainty again, and so on. There is no single right answer or approach, and learning your beekeeping takes place in many ways and many situations. Ultimately by learning we build confidence with which to enjoy our craft. It can also lead into many other avenues of interest, such as plants and pollination, the use of a microscope, or the natural history of other insects. With a great influx of new beekeepers in recent years, there now needs to be more consideration of learning beyond the introductory level.

### Beekeeping study groups

*Dan Basterfield*

Studying towards the various beekeeping examinations is greatly enlivened by working with others in a study group. Once established, these study groups can meet year after year, working towards a different Module or Assessment each time.

This webinar is aimed at those who wish to set up self-help study groups for those preparing for the BBKA Module Examinations and Husbandry Assessments (or Welsh and Scottish equivalents). We will explore how to establish and run effective study groups, and will consider resources that are available, various study approaches, the level of knowledge that is required, and how/where to get assistance and advice. We will also look at how to attract and include attendees who wish to learn within a group but who may not wish to attempt the assessments yet. Importantly, the study group leader does not need to be a subject matter expert.

### Module exam techniques

*Dan Basterfield*

Dan Basterfield progressed through the complete BBKA Module system, earning a Distinction at each examination, and achieved both the BBKA Master Beekeeper and National Diploma in Beekeeping qualifications in the same year. As a teacher and lecturer, one of his popular discussion themes is how to approach the examinations undaunted.

Here Dan outlines useful resources and approaches when studying towards these examinations, and then works through the exam format discussing in detail how to approach each aspect in a calm, structured, and confident manner in order to give best account of your studies.

Covers both the traditional paper-based exams and the new online exam system.