

*These notes were extracted from the book 'Sixty years with the bees' by Donald Sims.*

A system of management in which young queens are reared and mated from nuclei under the same roof as the colony was developed by the late R.W. Wilson, who gave a very full outline of the method in the May 1948 issue of 'Beekeeping' (the journal of the Devon BKA). I used it in that year on two colonies that I had near Lewes, in Sussex, and found it simple and effective, and very suitable for use on colonies in an out apiary, as these were. I have since used Wilson's method, with or without slight modifications, many times, on colonies in Kent and Sussex, in Devon and in Northumberland.

Wilson lived and had his bees at Barrasford, north of Hexham, in Northumberland, and I later met many beekeepers who knew him and one who worked with him.

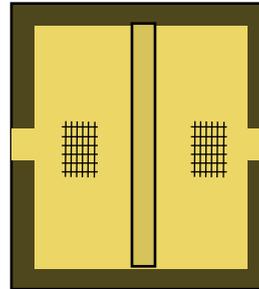
Wilson's method was one of three selected for investigation by the BBKA Research Committee and reported upon by Wedmore in 1952. He then said: "Briefly, the method provides for queen raising, and for increase if desired, as well as a method of swarm control. There is no need to find the queen, at least until she is to be superseded. Drones are not confined at any stage, and the management of nuclei is simplified."

Together with A.W. Worth's 'Worthwhile Method', Wedmore liked and recommended Wilson's method. I now have a long experience of it, and so do I.

The nuclei should be made as early as possible, about the time that the first drones are flying and before preparations for swarming might be expected. The date will obviously vary with the district and with the season.

A cover board is required in which entrances have been cut in the upper rim on the two sides (not the front and back) about an inch and a half wide, or pieces cut out and replaced with a nail through the middle to swivel. A division board will also be required which will make a bee-tight fit with this cover board when placed in a brood box above it, to divide the box into two equal parts, each with an entrance. The cover board may provide a solid floor or may

preferably have two pieces cut out and covered both sides with wire gauze, one each side of the division. A suitable board can easily be made from a clearer board.



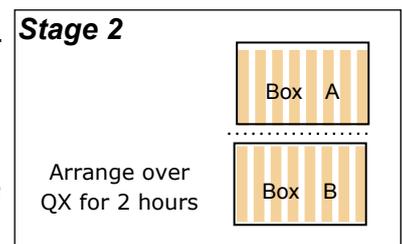
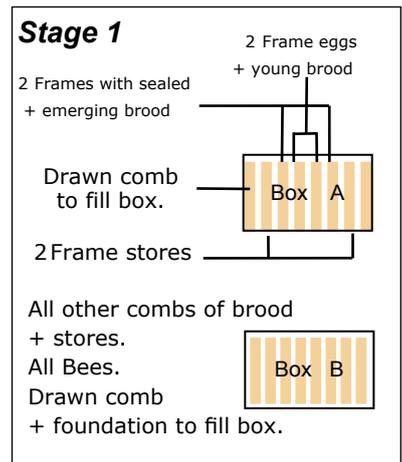
### The Split Board

A batten across the split board helps to divide the box

On a suitable day transfer to an empty brood box two good food combs, and between them two combs of young unsealed brood and eggs and two combs of sealed and emerging brood, the combs with eggs and young brood being in the middle. Brush or shake the bees off these combs when transferring them, thus making sure that the queen is not taken into the new box. Close up the combs remaining in the colony and put spare drawn combs or frames with foundation on the flanks to fill the box. Put an excluder on top, and then the new box with the brood and food combs above that and replace the cover and roof. Leave for about two hours.

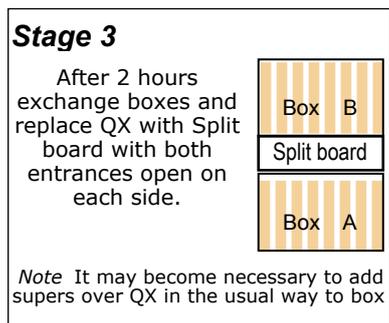
All that is the required is to reverse the positions of the colony and the new box. To do this, lift off and set aside the top box.

The combs will now be well covered with bees. Remove and set aside the colony, leaving its floor board or providing another in the same place. Set the new box on the floor board. On top place the screen board in which entrances have been cut in the upper rim, and see that the entrances are open.



On this screen board put the original colony (without it's floor board, of course).

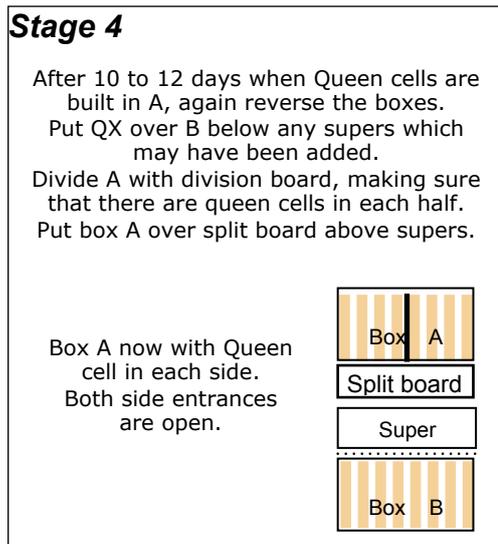
It matters not whether the colony was originally in a single box or in two. If it was in two,



put the two boxes above the screen board in their original order, i.e. bottom box still at the bottom, and treat the two boxes throughout as one brood chamber.

The flying bees will now enter the bottom box, which is queen less, but has eggs, young and older brood and nurse bees. Queen cells will soon be started. The top box (or boxes) will contain most of the brood, plenty of nurse bees, and the queen. Within a day or two bees will be using both side entrances.

Ten or twelve days later reverse the boxes once more, the brood chamber with the queen on the floor board, and the box with the queen cells above the screen board.



the queen cells above the screen board. First check for the presence of the queen by inspecting to find young brood. Then set the brood chamber to one side, without the screenboard. Check to see

whether the queen is on the screen board, or preferably shake the bees off the screen board into the moved brood chamber. Set the bottom box, now with queen cells to one side, without the floor board. Set the brood chamber with the queen, on the floor board, add an excluder and a super, then the screen board, with entrances open, and finally what was the bottom box, with queen cells.

Now divide the top box into two by inserting the division board, first ensuring that there are queen cells in both halves. There is no need to select or destroy cells.

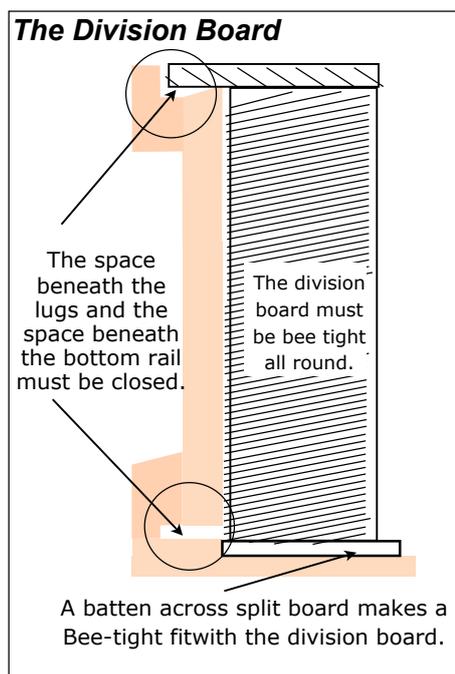
There will now be two nuclei each with a queen cell or cells and an entrance which bees have become accustomed to use. In due course the young queens will emerge and mate and here will be three colonies under one roof.

The nuclei can be used for increase, e.g. to build up for the heather. One of the nuclei can remain and allowed the full use of the box, and later be united to the original colony. If one queen fails to mate it is easy to unite the two nuclei - merely replace the division board with a dummy board i.e. a board of the same size as a brood frame, and later take the dummy board to one side.

*(Note - It will be easier to inspect the nuclei if two half width crown boards are used - Mike Hill.)*

If increase is not required, or no more than one new queen to be raised and mated, there is no need to divide the top box. The screen board can then be simpler and only one entrance (which can then be at the front or back, or at one or the other side) is needed into the top box.

If it is desired to raise all the queens from a selected breeder queen the simplest way is to put a comb or two with eggs and young larvae taken from the breeder queen in place of the two combs of young brood when the first operation is carried out. Spare cells raised on these combs can be exchanged later for cells raised in another nuclei. Wilson destroyed the first cells raised and then gave queen rearing material from his breeder queen.



Mike Hill - April 2014