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Record Keeping

Bristol Beekeepers

Records? Not to be confused with vinyl records that are making something of a resurgence¹, beekeeping records provide a means of noting the salient points from an inspection such that a quantifiable change in the colony can be made between inspections. Legally, the only requirement to keep any form of records relates to medicines administered to the colony. This is beyond the scope here, but will be covered in the autumn: for information, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) provides a suitable, compliant form for noting all medicines².

Why Bother? In making an informed judgement on how the colony is changing, it is essential to compare, relatively, how it was previously to how it is now. If you have a mind like Mr Memory³ then there is probably no need to make a record. For the rest of us, some form of hard (or soft) note on the salient characteristics of the colony is essential. Indeed, if you contemplate undertaking some of the practical assessments, then it is essential that you keep records as these will be inspected.

What Should be Recorded? This is where the adage “ask 2 beekeepers and get 3 answers” comes into play. You may, of course, record whatever you wish; for instance if you are involved in bee improvement then you will be assessing various characteristics of the colony. For the sake of this handout, we’ll focus on the key essentials: those factors covered in Colony Inspections:

- is there a laying queen (Brood All Stages, size of the colony and laying space)
- has she been seen (remember, it is only necessary to see eggs)
- is there enough stores to tide them over until the next inspection (at least 2 to 3 BS frames)
- are there any signs of disease
- is the colony preparing to swarm (is there enough space)

One of the key things to remember is only record what **YOU** need. There is no point in devising a massive spreadsheet, or to annotate war and peace in the comments section, if you make no use of it. Provided the key essentials are captured, less is truly more.

¹ https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/vinyl-demand-lps-record-store-day-a7952911.html

² <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadDocument.cfm?id=1081>

³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_39_Steps_\(1935_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_39_Steps_(1935_film))

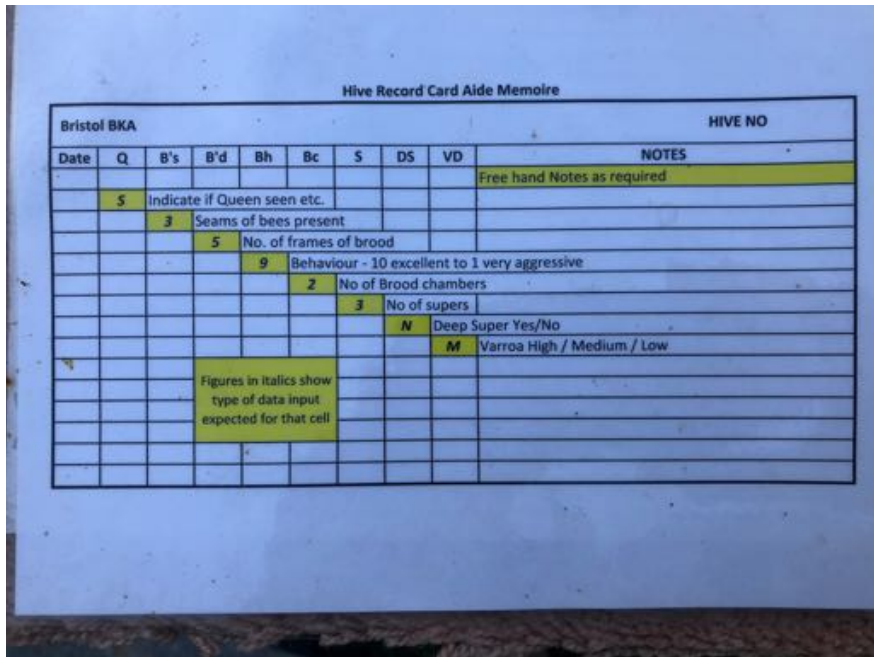


Fig 1: Bristol BKA's Record Cards

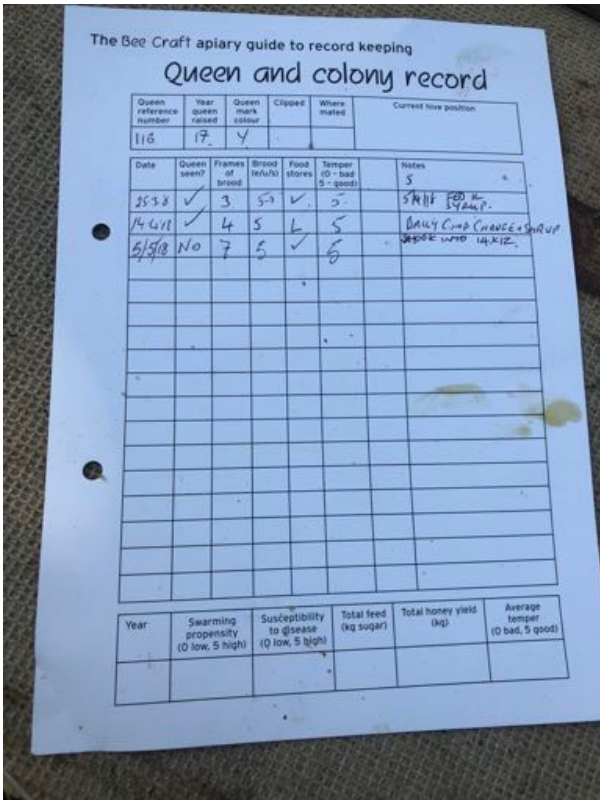


Fig 2: Bee Craft's Record Cards

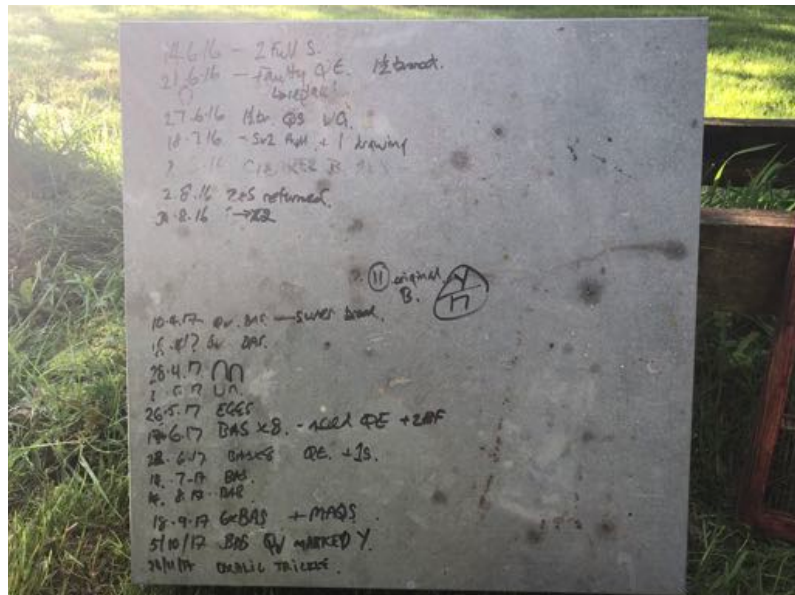


Fig 3: Record Annotated on Hive Roof

How Should it be Recorded? Again, this is entirely up to you. There are many different ways that people do this. Some use commercially available record cards (e.g. Bee Craft's). Others, like the association, produce their own, whilst some people use a dedicated notebook or even devise their own hieroglyphics which they write on the hive roof. Naturally, with the growth of IT there are Apps now which allow you to complete the record on your mobile device. If you wish, you can also put your inspection records into BeeBase. The important point is that you should choose a format that suits you and stick with it. Figs 1-3 show examples of each of these methods.