



# South Tipperary Beekeepers Association



## Newsletter September 2017

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### EDITORIAL

Autumn is surely on the way and it's a stark reminder to all when you see the first of the red and orange berries appearing. First place usually goes to the Mountain Ash. We notice them appearing around early July. At that stage the beekeeper needs to be thinking about having queen-right colonies, feeding, treating and those other important jobs. I'm sure all are busy now thinking about our honey show. Refer to back issues for some great tips on how to improve you exhibits. If you haven't a hard copy go on line. This edition has our usual contributors but we also have a few new contributors and this is what we need to keep the interest alive. Our Chairman also took time out to contribute. I would like to thank them all. A special word of thanks to our backroom team Caitlin on the typing, Mark on the formatting and Dennis the master with the red pen correcting all those little errors making sure there is a dot on every i and a cross on every t.

This year's yield looks like a good average year. I suppose we all dream of the bumper year but let's face it there are so many factors that must all come together to give that big crop. If one of them is missing then you quickly slip into the category of Average. As Irish beekeepers living in a country well known for its green country side and abundant rain fall we should be happy for such a crop hopefully every year. As we said before and we'll say it again "with the proper skill level and a good Irish bee you will never fail to get that average crop"

### APIARY UPDATE *Tom Prendergast*

Another year and at this stage most of the work is completed in the apiary. In the early part of the season we had great over wintering success with zero losses. Of course we had a few weak colonies. They served a purpose for our beginners demonstrating how to identify non-performers and what to do with them. We sold 16 nucs so all who really wanted a nuc got one. Hopefully all are going well with some reports of a small return for all the hard work. Most of the demos concentrated on beginners handling the hives, swarm prevention and control and supering. More advanced subjects were also covered. Bailey frame change, Vince Cooke nuc production and queen rearing. Several beginners came every Tuesday night after the demos were finished for experience. This will certainly help them next year. Right now the supers are removed, feeding, queen right, disease check and Varroa treatment are the priority jobs. Once again thanks to all our lecturers who turned up week after week to help. Our apiary is now a big concern, too big for one man or woman so again many thanks to our apiary committee who help out when the pressure is on. As always we are already thinking about next year but we will wait until then to let you know our plans.

### A WORD FROM THE CHAIR *Tom Roche*

Hello everybody, I was delighted when our Editor Tom invited me to say a few words and to welcome you all to another edition of our Newsletter.

It's mid-July and we're having spectacular weather. The bees are buzzing and working very hard, as well as catching many people out with swarm behaviour not according to the text books. However, all indications are we are in for a great honey harvest.

In STBA, we've had a very active season this year, so far. We had excellent interest and attendance for our beginner's class. I'm delighted to see so many from the class continue through to the outdoor demonstrations. As always, our lecturers and demonstrators provide top class practical and fascinating education to all, experienced and beginners. I have never left a demonstration evening without having learned something new.

We got our Facebook group up and running in February. We have 55 members already and it is gaining more interest and contribution by the day. Huge credit to Erika Reeves for a great job.

The STBA tent at the recent Clonmel Show in Powerstown was a resounding success. We were packed with visitors all day and our team provided a wonderful show. The Observation hive was a huge hit, of course, especially with the children. Great interest was shown in the honey tasting, where OSR, Ivy, Heather and Spring honey were the choices for sampling.

We're now looking forward to our annual Honey Show. One of the best in the country and it's only 2 months away now. Eamonn and Mary are working hard and it promises to be a terrific event again this year. I hope to see as many of you as possible there.

Good luck to everybody in your Honey harvest and your Beekeeping.

### TEXAS MEETS TIPP *Irene Power*

You will always find similarities and differences when we hear from beekeepers from different parts of the world. It is something that I always find interesting as you can pick up some useful tips and information and an appreciation of the different challenges across the pond. On a work assignment to Texas earlier in the year I took some time out to visit a local Central Texas beekeepers association. We think we have it tough in this country when it comes to weather & bees, but they also have their challenges, be they different ones! Texas weather varies greatly, anything from dry/parched/barren in the west to moist/damp/sticky in the east. The huge spread of Texas includes several regions with noticeably different climates. Generally speaking, the part of Texas that lies to the east of Interstate 35 is subtropical, while the area that lies to the west of Interstate 35 is dry desert. Texas ranks first in tornado occurrence with an average of 139 per year. They suffer from significant floods and also tropical cyclones.

In comparison to ourselves, the year begins in January, weather permitting, greater than 18°C, first inspections start & the pollen is starting to flow in. In the East this could come from the Elm tree, mistletoe produces abundant nectar but the hive populations are too small to make the most of it. In Central Texas, the pollen source can be wild mustard but mainly dandelion and henbit. It is also the time when packaged bees and queens can be ordered for delivery after April 1<sup>st</sup>. This is a big business for some Texan beekeepers, as they discover that there is more money in bees than in honey in parts of the state, so they buy large colonies, carry out splits and sell on nucs. The inspections continue on into February, and the first nectar starts to flow, in the East from early fruit trees, dewberry & pear tree and dandelion in Central Texas. At this time they are also feeding and the work involved is comparable to what we call the spring build up. Into March the days are getting warmer, foraging ramping up and also the start of the swarming period. In the East, early plum trees, hawthorn, pear, black lotus, red bud, wild cherry, wild onion, laurel, blueberries, red maple, hairy vetch, chickweed and dollar weed can begin to yield and also late March the clover will bloom. Indian blanket is the big honey flow in central Texas – light & tasty, Mesquite tree is the biggest honey source in the state. March is an important month for the brood rearing as these are the bees that will become the foragers for the main crop. Swarm control will be important now at this time also. Their philosophy on this is to down size the colonies, giving them more room, take splits & nucs. Because of the volumes of colonies they keep, they do not do as many swarm inspections as we do and a lot of the time they collect swarms for hiving and selling.

April is our July.... It is the month when the major honey flow comes in. Major nectar producers in April include red clover, vetch, hedges, wildflowers, Yucca clover and some trees such as prickly ash, Indian blanket and horsemint. It is also the time when the package bees are arriving, so busy nuc production and swarm control month for the Texan beekeepers. This can continue on into May, swarms still about and also a good time for getting foundation drawn. By June the flow has ended & the honey harvest has begun & often the holiday around the 4<sup>th</sup> July is spent extracting honey! Our friends from Texas told us that they would be lucky to get on average 2 supers per hive in Central area – this would be a poor/fair year for us so just goes to show, we do better than we think on honey production in this country despite our climate. They can have a lot of rain early in the season, washing away the nectar and then too much heat for flowers to yield later in the season.

August is a hot dry month in Texas and very little for bees to forage on. They gather large amounts of water and often can be bad tempered during this time of dearth. It is however, a good time to melt wax in solar extractors! As they move into Sept to Dec – it is very much the same as our autumn winter management, including varroa treatments/feeding etc. Varroa is very much alive and well in Texas and they also have a lot of issues with the small hive beetle. If you heard Tom speak about his method of introducing queens with the j-cloth – well it will be no surprise that Tom is the small hive beetle, it is cut in strips and hung on the frames in the hive, the bees will chew and tear up the j-cloth, and it becomes frayed and fluffy. SHB has a claw on the back of their legs and they get stuck in the cloth and die there. I have read about similar practice in Australia where the cloth is placed in the center above or below the queen excluder & in another case on the floorboard. By all accounts seems to be effective, hope we won't have to deal with this problem, however, anytime soon!

I had the pleasure of speaking to the Austin beekeepers about beekeeping in Ireland and as a result we had Tanya Phillips & Chuck Reburn from Austin, Texas return the favour and visit our outdoor demonstration in Powerstown on 18<sup>th</sup> July. If you were able to attend I hope you found it interesting, as I did, to listen to their beekeeping practices. They were very impressed with the demonstrations on the night and our association apiary and work & commitment of the association to the education of all our beekeepers. Thanks to Tom/Denis & team for putting on a great show to be proud of, as usual.... We are very lucky in South Tipperary to have such a great facility and dedicated team of instructors & committee members.

### LIMERICK BKA:

Congratulations to Limerick BKA for achieving another milestone in the development of their club. They have now set up their own apiary which is a credit to all involved. Several members of STBA were invited down to the official opening which was performed by our FIBKA President Mr Gerry Ryan. STBA have a long association with the Shannon buzzers with Irene Power developing their education programme over many years which she has now handed over to their own members. Jim Power and Redmond Williams help out with the judging at their own honey show and they also have their own confined class at the Clonmel show. For many years their members attended our demos every week. Now they can stay at home but are always welcome. We wish them all the very best of luck.

### BROOD IN THE SUPERS *Tom Prendergast*

As we remove our supers you can occasionally come across a hive in which the bees struggle to leave the supers. On further investigation you usually find that there is brood in the super. You will often find the occasional raised cap on a single worker cell. This is evidence that some worker bees do lay the occasional egg. As we all know these develop into drones. When you find a large quantity of brood in your supers then you need to deal with a different situation. Such occurrences need corrective action:-

1. Brood box and supers are full of worker brood. It's obvious here that the queen has access to both. Presuming you did use a queen excluder then it must be faulty. In this situation you need to find the queen and place her in the brood box. Replace the excluder. If you cannot find the queen then you need to remove the queen excluder and either smoke or brush all the bees from the supers into the brood chamber. Again replace the excluder and check the brood box in 4 days for eggs as proof that the queen is below.
2. Brood on both sides of the excluder could be an indication that you have two queens in the hive. I have seen this on one occasion. What happened was the beekeeper had a queen in the brood box but harvested some queen cell and left one on the crown board accidentally. This hatched, the virgin got out through a hole in the super (knot missing) fertilised and started to lay.
3. If you only have brood in the supers and nothing in the brood box then the queen is above the queen excluder. She needs to be found and put below. Why she is above needs to be established. Did you mistakenly transfer her while examining the hive? You can calculate how long she was in the super by the age of the brood.
4. Another situation is normal brood in the brood box and lots of drone brood in the super. Here you have a virgin trapped about the excluder and unable to be fertilized. She ends up a drone layer. She needs to be found and removed.
5. If you have no brood in both the brood box and supers and unsure about the status of the hive add in a test frame.

### Test Combs

A comb from another colony which contains eggs and very young brood can be placed in your queen less hive to determine if it has a queen. Make sure it is not all eggs as the bees will sometimes refuse such a frame and can eat the eggs. Leave the frame in the colony for 3-4 days and check for development. If they are drawing down queen cells they are queen less. No queen cell means the colony has a queen, often a virgin or newly mated queen who hasn't started to lay yet. Wait another week to check for eggs

### Storage of Combs

When finished extracting, the supers have to be stored throughout the winter in a manner that prevents damage from insect or animal. A lot of beekeepers store their comb wet and this does prevent wax moth damage. However wet combs can be messy. A sheet of plastic is usually required on the floor with newspapers on top to prevent a mess. Other beekeepers place the wet supers back on the hives in order to allow the bees time to remove all honey. Dry supers can be stored outdoor with a screen top and bottom.

### Honey Flavour

Apart from a very few close friends of beekeepers it is the beekeeper himself/herself that gets to taste those flavours that makes Irish honey so unique. Usually eaten warm at the hive as they remove a piece of burr comb.

The basic flavour of honey is sweetness. The flavour is enriched by the essential oils of the plants. Different plants with their own scent and colour give honey its own unique flavour. The lighter honey has the least flavour increasing as the honey darkens. The Hawthorn yield a much sought after nutty flavoured honey, Clover has a mild flavour and the Heather has a very strong flavour but it's not to everyone's liking.

All this good work done by the bees resulting in a top class product can be ruined by overheating and poor storage equipment. As honey crystallises it loses its flavour. Indeed the minute the beekeeper starts to remove the cap it loses some of that unique flavour and aroma at each step of the process - removal of supers, storage, extracting, heating and bottling. It's a shame we cannot share that unique flavour straight from the hive with all our customers. It might give all a greater appreciation of what the bees are capable of doing.

### BEE BIZ *Irene Power and Leneyan FKA*

Another year nears its end and after the beautiful weather we are looking forward to a bumper harvest of liquid gold to come pouring from our hives. Our new Chairman Tom Roche a new comer to beekeeping has had a busy few months watching over his brood

We had 21 beginners this year who attended our sessions over the 2 days in the Park Hotel and continued to go to the outdoor demonstrations in our Apiary in Powerstown. Big numbers attended again this year with a lot coming from Waterford, this is great to see as Tom Prendergast with his team have the Apiary looking super with lots of bee loving flowers and shrubs growing.

Tom Roche sent a display stand to the Bank of Ireland Enterprise Expo in the Loretto Convent in May which was attended by Tom Roche, Tony O' Gorman and Erika Reeves, A very successful days work with big numbers attending The Fethard Wall Festival was next with a stand attended by Mick Fleming and David O' Meara, David had his spring honey for sale on the day. The Clonmel Horse Show on the 2nd of July with one of their best attendance ever of over 15,000 people, Tom got a good posse together for the day to include Tom Roche, Martin Nolan, Eamon Hayes, Tom Hayden, Ann Horan, Ann Ryan and Tony O'Gorman.

With the controversial Heritage Bill going through the Dail in May a number of STBA members attended a meeting in the Teagasc office in Piltown to draw attention to the effect it would have on our native honey bees.

From this President Gerry Ryan and PRO Paul O'Brien got involved and Teagasc produced a pamphlet to inform farmers how they can help beekeeping. The next step is to get beekeeping on to their curriculum for young farmers at Agriculture College Members Eddie Lonergan, John Corbett, Tom Hayden, Malcom Tanner and Paul Lonergan attended a demonstration outside the Dail to highlight this bill to the members.

Last week the Apiary had visitors from Texas Tanya Phillips and Chuck Reburn who gave us a talk on beekeeping in Texas. Lovely to see Tom Hayden Editor of the Four Seasons we wish him the very best

Remember our Honey Show on Sept. 16th and 17th. This is the celebration of our honey harvest and a weekend we should all look forward to and get involved in. Eamonn and Mary Hayes are working hard to get all systems working smoothly so please put in an exhibit if not honey why not a wax entry or just bake a cake.

### AUTUMN SUPERSEDURE *Tom Prendergast*

Beekeepers are often surprised at their first spring inspection to find that the queen that was there at the end of the year is gone and replaced with an unclipped unmarked queen. Supersedure or the replacing of the old with the new is quiet common in the bee world especially when it comes to the queen

This is the time of year that you can see a supersedure cell in the hive. Usually when beginners see such a cell the first thought is to break it down. There is little fear of bees swarming at this time of year and it is a tell-tale sign that the bees are not entirely happy with the queen. The bees know best so it is important that you do not upset their plans. Usually there will be one or two cells located in the hive both are usually at the same stage of development. The old queen is generally still in the hive and may be laying as if nothing is going to happen.

There are two types of supersedure the first is the perfect supersedure where the old queen continues to lay until the young queen is mated and indeed laying. The queen mother eventually fades away and the young assumes supreme egg layer. This is not uncommon and probably goes unnoticed by most beekeepers

The second type is the imperfect supersedure. This can be a bit more hazardous for the colony as the old queen is gone before the new is ready to lay. If anything goes wrong with their plan such as the virgin fails to hatch, mates badly or not at all or where the beginner finds the cell and knocks them down thinking they are swarm cell. Well the colony is doomed and it's a common problem on first spring inspection a drone laying queen or laying workers. It's another reason why it's important to make sure all colonies have laying queens and the idea of overwintering queens should be an Irish priority

### BEE PLANT: BLACKBERRY SMEAR *DHUBH*.

The blackberry commonly known as the Bramble is probably one of our best known plant. There are over 200 species of this plant giving a wide flowering season. As a beekeeper we really value this plant as it is probably our best known and most reliable nectar producing plant. With reasonable average temperatures and in between the showers our bees never fail to collect a surplus for us. For the non-beekeeper the plant is best known for its Black Berries hence the name. The fruit are ready for picking from late July right up to the end of September. Several of us will associate and have fond childhood memories of picking the berries on the ditches long before the iPhone and all that sort of stuff. The soft fruit is popular for desserts, jams, jelly and wine not forgetting to mention a variation of Mead. You can find several recipes if you want to use this natural free resource. Avoid picking on the road side as the berries can have high lead content from all the traffic fumes. Two simple recipe are given below

#### Blackberry Fool

- 225g Blackberry
- 2tsp Vanilla essence
- Carton of Cream whipped
- Sugar to taste

Place fruit in saucepan cover with water, bring to boil cook until soft, add the sugar and then add the vanilla essence. Stir until all is dissolved then pass through sieve. Cool slightly, fold in cream. Chill in fridge and enjoy this refreshing drink

#### Blackberry Vinaigrette

- 180 g Blackberries
- 60ml Balsamic Vinegar
- 1tsp Dijon Mustard
- ¼ tsp Minced Garlic
- 1Tsp Irish Honey
- 210ml Olive Oil
- Salt and Black Pepper

Add all the ingredients except olive oil to food processor. Blend until smooth. Slowly add the olive oil while blending until smooth again. If you want to remove the seeds then strain through a sieve. If further seasoning is needed add more S&P, if you want it sweeter add more honey. Store in fridge and drizzle over those freshly picked salad leaves.

For further recipes on country food from the hedge rows refer to a very nice leaflet from IRD Duhallov "Food from Duhallov hedgerows"

### WAX MOTH *Tom Prendergast*

Wax moth can cause devastating damage to the comb especially stored brood combs. There are two species:

- The greater wax moth – Galleria mellonella
- The lesser wax moth Achroia grisella

The greater wax moth has a wing span of 25-30 mm and is 13 – 19 mm long and is brownish with varying amounts of ashy – white markings. When disturbed it usually runs for cover rather than fly away.

The life cycle of the wax moth consists of four stages Egg, larva, pupa and adult

1. Eggs are usually laid in timberracks in batches of up to 300.
2. Egg hatches after five to eight days – larva stage. The larvae burrow into the beeswax combs and feed for one to five months, depending on the temperature in the process of eating the combs the larvae leave a webbing type tunnel structure which is the classic sign of wax moth presence.
3. Fully – grown larvae have a dark hard head capsule, three pairs of legs and a segmented body. Colour is white, at the start turning dark grey with age, up to 20mm long. Wax moth larvae live on impurities in the comb and so prefer to live on brood comb.
4. Fully grown larvae form cocoons usually in a cavity that they chew out in the frames causing permanent damage. Adult live for 3 weeks starting to reproduce after 4-5 days.

### Ways to Reduce wax moth in the hive

Ensure strong colonies are maintained. Colonies that tolerate wax moth should be requeened with a different strain. Keep the hive clean and free from debris, cracks and crevices should be avoided in hive parts.

Ways to prevent invasion in stored combs.

- Store all combs wet.
- Store in a cool bright place.
- Place a sheet of newspaper between each box
- Avoid storing combs that were used for brood rearing. Best option is to cut out wash frames using washing soda and rewire for next year.
- All equipment should be well made.
- Keep area around the honey house storage area clean and avoid leaving old combs around as they attract moths and are ideal breeding sites for them.
- Encourage a few spiders to take resident in the locality as they are natural predators
- Biological control can be achieved by spraying the combs with storage with "Certan". This kills the larvae the spores of Certan which then germinates in the gut releasing toxins which destroy the gut lining and kills the ingested.

### NOTICE BOARD

**Wedding Bells:** Congratulations to Linda Williams who has got a new drone in her life. Luckily the old drone survived the ordeal and we hope to see him back at our demos next year

#### Honey Show September

Who can win that 24 jar class.

Will we have new Mead Exhibitors?

Try that cake or some sweets

We hope to see sections galore.

#### Winter chores

Clean honey house wash and tidy away all equipment, melt down wax,

attend winter lectures monitor for varroa monthly. Take a break.