



South Tipperary Beekeepers Association



Newsletter April 2015

◊ Editorial	◊ Maintaining Healthy Colonies
◊ STBA Update	◊ Starting Beekeeping—Ups/Downs
◊ Apiary Hygiene	◊ STBA Apiary updates
◊ Study Group	◊ Shook Swarm
◊ Good Advice for our beginners	◊ A Little Bit of Science (continued)
	◊ STBA Apiary—Rules & Regulations

EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL: Christmas came and went without any great excitement but for me the lengthening of the mid-January evenings is always a welcome and exciting start to another year of adventure in the apiary. Hefting and fondant feeding is always needed for a few colonies in the early year. Colonies that have issues such as shortage of bees, food or queenlessness will start to perish from January onwards. At this stage these empty boxes should be removed, cleaned up and possibly a change of combs. April is a great month, the spring flowers really start to appear in fields and ditches. Hives will commence to build up quickly—so be ready. Watch our yearly programme for upcoming events. I hope you find your bees in good condition. This edition of our newsletter is full of interesting articles. I hope you enjoy and find it of benefit. A big thanks to all who have contributed or helped with the formatting and printing. Great to have people like ye. I hope this year will be as good as last year.

STBA UPDATE

September is the month that the bee year starts and what a start we had with our annual honey show which was the biggest ever. Well done to Irene and her committee. Our AGM went off well with a good attendance. We had one change at the top table. Our secretary PJ Fegan stepped down after his three year reign. Well done and thank you PJ for your contribution. Walter Jones stepped into his boots. Walter is a relatively new member but is very active on the committee and always willing to help. Last year he was a member of the apiary committee. We wish Walter well in his new position. The other big news is that Irene is no longer our honey show secretary. She has decided to let someone else put their mark on what is now the biggest show in town. Mary and Eamonn Hayes are the new kids on the block. I have no doubt that they are already planning and we look forward to September. Lectures are in full swing every month up until April. Please make every effort to support and don't forget our outdoor demos. Our committee is constantly planning on how we can improve. It you have any ideas or suggestions please let us know.

APIARY HYGIENE CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS Irene Power

Any activity that helps your bees to maintain a healthy environment should not be neglected. Hygiene should start in the apiary. Consideration should be given to the actual layout. Firstly make sure all vegetation is kept neat and tidy. Although it's important to maintain shelter in the apiary over grown apiaries should not be tolerated. Cut back all over hanging branches. A little select pruning can change the total look of the apiary allowing in more light and access for the bees both in and out of the apiary. Pay attention to the ground around the hive. Maintain the vegetation in order to allow free movement of air. Also if you drop a queen it's easier to find her if the grass is short.

Anything that you remove from the hive such as frames, burr comb or scrapings should all be removed from the apiary. Old combs with a small amount of stores should not be left there for the bees to clean out. Always have a bucket with a lid when visiting the apiary. This is especially true at this time of year when a lot of burr comb and general clean-up is needed in all the hives. Keep all hives on stands. It's your choice as to the type of stand. Refusing timber make sure they are stable, infrost repair or replace. Apply a good preservative to maintain a long life, creosote is the best. Consider having the timber legs sitting on a slate or flat stone to keep them out of the damp. The hive may also need attention, any that have an issue such as splits or rotten timber should be marked up for attention and changed. Always check the roof. Inside the hive have a change at least four frames in every hive or consider a Bailey frame change. When supering always add in two frames of foundation.

A well maintained apiary with well-maintained hives and stands tell you a great deal about the beekeeper. It's never too late to start so get going before we really jump into the active season.

STUDY GROUPS Tom Prendergast Education Officer

Our study group started last November and we have over 20 participating mostly at Intermediate Practical and a few at Senior level. We have mostly our own members but also participation from North Tipp and Waterford. We were expecting a few from Limerick but thanks to Irene Power she is doing an excellent job down there with both the Intermediate and Beginners' classes. Hopefully some of our members will sit the exams. Of course the main objective is to improve your beekeeping skill in the apiary but that piece of paper stating that you passed is always very welcome. We are very lucky to be able to run these classes every year. This would not be possible without the help of our tutors. We are very fortunate to have both Dennis and Redmond on the team. Thanks lads I know all our students appreciate the two masters.

MAINTAINING HEALTHY COLONIES Dennis Ryan Bee Health Officer STBA

Good bee husbandry is the means of preventing disease in our colonies. This is achieved by maintaining strong well fed colonies, headed by a young queen with a regular replacement of comb. Disease monitoring especially for varroa is essential. All beekeepers should become familiar with the symptoms of the various adult and brood diseased and send samples regularly for disease diagnosis to Dr. Mary Coffey, Teagasc, Oakpark, Co. Carlow.

Know your enemy Varroa Destructor needs monitoring on a continuous basis. The mite drop taken over a one week period using the open mesh floor and insert is expressed as mites per day. Control treatment is required if this figure exceeds **eight** during the active season and **two** during the winter period. When this disease is left uncontrolled and is accompanied with viruses, especially Deformed Wing Virus (DWV), and other diseases it becomes fatal quite rapidly and colony collapse will occur in late autumn or winter. Using an effective treatment correctly and at the appropriate time will prevent this from happening. Since the mites are resistant to Bayvarol it is no longer effective. At present the alternative autumn treatments to the Bayvarol are showing variable results with high daily mite drop (20-50 mites) in November in some colonies after the treatment with either MAQS or Apiguard. MAQS is not the "Silver bullet" some beekeepers were led to believe it might be. The Apiguard is the more consistent of the two types of treatment with the treatment starting in early Autumn (August) when temperatures are still above 15°C with the second tray left in the hive until empty.

All colonies with a daily mite drop exceeding two have been treated in December or early January with Api-Bioxal using either the trickle or vapouriser method. Recent research at the laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects at the University of Sussex in England has shown this treatment of bloodless colonies to be up to 97% effective.

The monitoring again in February should show a much reduced daily mite drop – less than two mites per day. If this is not the case then those colonies which continue to have a high mite count should be treated in April before the supers go on the hive. The type of treatment could take the form of one tub of Apiguard for two weeks or one strip of MAQS for one week. If over wintered nuclei need treatment, use half of the full treatment on those i.e. 25g of Apiguard gel or in the case of MAQS half of one strip. The temperature in April may not reach 15°C, but it should be high enough to give a much reduced mite population going into the Summer.

For effective varroa control beekeepers will have to be prepared to use different control methods at different times of the year and those methods must be applied correctly. So with good planning and regular monitoring we can look forward to opening healthy colonies in April with few winter losses.

MORE GOOD ADVICE FOR OUR BEGINNERS PRO Paul Lonergan.

When I started Bee keeping Denis Ryan suggested that I take an hour or two on a sunny day in early spring and watch my bee hive on the comings and goings of my bees. The activity of the hive was just fantastic watching over who comes and goes, what's brought in and what's dumped outside. Whilst foraging for nectar the honey bee will collect fresh pollen on its branched hairs located all over its body. Some pollen will be brushed off by the bee and collected in the pollen baskets on its rear legs but some will remain elsewhere on its body. When the bee visits another flower some of the pollen will brush off on the stigma of the flower to complete the pollination process. If a bee is just collecting pollen its movements are quite different from when they are collecting nectar. The bee seems to bounce into the flower to dislodge the pollen so that it sticks anywhere over its body. It is well worth spending time to watch what is happening. On its return, a pollen forager will unload the pollen into a cell near the brood nest and will add a drop of nectar. This helps to preserve the pollen and start to process it into bee bread that is used by the nurse bees to feed the larvae.

If you watch a bee collecting nectar you will see that it carefully approaches the flower and walks inside so that its proboscis can reach the nectaries deep in the flower. It has learnt how to deal with this type of flower and this is one reason why bees tend to keep faithful to a particular flower type whilst there is nectar to collect. When the bee returns to the colony it regurgitates the nectar from its honey stomach and gives it to a house bee which will then start the process of turning it into honey. While watching keep notes on:

- What colour the pollen is and find out what tree or flower it comes from?
- Are the bees in good health?
- Is there a good flow?
- Is it easy for the bees to navigate home?
- Are they drinking a lot of water?
- Is your hive in good condition?

Watching your hive for a period of time in good weather is so rewarding for you.

STARTING BEEKEEPING – THE UPS AND DOWNS Alan Forskit

Over the winter of 2010 in our house the idea was brought up regarding keeping bees. Or more precisely my wife decided that she would like to keep bees and that I might like to look after them, an idea that I jumped at (but did not admit to this). The research was done and a couple of books were bought as the information on the internet is overwhelming for an absolute beginner. Also a local beekeeper was asked for advice as to whether our windy hill top in South Tipperary would be a good place to keep bees and on his confirmation of this we set out as future beekeepers.

The joys of beekeeping, or looking after several thousand little pets as I like to think of it, far outweigh the down side of things, but at times you do wonder!

The best way forward without doubt is to join your local beekeeping group or association and the benefits will soon be found. Take the opportunity to enrol on a beginners course which includes hands on practical experience, and you can decide to start then or delay for a while. We went straight in at the deep end!

The basic equipment is not cheap but will last for years so you will be buying more equipment as time goes on as opposed to replacing it. To set yourself up for the first year you will only need one hive, some tools and a bee suit. [Advice line 1](#) – buy a good suit first time. The cheaper ones do not last and it is cheaper in the long run. You will find that items such as extractors you can hire from your association and you may find someone living close to you who you can 'go halves on' with some less regularly used equipment. Once you have a little experience and knowledge you can acquire your first nuc. Again the help of your local association will help, and in the case of South Tipperary beekeepers association they are able to supply nucs to their beginners at a good price. And away we go!

Now, you have picked up the nuc in your nice new hive, carefully transport it to your apiary and place it on your hive stand. Isn't that what I do? Did he say leave it or feed it, how much sugar to a gallon? Read the book, read the course notes, it isn't in it, they both say different things. What do I do? Don't panic. [Advice line 2](#) – Find someone willing to be your mentor. This is the best thing that you can ever do. Most of the senior members of the association will happily give advice but it is always a good idea to find another local experienced beekeeper to help if needed. Oh, and when you go to feed the nuc and realise that you do not have a ke, any 6" rips of untreated timber will suffice to make an eke, the bees really aren't that fussy once they get the syrup.

Experience, information and advice are all that you need now. And by the start of winter of 2011 I had accidentally learnt how to see if a colony was Queenless, that if I left the test frame in long enough a new queen would emerge and also that there must have been a Queen, cell if in the hive, even though the swarm on the plum tree hanging down to the ground looked bigger than the contents of the hive that it came from.

End of year one no honey to spare but two hives (a very reasonably priced nuc offered and purchased) and a swarm hived and fed for the winter.

The bees are out feeding on the ivy now and it is time for winter reading. I am becoming more confused the more that I read. Every book has different methods for this and that and the other and confusion rules again, however, listen to your mentor.

You don't have to do anything in any particular way. Find a method that works and stick to it. Practice swarm control, disease management (simpler than you think) change frames periodically and a few other things and - ([advice line 3](#)) usually the simple way is the best.

Why practice swarm control on 9 day inspections when you work the same 5 days a week? Go for 7 day inspections on Saturdays, and if the weather is poor you have until the Monday before things get critical. As for the Bailey's frame change? This is too complicated for me. Change 2 or 3 frames each year or put a fresh brood box on the top of an old one for the Queen to move up into. Apparently you can expand this way but I have yet to try this.

Winter lectures and meetings are a great way to glean information however I did not have to attend to try this. I was so confused with information overload that I couldn't work out what questions to ask, but soon spring came and away we went again. Poor weather for the year and a few problems with the queens saw little honey produced but we had a few Christmas presents for the friends and neighbours and three hives going into winter.

Now this is only my humble opinion and not that of the producers of the product, the varroa treatment used in 2012 had all of the bees clinging to the outside of the hives and the Queens slowed or stopped laying. The colonies were well fed though and went into what was to be one of the coldest winters for years a little weak from the experience of the treatment. They came out the other side in good form but could have been stronger when they were quickly inspected and fed on a lovely warm day and then disaster struck.

The weather was pleasantly mild during March and into April, the bees were flying well and bringing in the nectar and pollen, suddenly the sun began to shine but the temperature plummeted dramatically during one day. I had to go away for a few days and on my return there were no bees at the entrances to any of the hives. It had warmed up by then so I cautiously opened the hives, I didn't even bother to suit up, I knew what I was going to find. All three hives had a few dead adult bees in them, the grubs were dead, frozen, and the worst thing was that there were some bees that died emerging from the cells. I can only assume that the flying bees were caught out by the sudden drop in temperature. What a lovely start to the 2013 season! I was upset to say the least but worse things happen at sea so they say, and with much encouragement and assistance from every one we started again and to our joy we actually produced honey in 2014.

Our deepest thanks go to everyone who has helped us to get this far. We needed it!

STBA APIARY UPDATES Tom Prendergast

Last year our committee sanctioned a three year plan to upgrade our apiary. The goal of STBA is to provide adequate bees in an area big enough for all participants to view what is going on and therefore leave the apiary with some new found knowledge. With this as our objective we decided to further extend the apiary so that we can space out our hives allowing a more organised workshop. All our demonstrations are well attended often with numbers in excess of forty. We have several welcomees coming from our neighbourly associations including North Tipp, Kilkenny, Waterford and Limerick all are very welcome. Last year we extended the apiary to the back of the shed. This certainly allowed us a little more room but not enough for the crowds that are attending and the number of lecturers we have there every week. The plan this year is to extend the apiary out into the field removing the fence and extending it by approximately 6m. This will give us the room we need. All hives will be placed on single stands allowing a better view as to what the lecturer is doing. We hope to do some bee friendly planting also. New feeders are on the list not to mention frames and foundation. Another shed for storage is on the way. All this is not possible without hard work and commitment and we are very lucky in STBA that both are available in abundance. I would like to thank our hard working apiary committee for all helping to upgrade our apiary. I'm looking forward to seeing big crowds again this year. We will have a more structured agenda for the whole season. If you have any ideas as to what we should be doing let me know. Hopefully swarm control, assessing hives, nuc production, queen rearing supering and section honey production will be some of the topics covered. We also will be covering the Bailey frame change and for the first time ever we are going to try the shook swarm. We will set out the agenda on the first night so that everyone will know what is happening before they arrive. Instead of giving a talk we will get straight into the hives and then as the night settles in we can have a chat. Hope to see ye all there. Oh yes it was also decided that we need to have some rules as to how we run the apiary. These are necessary for the safety and enjoyment of all who attend not to mention the safety of our bees. Have a look at them.

SHOOK SWARM Tom Prendergast

A shook swarm is not a procedure often considered by Irish Beekeepers. It can however reduce the incidence of disease within a colony and increase vigour at a time of year when the colony is building up the main honey flow. Anyone considering producing honey for show either comb or run should also consider this procedure. The aim of the procedure is to move the whole colony of bees into a new hive of foundation and destroy the old combs including the brood. Diseases such as Nosema, Chalkbrood are always present in a hive in the form of spores. Removing the spore count definitely helps a colony to reduce the incidence of disease outbreaks. 80% of the varroa in the hive are in the brood cells. So if you remove all the brood frames you are destroying a very large population of varroa. The initial idea of the shook swarm was to control an outbreak of EFB. This needs to be studied closely before deciding to complete a shook swarm rather than opting for the total destruction route. If the outbreak is high as in several cells on several frames the destruction of the whole colony would be the preferred method.

Only strong colonies should be subjected to the total loss of brood as they will need to build up again in time for the main flow. Mid April is an ideal time as colonies should be on min 6 frames of brood. A weak colony should not be chosen as it will lack vigour to rebuild. The stronger the colony the better as it will be linked to an early swarm with a good queen capable of laying a maximum number of eggs with adequate bees to look after the incubation of same. Feeding will be needed until all comb is drawn.

The procedure is as follows:

1. Prepare a new or sterilised hive with a full set of frames & foundations.
2. Remove selected hive to one side and placing the new hive in its position.
3. Place the queen excluder over the floor board to prevent the queen escaping.
4. Over that place the new brood chamber and half the frames and foundations, leaving the centre empty.
5. All flying bees will return to the site.
6. Open hive, find and cage queen in matchbox with the new brood boxes.
7. Start to shake the bees from the old comb into the new brood box.
8. When all the comb are shaken and / brush the remaining bees from the floorboard and brood box.
9. Replace the centre frames and foundation into the new brood box.
10. Release the queen into the new box down between the frames.
11. Place new crown board on top.
12. Leave for two days to allow the bees use any nectar or honey in the crop then start to feed 2:1 sugar solutions.
13. Check for brood after seven days and remove the queen excluder.
14. Continue to feed until all foundation is drawn. It may be necessary to move the outside frame into the chamber.
15. Eventually when fully drawn watch for space and supering.
16. Old combs can be cut out and rendered down for wax if viable but usually burning is the best option. If any serious diseases are suspected burn both comb and frame. Otherwise the frames can be sterilised and reused.

If you replace the comb using the above procedure it gives the colony a new vigour much the same as a swarm. Only strong colonies should be selected, remember a weak colony would not attempt to swarm. It would definitely reduce the tendency of a strong colony to swarm so it could be used in your colony management.

If you are worried about the varroa count as an alternative to the above consider the following:

- Remember you have removed 80% of the varroa in the brood and the remaining 20% are sitting on the bees waiting for brood.
- Insert a frame of open brood preferably drone. All the female mites will be attracted to this frame as there is no other brood available to them.
- When the comb is sealed it should be removed and destroyed.
- This comb will contain the vast majority of the varroa and you should have a hive almost varroa free.

Give it a try this year or visit our demonstrations where we will be trying it and watch how the colony progresses throughout the season.

A LITTLE BIT OF SCIENCE CONTINUED.....From September 2014

In the last newsletter we were talking about the alimentary canal from the start but we didn't get to the end so here are the remaining parts. It you intend to sit you scientific exam in Gormanston take note of all the systems.

The pyloric valve
The pyloric valve is formed by the thickening of the walls of the intestine. It controls the flow of material from the ventriculus. The inner surface of the valve bear backward facing bristles which would assist in a one way movement from the ventriculus into the small intestine

The small intestine
The small intestine is a slender tube. The epithelial lining is thrown into six longitudinal folds giving a large surface area suggesting that further absorption of digested food and water may take place. On the outside is a thick layer of circular muscle fibres.

The rectum
The rectum receives and stores all the remaining products of the alimentary canal. This waste is voided by the bees when on flights outside of the hive. When needed the rectum is capable of great distension, in the winter it can occupy almost the whole abdomen.

Six rectal pads are found on the outer surface of the rectum which may be associated with the extraction of water from the contents and return to the haemolymph.

The anus
The outlet from the canal.

STBA APIARY - RULES AND REGULATIONS.

- All visitors must be current members of STBA either full or associate. If joining as an associate member you must be a full member of another association. Membership card may be inspected.
- Everyone must sign in on the night.
- Minimum protective equipment is a veil. All suits should have been recently washed.
- Gloves are a major cause of disease spread. Surgical gloves are the preference but a very clean pair of household gloves is acceptable. **The heavy thick leather gloves are not allowed into the apiary.**
- NO Personal equipment i.e. hive tools etc. allowed into the apiary
- Anyone suffering from any bee allergies or medical conditions should make it know to the lecturer.
- Demonstrations start at 19:00. Arrive before time to allow for gowning up with protective clothing.
- Switch off mobile phones and enter / exit site with due care.
- Sale of equipment, bees etc. is only allowed when authorised by STBA.

Beginners' course starting soon.

Tell all those buzzing budding beekeepers. Saturday 11th and 18th April in LIT on the Clonmel bypass. Contact Tom or Dennis if anyone is interested.

Summer Recipes

Honey and Thyme Mustard

You will need:
225 g Dijon mustard
120 ml honey
1 teaspoon crushed dried thyme of fresh leaves
Whisk together all ingredients in small bowl until well blended. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Oriental Dipping Sauce

You will need:

April Check list

- ⇒ Grass cut, ditches trimmed, access ready and clear
- ⇒ Hive stands repaired, levelled and preservative applied.
- ⇒ Hive body repaired and preservative applied
- ⇒ Wax up those frames and change black combs