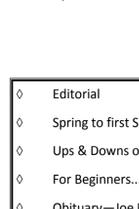


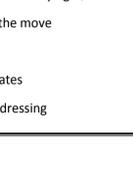


South Tipperary Beekeepers Association



Newsletter

April 2013



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EDITORIAL

Did anyone notice how quickly the months are passing by? Imagine another active season just about to start. According to our New Zealand weather forecaster and our postman in Donegal this is the year of the great summer. Hopefully our bees will be at peak condition when the flow starts. We really need an easy bee year. Last year was difficult but the same old rule applied, regardless of the weather the beekeeper who managed his bees well did get a crop of honey. I'm really delighted that John Corbett took the time out to give us an insight into his great life. We were all saddened at the loss of Joe Martin during the year a man who was always there to help. Thanks to all who contributed to our Newsletter. Hopefully there is something here for all. I wish you all a happy beekeeping, especially to our new recruits.

SPRING TO FIRST SUPER Irene Power

It's always nice as we move into February to hear the expression "there's a grand stretch in the evening". This is also the time when most of us start formulating our beekeeping plans for the year. However, there is no getting away from the fact that the state of your bees now will depend on how well you prepared them for the winter. Disease free and properly treated colonies that have a young queen, adequate bees & plenty of winter stores will have started brood rearing late winter and by Feb will be adding new bees to replace the worn out winter population. Keep in mind, the winter bees in Feb/ March are now getting very old and they have to work harder than ever, feeding an increasing number of larvae, foraging when the weather improves and maintaining the right temperature for the growing brood area. It's a very testing time for the bees. Many of the older bees will die so don't be alarmed if you see dead bees outside entrance. More than a few hundred a cupful would be a concern.

Spring is a crucial time of the year for the bee colony to grow and strengthen. The objective for spring then is to build up large colonies in advance of the nectar flow and to maintain them until the flow, very simple eh!

In February we heft the hives, gauge the weight and amount of stores. Feed fondant if necessary. Normally we would put the fondant in cling-film, cut a few slits in it and put it over the hole in the crown board. This year my nephew Gavin and I put the fondant in plastic containers and put them over the hole in the crown boards. On one hive I put the fondant directly onto the top-bars as the cluster appeared small and I wanted them to have direct contact with the feed. Try not to disturb your bees at this stage. Foragers can lose pollen coming through the mouse guards so keep an eye on that and remove the guards. Provide clean water supply near the hive, don't let it run dry. You will need spare equipment for swarm control, extra brood box with frames of foundation, spare nuc boxes with foundation. Treat timber and do general spring clean, tidy the apiary, cut back branches, make sure the smoker is clean and in working order.

Monitor for Mite Drop – we use varroa screen, put it in underneath the OMF and count the daily natural mite drop. If more than 2 mites per day then the colony needs to be treated. It's important to find out early as supers can't be put on until after the treatment is finished – aiguard, minimum 4 wks or could be 5wks before the second tin is empty – bayworal will take 6 wks. It is important to continue observing for diseases coming into spring and into the summer. Look for dysentery on front of hive or roof. There will be a normal amount but if you see anything abnormal, take note and you can do further investigation once you open the hive. Look for crawling bees, dead bees – again there will be a normal amount but more than a cupful might be a sign of trouble. Study group meet every Monday night, beginners and intermediate – it's not too late to join and a great way to learn, listening to experienced beekeepers, reading and getting ready to put it all into practice.

More of the same for March – continue to monitor the hive entrance. Wax up frames with foundation. It's good practice to swap out at least 2 older/black frames in each hive. Get supers ready. Continue to heft and feed where necessary. 1to1 sugar/water syrup can be given at this stage & bucket feeders are useful. If your bees have access to oil seed rape it will stimulate the queen to lay. The more forage the bees have, the more they feed the queen which encourages her to lay. Be careful, overfeeding can trigger early swarming, so feed only where necessary.

Check for fatalities and close down. Close the entrance to prevent robbing. If you suspect disease, send samples to Mary Coffey for confirmation. It's good practice to sterilize these hives and any good frames. We use 80% acetic acid to sterilize (100ml at 15°C for 1 wk). It kills Nozema, EFB, Amobeia, chalk brood and wax moth larvae.

By the time you are reading this it will be April and time for first inspection – temperature needs to be 15°C or more, and should be a quick 3 or 4 minute inspection. We basically are checking to see if the colony is queen right, have they enough stores and space for laying, put on q excluder & supers as required. Check for disease particularly the ones you noted any signs of disease on the outside and remember keep records.

Super early for the bees, it is better to add more early rather than wait for the colony to become overcrowded and then possibly set-off swarming. If the Colony has 8/9 frames of bees then it is time to super, possibly starting with two. Now that you have large, strong colonies, next trick is to maintain them in this condition by preventing swarming. Another Season's Work!

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF BYGONE YEARS John Corbett

My first encounter with the honey bee came at a very young age, back in 1944. In those times of no motorcars or phones, visiting cousins was a common event. On one such occasion, after having tea and eating cake and tart, while the adults were chatting and possibly discussing the war, I made my way out of the yard into a lovely garden with flowers, paths, box hedges and apple trees. Then my eyes fell on a row of beautiful little houses, blue, yellow, orange and white. I went to investigate and poked in the opening with a bit of a twig. I was delighted when little creatures came out. After some time I noticed I was covered with these little fellows. They were all over my jumper, loads of them, slowly moving. I looked with delight at what I had found. I can still remember the screams and excitement when I walked into the adult assembly. I was quickly picked up and held under the water spout in the yard, wrapped up in a rug, and taken home in the horse and trap. I didn't even have one sting to show after all that!

It must have been 1952 or thereabouts, when I was on my way home from Kilcass School. A local gentleman asked me if I would be interested in having a swarm of bees. He spoke with a strong "cockney accent" which was difficult to understand. He said the bees were under the drawing room window. Indeed there they were, a large brown ball of bees on the trunk of a Virginia creeper. We discussed what I would need. He went off to get a box, and came back with a butter box and plywood to cover it. I then asked for twine to tie down the cover. While he was gone for the twine I removed my socks and put them on my hands, this gave me great courage. He returned with about one hundred yards of binder twine. He asked me to put him time to go inside and he would watch through the window. Knowing that eyes were on me I moved in with the box, I angled it in beautifully under the bees, ran both hands to meet each other along the trunk, the bees dropped cleanly into the box, and in a flash, the plywood was on top. The window opened up and Mr Constable was saying "well done, jolly well done".

I used up all the twine and made the lid very secure. When I lifted my "trophy" I was surprised by the weight of it, and how awkward it was to carry. I wanted to get out of view of the house before I would stop for a rest. Finally I reached the road. Looking at my load, and with about three quarters of a mile to go I decided to turn it upside down, this made it much easier to handle. Over a stile and across fields, I finally made it home. Sometime later it was suggested that I should have fed the bees with syrup. Sugar was scarce and expensive and in spite of my many requests, my dear mother would not part with any of the bonus sugar given to beet growers, she said that she would make better use of it in a few buckets of plums rather than giving it to bees. So I bought a tin of golden syrup and poured it out on a board. I got great enjoyment watching the bees line up to take the syrup. The syrup was soon gone, and the winter came, spring time followed and I found a lot of lovely white comb and a heap of dead bees. It must have been some years later before I got hold of a Department of Agriculture leaflet on beekeeping. This gave measurements for a hive, and spoke of a veil and gauntlets. Soon after I must have looked the part, with an old straw hat, a lace curtain, fifty pins and harvest gloves used to protect the hands from thistle-thorns in the corn at trashing time. A visit to Suttons in Gladstone St., Clonmel gave me frames, foundation and finished that year with some sections. By now I was collecting a lot of stings, and reacting badly to them, swollen hands and the odd swollen jaw had to be endured. My social life by this time was becoming more important and enjoyable. Finally the parting of the ways came, when one of the big British Dance Bands, Garaldo or Silvestor or tour was playing in the Collins Hall, and I was at home with two swollen and closed eyes. The bees had to go... well my social life ran its course, and year's later with my wife, 4 young sons & our own place, my thought returned to bees.

It was easy to get bees back in those times, swarms came, two or three a month in May and June. Advice and direction was available from the ever helpful John Kearns RIP. Bee suits and smokers became affordable. In a short time I had six or seven hives, and the honey flowed. The S.T. B.A. had an extractor available on loan. This made it possible to produce run honey. One time on collecting the extractor I thought it would do with a good hot wash, so I took it around to a local rendering plant where I met a man in a long white apron and wellingtons, white hat and ear muffs. I asked him if he would give the extractor a wash, he looked it over and said it could be done, if I could hold it. I assured him that it would be held, so he set it at an angle, and instructed me to keep it at that. I put a leg at both sides and gripped it tight. There was a blast of steam, it almost took me off the floor and the extractor almost left my grip. I had to reaffirm my position, I could see nothing, but feel hot steam, the noise was frightening, and the heat of the extractor became unbearable, it made me fear that it had ripped apart. I was just about to shout stop, when suddenly it was over. When the steam cleared, I was relieved to see extractor in one piece and sparking. I later learned that the power wash was for removing dried fat from heavy steel tanks and drums. I had been very lucky, for a few minutes it was like being on a rocket, on the outside of it at that. No more hot power blasts for me.

On one occasion I had taken off the supers and had them in the shed. While uncapping a few bees got into the shed which I dealt with by sealing up the window and door with papers and tape. I did a good job, no more bees, the job was going well, then I went to take a phone call and stayed on the line for an hour. As I returned to the shed about two hours later, I could see bees all over the door and in the sky, all round the place. I pushed the door open, the place was black with bees, I couldn't see through them, and the noise was frightening. When I had gone out I dislodged all the paper and tape, making way for every bee in my own seven hives and every hive in the parish to come for a feast. I finished up with nothing. It took a week before all the bees had left, and the floor was covered with dead bees. After that experience I constructed a proper honey house, but would never again go uncapping or extracting before sunset.

I have good reason to regard the smoker as a dangerous piece of equipment. It should always be emptied and checked before you put it away. One evening I had made all the preparations to take home the honey from an out apiary of twelve hives. All went well, the clearer boards had worked very well. In a short time I had two, and sometimes three supers off each hive loaded in the car trailer Using an ex-army tent to cover and tie down the load, I was very pleased to get away so quickly as Ireland was playing an international and if I got going I could be home to see the second half. I put my hand on the smoker and it felt almost cold, and then I forced it in between the front of the trailer and a few supers, finally I tied down the cover and took off. I had travelled about three miles when I took a look in the rear view mirror, there was a fire ball following me, I could not see the top of the flames it was so high. On a narrow road, I pulled up, I couldn't remove the trailer as it was locked onto the hitch. The blaze died down once I stopped, I untied the cover from the back and turned it up over the front and beat out the fire. The road was full of smoke, as I was stamping on the cover and trying to put out the fire on the inside of the trailer and the supers a car pulled up beside me, a man said "are you alright", blinded with smoke he rolled up the window and drove off, maybe he was in a hurry to see the rugby match too. I finally put the fire out, packed up what was left of the tent and got home, so don't you ever be in so much of a hurry that you neglect to check and empty the smoker before you get on the road. Last word, don't ever leave your smoker overnight in the family car, I did once. The following day I took my dear mother and aunt to a wedding. Whenever that wedding or anything connected to it came up, I would be reminded of how they both smelled like gipsies all day and how they would never get over the embarrassment.

A bee Jake to finish Little boy went into a sweet shop . . . **Shopkeeper:** "well what can I get you?" **Little boy:** "I want to buy a bee", **Shopkeeper:** "but we don't sell bees". **Little boy:** "but you have them in the window"

FOR BEGINNERS : APRIL Paul Lonergan

April is the month when you can really start to enjoy your beekeeping; April is one of the best months in the year full of promise, spring flowers are in full bloom and there are usually several warm day when it is delightful to go and watch the bees collecting pollen and nectar.

Collecting stores - Honey bees have a wonderful symbiotic relationship with plants. Flowering plants and bees have evolved together for mutual advantage. Bees rely on flowering plants for their food and plants need bees to accomplish cross pollination.

Pollen - Whilst foraging for nectar the honey bee will collect fresh pollen on the 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. When the bee visits another flower some of the pollen will brush off on to the stigma of the flower to complete the pollination process. On its return to the hive a pollen forager will go near the brood nest , unload the pollen into a cell and 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.

Nectar - 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 nectarines deep in the flower. 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.

Major inspection - April is the month when we get to open the hive for its first major inspection. The following points should be remembered:-

1. Be prepared have your hive tool , smoker, spare frames etc. ready for use
2. Open the hive and ensure you put all components on the upturned roof 3. When you inspect the colony you should check a number of factors including:-

- Diseases - look for any symptoms
- Eggs - is the Queen laying?
- Food - is there enough honey to last until the next inspection?
- Colony Build-up - is there enough room for the queen to lay in ?
- Seek help - If you have concerns, close up the hive and ask a more experienced colleague to have a look. Enjoy your beekeeping season.

† OBITUARY: JOE MARTIN †

A wave of sadness was felt by all members of South Tipperary Beekeepers' Association when they heard of Joe Martin's death. Joe died peacefully on the 17th December last at South Tipperary General Hospital after a relatively short illness.

Joe was born in Lismore where his father, a member of the Gardaí, was stationed at the time. He had one sister Theresa Hussey who predeceased him in 1998. Joe's first job was as a clerk with ClíC and subsequently joined the Civil Service progressing to the position of court clerk at Clonmel Court House, where he spent the most of his working life. He was a diligent worker and he treated everyone he came in contact with respect and fairness; he was highly respected by colleagues, members of the legal profession and Gardai. Following his retirement, Joe joined the Clonmel Probus Club. Joe was also an avid reader and enjoyed listening to classical music.

Joe shared his time between his two homes, one at Prior Park, Clonmel and the other his family home in Lismore. Returning to Lismore gave Joe the opportunity to partake in his favourite pastimes; gardening, fishing and beekeeping. Joe loved the outdoor life and was a keen gardener and grew his vegetables in Lismore. Joe was a well-respected member of the local angling club and spent many a leisurely hour fishing on the banks of his favourite river, the Blackwater. He acted as treasurer for over forty years and a few months before his death the club honoured him with a special presentation for his dedicated service. Another reason for Joe to return to Lismore, on a regular basis, was to manage his apiary; this being an idyllic location for bees.

Members of STBA will remember Joe for his multifaceted contribution to the association. He served as secretary, chairperson and efficiently organised the Clonmel Honey Show for many years; he also was a former member of STBA study group where he gave freely of his vast practical beekeeping knowledge. Joe was a beekeeper and regularly attended beekeeping courses, particularly Gormanstown and was a member of the Galtee Bee Breeding Group. He frequently attended outdoor demonstrations and was always very helpful towards new members. I wish to thank Joe's niece Maura for donating his collection of bee books to the association library and to members of the study group.

Joe's funeral mass was celebrated by Fr Cullinan PP and was attended by a large circle of friends and neighbours from both Lismore and Clonmel, representing from Tipperary and Waterford as well as members of the legal profession and Gardai. He was carried to his final resting place by members of Lismore Fishing Club; a fitting tribute to a man who loved fishing. Joe was laid to rest in Lismore Cemetery beside his parents.

On behalf of STBA, I wish to record our deep appreciation for Joe's friendship, guidance and valuable contribution to our organisation during his lifetime and to extend our sincere sympathy to his brother-in-law John Hussey and his loving nieces and nephews: Maura, Ann, Claire, Carmel, Brian, Eddie and John.

May he rest in peace.

"The trees are in their Autumn beauty

The woodland paths are dry

Under the October twilight the water

Mirrors a still sky;

Upon the brimming water among the stone

Are nine-and fifty swans"

CHECK LIST:- DETECTION OF AND THE CAUSE OF DRONE LAYING QUEEN

Signs of a Drone Laying Queen:

- Domed capping on the worker cell
- Presence of Queen (actually seen)
- Stunted small drones

Spring time:

- At first exam – small colony with 1 – 2 frame of drone brood only. Large number of drones compared to workers in the colony for time of year or when compared to other colonies
- May be difficult for a beginner to detect as to whether it is a "Drone laying queen" - orderly laying pattern, compact few empty cell, 1 egg/cell or a "Laying worker" low hazard laying pattern, several eggs in each cell.
- Incidents of chalk brood may be high due to low incubation temperatures

During the season:

- Small area of drone (domed w. cells) in middle of worker cells.

- As season progresses number of drones increase
- Because Q is still laying some w. brood is still present.
- Eventually all drone brood
- Drones are small & stunted.

Causes:

- Shortage of sperm poor mating or just old age
- Physical inability to fertilise eggs
- Genetic fault

Treatment:

- Requeen after removal of defective queen
- Unite after removing drone laying Q.

BEEKEEPER ON THE MOVE Tom Prendergast

Recent trips took me mostly to our nearest neighbour England. After landing in Heathrow I travelled up towards Gloucester taking me through the Cotswold District. It is a beautiful area well known for its undulating hills and valleys. The area is mostly far land with a very good balance of small woodlands. There was also a good scatter of scrubland all very suitable for bee foraging. I did see an apiary with four national hives. I was impressed with the amount of OSR growing, field after field. I would love to return in April / May time when all these fields are surely in bloom. It really must be a spectacular scene. Hopefully someone will require my services in the area at that time. As a holiday destination it would be ideal especially if you are into outdoor activities like walking. I'm sure it will be dotted with beehives all working on that sea of yellow.

Another trip I travelled down South towards Brighton. Again I was lucky to pass through some really beautiful countryside known as the South Downs. Just like the North of London this area was farmland and again awash with fields of OSR. I really need to return to these areas when all are in flower. I didn't see any bee hives only a sign with "Honey for Sale" All looked like ideal areas for beekeeping very similar to others. Another observation was the great number of walk ways all signposted throughout the farmland. It seems that there are several rights of way. If you ever do visit this area drop into the town of Arundel with its beautiful Cathedral and Castle, well worth a visit

MOVING BEES

The movement of colonies from one area to another is sometime necessary for reasons such as: Movement can be very stressful to the bees. In order to minimise stress proper planning and preparation should be considered before moving.

The first consideration is the distance. If bees are to be moved a very short distance this may be achieved over a number of days or weeks. The rule for short distance is "move the hive less than one metre every day. Bees can re-establish themselves within such a short distance. However if this type of move is not possible then bees need to be moved a distance greater than 5 km. The reason for the distance is that when the bees start to forage after the move they are in new territory and will not find their way back to the old stand. If bees need to be moved an intermediate distance of greater than one metre but less than 5 km the colony will need to be moved away by 5 km and then moved back to its new site which again must be more than 5 km from the intermediate position. The colony needs to be kept on the intermediate stand for at least two weeks as bees' memory last for that length of time.

If there is a need to examine the colony do so at least 4 days before moving. This gives the bees a chance to propolise all parts back together again. Removing supers will help to reduce the load on the beekeepers but big colonies will need room. Any colony that is showing any sign of disease should not be moved. If queen cells are present and they are needed reconsider if moving is necessary as they may be damaged.

Before moving, a colony should be checked to determine that all is ok. No point in moving a colony that is not up to a certain standard. Firstly check for:

- Disease, any colony showing signs of any disease should not be moved. Remember you have a moral obligation to prevent the spread of disease.
- Colonies should have a laying queen or at least the ability to produce one.
- If selling or moving to an isolated apiary, make sure the colony has enough food for 10 days. If selling inform the buyer of the food situation.

After completing the examination put on the travel screen and secure with the straps, stapling the hive parts together with one staple at each corner also secures the whole hive. A heavy duty stapler would suffice for this job. An OMF would also be an advantage for ventilation. Check sure there are no points of entry apart from the front entrance. All cracks etc. should be attended to at this stage. Replace roof and leave undisturbed until time to move. The hive is now ready for moving apart from blocking up the main entrance. This can now be achieved with minimum disturbance to the bees. Check that new apiary is ready to receive the colonies, stands and access shall be ready. Equipment needed :-

- 1) Top screen with mesh size 7 to 25 mm with a 25 mm eke on inside for all bees to cluster;
- 2) Two hive strips;
- 3) One heavy duty stapler;
- 4) Water Sponge/ Water sprayer;
- 5) Foam & 6) Sticky tape at least 50 mm wide.

Movement causes vibration which excites bees and with the hive closed up there is a real risk that the bees will overheat resulting in the risk of comb melt down and bee death. Supplying water, being careful during loading and driving slowly will help reduce the level of vibration and the risk of overheating.

Avoid moving colonies with excess stores and very strong colonies may need an empty super for extra space. Ventilation on top and bottom is essential and spray occasionally with a water mist or sponge to help reduce risk of over heating.

Move the bees early in the morning before sun rise and only during the active season. Outbreaks of Nosema, associated with stressed colonies arising from the continuous movement of bees.

NEWS & UPDATES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD Paul Lonergan

The Beginners and intermediate lessons are up and running in LIT Clonmel under the leadership of Denis Ryan, Tom Prendergast and Redmond Williams, so all ready and rearing to go for the season.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY
Deadline for receipt of applications for the intermediate exam is on Mar 1st, with the exam on April 6th. Deadline for the Beginners exam is April 16th

OUTDOOR DEMONSTRATION
All demonstrations at Bulmers orchards, Powerstown, Clonmel starting at 7 pm each night April 23rd, 30th & May 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th

Additional demonstrations for beginners or others in need of further assistance/support will be held on June 11th, 25th & July 16th. All demonstrations start at 7 pm

Demonstration on Varroa treatment on Aug 20th again at 7pm

At these outdoor demonstrations we plan to have suppliers on site, giving you an opportunity to purchase beekeeping equipment i.e. clothing, hives, foundation smokers etc.,

STBA LECTURES
These lectures are a great way of learning different ways and ideas on aspects of beekeeping from experienced beekeepers and they should be attended if at all possible.

Last lecture in this spring series: **April 16th: Swarm Control - Speaker Irene Power.**

STBA HONEY SHOW

This annual event will be held in Clonmel on Sept 28th & 29th. Plan well ahead for this most enjoyable few days and get your honey, wax, candles, mead and photos ready in plenty of time.

From one who knows, you may think you're ready until the day of the show and YES! something will go wrong. So be prepared in time and you will enjoy the experience.

And finally a recipe to excite your taste buds. . . . !

HONEY AND HERB DRESSING

"Honey should be a regular ingredient in your cooking. Now that we are heading towards the warm salad days, consider the following" :-

- Measure 2 tbsp. lemon juice, 1 tbsp. clear honey and 6 tbsp. olive oil and 2 tps. French mustard and 2 tps. chopped fresh herbs such as parsley, chives and coriander. Mix all together and pour over your salad just before use.
- For those chicken wings why not try a honey and mustard glaze. Into a bowl add 4 tps. honeys with 4 tps. wholegrain mustard. Mix well together and season with salt and ground black pepper. Brush onto Chicken portions before barbecuing. Re brush the wings just before final cooking taking care not to burn the glaze.