THE NEW ZEALAND beekeeper

DECEMBER 1976

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THE NEW ZEALAND BEEKEEPER

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In this issue...
We have all our news at the front of the book, a massive beginners' report starting on page 13, a new recipe feature on p. 19, Richard Beeby says beekeeping is NZ's last peasant industry on p. 21, Murray Reid describes a palletised beekeeping operation on p. 23, Trevor Bryant describes what he learned overseas on p. 27 and Ivan Dickinson gives his views on honey marketing on p. 29. Happy Christmas and good beekeeping!

The N.Z. Beekeeper is published by Agricultural Promotion Associates, Box 176, Carterton on behalf of the National Beekeepers' Association of N.Z. (Inc.), Box 4048, Wellington in the first week of March, June, September and December each year.

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Editorial

Convincing the cynics

THE SUBSTANTIAL increase in the base price for honey being lobbied for by the Hone Honey Marketing Authority is not likely to be an overnight success. There are too many cynics to be convinced. Too many fears of setting dangerous precedents.

Nevertheless, wheat does not become flour without first going through the hammermill and the honey in the supermarket has known the agonies of the extractor.

The first step in the battle must inevitably be to convince beekeepers of the worth of their produce. For too long many beekeepers have been happy to sell their produce to the first available buyer — feeling thankful that the fruits of their labour were being taken off their hands. That some are willing to accept less than the HMA payout for their produce, after allowing for packaging costs, is evident from supermarket "specials" sometimes well below the 50c/lb mark.

It may be private enterprise and it may be competitive. But traditionally the buyers have had the enterprise and have profited greatly from the one-sided competition.

A general atmosphere that there was an inevitable buyers' market for honey has pervaded the industry now for a generation. It's an attitude which has inevitably reflected on the HMA's ability to sell to advantage overseas.

However, despite the measured wording in the authority's newsletters it is becoming apparent that there has been a dramatic turn-around in the HMA's ability to sell during the last year or so. It's a turn-around which will probably be permenant and if so, will in itself justify a large increase in the 1977 base price to producers.

Thanks in some part to the market intelligence and experience developed by our highly-successful comb honey exporters, the authority has learnt that NZ honey is indeed among the finest in the world; that some of our staple lines are unobtainable in quantity anywhere else — that, in short, after years of uneconomic prices there might in fact be a sellers' market for quality honey.

If this change in attitude can be transmitted back to private packers selling on the local market, a large part of the battle to convince government will be won.

To date the government's track record with regard to beekeeping has not been anything to write home about. The RBFC loans for beekeepers in the Central North Island who experienced disastrous honey crops last season were more than welcome. Nevertheless the assistance was certainly no more generous than that enjoyed by pastoral farmers in some part of the country every year by way of drought or flood relief.

The government's refusal to give financial incentitives to beekeepers who increase their hive holdings under the Livestock Incentive Scheme was both illogical and surprising, if the objective of the scheme is increased export earnings. Of all New Zealand's primary industries, the honey industry probably has one of the greatest potentials for increased production using locally produced and existing resources. However it is being held back by returns for honey which traditionally have not been high enough for any but the long-established and the highly efficient.

The basic pool of expertise is available from a large army of part-timers, many of whom would be willing to do the hard work that full-time beekeeping involves if the returns were available. Now that the returns are available, the government needs to be convinced that the honey industry is ready to roll and that it will make good use of a substantially-increased payout.

Given the climate of restraint and stabilisation prevailing in economy, the authority's arguments will need to be cogent and compelling. It is one thing to have a vast potential. The other is to convince the cynics that you can realise it.

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Rates: Full-page, $50; Half-page, $30; Quarter-page, $15; $1 a column cm. No deductions for contracts will apply.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS
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Beekeepers owning less than 50 hives and others who may wish or may not wish to join the association, will pay an annual subscription of $7.50 which includes the cost of a subscription to the NZ Beekeeper.

CORRESPONDENTS

GO TELL THE WORLD

Dear Sir,

The National organising committees of the XXVIth International Congress of Apiculture is most gratified at the enthusiasm for the congress that is developing in New Zealand. It is clear that we will have a good number of NZ beekeepers with us at this most important event in the calendar of international beekeeping.

This, of course, is the first Apicultural Congress ever held in the Pacific region and, in fact, it is only the fourth time the congress has been held outside Europe.

But while NZ beekeepers will be coming across the Tasman to hear about bees and beekeeping in Australia and other parts of the world, our visitors from overseas are insistent that they are coming "down-under" to see how we do things. They can only do this if Australian and New Zealand beekeepers will present papers at the congress.

So, on behalf of the national organising committee, I am making this appeal for papers by beekeepers about NZ beekeeping — about NZ honey flora, about your hives and your system of wax dipping the hives for protection, about your unique way of sitting apiaries on ground flora and about your system of honey marketing.

I hope this letter will encourage New Zealand beekeepers to play an even greater part in making the congress a success by preparing papers of 10 minutes, and no more than 15 minutes, in length for one or other of the sessions.

Full details of the content of each session will be announced shortly together with instructions concerning the submission of papers.

Join us in telling the beekeepers of the world how we carry out our beekeeping and overcome problems that are so very different from those of other countries.

Yours,

Keith Doull,
National Organising Committee

P.N.G. BEE INDUSTRY

Dear Sir,

May I take this opportunity to have a few words printed in your magazine.

On behalf of the beekeepers from the department of the agriculture hobbyists and future beekeepers, I would like to thank Mr Chris Dawson of Timaru (a great friend of mine) who visited Papua New Guinea three times setting up hives by collecting wild swarms from buildings, introducing New Zealand queens which I like most; he also taught the methods of raising queens; too for having my name printed in the "New Zealand Beekeeper" and the Timaru Herald and that was very good publicity. I reckon it is great to have my name in a foreign paper.

Secondly I would like to thank Mr Vincent Cook for his great job preparing a great report for the future bee industry. Before I came to Australia I had word that it looked promising.

Too, for all the New Zealanders taking part in promoting the bee industry in the Papua New Guinea highland region.

For your readers interest, I have started a village project with every help from Mr John Twincer in my mother's village. We held our first country field day on May 12, 1976 and many people came to witness it. Some people tasted honey for the first time in their lives and asked to take some home.

Once again, I would like to thank New Zealand for sending experts up with the equipment to get the industry off the ground. We will have some traditional links with New Zealand's bee industry and future beekeepers will firmly remember their first help.

Yours,

Peter Kundubu,
Mount Hagen,
Papua New Guinea.

YOU PLAGIARISER!

Dear Sir,

In the March 1976 issue of the "New Zealand Beekeeper" you published an article "Keeping Bees in Populated Areas" (pages 30 and 31). The author is one of my graduate students. No mention is made of his name or the source of the material which was "Gleanings in Bee Culture".

We are complimented in that you found the article suitable for reprinting. However, I am disturbed that proper credit is not given the author. It is especially important to students who must someday "sell" themselves to an employer. Part of their curriculum vitae is the papers they have published; having a paper reprinted in a second journal is to their credit and while a small item, is a plus in their final presentation.

I hope you will continue to use papers by my students but that they will receive proper credit for work done.

Yours,

Roger A. Morse
Professor of Apiculture
Cornell University

We regret any embarrassment our use of the article may have caused. The omission of proper credit to the author and the publisher was a result of a production error which missed our subeditor's eagle eye.

AUSSIE PEN PAL

Dear Sir,

I read your name in the Australian Beekeeper (March '76 issue) and was hoping you could help me.

First let me introduce myself. My name is Dick Livesy. I am 38 years old and married. My hobbies are stamp collecting and bees. I have been keeping bees now for four years.

I am interested in corresponding with an Australian beekeeper. I would like to exchange ideas on the different ways we handle bees. I would appreciate it if you could pass my name on to someone who would be interested.

I thank you,

Yours,

Dick Livesy,
1417 Todd Rd,
Kamloops,
B.C. Canada.

PROPOLIS CAKE TOO!

Dear Sir,

I should like to draw your attention to a minor omission in your September issue (volume 38 no. 3), In the "King Bee" feature on page 7 you correctly reported that pollen has been included as a qualifying item within the increased exports taxation incentive, backdated to April 1, 1976. However, you did not mention that propolis in cake form was included within the incentive at the same time as pollen, and also backdated to April 1, 1976.

You might like to include this information in a future issue, as some of your readers will doubtless be interested in the taxation saving involved.

Yours,

Linda Tizard
Dept of Trade and Industry

KING BEE

Bees are not livestock

Agriculture undersecretary, Jim Bolger, has told the National Beekeepers' Association that bees don't qualify as livestock for the purposes of the livestock incentive scheme.

"In establishing the criteria for this scheme, the government gave very careful consideration to the types of farming which should be included," he said.

"It was decided that the maximum immediate potential lay in the land devoted to the farming of sheep, cattle and deer, and priority has been given to increasing numbers on a national basis. The scheme in this first stage is, therefore, aimed at those farmers with either unused carrying capacity or with land available for development, who can make a permanent increase in pastoral production."

Mr Bolger told the association that the advantages of including beekeeping in such a scheme would be "taken fully into account" if any alternative scheme for increasing export earnings is contemplated at a later date.

Honey factories

The Department of Labour is currently investigating whether honey houses qualify as factories under the Factories Act. The matter arose following an inspection of an Auckland honey packing house by Labour Department officials. The owners were subsequently served notice that the house would have to be upgraded to meet minimum standards under the Factories Act.

While the matter is now being studied by both the NBA and the department with a view to developing a policy in this regard, beekeepers employing labour should be well-acquainted with both Labour and Health Department minimum requirements before upgrading or rebuilding honey houses.

Speedy Bee

Following a 1976 Conference resolution on the topic, the NZ Post Office has requested a member of its staff to investigate the possibilities of including a bee on a postage stamp issue. The NBA expects a further reply when the investigation is completed.

No bike deductions

The NBA executive has resolved that it should not seek to obtain special sales tax exemption criteria for farm motor bikes used for beekeeping purposes. The committee gave full consideration to the proposal which originated from the Otago branch of the association, but concluded there would be great difficulty in sustaining a case for special treatment — along with the difficulty of policing any special exemptions if they were applied.

Deferred-levy voters

The NBA executive secretary, Graham Beard, is to prepare a paper on administration aspects of the HMA election procedure for consideration by the minister of agriculture.

The question of the voting rights of persons eligible to vote in the HMA election where hive levy payments had been subject to deferrment would be a particular point to be examined in the paper.

Regional conferences

The Waikato branch proposal that four regional conferences be held prior to annual meetings at which the president of the NBA, the chairman of the authority and executive staff would be present has been examined by the NBA executive. The executive has suggested to the branch that to test the merit of the idea, they organise such a meeting in the early months of 1977 and extend appropriate invitations.

The branch considers the proposal would have the effect of better explaining the sectional activities of the industry to rank and file beekeepers.

No economic survey

Assistant director of MAF advisory services division, Ian Forbes, has informed the NBA executive that his ministry is unable to conduct an economic survey of the beekeeping industry as requested in remit 28 at the 1976 association conference. He told the September executive meeting that the resources were not available to conduct such a survey and there were many other demands with higher priority for economic survey work.

Close eye on Tongan Queens

The import of queen bees from Tonga will not go ahead until the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is certain no risks would attend such a proposal. Before the risk level could be determined a good deal of research would be required, according to MAF's Mr Ian Forbes.

Indemnity fund for RBFC loans

The NBA executive is to consider establishing an indemnity fund to guarantee development loans to beekeepers from the Rural Banking and Finance Corporation. Such a fund would probably resolve the legal and procedural problems which beekeepers face when attempting to raise finance while using their hives as security.

None of the usual lending channels will accept beehives as collateral security for loans because of legal technicalities regarding ownership.

NBA funds okay

The NBA executive has resolved to advise the minister of agriculture that it has no recommendation to make regarding an increase in the hive levy for 1977 and that the association's budgeted requirement from the hive levy account in 1977 would be $20,000 — the same sum as required during 1976.

The executive has also advised the HMA of its recommendation to the minister and has requested the authority to have due regard for the financial needs of the association when it makes the levy allocation to the association next year.

NBA/HMA merger proposal

The NBA executive has resolved it should take steps to establish a Honey Industry Act to incorporate existing functions of the association, plus the collection and the administration of the hive levy. The Act should also make provisions to enable the HMA and NBA to merge if and when it is considered desirable by the industry.

This resolution was the end result of a long discussion of a paper prepared by Mr Beard analysing those matters associated with a conference proposal that consideration should be given to a future merger between the two organisations.

A copy of the study paper has been forwarded to the Honey Marketing Authority and the authority has been asked to forward its background paper on the same topic in due course. The association intends to have a draft Act prepared in time for the 1977 conference.

No change in individual voting

The NBA executive has axed a conference proposal that individual association members should be able to withhold their votes at branch level so as to be able to exercise them as individuals at the association's annual meeting. The executive at its September meeting resolved that votes can be left uncommitted by the branches and that members attending the annual meeting had every opportunity to confer with their delegates.

McKenzie resigns

The NBA executive has reluctantly accepted the resignation of Mr Gavin McKenzie from the executive. Mr McKenzie has obtained a posting overseas — a full report appears elsewhere in this issue.

Apimondia papers

Beekeepers or people associated with the honey industry wishing to present papers at the Apimondia Congress in Adelaide are advised to contact the Apimondia Secretariat, Box 2609 G.P.O., Sydney, N.S.W. 2001, Australia, to obtain guidelines for the preparation and delivery of such papers. The deadline for the delivery of papers to the secretariat is August 15, 1977. A precis of the paper must be delivered by April 1, 1977.

Venn Young allays fears

Minister of forests, Venn Young, has informed the NBA that he has noted the concern of the association's conference with regard to clear-felling of native bush in the Kaimai Range and other bush areas for the purpose of planting pine trees. He assured the association that its views would be given full consideration.

Apiary Ownership Accounts

Minister of agriculture, Duncan MacIntyre, has informed the NBA that he would expect that a young person who wishes to go beekeeping and wants to save for his first land purchase for that purpose would be eligible to open a Farm Ownership Account. The accounts offer a substantial grant to assist in land purchase when they are terminated.

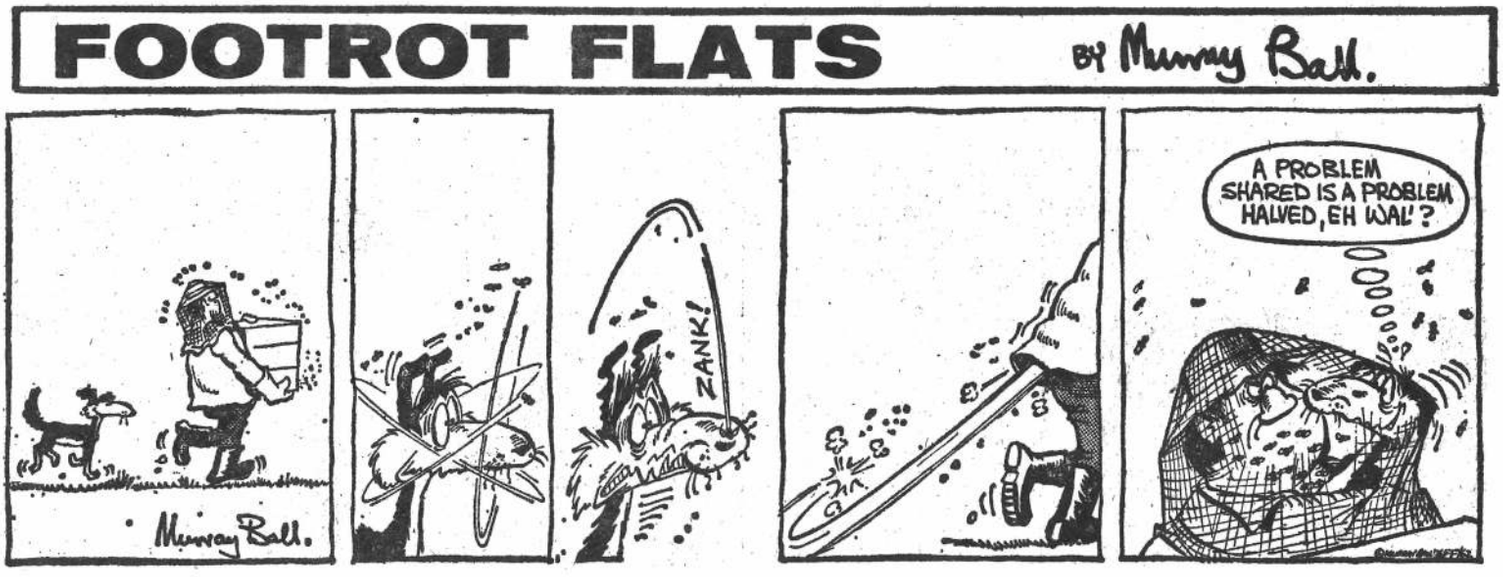
Advisory service revamped

Although we have yet to receive a detailed outline of the new structure of the apiary advisory service, we understand there has been a severe pruning of services in line with government spending restraints. Apiary instructors are now based in Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Palmerston North, Christchurch and Gore and a chief advisory officer is to be appointed in Wellington. The position of superintendent (beekeeping), has been abolished.

The restructured service emphasises advisory work rather than inspection for disease and beekeepers will now have much greater responsibility for the disease status of their hives than they did previously.

Apimondia trip

Beekeepers and others wishing to attend the Apimondia beekeeping congress in Adelaide are asked to get in contact with Graheme Walton, Apicultural Advisory officer, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Palmerston North. Mr Walton has details of possible group travel arrangements and deductions available.



With apologies to "Evening Post"

Beekeepers and queen breeders make service contract breakthrough

IN MARCH 1974 at the invitation of the local apiary instructor, two meetings involving 15 commercial beekeepers were called to try and work out a solution regarding the supply of queen bees to commercial honey producers in Southland.

The original concept was to purchase an existing queen bee breeding or honey producing outfit in a suitable locality for the purpose of breeding queen bees for a syndicate of beekeepers. Any surplus was to be sold at the discretion of the breeder at market rates.

The objects were to:

- ★ Ensure supplies of queen bees
- ★ Give a young enthusiastic breeder the chance to own his own business
- ★ Improve quality of queen bees (group would supply breeders)
- ★ Produce a "local" bee, i.e. one adapted to Southland conditions.

Today, eight beekeepers and two breeders have now reached agreement, and have set up what I believe is a first for New Zealand and possibly for the world.

The concept has changed dramatically since the first meeting. Instead of purchasing a business, equipment was cut and constructed, some comb drawn and filled with honey, and delivered to the two successful applicants.

Several meetings and working bees were held before the final contract was drafted. The contract drawn up by a solicitor to the requirements of the Group is flexible, gives all members some degree of protection and safeguards their interests. It is in effect, a service contract.

The contract briefly:

- ★ Nominates a minimum number of queens to which the group has first call.
- ★ Fixes the price of queens to four kilograms of bulk honey at the base price set by the H.M.A.
- ★ A committee is elected each year to work out a roster of supply, to communicate orders to the breeders and to be responsible for the group's interests. The committee arrangement avoids the problems of too many bosses.
- ★ Independent arbitrators are to be called in, in cases of dispute — one for each party.
- ★ If a breeder defaults or dies the contract is terminated and the monies are immediately repayable to the group.

The first queens have been delivered to the group. While the consignment was small it is a start. Next year it is hoped to meet half the group's requirements, with full production in the spring of 1977.

The concept of syndicates is not new, but rarely has it been used to give young men a start in an industry.

Inflation creates all sorts of problems, particularly when trying to purchase an existing outfit, building honey houses, buying trucks, etc. Beekeepers can overcome this to a degree by forming syndicates, contract extracting, etc.

While the success of the group is yet to be proven, it is a giant step in the right direction and opens up all sorts of possibilities. Already it has achieved greater understanding between participants, better utilisation of equipment and energies, opened the way for further syndicates or groups and, given two young men a chance to prove themselves.

While success will doubtless be counted in dollars, it has succeeded in many other ways already.

"The most striking feature of those attending was the few characteristics they had in common."

Over-subscribed Telford course rated a success

THE 1976 SOUTH Island Beekeepers Management Course was held at Telford, the MAF training farm near Balclutha. With course membership limited to 20 persons, the ministry organisers were put in the difficult position of having to turn away seven applicants.

Nineteen beekeepers eventually attended. In the words of MAF apiary advisory officer, Murray Reid. "The most striking feature of those attending was the few characteristics they had in common.

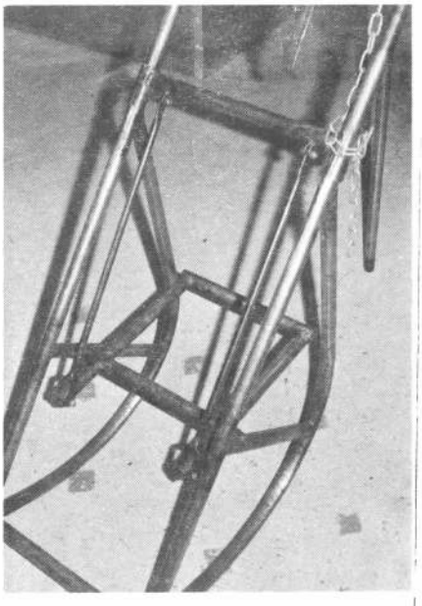
"They came from Auckland in the north to Gore in the south. They represented small and large outfits, those which had been established a long time and those which were just getting underway. Some came from outfits which had yet to be established."

This diversity of experience was of invaluable assisance to the course leaders (Trevor Bryant and Vince Cook, apiary instructors at Gore and Oamaru respectively, and Murray Reid, apicultural advisory officer, Christchurch) during the many discussion periods.

The aim of the course was to help beekeepers achieve their business objectives by careful planning and efficient management. Each of the members had to decide what his beekeeping objectives were, or why was he a beekeeper. Other aspects dwelt on included efficient hive management through understanding vital aspects of colony development and nutrition. This was followed by a practical session in an apiary specially brought in. The major emphasis however was on financial management and recording. This involved cash flow budgets, long term budgets, accounting, financial survey results and so on. Outside experts from the Rural Bank, Ministry of Agriculture and other beekeepers were brought in to help in these sessions.

One of the lessons brought home most forcefully was that, more hives did not necessarily mean more profit per producing unit.

A practical session was held in which various colonies suffering from a pollen shortage, bacillus larvae, inbreeding and poor wintering were looked into. An apiary containing 70 hives of bees was also worked and evoked a lot of discussion. We were fortunately also, or perhaps unfortunate, to discover a hive which had been donated to the Telford Farm Training Institute by the Southland beekeepers suffering from B.L. so that evening we had a nice bonfire but unfortunately no sausages.



Made of mild steel tubing and weighs only 9 kg. It can, however, lift up to four very full supers of honey.

New hive cracker and lifter

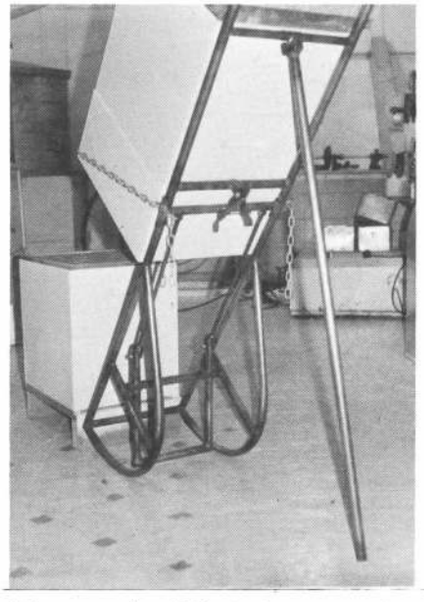
by Murray Reid

THIS INGENIOUS lifting and cracking device was invented and made by Peter Pearson of Darfield. Peter demonstrated it at the Canterbury field day last autumn and captured everyone's attention. Its application to commercial and hobby beekeeping was immediately obvious.

The whole unit is made from mild steel tubing and only weighs 9 kg, yet it was used, last season, to lift up to four very full supers of honey (the last season in Canterbury was a good one!)

The lifter can be used from the front, side or back of the hive, whichever is most convenient. In operation the lifter is placed up against the hive and the chain looped around the first honey super and then pushed down as far as it will go. The foot bar is pressed down firmly which raises the cross member holding the length of chain. This cross piece is free to slide up and down the main side supports, and will lock into a spring loaded catch when elevated sufficiently.

Depressing the foot bar tightens the chain and cracks the supers apart. Assistance from a hive tool is often needed to free the queen excluder. Now the honey boxes are easily rocked back on the rounded base sections and supported by the adjustable "third leg". The brood nest is now readily accessible for examination, or a bee escape can be put in.



The cracker/lifter in operation indoors.

With a little practice the honey supers can be set back on the brood boxes so neatly that no extra re-alignment is needed. The lifter can be used by one man but is most efficient if operated by two men, especially if using bee escapes. While one man lifts the honey the other uses the hive tool and places the escape board in position, and very little physical effort is needed.

On the debit side the chain, when tightened, does mark the supers on the corners but this is a very small price to pay for saving one's back. ■■

Small joy on roadsides

A DEADLY SERIOUS business for beekeepers... but comparatively light relief for the National Roads Board, when its October meeting broke away from discussions on financial restrictions to consider a request from the National Beekeepers Association.

The beekeepers asked the board to suspend road verge mowing operations between August and December, or set mowers 30 cm above ground level, so that bees could feed on the flowering clover.

The director of roading, Mr F.A. Langbein, said verges were mown for safety reasons and with maximum growth in spring there was a limit to the extent that cutting could be deferred.

"To set mowers 30 cm above the ground would be impractical with some mower types in use, and would reduce the interval between cutting and grass reaching a height which would obscure safety aids such as marker posts, and reduce sight distance on curves.

"While cutting is dependent upon weather conditions and must be programmed with other work, some choice does exist in timing and field forces should be asked to consider the local flowering season in deciding their mowing programmes," Mr Langbein said.

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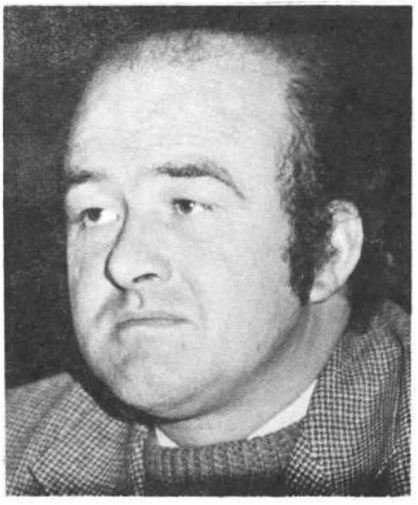
Christchurch
3 Garlands Road, Woolston, Christchurch. Phone 897-091



Gavin McKenzie

Making a bee-line to land of milk and honey

PAPUA-NEW GUINEA, a land of milk and honey. Conditions ideal for a family of potential working honey bees.

Temperatures throughout the year no higher than 80 degrees F, no lower than 50. Controlled rain and five star hives.

A tourist guide for a honey bee? No, it is where former NBA executive member, Gavin McKenzie, will be living for two years. Mr McKenzie left home on October 18 with his wife and two young boys for a life in Goroka, the Eastern Highland province of Papua-New Guinea.

His job is to promote honey manufacture there. It sounds easy but the job, part of New Zealand's foreign aid programme is much more complex.

Mr McKenzie will be giving instruction in beehive equipment, its manufacture and construction; queen bee rearing; swarm control; bee diseases; breeding bees; and the harvesting and marketing of honey, beeswax and pollen for economic production.

For these jobs Mr McKenzie has an ideal climate. The tropical climate of Papua-New Guinea is very reliable and Mr McKenzie said there would be no violent fluctuations like New Zealand's to kill a potential crop.

"Goroka is a town similar in size to Oamaru," he said. "The only difference is that instead of a main road, Goroka has an airstrip down its middle." Goroka has a population of approximately 12 000 people and Mr McKenzie will have to get to know their form of 'Pidgin' English.

Although the area is ideal for honey, Papua-New Guinea imports about 70 tonnes a year. And one of Mr McKenzie's jobs is to get the country self-sufficient in this field.

The job was advertised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs some time ago. Mr McKenzie has worked for the government before as an advisory instructor on beekeeping in Gore so he had that experience on his side.

He likes the challenge of the job. "Its basically the challenge of doing something in another country to assist other people get something started that appealed to me," he said.

Papua - McKenzie

Gavin McKenzie wrote to the editor shortly before his departure for Papua-New Guinea expressing his regret for having to resign to take up his overseas assignment.

Those wishing to contact Gavin can write to him at Box 359, Goroka, Papua-New Guinea.

Mr McKenzie's first job, when he gets over to Goroka is to set up 500 hives in a commercial beekeeping unit. The equipment and his service is supplied by New Zealand. The Papua-New Guinea Government provide his house.

The decision to establish the project was made by Mr V. Cook, the agricultural advisory officer for Oamaru, who recommended that assistance be given to the Papua-New Guinea Government to establish beekeeping. Mr McKenzie will be sending a monthly report to Mr Cook. "After two years if the area has beekeeping potential we would have gauged it," said Mr McKenzie.

After those two years Mr McKenzie hopes to see the beginnings of a thriving bee industry established in Goroka. He will have his problems. "I can only assist other people," he said. "My aim is to get the people of Goroka making their own decisions. This means that I can only show them, help them and advise them. Everything depends on my relations with the village."

If the venture is a success Mr McKenzie will still return to his Beeline business in Waimate. After two years in Papua-New Guinea, Waimate would expect to see a darker version of Gavin McKenzie, and a very much more experienced one.

Adapted from the "Waimate News."

FROM THE COLONIES

WEST COAST – SOUTH ISLAND

The almost complete failure of the kamahi to flower is of major concern to beekeepers especially those who depend on some stores being collected in late autumn from rata vine, which also failed, and an early and abundant supply from kamahi which has always been a reliable source providing weather permits the bees to operate.

This year heavy feeding has taken place to a late stage of spring and more hives than usual lost through poverty of stores.

One thing is for sure, and that is, that if our grader mentions anything about kamahi flavour on our grading notes there is going to be some hard questions asked as to where the flavour came from.

Should a crop eventuate it will have to come from rata.

There are reports of some trees already in full bloom at Whataroa on the flat but none elsewhere as yet (November 8), but some encouraging indications.

Peter Lucas,
Harihari

HAWKES BAY

Is this season going to be a repeat of the last? Beekeepers in the Bay are becoming just a little anxious as the wet spring drags on playing havoc with spring requeening, and general apiary management. We have missed out on any major willow flow and stocks of honey and sugar are now getting low. None of us are prepared to predict at this stage the outcome of the season.

But all our problems were put aside at our last meeting when we had the opportunity to get together and present Mr George Gordon of Hastings with his Life Membership to the N.B.A. Unfortunately he had not been able to attend conference at Taupo and Mr Bill Ashcroft passed on the association's best wishes and appreciation of his services to beekeeping.

Paul Marshall,
Hawkes Bay.

SOUTH CANTERBURY

In South Canterbury we have had the dullest and coldest spring for many years. August had the lowest hours of sunshine ever recorded, September was little better, while October was the dullest for two decades.

Willows came into catkin at least two weeks later than anyone can recall, but conditions were so cold and dull the willow flow was a complete failure.

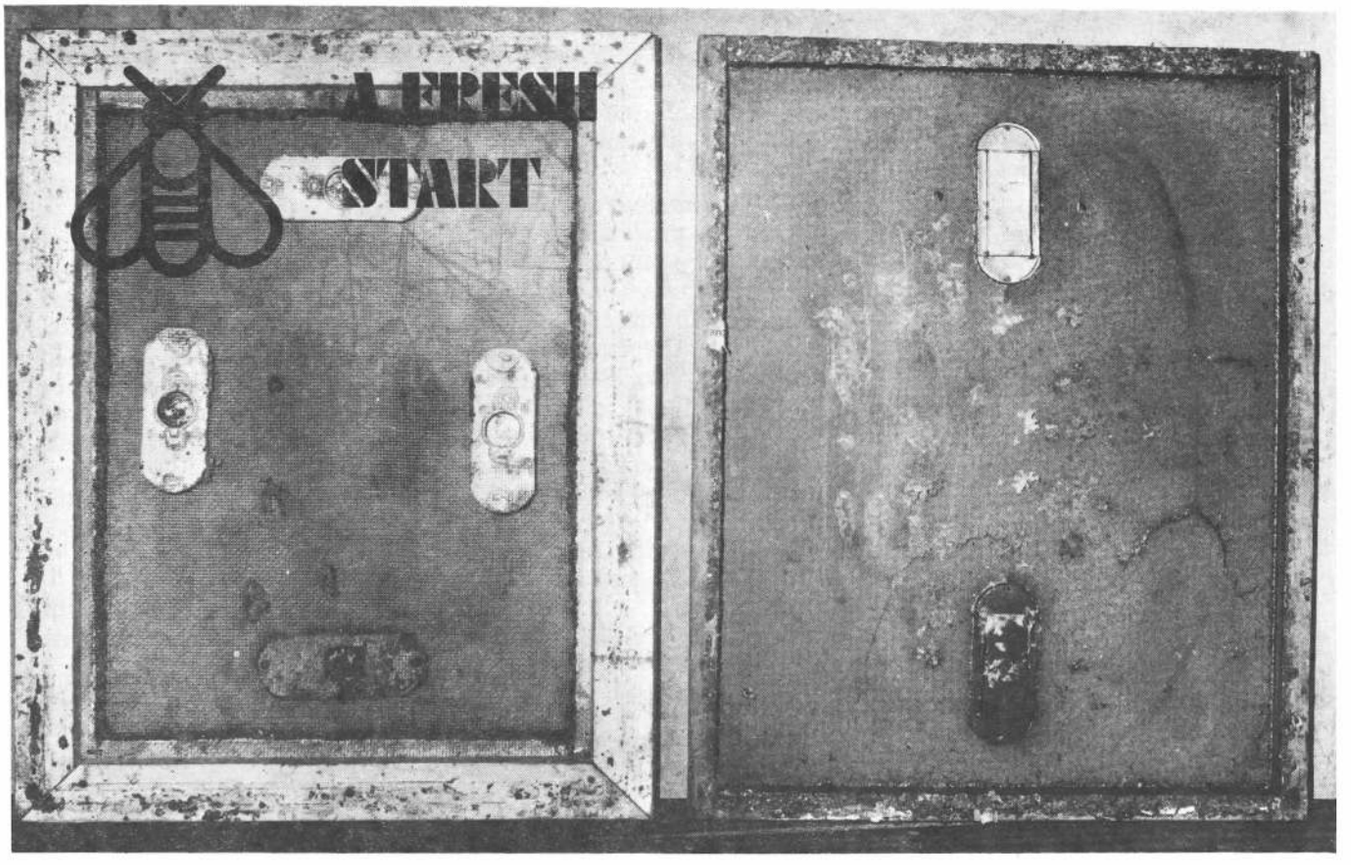
The bees came out of the winter in very good condition, but consumed stores at an alarming rate requiring continuous feeding to keep them in good condition and building up. Unless conditions improve considerably feeding will be necessary till well into December, perhaps until near Christmas as was the case in 1952.

In spite of so much dull and cold weather queen mating was little below average but it was common to find queens unmated up to a month after hatching. Drone laying queens are more common than usual.

Fortunately sufficient rain has fallen to ensure good pasture growth should temperatures rise sufficiently and so even though the spring has not been favourable prospects for a better season are good.

However we are not happy with the thought we may be required to feed so much for so long; this will be hard on both the nerves and the pocket.

Harry Cloake,
Timaru



Porter Bee escape boards. The best method for the amateur.

THE BUSY SEASON
and how to handle it

THIS MIGHT BE a convenient opportunity to consider the honey crop itself and how to handle it.

The first thing to say is: Always keep records. For the commercial operator this is a routine part of his business, but the amateur is inclined to be a bit slack. It is surprising how often it is either useful or convenient to refer back to past records but the really important one is, of course, the current one.

Do try and note down every trivial little detail. These records are your guide to present progress and future management, while memory alone is at best unreliable and at worst downright misleading.

In spring, note down the amount of stores, the brood area, the quality of comb, comments on site, condition of queen, the rearranging you have done, condition of hive and hive parts, notes on necessity to feed, recommendation for date of next examination, and so on.

Later examinations will be checks for queen cells and on hive build up, while summer notes will tell you examination details, when the flow started and ended, date excluder and supers added etc. Autumn notes will record the final honey crop, check on winter stores, date of re-queening and source of queen, date of hive entrance reduction, presence or absence of wasps and other items of interest.

This is merely a basic outline. Your own notes may greatly expand on these according to your own particular circumstances.

It is wise to keep each hive's record separate and to head each sheet with an appropriate identification plus past history of the hive in a few words to provide continuity on the spot. Some keep the hive record inside the lid between visits, but this can be a bit messy and inconvenient. Far better to take brief notes at each hive and to make a full — and clean — record after you have put the gear away, washed your hands and settled down.

Don't however, leave everything until then. It is amazing how details slip the mind in the drama of fieldwork. A typical record sheet is shown below.

The honey crop

How much of a crop can you expect? Let's look at some previous records:

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher and biologist (384-322 B.C.) stated that one swarm will bring 4½ kg to 7 kg of honey (10 lbs to 15½ lbs) with a record yield of 14 kg (31 lbs) which is not surprising under the beekeeping conditions of that era.

In New Zealand, the 1924 records give us an average commercial production of 39 lb per hive and I suspect that figure has not crept up markedly since then. (The same source states that persons desiring to take the beekeeping course at Ruakura 'may reside on the farm and pay for board, or they may have tents and make their own arrangements for meals' — a delightful comment on the times.)

Wedmore, in the 1942 reprint of his 'Manual of Beekeeping for English-speaking Beekeepers' quotes such figures as 593 lbs of honey from one hive in North Dakota, but goes on: "Australian records, however, put all others in the shade, enormous crops being obtainable from the honey-bearing forest trees. An *average* weight of 610 lbs per hive has been obtained in a good season in an apiary of 66 hives".

New Zealanders generally appear to be a very modest people, reluctant to boast of their good fortune or good management and the most impressive reference I have managed to come up with is from NZ Journal of Agriculture for November 21, 1927, where E.A. Earp, senior apiary instructor, states: "Now comes a report from South Canterbury of a crop taken from 60 colonies where the total yield amounted to 19 904 lb of white honey, or an average of 317 lb per colony."

My own best year was 1974 where my two best hives each produced 3½ full supers (the first before Christmas) and 12 - 20 sections, nothing up to the standard of the records quoted above, but still very welcome.

With which mouth watering thought, let it be said here that the amateur who looks after his hives properly, requeens when he should, prevents swarming, arranges brood when necessary, and provides adequate storage room for the bees should be satisfied with nothing less than 50 kg to 60 kg of surplus in a normal year, and that if he fails to get this it is his fault and not that of the bees.

Naturally the amateur should get more than the professional. For one thing there appears to be only a 30 per cent annual requeening rate in the commercial world whereas the amateur will requeen every year. The amateur is also able to give closer and more precise attention to his hives than the man responsible for several thousand and can well handle individual frames and boxes in a way no commercial beekeeper could spare the time to.

The amateur usually has his hives in one small area rather than spread over several thousand square kilometres and hence he knows exactly when the honey flow starts. Here in Rotorua, for example, the bees always start the honey flows on December 6, as a tribute to my birthday and have virtually completed it by the end of January.

In the south of the South Island the flow may start two weeks later and finish earlier. This is not to say they necessarily get smaller crops. The honey flow may well be shorter, but more intense in these areas.

This is something every beekeeper finds out for himself — elevation, exposure, aspect, all these and a hundred other factors are influential in deciding your honey crop, its size and when you will get it.

Section and cut-comb honey

If you, as an amateur with only a few hives, wish to produce comb sections, what do you do?

Once again, the simplest way is the easy way. There is no point in playing around with shallow supers, brood removal, de-queening, intensive pressure of numbers, and all the other hideously complicated manoeuvres a commercial operator has to go through.

Simply place two, three or four 8-section holders complete with sections fitted with extra-thin foundation in the centre of the first super above the queen excluder at the start of the honey flow.

Note that (a) if you try this without the excluder you may well get some cells filled with pollen in the sections and (b) if you put them before the flow the bees will refuse to work them and may leisurely work away in the side frames, which is not what you want and (c) do remove the sections as they are filled and sealed — not each individual one, of course, but certainly the central four or so, move the outside ones in and keep this sequence going.

Leave full sections on and the bees walk all over them with their dirty little feet and, given long enough, stain them and make them unsightly even though the honey is still good. You can get as many sections as you like with this method as long as the flow is on, but note that if you try it with only one brood chamber, an excluder and then sections, the bees will swarm, so two brood chambers is a must, for this and many other reasons.

Naturally the hive must be a strong one, which is not necessarily the case for cut-comb honey, where even a moderate hive can do good work.

Cut-comb is obtained, usually in shallow supers, by supplying the bees with full frames of thin, unwired foundation, removing when full, and cutting the comb out in segments, foundation and all. The bees may prefer it over sections but it is not as easy, nor as clean to handle for the amateur.

Back to sections. Some users leave the wood surround, the "section", on the comb when serving. This is wrong and not only makes the honey difficult to get at and leaves you with a disgusting honey-soaked remnant to scrape off at the end, but also tends to leave the plate smeared with propolis, a substance notorious for its ability to leave portions of itself all over cutlery, sink, tea towel and fingers.

The correct procedure is to slide a sharp knife round the four sides and allow the honeycomb to slide out in one block. The section itself may then be burnt.

Extracting of frames

You're an amateur, so you won't want to bother with fuming bees or blowing them or shaking them off or pulling ugly faces at them to scare them out of the supers.

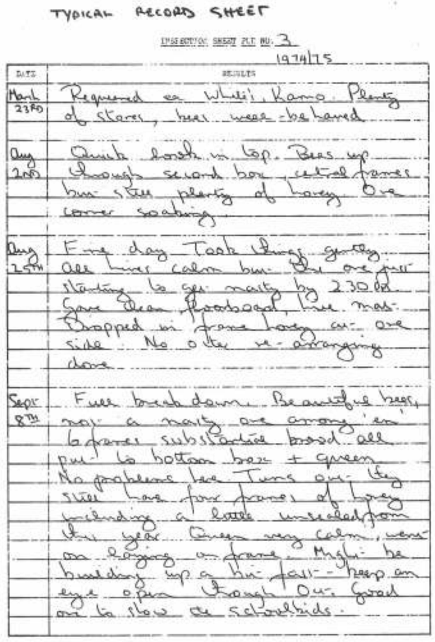
A rimmed hardboard lid with two Porter bee escapes works like a charm.

Slide it in over the top of the excluder by tilting the top boxes back (you're an amateur so your boxes won't be four or five high, they'll be two at most, taken off and replaced when full to prevent bees having to walk too far up). Put the board in as far as possible, bring boxes down on it, slide to fit, go round back, push boxes forward fully. Doesn't take more than a couple of seconds and if you can get a friend to help, so much the better.

Now leave overnight. Next day, take off supers, put on trolley or wheelbarrow — if you've done as instructed during honey flow they will be too heavy to carry without wheeled assistance — wheel to honey house. You haven't got a honey house? What have you been wasting your time on all winter?

Take inside, close doors carefully because once those bees get a sniff of honey and find a way in your peace is at end, and extract immediately while the honey is still warm.

Cut off the cappings with your electric uncapping knife that your wife gave you for Christmas, after a bit of prodding. Do two frames at a time, turn knife off, whirl in extractor a few times each side. It takes very little time to get most of the honey out if the frames are warm and the supers are going to go back on the hives to be cleaned up so why worry about the last few grammes? Take out frames, uncap next two, turning knife on before and off after, and carry on until all are done.


TYPICAL RECORD SHEET

INSPECTION SHEET PLT NO. 3

1974/75

DATE	RESULTS
March 23RD	Requeened ex White's, Kamo. Plenty of stores, bees well-behaved
Aug 2ND	Quick look in top. Bees up through second box, central frames but still plenty of honey. One corner soaking.
Aug 25TH	Fine day. Took things gently. All hives calm but this one just starting to get nasty by 2.30 PM. Gave clean floorboard, hive mat. Dropped in frame honey on one side. No other re-arranging done.
Sept 8TH	Full break down. Beautiful bees, not a nasty one among 'em. 6 frames substantial brood all put to bottom box + queen. No problems here. Turns out they still have four frames of honey including a little unsealed from this year. Queen very calm, went on laying on frame. Might be building up a bit fast — keep an eye open though. Out. Good one to show the schoolkids.

Put the boxes straight back on the hives they came from, leave two days, use Porter boards again, put each box in large plastic bag, seal with electrician's tape, store in cool place. Remember who you are and never mind about poisoning the moth or keeping it out with chemicals. Moths do not eat through plastic bags and the same bag can be used year after year, sealing any little holes with the same tape.

The honey

The honey you extract, run out of the extractor into whatever you have. If you have a large crop, it may pay you to have a barrel with a tap at the bottom and a lid at the top. Scum consisting of particles of wax, bits of propolis and so on will rise to the surface and the clean honey may be run out of the bottom. If your crop is less than this, it may be kept in any suitable covered container and, if for your own use, a bit of wax and other rubbish will not worry you.

I run the honey from the extractor into buckets, empty the buckets into a 44 gallon drum, leave it there for a couple of days or as long as I like — it isn't going anywhere. Once again, a plastic bag over the top keeps it scrupulously clean and allows me to see how much is there without lifting the lid all the time. Don't let it crystalise there though!

Back to extracting

Don't try to put straight into jars. Everything gets too sticky to play around like that. Remember, if a girl's best friend is the pill, the extractor's best friend is a damp cloth to wipe his hands, the extractor handle, the knife handle, the door handle, etc etc.

Don't try to strain your honey. It can be done if you dampen a couple of layers of mutton cloth and tie over your bucket or whatever, but is another messy business and sooner or later, and usually sooner, it overflows and floods the floor. Commercial operators warm the honey to liquefy it before straining. You are well advised merely to let it settle.

These comments are merely guidelines and may be altered to suit your own circumstances, but do not let the process become over-complicated, do not let the combs get cold, always put the supers straight back on their original hives for cleaning, never let the moth corrupt.

If you are short of supers during the flow, extract and replace for the bees to refill. Don't clean the extractor, merely put one plastic bag over top, another smaller one tied with a rubber band over the bottom tap, and clean everything at the end of the season. The electric knife, clean with a damp cloth while still hot, allow to cool, store in plastic bag.

Cappings

Unfortunately whatever I say will not apply to you. There are too many variables — size of crop, availability of equipment, co-operation of wives. All I can say is what I do, which is to extract into a dustbin (never used for its original purpose, I swear) with 8 mm holes drilled in bottom and lower third of sides. This bin is fitted inside another bin, this one lined with a large plastic bag. Honey drains through the holes into the bag. Another large bag

My extraction corner.

"Dirty little bees' feet."

fits over top of whole thing after uncapping to keep all clean, and this unit may be left to drain for several days.

Cappings are then put into 5 gal tins with top cut out and heated overnight at 80 degree C, then strained through two layers of mutton cloth into plastic buckets where the wax sets on the top and the honey settles to the bottom. A stick is left down the side and removed when the wax is set to leave a hole for the honey to be drained out and flushed away. Don't try to save it as the heating changes its composition and renders it unsuitable for bees or humans — sad but true.

The wax is then re-melted, usually altogether at the end of the season, re-cast in buckets without the stick, the buckets are held upside down under hot water, the block falls out, the little honey at the bottom is washed away and the wax is traded in on new foundation. The whole sequence is crude but effective.

Well, space has run out on us with the whole subject barely scratched. It merely remains to wish you good crops and good extracting. And good luck!

N.B. NOW is the hour to order your Autumn queens.

P.S. I have had a query on the making of mead. The simplest formula known to me is one provided by my good friend John Angell who unfortunately died last year while on a church working bee, but not before passing this recipe on (I leave it in Imperial units for the older generation).

Ye olde honey meade

Ingredients

3½ lb of honey
6 pints of water
1 cup of strong tea
1 pulped Granny Smith apple

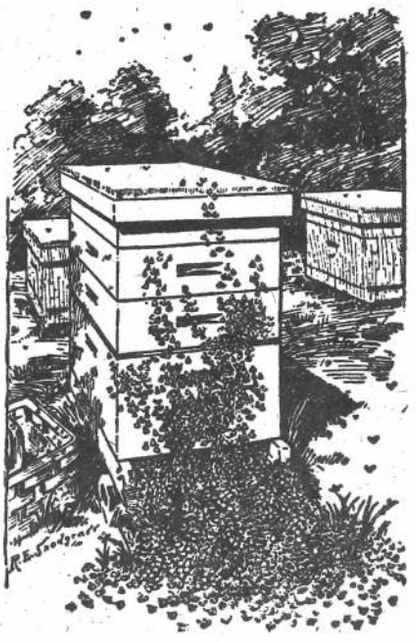
Simmer together for ten minutes, cool to blood heat, add a teaspoon of baker's yeast.

Using normal wine-making hygiene precautions, allow to work until all fermentation ceases, which may take three to four months, clear and strain carefully, and bottle. Makes one gallon. Must be stored for at least six months.

May be turned into the ancient Saxon spiced drink called 'methaglyn' by adding ½ oz. root ginger, 6 cloves, and some grated nutmeg or cinnamon to the ingredients.

So — there you are. I am quite sure the Editor will be willing to set up a taste panel to test the mature product!

Readers' queries



David Williams, our resident hobbyist adviser, is willing to answer readers' queries about problems they have with their hives. "My articles are designed to be both practical and provocative," he says. "There may be many points amateurs would wish to raise and would do so if told to write in. I would be happy to provide answers to the best of my limited ability and can always call on the literature or the experts for the really tricky ones."

Mail your questions to: "A Fresh Start", Box 176, Carterton. They will be answered by Mr Williams personally and suitable ones submitted for publication.

Dear Mr Williams,

My daughter has a hive of bees which we acquired from a swarm last summer. The only trouble is that the bees are rather prone to stinging and so to try to overcome the trait we have ordered two new queens from a breeder which are due in about October.

As I am not well-versed in bee culture, please explain the procedure for introducing these new queens to the hive.

Yours,

Ken Dibble,
R.D.2, Opotiki

Dear Ken,

Obviously you aren't going to wait to the very day you get the queens to arrange the hive the way you want it. If you do, you make the job more difficult for yourself.

So get the hive into order when convenient and keep the hive loose and ready for your major operation. If the queens don't arrive soon, you will need to keep an eye open for swarm cells anyway.

The queens themselves will arrive in a plastic queen cage, complete with attendants and a supply of candy. If the weather is not quite right, keep the queens in your hot water cupboard until it is. I like to brush a little warm water through the small grill myself, just to make it easier for them to work the candy.

When the right day comes, go through your hives, find the queens and kill them. I find it easiest to flick them off the frame onto the ground and tread on them. Don't worry, they won't fly away. Then, having broken away the end of the cage to expose the candy, simply suspend the cage with this hole pointing down between two central combs. Close the hive up, walk quietly away, and leave them for one week.

After the week is up, check that the queen has been released and that she is laying. Don't go to any trouble over this, because all you want to know is that she is out, that she has been accepted, and that the bees have not rejected her and started swarm cells. It does happen occasionally.

Just the main points again. First, get the hive ready ahead of time and keep an eye out for swarms. Secondly, if conditions are not good, wait until they are. Thirdly, kill off old queens, introduce new. Fourthly, wait one week before checking.

David Williams.

HONEY DELIGHTS

FLIGHTS OF APICUREAN FANCY

Stepping beyond bread and honey

by Angela Fussell

FRESHLY HARVESTED honey, warm just-out-of-the-oven bread with a dab of creamy yellow butter — what a yummy taste treat.

But have you ever thought of going one further from the bread and honey stage and using honey in cooking? Honey has many wonderful qualities — did you know that honey is one of the few foods readily available pure and unadulterated — its natural chemistry keeps it fresh for years without additives or special care, and consequently many guidelines to the use of honey come from ancient and traditional practices. Honey has been used in cooking at least since Roman times, lending its perfume to delicate cheese mixtures, enhancing vegetables and occasionally meats, and it is this agent that causes cakes and biscuits, over long periods of dark storage, to develop an incomparable bouquet of spices and fruits.

When using honey in baking remember that honey goods do brown more, are softer and moister than if made with sugar, and, of course, keep very well.

If only wanting to sweeten a little, use a light-coloured honey as the light-coloured honeys seem to have a less pronounced effect. So, when wanting a strong sweetener, use a dark mellow honey. But do remember to use honey in moderation, for if it disguises or completely takes over the natural flavours of the other ingredients, the use of honey in cooking will be a disappointment.

Freshly harvested honey is at its peak of flavour, so the autumn is a good time to try out the different sorts of honey: Try honey in the comb as well as the dark, light and strong liquid honeys.

In most mixtures honey can be substituted directly for sugar, allowing for its greater sweetening power and its added flavour: usually a smaller amount is needed.

So how about trying out a few recipes using honey. Since not everybody enjoys baking, the recipes selected are an entree, a main course dish and a dessert.

Try — and enjoy.

TOMATO SHERBET

Honey enhances the fresh tomato flavour without making it unnaturally sweet, creating a sherbet that is extraordinarily tasty and beautiful.

3 cups tomato puree
3T lemon juice
1T onion juice (squeezed in garlic press)
2 T honey
½t ground fennel seed
salt and pepper

If no tomato puree, substitute canned tomato juice, reducing it by boiling until slightly thickened. Add the remaining ingredients to the puree, adjust seasoning, pour into a freezer tray, cover with plastic wrap, and freeze until quite firm.

If it is frozen solid, allow the sherbet to soften at room temperature for half an hour before serving.

Scoop into avocado halves and garnish with fresh herbs.

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FAR EASTERN CHICKEN

6 whole chicken breasts, skins removed
1T cinnamon
½T curry powder
1t salt
1 clove garlic, crushed
½ cup honey
¾ cup grapefruit juice
1 cup crushed pineapple

Place chicken breasts in a single layer in a large frying pan. Combine the honey, cinnamon, curry powder, salt, and garlic and blend in the grapefruit juice.

Pour over the chicken, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring and turning the chicken once.

When the chicken is tender, transfer to casserole dish and combine the pan juices with pineapple. Spread this mixture over the chicken pieces. Grill six inches from the heat for five minutes, or until lightly glazed and bubbling.

Serve with rice.

***

HONEYED ORANGE CREAM

This delicate concoction is derived from the orange fool served at a famous Englishmen's club. Not oversweet, it is a perfect choice to follow a robust menu. In preparing the menu, remember that the gelatine and whipped cream mixtures should be combined when they are similar in consistency; this avoids separating.

1T gelatine
½ cup cold water
grated rind of two oranges
grated rind of one lemon
the juice of 4 oranges
the juice of 2 lemons
2T honey
1½ cups cream

Dissolve gelatine in the water. Set in a small pan of simmering water and stir until clear. Grate the rinds of two oranges and the one lemon directly into a large mixing bowl and add the fresh fruit juices. Stir in honey and gelatine mixture.

Refrigerate until it begins to thicken and has the consistency of unbeaten egg whites. Whip the cream until it forms peaks and gently fold the two mixtures together.

Pour into a serving dish and chill overnight or at least four hours before serving. Garnish with whipped cream and mint.

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BOOK REVIEW

"The Art and Adventure of Beekeeping", by Ormond and Harry Aebi, Unity Press, 184 pages, soft cover, $5.95.

PERHAPS ONE of the most confused citizens of our time is the small-time beekeeper of about six months experience slaving under a lather or conflicting advice from well-meaning helpers. Their willingly given aid doesn't fit with advice gleaned from "nothing can go wrong. . . " instructions from a book or two.

"The Art and Adventure of Beekeeping" is a godsend to such anxious types. Although an American book, it has much to offer a beginning beekeeper in New Zealand.

Perhaps its best point is that the authors devote some space to using their mistakes to illustrate management techniques. It's a very warm feeling to know that the people who hold the world record production from one hive can make so many mistakes.

It is also good to know — for instance — how to hive a swarm which doesn't hang off a branch in the classical text book manner. Trying a "sharp tap" on a swarm in the middle of a thicket doesn't seem to work for a beginner!

On a more technical level, many useful instructions and hints are given. Such things are bee noises, bee behaviour and numbers of bees working are used as guides as to what's happening in the hive and are not available in most of the other readily available books. These observations are used instead of calendar months as guides as to when to do things — a much better approach, especially during seasons like the last two.

This pleasantly anecdotal book is illustrated with some clear and characterful line drawings. It is thoroughly good reading.

Reviewed by David Kelly

"A Manual For New Zealand Beekeepers", by Charles William Cotton. First published Wellington 1948, second edition by Newrick and Associates, 1976. Collector version (1150 hand-numbered copies only) $14.95. 115 pages.

THE MANUAL For New Zealand Beekeepers has lived up to all of its pre-release publicity. It's certainly no guide to working bees in a Langstroth hive, though if you happen to desire to house your colonies in early colonial tea chests, the manual would leave any other text for dead.

Its language is quaint and picturesque, the quality of printing and paper in keeping with the publishers intention — to create a collectors' piece.

If you can't think of a suitable Christmas present for your beekeeping husband who has everything, the manual would be the ideal gift.

New Zealand's last peasant industry

by Richard Beeby

Richard Beeby operates 1000 hives in Northern Southland, and is based around Lumsden. He has recently put most of his hives on pallets (see Murray Reid's article in this issue) to enable him to utilize his hives for the greatest possible return. This is an edited version of a paper he presented to the beekeeping seminar held in Gore during August.

BEEKEEPING IS probably the last peasant industry in New Zealand.

Think about it: When it comes to selling and undercutting prices we have no peers. And if someone moves into our district (even if grossly understocked), our hackles rise.

Nevertheless, the peasant beekeeper of New Zealand is coming of age. The first legislation that will bring us into the 21st century will be the health regulation soon to be enacted. Just think, someone is going to inspect our honey houses (the cheek of them).

Why, we will not be able to use garnite fittings with their so many parts of lead per million; we might (heaven forbid) have to cover the honey we bring home to keep down its residual ash content; we might even have to be tidy.

Future facts to be faced:

A shorter working week is a certainty — there is only one trouble about this — the week has not enough days in it when the pressure is on and no-one can yet convey this to the bees. Also, if you are employing labour, the days of the full depth super are numbered. They're too damned heavy. A weight restriction will be imposed by the Labour Department — say 25 kilos, three-quarters depth.

Of most concern for the future is the narrowing field forage. Pollen sources in the wild are fast disappearing: Bronze heath at the suggestion of superphosphate, and the small outcrops of podocarps echo with chainsaws.

A good year for farmers is a bad year for gorse, the prime source of pollen in winter and spring.

I am sure ground temperatures become lower as gorse and hawthorn hedgerows disappear and that this is a disaster for such a temperature -susceptible plant as clover. The increased use of pesticides must be policed by the industry as they become more and more complex.

For beekeeping to be a viable proposition, it must be financially rewarding . . . you can't just live on a way of life. Costs must be lessened with, say, fewer visits, bigger apiaries, one multi-purpose vehicle, consolidation of areas.

Higher prices are not the answer — China sells with complete disregard to production costs.

Costs can be controlled, but price received cannot!

The Third World has the potential to saturate the world market if it had the right incentive — a high world price.

We have the option of higher production per hive or more hives per man. I opt for more hives per man as it seems to me the easier way — to squeeze an extra 10 per cent per hive is too demanding labour-wise.

A logical extension of this is to have contract extraction — just think, the Health Regulations met and less labour commitment for the beekeeper — you could do all that autumn requeening that you have talked about for years with help from university labour.

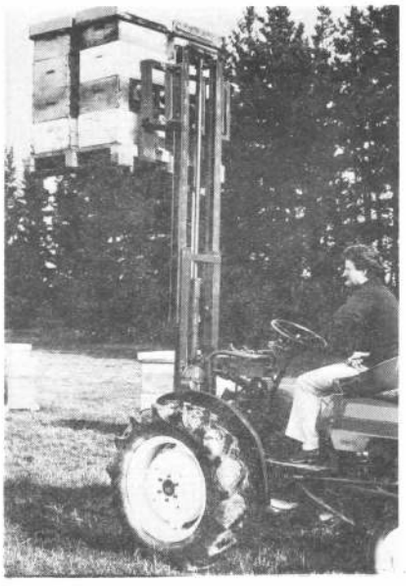
Think.

With autumn requeening, just feeding during spring. University labour becoming available when the heavy work and pressure increases, what is the potential per permanent man? 1000 or 1500 hives?

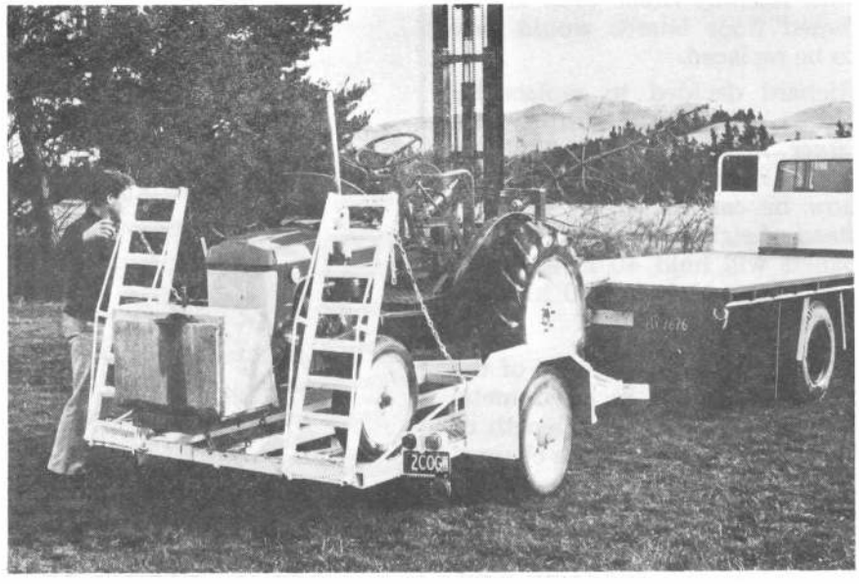
The need for field mechanization as yet has not been answered adequately, but to quote Chairman Mao "In agriculture mechanization is essential".

This I translate as meaning if you are still trying to do things manually you are dead.

T.G. Bryant photo



Richard Beeby's specially adapted tractor and forklift at maximum lift.



The tractor in travelling position on its trailer.

Shifting pallets of beehives by tractor

by Murray Reid, apicultural advisory officer, Christchurch

EACH YEAR tens of thousands of beehives in New Zealand are shifted for one basic reason — to collect more honey. This honey may be used purely as feed honey to save expensive sugar or if it is of a suitable quality and flavour, it will be extracted for human consumption.

Many mechanical devices have been built to assist beekeepers loading hives or boxes of honey on and off their trucks. These include motorised barrows, gantry type loaders and boom loaders of various designs. Most of these are designed to handle one hive at a time.

Mr Richard Beeby, a commercial beekeeper in Lumsden, Southland, has been forced into shifting a large number of his hives because of prevailing drought conditions. In Richard's home area the nectar flow can cut off completely as early as January 8. By shifting his hives, Richard can still collect a honey crop from areas where the season may be a bit later or to areas not affected by droughts or cold wet conditions. He can also shift hives onto riverbeds where the bees can obtain pollen particularly in the spring.

Richard considered all the loading devices currently in use and decided to experiment with a system of pallets loaded by a trailer-borne tractor. This is something new in New Zealand, although variations on the theme are used in the United States and at least three other NZ beekeepers are now using palletised hives of one design or another.

Richard chose the pallet system primarily because he wanted to shift a large number of hives in a hurry and to do it on his own. He doesn't employ any full time labour. The pallet design is based on that commonly used by the breweries and is made from lengths of tanalised 75 mm x 50 mm pine with 150 mm x 25 mm decking and base plates (see Fig. 1). The overall dimensions are 1219 mm x 990 mm and each pallet accommodates four bee hives. A better dimension would be 1219 mm x 1016 mm and then the pallet could also be used to hold empty supers with no overhang. However the 1219 mm x 990 mm size was determined by Richard's original truck, a low loading 3122 kg Bedford.

The bees have a 50.8 mm landing board. This means that when the pallets loaded with hives are pushed close together, there is still 12 mm clearance between the projecting hive lids. This clearance is vital to ensure the hive boxes are not dislodged during loading.

The hives have 9 mm x 25 mm risers with galvanised nails projecting through them to hold the bottom box firm. Richard is not particularly happy with these riser pins and intends to experiment with metal dowels, fencing staples, or design a riser that holds the bottom super firm while remaining water-tight.

The one major problem with these pallets where the decking also forms the floor boards of each hive is one of disease. If any of the hives become diseased

with *Bacillus larvae* then the infected floor boards would have to be replaced.

Richard decided to replace his old 3122 kg petrol Bedford for a larger more powerful 3320 kg diesel Bedford. Ten pallets can now be carried on the deck instead of eight as before. These 10 pallets will hold 40 hives, up to five boxes high, or 80 hives, if each is two boxes high.

Running down the centre of the truck deck is a recessed metal channel (see Fig. 2). A length of angle iron is slid into the channel and the pallets are loaded up to this on either side. Welded at intervals along the angle iron centre piece are short rope holders that contain enough rope to tie down each pallet and its hives.

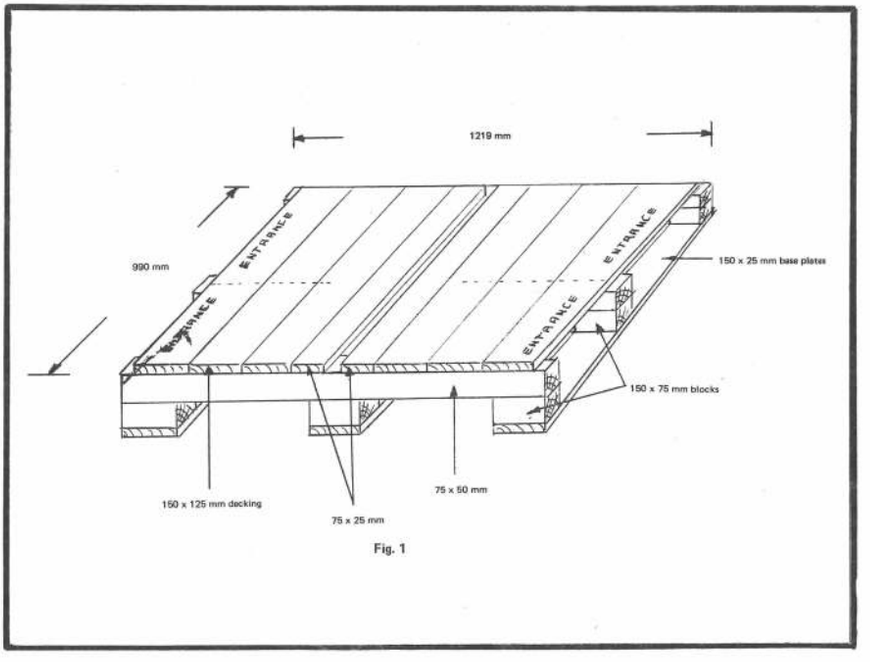


Fig. 1

Lengths of 100 mm x 50 mm treated pine, with V notched ends, are laid across the hives on each pallet and the ropes fed through the notches before being tightended. Square galvanised nails, across the notches, prevent the ropes jamming into the 100 mm x 50 mm timber too much.

When hives are shifted they are normally two boxes high. This means 10 pallets go on a truck deck five each side of the angle iron strip and the other 10 on top of these. Like most beekeepers, Richard has an assortment of bee hive lids and any irregularities in height between the lids of hives and the upper tier are compensated for by off cuts of 25 mm boards carried for this purpose.

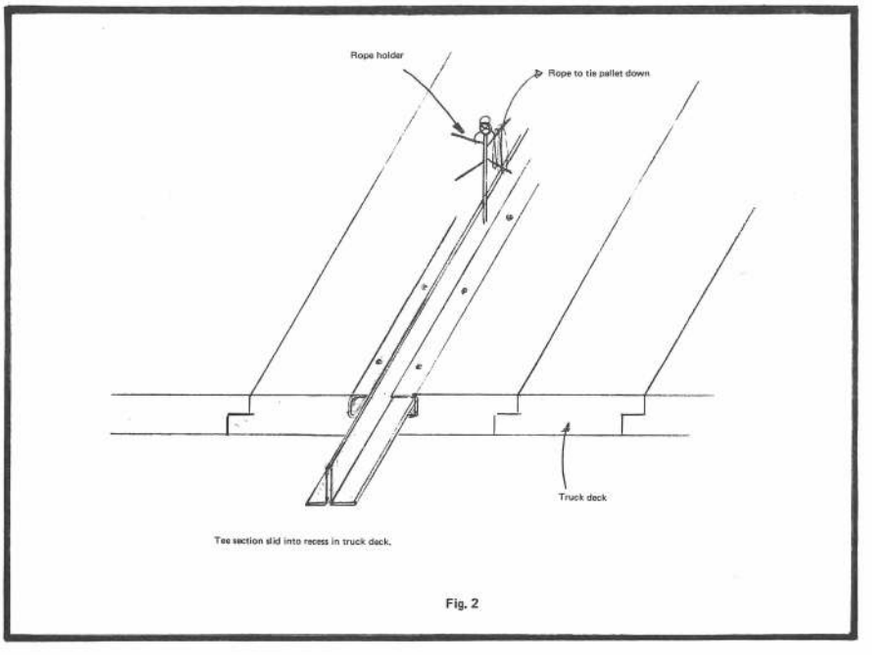
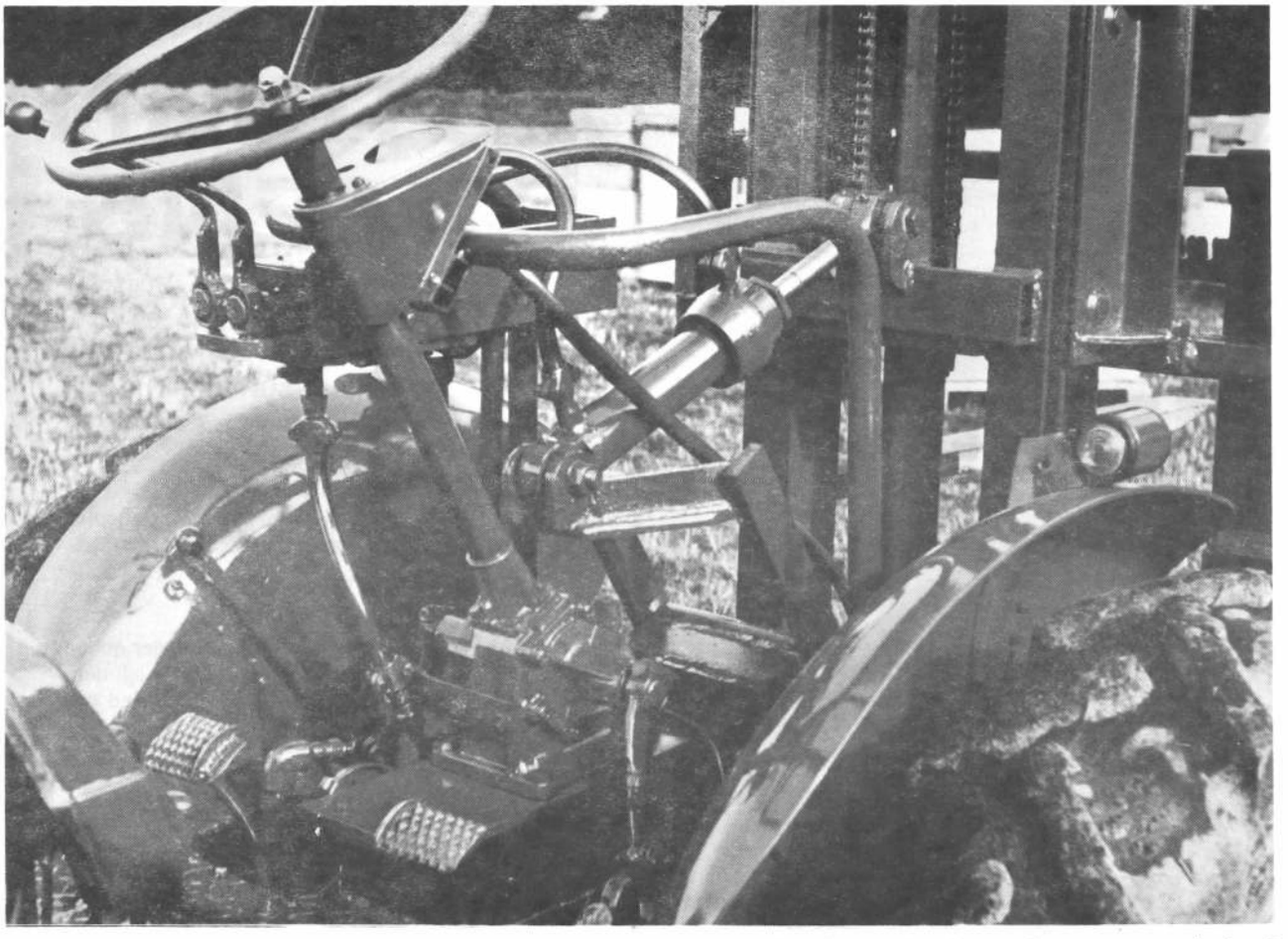


Fig. 2

The hives are loaded onto the truck by a BMC Mini Tractor (Richard originally had a Ferguson TEA tractor) which is towed behind the truck on its own trailer. The trailer is a converted horse-float especially strengthened and stressed for its new job. All purchases and modifications have been carried out so that the tractor and trailer unit would weigh under 2 tonnes. Above this weight, air brakes would be needed on the trailer.

Belcher 1 tonne capacity forks were fitted on the rear hydraulics. In the Ferguson TEA Richard left the tractor controls alone and spent most of his time, when loading hives, twisted around in his seat looking over his shoulder. In an endeavour to make life easier for the operator Richard has reversed nearly all the controls in the BMC Mini. For example he relocated the seat, the steering wheel and steering box, and the clutch and brakes were transposed using under the chassis lay shaft linkages, the rear tyres were reversed, the fuel tank was encased in concrete and located at the front of the tractor as a counter weight to the forks, the front steering arms were recranked 180° so they now lie over the front wheels, and the differential was also reversed. This was one of the most difficult aspects of the conversion as the lubrication system had to be rebuilt. In the process Richard lost the lock on the differential but this was of no real consequence. The tractor has nine forward gears and three



Where the action takes place: Showing reversed steering wheel and steering box, plus transposed clutch and brakes.

reverses. It also has live drive which the Ferguson didn't, i.e. the hydraulics on the forks can be operated with the clutch depressed.

The conversion was a time-consuming job and a frustrating one as pieces of equipment were obtained from many sources and much trial and error work was necessary to obtain clearances and correct operation of relocated parts.

Like all systems this one has drawbacks. For example the tractor needs a lot of flat ground to load hives onto the truck, even though it has a very tight turning circle of approximately 6 m. Also, when the trailer is hitched onto the truck the whole unit needs a larger turning circle to get in and out of each apiary. This has meant re-siting many apiaries.

The trailer with tractor is an extra weight that affects fuel consumption of the truck.

Perhaps the most serious disadvantage is that Richard is now fully dependent on mechanical devices and these have a habit of breaking down at awkward moments. When this happens to conventional boom loaders, the single hives can always be manhandled on and off trucks. Hives on pallets are a different story altogether.

On the credit side, Richard now has the ability to relocate a large number of hives in a relatively short time with little physical effort. Perhaps most important to him is the fact that he can now do this work on his own. This is an important consideration when the business cannot support a full time employee and the available or suitable manpower in a small town is limited. If the first cargo of bees is loaded the night before, Richard can make two trips in a day and shift 160 two-storey hives.

A group of four hives on a pallet is a particularly stable arrangement in the paddock. The hives are not easily knocked over by cattle. This saves expensive fencing of apiary sites. Richard is also increasing the number of hives per apiary with no obvious decrease in honey production.

It is amazing how many uses can be found for a fork lift tractor around the honey house and home.

As an extra bonus, Richard can now use his tractor to assist him to pull out his truck when it becomes bogged in some muddy paddock or access way. He can also transport hives out of, or winter feed into, apiaries that have become inaccessible to a big truck. ■■

A skep containing bees at Rothamsted.

At the end of April 1975, MAF apiary instructor Trevor Bryant and his wife left New Zealand for a five month overseas tour. Essentially tourists, visiting the United Kingdom, the Continent, and the United States of America, their interest in beekeeping could not allow them to neglect some of the major attractions to any apiarist.

Visits were made to Rothamsted Research Institute and the Bee Research Association and Trevor was fortunate to be sponsored by the Guernsey Beekeepers' Association to lecture beekeepers and give a practical demonstration in the Channel Islands. The following article is an account of Trevor's observations of beekeeping and bee research overseas.

"Black, with a very hot tail. . ."

ROTHAMSTED

At Rothamsted I met Mr John Walker, apiary officer, Dr John Free and Dr J. Simpson and was able to look at many aspects of work carried out at the institute.

Mr Walker's position is similar to that of apiary officers here in New Zealand. His main function is to co-ordinate pollination services; run field trials using bees belonging to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; and to train young apiarists. The laboratory also analyses samples of combs for disease.

In discussions with Mr Walker it quickly became apparent the benefits that we in New Zealand have with legislation to provide a back-up in fighting Bacillus larvae. Most disease control work in the United Kingdom is carried out by part-time inspectors whose work is co-ordinated by the apiary officers of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Dr John Free is well known to many of us for his work and many scientific publications. For the last three years he has been almost wholly committed to work on the pests of oil seed rape.

However, he has been able to look into pollination aspects of this crop.

Though the oil seed rape grown in England is the European variety and is largely self-pollinating, Dr Free has shown that yields can be increased by 13 per cent with honey bee pollination.

The European variety is sown in the autumn and flowers in early spring. Because of its high erussic acid level a lot of work has been done on crossbreeding, particularly with Canadian varieties, to achieve a lower errussic acid level. Results of this work could benefit the English beekeeper as Canadian varieties largely depend on insect pollination.

Dr Free has visited many overseas countries on foreign aid programmes, in particular Iran and other Arab countries. He sees apiculture playing a big role in these countries as they strive for self-sufficiency.

Dr Simpson was able to show me some of his experiments on swarm control. Of particular interest was the recording of queen piping and then playing it back to colonies. In an observation hive it was possible to see bees literally freezing on the frames when piping was sounded.

His work to date has shown that cramping the colony rather than restricting egg laying area will induce greater swarming tendancies.

BEE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

My visit to the Bee Research Association was most interesting. The organisation translates works into English, collates and publishes scientific works relating to apiculture, and ensures that this information is available to those interested. Many books are published. One recent publication, "Honey, A Comprehensive Study of", edited by Dr Eva Crane, is a must for all beekeepers and honey packers.

The director, Dr Eva Crane, is a world wide authority on many aspects of apiculture and it is to be hoped that we in New Zealand will have the opportunity of seeing her if she comes to the World Apimondia Congress in Adelaide in 1977.

Before I left New Zealand I was asked to look into the use of sugar from sugar beet for bee feed. At the Bee Research Association I read several publications on this subject. Sugar from beet can be fed to bees provided it is refined. Work done on the Continent and in England has shown that the unrefined sugar causes an abnormally high mortality in

worker bees with subsequent bad effects on the development of the colony.

I was able to attend a general meeting of the association at Oxford and this gave me the opportunity to meet and talk to many United Kingdom Beekeepers. Like many organisations, they are faced with a financial problem and are calling for more members.

At this meeting a lecture and slides of stone age man's rock paintings depicting honey hunting was given. The lecturer, Mr H. Pager, along with many of his colleagues, believes that bees were very important in the mythology of early man.

The meeting was held at the factory of Manly Pure Foods, which is the second largest honey packing plant in the United Kingdom. The plant is unique for its variety of packed specialty lines. Honey from 30 countries is handled and sold throughout the United Kingdom. Exports are made to 40 countries, including Canada, United States of America, and Australia.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

The highlight of our trip was undoubtedly the trip to Guernsey, one of the islands of the Channel Island group. Our hosts, Mr and Mrs L. Roberts, were extremely hospitable and showed us many facets of island life and its history.

The Channel Islands were occupied by the Germans during the Second World War and in the museum it was interesting to see New Zealand Red Cross parcels and many other items which linked the island with New Zealand.

We originally were to spend three days on the island but managed 10 days and visited Sark, Herm, and Jersey (all part of the Channel Islands group).

Within the sphere of the Guernsey Beekeepers' Association there are 42 beekeepers; the largest of these owns 40 colonies. The bees were black with a very hot tail and a high swarming incidence. The lecture and slide evening was attended by 35 beekeepers and 24 were present at the practical demonstration the next day.

EUROPE

Fifteen days travelling in Europe by train did not allow us much time to look at beekeeping on the Continent. Our itinerary included vistits to Paris, Cologne, West Berlin, Warsaw, Copenhagen, Oslo and Bergen.

Unfortunately we were unable to reach Warsaw. Before leaving London we applied for visas at the Polish Embassy. They returned our application forms and informed us that visas could be obtained at the East German/ Polish border.

On arrival at the border, at one o'clock in the morning, the border guards refused us entry and entry visas, removed us from the train at the first police station in Poland, where we spent four very uncomfortable hours. We were then put on a train back to West Berlin, thus depriving us of our main goal.

The reason for our visit to Warsaw was to meet Professor J. Woyke, world authority on genetics, at the Warsaw University. The rest of the trip was only half as interesting but far more enjoyable.

In Bergen, Norway, I had the opportunity to speak with an apicultural scientist working on the problems of chalk brood. This is a major problem in the Scandinavian countries and it appears to be due in part to cold, damp conditions, the long winter months, and is something of a genetic problem.

Norway's beekeepers are mainly hobbyists whose colonies produce on average 20 kg of honey; this being a good crop. It was unfortunate that we visited Norway when we did. If we had been a month earlier I may have been able to get a job with their scientific department breeding queens at their breeding establishment just north of Oslo. This could have been an excellent opportunity to experience first hand beekeeping in Norway.

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Beekeeping in England and the Continent is very much a hobbyist or part-time occupation. There are a few commercial apiarists; the largest being in Scotland operating over 2000 colonies. Many of the beekeeping techniques practiced are rather old fashioned by our standards, and steeped in folk lore.

Crops are low with a 20 kg surplus being a good crop. There is no honey flow as we know it; the nectar being gathered from various sources throughout the spring, summer and autumn.

Pastures are predominantly of ryegrass, and clover is almost non existent. There is however, a swing back to a grass/clover sward because of the high cost of nitrogen and this could improve crop surplus for the English beekeeper.

Beekeepers that I spoke to say there is a considerable market in England for good queen bees. There is, perhaps, an opportunity here for an enterprising New Zealand breeder.

Hive types vary somewhat, but the most common are the British National hive and the W.B.C. hive. None of these impressed me as all were very difficult to work. Many younger beekeepers are turning to the Langstroth — one more variety to the jumble there.

At Hill House it was very interesting to see a colony housed in a pottery hive of a design used by the Greeks in 2000 BC. There was also a skep containing a colony at Hill House and Rothamsted.

Prices for honey varied somewhat, from 50p to 75p per pound (approx. $1.00 - $1.50 NZ). Most honey being sold in liquid form. The marketing and treatment of New Zealand honey left a lot to be desired. An example of this was seeing Manuka honey, jet black in colour (overheated by the English packer) being blended with clover honey. The packer apparently did not realise that manuka was a thixotropic honey! In contrast New Zealand comb honey was well presented. ■■

This article is an edited version of a paper presented by Ivan Dickinson to the Gore beekeeping seminar in August. It represents a personal viewpoint, rather than the attitudes of the National Beekeepers' Association or the Honey Marketing Authority.

Why I supply the H.M.A.

ONE OF MY first adult decisions was to become a producer of honey. I had spent some weekends and holidays working for a beekeeper and liked what I did and saw.

Having made that decision I found that at the end of the season I had on my hands a product called honey which I had to sell to get a return that would pay the debts which I incurred in its production.

Here was my first introduction to retail packing and marketing. What did I find out?

You get an awful sore backside sitting at a one ton tank filling out one pound pottles, that is, if they arrived for you to fill. Everyone I asked to put lids on had a better job to do after they had done it once. Storage and delivery was not easy. The pottles had to be put in a carton to take to the retailer and they were not cheap.

What price shall I charge? What a decision that was. Anyway, I didn't need to make it, for nearly every retailer I asked to buy wanted to know what discount I would give him as so and so gives him so much.

By the time I had disposed of the crop, I had not made the return I felt I should have. Not only that, some of the those I sold to felt that I didn't need the money right away anyway and made me wait for it.

Never mind, I said, next season will be better, I shall have more honey and now I know all the problems.

What a laugh that was.

When I went back to the retailers the following year they told me that my honey was too dear, or they have a better discount or Joe Blogs was in the other day and sold him honey. Those outlets I did retain didn't want it just now, but would take a couple of dozen of ones and twos in the meantime. Big business!

But they didn't tell me that every time I had the truck loaded and ready to go out and do hive management they would ring me up and want some honey delivered round that day or else.

To cut a long story short, I found that the packaging and marketing of honey, were another complete ball game. I was not cut out for it and neither did I enjoy it. Taking all things into consideration the increased return was not always there.

In other words, I wanted to be a honey producer. The marketing of the product needed more expertise than I could hope to obtain.

So where to now?

My first experience in supplying a packer almost put me out of business. I put this down to several reasons, my inability at that stage to foresee the problems that can arise such as, buyers' creditworthyness, freight and handling charges and so on. My second experience selling to a packer was considerably improved on this and I consider that taking all things into account I received a fair deal from him. The only point that I did not like about the situation was that quite often he did not require all my output. However, this packer went out of business after a time and I had to look again.

As a beekeeper who was in the process of expanding from some 200 hives to a proposed 900-hive operation, what did I require in a buyer? Price wise, the best I could get, one who would take all my crop irrespective of how much I had. And most of all, one that was financially sound and would have a good rating with my creditors and bankers. One other point was that he had to uplift the honey when I wanted it out of my store. The Honey Marketing Authority met most of these requirements and it is to the authority that I have supplied my entire crop for many years.

Given rapid inflation and the effect that modern farming methods are having on production, I believe that honey producers will have to opt out of packing their own crop and concentrate on either production or marketing.

New Zealand and Australia are the only two countries in the world that have a statutory marketing organisation, and I under-

stand other countries wish they had the same set up. I believe there are a considerable number of beekeepers who feel the same as I do and require the services of an organisation that the HMA provides.

Over the last two years the HMA, through direction from government, has developed a base price scheme. In the short term this is a major step forward for the producer as it enables him to plan more effectively the financial side of his business.

I say in the short term because the reserves which have been established through the setting up of this scheme have not had a substantial draw on them. It appears there is a strong opposition to a further equalisation levy.

Last year the industry asked the HMA to grant private export licenses to honey packers to enable them to sell retail packs overseas. At this year's conference a call for private bulk honey exports was substantially carried.

The decision on this important issue is the responsibility of the HMA Board and it will not be an easy one. In support for private exports, we have had some producers who advocate the change quoting that they could return producers as much as 80c/kg.

I cannot for the life of me see how we can operate a base price scheme and allow private exports, unless private exporters are required to contribute to the reserve fund. The contribution to reserves cannot be made entirely by one section while the other has free rein. I believe that to drop the base price scheme to allow private exports would be a disaster. If private exports are permitted under any scheme they must be on equal terms to the supplier to the authority. There must be adequate control of price, quality, quantity and suppliers to the authority must in no way be put at a disadvantage. The same would have to apply to bulk honey exports.

The suggestion has been made that private exporters could pack and export at considerably less cost than the authority which has to meet its overheads regardless of the size of the crop. If a private exporter is a businesman at all, he will require a profit margin on his throughput and I would venture to suggest that his costs and profit margin would be very close to the overall cost incurred by the authority.

If private exports are permitted, a producer wishing to go into it would at the very least need the following knowledge: A knowledge of how to go about obtaining a market, how to communicate by correspondence to overseas buyers, and how to go about meeting all documentation and export requirements. His packaging and plant would need to be of a standard that would meet ever increasing overseas standards.

It is my opinion that if private export licenses are made available, we will find considerable interest in exporting by persons or companies not currently associated with the industry. A multiplicity of outlets will in no way give a better return to producers. The local market situation proves this.

Acquisition is a question that I have been asked to consider and I must admit it is a matter to which I have given little thought.

However, let's have a look at it:

Total acquisition by the authority would very quickly solve the local marketing position. Price at retail level would be under greater control and the authority would have a control on the amount of honey on the local as well as the export market.

HMA overheads would be spread over a much larger quantity of honey hereby giving a better unit return to producers. I would assume that there would be controls on sale of honey from beekeepers' premises and this would have its problems as the Apple and Pear Board have found out.

One of the areas that does concern me with acquisition would be the rigidity of the system. *Healthy* competition is a good thing for both producer and consumer and I would have some reservations as to whether our product would lose out under such a set up.

Apart from this factor, it would be a very difficult system for beekeepers to accept. It would meet with strong resistance under the guise of the right of the individual and the cause of private enterprise.

I feel it is better to regularly have a look at the existing system and change it if necessary to meet present-day needs. A completely new system is harder to accept than a variation on a theme and this is what we should be doing, even in our own businesses.

It is my opinion that the only way an acquisition system could come in would be by way of legislation where government would almost force the producers to accept it. The same way as the base price scheme came into being.

Another possible alternative is the formation of co-operatives by groups of producers. Although historically these have not been too successful in the beekeeping industry, this is not to say they could not be very successful.

Providing careful thought and planning is given to the setting up of a co-operative not only for the marketing of honey, but also the extracting and bulk production of honey, I see no reason why it cannot be viable. Under such an organisation, the producers in the set up could also derive benefits also from bulk buying of beekeeping equipment and plant.

The advantage the HMA has over a co-operative so far as finance is concerned, is that the HMA has available to it funds at a modest interest rate which it uses for the purchase of honey from producers. This has been of significant importance in the past in enabling the HMA to fulfill its role for the producer.

Local and export honeymarketing must keep pace with up-to-date selling and packaging methods and any producer, packer, co-operative, or authority which is not prepared to up-date its own procedures, leaves itself wide

"I believe that honey producers will have to opt out of packing their own crop and concentrate on either production or marketing". A group of beekeepers learn the fine arts of production at the recent management course at Telford.

open to a fall-off of not only producer support but also in highly competitive markets.

World transport and communications have developed in recent years to a stage where million dollar deals are made by very astute business men in a matter of seconds. I believe there are very few producers, no matter what product they are selling, who have, or could hope to have, the expertise to match these professional marketing people.

Whether you have a half tonne or 100 tonnes to market, you will be required to know how to conduct all the many steps which lie between the producer and the consumer. Off the top of my head, I can think of: Buying and selling; grading, packing and labelling; blending and quality control; pricing; promotion; distribution; accounting inward and outward; transport and storage; financing (which is of course coupled with risk taking); marketing intelligence, and last, but by no means least, profit making.

These are the reasons that I believe marketing has become a field of its own and if a producer is aiming to get the best return per unit from his hives, he has not the time to devote to this complex operation.

As a producer of honey, it is your decision as to how you dispose of your product. You are under no obligation to your company or partnership to obtain the best return for that product and if you are neither a company nor partnership your obligation is to your wife and family.

Markets and marketing techniques have changed and will continue to change, just as the producer changes his methods of management for better production/hive. Honey is firmly established as a world commodity and its world market has a profound effect on any person or organisation engaged in any aspect of the beekeeping business. That means, you as a producer also.

It is in your interest to be acquainted with what is happening and endeavour to support those who are actively engaged in obtaining for you the best stable level of return for your product.

The future of honey will, I believe, be guided by the old saying "that the customer is always right". Even in circumstances in which it appears that he is incorrect, it must be remembered that in the end both his wishes and his judgment must be respected and will prevail.

On the local market, packaging and presentation must be looked at if we are to hold our own with other spreads and any promotion at all will assist in lessening the necessity for exports. As I stated at the 1976 conference, we are still underselling our products at the local level and it is here also that better returns can be obtained and the present government appears more sympathetic to this avenue of increased returns.

FOR SALE

Pender, 2 frame bench model hand operated extractor.

Very little use, condition as new. Genuine offers to:

R.C. Mercer,
63 Clyde Road, Wairoa,
Northern Hawkes Bay.

Is that hobbyist down the road a member of the NBA? Get him to become one, or buy him a subscription to the NZ Beekeeper for Christmas. Only $7.50 from the friendly lady at the NBA, Box 4048, Wellington.

WANTED TO BUY

Hand operated extractor needed by:

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1,500 exotic butterflies, moths, beetles. 64 page catalogue $1.50. Also wanted suppliers of colourful dead butterflies and beetles. Complete Scientific, P.O. Box 307, Round Lake, Illinois 60073, U.S.A.

EMPLOYEES WANTED

Experienced beekeepers to work from April to September 1977 in honey operation in Northern Alberta, Canada. Living accommodation and cooking facilities provided. Excellent wages; bonus at end.

Write to:

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Wanted, Assistant Beekeeper

2 bedroomed house available, plus sleepout.

Duties would include servicing roadside stall. Remuneration could be by salary or share participation.

Apply:

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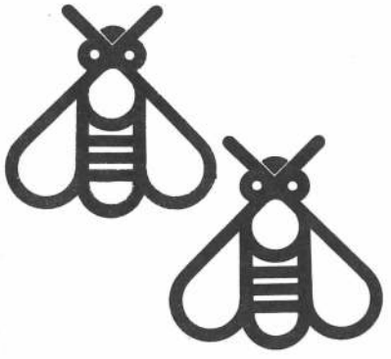

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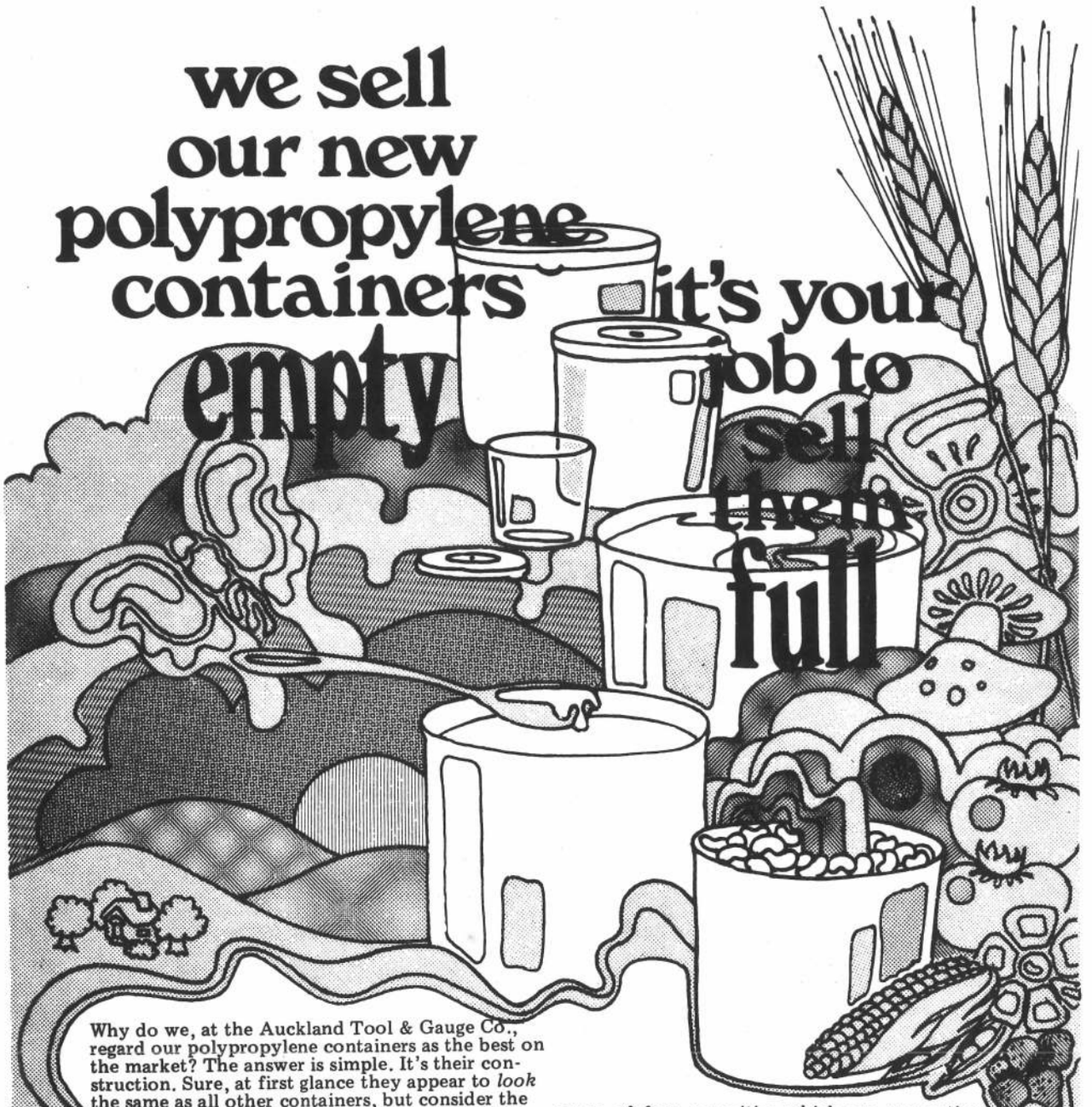

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