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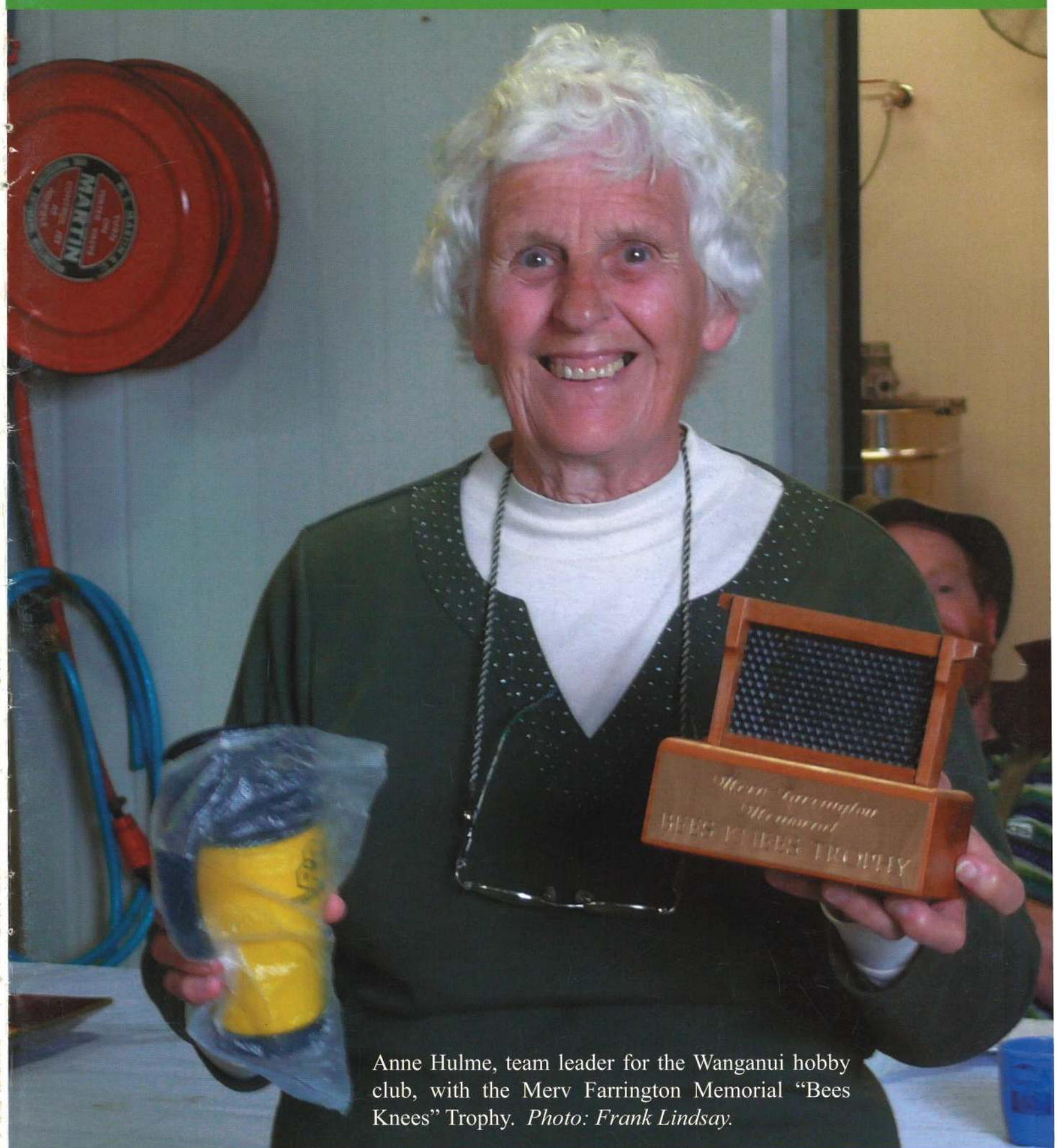

Anne Hulme, team leader for the Wanganui hobby club, with the Merv Farrington Memorial "Bees Knees" Trophy. *Photo: Frank Lindsay.*

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Deadline for articles and advertising

December issue: 10 November

(NB: No issue in January)

February issue: 10 January

All articles/letters/photos to be with the Editor via fax, email or post:

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(See page 2 for full details)

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NZ honey bees under new threat

New Zealand honey bees are under new threat from the *Varroa destructor* mite following reports of resistance to treatment in the Auckland area.

Bees from a hive near Auckland have been tested in the field by leading bee and honey scientist Dr Mark Goodwin of Plant and Food Research, and showed signs of resistance to synthetic pyrethroid treatments.

This is a huge wake-up call to the beekeeping industry but also for New Zealand's entire agricultural and horticulture industries.

This was not entirely unexpected but it is concerning because of the possible ramifications to the pollination industry, which is conservatively estimated at $3 billion.

Dr Mark Goodwin said overseas evidence suggests that as resistance to varroa treatment spreads over the country, it will be more and more difficult for beekeepers to keep their honey bees alive.

While it is still unknown what causes Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), which is blamed for the mass disappearance of bee colonies in the United States, some research suggests the varroa mite acts as a key vector, opening up hive populations to the impact of other viruses and pests.

Dr Goodwin said, "One such virus also thought to play a key component in the development of CCD is Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus (IAPV) which, although present in Australia, is fortunately not in New Zealand".

International scientists tested 50 hives suffering from CCD and found 95 per cent were infected with IAPV.

Dr Goodwin said because of this, and the fact there is so much that we still don't know about CCD, it is vital that we consider any risk to New Zealand's bee colonies as an extreme threat.

Even though resistant varroa have been found in the Auckland area it is very hard to know where they originated, and all beekeepers throughout New Zealand should be vigilant in checking their hives.

It is very important beekeepers monitor their hives closely, continue to alternate their varroa treatments and take the following measures to slow the risk of nationwide varroa resistance.

Beekeepers who notice signs of resistance to varroa treatment in their hives should contact the NBA immediately on 04 4716254 and test their colonies to confirm the diagnosis.

- Daniel Paul and Gemma Collier
Joint Chief Executive Officers,
NBA

What should beekeepers do in the meanwhile?

- Continue to alternate treatments, in conjunction with Apivar treatment, between one of the two available synthetic pyrethroids.
- Check hives before Christmas to ensure treatments applied last autumn and spring have worked effectively. This is very important even if colonies are not showing signs of resistant varroa.
- Remove honey early this year when varroa levels are still low and apply varroa treatment for eight weeks. This will give time to check whether treatments are working, and fix it if they are not, before levels of varroa get too high.

How to spot signs of varroa resistance to treatment in hives

The first sign of resistance is usually a colony or colonies that have high levels of varroa still present immediately after a treatment has been applied.

However, because high mite levels can also be caused by invasions of varroa from other colonies, it is important to test suspect mites for resistance.

The directions on how to carry out a test for resistance is included in Appendix 7 of the *Control of Varroa: a guide for*

New Zealand beekeepers (revised edition). This must-have guide for all beekeepers was written by Mark Goodwin and Michelle Taylor of Plant and Food Research and is available for purchase from the NBA.

What should beekeepers do if they think their hives are showing signs of resistant varroa?

If you think varroa treatments are not working as effectively as they should, it is important to test suspect mites for resistance. Refer to the previous section for information about how to carry out a test for resistance.

If the test confirms colonies are developing resistance to varroa treatment, please contact the NBA *immediately* on 04 471 6254 for more information and advice on what to do next.

History of *Varroa destructor* in New Zealand

Varroa destructor was first recorded in New Zealand in April 2000 when it was found in Auckland. The survey that followed identified a large number of colonies infested in the Auckland region and northern Hauraki Plains. Isolated infestations were also found in hives in Hokianga, Te Puke, Otorohonga and Taumarunui.

After consultation, the New Zealand government adopted a two-year managed control programme. The purpose of this programme was to give beekeepers time to learn how to manage varroa.

A line was established across the centre of the North Island, over which it was not permitted to move hives or beekeeping equipment that may carry varroa. The purpose of the line was to slow, rather than stop, the southward spread of varroa. This line stayed in place from April 2000 until September 2003. By this time, almost all of the 10,000-plus apiaries north of the line were infested, while about 100 infested apiaries were known south of the line.

The spread of varroa south of the line was enough to deem that the line was no longer useful. The line probably delayed the spread of varroa into the lower North Island by about two years, largely by restricting the movements of migratory beekeepers. A further temporary movement restriction line was put in place to cut off the eastern portion of the lower North Island, to slow the spread of varroa further. This has now been removed. Varroa has now spread throughout the North Island, including Great Barrier Island, and has been reported as far as mid-Canterbury in the South Island.

Source: Control of varroa: a guide for New Zealand beekeepers, *Mark Goodwin & Michelle Taylor, 2007.*

Due to work pressures, Frans Laas has been unable to write his President's report this month. We apologise for any inconvenience.

MAF investigates presence of P. alvei *in New Zealand*

In September, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) announced that it would undertake further work on the Import Health Standard (IHS) for honey. This would delay honey imports from Australia for possibly another two years.

This is fantastic news. However, the report also stated that there is sufficient evidence to show the presence of *Paenibacillus alvei (P. alvei)* in New Zealand to see a reassessment by ERMA of the 'new organism' status of this organism.

This evidence relates to a *P. alvei* sample found in a bumble bee and tested by a group of Universal College of Learning (UCOL) students. MAF then had the sample independently tested by an Australian lab, which confirmed the bacteria as *P. alvei*. This diagnosis was then confirmed again by AgResearch, which replicated the Australian lab's test.

Since then, MAF has informed the NBA that it is unlikely to make a submission to ERMA to change the status of *P. alvei* until it has further evidence.

To gather this additional evidence, MAF is currently liaising with the UCOL students who should have begun testing in October of another batch of samples.

Depending on what the students find, MAF may investigate the presence of *P. alvei* further when it conducts its annual exotic surveillance in February.

MAF is currently pulling together a team to work through the other recommendations made in the IHS review and will advise the NBA of its 'next steps' schedule once this has been developed.

We will post updates at www.nba.org.nz and disseminate information regarding the status of *P. alvei* and the IHS to all branch presidents and secretaries as it comes to hand.

- Gemma Collier and Daniel Paul
Joint Chief Executive Officers

Wellington team at the Southern North Island Branch field day, with joint CEO Gemma Collier identifying plants. Photo: Frank Lindsay.

Croatian research on controlling nosema with a herbal preparation

Researchers in Croatia have published the paper *Experimental treatment of Nosema disease with 'Nozevit' phyto-pharmacological preparation (Preliminary report).* Their findings have been published in two journals and they have presented these findings to the New South Wales Apiarists' Association conference, the North American Beekeeping Conference, Reno, Nevada, USA, and at Apimondia 2009 in Montpellier, France.

The full report is too large to reprint here but the abstract of the paper is presented below, along with commentary from Plant and Food Research scientist Dr Louise Malone. Additional information about the situation in New Zealand is given at the end of this article.

Readers wishing to read an abridged version of the report can refer to the digital edition of *The Beekeepers Quarterly*, Number 95, March 2009. (The article starts on page 48 although the Table of Contents says it's on page 46.) The link is: http://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/Launch.aspx?referral=other&pnum=&refresh=j17QLd060X8t&EID=6f580fb0-a871-416b-8505-6fe637c58db6&skip=true

Abstract from the preliminary report

Authors: Ivana Tlak Gajger, Zdravko Petrinec, Ljiljana Pinter, Zvonimir Kozari
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Nosema disease is a microsporidian Nosema sp. parasitic disease of adult bees. The disease is spread worldwide, and it causes significant losses to apiculture and economy in general. EU and Croatian legal regulations prohibit the use of antibiotics in the treatment of bee diseases, due to possible development of resistance to used chemotherapeutic agents, masking of disease, possible relapses, as well as harmful antibiotics residuals or their secondary metabolites in bee products. Therefore, the production and use of natural phyto-pharmacological preparations in the treatment of Nosema disease is a necessity. The aim of this research was to test the performance of the herbal preparation 'Nozevit' as a preventive measure against artificial infection with N. apis *spores, and its curative effect in the treatment of bees affected by Nosema disease.*

Comments from Dr Louise Malone

"This work has also been published in the *American Bee Journal*, which, although not peer-reviewed, is abstracted by reputable scientific literature search websites, such as the ISI Web of Science, suggesting that it has some scientific credibility. The authors note that the preparation did not produce a cure, but seemed to result in lighter infections in bees which should reduce the total numbers of spores available for infecting others in the colony. Please note that this preparation would not be as effective as the antibiotic fumagillin, but it might help to reduce nosema's impact."

Situation in Australia and New Zealand

Nozevit® is registered in Australia but not in New Zealand. We understand that there is interest in registering Nozevit® in New Zealand.

Congratulations to Dr Mark Goodwin

The NBA congratulates Dr Mark Goodwin, who has been awarded one of four 2009 New Zealand Science and Technology Medals by the Royal Society's New Zealand Science and Technology Medals Committee on behalf of Government.

Dr Goodwin, from Plant and Food Research in Hamilton, received the award for his work on honey bees and crop pollination practices.

Dr Goodwin is a world leader in crop pollination and honey bee research and is passionate about sharing his knowledge, presenting at conferences worldwide, visiting schools and local groups, delivering education programmes to growers and beekeepers, and is the lead author of several books. Mark was awarded life membership of the NBA in June 2009.

Congratulations Mark!

Get in quick for your copy of Starting with Bees

Earlier this year, the National Beekeepers' Association produced a publication perfect for the novice beekeeper.

Starting with Bees provides loads of information from the history of beekeeping and beehive equipment needed, to legal obligations and pest management.

You can get your hands on this 44-page booklet for $11.50 (including postage).

To order your copy, email secretary@nba.org.nz to obtain a publication order form.

First aid for workplaces—a good practice guide

Every year thousands of people are injured or fall sick at work—some seriously.

A quick first aid response can mean the difference between life and death, or can reduce the severity of the injury.

First aid can also help protect businesses, by reducing the impact an accident can have on productivity and the cost of employees taking leave. There is also a legal requirement for workplaces to take all practicable steps to provide first aid facilities under the Health and Safety in Employment Regulations 1995, and to have procedures for dealing with emergencies under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 (HSE Act).

A new guide launched by the Department of Labour, *First Aid for Workplaces — a Good Practice Guide*, helps identify what first aid is needed in individual workplaces. It was developed following consultation from a wide range of industry experts.

It takes account of recent regulatory changes, including the withdrawal of the Factories and Commercial Premises (First Aid) Regulations 1985. It replaces the Department of Labour's previous guide *Guidance Notes on Providing First Aid Equipment, Facilities and Training (2001).*

This guide will be useful to employers, the self-employed, and people who hire contractors. It will also be useful to first aiders, first aid trainers and organisations that supply or maintain first aid equipment.

For more information, visit www.dol.govt.nz

Source: Department of Labour, accessed 21 September 2009 from http://osh.govt.nz/publications/booklets/first-aid-2009/first-aid-2009_01.asp

Australian SHB study trip report Part 4—Small Hive Beetle trapping and killing

During my recent trip to Australia as part of a NBA group to study Small Hive Beetle (SHB), we travelled between Brisbane and Canberra and met numerous beekeepers, biosecurity officers, scientists and apiary inspectors. This is my interpretation of ways to control and kill the SHB in and around hives and also in your honey house.

My first observation was that the bees would corral the beetle into corners and trap them to prevent them roaming the hive. Of course the beetles don't like this so they hide, giving you the opportunity to capture them in the likes of baseboard traps through entry slots that the bees can't fit in. When the beetle enters these refuges they can be filled with several different substances such as vegetable oil or apple cider (which they drown in), or the use of absorbacides, lime, or diatomaceous earth, which dehydrates the beetle's body, thus killing it. Using the trap as a refuge from the bees is employed in several different ways: in the base of the hive, in the frames and under the lid of the hive. All of these methods catch beetles but do not eliminate them completely.

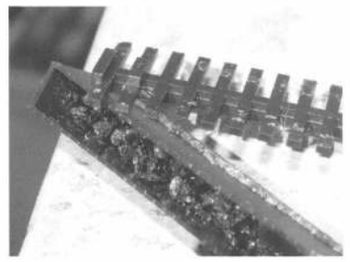
Also, coreflute (real estate signage boards) can be placed on the top of the frames as a refuge to the beetles and can be removed, burnt or frozen, to kill the beetle. There is also the possibility of pesticide bait being applied, but nothing is approved for use inside beehives in Australia yet.

As a commercial beekeeper all of these SHB control options appear to be time consuming and costly. Another possibility is hive traps (apiary traps), which use an attractant like fermenting honey or pollen. This idea looked more viable to me, but it appears that the beetles aren't attracted to honey and pollen as much as to a live hive. Senior Scientist Diana Leemon of the Animal Research Institute in Brisbane is currently trying to develop an attractant for use in apiary traps by using different yeast smells. Her tests and trials appear very hopeful and I believe that this may be the best way to control and eliminate hive beetle.

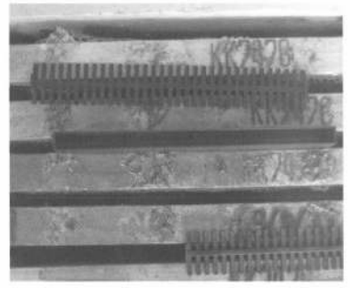
We also covered the topic of destroying larvae that are pupating in the ground. Permenthin drench is sprayed on the ground both around and under the hive to kill the larvae when pupating. Natural agents were another in-ground control discussed. Soil-borne nematodes and fungi may be another way to kill pupating larvae.

SHB in the honey house

During the trip we visited several large beekeeping outfits and it soon became apparent that the beetle has the same impact on the honey house as the beehives themselves. When honey supers are removed from the hive for extraction, a large amount of damage can occur within three to four days if the beetle and larvae are not destroyed. The most common and viable option used, once extraction of boxes is finished, is that boxes and frames must be treated with Fumitoxon tablets (phostoxin gas) or by freezing. Freezing seems to be more widely used: the freezing of the boxes needs to be done for a sufficient length of time to cool the entire amount of boxes. For example, a complete container may take up to three days to cool to -5°C. Boxes must be kept at freezing point until returned to the hives; otherwise beetles will re-infect frames.



AJ Trap in parts, showing dead beetles caught in it.



Two AJ traps in place between frames, one with the top off to fill with Apple Cider Vinegar (ACV), oil, etc. Photos: Jody Mitchell and Barbara Pimm.

- Gary Sinkinson, Southern North Island Ward study group representative

'Beekeeping for Beginners' in Franklin

For more than 15 years Pukekohe High School has organised a *Beekeeping for Beginners* course as part of its Community Education programme. This course may be held perhaps for the last time this year due to Government funding withdrawal.

Franklin Beekeepers Club members present the course to about 15 students each year. (Too many students make seeing and hearing difficult while gathered around hives during the practical sessions.)

The course comprises six two-hour classroom sessions, covering sufficient subjects to give students enough knowledge and confidence to at least get started, provide encouragement to learn more later on, and perhaps expand their beekeeping activities. The classroom work is augmented by two practical sessions where the students can get their hands among the bees.

The photo here shows some of the class at their first practical session in August this year, held at the apiary of Bombay Beekeeping Ltd.

- Peter Biland
Secretary, Franklin Beekeepers Club

News from the IBRA

After almost 14 years "in charge" Richard Jones is stepping down as Director of the International Bee Research Association. He will not disappear altogether but will concentrate on expanding the magazine *Buzz Extra*, take on a role as roving ambassador for IBRA and perhaps be the bookshop assistant at various venues. Above all he hopes to devote more time to rambling the lesser-used paths and indulging his lifelong passion for driving classic cars.

Sarah Jones became the Executive Director of IBRA on 1 October 2009. Sarah joined IBRA in 2005 in a part time and very specific role to produce a digital catalogue of the material in the historical collection with a view to making this material more widely available. The web site development and initiatives with new publications and products for the shop are all her work and so she is well placed to take on the full time and demanding role of Executive Director.

Norman Carreck took on the role of IBRA's Scientific Director on 1 October. Norman has been Senior Editor of the *Journal of Apicultural Research* since 2007 and will continue in that role with an additional broader scientific brief. A skilled and qualified entomologist who has kept bees since his schooldays, Norman's years at Rothamsted Research Institute and now his position at Sussex University make him well qualified for this important part-time role.

New publications from IBRA

The latest publications represent the first two books in a series that will look at different aspects of the IBRA Historical Collection. There is an index in each book that gives museum acquisition numbers so that each item can be traced within the collection.

Beekeeper's Protective Clothing: IBRA Historical Collection, Part I. Produced and published by IBRA in Cardiff 2009, 32 pages, soft back, £5.00 plus postage and packing.

Skeps, Tools And Accessories: IBRA Historical Collection, Part II. Produced and published by IBRA in Cardiff 2009, 36 pages, soft back, £5.00 plus postage and packing.

Both are available from the IBRA online store: http://www.ibrastore.org.uk/

Also, a revised edition of H A Dade's seminal work on dissection has been published with enlarged diagrams in a separate pack: **Anatomy and Dissection of the Honeybee** by H A Dade, published by IBRA, Cardiff as a **revised edition** 2009. £27.50 plus postage and packing.

For further information, visit their websites www.ibra.org.uk and www.jaas.org.uk

Source: Abridged from an IBRA press release October 2009 and information on new IBRA publications, supplied by Richard Jones, 14 October 2009.

Honey Valley: now it's the bee's knees

In July, Timaru-based honey exporter Honey Valley New Zealand won the Export New Zealand Canterbury Small to Medium Exporter of the Year award. The awards were presented at the Air New Zealand Cargo Canterbury Export Awards, held 8 July at the Christchurch Convention Centre. We congratulate Steve Lyttle and Carolyn Ball on their achievement.

The following article by Tina Law appeared in the 'BusinessDay' section of The Press, *(Christchurch), Monday 3 August 2009, page A7. It is reprinted here with the kind permission of* The Press.

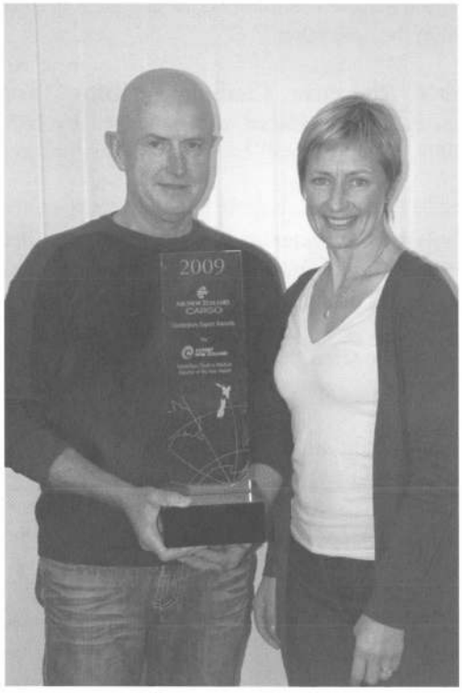
Sunday has always been devoted to family at Honey Valley New Zealand, so the entire family spent time together working in the factory.

So it was in the early days of the Timaru honey exporter, which has a staff of eight.

The firm was set up in 1996 by husband and wife team Steve Lyttle and Carolyn Ball, but the pair only gave up their day jobs in 2003. They used to work every week night and every weekend to get the business to the point of having established markets.

Early Asian customers nicknamed Honey Valley the "After Dark Trading Company" as they could only get in touch with Steve or Carolyn at night.

"We had huge support from family and friends because they didn't see us otherwise. They'd come out and talk to us and they'd end up here for the rest of the day packing honey."



Sweet as: Honey Valley New Zealand owners Steve Lyttle and Carolyn Ball are predicting a big increase in exports.

The couple's eight-year-old daughter, Holly, spent much of the first five years of her life at the factory, where Steve had turned the lab into a bedroom.

Steve and Carolyn put everything they had into Honey Valley, even mortgaging their home.

"For the first six years we traded on the borderline. If we'd given up after five or six years we would've lost everything. We would have the clothes we stood up in. It was not a half-pie commitment, everything was on the line," Steve said.

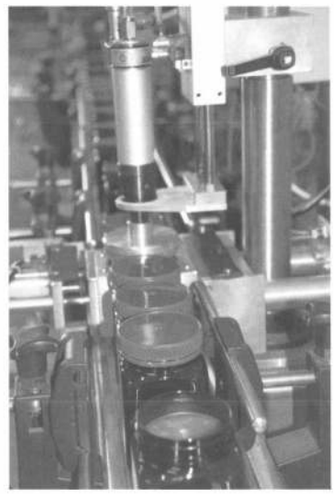
One mistake people often made when setting up a business was not making a total commitment to it, Steve said.

"If you really want to get up and running you have to do that, otherwise you have to rely on outside investment."

Honey Valley is a $5 million business. Steve hopes to increase that to $10m in the next five years by expanding into Europe. He will launch there in October after attending one of the biggest food and beverage trade fairs in the world, Cologne's Anuga fair.

Steve and Carolyn set up the firm after Steve was made redundant as general manager of the New Zealand Honey Producers Cooperative, a group he set up more than 25 years ago.

Asian customers rang him at home and said they still wanted to deal with him, which led to Honey Valley, Steve said. About 98 per cent of Honey Valley's revenue is gained from exporting to 12, mostly Asian, countries. Honey is sourced from 100 beekeepers from Kaitaia to Te Anau and 15 varieties are made.



Honey jars get ready for export at Honey Valley New Zealand's Timaru factory.

Most customers design their own labels and sell the honey in department stores or high-end delicatessens.

Adding value to the honey with packaging meant Honey Valley could command a premium price, which also enabled it to pay its beekeepers more than other buyers. Because of that, Steve said he was constantly having to turn suppliers away.

Honey Valley pays about $6 a kilo compared with $4.75 to $4.80 being paid by most companies.

Each pottle of honey can be tracked back to the geographic location of the hives, an important selling point.

The plant

Photos: Steve Lyttle.

Meet your Executive Council

Executive Council at their meeting on 18 October. Seated: Mary-Ann Lindsay, President Frans Laas, joint CEO Gemma Collier. Standing: Vice President Barry Foster, Lewis Olsen, Treasurer Glenn Kelly, Trevor Corbett, Neil Mossop, joint CEO Daniel Paul. (Maureen Maxwell was unable to attend.) Photo: Jessica Williams.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCMENT

Export Award winning company
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Franklin Beekeepers Club AFB Recognition and Competency Course and test

The Franklin Beekeepers Club organised an AFB Recognition and Competency Course and test, held on Saturday, 3 October at the Ramarama Hall. About 40 people took the test.

Auckland Branch secretary Bob Russell was the trainer on the day and provided the photos below, taken towards the end of the test when about half the participants had completed the test and left the venue.

At front: Auckland Branch secretary and course trainer Bob Russell. Peter Biland, Franklin Beekeepers Club Secretary, is standing behind Bob.

Tutin checking starts from 1 January 2010. Have early honey off before then.

From the archives

The 16th AGM was held in Timaru on 5–6 June 1929 and attended by 89 delegates.

A look at the minutes and remits showed little had changed in the attitudes and views of beekeepers. There were various remits in support of the control of American foulbrood (AFB), as well as discussions on matters outlined in the October issue of *The New Zealand BeeKeeper.*

There was a report on the Byrd Expedition:

> *"A quantity of honey, approximately 500lbs, was forwarded to the Byrd Expedition for use in the Antarctic, the gift being supplied by the National Beekeepers' Assn. and the HPA* (Honey Producers' Association). *The American Honey Institute will probably contribute towards the cost of this gift. The honey was specially packed for conditions likely to be met with in the South, at the request of those in charge of the Expedition."*
>
> *"Warm appreciation was expressed by Commander Byrd, and Dr Coman, Dietetian* [sic], *who considered that the honey would be ideal for use on the ice. It is hoped that later on a report on its value to the Expedition may be obtained from Commander Byrd, and such a report would provide useful material for propaganda."*

We note from the balance sheet that the cost of the gift was £13 1s 8d: approx 6d per pound, or roughly 5¢ per 500g pot.

The minutes go on to say that:

> *"Mr L F Robins, Temuka gave an interesting and instructive address on his method of harvesting a crop from his out apiaries, for which purpose he had converted an old motor car chassis for extracting purposes"*

The mind boggles at that sort of contraption was built for the purpose but it illustrates that beekeepers are always an inventive bunch of people, often turning discarded trash into 'beekeeping equipment'.

> *"The Secretary reported that as a result of a communication from the Taranaki Branch, to the effect that Inspectors of Factories were pressing beekeepers, to register their premises as factories, he had obtained legal opinion on the matter. The legal position was that technically beekeepers' premises were a factory within the meaning of the Act. The secretary explained that the matter did not end with the payment of the small Registration Fee, but that beekeepers would find themselves hampered by a maze of awkward restrictions relating to hours and conditions of employment, and possibly may be required to pay income tax, from which they were now exempt".*

We feel that the most notable item at the conference was that the meeting was attended by Mr. Clyde Carr MP, who stated that the Government had promised a grant of £9,000 to the Association and he "assured them (the members) that he and the ministers would co-operate with the present Government in assisting the honey industry".

The grant was further referred to in the President's (Mr. R Clark, Matamata) report:

> *"The fact that the Association, with the invaluable co-operation of Mr. Rentoul, Managing Director of the Honey Producers Assn, had been responsible for securing the assistance of the past and present Governments by the substantial grant of £9,000 towards advertising New Zealand honey, should alone prove to beekeepers the usefulness of the Association to the industry. The grant would prove to be a tremendous boon to the honey producers."*

To have some appreciation of the grant, we have provided an indication of values during this period:

- average wages were about £15–£20 per month or £200–£300 per annum
- an 11-acre farm with a good six-roomed kauri house was £1,950, while another seven-room house within three minutes of Station and Post Office, hot and cold water, and all conveniences cost £1,500
- you could buy a 1929 Dodge 'Victory Six' for £465, a NZ-assembled Chrysler Six for £399, a smaller 1934 Ford Y for £215 or a 1936 Austin 7 for £222.

So the £9,000 grant must have been like winning Lotto—the money could conceivably purchase a town residence, a country retreat and a couple of cars, one for everyday use, while the 'flash' car would be used on Sunday to drive to church or the 'estate'. There would be funds to provide wages for a couple of years, and you would have only spent half the windfall!

- Roger and Linda Bray,
NBA Librarians

Stamps from Belgium, provided by Roger Bray.

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From the colonies

Northland Branch

We had an unusually dry August and early September. This led to a very good build up in hive strength during early spring, with easy access for the bees onto high-protein gorse and other pollens. Just as well that the hives built early, given that gold kiwifruit orchards in Whangarei needed hives up to two weeks earlier than usual (end of September rather than the middle of October), and many avocado orchards were also early.

By all accounts the manuka started flowing early, with the coastal manuka near Whangarei flowering profusely by early September. The hives did well for a couple of weeks and then rain stopped the flow. It will be interesting to see what type of crop comes in. Much will depend on the weather.

Since mid-September the rains have come with a vengeance, and the utes have got stuck a few times getting hives onto sites and feed into hungry hives. Trash weather has also made it difficult for queens to get out and be adequately mated. We had a wonderful run of queens out, mated and laying prolifically from our first graft around 20 August, but later grafts have produced disappointing results.

Spare a thought for some of the gold kiwifruit orchardists. In some cases the heavens opened as soon as the hives were in, and they are concerned about how much pollination will have occurred. It is amazing, however, how the bees will work the vines in all but heavy rain, especially under the cover afforded by pergola systems.

Swarming has become a problem during the first two weeks of October. Some hives have been adversely affected by karaka nectar when the bees can't forage on anything else in the rainy conditions.

One beekeeper has been told by a course participant that some people had gone to a beekeeping course to learn just enough to steal boxes of honey off other beekeepers' hives. It gives a whole new meaning to 'robbing honey'. I suggest that you be vigilant with your manuka hives and think seriously about microchipping or otherwise identifying supers.

- Simon Peacey, Branch Secretary

Bay of Plenty Branch

AB-SO-LUTE-LY POS-IT-IVE-LY WET WET WET.

For the first time in many years we have had more than our share of rain in September/October. Getting hives out of sites for gold kiwifruit pollination was the first challenge, placing them in orchards the next. Some orchards look more like a ploughed-up maize field by the time we finished. The only person who enjoyed the whole experience was a young beekeeper from Germany. He found it more exciting than a roller coaster! But then again he was also delighted when the call came for swarm busting.

Swarms seem to be starting as per normal although there is little nectar around. This season the willows produced pollen but little or no nectar, and now the barberry and hawthorn are flowering, but not much seems to be happening regarding nectar. Along with most others, we seem to be constantly feeding. There are plenty of bees and pollen, just a shortage of honey in the hive. There also seems to be some varroa around so it's time to treat.

Hopefully the weather will improve sometime soon so that the ground can dry out and improve access. Meanwhile it's carry on, get new mud grips fitted and engage low box.

- Barbara Pimm

Hawke's Bay Branch

Spring has been very early this year with most plants flowering two weeks ahead of normal. The willow flow has been very good this year, which has helped get hives ready for pollination. Kowhai is having one of the best flowerings I have seen in many years and both the bees and the tui are very happy, at least in the sunshine.

We have gone from a green drought situation to a reasonably wet spring, although I don't think it is as bad as many parts of the country. The grass is finally starting to grow and farmers are starting to recover from three years of drought. NIWA is predicting a dry summer, but as they are usually as accurate as Ken Ring we will probably be wearing gumboots for a while.

Varroa numbers are very low, as is normal in a Hawke's Bay spring. Some hives, despite not having been treated for six months, are showing zero mite numbers (of course, at this time of year most mites are in the brood and won't show up on a sugar shake). Nevertheless, we know from bitter experience that even after treating them in the spring, come February they will be crawling again. Judging from what I have read some places get quite high re-invasion over the winter months, but I have not seen this in Hawke's Bay.

- John Berry, Branch President

Canterbury Branch

Are we barking up the wrong tree? I'm taking a break from my usual musings and would like to put the following out there for discussion. The Canterbury Branch is very keen to see some debate and research around our ability to prove our industry is carbon positive and how we may benefit from this, as opposed to concentrating on how small our carbon footprint may be as other industries are in the throes of doing. By this I mean taking stock of what our bees are doing in the name of national good. Please feel free to add anything to this debate that you feel may help by contacting the Executive.

The Canterbury Branch feels that the NBA should look at the benefits our businesses can offer in terms of carbon credits.

It's a good idea—as long as it is well focused. Let me explain our thinking on this subject.

It is now a given that bees cannot be kept in New Zealand without human intervention because of varroa. Beekeepers faced with the financial burden of keeping them alive must be entitled to any financial rewards due to the work they do if beekeepers want to charge for these services. This is basic property rights.

What I am getting at is that clover is a bi-annual plant and without pollination by bees, would disappear from New Zealand pastures within a few years. This is a given. This is why beekeepers and farmers have such a good symbiotic relationship. The clover is vital to pasture production because it takes nitrogen from the air and turns it into nitrates (nitrites are in effluent—a completely different compound) via its root nodules and fixes nitrogen in the soil so that other grasses can utilise it.

Without this nitrogen fixed in the soil via clover root nodules, grass growth is very limited and unproductive. Farmers apply a variety of petrochemical-based fertilisers (but mostly urea) to counteract this and to encourage grass growth. Ultimately every clover plant in New Zealand reduces the amount of petrochemical fertilisers that are imported and used in this country.

As our bees provide a suitable alternative to petrochemical use, we as beekeepers should be getting carbon credits on every barrel of pasture honey we produce. This is only taking into account the fertilisers not required because our bees are keeping clover in the pasture sward. Consideration could also be given to the non-importation of these chemicals or the carbon locked up in seeds in the ground or exported.

I think the precedent has been set to look into this. Companies are rewarded for using renewable energy sources (i.e., hydro, wind energy, timber plantations) and those that use finite resources (i.e., oil, thermal) or 'dirty' resources (i.e., coal) are penalised. This is where our research should focus—on a return to beekeepers—not trying to limit our expenses. The companies who produce the types of energy mentioned above are only receiving carbon credits because they did the research to prove they deserve them. We need to do the same, or encourage Government to do it for us.

Another aspect to consider is manuka honey. How much land has not been cleared because the return to landholders from honey is greater than the benefit of the land in pasture? How much carbon is locked up in the manuka plantings themselves? Without the bees this land would be utilised for something else.

It is time as an industry to start thinking outside the square and go after what is rightfully ours. Imagine a time in the not-too-distant future when we each get a substantial cheque in the mail for each barrel of honey we produce from a carbon polluter, which could conceivably be greater than the value of the actual honey. This is well worth pursuing.

- Brian Lancaster, Branch President

Otago Branch

After an unusually warm and calm August and most of September, the law of averages kicked in and Otago weather has been mostly cool and damp since. On the east coast here, some of my hives that were just getting up steam have had second thoughts and have thrown out their drones, which is pretty unusual. Not all their drones, I hope, as I have managed to get queen cells out earlier this spring and the odd nice day may have seen a few of them mated.

With the poor weather, flying time has been limited and with little nectar gathered from early flows, some yards are getting hungry. The late September winds put paid to the willow in most areas but the rains that followed have seen a great flowering of dandelions in places. A few good days just now would see a good flow from them. Some inland parts of Otago have been warmer, and visiting beekeepers in Otematata for a discussion group meeting the other day we saw some hives drawing wax nicely and putting honey above the excluder. While Coastal and South Otago have had a few inches of rain, inland areas like the Maniototo are still dry and badly need more moisture before summer.

Happily no one has found varroa just yet: we are all hoping no one brings hives or queens south from an infected area of the country and unnecessarily speeds up the inevitable. This year has seen a continuation of hives going north to manuka producers in the upper North Island, as beekeepers downsize in anticipation of varroa arriving or as part of their retirement strategy. This—and strictly average prices for clover—has seen a steady decline in hive numbers in Otago and Southland. Surely you will be able to cross the North Island soon just by jumping from one hive roof to another?

To counter this loss in hive numbers there is a real surge in new hobbyist beekeepers, with many doing a local training programme. We would love to see them succeed and join the NBA to be well informed to deal with beekeeping issues. A few newcomers have contacted me and the NBA's new booklet, *Starting with Bees*, has been an excellent first read to pass on to them. Congratulations to the authors.

- Peter Sales, Branch Secretary

From Telford Rural Polytechnic

The students have just returned from three weeks of work experience, spending on average one week with each beekeeper. The areas where students have been working include Te Anau, Middlemarch, Lake Hawea, Tauranga and Gisborne. The students have been checking hives for disease, feeding hives, shifting hives and other spring management. Students are currently making a plant collection and studying agricultural chemicals.

- Dr David Woodward
Head of Department, Apiculture

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About the Apiary

As we reach the end of the month, honey reserves are being consumed at a huge rate. If the weather were any good, there would be a feast of nectar out there for the bees. Buttercup, hawthorn, barberry, lemon wood, ngaio; near the sea, karo and even kowhai are still flowering. There's no bud on the rewarewa but I'm told other areas are budding up. Beekeepers in other regions report their hives are in good condition, they have had enough rain and everything is looking good. Nucs made and mated in September are now filling a full-depth super.

Here in Wellington it's been a miserable month. Lots of cold fronts, snow on the ranges, the rain gauge has been half full nearly every day and it's been really cold. We have had the odd fine day each week when the temperature got up a bit, but I felt it best to leave the bees alone as they need the valuable pollen to keep brood rearing. Disturb the hives and the bees would miss the opportunity as the weather quickly closed in again. Still it has given me a chance to make more mesh bottom boards and five-frame nuc boxes, using wooden ends and used coreflute real estate signs as a covering and roof. Unfortunately, the weather has put me well behind and now the hives are producing queen cells and the odd one has got away on me. I am splitting any hive that looks like it could swarm—I have split some hives with queen cells into three.

In these fickle conditions, it's interesting to note that one hive will be on the verge of starvation, yet another next door has wet honey surrounding the brood. A few days without honey and you will see the newly emerged bees lying on the bottom board. Another couple of days with no food and no flight activity and the bees will start to cannibalise the brood, and those bees are the ones that will be bringing in your honey crop. We don't want to stop brood rearing, so we need to feed when honey supplies get low.

Feeding and inspecting

November is usually a dearth month in our area. The early bush has normally finished and we are waiting for the kamahi flow to start. It's budding up but still a couple of weeks away as I write this. Hopefully it will be like the rest of the season and be a little early. However, you can't rely on leaving the bees and hoping a flow will carry your bees through. Feeding sugar syrup to a strong hive will just stimulate swarming. Give them something to do and keep the queen laying. Spread the brood frames a little by placing two fully drawn frames between two frames with brood in them. Those in the north can interspace frames as there is no chance of the brood being chilled. Down here it's a little different and still cold in the mornings.

For strong hives, place a couple of two-kilogram honey containers of raw sugar in the top feeder. If you don't have these, cut a bit of plastic about half the size of a super and place the raw sugar on top of it. Dribble a little water around the edge to wet a bit of the sugar. The bees soon find the sugar and when the watery sugar is consumed, they will bring up more water to dissolve the raw sugar. Although it's a lot of work for the bees, it will hold them when conditions are rough outside. As soon as the weather clears, the bees will ignore the raw sugar in favour of fresh nectar.

Don't let a ring of honey develop above the brood area. Add foundation frames interspaced with drawn frames above the brood nest. This also gives the bees something to do drawing out the frames and will help to suppress swarming. But once there's an egg in a queen cell cup, split the hive.

When you're inspecting the hives, don't rub out the first queen cell you come across. Put the frame aside in front of the hive and look over the rest of the frames for more queen cells. Sometimes the bees themselves will have started to supersede the queen by building three to five queen cells. These are generally closer to the brood area and not necessarily along the bottom bars. If you rub out the queen cells, the hive will possibly go queenless.

Also check to see if eggs are present before doing anything. The best thing you can do is to make a four-frame nuc, mark it with the hive number it came from (for traceback) and put it in another apiary. If you don't have another apiary, add an extra shake of bees from another brood frame to fortify the nuc against any field bees returning to the original hive. Splitting a hive also halves the mites in the hives. I have a frame of drone brood in most brood supers as I want new queens mated, but some hives are overflowing with drone brood. It doesn't hurt to cut out a slab of drone brood and along with it go more mites. At first light, the starlings and blackbirds are quick to check out these slabs of brood on the truck; however, they are meant to be for my son's chickens.

At the end of the month you can again reverse your first and second brood supers to keep the queen laying in the bottom two supers. Add a honey super early as when the bees start bringing in nectar, they'll need room to store it.

Replacing old queens

You will also see older queens starting to fail now. They have been laying with a hiss and a roar but can't sustain it. You will start to see missed cells and more pollen being stored around the brood nest, so it's time to replace her. Can't find her straightaway? Put a queen excluder between the brood supers and check again in four days. The section with the eggs contains the queen. Remove this super a couple of metres away from the hives and cover it with a hive mat for an hour or so. The field bees will return to the hive and she will be easier to find.

Can't find a queen and can't wait four days? Check the hive next door for disease and then take a brood frame from that hive and place it in the one where you want to find the queen. Close the hives and leave it for half an hour and then quickly look at the frame. Your queen will have come up to investigate the smell of the other queen on the frame and should be on that frame. Now you can see why it's so much quicker with marked queens. (I must do that more religiously instead of just marking the ones I come across in my normal inspections.) Once the queen is found and dispatched, put a four-frame

nuc in a full super and place it on the hive with a couple of sheets of newsprint underneath for a slow introduction. Or just spray air freshener in the hive and between each super and into the nuc. Pop the nuc into the centre of the hive. A little dribble of sugar syrup over the tops of the frames gives the bees something to do and the introduction will be swift and safe. You now have that hive up and going again.

So that's it. Sounds easy but I seem to be working all hours now and the bees get rather tetchy late in the day, especially when the smoker goes out because the pine needles are wet.

Things to do this month

Check feed, check pollen. Do an AFB check: look at three frames of emerging brood each time you open a hive once the full inspection has been completed. Raise queen cells: it's nice to see your handiwork running around a nuc. Super hives. Take swarm control measures—try not to lose a swarm as with it goes the honey crop from that hive. Cull old frames. Fit foundation to comb honey frames. Note that you will have to do a tutin check before considering cut comb production.

- Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

Entertaining and educational

"My Brazilian friend's cruise ship is stopping at Mount Maunganui for the day. He wants to see something other than the usual touristy stuff. Could we come and see your bees?" No one had ever referred to our bees as having entertainment value before. How could we say no?

We kitted our visitors up in the appropriate gear—which provided some entertainment in itself as they fiddled with zips and hoods, and Glen (my husband and beekeeping main-man) took on his first tutoring role, alfresco style.

They were fascinated by the bees. Questions came thick and fast: "Do you get stung? How often?" "How do you know which ones are worker bees?" "So the only ones who do any work are the girls? Ha ha! Cool!" This last comment from one of the boys, obviously.

Left to right: Fabio, Jason and Kelly looking for the queen. Glen holds the frame.

Glen explained the difference between workers, drones and the queen, and they were all identified in the hive. We explained the lifecycle of the bee—and how despite some small perks, it's really not that great to be a bloke in the bee world!

Our visitors left with new knowledge that they will hopefully share with others. But they weren't the only ones to learn something. We were newly inspired to educate people at every opportunity about the importance of bees. I'm even using a new weekly 15-minute slot on Te Puke's local radio station to promote bees and backyard beekeeping when possible!

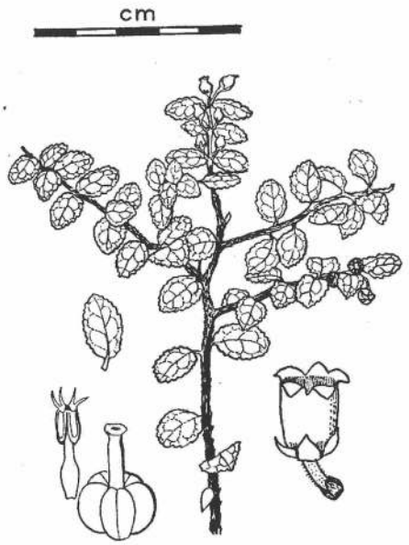
- Kushla Haenen

Jason (obscured), Kelly and Fabio give their beekeeping experience the thumbs-up.
Photos: Kushla Haenen.

Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand

Gaultheria antipoda

Common name: Snowberry



Gaultheria antipoda

An erect spreading shrub with sharp narrow leaves found throughout New Zealand.

The flowers are small, pink or white and occur September to November, giving a dark coloured nectar.

The berries are pink, red or white and were collected by the Maori when other berries were scarce. Some species of this genus do have berries that are either narcotic or poisonous (take your chance if you want to try berries of the other *Gaultheria* in New Zealand).

The Maori used the leaves either as a poultice or applied to cuts untreated.

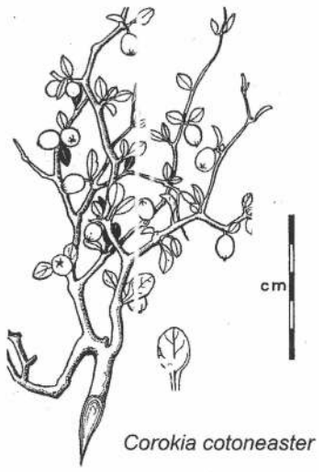
An infusion of boiled Snowberry leaves was drunk like tea for asthma.

Corokia cotoneaster

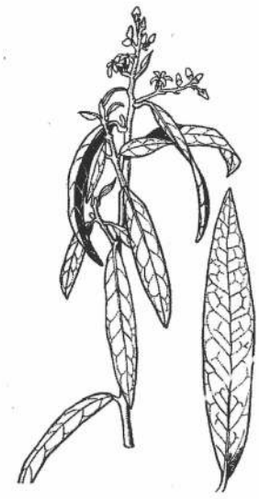
Common name: Corokia

The Corokia is a rigid shrub up to three metres high with interlacing black branches and alternate leaves. It is found throughout New Zealand.

The flowers are small and yellow and are a minor source of nectar from September to November, giving a pale nectar. The berries are red.



Corokia cotoneaster



C. buddleoides

In the north of the North Island is another species, *Corokia buddleoides*, which has long narrow leaves shining green above and are downy on the underside. This shrub also has yellow flowers and orange berries. It flowers in December.

Maori used the liquid from the boiled leaves as a relief from stomach ache or as a tonic for stomach ulcers.

- Tony Lorimer, NBA Life Member

Southern North Island Branch field day

The Southern North Island (SNI) Branch held their spring field day on 17 November at Gary and Karen Sinkinson's honey house just south of Feilding, with 70 beekeepers and visitors in attendance.

This field day was to be a little different in that we were going to have an afternoon of competitions based on the Young Farmers Competition. Most of this was based on outdoor activities but the weather forecast was for heavy rain so the night before, it was decided just to go with what we could do indoors.

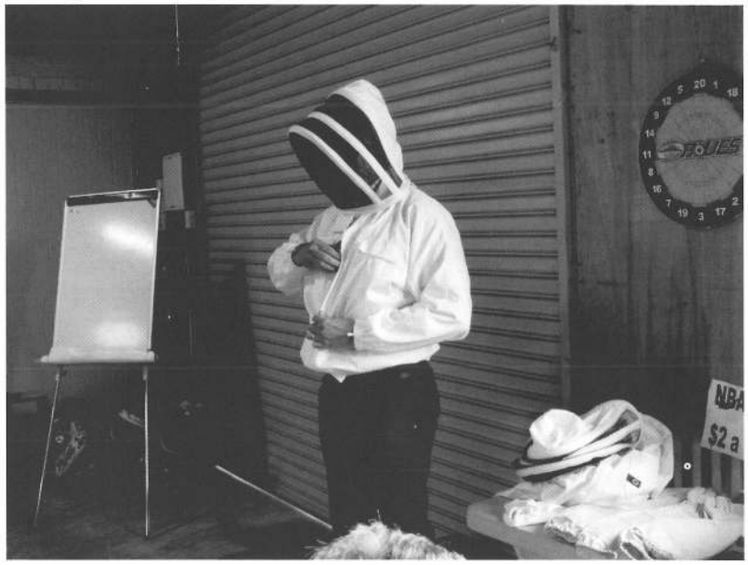
After a cup of tea and 120 muffins (thanks Gary and Karen), Gemma Collier (one of our new CEOs) and Rex Baynes were each introduced to everyone.

While the weather held, we got into the hive activities straight off. The majority of our branch consists of part-time beekeepers, so three experienced commercial beekeepers manipulated the hives, found the queens and made up nucs with protected queen cells. I marked the queens with green water-based paint pen for easy identification. (Everybody got that part of the question correct in the afternoon's quiz.) Showing how to do something is so much easier than writing it as there are so many variables in beekeeping. Once you have seen an experienced beekeeper do it, it looks easy and in fact it is. That extra shake of nurse bees off a brood frame gives the nuc a boost.

All too quickly we were called back into the shed where SNI Branch President Peter Ferris took over. Gemma and Rex gave their presentations while several of us were sorting out things for the afternoon competition.

The Manawatu Beekeepers Club put on a sausage sizzle and then the afternoon fun started, identifying weeds, shrubs and trees ("what are these or what are they used for?"), plus two general knowledge question sheets. Robin McCammon made a shield for the event to commemorate long-term beekeeper and branch foundation member Merv Farrington, who died recently.

After much fun the Wanganui Beekeepers Club came out on top in the competition. Stuart Ecroyd donated a beekeeper's top and hood which was auctioned and the money went into the SNI Branch funds. We then looked over the commercial beekeepers' vehicles set up for spring feeding and a display of small machinery.



Stuart Ecroyd modelling the new top.

The raffle of a hive and a single super made by Gavin Lambert was won by Wendy Woodhouse from the Wairarapa Hobbyist Beekeepers Club and Fiona O'Brien from the King Country.

We all had a great time and most of us went away with more knowledge. Peter Ferris advised the group that the autumn field day will be at his honey factory in the Wairarapa in April. We will be holding a more full-blown competition, so bone up in the meantime on all things associated with beekeeping (which could mean anything related to farming).

My thanks to everyone who looked after or supervised our grandson Richard while we were both otherwise involved. A great day was had by all and the rainy weather held off all day. It was just a pity we didn't see more of our commercial beekeepers there.

- Frank Lindsay, NBA Life Member

Queen or queenless hive?

From time to time a hive will go queenless and it's difficult to determine whether there is a virgin queen in the hive or not. Many beekeepers purchase new queens only to have them killed by a virgin queen.

If after having a look through you can't see a virgin queen, put the cage containing the queen at one end of the frames and watch the reaction of the bees. If they rush forward and all over the cage, the hive is queenless. If they hardly take any notice of the cage, there is a virgin in the hive.

- Gary Jeffery

Get well soon!

Professor Peter Molan of the Honey Research Unit, University of Waikato, is recuperating after a recent heart attack. The NBA wishes Prof Molan a full and speedy recovery.

Above: Beekeepers inspecting AFB frames. Photo: Rex Baynes.
Left: President of the SNI Branch, Peter Ferris, presenting the trophy to Wanganui team leader Anne Hulme. **Photos: Frank Lindsay.**

Learning the ropes, starting with how to drive a digger.

Wanganui team identifying objects: "What is it and what is it used for?"