

BEEBIZ APRIL 2021

The Newsletter of the Northern Rivers Amateur Beekeeping Association Inc.

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Postal Address 54 Donnans Road, Lismore Heights, NSW 2078

April Field Day 2nd May

The next field day will be on 2nd May at the home of Susan and Bill Nicholls, 687 Myocum Rd, Myocum. Organised activities for the day are

(a) Experienced beekeepers talking about the humble smoker, covering the operation, the maintenance, and safety aspects.

(b) Inspection of flow hives, including looking at the brood and removing honey. Bill has two very successful flow hives to talk about and to demonstrate to us. It is a good time to be talking about candied honey in conventional and Flow hives. Bring your beekeeping gear.

The day will commence at 9.30 am with a welcome by the President, and the beekeeping activities will start at 10.30 am. Lunch of sausages and salad will be served at about 12.30 pm, and the raffle will be held before the end of the day at 1.30pm.

All attendees are asked to bring either a morning tea item or a salad for lunch. As a guide, bring enough for twice the size of your group. Lunch will cost \$5.

In the past, the club has always relied on lunch payments and the raffle to provide funds for the operation of the club. Additional raffle items are always appreciated. Raffle tickets will cost \$2.

So, remember to bring

- Salad or/morning tea
- Raffle items
- Chairs
- Nametags

Directions

Property is at 687 Myocum Road, Myocum. The driveway is on the left coming from the Ewingsdale Interchange (Byron Bay) on the M1, and the entrance has a letterbox with three numbers (687,681,685) on it, and a sign saying "Electrician". Follow the bitumen driveway for about 250 meters, go over a cattle grid on to two concrete tracks, follow this for 150 meters, then take first right up the hill on a bitumen road. This takes you to the house.

From Mullumbimby, take Coolamon Scenic Drive until you reach Myocum Road on the left.

Look for the bee signs.

All welcome.

Please be considerate when you park.

President Report

“The problem which underlies all others is the ascertainment of the place which mankind occupies in nature and of his relationship to the universe of things.”

Thomas Henry Huxley

A successful field day was held at the lovely home of Meg Winterford and William Brener. Numbers are slowly increasing as people start to venture out again with the pandemic easing. Big thanks to Meg and William, and to everyone who contributed to the lovely day.

It has been a terrible time to be wrangling bees as the skies seem to open up every time I put the veil on. Here's hoping for fine weather for our next field day at Myocum at which it will be demonstrated how to crack open a Flowhive among other things.

I suppose I sound like a broken record but we still need more good people to provide venues for field days going forward and more committee members, and an editor for the newsletter to relieve Brian of some responsibilities.

Hope to see you all at Myocum. That's all from Byrangery Creek this month.

Cheers Kevin Virgen

Secretary Report

The last field day at the home of Meg and William was very successful; not only did we have great weather, we also fitted it in between two floods in the Richmond River. It was good to see the increased attendance, and feel the community vibes that come through with more people.

Members will note a couple of changes in the way we advertise the field days. We have arranged for a flyer advertising the field days to be sent to members in the week before. Also, we have put the field day notice at the front of the newsletter, as it is our most important activity and tended to get lost before the minutes. Try to come to Myocum.

Brian

Report on Field Day March 28th

About 24 people attended the field day at Meg and Williams place. The topics were the demonstration of some aspects of extracting, and an inspection of Meg's hives. The less-experienced beginners undoubtedly picked up some useful tips about extracting from the discussion about using various knives and scratchers. The two hives were found to be healthy, but one had an ailing queen. It was recommended that she be replaced with a young queen to give the hive a good start in Spring.

(Most queen breeders stop before Anzac Day, as there will not be enough drones to guarantee a satisfactory mating going into Winter. Ed.)

Brian

Flowering Report

Much the same this month to the last report. Although the budding on the Red Gum, *Eucalyptus tereticornis* is becoming clearer. It will not be as good as last year and will be a bit later. Some trees are not showing any bud, and some only a small amount. The Grey Ironbark, *E paniculata* is showing good bud where I have been able to get to view it. There is a patchy budding showing on the White Mahogany, *E acmenoides*. It will be a long way off. Maybe I will have had my jab by then.

Ti/Tea/ Tee tree, *Melaleuca quinquenervia* is having a flowering burst as I write, including my red coloured ones. Backing them up on some parts of the coast will be some Swamp Mahogany, *E robusta*. I have mentioned before the effect of the wet season on the yield the M quinquenervia hereabouts. Further south around Kempsey, it can produce good crops because they *tend* to be out of our wet season, with rain throughout the year.



Flowering Fireweed Photo G. Manning



Flowering Golden Rod Photo G Manning

At time of writing my bees seem to be a bit short of pollen. Unfortunately some Ragweed showing, but as I have said before it is worse than useless, the quality being so low. Depending on the weed control by land owners, very little in my instance, Farmers Friend is being worked heavily by bees. At my place, all ferals as I have no bees at home. Interestingly there are very few on Billy Goat weed, also known as Ageratum. Bees at times work it heavily. In this case the apparent lack may be no more than the vast amount I am supporting, so the bees are somewhat diluted. Keeping in mind that there are far fewer feral bees these days, presumably because of Small Hive

Beetle. Feral hives tend to have to put up with hollows that are too small for a strong viable hive.

Yesterday I noticed the first of Fireweed showing. Not much though as it has had to battle with very long grass this season to get away. It will certainly not be as good as the picture, Then again the picture is now a paddock of rye grass,

Whilst not occurring in big patches, golden rod is flowering in patches on the roadsides I travel. It is presumably attractive to cattle as it does not seem to occur over the fence into a paddock. In the United States it is a valuable autumn forage as they head for their severe winter. So it must cover large areas.

The lilli pilli will still have a couple of

bursts to go. There are some places where it occurs in reasonably large numbers. If you are in town there will soon be a good flush of bottle brush.

Geoff

From The Hives

The hives at Coraki have not done much due to all the rain in the last month. It also became so muddy that getting in and out was difficult. Also, it is in the interest of good relations to avoid cutting up the owners paddocks.

Two more hives have died out, probably due to supersedure queens either not getting back to the hives from the mating flight, or not being able to do a mating flight in the pouring rain. These were over-run by small hive beetle maggots, and are in the process of being cleaned out.

Brian

An Inventor's experience. Flow Beekeeping Part 2.

Last month I wrote on my experience as an inventor and some of the advantages and concerns of Flow hives. This time I'm addressing perhaps one of the most commonly asked questions I get.

Candied honey is an annoying hassle no matter what sort of honey extraction a beekeeper does. It won't spin out easily from conventional frames, nor will the Flow frames operate. Even crushing and sieving the comb is impossible without heating. In exasperation, the beekeeper can decide to leave the candied honey for the bees, they may consume it during the winter dearth. If you do want to harvest, then warming the frames to the point where the honey 'melts', at about 40 degrees is effective. It does involve removing the frames (Flow or conventional) or the whole super from the hive and then making up some sort of insulated box to gently heat them in. Some beekeepers have had success with putting the candied honey super below the brood and an empty super above. Bees prefer to store their honey above the brood and so are inclined to shift the honey to the upper super, de-crystallising it in the process.



Back of flowhive

Flow frames do offer a couple of advantages regarding candied honey. Firstly, the honey stays a little warmer as the super remains on the hive warmed by the brood below. That one or two degrees can make a difference. I've heard many stories of honey candying within minutes of being removed from the hive. If you are aware that the bees are working crystallising nectar you will want to harvest immediately it is ripe. For example; Canola, (or Oilseed Rape as they call it in the UK) has about two days from ripening to going candied in the hive. That is the extraction window beekeepers have. In order to avoid crystallisation some beekeepers will use a refractometer to determine the moisture content of the honey. Then they can decide exactly when to harvest.

The Flow frames allow the easy sampling of a small amount of honey from the end of the frame. Inserting the key just half an inch or 15mm into the frame will operate just the very end section yielding perhaps 50ml of honey. This end-of-frame honey will, if anything, have a slightly higher moisture content than the main bulk of the frame. The refractometer will tell you if your honey is close to being ripe. You can then estimate the ideal time to harvest.

Another advantage of Flow is that harvesting can be done with little effort at any time of the day or night, it's easier to harvest in that 'window' between ripeness and candy.

Of course sometimes Cedar and I have been caught with unexpected candied honey in the Flow frames. During our prototyping period I remember inserting the key to operate the Flow mechanism and finding it completely impossible to turn. Was the invention flawed? What could have gone wrong? On inspection we realised that we had firm candy instead of liquid honey. We returned the frame to the hive and put as much weight on the handle of the key as we dared – it didn't seem to move. However, the next day we were surprised to find that the bees had chewed out the candied honey from that particular frame and were busy filling it with liquid honey again! We guess that the bees had sensed some fissuring in their honeycomb cells and decided to 'remove and repair'. We do not advertise this as an advantage of Flow frames as we cannot be sure that it will work every time.

The ability to harvest just a proportion of a frame – say one third or a half is useful for some beekeepers. Perhaps you'd like to show off the bees and honey to a friend but would prefer to leave most of the honey in the frame. If you want to fill a 500ml jar, for example this will be about one quarter of a reasonably full Flow frame. Insert the key a quarter of the way in and you can delight together in the fresh honey flowing from the hive and send them off with a great gift.

Inventing can be like finding your way through a foreign city with no map. You are likely to bump into many dead ends but occasionally will come across marvels you did not know existed.

Cedar and I were puzzling about how to construct the ends of the Flow frames and what material they should be made of. They had to be strong, they dealt with a number of different forces including a beekeeper levering them out of the hive with a hive tool. One end had to be quite accessible so that we could insert the operating key and honey tube. Cedar suggested; “Why not make the ends of clear polycarbonate?” “Ok”, I said, not realising the possibilities this would open up. Until that moment we had assumed that the Flow frames would hang entirely within the super – just like the honeycomb frames we had grown up with. Now we realised that the end of the frames could make up the back wall of the super. This enabled the access to the rear and created a window. The clear ends revealed the busy world of bees. We could see them working down in the end cells and between the combs. This was a view of bees in a hive that few beekeepers had seen before and one that can entrance adults and children alike.

Bees will tend to store the various honeys they are producing separately in the combs. This has been well known to beekeepers who can lift different frames from a hive, hold them up to the sun and marvel at the differences in colours. This indicates differences in origin and of course, flavour of the honeys the bees have stored. If your bees have been working a variety of plants, the clear end-view of the Flow frames can show perhaps five or six different colours of honey. Each frame can be harvested separately. Flow makes it so much easier to obtain mono-floral honeys and to savour the taste of each.

Last week I was asked another common question. “*How often should I inspect my colony for pests and disease?*” I realised the question implies that the opening of the hive is a sort of chore or duty. “*What's the minimum number of times I have to do this?*” I wanted to turn the question on its head. I answered that having your (bare) hands covered in bees as you gently prise open their secret world is so enjoyable that you should do it every mild and warm day that you can – every day if you like. Opening up a hive and allowing a familiarity to develop between you and the bees is one of life's great pleasures.

Happy beekeeping!
Stu Anderson

Advice about Candied Honey

Whether honey will candy depends on many factors; two important ones are the floral origins of the honey and temperature. The floral origins determines among other things the ratio of glucose to fructose in the honey; high glucose levels are more prone to candy. Honey from the Northern Rivers will almost always candy if the temperature gets towards 15C. One of the few Australian honeys which does not candy is yellow box, usually found over the Great Dividing Range.

Candied honey is a problem in all sorts of hives as the temperature decreases in Autumn. Most small conventional beekeepers will have the super of honey sitting on top of a clearer board for one to two days, and then in a shed for a few days awaiting extraction. It gets quite cold, particularly in Winter and will soon candy if the temperature gets to about



Sugar crystals in extracted frame

15C. Full professionals get around this by having a hot room to store the boxes of honey. If the honey candies in a conventional hive, it can be readily partially extracted after uncapping. Maybe all the sugar crystals do not leave the cells, but a lot do. When the frame with sugar crystals is put back in the hive, the bees clean out the cells, and fill them with fresh nectar.

In contrast, if the honey in the flow frame candies, it gums up the works. Probably all honey should be extracted in Autumn from all the flow frames to avoid this problem. It is a mistake to leave too much honey in a conventional hive as well, but not as bad..

The bees require stores to last the winter, and assist in the Spring build-up. How much is enough? The usual recommendation is a full super above the brood box, but this is too much for most areas of the Northern Rivers. Some beekeepers on the red soil keep only the honey stored around the brood, knowing that there are sources available through the winter. Beekeepers can always fall back on to feeding white sugar, and indeed stimulatory feeds early in Spring help the bees to start expanding before the flow.

In Autumn, the bees will often leave full frames uncapped, making it difficult to follow the ¾ capped guide lines for extraction. In practice, any frames which do not yield liquid drops on a flat surface with a vigorous shake are fine to extract; even if they do give few drops, it will be OK as long as there are plenty of other frames that do not.

(A true story/lesson. A friend of mine found in Winter that his eight hives each had two supers crammed with candied honey from the flowering of the tea tree (melaleuca quinquinervia). He had a great idea (more like a brain explosion); he opened up all the hives, and using a scratcher uncapped all the frames in the top boxes. He came back a week later; the honey had run down into the hives, killing all the bees and brood, and all the hives were a seething mass of small hive beetle maggots. I helped him clean it up; most of the honey and maggots ended up in the Casino tip. Ed.)

Volunteers

The club requires more volunteers, not just for the Editor's job, but also to hold field days. The requirements to hold a field day are sufficient parking not requiring a four wheel drive, and some beehives. Most rural residential properties can manage this. We would like to fill the entire program for a year, so come on. Speak to Kevin or Brian.

List of Helpful Members

Kevin Virgen	Federal	6684 9213	Brian Window	Lismore	0466 790 736
Ray Smith	McKees Hill	0427 734 954	Paul Towner	Rous Mill	0418 321 305
Geoff Manning	Bentley	0400 221 602	John Bull	North Casino	0414 842 903
David Fairhall	Richmond Hill	0444 513 771			

Services Directory

Summary of available products and services

NRABA Members

David Fairhall(queen cells, mated queens, nuclei) (Lismore) 0444 513 771
Brian Window (nuclei) (Lismore) 0466 790 736
Geoff Manning (hives) (Bentley) 0400 221 602
Ray Smith (nuclei) (Lismore) 0427 734 954

Not NRABA Members

Stephen Fowler (nuclei, hives, all sorts of bee equipment, buys wax) (Alstonville) 0418 412 621
Merv McDonald (nuclei, hives, hive care)(Alstonville) 0439 166 016

Rob Stone (mated queens, nuclei)(Casino) 0487 598 105

Ross Wood (mated queens, nuclei)(Grafton) 0421 817 710

Corrections and additions welcome

Joining NRABA

To join the NRABA, log on to the NSW Amateur Beekeepers website at beekeepers.asn.au, select the NRABA as your club, and pay the required amount, made up of a payment to the ABA, and a supplement paid to the NRABA. The amount required by the ABA reduces quarterly.

MINUTES NRABA COMMITTEE March 4th 2021

Time 5.30 pm Thursday 4th March 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road, Lismore Heights

- Members present KV, BW, GM
- Apologies Ray Smith, Paul Towner
- Minutes of Committee meeting February 4th 2021 (accepted; m BW,s GM; passed)
- Matters Arising

Maddy Allen, the editor had responded to the secretary letter (saying that 10th of the month for contributions should be soon enough for the production of the newsletter) by still insisting on a closing date for contributions of the 7th of the month. The secretary, after consulting with the rest of the committee, decided that this was not acceptable, and said that he would volunteer to take on the role again. He had notified Maddy Allen, thanking her for her work.

- Correspondence
 - Reports
- Treasurer

BW presented a report; Feb field day income meals \$45, raffle \$18

expenses sausages \$65, groceries \$51.25 (accepted; m GM s BW; passed)

-Editor

Stuart Anderson is writing an article for the newsletter. It was suggested that he address candied honey, and swarming if hive kept to two boxes.

Also , the club to buy a flowhive so that the committee and club members can familiarize themselves with its operation.

-Membership

New member acceptance

Daniel Stevenson, James Ralph accepted as members (accepted; m BW s GM; passed)

- Agenda Business Items

(1) Field Day Feb 28th

There was discussion about the poor turn out. One possibility was that the details were lost at the end on the newsletter. It was moved that the secretary should put out a second flyer about a week before the field day, and that the flyer should be displayed when the member clicks on the email (m GM s KV; passed)

(2) Field Day March 28th

Bill Nichols had volunteered to hold the next field day at Myocum. Secretary to arrange.

(3) Col Rankin

A club member had been worried that Col Rankin may have diseased hives in his apiary in Ballina. BW agreed to find out which bee club he is in, and to see if he does need some help.

- General Business

(1) Primex.

Club will host with Professionals on 22nd May. GM said it conflicts with the professionals Annual Congress in Tamworth. BW to get brochures ready.

- Next Meeting

Time 3.00pm Thursday 1st April 2021

Place 54 Donnans Road Lismore Heights

Meeting finished at 6.23pm