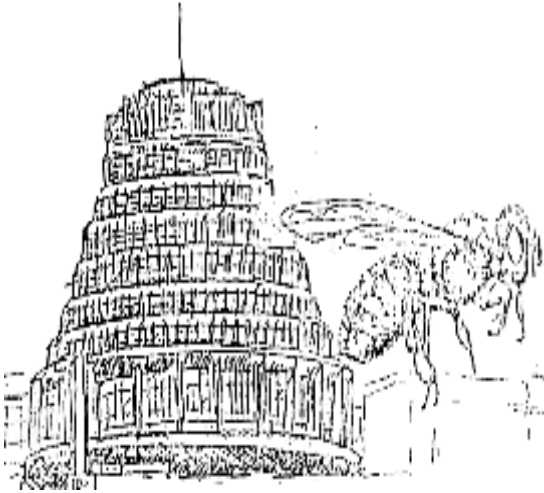


# Wellington Beekeepers Association Inc.



Our Next Meeting:

When:

**Monday 8 March 2004,**

**at 7.30 p.m.**

Where:

**Terrace Centre,  
Union Church,  
Dr Taylor Terrace.  
Johnsonville**

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**Wellington Beekeepers Association Inc.  
Monthly Newsletter – MARCH 2004**

This newsletter is available to members via e-mail using Adobe Acrobat v3 format. The reader software is available from Adobe free of charge. Contact [editor@beehive.org.nz](mailto:editor@beehive.org.nz) for additional details.

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**MINUTES OF WELLINGTON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION INC MONTHLY MEETING HELD IN THE JOHNSONVILLE UNION CHURCH HALL JOHNSONVILLE ON MON 9 FEBRUARY 2004**

**PRESENT:** Frank Lindsay (Pres.), Mary Ann Lindsay (Treas.) John Burnet (Sec.), and 34 members as listed in the attendance book.

**APOLOGIES:** Amor Walter, Hamish McDonald, Bob McGahan

**New Members and Visitors:** Andreas (Greek beekeeper)

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:** Minutes of meeting held 8 Dec as circulated in the Feb newsletter were confirmed.

**MATTERS ARISING:**

• **Swarm Update:** Using a TV monitor and digital camera the President displayed recent photos showing brace comb from a swarm tied into hive frames using knitting wool. Members were advised that swarms often absconded (depending on conditions) however this could be controlled by using a queen excluder or temporarily blocking the entrance with grass.

Andrew Beach recounted a recent experience in which he was called to remove a swarm from an abandoned camping trailer. He quickly discovered there were two swarm colonies plus a bumble bee nest. In order to save the honey he used soap and water instead of Carbaryl or any other pesticides or chemicals. Two buckets of comb honey were collected and were used to make 60 litres of mead.

• **Varroa Update:** Varroa was now reported at Gracefield, throughout the Hutt Valley and all the way down State Highway 1. President advised he had a low mite count in Pauatahanui and this was due to the death of feral hives and the area had now passed the acute phase. It was now most important to recycle frames at least every three years to prevent build up of chemical residues – in this respect the use of Bayvarol was better than Apistan.

**GENERAL BUSINESS:**

• **Consumer Magazine Report on Manuka Honey:** Details of a recently published article were outlined to members which reported that 8 out of 20 tested samples of manuka honey were found to be blended not active manuka products. The problem was caused by the absence of a common industry standard also beekeepers and packers with varying or inaccurate records indicating the proportion of manuka in the bulk shipment. Currently the manuka component in manuka honey varies from 50% to 90% but general industry consensus was that active manuka honey had to contain at least 70%. It was the NBA's responsibility to respond to Consumer's article and criticism.

A quality sticker system should be introduced supported by audit and random checking. Currently the cost of laboratory checking pollen counts in a honey sample was \$40 and \$60 to test for active manuka. Putting hives into manuka flowering areas is no guarantee of getting manuka honey – bees will over-fly manuka if another preferred source is flowering.

- **Beekeeping in Greece:** Further to last month's meeting, Andreas (our guest beekeeper from Greece) spoke briefly about the migratory beekeeping in the Greek Islands, moving hives between islands following the flowering of thyme which continues until the end of May. Basically a two-queen system is used i.e. all hives are split in spring, new queens are added to the second hive and hives are then united at the flow. The honey is harvested in July.

Andreas also described a problem faced by Greek beekeepers which NZ beekeepers do not experience – hornets. These insects are bigger than wasps and predate bees – 500 at a time. Andreas briefly outlined his hornet catching techniques.

- **Wasps:** President outlined the problem some areas in NZ face of mass German wasp attacks on hives. Some years ago a commercial beekeeper was losing 10% of hives per year due to German wasp attack but the introduction of common wasps in the area soon solved the problem. Another more practical control method is Frontline flea control (thiopyranol based) mixed with fish based cat foods (3 drops per litre). Sheep drench was also known to kill wasps. Carbaryl is usually the easiest to use but this is no longer available - Derris dust is a good substitute.

Ivan Pederson spoke about a hive nest he recently destroyed in dry stony ground. It consisted of nine separate nests probably with multiple queens all sharing a common entrance.

- **Wax Moth:** Following a member's enquiry several control methods were suggested: PDB crystals, placing supers in the deep freeze, fly-spray, separate honey from brood supers (moths are

attracted to brood casings and pollen not clean honey frames).

- **Honey exports to Australia:** NZ liquid or creamed honey (not comb honey) is now accepted by Australian Customs for import to Australia. Because of the differing attitudes adopted by inspectors at airports, it is best to declare it on entry.

- **Destroying wild hives:** Wild colonies in cavities can be sealed in using expanding foam such as No More Gaps.

### **DEMONSTRATION:**

With most members now harvesting their honey, the President outlined the various bee removal techniques. Three division boards with different escapes were shown and their use described –

1. A small piece of fly screen secured across a corner separated from a hole in the board by a space allowing bees to pass through one at a time.

2. Porter bee escapes made of plastic with a couple of copper strips allowing bee escape. Should be used in pairs in case of a dead blocking one exit.

3. Circular escapes made of metal – each provides two channels for bees to exit.

All these escape division boards better when the escape is in the centre directly over the colony not in the edges or corners where bees do not congregate. All escape boards should be put on the hive one day prior to harvest. There were also chemical products available and used extensively overseas eg Beego.

Meeting closed at 9:15 pm. and members then enjoyed the usual supper.



This photo comes courtesy of Richard Wickens, who's article follows:

**Beekkeeping in Manitoba,  
Canada by Richard Wickens**  
**(Part 3 - part 2 appeared in the  
February 2004 Newsletter)**

Another fine day in Prairiedise. It's going to be a hot one too. Later in the season some of the hot days will be preceded by a fog dense enough to reduce every landmark to a dark smudge, if they're visible at all, and make finding the turn-off to the honeyhouse a feat of navigation. Thunderheads will also develop in the late afternoon and treat us to some spectacular shows of forked lightening.

What's it going to be like inside the honey house come midday? All that metal cladding on the outside is surely going to raise the temperature inside the building until it's like a furnace. But there's a chance of a last minute reprieve. Terry might have changed his mind and decided to harvest for another day. We've been warned to bring our coveralls each day in case of a last minute plan change. But, no change today. There wouldn't be enough empty boxes to put back on the hives if we headed out to the beeyards.

Terry hands us aprons and baseball caps. He explains that we're preparing food and they're a necessary hygiene measure. The threat of a food inspector descending on the honey house to carry out a snap

inspection is treated as ever present although none ever turns up. Watches too are removed. No point in collecting honey under watch-straps. I'm wearing shorts and a T-shirt against the heat, and Alvaro and I have stuck to our boots whereas the others are wearing sneakers. Bradon, a local lad, has been added to our team for extracting. He's to be our pallet washer and helps out with top bar scraping. Whenever he's got a spare moment, he waters down the cement floor and scrapes the wax and debris into a pail.

The extractor is located in an area off the body of the honeyhouse where all the honey drums and empty honey boxes are warehoused. The extraction area is open to the body of the main body building and resembles a church nave. There's more natural light here than in any other part of the building as there's windows in the two outer walls. Set into the windows are mesh cones that allow the bees that fly around the extraction room to escape – at least the ones that don't sting us.

From my post, I can see outside a small beeyard where Terry monitors the weight of one of the hives as a guide to how the bees are doing this season. It's also a place to transfer the bees that, despite all our efforts to leave them behind in the beeyards, have managed to make it into the honey house as stowaways.

I soon learn my role. Nothing too complicated for a novice with nectar still behind the ears. I'm to scrape the burr comb and propolis off the top bars of the frames as they emerge onto the conveyer from the decapper and scratch any cappings that survive intact. Early in the season, the comb is well drawn out but later on the comb is not drawn out so fully and we become busier with the scratchers,

sometimes having to halt the conveyor to deal with a several frames at once.

It's a magnificent beast, the extractor, a mechanical dinosaur in stainless steel armour, and stretching in a crouch almost the length of the room. It's a product of Cowan Manufacturing. At the head of the machine are the decapper and the 'frame lifter'. The latter, like a set of false teeth, rotates on a post beside the decapper and through a system of hydraulics is manipulated up and down so that it can pick up all nine frames in a single bite from each of boxes in the four stacks grouped next to the decapper and drop them onto the abbreviated conveyor in the bottom jaw. Terry tells me the 'frame lifter' is a prototype developed by a beekeeping mechanic – a man, he assures me, who is a mechanical genius and I'm inclined to endorse his opinion when I watch his invention in action. The prototype has since been modified and is now marketed by Cowan Manufacturing which is proof if you need it of the man's genius.

I'm positioned behind the head of this beast on the nape of its long neck, that is, alongside the conveyor. As the frames drop down the back of the decapper's throat, they're drawn between a pair of vibrating heated blades that slice the caps off the cells. Cam Unrau's the master of the frame-lifter and decapper. In between feeding frames into the mouth of the decapper, he scrapes the empty boxes free of comb and propolis, and deposits them on a low conveyer that runs along the inner wall of the room and carries them to the tail of the extractor where Alvaro is working. Scraping the empty boxes is done with a hive tool. A moment's inattention can lead to cut knuckles from the metal spacers that are fixed to all the honey supers.

By 8.30 am we are underway and except for water and toilet stops – there's no official morning or afternoon teas – we work through until 12.15 pm. All the moving mechanical parts make a considerable racket. It's not so loud that you need to wear earmuffs, but it's loud enough to make prolonged conversation a strain on the voicebox. Anyway, I'm too busy inspecting the frames passing under my eyes to have much time for conversation as frames emerge from the decapper about every 6 seconds. They ooze a marvellous, golden honey, a liquid sunlight. No wonder honey was once thought to have been 'Mana from Heaven'. At this time of the summer, the honey is mostly canola with a little alfalfa, dandelion, sweet clover and other floral sources mixed in. Towards the end of the season, the honey will be primarily buckwheat, a honey not unlike manuka but less popular in this part of the world because it's dark and bitter. Buckwheat is grown for flour and 90% is exported to Japan where it's used to manufacture noodles. Terry tests the honey with a refractometer twice a day to ensure that the moisture content is not too high. He claims that he can also tell whether the honey is ripe by eye.

I notice that as some of the frames emerge from the decapper, the comb detaches itself from the foundation and begin a slow cascade into the sump. This seems to happen mostly when the wooden frames contain plastic foundation. The bond doesn't seem as strong as wax on wax. Terry agrees with my opinion that the damage to the comb must make more work for the bees when the frames are placed back on the hives as the bees have more renovation to do to reconstruct the comb. Terry tells me that it's getting harder to buy wax foundation, and one

third of his frames now contain plastic foundation. He's also trialling black plastic frames but he remarks that the bees are slow to draw out comb on them.

Occasionally, there's a stoppage. From time to time a frame jams in the decapper, and has to be extricated. A thorough search for any pieces that break from frames is always conducted after one of these salvage operations. Any errant piece of a frame or plastic foundation could have disastrous consequences if it ends up becoming lodged in the heat exchanger or pump or some part of the labyrinth of tubing that runs from the extractor to the storage tanks up in the ceiling of the honeyhouse above the drying room. Once the broken pieces are retrieved, no matter how small, they're scraped over the sump before being discarded. All those dribbles of honey added together over a season could represent a significant amount of honey!

Terry roves around the extractor's belly loading and unloading frames into it, a task made easier by a system of hydraulics. This is a mature item of equipment and Terry treats it tenderly. But even more sensitive is the 'separator' where pure honey and debris part company inside the rapidly spinning bowl. The honey passes to it from the extractor through a heat exchanger to make it flow better. Equipment breakdowns during harvest could be catastrophic as machinery parts or service facilities for this kind of equipment is not readily available in a small rural town like Gladstone, although it's surprising what services can be found. Amongst his many jobs, Terry keeps replenishing Cam's stacks of honey boxes whenever they get low. He wheels them out of the hot room next door on a hand-truck.

At the tail end of the extractor Alvaro has his post. He's a busy man is Alvaro. When the extractor is emptied of frames, they are carried down one of the two parallel conveyor belts to him and he deposits them into the empty boxes. When he's assembled a stack, he wheels enough of them onto the hired van and Terry's semi in readiness for next day's harvest. Any boxes not required for the harvest are stacked in the body of the warehouse.

The lunch break is 30 minutes and we shed out aprons and take ourselves outside and sit in the shade of the van parked in the loading bay to eat our lunch. There's a faint odour of rotting meat in the air from the pheromone attractant inside the fly trap positioned not too far away, but it's not strong enough to spoil anyone's appetite. The conversation is generally about beekeeping but sometimes it turns to sports and hunting.

Terry is an avid follower of the Blue Jays, a Winnipeg semi-pro baseball team, and takes his son to games when they're in Winnipeg a 140 kms South of Gladstone. Cam is keen on hunting with both bow and rifle, and has a bear's head amongst his trophies. I struggle to explain rugby to my fellow workers. Of course, they're mystified. Terry who has watched a game compares it a kind of brutal grid-iron without the common-sense protection of padding and helmets. By the time I leave Canada, I've become a supporter of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, a grid-iron team, although I'm as mystified by the rules of the game as they are by those of Rugby Union.

*To be continued ...*

**Part 4 – of notes from an article by Dr Pedro P Rodriguez re the use of propane foggers and Food Grade Mineral Oil (FGMO):**

**Question: Is there any time when Food Grade Mineral oil (FGMO) can not be used?**

**Answer:** There are no limitations as to when FGMO can be used. FGMO does not have time of day, temperature or other environmental requirements. Emulsion soaked cords are meant to provide protection all year long. Fogging is recommended any time when the bees are flying.

**Question: Does FGMO smoke influence honey bees?**

**Answer:** The fogger does not produce smoke. The emissions of the fogger are a very fine, cool white mist. Bees do not seem to be affected by FGMO fog. They may rush out of the hive during the first and second applications, but seem not to be bothered after those initial applications. The colour of FGMO fog should always be white. If the colour turns blue, it means that the flow of FGMO into the coil is not sufficient and the oil is being burnt.

**Question: Is there a special way to operate foggers?**

**Answer:** Foggers are simple to operate, but it is important to develop a routine operations system. The following steps have been successful for me.

**Lighting.** This step can be troublesome, especially in the field during windy days. I solved this task by borrowing my wife's BBQ butane lighter, a gadget that lights the fogger instantly. Turn the fogger's gas knob ¼ turn, click the lighter and point to the side of the coil. Placing one's hand above (not on!) the

coil, one can feel the heat rising, an indication that the fogger is lit. If not, apply the lighter to the side of the coil again. Allow the lit fogger to rest (about one minute) and watch the spout. You should see the following sequence of events: a drop or two of oil will "spit out" of the spout. A small plume of fog resembling that of a lit cigarette should be the next observation, followed by a thicker puff. By this time the coil should be red hot and ready to produce a steady flow of FGMO fog. Point the fogger at the entrance of the hive, squeeze the trigger firmly and steadily for about 5 seconds. Operators must make sure that fogger is kept parallel to the entrance of the hive. Do not point fogger downward.

*END*

With reference to the article: *100 Years Ago November, 1903 How to Use a "Bingham" Honey-Knife by T. F. Bingham* which appeared in the February 2004 Newsletter. This article was taken from the 'American Beekeeper Journal' Vol 143, No 11, of November 2003, and we thank them for permission to reprint. The scribe apologises that this acknowledgement was not included with the article.

## **Honey Competition**

**Next Month**

**Don't forget to prepare your entry for the Honey Competition next month. Classes for liquid and creamed honey, and for honey-comb.**

## **THE LANGSTROTH FRAME AND HIVE, AND WHY THEY BECAME THE STANDARDS.**

1. A shallow frame permits the use of a low flat hive that can easily be tiered up one, two, three, and four stories high. This is a great advantage when one is running for extracted honey, as all he has to do when the bees require more room is to add upper stories as fast as the bees require them, and then at the end of the season extract at his leisure. Square or deep hives can not be tiered up very high without becoming top-heavy and out of convenient reach of the operator.

2. The long shallow frame is more easily uncapped because the blade of the uncapping-knife can reach clear across it.

3. The shape of the Langstroth frame favors an extractor of good proportion.

4. A deep frame is not as easily lifted out of a hive; is more liable to kill bees in the process of removing and inserting frames.

5. The shallow frame is better adapted for section honey. It is well known that bees, after forming a brood circle, are inclined to put sealed honey just over the brood. In a frame as shallow as the Langstroth, there will be less honey in the broadest: and more in the boxes; for bees, in order to complete their brood circle in the Langstroth, will, with a prolific queen, often push the brood-line almost up to the top-bar, and, consequently, when honey comes in, will put it into the supers or boxes just where it is wanted.

6. When bees are left to themselves they will generally form a cluster late in the season, immediately over the entrance of the hive, and down two or three inches from the top of the frames. As the season progresses the cluster eats into the stores above it, and on reaching the top it works backward. It therefore transpires that the cluster reaches the top of the hive where it is the warmest during the coldest part of the year. In the case of the ordinary square frame the bees will be found just over the entrance, but four or five inches from the top; but in the midst, of the coldest weather the bees may not and probably will not be near the top of the hive; but on reaching the top they can progress backward only a comparatively short distance because the top bar of a square frame is relatively short. In the case of the Langstroth hive, the bees during the entire cold part of winter stay in the top of the hive, where it is the warmest. As fire stores are consumed they move backward and gradually reach the back of the hive, and by that time warmer weather will probably prevail.

But in actual experience bees seem to winter just as well on a Langstroth as any other: and as the shallow frame is better adapted to section honey, beekeepers naturally turned toward the shallower frame, with the result that now probably nineteenth of all the frames in the United States are of Langstroth dimensions: and whatever advantage there may be in favor of the square shape, the beekeeper is able to buy standard goods so much cheaper that he adopts the Langstroth frame.