



Next meeting | Wednesday 6th December 2023

Where | Johnsonville Community Centre

Editor | Jane Harding janeh@xtra.co.nz

No beginners class this month, main meeting starts at 7.30pm

Entries for the mead competition from 7pm.

Main Meeting: 7.30pm

Mead competition with Jacob de Ruyter judging.

Bee-themed quiz and shared supper.

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President's Message

I have been at the Anthropology Conference in Dunedin over the last few days and I very much enjoyed the drive from Picton to Dunedin under blue skies. I noticed that the cabbage trees were dripping with flowers and so I expect there have been many swarms of bees. Before I left home I made three splits from two of my Golden Mean Top Bar hives and I thought that would be that until I returned home. However last Thursday morning I received a message from Erica saying that there was a swarm. The weather was warm at the time the bees swarmed but the temperature dropped quickly and this made it easier to collect the swarm. Two weeks ago I had two colonies and now I have six. I hope everyone is enjoying this aspect of the reproduction of colonies - splits and/or swarms.

Susan Wardell, one of the anthropologists at the Anthropology Conference, constructed an exhibit about bees and cross pollination including photos, selections of text, poems and drawings. She let me bring this exhibit home to show at our next meeting and I hope you take the chance to have a look and enjoy it.

Ekō have been keeping me up to date on the pesticide, glyphosate, and have noted that there is new research about its harmfulness. The scariest thing is that there is evidence that glyphosate can be found in the food we eat, the textiles we touch, and the dust in our homes. At the beginning of November the EU banned the pesticide for another 10 years. Although EU countries did not reapprove glyphosate the 'no' vote was not very strong and the pesticide lobbyists have gone into full swing before another vote in about a month. If you want



to support getting a ban on glyphosate in Europe that will support bee health there please contact us@eko.org

I am looking forward to the mead judging and tasting at the next meeting and our celebration of another year ended.

Take care over the holiday break - Merry Christmas!

Tricia Laing



The bees know it's Christmas when the pohutukawa flowers



Haewai Meadery

The judge for our mead competition this year is Jacob de Ruiter.

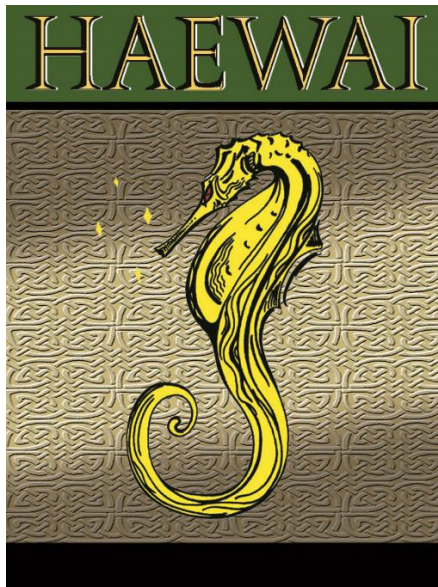
Jacob and Coral Hyam run Haewai Meadery on Wellington's south coast in Houghton Bay. Haewai is one of New Zealand's few producers of traditional mead, made in the traditional way from honey, water and yeast.

Haewai also make Metherglynn, which incorporates the use of herbs and flowers into the mix when the mead is aging.

Jacob credits the success of their product to the water from the spring on their property Wind Gardens, and of course to the honey they use.

Haewai is open to visit in the weekends and at other times by arrangement.

<https://www.haewai.co.nz/index.html?1>





Hives and Hiveware for Sale

Ben is downsizing his 3/4 hives and has a range of single (\$300) and double hives (\$400) for sale, with the majority having new queens this season. There are also a variety of bases available - wood, Hive Doctor and Hive Defender depending on your preference. Prices are negotiable, and splits with or without queens are also available, as well as frame transfers into your own hive ware. Delivery can also be arranged in most cases. You can contact Ben on **021 0261 0750**.



Frame from one of Ben's hives



FOR SALE – READY-TO-GO HIVEWARE

Large number of unused, assembled, dipped, painted, full depth boxes each with 10 x unused plastic frames.

Ex – commercial beekeeper’s stock but never used.

RRP – approx \$100 each (depending on supplier)

My price - \$50 (incl GST)

Delivery included (within Wgton area).

John Burnet

21 Kiwi Crescent, Tawa, Wellington 5028

Ph 04 232 7863 | Cell 0274 379 062

Interesting Links

New Research suggests we’ve got it all wrong on why bees cluster, and our hive designs aren’t helping:

<https://www.sciencealert.com/honeybees-suffer-unnecessarily-in-human-made-hives-study-finds>

Zoe and Rose from Victoria University are interviewed on Radio New Zealand talking about their research into varroa control using RNA interference.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ourchangingworld/audio/2018916120/a-new-way-to-help-honey-bees>

Rose spoke to use about her research back in August, and Zoe will come back and update us on her research early in 2024.



Hive Robbing

Hive Robbing is generally something that occurs towards the end of summer when there are less nectar-bearing flowers around and the bees and wasps are looking for new sources of nectar. Strong hives will sometimes attack and rob a weaker hive, and wasps of course will attack hives to get at the honey.

Bees attacking another hive will crowd around the hive in large numbers and attempt to enter the hive. If a weak hive cannot defend itself and kill the intruders, the honey stores can be quickly plundered and the bees killed.

This season we seem to have an early start on robbing, I've noticed a few facebook posts about this, and I have already seen wasps around my hives.

The best cure is of course prevention, and there are some simple rules:

- Don't leave old honey or honey frames open in your apiary. This will encourage robbing behaviour from bees and wasps.
- Be careful where you store frames and when you use a solar wax melter, as the smell of honey on the wax can encourage robbing.
- When taking honey frames off the hives, have the hive open for as short a time as possible, to reduce the opportunity for robbing to commence.
- Fit robbing guards to your hive entrances, there are a number of different designs and ideas out there for guards,
- Reduce the size of the entrance to your hives so the hive is easier to defend.
- Try and locate the source of any wasps and kill the nests.
- And an idea from Honey Bee Suite: Diverting Robber Bees.
- "A wide board, a piece of coreflute or plastic panel placed on the ground so it leans against the front of the hive does a good job of



diverting robbers. Bees not familiar with the hive seem reluctant to go into the deep shade caused by the board.”

- Strong hives don't get robbed, so keep your hives strong by making sure they have enough food and a good queen. Consider combining smaller/weaker hives to create a single stronger hive.

And if you do see robbing occurring:

- Use a smoker to calm the bees
- Reduce the hive entrance and block all other entrances,
- Turn the hose or sprinkler onto the hive with a gentle spray, this will discourage bees from flying and hopefully discourage the robbing from occurring.
- Try placing wet sacks or towels over the hive to mask the smell of honey,
- Smear the hive entrance with something strong smelling like Vicks Vapo Rub to mask the smell and put off intruders.



Hive Robbing (photo courtesy of Ecrotek)



Keeping Your Bees Informed

Here's a lovely story to end the newsletter for this month. Many of us know of the old practice of telling the bees when a beekeeper died, in fact the Queen's beekeeper did just that to the Queen's hives back in September <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/royal-family/royal-beekeeper-bees-queen-death-b2164345.html>.

Apparently the practice is not just reserved for the death of the beekeeper, but for other important events also:

There was a time when almost every rural British family who kept bees followed a strange tradition.

Whenever there was a death in the family, someone had to go out to the hives and tell the bees of the terrible loss that had befallen the family. Failing to do so often resulted in further losses such as the bees leaving the hive, or not producing enough honey or even dying.

Traditionally, the bees were kept abreast of not only deaths but all important family matters including births, marriages, and long absence due to journeys. If the bees were not told, all sorts of calamities were thought to happen. This peculiar custom is known as "telling the bees".

The practice of telling the bees may have its origins in Celtic mythology that held that bees were the link between our world and the spirit world. So if you had any message that you wished to pass to someone who was dead, all you had to do was tell the bees and they would pass along the message.

The typical way to tell the bees was for the head of the household, or "goodwife of the house" to go out to the hives, knock gently to get the attention of the bees, and then softly murmur in a doleful tune the solemn news.



Little rhymes developed over the centuries specific to a particular region. In Nottinghamshire, the wife of the dead was heard singing quietly in front of the hive,

“The master's dead, but don't you go; Your mistress will be a good mistress to you.”

In Germany, a similar couplet was heard,

“Little bee, our lord is dead; Leave me not in my distress”.

But the relationship between bees and humans goes beyond superstition. It's a fact, that bees help humans survive. 70 of the top 100 crop species that feed 90% of the human population rely on bees for pollination. Without them, these plants would cease to exist and with it all animals that eat those plants. This can have a cascading effect that would ripple catastrophically up the food chain.

Losing a beehive is much worse than losing a supply of honey. The consequences are life threatening. The act of telling the bees emphasizes this deep connection humans share with the insect.

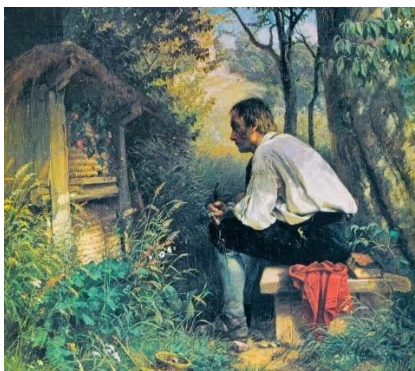


Figure 1 The Bee Friend by Hans Thoma



What's Ahead in 2024

Monthly meetings will commence again on the 1st Wednesday of February, 7 February. The committee will meet before then to put together the programme for 2024.

We will continue to have our newbies sessions before the main meeting, starting at 6.45pm and the main meeting getting under way at 7.30pm. Our newbies sessions will again be focused on what's happening in the hives, and what you need to be looking out for or preparing for.

Some of our regular sessions this year will return, namely:

Honey Competition – March or April

Photo Competition – July, in conjunction with the AGM

Mead Competition - December

Who can I speak to?

President - Patricia Laing president@beehive.org.nz

Treasurer – John Burnet (04) 232 7863 treasurer@beehive.org.nz

Secretary – Jane Harding 027 421 2417 secretary@beehive.org.nz

Membership - James Scott - (04) 565 0164

Web Master - Jason Bragg - (021 527 244)

Librarian - Ellen Millar - (021 709 793)

Supper co-ordinator - Barbara Parkinson – (04) 2379624

Swarm WhatsApp Administrator - Jim Hepburn (021 926823)

PK Tan - 021 109 3388

Graeme Chisnall - 021-246-8662

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