Times Past

- *Eoghan Mac Giolla Coda*

Breakfast was Bond's favourite meal of the day. When he was stationed in London it was always the same. It consisted of very strong coffee, from De Bry in New Oxford Street, brewed in an American Chemex, of which he drank two large cups, black and without sugar. The single egg, in the dark blue egg cup with a gold ring round the top, was boiled for three and a third minutes.... Then there were two thick slices of whole-wheat toast, a large pat of deep yellow Jersey butter and three squat glass jars containing Tiptree 'Little Scarlet' strawberry jam; Cooper's Vintage Oxford marmalade and Norwegian Heather Honey from Fortnum's.

- Ian Fleming,
From Russia with Love

Commercial Honey Production at Clonroche

(The following article highlights how much a loss to Irish beekeeping was the closure of the Beekeeping Research Centre at Clonroche, Co. Wexford. The article demonstrates the potential of honey production in Ireland using the native honey bee. The management system used is also as relevant today as it was forty years ago. The information on honey yields is also invaluable in discussions of honey production potential under Irish condition. I have included the article in full).

Introduction

The commercial honey production trial has now been running at Clonroche for the past 12 years. In 1966, 75 stocks of bees were set up in three apiary units of 25 stocks per apiary. The apiaries are located within an eight mile radius of Clonroche Research Station. The management of these 75 stocks has been according to the directions laid down in the Dept. of Agriculture and Fisheries leaflet: "A Blueprint for Profitable Honey Production. "In addition, use has been made of the technique of splitting some stocks in the first week of May and using these stocks to replace winter losses and weak stocks in springtime.

The aim of the trial is to record the honey crop that can be achieved under Irish conditions over a period of years. It is hoped that by demonstrating the yields that can be obtained, honey producers would adopt better management systems, making beekeeping a more profitable and rewarding enterprise for all concerned.

The type of hive used is the Modified Commercial, and **the bees are all Irish-bred black bees.** Hive stands are made to hold two hives approx. 375 mm from the ground. Creosote is used on all hives and stands as preservative. The three apiary sites are rented from farmers and hold no agricultural value. The apiaries are kept clean from grass and weeds by an application of the weedkillers paraquat and simazine.

Procedure

The stocks overwintered well in the winter of 1976 and spring of 1977. They were weighed on the first of every month, starting on November 1, and continuing up to April. The records show that they consumed an average of 7.4 kg of food between November and April.

In 1977, it was found on our first inspection on April 4 that three stocks were queenless and one stock had chalk brood and was very weak; so these four stocks were considered as winter losses. Spring disease tests showed that three stocks were infected with acarine, and four stocks infected with nosema. The infected stocks were treated with Folbex strips for acarine and with Fumagillin for nosema.

All one-year-old queens were clipped and marked during early April. Fifteen stocks were divided on May 2. The April weighing showed an average brood chamber weight of 27.6 kg and with brood chamber weights as high as this, and favourable foraging conditions during May and June, an average of 2.5 kg of sugar per stock was all that was needed to be fed as spring feeding.

Routine swarm control work started on May 20 and continued at nine- or ten-day intervals until July 18. Nineteen seventy-seven was a particularly bad swarming year and stocks headed by new 1977 queens that would not normally be expected to build queen cells did so in July. In all, a total of 78.6 per cent of stocks built queen cells.

In our routine apiary inspections we try as far as possible to equalise our stocks by taking frames of brood from our stronger stocks and giving them to weaker stocks in the apiary. Our aim is to keep the queen laying in the stock until after June 20. After that date, if the stock persists in building queen cells, we either destroy the queen or remover her in a nucleus hive. We have found that making a nucleus hive at this time with the old queen and one frame of brood, and shaking in some bees from other frames that they will develop into a strong nucleus that can be overwintered as such.

From our scale hive records we find that the honey flow started at Clonroche on July 1, and continued until the end of July. The peak honey gathering period was from July 5 to July 23. The total weight gain of the Clonroche scale hive was 72.4 kg. The honey flow for white clover was particularly good in 1977, and weight gains of 6.7 kg per day were recorded. The honey was removed from the hives in early August using clearer board with porter bee escapes, and the bee blower to remove any bees that had not gone down through the clearer boards.

Forty stocks were brought to heather / knapweed sites in north Kildare on August 9 and, although a scale hive established at Lullymore showed a weight gain of 7 kg between August 9 and September 2, no surplus honey was obtained from any stocks at the heather.

The 40 stocks were brought back to Clonroche on September 20.

All the stocks were then weighed and the average brood chamber weight of the stocks not at the heather was 36.9 kg. With the stocks having so much stores in the hives, an average of 3.4 kg of sugar per stock was all that had to be fed in late September. The Millar feeder is used for the feeding of all stocks in full-size brood chambers at Clonroche, and the syrup is made up at the rate of 1 kg sugar to 0.5 litres of water for all feeding.

Disease tests in the autumn showed 14 stocks with acarine infection and no stocks with nosema. Fumadil-B is incorporated in the syrup at autumn feeding for the treatment of nosema, and stocks are treated with Frows mixture for acarine disease in late November. Mouse guards are put on all hives in September.

Discussion

Despite the fact that swarming was a very big problem, 1977 was an excellent year for the honey producer who adopted a proper management system of his stocks. It will be seen from the table that our yields for 1977 are less than 2 kg lower than the best year, 1968. Prices for honey also showed a worthwhile increase, with 45p per pound, in bulk, readily available.

Year	Flower Honey	Heather/Knapweed Honey	Total
1966	27.7	-	27.7
1967	34.1	-	34.1
1968	42.7	4.1	46.8
1969	29.1	8.2	37.3
1970	19.1	6.3	25.4
1971	29.1	0.0	29.1
1972	17.3	4.5	21.8
1973	20.7	1.3	22.0
1974	22.0	0.0	22.0
1975	41.6	2.9	44.5
1976	24.8	4.4	29.2
1977	40.8	0.0	40.8
Mean	**29.0**	**3.2**	**31.7**

Table: Average honey production (kg/hive) 1966-1977

An Beachaire, July 1978

Updated List of Native Bee Suppliers

There is now a list of Native Bee Suppliers of queens and nucs on the NIHBS website: http://nihbs.org/nucs-and-queens/.

All these suppliers have signed a voluntary undertaking concerning the supply of honey bees to the public. The text of which follows

The Native Irish Honey Bee Society was established in part to: Promote the conservation, study, improvement and re-introduction of the native Irish honey bee, Apis mellifera mellifera, throughout the island of Ireland.

In support of this work, I hereby undertake to fully support the aims and objectives of the Native Irish Honey Bee Society as set out in that organisation's constitution.

I hereby confirm that to the best of my knowledge, the honey bees I produce for sale are Apis mellifera mellifera.

I undertake to provide on request, bee samples from any and all of my apiaries and colonies of honey bees for the purpose of DNA analysis to determine purity of stock. This will only apply when the DNA analysis system is verified and operational.

I confirm that I subscribe to the principle of not importing honey bees from outside the island of Ireland.

Anthony, Robert: **	Waterford	kilmeedy.west@googlemail.com	087 6547034	Q N
Bees Coolmore:	Cork	mnewenham@coolmorebees.com	086 2317229	Q
Coyne, Gerard:	Galway	gerrypcoyne@yahoo.co.uk	085 1043696	Q N
Dumican, David:	Down	daviddumican06@aol.com	00447584560995	Q
Getty, Jonathan:	Antrim	jonathangetty80@gmail.com	00447835147366	Q
Little, John:	Carlow	littleent@eircom.net	086 8509644	Q N
NicGiollaCoda, Aoife:**	Tipperary	galteebees@gmail.com	087 6743030	Q
O'Connell, Colette:	Waterford	coletteoconnell@ymail.com	086 3904817	Q N
O'Neill, Colm:	Kildare	colmdoneill@eircom.net	087 2584890	Q
O'Sullivan, Vincent:	Cork	midletonbees@gmail.com	086 6214600	Q N
Osborne, Sean:	Galway	osbornegalway@yahoo.ie	087 2558639	Q N
Phair, Jerome	Offaly			Q N
Rice, Liam:	Cork	liamandkittyrice@gmail.com	086 159 7881	Q N
Summerville, John:	Offaly	svillejohn@gmail.com	086 8549141	Q
Walsh, Damien:	Donegal	dewalsh60@gmail.com	086 0513020	Q N
Walsh-Harrison Pauline		pwalsh100.pw@gmail.com		Q

** Supply to Republic of Ireland only