

<u>President</u>	Tony Lamont	6663 1238
<u>Vice-president</u>	Geoff Muntelwit	6688 6128
<u>Secretary</u>	Shirley Ashman	6628 3687
<u>Treasurer</u>	Peter Dickson-Smith	6649 2009
<u>Equipment Officer</u>	Stephen Fowler	6622 8534
<u>Library</u>	Brian Window	6624 2864
<u>Editor</u>	David Fairhall	6624 8739

[tclamont@bigpond.com](mailto:tclamont@bigpond.com)

[shirley.ashman@bigpond.com](mailto:shirley.ashman@bigpond.com)

[pdsbml@bigpond.com](mailto:pdsbml@bigpond.com)

[fowlerstephen@y7mail.com](mailto:fowlerstephen@y7mail.com)

[brianwindow@internode.on.net](mailto:brianwindow@internode.on.net)

[Newsletter\\_NRABA@bigpond.com](mailto:Newsletter_NRABA@bigpond.com)

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## From the President

Hello everybody. Sorry I didn't get to the last meeting but I hear there was a nice roll up. The weather was good, along with the activity, so thanks to Peter Laughton and his helpers (I believe he had some helpers!) for providing the venue.

This will be my last President's Report as the next meeting will be the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and all positions will be up for grabs. So we will organise a bus for a trip to Peter and Barbara's at Glenreagh. If you intend going on the bus, get your name on the list as soon as possible so we can arrange a time to leave and a pick-up point.

I've enjoyed my role as president over the last three years, and being part of a club that is growing and helping others to get into beekeeping. So, have you given some thought about who you might nominate for our new committee? I have. See you on the bus.

Tony

## Last Meeting

Our February meeting was held at the home of Peter and Lyn Laughton, in Tabulam, between Tenterfield and Casino, on the last Sunday of the month.

The day's proceedings kicked off with a Flow Hive meeting, followed by morning tea. A honey cake competition – one of a series we are having in the run-up to the Colonel Pulling Competition (CPC) in May – was won by Peter's daughters.



*NRABA Meeting at the Laughton's*

Merv then gave a quick masterclass on how to keep your smoker burning for longer. The hive inspection covered an important topic for apiarists: requeening. The old queen was identified and removed from a number of Peter's hives. These were installed with recently mated caged queens.

Lunch included the usual sausage sizzle, with a selection of salads and desserts to follow. Special thanks go to the Laughtons for hosting the meeting and to all those who helped on the day.

## From The Hives – March

Further to last month's hive where the queen was found above the excluder, the excluder was judged to be OK. A check of others around the shed showed that slots in flat-punched plastic excluders were always less than 4.36 mm, and that the welded wire types usually had some spaces bigger than 4.36 mm. Maybe some manufacturers need to lift their game?

The bad news is that the hive succumbed big time to hive beetles after the queen was put back down below; four boxes of honey and maggots when it was finally examined. This was a strong hive with a good laying queen. It is clear that this is an example of what another well-known member of the NRABA calls “p\*\*s-poor beekeeping”; it should not happen.

The point has been made before that beekeepers should modify their practices now that hive beetles are here. When doing any major hive manipulations like this, or making up nuclei hives, here are some suggested dos (and don'ts).

- Do maximise the coverage of bees on the frames by removing as many frames for extraction as you can. If the hive has few bees, remove boxes of part-filled frames.
- Do remove old brood combs and combs choked with pollen from the hive. The old practice of putting these combs above the excluder to be later extracted should be avoided. The combs provide a starting point for a beetle attack. Never put any frames attractive for breeding hive beetles in the top of the hive.
- Do put all the brood together down below. Excess frames of brood can go together immediately above the excluder, but it is preferable to have no brood above the excluder; it is better to discard some brood combs than have a whole hive overcome by maggots.

One set of 16 hives (now 14) at Bungawalbyn is ready to be moved to a site with *Melaleuca quinquenervia* near Coraki, while the other set has a lot of honey to come off before moving. The ground has been a little boggy and it would be risky getting a full load out of the paddock.

Brian

### **March Flowering**

There is not likely to be much melliferous flowering in the Richmond Valley in the coming months, other than what was mentioned in the last newsletter: ti tree, or *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, and support species growing in the

same environment, such as swamp mahogany, or *Eucalyptus robusta*.

Ti tree is regarded as producing best near the coast, and in years when they have wet feet from rain before Christmas and then dry during the flowering periods. But, as with all Australian floras, they don't always follow the accepted wisdom.

The banksias, such as *B. integrifolia* and *B. ericifolia macrantha*, on the coast will give pollen and can be useful nectar producers at times. Most produce strong-flavoured dark honey that tends to crystallise quickly, sometimes in the hive.

Those of you who went west for the last meeting may have noticed the swamp mahogany (no, not the one mentioned above; common names are confusing aren't they?), *Lophostemon suaveolens*, flowering as you walked into the paddock where the bees were. Like the closely related brush box, an irregular yielder, it may have been responsible for the nicely filled supers we witnessed on the day.

The next meeting is also being held in the Clarence Valley, albeit a tad further downstream. On our last visit we passed corky ironbark/square fruited ironbark, *E. tetrapleura*, growing around Myrtle Creek near Whiporie. It is a winter flowerer and is known for producing a light honey that froths when extracted. Like some other ironbarks it is pollen deficient, and there is normally no other pollen where it tends to grow at that time of year, so one works it at one's peril.

Geoff

### **Annual General Meeting**

The AGM of the NRABA will be held on 26 March, as part of the next monthly meeting at Glenreagh. All positions will be declared vacant.

Have you thought about taking on a role in the NRABA? Well-functioning clubs need good leadership and many hands make light work. Please consider this at the AGM.

And a reminder that if you think someone would do well in a position, please discuss it with them

before nominating them. No throwing your mates under the bus!

### **Steritech**

A total of 164 boxes, assembled in 4½ pallets, were sent to Steritech for irradiation, and returned a week later. Most of the consignment consisted of boxes of unknown history, which were being sterilised to make sure they were clean. A small part of the consignment included boxes known to be infected with American Foul Brood (AFB).



*Pallets of Boxes Ready for Transport to Steritech*

The cost per box and contents worked out at \$14.60, with roughly two thirds for the irradiation and one third for freight.

Brian

### **Hives and Nuclei**

Please contact Stephen Fowler if you are able to supply hives and nuclei to other club members.

### **New Equipment**

Don't forget that Stephen and Janet Fowler carry most common beekeeping equipment, including a range of manual and electric extractors. They also have a range of jars and pots for honey sales.

Remember that you can contact Stephen or Janet a week or two before the next meeting and they'll bring your gear along to the meeting. The Equipment Officer contact details are at the front of the newsletter.

Robert Stone has pre-assembled and wired frames for sale. Please contact Robert on 6683 2222 for further information.

### **The Great Cake Bake Off**

As mentioned earlier, Peter Laughton's daughters were the winners of the February honey cake competition, which was judged by three mystery judges. But there's another chance to display your cake-baking talent, at the NRABA March meeting.

Remember that the cake must contain honey and a copy of the recipe must be provided if it is selected for entry into the CPC. So, bring your entry to Glenreagh, preferably on a plastic plate. Presentation of the whole cake for judging would be appreciated.

Anyone who plans to enter, please let Shirley know either by email or phone. Contact details are at the front of the newsletter.

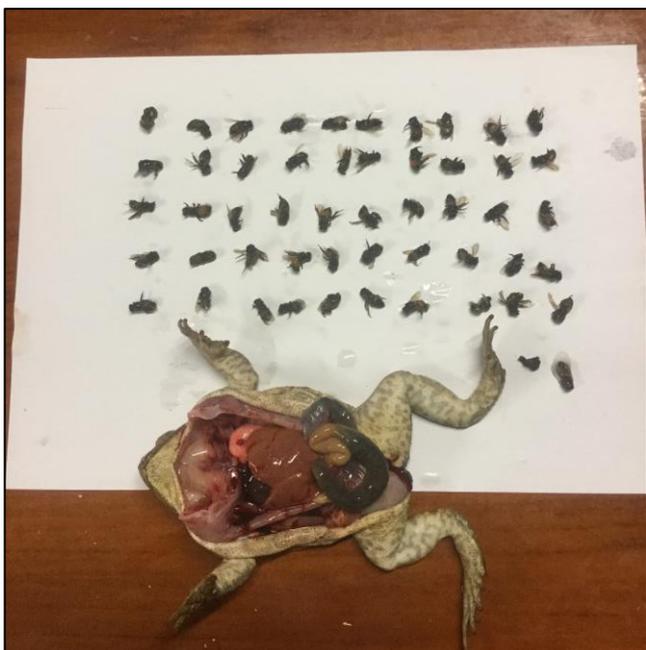
### **Cane Toads!**

*This article was sent in by one of our members, Paul Towner.*

Having not given much thought to the cane toads because I don't routinely see them (but know they are here at Rous Mill), I was much disgusted to find one sitting at the front of a hive about a week ago.

The call of nature and a beautiful night led me outside at about 1am. I hadn't gone to bed, but had been up in the shed making frames etc, after finishing night duty that morning, so was wide awake at a late hour again. I retired for the evening via the front lawn to check on the hives, and was very disgusted with Mr Toad, so despatched promptly with same. BUT HE WAS BACK AGAIN THE NEXT NIGHT!

It had got the better of me and I needed to know how many of my bees he had eaten. With a sharp scalpel, the toad was dissected. I hadn't done that since high school, but plenty of hunting and field dressing game over the years had me in good stead.



*52 Bees Eaten by a Cane Toad*

There were 52 bees in the toad's stomach, and the small and large bowels were full of what appeared to be further digested bee carcasses! A smaller toad that I found probably 20 yards from the hive, and looking rather innocent, got the same treatment. It had 12 bees in its stomach plus an unknown quantity in the rest of the digestive system.

Is there no end to what these bloody things will devour?

Paul

### Upcoming Events

26 March – NRABA monthly meeting, Glenreagh

18-19 May – NSW Apiarists' Association Inc. Conference, Ballina

21 May – Colonel Pulling Competition and AGM of the ABA, Ballina

### Newsletter Submissions

Thank you to all members who contributed to the newsletter. It really is appreciated.

Newsletter submissions can be emailed to [Newsletter\\_NRABA@bigpond.com](mailto:Newsletter_NRABA@bigpond.com) by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. Photos are always appreciated.

### Next Meeting – 26 March, 2017

The next meeting will be held at the home of Barbara Lukas and Peter Dickson-Smith.

**Location:** 39 Eastbank Road, Glenreagh, NSW 2450.

**Time:** 10am Flow Hive meeting; 10.30am group meeting/AGM.

**Transport:** A bus has been booked for this meeting, leaving at 8am from Harold Fredericks Car Park (opposite Oakes Oval), Dawson Street, Lismore. Bookings are essential. Please contact Shirley Ashman or Tony Lamont to reserve your seat, calling after 6pm in the evening. The bus trip is free – first in, first served.

**Directions:** For those travelling by car, take the Armidale Road from South Grafton. After about 5km, turn left to Coffs Harbour on the Orara Way. Glenreagh is 38km from this turn. At the southern end of the village, turn left into Sherwood Creek Road. Cross the river and the railway line and proceed to a T-intersection. Turn right into Eastbank Road, follow the bitumen onto the gravel road straight ahead. No.39 is at the end of the gravel road, with white post-and-rail fencing fronting the road.

Bee meeting signage will be in place.

**Activities:** Hive inspections, the NRABA AGM and discussions on entries and arrangements for the CPC.

**What to bring:** Please bring the following items:

- Either a morning tea item or a salad to share;
- Raffle items are always appreciated;
- \$5 per head for morning tea/lunch;
- Beekeeping protective equipment;
- Chairs.