

## *Apiary Manager's Report 2018 LBKA*

### *Introduction*

Last year was a great year for the Limerick Beekeeper's Association. This year I can say it was a fantastic year for beekeeping in general and honey production as well as for our apiary. The weather over the winter was very mild and bees ate into their stores early in spring, I was feeding fondant by the end of January all through to March. The snow for St. Patrick's weekend and Easter was a big surprise and beekeepers throughout the country lost bees to starvation and other causes. The Apiary lost two nucs and this was down to poorly mated Queens as they were not laying, they had plenty of food but had reducing numbers in the colony. It was the 24<sup>th</sup> of April before any hives were opened and all that survived the harsh weather were in good condition. From then on they just took off and one had to be ready for them and the weather was fantastic for the bees and beekeeping.

We had a tree planting for bees evening in Late April helped out by members and the trees were organised by Sinead Mortell through Coillte



Members who turned up for the tree planting evening

This year we had 30 new beginner beekeepers take the two day course on 14<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> April in the Rathkeale House Hotel. Their first visit to our apiary was on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and we had a great evening of basic beekeeping. We had 8/9 visits to the apiary throughout the bee season for both beginners and advanced beekeepers and these proved to be very successful. The FIBKA practical exam for the beginners took place in the apiary June 13<sup>th</sup> and congratulations to all who took part in both the theory and practical exam's. I would like to thank all who contributed and helped out in the apiary throughout the year. I won't name them for fear of forgetting someone but ye all know who ye are.



Tutors and new beekeepers who attended the 2 day Beginner course at Rathkeale House Hotel



Some members at the tidy up pre RCBKA visit

Earlier in the year I had accepted on behalf of LBKA a visit request to see our apiary and discuss how we set it up and financed it from the Royal County Beekeepers Association Co. Meath. July 14<sup>th</sup> we hosted them at the apiary and they were greeted with cup of tea and refreshments after their long journey. They arrived enthusiastic and wearing bee suits so after the cup of tea we opened a hive and talked beekeeping for most of an hour or so. Before opening the bees I was presented with a token of appreciation a €100 voucher from the Chairperson Michael Goulding which I graciously accepted on behalf of LBKA. The Voucher later purchased 2 new twin 3 frame nucs for the Apiary. The weather on the day was fantastic, they planned a one hour visit and almost three hours later they departed on their journey, this speaks volumes of the great day we had with a great bunch of visiting beekeepers, relaxed conversations on beekeeping, friendly banter and whatever over a cuppa and making new friends.

I wish to thank the committee members Our Treasurer Liam Arrigan, Sinead Mortell Our Secretary, Mary Vaughan, Jean-Loui Valentine, Mike Geaney, Frank Corbett, Edel Boohan who attended, brought food and helped out on the day and made the day a huge success, I'd like to thank Albert Nolan for attending and giving us a great write up in the Limerick Leader on the visit. If I have left out anyone, my apologies but you are very much included in our appreciations.



Presentation of Voucher By Michael Goulding RCBKA



Hive inspection with RCBKA



Group Photograph of LBKA & RCBKA Members on the day

We went in to the winter last year with 9 colonies and came through with 7 this spring. As the season for inspecting didn't start until late April the bees were slow to take off but when the fine weather started they exploded and the bees did what they do best and produced lots of honey. June the hungry month or gap month started in the last 2 weeks of May but I found it was short this year due to the fine weather.

A total of 9 Nuc's were produced in the apiary this year and all the queens were reared in the apiary from very productive queens. Of these 6 were sold to new beekeepers. 1 replaced a hive that developed Drone laying workers the other 2 are in the apiary and will provide backup to the other hives. Again I would like to thank the beginners for purchasing the nucs from the association as this is vital funding for the development and running of the Association.

This year we produced a total of 232 jars of honey this could be a record.

119 Jars were sold to our members and to various people I met at the apiary grounds

There are still 66 jars available for sale.

44 jars were gifted to various people as tokens of appreciation for their help or donations to the apiary and these are as follows.

- 3 Jars to Helen McKeogh for facilitating the association's needs here in the Mungret GAA Clubhouse.
- 6 Jars via Gus McCoy to St. Mary's Fife & Drum Band Hall as a token of our appreciation for the use of their hall for committee meetings.
- 3 jars were kept for the Clonmel & Limerick honey show.
- 6 Jars to Cllr. Adam Teskey for his help in LA21 Grant.
- 12 Jars each to Caroline Rowler and Collette Blaney who had to give up beekeeping and donated their bees & hives to the apiary.
- 2 Jars to Rathkeale House Hotel

**Note:**

I entered 3 jars of medium Association Honey in the Confined Limerick and Clare Association Class at the Clonmel Honey Show and yes it won first prize, it also won 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in our own Limerick show.



## *Purchases*

- Honey Jars, Lids & Labels from Alpach
- 20 Nuc boxes & Varroa treatment from Paul O' Sullivan
- Frames & Foundation from West Limerick Bee Supplies
- Various items i.e. petrol for lawnmower, wire for fencing etc.

## *Planning for 2019*

Currently we have 9 colonies of bees. They are all headed up with new queens from this year stock and have been bred from different sources; creating diversity within our apiary. Fingers crossed we will be inspecting 9 colonies in March/April 2019.

This year we have been planning phase 2&3 of the new apiary development and it is hoped to start this early 2019. This will consist of an extraction room to demonstrate the extraction of honey to members and a laboratory to educate members in bee health and diagnosis of diseases. The site is secure and the bees and the public are safe again this year.

I hope to have on display the plans of the development and final figures at the start of the new-year. We have built up some funds this year but we need more and we are planning a raffle to start in the new-year. It is our plan to meet the criteria to secure funding for the rest of the development by means of match funding which means we have a short fall on our funds hence the raffle. We are open to other fund raising ideas if anyone knows of organisations wanting to give money away or any ideas on sourcing financial support please let us know or come on board and help us as you are all very welcome.

The new apiary this year proved a huge success even though it was an experimental year as to what would work and I think the schedule that was laid out worked very well. We had some great nights of beekeeping and a big thank you for supporting it. A new schedule in a work in progress at the moment and will be available soon. The apiary provided the opportunity to have many practical workshops there because of its location and easy access and I would like to express our thanks to Limerick Co. Co. for the site.

I said in my report last year that the Association apiary does not belong to me or any one person. It is the County Limerick Beekeepers Apiary. All paid up members have access to the apiary and I would like to see more members attend and take ownership of this fantastic facility. I have met and spoken to many beekeepers and associations around the country and they are (in a good way) envious of the facilities we have for our beekeepers. Other associations have expressed an interest in visiting the apiary. The next phase of the development is depending on your support and participation. This is a place for beekeepers of all ages and skills, to meet have a chat to share and to learn and above all enjoy the craft of beekeeping among friends.

**Thanks:**

I would like to thank the following for all their help and work throughout the year. The apiary committee and all the members that helped out on the various dates throughout the year. Thanks to our Chairman Gus McCoy, Liam Arrigan our Treasurer and our Secretary Sinead Mortell and all the committee members for their support and hard work throughout the year. And a special thanks to all the members who turned up on the open nights and participated making the apiary a huge success. I would also like to thank Rathkeale House Hotel for accommodating us with the beginner's course and their excellent service on the days.

**Summary:**

In summary we have come through a fantastic year for beekeeping and a fantastic year for Limerick Beekeepers Association. We had losses and they were replaced. We supplied new beekeepers with bees. We got a great crop of honey and it won at the honey shows. We have ambitious plans for the New Year 2019 and I look forward to your support and participation throughout next year.

Before I finish, you may know our current chairperson Gus McCoy, Vice Chair Paul Brennan, Web Master Keith Ball and PRO Cathy Cooper are stepping down and I would like to take this opportunity to wish them well and success in the future. For me personally it has been a pleasure working with you all since joining the committee. I hope you will continue to contribute to the association.

I have expressed an interest in staying on as apiary manager.

Thank you

*Tom O'Brien*