

The National Honey Show

This magnificent exhibition of honey and both natural and man-made products of the hive and the industry that surrounds them was staged in London's Kensington Town Hall during 15th to 17th November 2001.

If any beekeeper thinks that if you see one exhibition you've seen em all then they have never been to the National Honey Show.

Imagine; 27 judges are needed to cope with over 1,180 entries, with a minimum of 3 jars per entry and up to 24 in some classes. Over 200 entrants and that's only those which did turn up. Entries come from all over the United Kingdom and several also from former British Colonies and Dependencies as well as European Union countries. Those who didn't make it came from non-registered or non-EU countries that could not pass quarantine. There were about 60 of these. It appears that the English laws about bee quarantine are as strict as ours and only registered or EU countries can send honey to the UK. As a registered country Australian beekeepers would be eligible to compete and should not have any difficulty in getting their entries into this prestigious event.

The Show lasts for three days and is always held in London during the later part of the calendar year.

Beekeepers, educationalists, environmentalists and other interested people from all over the UK and overseas, attend this famous function to exchange ideas, trade goods and services and above all to compete and be seen in competition

with fellow beekeepers.

The popularity and value of this event has developed from being a long recognised and established function throughout the UK. It annually attracts ever-increasing numbers of overseas visitors who come to see what the British beekeepers and other entrants are producing. Although it was difficult to get precise details it was clearly inferred that many buyers also attend to assess the quality of this year's produce and place orders from producers who pack their own honey. To win any one of the 78 prizes and cups and trophies is almost an assurance that your year's supply will be bought. Of course not all these prizes are available to every competitor. Many of them are for members of County Associations or like bodies.

Anything you can name is open to entry and competition. honey and bee-related products such as; beverages, beeswax samples mouldings, candles, carvings, mouldings, soaps and polish, confectionery and baking, stationery, books, photographs, cosmetics, aids to health, toys, jewellery, needlework with a bee/honey theme and more.

The competitive sections, of which there are almost 170 occupy one large hall. Every entry is displayed on banks of tiered shelves, five high and each about 5 meters long.

In an adjoining hall trade and other stands featuring all the appliances, crafts, information and products associated with honeybees and the hive. Notable among these was the large number of county beekeepers association who had books, pamphlets, equipment and other items for sale. The English Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries set the pace a few decades ago and opted out of extension/research programs

and their place has been taken by associations who have quite remarkably increased their membership and scope of activities ever since. Bee book publishers and distributors were also present and apparently did a brisk trade.

There is also an extensive lecturing program presented by local and international speakers who are directly involved in contemporary research and extension activities. These lectures normally run for about 40 minutes after which there is about 10 minutes for questions. There is then a 20 to 40 minute break during which further private discussions with the speakers can be held over a cuppa tea/coffee or honey beer if your wish.

It was my privilege to be invited to present two addresses on successive days and not only were the question times filled I had a job getting away from eager listeners over an hour afterwards. My addresses were directed at the evolution of quality standards for honey in Australia and an outline of our sources of honey from native species. As indicated both went down very well and I was asked to repeat them in abbreviated form in Scotland a little over a week later.

Australian beekeepers, honey packers and producers and marketers of honey and bee products would be well advised to consider entries and displays in the National Honey Show. I have no doubt that the Australian packers and marketers of our honeys do an excellent job in disposing of our surplus production to the best possible markets and in a condition we can be proud of. But, this is no reason to ignore prestigious events such as the National Honey Show to further promote our products.

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