

R. Stephens Apiarists Pty Ltd
Special Edition celebrating 100 years, 1920-2020

Tasmanian Honey

2020



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From small beginnings on 2 acres purchased 1920, using war service pension



Built on and bricked in



Garages added each side for vehicles and storage

Factory 1920 to 2020



New storage facility added 2017 (shed on far left) Additional garage space containing refrigerated container (next shed to the right) Adjoining covered shed is for Queen rearing, wax storage and hot room



26 Pioneer Drive, took three winters to build, during the off honey season



Robert and Ian finished in 1953 – stones from dry creek, shingled roof, now Italian tiles

Residence 26 Pioneer Drive



Front of house 2017



Rear of house, heritage listed in 2011



1929 original AA Model Ford truck, taken 1934 Skittle Ball Plain



1956 F600 with founder Robert Stephens, home built semi

Transport over the years



Bringing bees home in the snow



- 1: Sterling Ford 2007 semi 500hp Detroit, loads hives to west coast - carries 350 hives returning to home sites
- 2: Ford LN900 78 flat tray with lazy axle 477 petrol motor, super charged - mainstay of the fleet still in use 2020
- 3: Ford LN900 originally prime mover retired two years ago - Ewan Stephens built in 1993, rebuild 2007
- 4: Ford 700 with tray used on shop rounds
- 5: Ford 59 known as Paleford retired 2 years ago



Hives loaded by barrow



Camping under the tarps at Kelly's Basin (West Coast Motel)



Main camp at top of Mt Arrowsmith



Ken Stephens campervan - set up in Kelly's Basin Retreat

Early Days Living Away From Home



Removing honey from hives hut site



Loading 60lb drums into container by hand for Japan 1973



Fork lift loading 300kg drums with barrow assistance for Germany



Filling a bulk container for the UK by pump line

Overseas Export



Semi load of 24000 x 17.5oz jars for New York USA
- began in 1956 with 56 cartons growing to container loads in recent years



Ilan Stephens giving first lesson in beekeeping - finding the Queens with three sons, left to right: Ken, Ewan and Neal



Ilan, Queen breeding hives with Nuecs on the right



Original placement, single hives - Ian checking hive at Dunorlan



Beekeepers removing honey from hives (palletised 2002)

The Art of Beekeeping



Neal and Ken checking hives for Queens (note barrows still used today)



Early transport into Teepookana, crossing the King River



Truck coming off the punt over King River

Old and New Transport into Leatherwood Site, Teepookana



Safely off, Iron Bridge in background



Today's transport to Teepookana, now via ABT Railway (Wilderness Railway)



Vehicles loaded on ABT Railway (Wilderness Railway)



LN900 - LN700 (rear) with netted hives into Teepookana after leaving train



Ford Stirling with full load returning to Mole Creek (1232 honey supers)

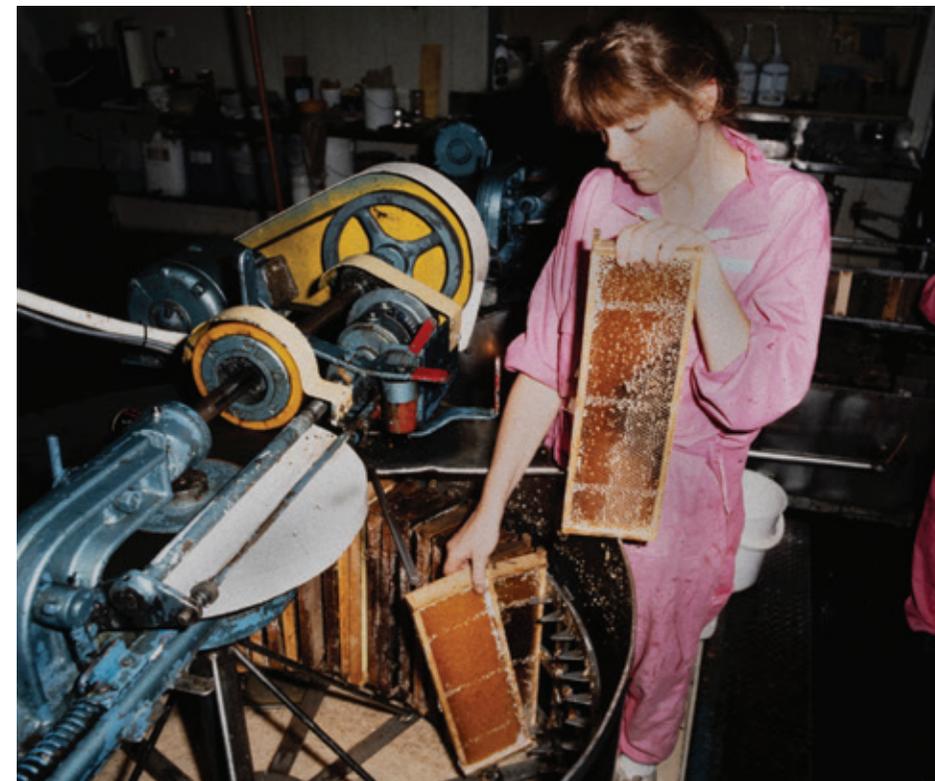
Present Day Transport



Three vehicles heading home from Mt McCall, Lake Burbury in the background
Semi full load of honey supers and forklift - LN700 490 honey supers and camper van, LN900 672 honey supers



Round 70 frame extractors arrive in 1969 (Ian and Robert) Ian took over in 1966, then began the huge expansion from 1968



Hand loading fully automatic radial extractors

Extracting Honey Old and New



New extracting system, 2017



Fully automatic machines loaded and unloaded with honey frames



New honey straining system prior to storage



Storage tanks



Early packing - bottles being labelled

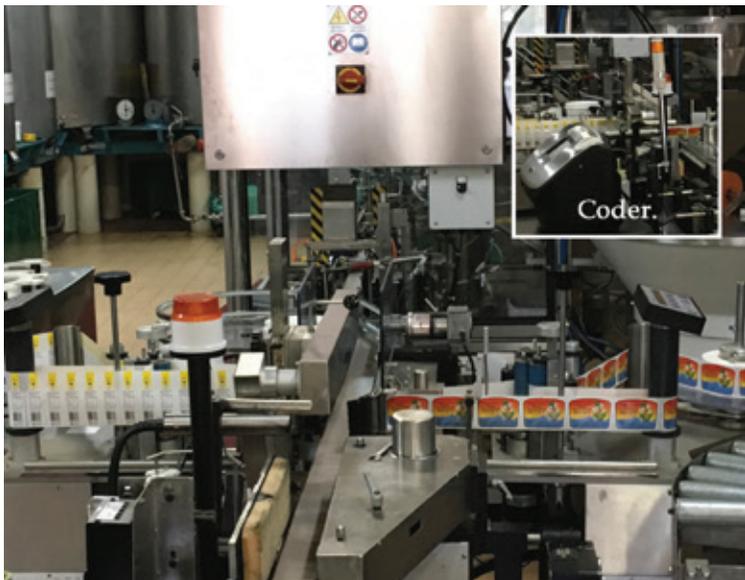


Bottles being filled



New lidding machine

Bottling Old and New



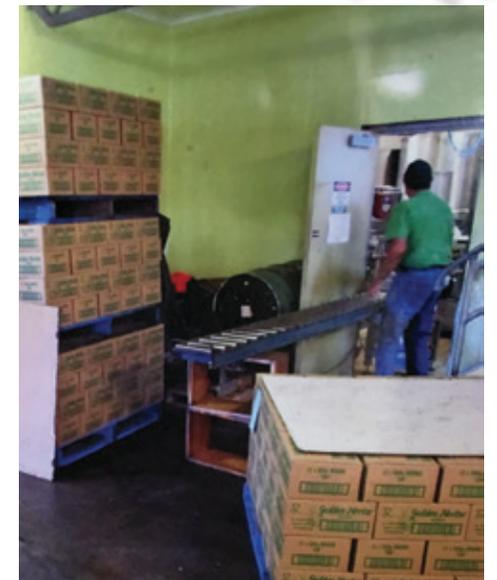
Labels placed on both sides of bottle



Early packaging into cartons



Automatic packing as it is today



Cartons placed on pallets for storage



Famous Golden Nectar Real Leatherwood Honey (two thirds of production)



Window display Rockerfeller Centre New York USA, courtesy Australian Trade 1990



Display at Tasmanian Craft Fair

Sales and Product Range



Product Range





Founders Edith and Robert Stephens 1920



1958 - 2018 Shirley and Ian Stephens with product at factory



2006 A.H.B.I.C Award for service to the Australian Honey Bee Industry

Stephens Family



Today's Master Beekeepers - Kenneth, Neal and Ewan Stephens



The R Stephens Honey Story

In 1914 Mr. Robert Stephens had just started his hives at Mole Creek when he joined the 12th Battalion, returning in 1919, to purchase the two acres of land where the factory and Apiary are now situated.

In 1923 fifty hives were moved to Caveside by horse and cart. This rate of expansion continued, more hives being placed in neighbouring districts until 1937.

In 1929-30 an A model Ford truck was purchased and two men employed to work the 450 hives which produced a record crop of honey, only to result in very poor honey sales. During the intensification of the Depression in 1930 the now famous "GOLDEN BEE" label came into existence.

In the summer of 1934 Mr. Stephens transported bees to the Mt. Arrowsmith area on the West Coast. He travelled from Mole Creek along the Great Lake to Waddamana, by Dee Lagoon to Bronte via the partly constructed Lyell Highway to Mt. Arrowsmith, returning through Skittle Ball Plain, which is now the Missing Link. Owing to bad roads, poor transport and the war he did not return again until 1951, this time with a 1937 Ford truck. Poor conditions in the north then forced him to move westward where a reasonable crop of Leatherwood Honey was produced.

Retail markets were then established for this unique honey and the distinctive "GOLDEN NECTAR" label was designed. It is now to be found in health shops in Australia and the USA.

During 1966 his son Ian took over the business, and an updating expansion of machinery and building was commenced in December 1968.

In the 1971-72 season over a period of three weeks, 900 hives were moved on a semi trailer to bee sites on the Lyell Highway, extending from Mt. Arrowsmith to the Cardigan River, and also in the Kelly's Basin area to gather the Leatherwood Honey. In 2019, 2400 hives were moved to these sites - others namely Teepookana, Strahan, Zeehan & Roseberry areas. Most of which are in the World Heritage areas, from which the honey is classified as Organic.

As the weather conditions are variable in this part of the island all hives must be in top condition to reap full benefit from the honey flow when it occurs. Three to four men work the bees, and the honey is returned to Mole Creek for extraction.

Two 70 frame radial extractors made to our own specifications were installed in January 1969, these were capable of extracting 3 tonne of honey per day.

In 2017, a new automatic extracting system was installed, extracting up to 6 tonne per day.

The honey is extracted in hygienic conditions, filtered then pumped into stainless steel tanks in our modern packing room.

The equipment, filling, labelling, lidding, coding & carton packing machines are the best in Tasmania. The most up to date for its size in Australia.

Honey is packed in Candied, Liquid and Creamed form, which varieties add to the honey's presentation, giving choice and pleasure to most palates.

Over the years we have concentrated on employing locals however many international trainee apiarists have been employed throughout our busy seasons. They have been of immense assistance as we share their thoughts and we are able to train them as apiarists. The exchange of knowledge has been appreciated by both sides.

Beekeepers skills are many and varied. The understanding of bees and their product throughout the years, handed down from Robert to his grandsons and others has kept this business operating, for which we are very thankful.

Celebrating 100 years, 1920-2020



Factory - 2020



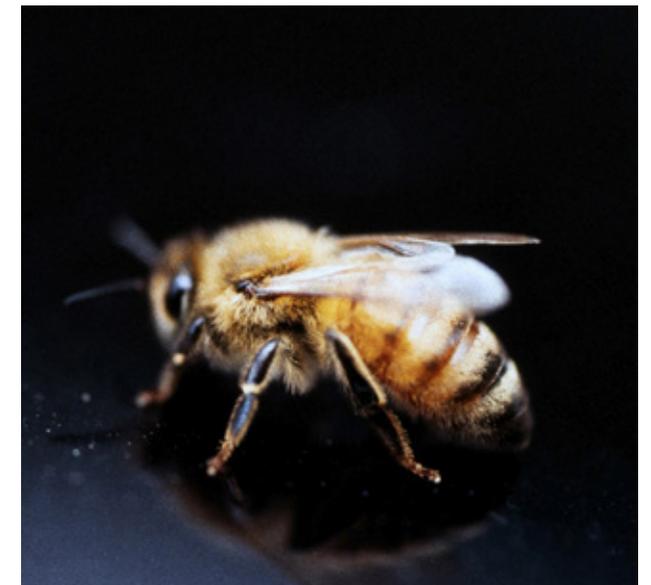
Famous Leatherwood flower



Healthy happy bees



Loyal hard working apiarists



The worker bee

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