

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.**PLEASE NOTE AMENDED DATES FOR SEPTEMBER'S APIARY MEETINGS..**

Saturday, September 13th. *Cockington Apiary commencing at 2-30 p.m. Advanced beekeeping with the Apiary Management Team. 'Beginners & Improvers' training course with Jack Berry. Handing back the 'training' hives to the AMT in readiness for varroa treatment. PLUS the End-of-Season barbecue. See the 'Chairman's Chat'.*

Saturday, September 27th. *Cockington Apiary commencing at 2-30 p.m. The pre-winter Apiary clean-up led by the AMT.*

Tuesday, October 14th. *The Gerston Christian Centre, off Torquay Rd. , Paignton. Commencing at 7-30 p.m. Speaker, Mr. Fred Rice plus the usual light refreshments & Branch library.*

Tuesday, November 11th. *The Gerston Christian Centre, off Torquay Rd. , Paignton. Commencing at 7-30 p.m. Speaker, Mr. Glyn Davies plus the usual. light refreshment & Branch library.*

Saturday, November 15th. *The Paignton Club, The Esplanade, Paignton. The Branch Annual General Meeting. Commencing at 2 p.m. with guest speaker Mr. Brian Maddocks who will present an illustrated talk on Antarctica.*

Friday, January 23rd. *The Paignton Club. The Branch Annual Dinner. Details to be announced later.*

DIARY OF A BEEKEEPER.

In 1958 Sheila and I moved to Holmes Chapel in Cheshire. My first "Buzz" epistle recounted the tale of my first few years of beekeeping there. In 1963 we moved to Ewell near Epsom in Surrey and thence, in 1967, to Paignton. In the intervening years the points of note were that 1969 was an extremely good honey year, my bees contracted the notorious American Foul Brood (AFB) disease in 1961 and had to be destroyed by fire. In 1962 I set up my first out-apiary at Alumbrook Farm and increased to 30 colonies in 1963. However, I could not take them all to Surrey so had to sell them all – probably at about four pounds per colony, inclusive!

I started again in the spring of 1964 but the bees I acquired had AFB. At that time Bob Hammond (of BBKA Basic prize fame) was the local Foul Brood Officer and Bernard Pritchard (later North Devon stalwart beekeeper) lived in Middlesex. They came along with a great deal of humorous banter at my expense and made the funereal arrangements for my bees. A few weeks later I acquired bees from 'Curly Grey' an elderly local beekeeper who wanted to give up. He had

Mountain Grey queens which were considered a very good strain back then. However, I bought a couple, or so, of the so-called Buckfast queens which were being bred in Northern Ireland and had recently become available. They were a great improvement on any bees I had previously in terms of manageability, prolificacy and the weight of the honey yields. I wrote a note to this effect for the then weekly edition of the British Bee Journal edited by Cecil Tonsley.

Living on the outskirts of London I naturally attended the National Honey Show each year, attended and even spoke on one occasion at the Merrist Wood weekend school. Dr. Eva Crane's Bee Research Association (now IBRA) had been founded a few years earlier and I became a contributing member. We moved to Devon in the autumn of 1967 which was the start of a new chapter both in my life and the history of my beekeeping. Those were heady days and I realised then that beekeeping was to be my lifelong hobby.

Kingsley Law.

DON'T SELL YOURSELF SHORT!

English honey will run out by Christmas because pests have decimated the honey bee population, shoppers were warned last night. Billions of bees have been wiped out in Europe and America and British bees are under attack from a killer mite. As every third mouthful of the food we consume is linked to bee pollination scientists say the collapse of bee colonies will have a massive impact on food supplies and prices. Flowering shrubs such as beans, peas, strawberries and raspberries will not produce fruit. The pollinating services of bees are estimated to be worth £165 million a year to the British economy. Stuart Bailey, director of the Honey Association said: "There will be no English honey on the shelves of supermarkets at Christmas although there will be some from abroad. Consumers will not get English honey unless they buy it from local beekeepers but they too, will sell out quite quickly." Mr. Bailey called upon the Government to pump more money into bee research. The British Beekeeping Association wants the current spend of about £200,000 a year to increase to £8 million over five years. A glimmer of hope has been provided by searchers at Warwick University. They have found the killer varroa mite, which feeds on the bee's blood and infects it with deadly viruses, can be wiped out by types of fungi. The scientists get the bees to spread the fungi through the hive by making them walk through a foot bath at the entrance. Mr. Bailey said: "If Warwick University has found a solution to the varroa mite it will be fantastic because it would have an immediate effect."

By John Ingham & Alice

Barber.

Contributed by Maurice Satterly.

BEES STAMP OUT TROUBLE!

Bees are falling victim to a nasty mite which carries deadly viruses. The good news is that Warwick University scientists have devised a cure, a footbath for bees, which will enable them to spread a mite-murdering fungus through the hive.

“And is there honey still for tea?” asked the poet Rupert Brooke. Well, maybe not around Christmas but plenty next summer (thanks to the Warwick boffins).

Contributed by Maurice Satterly

WELL DONE, LADS!

Two of our members, Norman Wallace and Les Williams went to a great deal of trouble to enter their hive products into the Honiton Show. Their efforts were rewarded by winning two Third Prizes for medium and dark honey, one Third Prize for beeswax and one Second Prize for mead. As Les commented: “There were 161 entries in the Honiton Honey Show but ours were the only entries from Torbay Branch. Unfortunately, the Okehampton Show had to be cancelled due to the terrible summer weather”.

Reported by Norman Wallace.

JACK'S TOPICAL TIPS.

By the time you read this you will have reached the end of August and all the vast amount of honey produced this year should be extracted & stored away, the varroa treatment done and feeding started. Well, what a terrible year for everyone! It is the worst year that I have known in my 20 plus years of beekeeping. But don't worry too much. Next year will be better if any queen rearing was done & if queens were mated ok. This may be the trouble next season; there are likely to be plenty of drone laying queens as there was this year after last year's wet summer.

I hope the beginners are not too despondent. I know some of you had a lot of swarming which was, I think, more than usual. This could be because the colonies were unhappy with the new queens who may not have been properly mated after the 1st swarm issued. Because of the weather, the fever was still in the colonies and they raised more queens to supersede the poorly mated queens. Let's hope that in the little fine weather we did have, any queens that could be mated did so properly.

Next month we start our winter evening meetings. Come along and see what Doug has in store for us.

Jack Berry.

THE CHAIRMAN'S CHAT.

One of our delights in August is our annual visit to Neil's apiary at Decoy, Newton Abbot.

He has an apiary of which he can be quite justifiably proud. But it is more than that - it is a wildlife reserve. Neil has dug out by himself a deep pond specifically to encourage pond life and wild flowers to get established. It is now a protected area teeming with newts, frogs, dragonflies amid an abundance of colourful plants. And his hives are a joy also! All home-made in his apiary hut. Even that is an understatement - it's fitted-out with a generator, woodworking machinery and electricity. Even a sink and an outside loo! I have often stated that every man should have a shed. Many a happy hour is spent in one.

Neil's apiary is nicely laid out. The hives are well cared-for and the grass kept short. Even the bees sounded happy when we were there. Some of us could learn a lot from our Neil.

The tea was splendid also. We sat with members of the Allotment Association scoffing delicious cakes and scones, all provided by the ladies. And even the weather was kind to us! Well done, Neil. Many thanks to you and your wife as well as the other good ladies for a very enjoyable afternoon.

At the Apiary we have taken off the honey crop which turned out to be 50% of last year's at 430 lb. The colonies have all been treated with Thymol administered on felt pads and placed over the brood frames. A second treatment in two weeks. This method would seem to be effective and much cheaper than using Apistan which contains the same amount of Thymol *i.e.* 12.5 grams per dose.

Please do not forget our 'End-of Season' barbecue planned for 13th September. Come along with your 'eats' and talk over our terrible season.

We have had a case of vandalism reported by one of our newer and enthusiastic members, Meiko, who lives at Chelston. She has set up her small apiary in her private garden and it has been 'set upon' by morons who obviously have nothing better to do in their lives. Not once but THREE times! First, the hives were pushed over. The second time they were pushed over and large stones thrown at the hives. The third time the above was repeated then antifreeze splashed over the colonies and a hose pipe and water turned onto the hives. All this in a private garden. It really is disgusting and demoralising for Meiko. I believe that she has now moved her hives to - hopefully - safer grounds. But there is really no need for this sort of behaviour and one wonders at the sort of idiot who does this sort of work and the citizen he / she will become.

I went to the Open day at Kelly mine, Lustleigh, on Sunday 30th August to see how it was progressing since my last visit. The mine produced an iron ore called micaceous haematite which was used to make rust-proofing paint. It was well-attended and very interesting. Do go along when you get the chance.* This was our secretary's old stamping ground and of which Peter Tattersall is still a very active member.

See you at the Apiary on 13th September.

Jim Mogridge.

* Next 'Open Day' is in August 2010. Editor.