

# TORBAY 'BUZZ' FOR DECEMBER 2008.

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TORBAY BRANCH, DBKA.

President : Mr. Ron Brown. OBE.

Web sites: southdevonbees.org & devonbeekeepers.co.uk

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

**Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>.** *The Gerston Christian Centre, off Torbay Rd., Paignton. A light-hearted Branch Christmas quiz evening plus Christmas refreshments.*

**Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>.** *The Gerston Christian centre, off Torquay Rd., Paignton. Winter evening meeting. Phil Chandler will be describing beekeeping using the Top Bar Hive.*

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

**Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>.** *Cockington Apiary. Commencing at 2-30 p.m.. Spring-clean of the Apiary. Working party commences at 10 a.m.*

**Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup>. April.** *Cockington Apiary. Commencing at 2-340 p.m. Start of the summer programme. Checking all colonies, etc.*

**Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup>. April, 2009.** *Stoneleigh, Warwickshire. The BBKA Spring Convention. Details of Branch visit to be announced later.*

**Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup>. April.** *Cockington Apiary. Commencing at 2-30 p.m. A talk over the proposed Apiary summer programme.*

### MEMORIES OF EDGAR BUTT.

Edgar Butt? Who is he, I hear you ask. He was one of our beekeepers who was in the First World War and was badly injured. He was a commercial beekeeper and had about two hundred hives and was also our local bee inspector and in business with three other of our local beekeepers – Mr. Willis, Mr. Hamlyn and some other person. They had an apiary at Cockington which is now our Branch Apiary - but I have no idea how we came to get it. When I came on the scene, the hut was full of old WBC gear which was full of woodworm and it all made a lovely fire. I was told later that the gear was only loaned to us!

Edgar had a problem! Edgar couldn't get on with any other beekeeper. In his cellar at home, he had about six carboys all filled up and wearing jumpers and bubbling away, mostly of fruit picked in the wild. He did his best to drink a lot of what he made. Enough said!!

What Edgar did when he went out to check some farmer's bees would be to load up his car with bottles of his wine and exchange them for potatoes, cream, eggs or anything else he could get his hands on. When he checked my bees he nearly always said "Poor little buggers. They must be freezing!"

Edgar, every year, had an open day at his Denbury apiary beyond what is now

the Channings Wood Prison. What days!! There used to be fifty people, or more, from all over the area. I took my little girl there with me – she was then four or five years old and now she is fifty-two – surely that can't be right? Edgar told me two stories:

A beekeeper died and the relatives could not find the will, etc. Some time later Edgar went to check his bees and there, in the roof of the WBC hive, was the will – safer than a bank! Well, maybe.

The other story was of a hedger and ditcher who was working near to Edgar's apiary when a bee was buzzing around his head. He went to swipe it away with his hand but forgot he had a sickle in his hand with the result that he cut his head open. You nearly had to call me Van Gogh he told Edgar with a smile on his face. Edgar notified his insurance company and they gave the hedger and ditcher a few pounds for his trouble – or was it for the first time they had heard of a story like that?

The sad part of Edgar's story is that he was always going to build a bungalow on his apiary at Denbury when he retired. To this day there is no bungalow!

*Contributed by Maurice Satterly.*

*Thanks, Maurice. Your Editor recalls a couple of visits to Mr. Butt's Denbury apiary in the company of John Vyle and his dad, Fred. These must have been made in the 1940's or 1950's and before I had even thought of keeping bees. A striking feature of Mr. Butt's apiary was the sight of a large stuffed and very moth-eaten bear standing among the beehives – perhaps exchanged for a few bottles of home-made wine? And why was there always sunshine back in those far-off days?*

### BEEKEEPING ON 'COUNTRY COTTAGE'.

The TV programme 'Country Cottage' recently took us to Hackney in deepest London where it featured a young guy who kept his four hives on a flat roof some four floors up! He said that he gets 100 lb. of honey from each hive (not so much as I get!) It was nice to see a young fellow with bees but I did not think much of the long ladder he needed to get up to his hives!

*Contributed by Maurice Satterly*

### THE CHAIRMAN'S 'CHAT'.

Saturday last, the 15<sup>th</sup>. November, at our chosen venue, the Paignton Club, saw us hold our Branch AGM. We received our speaker, Mr. Brian Maddock who commenced at 2 p.m. with a splendid talk and film of the Antarctica, a trip he had made with his wife some years ago. He took us into the regions explored by Sir Ernest Shackleton in 1908 on his famous journey. The filming was some of the best we have seen by an amateur photographer. It was, as everyone present agreed, absolutely spellbinding.

We then had a very nice tea – although we

could have liked a few cakes to go with the sandwiches.

And then the AGM which I thought proceeded with the correct amount of lightness combined with the business side of the meeting. We finished at approximately 5 p.m. - a very nice afternoon spent in what must be one of the better venues for an AGM in the country. Free parking, an excellent room with good views of Torbay and Paignton's seafront and taking up two and a half hours of our lives.

Now! Despite all the near-pleading placed in our newsletter together with those at the recent winter meetings, only approximately nine full members turned out. We had another six or seven non-members at the talk by Brian. Why don't we get more 'bums on seats'? I will pull no punches. When after all the effort put into arranging the whole afternoon by my good self and Douglas most members cannot be bothered to attend. We do not even receive many apologies for absence, continually asked for by Douglas. This is both rude and discourteous. It is also very embarrassing and uncomfortable to receive an asked-for speaker into these surroundings. Again, why is this? I am fully aware that we all lead busy lives and some people cannot make the date. However, an apology would be nice! We have approximately forty-one members on the books - nine attended! Why say you belong to a Branch when you do nothing to belong? Surely you get more out of the Branch if you join in all the arranged activities - arrangements made for YOU. I cannot believe that you cannot. It is simply a case of apathy. All one has to do is put the date and venue on the calendar and come along on the day

I spoke with a member a few days before our Meeting and when asked if he was going to attend his lame reply was "when is it?" I could not be bothered to answer him. Needless to say he wasn't at the AGM. When I was in business I was not in the habit of continually asking folk or pleading with them and I am not starting now. If you think you require a new chairman or secretary, come along to these meetings and make your views known. I have been your chairman since 2001 and have enjoyed the position so I will finish with the rallying-call made, whilst slightly intoxicated, by the Chairperson of Norwich City Football Club, Delia Smith ( the cook ) during last season, to the rather subdued fans:

**"WHERE ARE YOU? LET'S BE HAVING YOU!!"** She then sat down and so will I!

P.S. I would welcome your views.

Call Jim on 663308 or leave a message for your Editor on 325750.

**'FALLING INTO THE HONEY TRAP.'**

Tina Crowson recently highlighted the pleasures and the problems of keeping bees in her recent Herald Express 'Digging Deep' feature. Tina outlined the disastrous effect the varroa mite was having on colonies throughout the country, the near-extinction of wild honeybee colonies, the lack of honeybees in her garden and the absence of swarms. She also mentions the looming threat of the mysterious Colony Collapse Disorder and the possibility that the honeybee population could be wiped-out within the next ten years.

But all was not gloom and doom! Far from it. Tina reviews and recommends '*Keeping Bees and Making Honey*' written by Alison Benjamin and Brian McCullum, published by David & Charles and priced at £14.99 as a good all-round book from which to learn more about our busy friends - plus how to plant out and tend your garden to become 'bee-friendly'. This looks to be a good book for anyone wishing to take a broad all-round view of the pleasures of keeping bees. Why not pay a visit to your local bookshop and see if they have a copy you can browse through? Make up your own mind about whether its 'message' is right for your level of beekeeping expertise before buying it.

#### **THE DECEMBER 9<sup>th</sup> QUIZ EVENING.**

For the December meeting, our Chairman has engaged the services of an expert quiz master to lead us through a **FUN EVENING**. Prizes will be awarded to the knowledgeable - no, not a jar of Apiary honey but **REAL** prizes! The quiz will be light-hearted and mainly tests our general knowledge. **JIM PROMISES THAT ONLY ONE PART WILL BE ABOUT BEES & BEEKEEPING** - i.e. those bits of bees we never know the names of! Additionally, there will be Christmas fare plus - if Stan is willing - a bowl of **HOT PUNCH!** Please come along and make it a thoroughly enjoyable social evening.

#### **THE JANUARY 13<sup>th</sup>. MEETING**

The New Year meeting sees a return to serious beekeeping with the first visit to Torbay Branch of Mr. Phil Chandler who will be giving us the benefit of his extensive knowledge of beekeeping using the *Top Bar Hive*. Phil is an ardent supporter of organic food production and his approach to beekeeping will, I am sure, reflect this.. This will be an expert insight into a wholly new approach to beekeeping. For those with access to the internet, take a look at [www.biobees.com](http://www.biobees.com)

It may be January but make a real effort to come along and listen to Phil who will be keeping us warm all evening!

#### **SUMMER'S COMING!**

Hard to believe with a northerly gale blowing chilling rain past the window but the AMT has just issued the dates of the first few of the summer Apiary meetings. I have put these into '*Dates for your Diary*'. Come along to the March spring-clean and help the AMT get the Apiary ship-shape for the summer.

Jim is appealing for bright, original ideas for the

Branch display at the 2009 Devon County Show. Last year Holsworthy Branch deservedly took the First Prize. Our Chairman has **ALWAYS** had to do the work on our stand – thinking up the idea and translating this into a display stand. Show him he is not the only ‘brains’ in the Branch. Your ideas - **NOW**- to Jim on 663308 and also volunteer to give a hand to help make up the display. How about being a steward at the County Show? It’s really good fun and **FREE ADMISSION!**