

TORBAY 'BUZZ' FOR MARCH 2009.

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TORBAY BRANCH, DBKA.

President : Mr. Ron Brown. OBE.

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

Tuesday, March 10th. *The Gerston Christian Centre, off Torquay Rd., Paignton. Winter evening meeting commencing at 7-30 p.m.*

Mr. Kingsley Law presents 'The Coming Season'.

Saturday, March 14th. *The DBKA President's Day and AGM. See 'Beekeeping' for full details.*

Saturday, March 28th. *Cockington Apiary. Working party. Spring-cleaning of the apiary. Commencing at 10 a.m. All welcome. A 'fun' day! Come and give a hand.*

Saturday, April 11th. *Cockington Apiary. Commencing at 2-30 p.m. start of the summer Apiary programme. Checking all colonies, etc.*

Saturday, April 18th. *The Spring Convention at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire. Branch 'trip' using private cars. Co-ordinator: Jim Mogridge. Tele. 663308.*

Tuesday, April 21st. *Advance notice of a talk by Prof. Ellis at Kelly College, Tavistock. Details to follow in 'Beekeeping'*

Saturday, April 25th. *Cockington Apiary commencing at 2-30 p.m. Talking-over and agreeing the forthcoming Apiary summer programme.*

Sunday, May 17th. *Central Garage, Newton Rd., Torquay. Commencing at 10 a.m. Loading lorry with Devon County Show equipment (See Chairman's Chat)*

Sunday, May 24th. *Central Garage, Newton Rd., Torquay. Unloading lorry with County Show equipment. (See Chairman's Chat)*

Thursday, Friday & Sunday 21st, 22nd & 23rd. *May. The Devon County Show.*

Saturday, 6th June. *Cockington Apiary. Commencing at 2-30 p.m. Visit by Plymouth Branch members plus a Branch barbecue.*

THE CHAIRMAN'S CHAT.

Our President, Mr. Ron Brown OBE.

I, along with Maurice and John, visited Ron at his retirement home last week. He lives at the nicest run home in Torquay and the occasion was Ron's 95th birthday on February 2nd. He was pleased to see us with the birthday card signed by all at the Branch dinner a few days previous and a few gifts of honey and chocolate. Ron was looking a little frail and now walks with two sticks but his mind was alert as ever – although he's a little forgetful, perhaps. I took two of his books for him to autograph for me. His writing is still very strong. The books are now worth

double!! Good to see you, Ron. We are all proud to call you our President.

I forgot, in the February 'Buzz', to thank all of you who came along with family and friends to the Branch Annual Dinner at the Paignton Club. I thought the evening was very enjoyable and the meal excellent. I think that even John found it worthwhile to attend.

I am thinking that we should hold an '*Expo*' along the lines that we had some years ago at the Gerston Centre in Paignton. We would have the hall for a full Saturday, maybe in early May. The aim would be to promote bee keeping to the general public, not to sell honey, etc. We would have stands and perhaps demonstrations, a small apiary, live bees and a running video showing some elements of bees and how to start off bee keeping. Along with free cups of tea, etc. But mostly Branch members to talk to the hordes of visitors who would pour through the door and impart some experiences on bee keeping to them. Watch this space, as they say.

Dates to keep on the calendar for this month:

It is our last 'winter' meeting at the Gerston Centre on 10th March.

It is the DBKA's AGM and President's Day at Exeter on Saturday 14th March. A chance here to sell your unwanted equipment at the auction during the day.

At the month's end on Saturday 28th it's our 'clean-up' day at the Apiary to prepare for the best season for many a year! Remember, we start early at **10 a.m.**

The Stoneleigh Spring Convention is coming around again. It's on Saturday, April 18th. Please let me know if you are going so I can purchase the tickets in advance. Call me on 01803 663308.

The Devon County Show is also here with us in May. Lots of help is required from all Branches. Ring me and find out what you could do to help the Branch. Very important, though, is the help needed before and after the Show. All of the DBKA Honey Tent equipment is stored upstairs at Central Garage here in Torquay. We have to get all of this down from upstairs into a lorry on Sunday 17th May. We've got to get it back upstairs again on Sunday 24th. This is hard work so lots of help is need on these days. We 'old-stagers' have done this now for the last few years. How about some of our younger members with younger, stronger, muscles giving us a helping hand this year? We meet at Central Garage, Newton Rd. at 10 a.m. on the 21st. and at 2 p.m. on the 24th. Give me a call if you can help.

As I write this I am sitting outside the apiary shed at Dainton. It is a glorious, sunny day and all the eleven colonies that I have here are really buzzing. As I drink my black coffee and watching a small hazel tree about two metres away which is alive with bees. For the tree is

laden with pollen and the bees are making use of it. Likewise, I have a water butt taking the water from the shed roof. It is full of water and the top is off and the bees are doing their best to take it all back to the hives. So it is essential for your colonies at this time of year to have a supply of water and an intake of fresh pollen.

See you at the next meeting,

Jim Mogridge.

JACK'S 'TOPICAL TIPS'.

Well, now that I am back from my holiday and temperatures of 86° F to 89° F, I have been greeted by temperatures down to 27° F and I have found it hard to come to terms with the cold. Many thanks to Kingsley for stepping in for me with 'Topical Tips' because, where I stayed - although they had two computers, - both were waiting for repairs!

The bees will have been looking after themselves and, if well fed during the autumn, they should be OK. To make sure, pick a warmish day when they are flying. Just lift the crown board and check that the colony is near the stores because when it is as cold as it has been, the bees may have eaten the stores close by and, being in a tight cluster, they may not be able to reach the rest of their stores. Bees usually like to keep their stores above them but, in the smaller hives, they may, by now, not have any left so the best thing to do is to place bakers' fondant above the feed hole in the crown board.

When I first started bee keeping, I used to put fondant on every hive using it as a kind of thermometer - those hives that took it down I gave them some more, those that didn't I left until my first inspection at the end of March, beginning of April. That time won't be long in arriving now, so you should be prepared with equipment and frames to be made up and ready to exchange.

There is now only the one more winter meeting in March. I hope that you will all be there as were a good number at the last meeting.

Jack Berry.

ROLL UP! ROLL UP! COME ALONG FOLK TO THE SHOW.

Torbay Branch has volunteered to be responsible for the candle-rolling and honey-tasting stands at this year's Devon County Show. Wendy Ashley will be doing all the hard work of organising the stands but she cannot run both stands for three days all alone! Stewards are needed to give a willing hand. No previous experience is needed - Wendy will soon get you 'up to speed' but a happy smile is a must! This is always a busy 'fun day' with lots of jolly laughter. The lucky volunteers will need to put in half a day - morning or afternoon - on a stand and will then have the rest of the day free to

enjoy the County Show. Your reward? Free entry to the County Show and the satisfaction of a worthwhile job well done.

The County Show runs from Thursday 21st. to Saturday 23rd. May inc. Please volunteer for any one - or more - of these dates. Wendy will need to know details of names and days by the **20th March** so that arrangements can be made to obtain passes / tickets to the Show.

Call Wendy NOW on 01803 851552.

THE WINTER PROGRAMME.

Our winter programme concludes on Tuesday 10th. March with a talk by our own Kingsley Law entitled 'The Coming Season'. Kingsley will be giving us the benefit of his vast experience of bee keeping by telling us how best to prepare ourselves and our bees for the new season now just ahead of us. Come along to the Gerston Centre and learn a lot of practical bee keeping in just the one evening.

CAUTIOUS APPROACH TO NEO-NICOTINOIDS.

Simon Press, senior technical manager at the Co-op group which owns 25,000 hectares of farm land in Britain, recently stated " We believe that the recent losses in bee populations need definitive action, and as a result are temporarily prohibiting the use of the eight neo-nicotinoid pesticides until we have evidence that refutes their involvement in their decline." Mr. Paul Monaghan, the Co-op's head of social goals accused the Government of failing to recognise that " pesticides could be a contributing factor" in the breakdown of nature's 'number one' pollinating machine.

The BBC's 'Today' programme also recently ran a very good piece about the decline in the UK's honeybees. There was an interview with a senior Co-op executive who said that they had decided to ban all eight neo-nicotinoids from all farms which the Co-op own and that they are also going to give £150,000 for emergency research, including the effects of pesticides. They are also proposing a 10-point plan to assist honeybees in the UK which they are planning to implement throughout the Co-op's farming operations and stores. Although there was no conclusive proof that the neo-nicotinoids were the primary cause of honeybee collapse, what was glaringly self-evident was that no serious research was going on in the UK into pesticides and honeybees.

Phil Chandler via 'Bee Alert' phil@biobees.com

AND TO FINISH ON A MISERABLE NOTE!

Our DBKA annual subscription fell due on the 1st. January. Not the best time of year to have to pay yet another bill but we are now into March and our Treasurer would like everyone who has yet to get around to that piece of paper on the mantle piece (does anyone still have a mantle piece these days?) to make the effort and pay their sub. The bees are now getting active and you will shortly need the 'comfort' that adequate third-party insurance plus BDI will bring you. Lost your subscription form? Call Kingsley on 01803 812285 or your secretary on 01803 325750.

ITEMS FOR 'BUZZ'.

Always welcomed by your editor.
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