

# TORBAY 'BUZZ' FOR MAY 2009.

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TORBAY BRANCH, DBKA.

**President : Mr. Ron Brown. OBE.**

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

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.**

**Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup>.** *Cockington Apiary.*

*Commencing at 2-30 p.m. Summer apiary*

*programme with the Apiary Management Team.*

**Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup>.** *Central Garage, Newton*

*Rd., Torquay. Commencing at 10 a.m. Loading*

*lorry with Devon County Show equipment hat )*

**Thursday, Friday & Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>.**

**May.** *The Devon County Show.*

**Sunday, May 24<sup>th</sup>.** *Central Garage, Newton*

*Rd., Torquay. Unloading lorry with County*

*Show equipment.*

**Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> June.** *Cockington Apiary.*

*Commencing at 2-30 p.m. Visit by Plymouth*

*Branch members plus a Branch barbecue.*

**Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> June.** *Cockington Apiary. Visit*

*to the Branch Apiary by our Regional Bee*

*Inspector, Mr. Adam Vevers.*

**Saturday, July 4<sup>th</sup>.** *Cockington Apiary.*

*Commencing at 2-30 p.m. Summer apiary*

*programme.*

**Saturday, July 18<sup>th</sup>.** *Cockington Apiary.*

*Commencing at 2-30 p.m. Summer apiary*

*programme with Apiary Management Team.*

### **JACK'S 'TOPICAL TIPS'.**

This month Jack will be unable to give his usual beekeeping advice to our members. Jack has suffered a very bad fall whilst out in the garden at his home at Marldon which has resulted in some very serious injuries. As usual, our Jack is fighting back in hospital and hopes to resume his normal service as soon as possible. On behalf of all our members:

**GET WELL SOON, JACK.!**

### **THE WINTER / SUMMER LOSS SURVEY.**

A big 'thank you!' to the selected nine Branch members who participated in this year's survey of colony losses over the past winter. For the first time, the survey also included losses suffered by members during last year's summer season. All of the figures have been totted-up to provide a Branch 'picture' and forwarded to Brian Gant at Totnes who will shortly publish the results of his Devon-wide survey in 'Beekeeping'. Should make interesting reading!

*Doug Westaway.*

### **A SPRINGTIME OF BLOSSOM.**

This must surely be one of the finest beekeeping springs we have ever experienced. The weather has been warm with a great deal of sunshine with minimal rain and with strong

winds almost non-existent. As a result, early blossom has been 'busting out all over' with wonderful displays on every possible kind of tree, shrub and plant – even down to the weeds in the garden. Taking advantage of this nectar and pollen bonanza has been an amazing number of bumblebees and honeybees, all of whose colonies must have been given a good start to the new season. Hopefully, members will have been prepared with sufficient supers on their hives to give your bees room to store and process the incoming nectar. I would be expecting bumper spring crops of honey this year. Let me know how you fare. Looking further ahead, the fine spring weather will enable your colonies to build up quickly and strongly. Make sure there is sufficient room for the expanding population and keep a careful inspection for swarm preparations throughout this coming season!

*Doug Westaway.*

### **A HIVE SITE IN St. MARYCHURCH.**

Finding a safe and suitable place to put a hive within the urban confines of Torbay can be a major difficulty for many of our members. Very unusually, a lady living in St. Marychurch has offered her garden for a small apiary. She has read the recent press publicity concerning honeybee losses and is anxious to help beekeepers establish more honeybee colonies.

The site has not been inspected but appears from her description to be ideally placed for one or two hives. Please contact:

Mrs. Jill Read, 'Vellore', Priory Road, St. Marychurch. The tele no. is 01803 313449.

Another hive site! This time in Ilsham Valley, Torquay. Contact Mr. Garry Owens on 01803 295368. Garry would be delighted to have one or two hives in his organic garden. Again, not inspected!

### **CCD AND THE ECONOMY!**

*No connection between Colony Collapse Disorder and our current economic state? The mayor of London thinks there is!*

"Sorry, gov" says the pest control people when I mention the under floor infestation. "We don't touch bees. They're protected". When I consult the Rentokil web site, I find all kinds of advice about how to massacre wasps and ants, but not bees. 'If you are lucky enough to have bees in your house' says Rentokil, 'you must treat them as honoured guests. If you value the future of the planet, you will not touch a bristle of their buzzing little backs.' As all bee experts will testify, there are good grounds for such restraint. The global bee population has recently entered a catastrophic decline in a syndrome despairingly but vaguely known as "Colony Collapse Disorder". Thriving be farms are being turned

overnight into ghost towns as workers mysteriously desert their queens; beeswax candles are in short supply; the stocks of honey are running low; and with too few bees to pollinate the plants that make up the very basis of our agriculture, everyone is quoting Albert Einstein to the effect that if the bees go, the human race will perish four years later..

In the great bee crisis, it is impossible not to see the metaphor. Since Homer compared the Greek troops to columns of bees issuing from a hollow rock, bees have stood for mankind's organisational ability. As Shakespeare puts it: 'they are creatures that by a rule in nature teach the act of order to a peopled kingdom.' Hive of industry, busy as a bee – for centuries these have been the clichés of human economic success. Well, look at the poor bees now, and look at the world economy. No one knows what exactly has gone wrong with the bees. Some blame the Varroa mite; some blame pesticides; some say they have been put off by all the genetically-modified crops; some say the bees are getting fed up of being carted around to fertilise the Californian fruit and nuts and have gone on a kind of strike; and some say that their navigational technology is being jammed by humanity's increasing use of mobile phones.

No one can say why they go off to die alone, and no one knows exactly where they go – except for me, that is. I can tell you that a small but noisy minority has junked the hive and come to live in our house, at least until first light when they like to rise early and make love to the spring flowers. I have one on my desk in front of me. I am afraid that he has knocked his little bee brains out trying to fly through the window, but you can tell by the fat yellow pollen sacs on his legs that his last day was highly enjoyable. He had been out there pollinating and fertilising in a thoroughly promiscuous way, and later this year, I expect, there will be some apple or cherry that ripens entirely thanks to his efforts.

And that is the point, my friends. The economic recovery is like the bee population, in that you never know exactly where it will turn up. Samson saw the bees swarm in the belly of the lion. Virgil described how you could restore a bee colony by beating a bullock to death and sticking it in a brick kiln. Unlikely though these may sound as places for bee generation, they are nothing like as inhospitable to nature as our house. If I were trying to breed bees myself, they would certainly go the way of our belly-up goldfish, or our hamsters who all had shamelessly incestuous relationships before expiring of hamster AIDS. Here is the most polluted, bee-hostile urban environment you

could imagine, the air thick with hairspray and nit cream and the microwaves of umpteen mobiles and other electronic devices – and yet I am proud to say that it is also a refuge for some of the most vulnerable and vital animals in the ecosystem.

I don't want to make too much of this. I will not claim to have seen a bee revival, any more than I will claim to have seen the bottom of the market. But when I read the wrist-slitters and the gloomadon-poppers of the *Financial Times* and their snooty refusal to see any hope in the recent rallies in stocks or in house prices, then I cannot help thinking of the people who are buying houses and opening shops with a determination and confidence that will eventually lead us out of recession; and I think of the amazing animal optimism that urges the bees to try living in my bedroom.

*Extract from Daily Telegraph 7<sup>th</sup> April article by Boris Johnson. Submitted by Peter Tattersall*

### **HONEY IS NOT TO BE SNEEZED AT?**

Under a microscope, pollen looks charming – little spiky balls like those used in Pilates classes. Up the nose, however, it is such a menace that one fifth of the population dreads the coming of summer. Dry, sunny days when the pollen count is high make their noses run and eyes stream. Most remedies for hay fever aren't very attractive, either. You can lock yourself in doors next to an air-conditioning unit, feel drowsy on antihistamines, or worry about what steroids are doing to your body. So, swallowing a spoonful of honey is a delightful alternative. Thousands of people swear by it, saying that a spoonful a day, preferably starting well before the pollen season, has transformed their lives. The principle behind it is desensitisation. The pollen that bees collect is the heavy-grained variety that doesn't cause problems. But honey, being sticky, may also contain small amounts of the lighter, wind-blown pollens that inflame the linings of the nose and eyes. These are chiefly from grass and from trees such as birch which normally begin to blossom around the third week of April and trigger allergies in a quarter of hay-fever sufferers.

But is there any evidence that honey is an effective anti-allergen? Researchers at the University of Connecticut found no evidence of honey's effectiveness in a study published in 2002. They divided their hay fever sufferers into three groups. To one group they gave local, unpasteurised, unfiltered honey, A second group was given nationally-collected, pasteurised, filtered honey. The third group received a placebo of corn syrup with honey flavouring. Neither honey group fared better than the placebo one! But if you want to see if it works for you, begin now; don't wait until you start sneezing. And if it doesn't work, the honey can do little harm!

### **TREGOTHNAN MANUKA HONEY.**

This Cornish estate is the only producer of manuka honey outside New Zealand! The price? £75 per 100 g. Yes, that's right.. ( Available from Fortnum & Mason and Harvey Nichols – where else! )

*Extracts from Daily Telegraph articles by Cassandra Jardine 13<sup>th</sup> April 2009. Submitted by Peter Tattersall..*

