

TORBAY 'BUZZ' FOR NOVEMBER 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, November 10th. Branch winter meeting at the Gerston Christian Centre, Torquay Rd., Paignton. Commencing at 7-30 p.m. Mr. Kingsley Law reviews the past season. Light refreshments will be served.

Saturday, November 14th. The Branch AGM at the Paignton Club, commencing at 2 p.m. Guest speaker Ms. Linda Dewis of 'ShelterBox'. Light refreshments will be served. See below for details.

Tuesday, December 8th. Branch winter meeting at the Gerston Christian Centre, Gerston Place, Torquay Rd., Paignton commencing at 7-30 p.m. Speaker to be announced. Light Christmas refreshments will be served.

Tuesday, January 12th. Branch winter meeting at the Gerston Christian Centre, Gerston Place, Torquay Rd., Paignton. Commencing at 7-30 p.m. Speaker to be announced. Light refreshments will be served.

THE NOVEMBER WINTER MEETING.

This month we have two Branch events. Firstly, Kingsley will be discussing with us the successes and disappointments of the past typically 'English' summer season. As usual the weather conspired to disappoint and challenge us as beekeepers. Come along on to the Gerston Christian Centre Tuesday 10th. November and join in with Kingsley as he reviews the past season. The usual refreshments will be served by your *secretary* who is ashamed to admit, left everything to Maurice and his team last month!

THE BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

Our second event is, of course, the Branch Annual General Meeting. This will be held, as usual, in the Paignton Club, that rather grand building at the harbour end of Paignton's sea front. The meeting will be held on **Saturday November 14th**, and will commence at **2 p.m.**

Our guest speaker this year is Ms. Linda Dewis who will be describing the work of that well-known charity 'ShelterBox', much in the news recently providing relief to the victims of a series of natural disasters. Please come along and give Linda and 'ShelterBox' your full support. At about 3 p.m. refreshments supplied by the Paignton Club will be served, followed by the business of the Annual General

Meeting. As the 'old hands' will know, the formal business of electing your branch officers and general committee members is conducted at a cracking pace and with the minimum of formality. As our chairman has often reminded us "beekeeping should be fun". This also applies to our AGM! However, the DBKA is a registered charity and 'rules is rules'. We must correctly elect our officers and committee and for that we need Branch members who are prepared to stand for the various posts. Please consider volunteering some of your time to help ensure the future of Torbay Branch. Call your secretary on **01803 325750** or submit your name from the floor of the Meeting on November 14th.

Doug Westaway.

JACK'S 'TOPICAL TIPS'.

I had a nice surprise last weekend when Don & Phoebe (Burgess) turned up at home, they were on their way back from Cornwall. For those who don't know them, they were club members when the club was in it's heyday. We talked about the club honey show which was held in Cockington Court. Phoebe reminded me of all the cooking we did for honey tasting & Jim with his mead, the Rev. Capener, the judge, who had 18 bottles of mead to taste. Don asked me if we were going to have it again I said: "I hope so, perhaps when we have

our AGM with new members". Don does the beginners & basic classes like me and this winter, so far, he has 29 applicants from which appears that beekeeping is on the up.

Don & Phoebe wished to be remembered to all those members that knew them.

As you know this is the start of the beekeepers year when beekeepers prepare for the next season by doing repairs and trying to correcting the past season's mistakes.

Jack Berry

BEEKEEPING & 'FARMING LINK'.

'*FARMING LINK*' is the official publication of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. (DEFRA) and is published to convey the latest news from DEFRA and its agencies to the nation's farmers and growers. The April edition explained that a combination of factors including difficult weather conditions and pests and diseases has led to increased losses in the UK's bee populations over the past few years. In response to this, additional funding from government and a drive to get ALL beekeepers to make themselves known are to form a major new strategy on bee health.

The two-page article describing the combination of factors which have led to increased losses in the UK's

bee populations over the past few years. It was emphasised that *Apis mellifera* plays an important part in the UK's food security and as a pollinator has an estimated annual economic value to farmers of between £120m and £200m. Additionally, the UK's beekeepers produce about 4000 tonnes of honey per year – about a sixth of the honey we consume – and worth between £10m and £30m annually, depending on the harvest. Richard Ball explained that the honeybee's role in fruit and vegetable crop pollination was well-known but such plants as oil seed rape which are claimed to be 'self-fertile' benefit from the bees as they make for more even pollination and better yields at harvest. The British Beekeepers' Association concludes that 30% of the UK's honeybee colonies were lost during the winter of 2007/8 for a wide variety of reasons. Beekeepers normally expect losses of about 5% to 10% each year. Richard Ball estimates that about half of the UK's small-scale beekeepers are members of beekeeping clubs and associations and it must be the aim to encourage more beekeepers to sign-up to these organisations and especially to register on the National Bee Unit's 'BeeBase so that an increased knowledge of bee health throughout the UK can be obtained. It will only be with a good science base that the UK can start to get to grips with these very real problems.

The reasons given for honeybee losses in the UK have been wide-reaching but commonly cited are a combination of the prevalence of the parasitic mite *varroa destructor* and the viruses associated with it, the very wet weather over the past couple of springs and summers together with inadequate knowledge of bee husbandry and effective disease management by less experienced beekeepers. *Varroa* is now common but can be managed through responsible beekeeping. However *Nosema ceranae* which is thought to be linked to losses of colonies in China and Spain is being detected in UK colonies for the first time although its widespread distribution suggests that it has been present for some time. The National Bee Unit is currently studying the distribution and possible impact of this parasite.

Some have also blamed certain pesticides for honeybee losses. The UK pesticide regulatory system is thorough and robust and authorisation to use any pesticide is dependant upon it being clear that risks to bees and humans fall within acceptable levels. No evidence has been presented to date to indicate that it would be appropriate to restrict or prohibit the currently approved uses of the pesticides in question in the UK. The government is keeping this matter under review and will act if there is any evidence of an unacceptable risk to bees.

There are beekeeping opportunities that spring to mind. The first is to improve the communication channels between farmers, growers and their local beekeepers. This would have particular benefits in terms of spray liason work – letting beekeepers know when crop protection is being used. In terms of pesticide control, the agricultural landscape in the UK is the safest it has been for more than 25 years. The second opportunity is for farmers and growers to help provide more accessible apiary sites for bee farmers and keepers.

In January, the Environment Secretary announced an extra £4.3m of funding to support the bee health programme. Of this nearly £2.3m will support the work of the National Bee Unit in identifying beekeepers and, in collaboration with beekeeping associations, providing additional training on tackling pests and

diseases and applying good husbandry. An extra £400,000 in addition to the current £200,000 is being dedicated to research. DEFRA will contribute £500,000 towards a wider research programme into the problems affecting pollinators, including honeybees, for the next five years.

DEFRA is encouraging all beekeepers to register on the BeeBase database which will help the National Bee Unit increase levels of surveillance and disease control. Beekeepers can then request a free apiary visit from their local inspector who can provide help and advice.

Beebase.csl.gov.uk. 'farming link' www.defra.gov.uk

Supplied by Peter Tattersall.

A CHESS PLAYER OUT THERE?

Our president, Mr. Ron Brown, would dearly like to enjoy a friendly game of chess at his nursing home here in Torquay. If one of our members would like to meet up with Ron and give him the occasional game please contact Mrs. Rose Brown on 01626 836816 or John Vyle on 01803 325593.

John Vyle.

AN APIARY SITE FOR YOU!

I have been asked by Sharona and Steve to contact you, and to let your members know they have an apiary site in a field North of Denbury. I kept bees there for several years and can say it is a good site for forage plus all the other points mentioned in the books for an apiary site. The area is already fenced and has hive stands for 6 hives built by me and a contribution for this would be appreciated. You can contact Sharona and Steve on 0777 583 2836 or me, Rod, on 01803782190.

Many thanks.

Rod Saffery

BEEKEEPING IN THE UK

*A survey in 2001 suggested that in the UK some 44,000 beekeepers maintain around 274,000 colonies of honeybees. *Most are small-scale beekeepers many of whom are members of national and local beekeeping associations such as the British Beekeepers' Association in England. *Around 300 of these are commercial beekeepers, members of the Bee Farmers Association and manage around 40,000 colonies. *There are 33,000 known beekeepers in England who maintain around 230,000 colonies.