



Eva Crane Trust

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Lecture at Bormes-Les-Mimosas, France.
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Lecture on the Bee Research Association

S.P.M.F., Bormes-les-Mimosas, 18th February 1974

This year, 1974, is the 25th Anniversary of the foundation of the Bee Research Association, BRA, which was incorporated in London on 24th January 1949. So the year is being marked by celebrations of this event in many countries. I am especially happy to be present at your meeting here, because this year also marks the 25th anniversary of my first personal contact with French beekeepers, at the International Beekeeping Congress at Amsterdam in 1949. A year later, in 1950, I paid my first visit to the Bee Research Station at Bures-sur-Yvette — where Professor Chauvin was in charge. Since then the Station at Bures, under the guidance of Dr. Louveaux, and also the BRA, have both expanded greatly. ^{two institutions} They have also come to work more and more closely together, and Dr. Louveaux is a valued member of the governing Council of the BRA.

BRA serves apiculture in the whole world as a centre for information about bees in all their aspects. These include research on bees, and technical advances in their use — for harvesting honey, beeswax, pollen, propolis and bee venom. Also the properties and chemical characteristics of these substances, and methods of handling and processing them. Last, but not least, the important use of bees for pollinating agricultural crops. This work of the BRA is supported financially by its members, drawn from 96 different countries, and also from other subscriptions and government grants.

I will explain how our system works now, without going into details of its history, except to say that its development has been based on ^{freely given} co-operation from many institutions and individuals all over the world.

The BRA headquarters are at Gerrards Cross, 30 km west of London, in Hill House, which we were able to purchase in 1966 as a result of an international

appeal for funds for this purpose. The paid staff is equivalent to ten full-time workers — myself, two other scientists, and the rest with some special knowledge of beekeeping, or documentation, languages and so on. We also of course have typists and clerical workers, of whom a high standard of accuracy is required.

Every day, information about research work or new developments concerned with bees arrives by post at Hill House. Most of this is in the form of publications — scientific or apicultural journals, or extracts from them — but we also receive photographs of new devices, or the devices themselves: a new form of hive fastener, or a special frame for transporting many queens in a single nucleus hive, or a new plastic feeder, for example. The publications come from many countries, and may be in any language, and we have encountered 57 different languages so far. We are fortunate in having contact with many persons who are linguists, and willing to help with the more difficult languages that our staff may not know. Our object is first of all to get hold of all the information, so that nothing of significance escapes us; secondly, to sift it and decide to the best of our ability what really is new and likely to be useful for the advancement of apiculture and apicultural research in the world at large; then thirdly, to "process" this into a form in which it can be distributed throughout the world, and put into use by those who will benefit from it.

Let me give you some examples. Since 1949 techniques for the instrumental insemination of queen bees have been developed from a very specialized laboratory procedure to routine work undertaken by a good trained technician. Each step in this advance has been first published in print by the person who made it, then it was our job to learn about this publication, and present it in summarized form for those who need to know about it. Similarly with advances in swarm control, honey handling, pollen traps, methods of clearing bees from the honey chamber

so that this can be removed expeditiously from the hive. Similarly also with fundamental scientific research which can form a basis for beekeeping development.

Our main method for presenting the information we assemble is a quarterly journal called Apicultural Abstracts. It consists entirely of summaries of the new developments, with precise bibliographical details of the full original publication. An indication is also given as to whether the publication (or an English translation) can be obtained from our headquarters.

In BRA we have always worked through English. It is one of the major scientific languages of the world; many scientists can read English even though they do not speak it, and we try to publish in a clear style of English that is most likely to be understood widely. To have good quality translations into French, and other important languages, would have been beyond our means.

This journal Apicultural Abstracts has now been issued for 24 years, and the publications reported in it represent virtually the whole of apicultural research since 1949. From the beginning these publications were indexed according to author and subject, using a card index system that was enlarged year by year. More recently we have taken advantage of a collaboration with the Institute of Computer Science in the University of Guelph in Canada. This was done through Professor Townsend, who was head of the Apiculture Department and has for some years also been Chairman of the BRA. We now have complete subject and author indexes to Apicultural Abstracts on magnetic tape, with printouts on paper and on micro-film. These are leased or sold to institutes such as the French one at Bures-sur-Yvette. They enable a user to find out what new things have been published since 1949 on any subject related to bees, also where a summary may be located in Apicultural Abstracts, and if the BRA has a copy of the full original publication or an English translation. The subject might be to do with honey, crystallization

in the comb, or diastase content; it might be a disease problem, nosema or what used to be called black disease and is now known to be due to viruses; or equipment for moving hives, strapping them up, keeping the bees in, loading them on trucks, and so on.

Since 1973 Apicultural Abstracts has been printed by a large international organization, the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux or CAB, on a computer system. CAB publishes 19 other journals covering the whole of agriculture, and containing altogether 100 times as much material as ours on bees. CAB is linked with the FAO information system, in what is known as AGRIS. So, now, a copy of the magnetic tape prepared in the CAB computer in England for printing our journal, is posted to Canada, where the other computer ^{incorporates} adds material from it, to keep our indexes up to date, year by year. We have recently started adding to these indexes some of the important publications earlier than 1949. We are hoping to make special arrangements with other countries, notably the USA, France, and Germany, to extend this system, so that we get a complete index to bee research, ^{which} ~~that~~ can be kept up to date.

The BRA publishes two other journals besides Apicultural Abstracts. One is Bee World, started in 1919 by the Apis Club, and continued by the BRA in 1950 after the Apis Club collapsed; Bee World is sometimes nowadays referred to as "the journal for the thinking beekeeper", and this is true in that Bee World is the medium for presenting new ideas and new advances and developments, for discussion and for trying out in beekeeping practice.

The third journal is called Journal of Apicultural Research. It was started in 1962 at the request of bee scientists in a number of countries, who wanted to be able to report their research work in a journal specializing in bees and published in English, so that it would be read by the largest number of other bee research workers in the world. It is similar in style to your Annales de l'Abeille, now

Apidologie, and we have always had good connections with this journal.

The international organization Apimondia, which has become increasingly valuable in recent years, differs from the BRA in several ways, and it may be helpful if I explain these. First, BRA is an association of individual scientists and beekeepers, and institutes and university departments etc., whereas Apimondia is a federation of national beekeeping organizations. Secondly, BRA does most of its work through the printed word, and its publications and indexes provide a permanent "world information bank" for bees and beekeeping. Apimondia, as you know, is active in arranging congresses and meetings where communication is by word of mouth. Thirdly, the Bee Research Association — as its name implies — is the primary link between scientists and research workers. On the other hand the first concern of Apimondia is beekeeping itself. Happily, many bee scientists are linked with Apimondia, and many scientifically minded beekeepers with BRA, so there is good and useful cross-fertilization, and both organizations have their own important part to play which could not be done as effectively by the other.

In closing, I should like to mention the BRA Library. This includes the older Apis Club Library, and many bequests, and is without doubt one of the most important bee libraries in the world. We are, however, lacking a number of French beekeeping books and pamphlets and should welcome any that anyone here can pass on to us. It does not matter if they are out of date — in fact the older they are the more difficult it is for us to ^{obtain} ~~get hold of~~ them. We have many of your long-established French journals — l'Apiculteur, Revue française d'Apiculture, Gazette Apicole, and others, but even here we need some of the early numbers. And we should welcome any trade catalogues of French beekeeping equipment, old or new. We often find that some of the older beekeepers are willing to pass such things on to BRA, where they will be permanently stored and used.

We also have a large "Collection of Historical and Contemporary Beekeeping

Equipment", to show how beekeeping was done in the past and how it is likely to be done in the future. Again, we should welcome ^{much}/more French material in this Collection.

All in all, I think it is true to say that no other subject in science or agriculture is better served than apiculture in its "world information bank", and I can provide further details afterwards to any of you who are interested to learn more about it.