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BEE RESEARCH NOW ORGANIZED

By Dr. Eva Crane

BRITAIN is justly proud of her tradition of voluntary organizations, created from time to time to serve specific needs. The Bee Research Association, Ltd., with its registered office at 530, Salisbury House, London Wall, E.C.2, was founded in 1949, and has become the international clearing-house for research workers in beekeeping, and bee products. There are B.R.A. members in almost all the countries of western Europe, in North and South America, in South Africa and Australia, in most Asiatic countries, and in the U.S.S.R.

The objects of the B.R.A. are “to advance beekeeping science and beekeeping and, with a view thereto, to promote, finance, organize, carry on, and encourage research.” These objects are fulfilled in two main ways:

1. by carrying out—and helping others to carry out—research work; and,
2. by providing information about the results of research.

The honeybee must surely be the most widespread of all “domesticated” animals, since it is kept with profit from the Equator to well within the Arctic Circle. Virtually all countries produce some sort of bee-litterature; at least 35 new publications are issued each year. Beekeeping also impinges on many fields of learning. Botany (bee forage), chemistry and physics (composition and properties of honey, medicine), agriculture (slugs and insects), and zoology (honey and bee venom)—and even of pollen and royal jelly—are fields where literature must be constantly watched. The research literature relevant to beekeeping is in fact scattered in nearly a thousand different periodicals, and there are also large numbers of isolated publications which are even more difficult to discover.

In 1952 the B.R.A. took over from the Apis Club the publication of Bee World, a monthly journal which now includes Agricultural Abstracts and covers the world’s literature on beekeeping and the sciences related to it.

VOLUNTEER WORK

The abstracting is done on a voluntary basis by research workers, Government officials, and private beekeepers who have a knowledge of one or more foreign languages. Surprisingly enough, this voluntary system is successful—possibly because the published abstracts are so valuable to all concerned that each takes care to maintain a high standard in his or her contribution towards them.

The B.R.A. has so far published three books. The first, in 1951, was a Dictionary of Beekeeping Terms giving equivalents in French, German, Dutch, and English of about a thousand terms in beekeeping and related sciences. Supplements for the three Scandinavian languages, and for Italian, Spanish, and Russian, are in preparation. The second book, The Pollen Loads of the Honeybee, was published in 1952 and represented the results of five years’ research by Dorothy Hodges. Then in 1953 The Behaviour and Social Life of Honeybees was published; this book is written by Ronald Ribbands, who is on the staff of the Bee Department at Rothamsted Experimental Station, and is one example of the close and profitable cooperation which exists between the B.R.A. and Rothamsted. This book gives authoritative and up-to-date information on the research work which has been carried on in bee behaviour—some of which is of vital importance to practical beekeeping and agriculture.

Other publications include a World List of Bee Research Workers, with details of the 400-500 people working on bees and their products, and Some Recent Russian Research on Bees and Beekeeping, containing English translations of 10 important papers previously available only in English-speaking countries and research workers. Several catalogues and bibliographies of beekeeping books and periodicals are in preparation, and also a collection of statistics of honey and bee wax production in different countries and of the world trade in them.

In these experiments various beekeeping operations and their results are reported on by a number of competent beekeepers, the operations being sufficiently well defined by those organizing the experiment (this is by no means easy in beekeeping) to ensure that the results can be usefully compared. Subjects already investigated by the B.R.A. include forage, climate, forage, and rowing; and, not least, methods of introducing a new queen to a colony of bees.