



Eva Crane Trust

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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 work on bees, 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 the scientific study of bees and beekeeping and, with a view thereto, to promote, finance, organize, carry on, and encourage research." These objects are fulfilled in two main ways: first, by carrying out—and helping others to carry out—research work; and, secondly, 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-literature"; at least 35 now publish a beekeeping periodical, and some countries as many as 10 or 12. Beekeeping also impinges on many fields of learning. Botany (bee forage), chemistry and physics (composition and properties of honey), medicine (after-effects of bee stings, and therapeutic uses of honey and bee venom—and now of pollen and royal jelly): these are a few of the fields whose 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 *Apicultural 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 English, French, German, and Dutch 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 co-operation 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 out on 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 Work on Bees and Beekeeping*, containing English translations of 10 important papers not previously available to English-speaking beekeepers and research workers. Several catalogues and bibliographies of beekeeping books and periodicals are in preparation, and also a collection of statistics of honey and beeswax production in different countries and of the world trade in them. These projects are possible only because we are able to obtain competent collaboration—from Government departments, research institutes, beekeepers'

associations, and individual beekeepers—in almost all countries.

The B.R.A. Library (which includes the material from the Apis Club Library) has also been built up by contributions from many countries, and is still growing rapidly. It now contains some 5,000 reprints of scientific papers, 500 books, sets of 350 beekeeping periodicals, and unpublished English translations of some 200 important publications in other languages. This year we have also started a Beekeeping Picture Library. All material in these libraries is lent to members anywhere in the world, and it is worth putting on record that we have not yet lost a single publication through lending it abroad.

The first outstanding service of the B.R.A.

to beekeeping research has been making available to those who need them the results of work already carried out. This has prevented much waste of time and duplication of effort in different countries. The B.R.A. has also been able to help a number of people who had the ability, but lacked experience or training, on their way towards carrying out research which is of value to beekeeping.

Research work actually carried out by the B.R.A. has been concerned with practical problems.

Large-scale experiments are carried out by beekeepers under instruction, each having two (or more) colonies "matched" as closely as possible in every way, one used as a control and the other receiving some special treatment, for instance, being fed with syrup or pollen substitute. All beekeepers apply the special treatment in the same way; all must be both competent and trustworthy, and must report faithfully in the manner required. One advantage of this method is that it shows what happens under ordinary beekeeping conditions, where results may be rather

different from those obtained in an experimental station; it is not only the bees and their conditions which constitute the experimental material of beekeeping, but the beekeepers as well.

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 this method, with some success, are methods of swarm control, and methods of introducing a new queen to a colony of bees.

This research work is done in consultation and collaboration with the research institutes, and is complementary to the experiments carried out there.

The main financial support for the work of the Bee Research Association has come from public-spirited private beekeepers in this country. No financial support is received from Government sources (how much more could be done if it were!), but some agricultural colleges, and many individual bee research workers, subscribe as members.

The B.R.A. provides an educational exhibit at the Royal Agricultural Show every year; this year half the space was devoted to research, and half to an historical display by the National Beekeeping Museum. This Museum is under the direction of the B.R.A., which is responsible for its finances. It was started in 1952 and is at present housed in the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading.

The B.R.A. is a "Specialist Member" of the British Bee-Keepers' Association, and is represented on its Council; it also works closely (although unofficially) with the various County Beekeepers' Associations, many of which are corporate B.R.A. Members, as are a number of National Beekeepers' Associations in other countries.

We are indeed "members one of another," and this is the basis on which the Bee Research Association has been built up and which has enabled a voluntary organization, with far too little money and no official support, to accomplish so much in its own small field. Its value to the beekeeping industry is considerable; we hope that we shall not have to wait too long before this is recognized, and adequate funds are made available for continuing the work.



Ancient equipment for beekeeping collected by the Bee Research Association and now exhibited in the Museum of Rural Life at Reading.