



Eva Crane Trust

ECTD_289C

TYPESCRIPT: The International Bee Research Association

SOURCE: *Typescript of lecture presented at Lithuania
Inst. of Agriculture*

DATE: August, 2000

(unpublished ~~text~~
talk)

21/8/00

Lithuania-2 2000D

The International Bee Research Association

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During the Second World War, the bee scientists and beekeepers in different countries were cut off from each other, especially those on either side of the Iron Curtain. When the War ended in 1945, they had an urgent need for information about new researches and advances that could help them in their own research and beekeeping. The Bee Research Association was established on 24 January 1949, with the support of the British Beekeepers' Association Research Committee, to collate and provide this information world-wide. By August 1949 its membership already included some 600 beekeepers, bee scientists and others, and at the 13th International Beekeeping Congress in Amsterdam, Graham Burt and I presented a report on its work and aims. As a result, we received offers of collaboration from many countries.

A history of the first 25 years of the Association was published in 1974. Professor Karl von Frisch, who had been President from 1962 to 1964, wrote in the Introduction: 'One great service rendered by the Association is that, within its own special field, it seeks out and fosters ... contacts, and many individuals have thus been led out of their isolation. In doing this, the Association not only helps and sustains the individual, it expands his horizons and those of others, leading to an increase in mutual understanding.' The world-wide provision of scientific information for beekeepers and bee scientists has been

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the main function of the Association during all its 50 years, and I will say more about this later.

In 1961 IBRA launched an International Appeal for funds with which to purchase premises for headquarters, and in 1966 we were able to purchase Hill House near Gerrards Cross in Buckinghamshire, England. This move initiated a period of great expansion for the Association during which increasing grant-support was obtained: from the UK Development Commission, The Royal Society, the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux and other sources.

At a Bee Research Association Members' Meeting in France in 1975, a Member proposed that - since the membership, character and work of the Association were international - the word 'International' should be included in its name. The name was changed to International Bee Research Association (IBRA) at a Members' meeting in the lecture room of the Linnean Society in London. In the same room, in 1858, Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace had 'made the first communication on their views on the origin of species of natural selection'.

There are three IBRA journals. We inherited *Bee World* from The Apis Club in 1950, and it is now in its 81st year. In 1950 we also started *Apicultural Abstracts* which reported new developments and research findings world-wide, and the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux (CAB) provided some financial support for this journal from 1961 to 1994. Since 1962, the *Journal of Apicultural Research* has also published, at the request of scientists in different countries, for refereed scientific research papers. This journal is now in its 39th year. Since

1993 it has been edited by Dr Tom Rinderer and his colleagues in the United States Department of Agriculture.

The IBRA Library inherited much from the Apis Club, and has been continually enlarged by the addition of new books, beekeeping journals, and reprints of research papers. Also, Members have given or bequeathed their own collections of early bee books. In 1987, the Library was named the Eva Crane International Research Association Library, and it is now probably the most important and valuable library on bees and apiculture in the world, and is very widely used.

IBRA has published more than thirty high quality books. From the onset, we realized how difficult it was for beekeepers from different language groups to communicate with each other. So in 1951 we published the first *Dictionary of beekeeping terms*, in English, French, German and Dutch. Thanks to help from a number of beekeeping linguists, who did the work without payment, eleven volumes have already been published, which together include the following languages (with English): Arabic, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish. *A volume with Estonian, Latvian & Lithuanian is in preparation.*

IBRA has played an important part in making available the specialized knowledge needed for developing beekeeping in the tropics. In 1976 we organized the first International Conference on Apiculture in Tropical Climates, in London. We have since held further Conferences, in India, Kenya, Egypt, Trinidad, Costa Rica and Thailand. IBRA has also held a number of other

international meetings. In 1990 I published a 600-page book: *Bees and beekeeping: science, practice and world resources*.

Starting in the 1950s, the Association assembled a Collection of Historical and Contemporary Beekeeping Material. Items from the Collection have been used for research and for educational displays, but it has not yet been possible to obtain funds for a permanent display. IBRA has had an important role in encouraging historical research on bees and beekeeping, especially after vessels excavated in Greece and Spain were identified as ancient hives, from 1973 onwards. There have been many finds from more recent centuries, especially in Britain and Ireland, France, Greece and Spain. I published *The archaeology of beekeeping* while I was Director of IBRA (from 1949 to 1983), and *The world history of beekeeping and honey hunting* (1999) since I retired.

The present Director of IBRA is Richard Jones, who spoke at the meeting in Jena in 1999. In recent years, International Bee Research Association has suffered in the same way as many other scientific organizations, in that grants to maintain its work are much more difficult to obtain.

IBRA has always kept abreast of current information technology, and this has been made possible by the participation of Members and others who made their knowledge and facilities available to us. When we started in 1949, the only output was hard copy, and subject and author indexing was done using card indexes. In the 1960s microfiches were introduced, and we used them. Computer operation of IBRA information services was started in 1969, and we were early in this field because of the

initiative of Professor Gordon Townsend at the University of Guelph, Canada. From 1973 *Apicultural Abstracts* was produced in the computer-operated system of the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux (CAB), and we continue to receive records of new bee-related publications in the computer system of CAB, now CAB International. Reports of all publications in *Apicultural Abstracts* since 1973 can now be searched on disk by IBRA staff, and we are studying other ways of developing electronic access to our data banks. Since 1996 *Apicultural Abstracts* has also been available on disk.

For half a century, IBRA has been a much loved institution. As an international centre for information on bee science and beekeeping, it built a bridge between the end of the Second World War and the present wide transmission of information through electronic technology. What we need now are the funds to make the information on developments in beekeeping and bee research available in the forms most useful to beekeepers and bee scientists in the world at large.

Summary

The International Bee Research Association (IBRA) was founded in 1949, to keep bee scientists and beekeepers up to date with new developments and research in bee science and beekeeping; its headquarters are in Europe. During its 51 years it developed into an invaluable world centre of information on honey-storing bees and beekeeping. It has published three journals, two since 1950, and a number of books and other material, including volumes of the *Dictionary of beekeeping terms* that together cover 15 European languages and 4 others. All this has been achieved through the work and co-operation of IBRA Members and others in many countries; the present urgent need is for further funding.