

# IBRA Council — Who's Who

Fani Hatjina, N. Moudania, Greece

*This occasional series is intended to help IBRA Members get to know those who represent them on IBRA Council. Dr Fani Hatjina obtained her PhD in Cardiff and made much use of the IBRA library during her studies. She is based in Hellenic Institute of Apiculture, National Agricultural Organization 'DEMETER'*



Ever since my childhood I have always been very curious. This curiosity once caused a small problem with my eyes, when I disturbed a wasp's nest and was attacked en masse! However, here I am today working with honey bees. I knew almost nothing about their fascinating world, or their behaviour as insect biology was only a small fraction of my first degree studies in the Biology department of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

My first contact with the bees was through a beekeeping seminar, which I found so interesting that I immediately decided to study further, after finishing my first degree. After receiving an award by the State Scholarships Foundation of Greece (S.S.F.) for undertaking Diploma and Ph.D studies in UK, I found myself in Cardiff University to undergo PhD studies under the supervision of Prof. Robert Pickard and Dr. Robert Paxton. My interest was in bee behaviour in relation to plants and their efficiency as pollinators. The last year of my research work was funded by the C. B. Dennis foundation (UK), to which I am grateful. The contact with many other International students during my studies was an added bonus on top of my research.

The 4 years in Cardiff University brought me close to IBRA and its staff. IBRA's headquarters became my second home as I spent much of my studying time there. That is how I came to know and follow IBRA's activities as a an International Library, publishing house, conference organiser and promoter of apiculture knowledge and practice in Developing Countries. The best experience though was my meeting with Eva Crane and the opportunity to visit her house some years later. The strong personality, the demanding conversations and her curiosity as well as her knowledge on the historical findings from Ancient Greece, are truly unforgettable. It was the same period, that I also had the opportunity to visit Buckfast Abbey and Brother Adam.

However, the financial constrains forced me to return to Greece in autumn 1994 and finish the writing of my thesis from my home town, Thessaloniki. I received my PhD in 1997. From 1996 until 2000, I was working as a part-time Apiculture lecturer in Technological Educational Institution of Thessaloniki and in 1999 I was appointed as a Researcher in the Hellenic Institute of Apiculture, in N. Moudania. At the same time I

worked for three years as a part time co-lecturer on the subjects of 'Apiculture' and 'Pollination Ecology' on the Undergraduate Course of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Today, I am still in Hellenic Institute of Apiculture, as Researcher B'. I am no longer teaching Undergraduate students but beekeepers (beginners and professionals) trying to transfer what I know, the experience I have gained (even if it still small) and to develop new ideas.

Beekeeping has a long tradition in Greece but the weather conditions, with very dry summers, and the geomorphological characteristics of the country, with many areas covered by non bee plants or no plants at all, makes beekeeping very difficult and not very profitable. However, Greece is one of the most densely populated countries in respect of honey bee colonies, and the number of beekeepers has not decreased as in other countries, but in fact increased. Honey bee scientists in Greece work in close collaboration with the beekeepers, in all aspects but particularly in respect of diseases, toxicity and queen quality.

Although my PhD Thesis was devoted to pollination services provided by honey bees, my position in the Hellenic Institute of Apiculture demanded work with diseases and other subjects related to beekeeping practice. For more than 4 years my work focused on the use of oxalic acid against the varroa mite. At the same time, the need to assess the toxicity of even the biological medicaments drove me in the direction of the toxicity assessment. Starting from the oxalic acid and continuing to the neonicotinoids, and especially imidacloprid, I am interested to find new ways to evaluate the toxicity to bees - adults and larvae. Bee's longevity, the size of Hypopharyngeal glands (HPGs), respiration activity, the total protein and the vitellogenin, the fat body, are some of the physiological systems which I try to evaluate working in close collaboration with other laboratories in Greece and abroad.

I am part of several International Scientific groups. I wish to work with others in proposing solutions and solving bee related problems. One of these groups, COLOSS, has made great progress through such international collaboration. As an Associate Editor of *Journal of Apicultural Research* (JAR) and a close collaborator of IBRA, I am trying to give a helping hand to its activities and especially to increase scientists' awareness for IBRA's work, to take JAR and *Bee World* so as to be one step ahead and improve the dissemination of knowledge between scientists and beekeepers.