

History and Origin of the Moir Library

The Moir Library owes its origin to Mr. John W Moir, CMG, FRSGS, FZS., an outstanding personality who was an empire builder, a beekeeper and a bibliophile. After a life spent in Africa seeking to follow Livingstone's footsteps, combating the slave traffic by opening up trade, he returned to his native Scotland.

In 1912 he began collecting bee books, and by 1916 he had 167 volumes. He decided to bequeath his books to the Scottish Beekeepers' Association, but later altered his plans so as to give his fellow members the benefit of his books in his life-time. He then presented them to the Association on the understanding that he himself would remain the Honorary Librarian and house the library in his home.

The collection of books grew rapidly and by October 1933, when the Special Catalogue number of 'The Scottish Beekeeper' was issued, comprised some 1270 items. With this great increase in the stock of the library, the work involved in its administration grew apace and Mr. Moir felt himself compelled in 1936 to seek the help of friends and of the Edinburgh Public Libraries to alleviate the burden.

Ultimately at the end of 1939 the library was transferred to the care of the Public Libraries and was housed in the Central Reference Department. At the time of the transfer there were 1799 books and pamphlets and 439 volumes of periodicals. In 1991 the main lending collection was transferred to the Fountainbridge Library. The [rare books](#) were kept in the Central Library until November 2002 when they were transferred on deposit loan to the National Library of Scotland. This will make the books available world-wide.

The Moir collection covers a wide field, and includes books in French, German and Italian as well as English and other languages. There is a wide selection of American books, and pamphlets from research stations in Europe and beyond, so that the advanced student may keep abreast of modern research.

Young people, students, practical beekeepers as well as researchers will find publications to interest them. The more popular modern text books are duplicated and additional copies are sometimes procured so as to reduce the period of waiting for borrowers. A selection of British, American and other magazines are added each year.

The library is of special value as it is both a lending and a reference library, although the books which are for reference only, and therefore cannot be sent by post, are few in number and confined to rare items. The oldest books are subject to special borrowing rules.

The great majority of the books are, however, freely available to members of the Scottish Beekeepers' Association, and members are provided with a card which enables them to borrow direct from the library.

The welfare of the library is supervised by a Library Committee who are anxious to enhance the value of the library to beekeepers and to maintain its high standard, even adding to its numbers. The Scottish Beekeepers' Association gives an annual grant to help to keep the library up to date, but donations of books and periodicals on beekeeping will always be welcomed by the committee.

Catalogues are available as follows: 1950, out of print; supplement 1950 -1962 available at £5 plus postage; second supplement 1963 - 1984 available at £5 plus postage; 1985 - 1999 available as computer print-out. These supplements are available from the [SBA Library Convener](#).

Moir Library - Rare Books

National Library of Scotland

The Rare Books Collection of the Moir Library is held on deposit at the National Library of Scotland.

In November 2002, 233 volumes, representing the Rare Books Collection of the Moir Library, were deposited on long-term loan in the National Library of Scotland. It is described by the National Library as: "One of the very finest collections of rare beekeeping books in the world", and includes items published as early as 1525. The Scottish Beekeepers' Association is pleased to have been able to enter into this agreement with the National Library of Scotland to help ensure the long-term care of the volumes, while maintaining the principle of access to the books for purposes of scientific and academic research.

All of the rare Books held by the National Library have now been individually catalogued, and an individual bibliographic record is available for all the deposited Moir items through the online main catalogue on the NLS website. Further details can be found on the website of the [National Library of Scotland](#).

In addition the following link will take you to a series of digital scans with text of some of the choice items from the Moir Deposit that were exhibited in 2002:

<http://www.nls.uk/digitallibrary/moir/>