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Report for 1929

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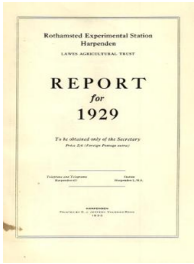

Introduction - General Account of Rothamsted

Rothamsted Research

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INTRODUCTION

The Rothamsted Experimental Station was founded in 1843 by the late Sir J. B. Lawes, with whom was associated Sir J. H. Gilbert for a period of nearly 60 years. Lawes died in 1900 and Gilbert in 1901; they were succeeded by Sir A. D. Hall from 1902 to 1912, when the present Director, Sir E. J. Russell, was appointed.

For many years the work was maintained entirely at the expense of Sir J. B. Lawes, at first by direct payment, and from 1899 onwards out of an annual income of £2,400 arising from the endowment fund of £100,000 given by him to the Lawes Agricultural Trust. In 1904, the Society for Extending the Rothamsted Experiments was instituted for the purpose of providing funds for expansion. In 1906, Mr. J. F. Mason built the Bacteriological Laboratory; in 1907, the Goldsmiths' Company generously provided a further endowment of £10,000, the income of which—since augmented by the Company—is to be devoted to the investigation of the soil. In 1911, the Development Commissioners made their first grant to the Station. Since then, Government grants have been made annually and, for the year 1929-30, the Ministry of Agriculture has made a grant of £27,400 for the work of the Station. Lord Iveagh has generously borne the cost of a chemist and a special assistant for field experiments for studying farmyard manure, both natural and artificial; while other donors have, from time to time, generously provided funds for special apparatus and equipment. Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., and the Fertiliser Manufacturers' Association, jointly defray the cost of a Guide Demonstrator for the field plots and, in addition, provide considerable funds for the extension of the work; the United Potash Company, Fertilizer Sales, Ltd., Beet Sugar Factories (Anglo-Dutch Group) and other firms, also give substantial assistance. The Empire Marketing Board, the Royal Agricultural Society, the Institute of Brewing and the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research make grants for specific purposes. The result is that the Station is able to deal with problems affecting modern farming in a far more complete manner than would otherwise be possible.

The laboratories have been entirely rebuilt in recent years.

The main block was opened in 1919, and is devoted to the study of soil and plant nutrition problems; another block was

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erected in 1924 for plant pathology at a cost of £21,135 provided by the Ministry of Agriculture out of the Development Fund, and the house adjoining the laboratories on the North side, the Red Gables, has been converted into an Administration Building to hold part of the Records and Statistical Department, Staff Common Room and Conference Room.

Perhaps even more important has been the reorganisation of the work of the Station so as to keep it in touch with modern conditions of agriculture on the one side and of science on the other. This was completed in the laboratories in 1922, on the Farm in 1924, and on the field plots in 1926, when the field laboratory was erected and the new methods of field experiment were adopted. In 1926, the International Education Board, Rockefeller Foundation, generously gave a grant of £2,000 for the extension of the glass-houses on condition that another £1,000 should be obtained; this was done with the help of the Ministry of Agriculture and of the Society for Extending the Rothamsted Experiments. In 1928, the Empire Marketing Board made a grant of £1,835 for the erection of special insect-proof houses, and an annual grant of about £2,200 for the study of virus diseases. The equipment of the Station is now exceptionally good.

The Library is steadily growing, and now contains some 22,000 volumes dealing with agriculture and cognate subjects. The catalogue of the old printed books on agriculture has been published, and every effort is made to obtain any that we do not possess. A collection is also being made of prints of farm animals, of old letters on agriculture, and farm account books. Many of these lie in farmhouses, unused and inaccessible, not in themselves valuable, but often of great help to students of agricultural history and economics when brought together as we are doing. Gifts of books and documents to the Library will be greatly appreciated.

The extension of the experiments to various outside centres in Great Britain, begun in 1921, has proved so advantageous that it has been developed, thanks to the grants of the Royal Agricultural Society and the co-operation of the Institute of Brewing. Not only is useful information spread among farmers, but the Station itself gains considerably by this closer association with practical men. As part of this extension, the Station, in 1926, with the consent of His Grace the Duke of Bedford, took over from Dr. J. A. Voelcker the lease of the Woburn Experimental Farm, so that this now becomes a part of the Rothamsted organisation, allowing us to make experiments simultaneously on a light and on a heavy soil : a very advantageous arrangement. Through the generosity of His Grace, certain necessary changes have been made in the farm equipment, and the grass fields have been grouped and watered for intensive grazing. The Agricultural Engineers' Association also rendered assistance. Dr. Harold H. Mann, formerly Director of Agriculture, Bombay Presidency, India, and Agricultural Adviser to H.E.H. the Nizam's Government, Hyderabad, India, has been appointed Assistant Director, with Mr. T. W. Barnes as Chemist, and the laboratories, pot-culture station and meteorological station have been re-equipped and reorganised. A grant from the Royal Agricultural Society of England has enabled us to appoint an additional computer in the

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Statistical Department to prepare the material for a full summary and discussion of the results of the last fifty years of experiments there.

The activities of Rothamsted, however, are not confined to the British Isles, but are gradually spreading out to the Empire and other countries abroad. The International Education Board sends workers from all parts of the world to study in these laboratories. The Empire Cotton Growing Corporation has, since 1923, made a grant of £1,000 per annum for the development of investigations in Soil Physics, while the Empire Marketing Board has recently invited the co-operation of the Station in solving certain agricultural problems of great importance to the Empire.

At the invitation of the proper authorities, the Director and other members of the staff have already visited the Sudan, Palestine, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada to discuss agricultural problems and possibilities of co-operation; in addition, visits are paid to the United States and to European countries to discuss problems and methods with experts there, and generally to improve the equipment of the Institution and widen the knowledge and experience of the staff.

More and more workers are coming from the overseas Dominions to carry on their studies at Rothamsted. None but University graduates are eligible, and most are, or are about to be, on the staffs of Government or other Agricultural Departments: men who will become leaders in the agricultural communities of their respective countries. To our great regret, lack of accommodation has compelled us to refuse some who wished to come. This is highly unfortunate.

The most important of all these Empire developments has recently been inaugurated. At the Imperial Agricultural Conference of 1927 it was decided to set up in this country a series of Bureaux to act as central clearing houses of information and to promote interchange of ideas and methods between the agricultural experts of the different parts of the Empire. The Soil Bureau is located at Rothamsted and began operations on May 1st, 1929. Dr. A. F. Joseph, late Chemist to the Sudan Government, has been appointed Deputy Director; Mr. A. J. L. Lawrence, Scientific Assistant; and Miss H. Scherbatoff, Translator.

In view of the great expansion of the work in the last ten years, the Committee has deemed it advisable to acquire the site adjoining the laboratory on the South side in readiness for the time when further accommodation will be necessary.