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Report for 1939-45

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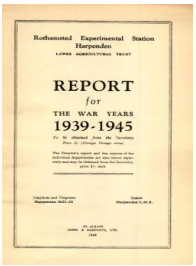
Rothamsted Experimental Station
Harpenden
LAWES AGRICULTURAL TRUST

REPORT
for
THE WAR YEARS
1939-1945

The Centenary Celebrations

Rothamsted Research

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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR

Because of the war no annual report has been printed since 1938, and the present report covers the years 1939 to 1945 inclusive. It differs in certain respects from the pre-war annual reports. As in the case of the account published at the time of the Centenary, the work of each department is described in some detail by its head. There is a good deal to be said for describing in this way the work of a specialist institution engaged largely on the more fundamental problems. It should be made abundantly clear, however, that the work at Rothamsted is not conducted in a series of water-tight compartments. There is consultation and collaboration between the departments from the preparation of the programme to the writing up of the results, and many of the investigations or parts of them are carried out jointly by members of different departments. Contact is maintained formally by meetings of a Staff Council and by scientific discussions held about every three weeks, but the informal contacts, when the staff meet daily for tea, are even more important.

The war-time report follows the pre-war abridged reports in omitting the tables giving the detailed results of experiments. The figures for any particular experiments may be obtained on application to the Secretary.

Acknowledgement is made to Mr. G. V. Jacks for editing this report.

In spite of the proximity to London, Rothamsted suffered no damage from enemy action during the war. Incendiary bombs were dropped on two occasions, one landing on the roof of the laboratories and several others about the premises and in the Director's garden, but they were dealt with by the very efficient fire-watching service organised by the staff from its members. On a few other occasions, strings of high-explosive bombs were dropped on the Common in front of the building and on the farm, but no one was injured and no damage was done either to buildings or crops. Dr. R. K. Schofield was in charge of the A.R.P. work assisted by Mr. D. J. Finney, Dr. J. T. Martin and Mr. R. G. Warren; Dr. Winifred E. Brenchley also took an active part, especially with regard to first-aid and catering.

Accommodation was provided for workers evacuated from the Department of Biometry and Eugenics of London University, the British Leather Manufacturers' Research Association, Diagram Films Ltd., and the Public Health Department of the Ministry of Health.

The Centenary Celebrations

The Centenary of Rothamsted was celebrated on 21st July, 1943. Owing to the war and the difficulties of travelling, the celebrations were on a much smaller scale than they would otherwise have been. Nevertheless there were nearly 300 guests and 25 countries, including the Dominions, were officially represented. Amongst those present were Mr. R. S. Hudson, the Minister of Agriculture, the Duke of Norfolk, Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, the Marquess and Marchioness of Salisbury, the

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Viscount and Viscountess Bledisloe, and Sir Henry Dale, President of the Royal Society.

In the morning the guests were taken in small parties round the laboratories and had an opportunity of inspecting the new south block, the remodelled sections of the main block, and the new pot-culture houses.

After a luncheon in the Public Hall, addresses were given by the Earl of Radnor, Chairman of the Lawes Trust Committee, Mr. R. S. Hudson and Sir John Russell.

Many messages of congratulation were received from overseas and from well-wishers in this country.

In the afternoon the guests were taken round the farm and inspected some of the more important experiments including the 100th successive wheat crop on the Broadbalk field.

Parallel meetings to commemorate the Centenary of Rothamsted were held in Moscow by the agricultural scientists of the U.S.S.R., in Cincinnati by the Soil Science Society of America, and commendations of Rothamsted's work were made at meetings in Spain and Portugal.

Retirement of Sir John Russell

On 30th September, 1943, Sir John Russell retired from the directorship of Rothamsted. Dr. W. G. Ogg, formerly director of the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research, Aberdeen, was invited to succeed him.

Sir John joined the Rothamsted staff in 1907 and was appointed director when Sir Daniel Hall left in 1912. During his long tenure of office, Sir John completely reorganised and greatly expanded the Station, and, what was still more important, gathered round him a first-class staff. He built up what is now one of the finest agricultural libraries in the world, and raised large sums of money for the rebuilding of the laboratories, pot-culture houses and farm buildings and for the purchase of Rothamsted farm and Manor House. In this summary it is impossible to deal adequately with Sir John's great services to Rothamsted and to the agriculture of the Empire. He travelled widely and did much to make the work of the Station known in other countries. Besides serving on numerous committees set up by the Ministry of Agriculture, the Agricultural Research Council and the Colonial Office, he took an active part in the work of the Allied Post-War Requirements Bureau and UNRRA. During the war he also served part-time with the Soviet Relations Division of the Ministry of Information which entailed making extensive lecture tours in many parts of the country.

When he retired the staff and former workers presented him with his portrait painted by Francis E. Hodge.

Improvements to Laboratories and Farm Buildings

In 1938 a Centenary Fund was inaugurated for the purpose of reconstructing some of the old laboratories and erecting new ones: also for setting up pot-culture houses and extending and improving the farm buildings. There was a ready and generous response from many friends and supporters of Rothamsted and, had it not been