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Report for 1955

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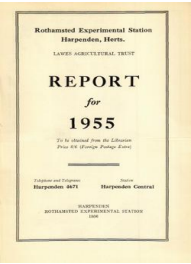
Rothamsted Experimental Station
Harpenden, Herts.

LAWES AGRICULTURAL TRUST

REPORT
for
1955

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1956

Preface

Rothamsted Research

Rothamsted Research (1956) *Preface ;* Report For 1955, pp 21 - 24 **- DOI: https://doi.org/10.23637/ERADOC-1-77**

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PREFACE

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 sixty years. Lawes died in 1900, and Gilbert in 1901; they were succeeded by Sir A. D. Hall from 1902 to 1912, and by Sir E. J. Russell from 1912 to 1943, when the present Director, Sir William G. Ogg, 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 1889 onwards out of the income derived 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 from which—since augmented by the Company—is 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 at the present time over 90 per cent of the necessary funds is provided from Government sources—mainly by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Research Council.

The main block of laboratories was opened in 1919; another block was erected in 1924 for plant pathology by a grant provided by the Ministry of Agriculture out of the Development Fund; and Red Gables, the house adjoining the laboratories on the north side, was converted into an Administration Building to hold the Commonwealth Soil Bureau, Staff Common Room and Conference Room.

Since 1945 Rivers Lodge, a house belonging to the Station, on the south side of the laboratories, has been used to provide accommodation for the Statistical Department. In 1946 Rothamsted Lodge, the dower house of the Estate, was purchased and occupied by the Entomology and Bee Research Department.

In 1947 the plant nematology work under Dr. T. Goodey, of the Institute of Parasitology, was transferred to Rothamsted, and a new laboratory was erected to house this department.

Large glasshouses, including special insect-proof houses for virus studies, were added in 1926, 1928 and 1931 by aid of generous grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Empire Marketing Board and the Ministry of Agriculture. A new large range of houses, some of which are insect-proof, was erected in 1935 for plant-pathology investigations.

In 1940 the south wing was completed and the old chemical laboratories reconstructed. These extensions and reconstructions provide accommodation for the Chemistry, Biochemistry, Physics and Microbiology Departments; in addition, a range of pot-culture houses was built. In 1939 a laboratory was completed for workers from the Imperial College of Science and Technology. A West

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Building, to house the Entomology and Insecticides Departments together with the mycologists of the Plant Pathology Department, was completed in 1955.

The Rothamsted Home Farm of 250 acres came under the management of Sir John Lawes in 1834, the experimental fields being worked from the farm buildings at the Manor House. In 1913 the first range of farm buildings and cottages was erected on the site of the present buildings. These were considerably enlarged in 1930–32 and equipped for electric light and power; further additions were made in 1939–40. A range of six farm cottages was erected in Ninnings Field in 1948, and a concrete road constructed from the back of the laboratories to the farm.

The non-experimental part of the farm was reorganized in 1928 to meet the prevailing economic conditions, much of the land being laid down to permanent grass, and cattle and sheep were introduced. In 1939 this policy was reversed, ley farming was introduced and the arable acreage was increased to meet wartime conditions.

The extension of the experiments to various outside centres in Great Britain, begun in 1921, has proved so advantageous that it has been developed. Not only is useful information spread among farmers, but Rothamsted also gains considerably by this closer association with the universities and Advisory Services. As part of this extension, the Station took over in 1926 the Woburn Experimental Farm. We were thus able to make experiments simultaneously on the light land at Woburn and the heavy land at Rothamsted.

In May 1934 the negotiations for the purchase of the farm and some adjoining parts of the Rothamsted estate were completed. The Lawes Agricultural Trust now owns the site of the laboratories, the experimental and ordinary farm fields, Knott Wood, the Manor House and grounds, the farm manager's house and eight cottages. The total area is 527 acres. The purchase price was £35,000, all of which was raised by public subscription. Generous contributions were received from Sir Robert McDougall and others, and a highly encouraging feature of the appeal was the number of subscriptions received from farmers, village school teachers and from oversea sources.

During 1951–52 the Manor House was converted into a Hall of Residence, providing accommodation for seven families, rooms for twenty single workers and two guest rooms. Some of the large public rooms are available for lectures and general institutional purposes. The fabric of the older part of the building, part of which dates back to the 13th century, has been carefully preserved. The greater part of the cost was met by the Ministry of Agriculture, but the Station also received encouragement and financial aid from the Pilgrim Trust. The conversion has greatly enhanced the amenities of Rothamsted, and the accommodation is particularly useful for the younger members of staff and temporary workers from overseas. An illustrated guide to the Manor with an account of its history has been published (1953) under the title *The Manor of Rothamsted*.

The activities of Rothamsted, however, are not confined to the British Isles, but are gradually reaching out to many parts of the

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world. The Station regularly participates in work for the solution of agricultural problems of great importance to the Commonwealth.

Rothamsted offers research facilities for post-graduate students, but unfortunately the number of additional workers that can be accommodated is at present strictly limited by lack of laboratory space.

The Commonwealth Bureau of Soil Science, one of the ten Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux set up to act as clearing centres of information on agricultural science, has been located at Rothamsted since its establishment in 1929.

The Library

The Library may be said to have come into being in 1913, when the Sir Henry Gilbert Collection, presented by Lady Gilbert, was added to the small body of reference works used in the Laboratory at that time—most of them the gift of Sir John Lawes himself.

Its expansion, aided by gifts and grants from a number of individuals and societies, was rapid, until it now contains :

	(Approximately)
Periodicals	4,800
(Current, 1,600)	
Books, 1841–	11,000
Books, 1471–1840	3,500
(including 14 incunabula)	
Bound volumes of pamphlets	400
MSS.	100
Maps	300
Prints	200

—in all about 18,000 items, comprising some 53,000 volumes.

The yearly accessions of books and periodicals, bought and exchanged, amount to approximately 1,100 volumes.

The chief periodicals on agriculture and related subjects published throughout the world are received, either by subscription or in exchange, and constitute the most-used section of the Library.

The stock of books also covers a wide range of subjects—not only agriculture but also, e.g., chemistry, physics, biology, botany, geology, zoology, meteorology and statistics. The books are arranged according to the Universal Decimal Classification system. The collection of early printed books (1471–1840), which is kept separate from the rest, includes fourteen incunabula, amongst which is a copy of the first dated edition of Pier de' Crescenzi's *Ruralium commodorum libri duodecim*—the earliest printed book on agriculture —produced at Augsburg by Johann Schüssler in 1471 (Hain 5828). The collection of MSS. includes a copy of the *Treatise of Husbandry*, by Walter of Henley (fl. 1250), written in England on vellum about the middle of the 14th century.

The prints, which are mainly of the 18th and early 19th centuries, include portraits of eminent agriculturists, bucolic scenes, and representations of livestock. A most valuable addition to this col-

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lection was made in 1948, when Lord Northbrook presented to Rothamsted his father's collection of prints.

The Library is designed to meet the requirements of the staff of Rothamsted; but its use is extended to any research worker who can show his need of it.

The General Catalogue of the Library is kept on cards. There is also a published catalogue of the collection of early printed books on agriculture (Rothamsted, 1926; second edition, 1940; supplement 1949). A complete catalogue of the serial publications in the Library was published in 1954.