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Rothamsted Experimental Station Report for 1985

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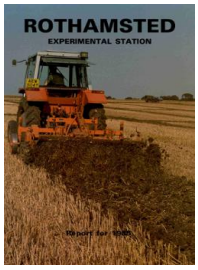

The Lawes Agricultural Trust

Rothamsted Research

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THE LAWES AGRICULTURAL TRUST

In 1889, John Bennet Lawes set up the Lawes Agricultural Trust, with the main purpose of ensuring that the work he and Joseph Henry Gilbert had been doing at Rothamsted would continue. He did not, however, limit it to the continuation of such work but gave it wider terms of reference: 'scientific investigation and experiments in connection with agriculture embracing all or any subjects connected with or bearing upon agriculture, animal and vegetable physiology, meteorology, botany and chemistry and the objects of such investigation and experiments may be from time to time extended or varied as the Committee shall determine'. He restricted the Trust from using its resources for educational work; they should be 'confined exclusively to original investigation and research with the view of advancing the science of agriculture'.

He endowed the Trust with £100000, part of the proceeds of the sale some years earlier of his fertilizer business. He also leased to the Trust for a 'peppercorn rent' about 20 ha of land on which the most important experiments were being done, and allowed the Trust to rent much of the remainder of the estate at an economic rent. (The whole estate was bought by the Trust in 1934.)

He appointed three men as trustees (Sir John Lubbock, William Wells and John Evans) and the deed laid down that new trustees to replace any of the three should be appointed by the Royal Society.

Lawes also decided that the Trust should have a Committee of Management, to be called the Lawes Agricultural Trust Committee, to consist of nine persons, and that four should be appointed by the Royal Society, two by the Royal Agricultural Society of England, one by the Linnean Society and one by the Chemical Society*. The ninth person was to be Lawes himself, and after his death, the owner of the Rothamsted Manor House. After the Trust bought the Manor House, the Director of the Station, who had acted as Honorary Secretary to the Trust Committee, became the ninth member. Members of the Trust Committee are appointed for 5 years but are eligible for re-appointment. The Committee acts as the governing body of Rothamsted Experimental Station and normally meets three times a year.

The names of the trustees and members of the Committee are given opposite, and against the name of the member of the Committee is an indication of the body responsible for his appointment.

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[1]The Royal Society
[2]The Royal Agricultural Society of England
[3]The Linnean Society
[4]The Royal Society of Chemistry.