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Husbandry in England

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Recent Breaks from the Old Rotation in Sussex

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CHANGES IN HUSBANDRY

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making from the home to the factory. There has also been a large increase in the numbers of small producer-retailers, particularly in the West or industrial areas.

The tendency in this county is to become more intensive. We have a type of young men coming forward who are availing themselves of all possible scientific information which can be applied with profit in practice. For example, they are rationing their stock right through, and are keenly interested in the economic side of their farming business. They are studying soil and manurial conditions very closely, and are out to take full advantage of any advice that we, the educational bodies, can give them; and I say without the slightest hesitation that these men are to-day doing quite well on their farms, even in spite of the depressed market conditions.

Conclusions.—The main changes that have taken place during recent years are :

(1) The decrease of arable land and proportional increase of permanent pasture.

(2) The reduced area under roots and mangolds is being replaced to a large extent by sugar-beet.

(3) The variation of the rotation to include seeds leys of longer duration, and the growth of saleable crops such as potatoes and sugar-beet.

(4) The reduction of sheep when compared with the 1910 period, the tremendous fall in numbers just after the war, and the gradual return to about 10,000 head short of 1914 numbers.

(5) The increase during the past fifteen years in cow-keeping and the sale of milk to its present steady level.

(6) The demand for smaller joints of meat has influenced the size of animal sent fat to market.

(7) The decided improvement in methods of management and feeding of farm live stock and manuring of crops and grass-land, and the keen desire of many young farmers to avail themselves of scientific and technical instruction that has direct relation to farming practice.

(8) Apart from the demand for holdings of from 100 to 150 acres there appears to be little change except in the decrease of the smallholdings of from 1 to 50 acres and of farms of over 300 acres.

RECENT BREAKS FROM THE OLD ROTATION IN SUSSEX

By H. DREWITT

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My remarks refer to the Southdown country and the plain between it and the sea in West Sussex.

The foundation of farming in this part of the world is found in

the Norfolk or four-course system—probably no finer method of maintaining the fertility of the land in Eastern and Southern England has ever been thought out, and that is why landlords are so careful to stipulate in their leases and agreements that the farm shall be left in four-course lain. Its central point was the root crop, which provided the means of keeping a large head of stock on the farm throughout the winter; on the lighter soils sheep would consume the root crops on the land. The sheep stock might be a Southdown flock, a Down crossed flying flock for the production of fat lambs (many thousands of Dorset Horn and Hampshire Down ewes were brought into Sussex annually for this purpose), or wether lambs for fattening would be bought in the autumn when the amount of keep available could be estimated with fair accuracy. A more detailed account of the cropping of the district as it was some twenty years ago is given in Hall and Russell's *Soils of Kent, Surrey and Sussex*.

Another feature of the four-course system was the regular flow of work which kept the permanent staff of both horses and men steadily employed throughout the seasons, without alternate rushes of work and then slackness. It was a method needing a large amount of capital which was turned over very slowly, but it did not require much brain power; one had only to look over the hedge as one drove to market or church to see what one's more prosperous neighbours were doing, and then follow their example.

Nowadays these happy times are long past: one man is making wholesale milk production the principal feature of his farming, another is breeding sheep on a large scale, while a third has a milk round in the nearest town and perhaps combines with it the sale of poultry, vegetables, or even flowers. The one thing that no one specializes in is corn production.

The acreage of clover grown for feeding or haymaking has much diminished, and leys for two or three years are taking its place; this automatically cuts down the wheat crop which used always to follow the clover. The seeds mixture for the longer leys is made up of some Italian and perennial rye-grass, cow-grass, timothy-grass, and possibly a little wild white clover. These longer leys are followed by roots or oats, as wheat seldom does well after grass.

When white winter oats became popular they were frequently sown in place of wheat; they have the great advantage of being ready to harvest, thrash and sell early, thus providing some money early on in the harvest.

The greatest changes in the rotation are seen where the fallow crops come in; very few swedes are grown, and the disciples of Mr Boutflower are equally chary of growing mangolds. This eliminates to a large extent two very expensive crops. In their place many farmers are content to sow mustard to plough in, or, when they have a ewe flock, to feed off. Marrow-stem kale to feed

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off before Christmas is grown to an increasing extent, as it requires little hoeing. Of course there is not so much keep produced, but then not so many sheep are kept; the marrow-stem may last until the end of February, then the turnips are fed, and after that the swedes and mangold (if any). The sheep used to go on to swedes about 1st December. The mustard is sown and ploughed in chiefly by cow-keepers who have given up growing mangold.

Sugar-beet on the deeper soils provides a root crop that is saleable, and which at the same time leaves a considerable residue that can be fed on the ground by sheep, or carried to the yards and stalls for cattle. This crop, if the price paid for it continues to be sufficient, would seem to help in the solution of the difficulties of providing a fallow crop which will leave a balance on the right side of the cash-book.

Flockmasters have always to provide a late piece of roots to feed off in the latter half of April; this used to be sown with cuckoo oats and rarely produced more than ten sacks of light oats to the acre. Now this land can be sown with sugar-beet, which usually does well after the root crop and saves a portion of the expensive preparation of the land.

Perhaps a clean field may be sown with trefoil and mown next season to provide an extra hayrick, and then be broken up and put in with turnips. Then, instead of the vetches being followed by turnips, mustard may be sown, to be ploughed in or fed off as circumstances may require.

Catch-cropping such as I have just described plays havoc with any settled scheme of rotation, for so much depends on the character of the season, particularly the amount of the rainfall, and changes may have to be introduced when the cultivations are half completed.

The tractor has also influenced the rotation, since it provides a valuable reserve of power; it can be worked long hours whenever it is necessary, and never eats on Sundays.

Possibly the new forms of artificial manures, and still more their relative cheapness, may stimulate further changes in the rotations, but progress in this direction would be more rapid were it possible to supply the soil with lime in a less expensive manner than can now be done; we have all been drawing extensively on the reserves of lime supplied by our fathers and grandfathers, and there are signs that this draft is becoming an overdraft.

Another feature which is changing the character of the rotation in the district to which my remarks refer is the establishment during the last ten years of ranks of bungalows all along the sea-coast, which from June to September are filled with a population which requires large quantities of dairy produce, fruit, vegetables and a little meat; naturally, efforts are being made to supply this demand at our doors.

On the Southdowns the changes are in quite another direction: here the primary condition is to reduce expenses, particularly labour, consequently the wheat area is cut down to a minimum; very few root crops which want hoeing are sown, their place being partly taken by rape and turnips. Grass is rapidly increasing in acreage; much of it is called temporary, but probably only time will be needed to convert it into permanent pasture. This movement would be much accelerated if it were not for the expense and difficulty of fencing and providing a water-supply on the chalk. The real Southdown Hill flock is becoming a thing of the past, and in many cases nothing is taking its place; no one who has the capital to found one will take a large hill farm.

To sum up shortly, I would say that the influences at work to-day in the district of which I am speaking are:

Firstly, the break up of the landed estate system, which leaves the new owner-occupier free to farm his land as he likes throughout the whole term of his occupation.

Secondly, the effort to get a more rapid turnover of the capital in the farm.

Thirdly, the desire to supply the demand for what may be termed the less essential foods.

Lastly, and all the time, the dire necessity of reducing expenses.

RECENT CHANGES IN THE SYSTEM OF HUSBANDRY IN SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE

By J. C. WALLACE, M.A.

County Agricultural Organizer, Northants

PERHAPS in no part of the country has so great a change in the system of farming taken place as in South Lincolnshire. This change is comparatively recent—within the lifetime of the present-day farmers. Forty years ago the district was chiefly pasture and wheat; to-day it is all arable. In the eighties the district was, if anything, in a worse plight than other parts of the country, but the change which has taken place in the system of husbandry has made it one of the most prosperous areas in the country. Farming in South Lincolnshire has, since the beginning of the present century, been a profitable undertaking, and this prosperity has been due to the fact that the farmer has been willing to change, and did change, his system of farming.

The remarkable feature is that this change, when it began, was in direct opposition to that which was taking place in other parts