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ROTHAMSTED
RESEARCH

Guide to the Experimental Plots - 1913

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Introduction

Rothamsted Research

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INTRODUCTION

MR (afterwards Sir) JOHN BENNET LAWES was the founder of the Rothamsted Experimental Station. He began experiments with various manurial substances, first with plants in pots and then in the field, soon after entering into possession of the estate of Rothamsted in 1834. In 1843 more systematic field experiments were begun, and the services of Dr (afterwards Sir) J. H. Gilbert were obtained as Director, thus starting the long association which only terminated with the death of Sir John Lawes in 1900, followed by that of Sir Henry Gilbert in 1901.

For many years the Rothamsted Experimental Station was not connected with any external organisation, but was maintained entirely at the cost of Sir John Lawes. In 1889 he constituted a trust for the continuance of the investigations, setting apart for that purpose the laboratory (which had been built by public subscription, and presented to him in 1855), certain areas of land on which the experimental plots were situated, and £100,000.

By the provisions of the trust-deed, the management is entrusted to a committee nominated by the Royal Society (four persons), the Royal Agricultural Society (two persons), the Chemical and Linnean Societies (one each), and the owner of Rothamsted.

In 1906 Mr J. F. Mason, M.P., presented the Committee with £1000 for the building and equipment of the "James Mason" Bacteriological Laboratory, together with a grant towards its maintenance. In 1907 the Goldsmiths' Company made a grant of £10,000, the income of which is devoted exclusively to the investigation of the soil. The Permanent Nitrate Committee have also made a grant of £2000 to the endowment. The Society for extending the Rothamsted Experiments, founded in 1904, has also collected donations amounting to £3400 and annual subscriptions of over £130. This Society was in 1909 incorporated under the Board of Trade, thus giving it the power to hold money in trust for the purposes of the Rothamsted Experiments.

During the year 1911 a scheme was published from the Board of Agriculture for the encouragement of agricultural research with funds provided by the Development Commission, and this scheme established or assisted a certain number of institutes for fundamental research, each dealing with one great branch of the subject. The Rothamsted Experimental Station is recognised as the Institute for dealing with Soil and

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Plant Nutrition problems. In accordance with this scheme a capital grant of £3100 was made, and a maintenance grant of £2500 for the current year, and it is expected that an annual grant of this amount will be made to the Station in future. Certain scholarships have also been instituted to provide the training in research work for men who have already qualified in pure science and are desirous of taking up an agricultural career. The holders of some of these scholarships do their work at Rothamsted.

The field experiments, which began in 1843, have on some of the plots been continued without break or alteration up to the present day; on the Broadbalk wheat field certain rearrangements were made in 1852, in which year also the barley experiments on the Hoos field began. The leguminous crops on the Hoos field were started in 1848; the experiments on roots have been continued on the same field since 1843, and on the same plan since 1856. The grass plots began in 1856, and the rotation experiments in 1848.

It should be remembered that the object of the Rothamsted experiments is to study the soil and the plant, and only indirectly to find the most paying method and manuring; hence neither the nature nor the quantities of material applied are to be taken as indicating the manures to be used in practice.

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