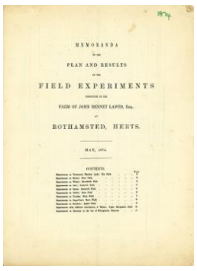
Memoranda of the Field Experiments at Rothamsted May 1874



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Experiments on Turnips; Barn Field

Rothamsted Research

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tities of clover were cut in September of that year, but the plant again died off in the winter.

In April 1870 Clover was sown over the whole of the experimental land, this time in conjunction with Barley; but on those portions which had also been sown in 1868 and 1869 the plant again died off during the winter and early spring; whilst from those which had not been sown in 1868 and 1869 two small cuttings were taken in 1871. In the spring of 1872, the plant being then almost entirely gone, the land was ploughed up. It was again ploughed in July 1872, and in March 1873; the intention being to sow some other leguminous crop; but owing to the wetness and lateness of the season this was not done; the land was again left fallow, and re-ploughed in the beginning of June and the end of July (1873). On May 4, 1874, the land was again ploughed, prepared for sowing, and sown with Red Clover seed May 5, without manure.

In the spring of 1871 the *small* plots in the field were again re-sown, and those of the garden-soil were entirely enclosed, both around and above, by galvanised wire netting. Small cuttings were taken from these small beds in July 1872, and (excepting from the garden-soil plots, which had yielded considerably more than the others in 1872) larger cuttings were taken in July 1873. The produce was the largest where potass and nitrate of soda were employed, and where they were applied in the largest quantity, and at the greatest depths. In April 1874, there was still some healthy plant on all the plots, but it was considered to be too irregular to preserve. It has, therefore, been dug in, the artificially-manured plots remanured as before, but only to the depth of 9 inches, and resown with seed on May 4th. More small plots have also been arranged; on which the manures were dug in, at the various depths, on May 11th to 14th, and the seed sown on May 16th.

The general result of the experiments in the field has been—that neither organic matter rich in carbon as well as other constituents, nor ammonia-salts, nor nitrate of soda, nor mineral constituents, nor a complex mixture, supplied as manure, availed to restore the clover-yielding capabilities of the land; though, where some of these were applied in large quantity, and at considerable depths, the result was better than when they were used in only moderate quantities and applied only on the surface.

On the other hand, it is clear that the garden-soil has supplied the conditions under which clover can be grown year after year on the same land for many years in succession.

The results obtained on the garden-soil seem to show that what is called "clover-sickness," cannot be due to the injurious influence of excreted matters upon the immediately succeeding crop.

That Clover frequently fails coincidently with injury from parasitic plants, or insects, cannot be disputed; but it may be doubted whether such injury should be reckoned as the cause, or merely the concomitant and an aggravation, of the failing condition.

The results of the experiments seem, therefore, to exclude the supposition that the primary cause of failure is either destruction by parasitic plants or insects, injury from excreted matters, or the shade of a corn-crop, and to indicate that it must be looked for in exhaustion of the soil. Still there remain several open questions. Is it exhaustion of certain organic matters rich in carbon, of nitrogenous food, or of mineral constituents? Again: is there an absolute deficiency in the soil of some of the substances in question, or only an unfavourable condition of combination, or, so to speak, of *soil-digestion* of them, for the requirements of Leguminous plants? Or, is there only an unfavourable distribution of them within the soil, considered in relation to the extent and character of the root-range of the crop?

These various suggestions cannot be further considered within the limits of this brief notice, which may be concluded by the following quotation from Rothamsted papers on the subject ('Journal Royal Agricultural Society of England,' vol. xxi. Part I. p. 178; and 'Journal Royal Horticultural Society of London,' vol. iii. p. 86, 1872).

"When land is not what is called 'clover-sick,' the crop of clover may frequently be increased by top-dressings of manure containing potass and superphosphate of lime; but the high price of salts of potass, and the uncertainty of the action of manures upon the crop, render the application of artificial manures for clover a practice of doubtful economy.

"When the land is what is called 'clover-sick,' none of the ordinary manures, whether 'artificial' or natural, can be relied upon to secure a crop.

"So far as our present knowledge goes, the only means of insuring a good crop of Red Clover is to allow some years to elapse before repeating the crop upon the same land."

BARN FIELD.

EXPERIMENTS ON THE GROWTH OF ROOT-CROPS.

Experiments with Turnips were commenced in 1843. Eight acres, divided into numerous plots, were set apart for the purpose; and the crop was grown for ten consecutive years on the same land ("Norfolk Whites" 1843-1848, and "Swedes" 1849-1852); on some plots without manure, and on others with different descriptions of manure. Barley was then grown for three consecutive seasons (1853-1855) without manure, in order to test the comparative corn-growing condition of the different plots, and also to equalize their condition, as far as possible, by the exhaustion of some of the most active and immediately available constituents supplied by the previous manuring. A new series of experiments with Swedes was then arranged, having regard to the character of the manures previously applied on the different plots, and to the results previously obtained. This second series was commenced in 1856, and continued for 15 years—namely, to 1870 inclusive.

It is impossible adequately to state the bearing of the results in a few words, but the following are some of the most characteristic indications:—

1. Without manure of any kind, the produce of roots was reduced in a few years to a few cwts. per acre; but the diminutive plants (both root and leaf) contained a very unusually high percentage of nitrogen.

2. Of "mineral" constituents, phosphoric acid (in the form of superphosphate of lime) was by far the most effective manure; but, when this manure is used alone, the immediately available nitrogen of the soil is rapidly exhausted.

3. Really large crops of turnips can only be obtained when the soil supplies a liberal amount of nitrogenous (and carbonaceous?) matter, as well as mineral constituents; and when they are already available within the soil, or are supplied in the form of farmyard manure, rape-cake, Peruvian guano, ammonia-salts, &c., the rapidity of growth, and the amount of the crop, are greatly increased by the use of superphosphate of lime applied near to the seed.

The land is now devoted to experiments with sugar-beet; for particulars of which see next page.

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EXPERIMENTS ON **SUGAR BEET**—BARN FIELD.

GROWN YEAR AFTER YEAR ON THE SAME LAND, WITHOUT MANURE, AND WITH DIFFERENT DESCRIPTIONS OF MANURE, COMMENCING 1871.

Previous Cropping:—1843–'48 (6 Seasons), experiments on Norfolk White Turnips, with different descriptions of Manure.
1849–'52 (4 Seasons), experiments on Swede Turnips, with different descriptions of Manure.
1853–'55 (3 Seasons), Barley without Manure (with a view as far as possible to equalise the condition of the Plots).
1856–'70 (15 Seasons), experiments on Swede Turnips, with different descriptions of Manure, in which the arrangement of the Plots was the same, and that of the Manures very similar—in fact, exactly the same during the last 10 years—as in the first year of Sugar Beet, excepting that, during those 10 years, the Alkalies were omitted for the Swedes. For the second and subsequent years of Sugar Beet slight alterations in theManures were made, as will be seen below.

Area under experiment about 8 acres. The experiments are arranged as under, in 5 Series, each of which comprises 8 Plots.

PLOTS.	Manures, per Acre, per Annum. SERIES 1.	SERIES 2. Each Plot as Series 1, and Cross-dressed with 550 lbs. Nitrate Soda.	SERIES 3. Each Plot as Series 1, and Cross-dressed with 400 lbs. "Ammonia-salts."	SERIES 4. Each Plot as Series 1, and Cross-dressed with 2000 lbs. Rape-cake, and 400 lbs. "Ammonia-salts."	SERIES 5. Each Plot as Series 1, and Cross-dressed with 2000 lbs. Rape-cake.

FIRST SEASON, 1871.

	PRODUCE PER ACRE (Roots trimmed as for feeding, not as for Sugar-making).	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.
		Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.
1	Farmyard Manure (14 tons)	18 3	3 5	27 13	6 19	22 1	5 6	26 4	6 14	28 18	5 14
2	Farmyard Manure (14 tons), and 3½ cwts. Superphosphate of Lime (1).	14 13	2 14	25 16	5 15	21 15	4 6	25 2	6 7	25 4	5 5
3	Without Manure (for 30 years)	7 11	2 0	22 3	5 12	15 6	4 16	19 18	7 0	20 16	4 12
4	3½ cwts. Superphosphate, 300 lbs. Sulphate Potass, 200 lbs. Sulphate Soda, and 100 lbs. Sulphate Magnesia	7 11	1 5	22 15	4 8	17 10	3 5	22 15	6 3	21 7	3 19
5	3½ cwts. Superphosphate	5 12	1 8	20 19	3 14	15 4	3 19	19 18	7 12	18 19	4 5
6	3½ cwts. Superphosphate, and 300 lbs. Sulph. Potass	5 1	1 4	21 5	3 13	17 4	3 4	23 11	6 11	21 0	3 11
7	3½ cwts. Superphosphate, and 300 lbs. Sulph. Potass, and 36½ lbs. Ammonia-salts (2)	5 18	1 5	20 19	3 18	18 8	4 3	21 0	5 0	21 7	3 17
8	Without Manure 1853 and since; previously part Unmanured, and part Superphosphate	7 10	1 14	21 13	3 16	16 2	4 15	17 19	7 11	20 7	4 9

SECOND SEASON, 1872.

	PRODUCE PER ACRE (Roots trimmed as for feeding, not as for Sugar-making).	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.
		Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.
1	Farmyard Manure (14 tons)	15 13	4 2	23 9	7 19	22 14	9 0	26 8	9 11	22 5	6 1
2	Farmyard Manure (14 tons), and 3½ cwts. Superphosphate of Lime (1)	16 0	3 18	24 6	8 16	22 0	7 16	25 9	9 14	20 15	5 11
3	Without Manure (for 30 years)	7 17	1 13	21 7	6 6	15 3	4 13	20 8	10 1	16 3	3 11
4	3½ cwts. Superphosphate, 500 lbs. Sulphate Potass, 200 lbs. Chloride Sodium (common salt), and 200 lbs. Sulphate Magnesia	6 14	1 10	20 2	5 19	15 10	3 7	23 8	7 13	17 18	3 15
5	3½ cwts. Superphosphate	6 17	1 8	19 6	6 4	14 5	4 13	18 11	10 4	15 18	3 16
6	3½ cwts. Superphosphate, and 500 lbs. Sulph. Potass	6 6	1 5	16 16	5 14	14 7	3 19	22 16	9 9	15 17	3 14
7	3½ cwts. Superphosphate, and 500 lbs. Sulph. Potass, and 36½ lbs. Ammonia-salts (2)	6 15	1 8	17 0	6 1	15 9	3 19	23 9	9 10	15 10	3 15
8	Without Manure 1853 and since; previously part Unmanured, and part Superphosphate	5 4	1 5	15 6	5 19	13 10	4 1	19 12	9 17	15 0	4 6

THIRD SEASON, 1873.

	PRODUCE PER ACRE (Roots trimmed as for feeding, not as for Sugar-making).	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.	Roots.	Leaves.
		Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.	Tons. cwts.
1	Farmyard Manure (14 tons)	15 2	5 12	20 5	10 9	22 2	9 18	22 15	12 10	23 10	7 8
2	Farmyard Manure (14 tons) and 3½ cwts. Superphosphate of lime (1)	14 6	5 2	21 10	11 0	19 4	8 9	23 7	13 6	21 18	6 18
3	Without Manure (for 30 years)	5 1	1 11	14 5	6 11	9 3	3 16	15 12	9 11	14 13	4 1
4	3½ cwts. Superphosphate, 500 lbs. Sulphate Potass, 200 lbs. Chloride Sodium (common salt), and 200 lbs. Sulphate Magnesia	5 2	1 13	16 9	6 11	12 10	3 10	20 3	8 0	16 1	3 8
5	3½ cwts. Superphosphate	5 5	1 11	18 8	5 13	10 19	5 0	14 15	9 8	13 19	4 9
6	3½ cwts. Superphosphate, and 500 lbs. Sulph. Potass	4 12	1 5	15 17	4 4	12 18	3 12	20 2	9 5	14 14	3 11
7	3½ cwts. Superphosphate, and 500 lbs. Sulph. Potass, and 36½ lbs. Ammonia-salts (2)	5 19	1 12	16 14	5 3	13 0	4 15	19 16	9 0	15 17	4 4
8	Without Manure 1853 and since; previously part Unmanured, and part Superphosphate	4 11	1 7	12 9	5 18	8 8	2 19	15 2	9 8	12 2	3 16

FOURTH SEASON, 1874.

For the Crop of 1874 Superphosphate of Lime, Sulphate of Potass, Chloride of Sodium, and Sulphate of Magnesia, applied as in 1872 and 1873; but no farmyard manure, or cross-dressings of Nitrate of Soda, Ammonia-salts, or Rape-cake.

(1) "Superphosphate of Lime"—in all cases made from 200 lbs. Bone-ash, 150 lbs. Sulphuric Acid sp. gr. 1·7 (and water).
(2) "Ammonia-salts"—in each case equal parts Sulphate and Muriate of Ammonia of Commerce.