

# THE SOCIETY FOR EXTENDING THE ROTHAMSTED EXPERIMENTS

(INCORPORATED)

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**T**HE Lawes Agricultural Trust was founded by the late Sir John Lawes in 1889, and endowed by him in order to secure the continuance of the Rothamsted Experiments which he had initiated in 1843. The income derived from the endowment is only sufficient to maintain, with the accompanying Laboratory work, the forty-five acres or so of experimental plots which have done so much towards the elucidation of Agricultural Science during the last half century, leaving little or no margin for development along the many other lines of research which have recently grown up. Thanks, however, to the generosity of the Goldsmiths' Company, Mr. J. F. Mason, the Permanent Nitrate Committee, and other gentlemen, the Lawes Agricultural Trust Committee has been able to extend the scope of its work, especially in the direction of soil investigations and bacteriology.

The Society for Extending the Rothamsted Experiments was founded in 1904 with the object of obtaining further funds for the service of the Station. Its aim is to interest as wide a public as possible in the work of Rothamsted and to collect subscriptions and donations; a Charter of Incorporation has been obtained in order to enable it to hold such funds, given either for general or for special purposes connected with Rothamsted, since by the original deed the Lawes Trustees are only empowered to deal with the initial endowment.

When the Board of Agriculture issued its scheme in 1911 to establish various Research Stations in the country with money provided by the Development Fund, Rothamsted was

selected as the Station for soil and plant nutrition investigations. This involved a considerable extension of the work, and a grant of £3,000 was made towards the cost of the necessary new laboratories on condition that the Society raised an equal amount and also extended the farm. This has been done, £3,000 has been raised and the Home Farm of 230 acres has been taken on a 77 years' lease, put in order, and arrangements made for erecting the necessary buildings. The new laboratories are now completed and afford admirable facilities for carrying on the new work contemplated under the Scheme.

It is, however, absolutely essential that the old experiments should be continued. These experiments are unique in the history of agriculture. Nowhere else are there, and nowhere now can there be, field experiments carried on continuously without change since 1843, 1852, and 1856 as some of the Rothamsted experiments have been. It is impossible to over-estimate the value of such long continued experiments in a subject where season and climate play so important a part as in agriculture. The data thus gathered together throw light not only on laws and principles long since established, but also on the most recent of our new work. In the interests both of the present and of future research work it is indispensable that this accumulation of data should continue.

The Laboratory in which the work is done in connection with the old plots was built by public subscription in 1854-5, but some years ago it began to reveal certain structural defects and the Committee are advised that it may not be safe much longer. As it is not suitable for modern work there is no point in spending money to put matters right, even if a moderate expenditure would meet the case. The Committee are therefore faced with the necessity of rebuilding the old Laboratory at an early date. The Society have reason to believe that a grant will be made out of the Development Fund equal to the sum they raise for this purpose. Any subscription sent in therefore brings in double its own amount.

Besides obtaining funds for such large enterprises as building and extension, the Society through its subscription list provides an annual income for helping on the detailed work of the Laboratory. Unfortunately, some of the best subscribers have been removed by death and the subscription list is smaller than it was. The value of this income is very great—much greater, indeed, than is suggested by its amount. The Rothamsted Experiment Station is not a trading concern, and cannot, by increasing its activity in other directions, recover any unforeseen expenditure or provide for any sudden development opened up by new experimental work. Its only method would be to cut down expenditure in other directions, and therefore to hamper work that was already going on. From this misfortune the Station is saved by the annual subscriptions of the Society: these provide a valuable contingency fund out of which special expenditure may be met without disturbing the rest of the work. New subscriptions and donations are much needed, and should be sent to the Secretary of the Society, Rothamsted Experimental Station, Harpenden.

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