

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS

Report on the correspondence and papers of

HERBERT HUNTER (1882-1959)

agricultural scientist

1898-1959

deposited at the Institute of Agricultural History,

University of Reading

Reproduced for the Contemporary Scientific

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THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS

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Report on the papers of

Dr. Herbert Hunter

(1882 - 1959)

Compiled by: Jeannine Alton

Harriot Weiskittel

Deposited in the Archives of the Institute of Agricultural History,  
University of Reading 1977

### Description of the collection

The papers were received from Hunter's daughter, Miss Margaret Hunter, who attempted to assemble as complete a collection as possible from the various institutions with which her father was associated during his career. She provided a biographical account of his life and work (Item 1) and much helpful information about the arrangement of the papers.

Hunter graduated in 1903 from the University of Leeds where he was one of the first two students to take the B.Sc. in Agriculture (Items 12, 17). He was then appointed officer in charge of the barley investigations being conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction in Ireland (Items 12-14, 18, 41). It was during his work in Ireland that Hunter developed the Spratt-Archer variety of barley, which was for many years the most widely grown malting barley in Britain (Items 13, 25, 26). In 1919 he was appointed Head of the Plant Breeding Division of the Ministry of Agriculture for Northern Ireland, and in 1923 moved to Cambridge to join Sir Rowland Biffen, T.B. Wood and F.L. (now Sir Frank) Engledow in the Plant Breeding Institute of the University School of Agriculture (Items 5, 23). Hunter became Director of the P.B.I. in 1936, and, during the Second World War, also served as Director of the National Institute of Agricultural Botany in Cambridge. After his retirement from the P.B.I. in 1946, Hunter served as President of the Council of the N.I.A.B. for three years, 1951-53.

With the exception of a few notebooks and files (Items 17-24) and some scientific correspondence (Items 25, 27, 29) little remains of Hunter's original working records and notes. Most of the collection is of a biographical and personal nature. Of special interest are Hunter's own reminiscences of colleagues and friends (Section B), the papers and correspondence relating to his proposed visits to Russia (Items 6, 28), and his file of press cuttings which document the dramatic changes in plant breeding, crop production and the brewing industry during the first half of this century (Item 30).

Item 32 is the manuscript (unpublished) of Hunter's last book, Oats: Botany, Cultivation, Utilisation.

Dr. Colin M. Kraay, Keeper of the Heberden Coin Room, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, kindly identified and described the casts of ancient coins in Item 11.

All items are manuscript unless identified otherwise; titles in inverted commas are those which appear on the manuscripts.

Contents of the collection

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A. Biographical and personal (Items 1-11)

1. Biographical note of Hunter's life and career by his daughter, Miss Margaret Hunter. 1959  
Typescript summary of career.  
Obituary notices and tributes.  
Appreciation of Dr. Hunter by F.R. Horne as published in The Journal of the National Institute of Agricultural Botany and typescript (annotated) by Horne of notice for publication in The Times.
2. Letters of sympathy received after Hunter's death. 1959
3. Certificate of the M.Sc., Leeds University 1924  
Certificate of the D.Sc., Leeds University 1925
4. Printed appeals published in Cambridge during the General Strike. 1926
5. Copy of Hunter's contract of employment as principal assistant with the P.B.I. (1934) and of his letter to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food re pensions (1956). 1934  
1956
6. Papers connected with proposed appointment of Hunter as Agricultural Attaché at the British Embassy, Moscow (the appointment was not confirmed by the Soviet government): correspondence with the Ministry for Agriculture and Fisheries, typescripts of 'Food and Farming in the USSR' and 'Points for Agricultural Attachés to USSR', data on production of crops in the UK 1936-42, summary of agricultural cooperation with the USSR before the war, copy of Soviet Monitor (see also Item 28). 1942-44
7. National Institute of Agricultural Botany: photographs of colleagues, of judging, of Hunter's portrait; printed leaflets published by N.I.A.B. on the growing of barleys and on the varieties of spring wheats and spring barleys.
8. List of subscribers to presentation made to Hunter on his retirement from the Plant Breeding Institute, by brewers, maltsters, and seed trade. 1946
9. Invitation to garden party at Buckingham Palace. 1950  
Photograph of conference in Sweden, at Svalov Institute. n.d.
10. 'Hunter' Barley: letter from Guinness asking Hunter's permission to name their new barley strain in his honour. Article describing Hunter's work in developing Spratt-Archer and the history of the new Hunter variety. 3 photographs of Hunter barley. 1959
11. One box of plaster casts of ancient coins depicting grains. The coins were used as illustrations by Hunter (figs. 11-14) in his book The Barley Crop, published in 1952 (see Item 40). The casts were fully listed and described by Dr. C.M. Kraay; this list is included with the casts.

B. Reminiscences (Items 12-16)

12. 'Professor J.R. Campbell': typescript (3 pp.) character sketch of Campbell describing his unorthodox methods of lecturing and his later work as Assistant Secretary of the Department of Agriculture in Ireland. The sketch also provides an autobiographical account of Hunter's arrival in Ireland.
- Letter from Campbell, 19 January 1920, written to Hunter on his move to Northern Ireland. 1920
13. 'John H. Bennett': typescript (18 pp.) character sketch of Bennett who was director of the experiments in barley growing conducted by the Irish Department of Agriculture and the Guinness Co. at Ballinacurra. The sketch gives not only a portrait of Bennett as a supervisor and friend but also an autobiographical account of Hunter's own work in Ireland - the tours of inspection of the fields, seed selection, propagation of stock, etc. that eventually led to the development of the Spratt-Archer variety of barley.
- Letter from Bennett to Hunter, 23 November 1927, setting out his recollection of the development of Spratt-Archer (see also Item 26). 1927
- One letter from Mrs. E. Bennett thanking Hunter for writing down his memories of her husband. 1953
- Photograph of Mrs. Bennett and Hunter at Ballinacurra. 1957
14. 'Arthur Jackson': typescript (first page only) account of Jackson's work in selecting seeds for the barley trials.
- One letter from Jackson, 20 December 1926, congratulating Hunter on his new book on barley. 1926
15. 'Redcliffe Nathan Salaman': typescript (3 pp.) of obituary notice written by Hunter. 1954
- 'Howard Crosby Gregory': typescript (4 pp.) notes and draft of appreciation of Gregory (probably not written by Hunter). Printed copy of memorial appeal, of which Hunter was chairman. 1953
16. Letter from Hunter to his daughter, 7 May 1956, re his memories of George Moore, Horace Plunkett, George Russell and the movement to start a national theatre in Ireland. 1956

C. Notebooks and working papers (Items 17-24)

17. Notebook labelled inside front cover 'H. Hunter. Preston-on-Tees. Eaglescliff R.S.O. Co. Durham. Agricultural Notes'. Contains Hunter's undergraduate lecture notes on soil (see his description of his first university lecture in his sketch of Professor Campbell, Item 12), domestic animals, drainage, seeds, fertilisation, etc. Specimens of various grasses which Hunter pasted in the book are still intact. Hunter was one of the first two students to take the B.Sc. in Agriculture at Leeds and the first to receive a D.Sc. in Agriculture (see also Item 19). 1898
18. Notebook, labelled on inside cover with name, containing a 'Record of Nursery Experiments carried out at Charleston, Ballinacurra, Co. Cork in 1905'. Notes on preparation of plots, cultivation, varieties of barley sown, measurements and observations of crop, record of results. 1905
- Part II of the notebook contains notes on 'Character of Rachillae of different varieties' and on 'Bristles on vein pairs' with lists of data and descriptions of various varieties of barley.
19. 'Improvement of the Barley Crop', bound copy of thesis presented by Hunter for the D.Sc., Leeds University, 1925. Inserted at the back of the book is a photocopy (from The London Corn Circular, 1927) of the text of a lecture delivered by Hunter at the Corn Exchange Co. on improvements of the barley crop. 1925  
1927
20. Notebook (not labelled) containing records for 1926-32 of sowings, growths, crossings etc. of various varieties of barley. 1926-32
21. File labelled 'Varieties of Barley' containing:  
- notes on Montcalm Barley by R. Summerby  
- typescript appendix taken from Beaven's book, Barley  
- 1 p. misc. notes by Hunter on varieties of barley in the ancient world  
- lists of U.S.A. barleys  
- plates and drawings of barley  
- 3 p. of misc. typescript re hybridisation, American barleys 1936
22. File labelled 'Barley Trials' and 'Barley. Latin Square and qualitative figures' containing extensive data gathered from trials. 1945-47
23. Plant Breeding Institute, Cambridge: 'Memorandum on the programme of work and future development of the Plant Breeding Institute, Cambridge', 26 pp. typescript plan of work for the next five years, annotated by Hunter on the cover 'Submitted to V.E. Wilkins at the time he was in charge of Research Institutes at the Min. of Ag. & Fisheries' (no other date is given).

24. Experimental Barley Plots: ledger (17" x 21") containing a map of Ireland showing location of plots, 1938; botanical drawings of barley varieties; summary sheets and results from 1901-15, 1919-57 large-scale plots; typescript 'notes' 1938 and 1948, to accompany and explain the data.

D. Correspondence (Items 25-29)

25. 2 letters from W.S. Gosset, 26 July 1909 and 10 April 1910, re Hunter's results with the Warminster, Glasnevin, Archer and Goldthorpe varieties of barley (see also obituary notice of Gosset in Item 30). 1909-10
26. Correspondence with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Dublin, and carbon copies of various letters by Hunter re the credit due to Hunter for the origin of Spratt-Archer (see also Item 13). 1927
27. Correspondence from E.S. Beaven, 1926, 1939, 1941, discussing Hunter's new book on barley, the affairs of the Plant Breeding Institute and the National Institute for Agricultural Botany, Spratt-Archer, the chessboard system, a new cereal developed by Beaven, and other matters of mutual interest. 1926, 1939, 1941
- One letter from Alice Beaven (daughter) re editing of her father's book on barley after his death. Typescript (14 pp.) review by Hunter of this book, Barley. 1943  
1947
- Obituary notice of Beaven, written by Hunter and published in Nature. 1941
28. Correspondence from N.I. Vavilov re Hunter's proposed visit to Russia in September 1939. (The visit was cancelled.) See also newspaper clipping (1948) in Item 21 reporting Sir Henry Dale's resignation from the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in protest over Vavilov's dismissal as Director of the Lenin Academy of Genetics and the subsequent appointment of Lysenko (see also Items 6, 33). 1939
29. Miscellaneous correspondence (presented in date order):
- Dimitriew, Alexis (2 cards) 1930
  - Malzew, A. 1937
  - Bell, G.D.H. (see also Item 22) 1947
  - Long, H.C. 1949
  - Helbaek, Hans (6 letters) 1951-52
  - Pesola, Vilho (3 letters) 1952-53
  - Multamäki, K. 1952
  - Horne, F.R. 1958

E. Publications (Items 30-43)

30. One extensive file of newspaper cuttings, 1920-54, 1958-59, containing articles written by Hunter, reviews of his published work and of his achievements in plant breeding. The file also contains articles of general agricultural interest which Hunter kept for his own information and 1 photograph taken at field inspection of the barley crop in Ballyreagh, Newtownards. 1953
31. One file of typescripts for lectures or published work (includes copy of a bibliography for 1939-50):
- 'Bold John Barley Corn,' The British Farmer, September 1955, annotated typescript. 1955
  - 'Botanical Purity in Cereals,' Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture, September 1944, duplicated typescript. 1944
  - 'The Science of Malting Barley Production', 25 pp. typescript, with 4 p. summary. c.1955
  - 'Identification of Barley Varieties Grown in the British Isles by Examination of Threshed Grain', 2 heavily annotated typescripts.
  - 'Seed and Rates of Seeding', typescript for lecture. n.d.
  - 'Visit to U.S.A. and Canada, April and May 1948': typescript report of visit; meetings, inspection of equipment and fields, lectures. 1948
32. Oats: Botany, Cultivation, Utilisation: manuscript and typescript of Hunter's last book (never published). Correspondence between Miss M. Hunter and Nicholas Polunin, editor of the World Crops Books series for Leonard Hill Ltd., re possible posthumous publication.
33. Offprints of Hunter's work:
- 'Relation of Ear Survival to the Nitrogen Content of Certain Varieties of Barley.' 1938
  - 'The Influence of Environment on the Yield and Quality of Certain Varieties of Malting Barley' (paper originally read at meeting of the Institute of Brewing, London, December 1947). 1948
  - 'The Barley Crop' (paper originally read at Second Crop Conference, Cambridge, December 1953). 1954
  - 'Malting Barley', one of a series of five lectures on 'Barley and Malt' given at Sir John Cass College, 1956-57. 1956-57
  - 'Malting Barley', paper on barley production in Norfolk. c.1956

34. Offprints/translations of others' work:

'Studies on the Origin of Cultivated Plants' by N.I. Vavilov, 1926  
presented to Hunter by the author.

'On the Genetic Nature of Winter and Spring Varieties  
of Plants' by N.I. Vavilov and E.S. Kouznetsov:  
carbon typescript of English translation.

35-40. Books by Hunter

35. Oats: Their Varieties and Characteristics. A Practical Hand-  
book for Farmers, Seedsmen and Students (Vol. II of the  
Practical Farming Series, ed. Sir John Russell, published  
by Ernest Benn Ltd.) with notes and annotations by Hunter. 1924

36. The Barley Crop. A Record of Some Recent Investigations, 1926  
published by Ernest Benn Ltd., London, annotated by Hunter.

37. Crop and Stock Improvement (The Farmer and Stock-Breeder  
Manuals series, ed. H.C. Long, published by Ernest Benn  
Ltd., London), with A.B. Bruce. 1926

38. Recent Advances in Agricultural Plant Breeding, with H. Martin  
Leake, published by J. and A. Churchill, London. A  
review by John H. Parker sent to Hunter is taped into the  
back of the book. 1933

39. Crop Varieties: varieties of cereals, flax, potatoes, beans and  
field peas (volume in the Agricultural Series, ed. H.G.  
Sanders, published by E. and F.N. Spon Ltd., London). 1951

40. The Barley Crop. A modern comprehensive account of all aspects  
of barley growing, Crosby Lockwood and Son, London,  
annotated by Hunter. See also Item 11. 1952

41-43. Books from Hunter's library

41. Horace Plunkett by Margaret Digby, published by Basil Blackwell, 1949  
Oxford. Chapter V (pp.84-116) is a description of the  
origins and work of the Department of Agriculture and  
Technical Instruction in Ireland, 1899-1907.

42. Pioneers of Fertility by Crichton Porteous, published privately.

43. The Bread of Our Forefathers by Sir William Ashley, Clarendon  
Press, Oxford. 1928

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