
Editorial

Reaching 100 years old is a reason to celebrate and the *Journal of Agricultural Science, Cambridge*, reaches that milestone this year. The opening Editorial in the first issue in 1905 justifies launching the Journal. It notes that in 1905, in Great Britain, there were about 24 Agricultural Colleges, most with an experimental farm and laboratory facilities. In addition many individuals also undertook agricultural research overseas. Although much of the scientific work was published in the Reports of the Agricultural Colleges, these tended to have a local distribution, and to be written in a non-technical way. Thus the promoters of the *Journal of Agricultural Science, Cambridge*, had decided that the time was right for the issue of a journal devoted wholly to scientific papers on agricultural subjects. In defining the remit of the journal the scope was to be wide including biological or physical subjects, provided the question bore on agriculture. The reports were required to be of original work. The Editorial stated that reports of ‘demonstration plots, or manurial and variety tests of an ordinary commercial character, will not be admitted, nor papers dealing with general farming as distinct from agricultural science’.

One hundred years later this remit still holds. The *Journal of Agricultural Science, Cambridge*, still maintains its breadth of scope with papers on all aspects of animal, crop and soil science. Two crucial questions for the editors in considering whether a paper is suitable are whether it is science and whether it is agricultural science. Then we have to decide whether the science is good enough for our international readership. This latter stage is where the referees play a crucial role in maintaining the standard of science in the Journal. Referees give their time willingly and free, and the Journal owes a lot to them. We do now recognize this by, each year, publishing a list of referees who have helped the Editorial Board.

Agriculture has changed in the last hundred years. Agricultural science has changed too, in response to new techniques for measurement becoming available and in response to new questions posed by farmers or policy makers. Inevitably the papers published in the *Journal of Agricultural Science, Cambridge*, reflect these changing abilities and priorities. Nevertheless, scrutiny of the titles of papers in the first volume in 1905 (see below) does show similar pre-occupations to present times. The first paper was on wheat breeding. Others dealt with nitrogen, legumes and manure,

the chemical composition of food crops and forages, plant and animal diseases, soil analysis, inheritance of characters in plants and animals. A paper with a strong resonance with today’s pre-occupations in European agriculture was ‘The amount and composition of drainage through unmanured and uncropped land, Barnfield, Rothamsted’.

And what of the Journal in 2105? There will still be farming, and farmers and policy makers needing answers to questions. The results will still need to be disseminated. So we believe the Journal will still be needed. Its high standing in its subject community gives it a head start in survival. That is not to say the Journal will look the same. Contributors will have noted that in August 2004 we moved to web-based submission via Manuscript Central (go to the website at <http://jagricsci.manuscriptcentral.com>). The whole scientific publishing industry is discussing modes of publication (paper v. electronic) and who should pay. These discussions do not threaten the Journal. Our survival depends on a continuing supply of good quality papers on agricultural science, as defined in the original issue. For that we are dependent on our readers and on the support which agricultural scientific research receives.

In this centenary year we believe it is entirely appropriate to consider what has been achieved over the last 100 years. Accordingly the issues in this Centenary Year will contain a set of Centenary Reviews in which particular topics are reviewed, progress is estimated and future prospects are considered. We hope you will enjoy reading them.

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