Experimental Farm

The Veitch Experimental Farm adjoined the township of Veitch, and was situated about 158 miles east of Adelaide, and 16 miles south of Loxton.

The land was set aside for agricultural experiments in 1905, but at the time was entirely covered with mallee scrub, and carried no improvements whatsoever. The timber was of medium height, but easily rolled, and consisted chiefly of Eucalyptus oleora and Dumosa, together indicative of somewhat low rainfall.

For a few years the area was simply treated as an experimental plot and worked in conjunction with the Loxton Experimental Farm. However, in 1910 a considerable amount of scrub was cleared, buildings erected, a manager appointed, and operations commenced on a more extensive scale. At the time all produce had to be carted a distance of 16 miles over very heavy tracks to the township of Loxton, and from there first transported by river boat to Murray Bridge before being tailed to Adelaide.

In 1914 the Loxton railway was completed, and the line practically cut the farm in halves, leaving the buildings etc. on the western portion. At the same time land intended for the site of the township of Veitch was separated from the farm area.

From 1910 onwards, operations went ahead rapidly, buildings and fences were erected, the land cleared and other improvements effected.

The total area was 3800 acres, and during its operation, about 2500 acres were cleared and available for cultivation. Approximately 600 acres were still under scrub, whilst the remainder consisted of such poor sandy soil exhibiting a tendency to drift that it was not considered advisable to cleat it of natural vegetation.

The soil varied considerably in type, but in the main was of a sandy nature with some areas of light loam, patches of calcareous land overlaying hard limestone rock, and extensive sandhills. The sandhills all lay in an easterly and westerly direction, and were placed fairly closely together. Burr medic soon followed applications of superphosphate, and in seasons of adequate rainfall good pasture made its appearance.

On this fodder young stock developed well and animals of all ages fattened well – in fact, in the early days of Kybyolite Experimental Farm, before the improvement of pasture and top dressing at the station rendered the conditions suitable for young growing livestock, it was the practice to sent all the young animals to the Veitch farm in order to build up their bony framework before being returned to Kybybolite.

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS
Veitch recorded the lowest annual rainfall of any of the experimental farms, being an average of 11.86 inches.

The district enjoys pleasant mild winter weather, but suffers from high temperatures during the summer months. Winds are frequent and consequently after a low rainfall year when the condition of the soil or the amount of vegetation is insufficient to hold the soil particles together, it is inclined to drift badly, particularly where the sandhills have been cleared of scrub. Further, when unfavourable early winter conditions are experienced, young crops may be cut by drift and very severely damaged.

CROPPING EXPERIMENTS
During the period to 1930, many experiments were carried out on the farm – wheat, barley, rye and oat varieties – experiments of interest and value to the local farmers, who were very disappointed to see it closed by the Government in 1930.

The last and well-known manager of the Veitch Experimental farm was Mr. L. Smith who was farewelled on 9th February 1931.

A clearing sale was conducted on the Farm by Goldsbrough, Mort and Co. with a record crowd and keen bidding, as recorded in the "Murray Pioneer" – "Buyers were in attendance from various outside centres. Bidding was keen throughout and prices realised were very satisfactory. A few of the leading lines and prices are quoted – spring drays, £4/ 5/ - to £5/ 5/ -; English wagons £12 to £23; tip dray £12, scales £2 /10 – etc. Horses brought £5 to £25 and milch cows £12/ 5/ - ; £14/ 10/ -; ewes 13/ 4, hoggets 10/ 7."

RAINFALL AT VEITCH'S WELL
From Murray Pioneer of Friday 21st November 1913 – "For the past six years the annual rainfall at Veitch's Well has been 1½ inches better than at Loxton. Some weeks ago at the Government Experimental Farm, 1100 bags of old season's wheat were ready for shipment. This season it is estimated that 4000 bags will be the tally from this productive farm. Mr. Eime says it is beating a wonderful crop." (Mr. Eime – clerk of Loxton District Council.)

Rainfall Distribution at Veitch's Well, 1909-1929

	1909.	**1910.**	**1911.**	**1912.**	**1913.**	**1914.**	**1915.**	**1916.**
	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.
January	0.56	0.26	0.84	-	0.10	0.31	0.48	0.18
February	0.19	0.32	3.17	0.29	2.67	0.56	-	0.03
March	0.66	4.78	0.65	0.30	3.22	1.06	-	0.10
April	0.15	-	0.03	0.18	0.14	1.01	0.51	0.20
May	3.03	2.16	1.32	-	1.23	0.52	1.33	0.43
June	2.48	2.09	0.90	3.95	-	0.35	1.91	1.97
July	1.73	1.41	1.11	1.09	0.53	0.38	0.63	2.43
August	2.24	0.58	0.66	1.25	0.67	-	1.67	4.01
September	1.78	2.34	2.13	1.33	3.22	0.15	1.99	2.57
October	0.56	0.88	0.36	0.34	1.80	0.15	0.56	1.64
November	1.07	0.69	0.77	2.05	0.68	1.10	0.19	2.04
December	-	0.68	1.42	0.79	0.69	0.65	0.56	1.09
Total	14.45	16.19	13.36	11.57	14.95	6.24	9.83	16.69
"Useful" (April to November)	13.04	10.15	7.28	10.19	8.27	3.66	8.79	15.29

	1917.	**1918.**	**1919.**	**1920.**	**1921.**	**1922.**	**1923.**	**1924.**
	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.	In.
January	0.45	0.07	0.20	0.10	1.61	0.48	0.04	2.01
February	2.60	0.28	5.49	-	0.97	0.09	0.03	0.89
March	0.78	0.49	0.36	0.33	1.24	-	-	0.41
April	0.24	1.00	0.26	0.33	0.06	0.89	-	0.25
May	1.15	1.31	1.88	1.45	2.19	3.06	1.75	0.69
June	1.01	1.08	0.37	1.29	0.78	1.21	2.95	1.43
July	1.14	1.39	0.29	0.79	0.91	0.91	2.81	0.19
August	1.91	2.36	0.53	2.19	1.28	0.70	1.59	0.99
September	2.01	0.22	0.76	3.10	1.54	1.10	1.97	1.58
October	2.38	0.98	0.45	3.66	0.45	0.73	0.65	1.47
November	1.72	0.07	0.62	0.95	1.03	0.09	0.03	1.37
December	1.21	-	2.03	1.31	0.30	1.02	1.51	1.17
Total	16.60	9.20	13.24	15.50	12.36	10.28	13.33	12.45
"Useful" (April to November)	11.56	8.41	5.16	13.76	8.24	8.69	11.75	7.97

	1924.	1925.	1926.	1927.	1928.	1929
	Ins.	Ins.	Ins.	Ins.	Ins.	Ins.
January	2.01	0.71	0.00	0.18	0.68	0.14
February	0.89	0.47	0.09	0.32	2.75	0.42
March	0.41	0.61	0.13	0.30	0.71	0.20
April	0.25	0.25	2.00	0.00	0.70	0.04
May	0.69	2.91	2.59	0.54	0.38	0.44
June	1.43	0.64	1.04	0.57	1.02	0.40
July	0.19	0.74	0.96	0.96	0.94	0.48
August	0.99	0.32	1.52	1.13	0.23	0.42
September	1.58	1.78	2.45	0.85	0.77	1.11
October	1.47	0.00	0.45	0.27	0.72	0.06
November	1.37	0.00	0.00	0.34	0.00	0.59
December	1.17	0.05	0.31	0.48	0.04	3.02
Total	12.45	8.48	11.54	5.94	8.94	7.32

Lowest and highest Rainfall Years

	Lowest	Rainfall	Years.	Highest	Rainfall	Years.
	1914.	1927.	1929.	1910.	1916.	1917.
	Ins.	Ins.	Ins.	Ins.	Ins.	Ins.
January	0.31	0.18	0.14	0.26	0.18	0.45
February	0.56	0.32	0.42	0.32	0.03	2.60
March	1.06	0.30	0.20	5.50	0.10	0.78
April	1.01	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.20	0.24
May	0.52	0.54	0.44	2.16	0.43	1.15
June	0.35	0.57	0.40	2.09	1.97	1.01
July	0.38	0.95	0.48	1.41	2.43	1.14
August	0.00	1.13	0.42	0.58	4.01	1.91
September	0.15	0.85	1.11	2.34	2.57	2.01
October	0.15	0.27	0.06	0.88	1.64	2.38
November	1.10	0.34	0.59	0.69	2.04	1.72
December	0.65	0.48	3.02	0.68	1.09	1.21
Total	6.24	5.94	7.32	16.91	16.69	16.60

HARVEST REPORT SEASON 1925-26

The following report of Veitch Experimental Farm for 1925-26, was prepared by Arthur J. Perkins, Director of Agriculture, and L. Smith, Manager-

PERMENENT EXPERIMENTAL PLOTS – A series of plots were set aside in Veitch Experimental Farm (Cont.). 1920 with the object of testing various cultural practices of local interest. Each plot has been given an area of 2 acres.

Wheat Fertiliser Plots – In keeping with what appeared to be sound local practice, these plots run on a three-course rotation: - (1) Bare fallow, (2) Wheat, (3) Pasture. Each unit consists, therefore, of a series of 3 plots, 2 acres in area each; plot coming under wheat every third year. Mean yields per acre secured in 1925-26 in comparison with 1920-25 and 1920-26 means respectively have been shown in Table II: -

	Yields Per Acre Means		
Treatment of Plots Per Acre	**1925-26**	**1920-25**	**1920-26**
	Bush.	**Bush.**	**Bush.**
½ cwt. 36% superphosphate	7.77	18.28	16.52
1 cwt. 36% superphosphate	14.05	20.03	19.01
2 cwt. 36% superphosphate	19.45	22.06	21.64
3 cwt. 36% superphosphate	16.93	21.80	20.99
No manure	21.10	16.59	15.85
1 cwt. Super, ½ cwt. Sulph. Pot	12.50	19.40	18.25
1 cwt., super, ½ cwt. Nitrate of soda	14.82	19.23	18.50
1 cwt ., super., ½ cwt. sulph. pot, ½ cwt. Car. soda	16.27	19.67	19.10
No manure	11.38	15.72	14.99

Mean results of 6 seasons show that at Veitch, as in other portions of the State in which this point has been tested, 2 cwts. of 36 per cent. super. Is the maximum dressing from which profitable returns may be expected in wheat growing. For the six years, the mean difference between the yield of the 1 cwt and 2 cwts. plot is over 2½ bush, which represents a handsome return for the second hundredweight. On the other hand, Sulphate of Potash and Nitrate of Soda have proved without value.

The mean return from the two " No Manure" Plots, 15.85bush and 14.99bush respectively, is remarkable for this low rainfall country and apparently poor quality soil.

SIX-ROW BARLEY FERTILISER TESTS – These Plots correspond exactly to the Wheat Plots, i.e., they form part of a similar three-course rotation in which barley takes the place of wheat. Results hitherto secured are shown in Table III: -

	Yields Per Acre Means		
Treatment of Plots Per Acre	**1925-26**	**1920-25**	**1920-26**
	Bush.	**Bush.**	**Bush.**
½ cwt. 36% superphosphate	24.40	25.80	25.58
1 cwt. 36% superphosphate	25.42	26.24	26.10
2 cwt. 36% superphosphate	27.12	25.76	25.98
3 cwt. 36% superphosphate	26.94	24.62	25.01
No manure	17.78	18.30	18.20
1 cwt. Super, ½ cwt. Sulph. Pot	24.44	22.10	22.50
1 cwt., super, ½ cwt. Nitrate of soda	23.76	23.24	23.34
1 cwt ., super., ½ cwt. sulph. pot, ½ cwt. Car. soda	27.02	21.84	22.72
No manure	20.32	18.08	18.46

The response of Six-Row Barley to various fertilisers, although appreciable, is not as pronounced as that of Wheat. This is probably due to the tendency of Barley to blight off under the influence of unfavourable weather. Superphosphate gave satisfactory results up to 1cwt to the acre, i.e., about 7½ bush above “No Manure.” Heavier dressings are without apparent results on the general average of seasons. As in the case of Wheat, Sulphate of potash and Nitrate of Soda proved without value, if not actually detrimental.

After the Veitch Experimental Farm closed in 1930, it was leased to Mr. G. H. W. Beer until 1937, to Mr. Edward F. Trainer, then to brothers Thomas Vincent Trainer and John Augustine Trainer in 1938 and in 1948 to Mr. L. V. Arnold who sold it to Mr. D. G. Rimington in 1956, and Mr. Merv Koch bought it in 1959.

Mr Koch subsequently sold the farm to Mr. Russell Smith, who still farms it with his son Andrew in 1988.

The old red brick homestead, built about 1914, has been extensively renovated into a large family home. The original building had 12 bedrooms and was used to house the Experimental Farm workmen.

The old barn on the property is now used as a shearing shed. It is a large, well preserved building of stone with a red brick floor. The two long sheds that were used as horse stables and implement sheds still stand; one has been converted to store bulk super and the other is used for storing small implements and sundry items, being too low for today’s large farming plant. There are two large sheds that have been built on the property to house the farming implements, plus a number of silos for storing grain.

The property is now farmed for wheat and sheep production and on a good year produces some good wheat crops above the average for the area.

Even though the Experimental Farm closed in 1930, today 58 years later locals still refer to it as “the old Veitch Experimental Farm.”