

Source for the History of Genetics: Archives & Research (Correspondence between N.I. Vavilov and W. Bateson)

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The John Innes Centre, placed in Norwich, East England, is one of the leading institutions in plant and microbiological research. Its part is also special Library built in 1990 that houses the Historical Collections owned by the John Innes Foundation Trustees. These collections include the History of Genetics Library, the John Innes Archives, and the John Innes Foundation Collection of Rare Botanical Books. The John Innes Centre Archives are an important resource for scholars in the history of botany and classical genetics.

Besides other valuable items it contents an unique collection of the leading British botanist and pioneer of Genetics, William Bateson (1861–1926). It is the largest in the world, comprises some 10,000 pieces of correspondence, notebooks, diaries, articles, specimens, photographs, newspapers etc. W. Bateson was the Director of the John Innes Horticultural Institute from 1910 until his death in 1926.

Among others there are 11 pieces of correspondence written in English from Nikolai I. Vavilov (1887–1943) to W. Bateson and 5 reversely accessible for historical research. They are especially relevant in addition to already published sources¹⁴. They cover the period from November 28, 1915 until January 25, 1926. The core of the correspondence was originated in 1920s and deals with general aspects of scientific policy, with special focus on Soviet Russia and Sankt Petersburg after the bolschewist takeover, research programme and activities of N.I. Vavilov, planing of Vavilov's expeditions abroad, and Bateson's journey to Leningrad/Sankt Petersburg in September 1925 and his membership in the former Russian Academy of Sciences¹⁵. From the perspective of the history of genetics especially the overview drawn by N.I. Vavilov in October 1922 on the problems of the system of variation, the origin of cultivated plants, the drawing of a system of classification of varieties, and investigation of the different varieties found in Russia is of importance. Another interesting information on the personell and background of the Russian school of genetics was delivered to W. Bateson in February 1924. Additionally, the set of correspondence contains also one letter of Y.A. Philipchenko to W. Bateson from August 1925 and one letter of Catharine Vavilov to W. Bateson from January 1926.

Access & Information:

Researchers wishing to explore the collection can search the database of W. Bateson's correspondence through the internet catalogue:

<http://www.jic.ac.uk/corporate/search/BatesonLetters>

¹⁴ Vavilov N.I. *Nauchnoe Naslednie v Pismakh*. Moscow, 1994–2002. Vol. 1–5. See: Kremontsov N. *International Science between the World Wars. The Case of Genetics*. London, 2005. P. 26.

¹⁵ See: William Bateson. *F.R.S. Naturalist* / ed. by B. Bateson. Cambridge 1928. P. 151–8; *Zakharov I.A.* 200th anniversary of the Russian Academy of Sciences from the viewpoint of an English geneticist // *Genetika*. 1999. Vol. 35(10). P. 1322–1325.