

Albrecht Daniel Thaer (1752–1828)

Physician and Reformer of Agriculture
Thaer-Exhibitions at Möglin

Albrecht Daniel Thaer

Thaer, after his study of medicine, was registered as a medical doctor in Celle (near Hannover) until 1804; besides his work as a physician he increasingly got involved in dealing with questions concerning agricultural production techniques. In 1804 he gave up his medical profession and moved – upon invitation by the King of Prussia – to Möglin to stay here permanently.

He operated his estate of Möglin on the basis of rational principles; as State-Counselor he directly and also indirectly had part in planning and executing the agricultural reform in Prussia; and with his call by A. v. Humboldt to establish agricultural sciences at the newly founded University in Berlin in 1810, he became the founder of agricultural science in Germany.

Commemoration of Thaer at Möglin

The Promotional Association Albrecht Daniel Thaer was founded and registered at Möglin on 22nd June 1991. This Association grew out of a circle of persons interested in A. D. Thaer, which convened since 1987.

The aim of the Promotional Association is to recognize and appreciate the achievements of Thaer; invention and introduction of the science of agriculture in Germany; development of a master-estate at Möglin, from 1804 onward; foundation of the first academic teaching institution for agriculture (1806) within the German speaking community, later known as „Royal Prussian Academy for Landholding” at Möglin. As a Counselor of State in the Prussian Ministry of the Interior he influenced the agricultural reforms and, as professor at the Berlin University he gathered fame as a teacher and as author of numerous important publications.

Apart from exhibitions in the new building and in the church, there are other monuments which remind the visitor of Thaer at Möglin: his mansion, his graveyard and his bust (1978) overlooking the park and in the center of the village a monumental rock and a street called „Thaer-Weg”.

The exhibitions at Möglin

The former farm yard of the Thaer-Estate with all its buildings has been put under protection by the monument-department. In 1992 these were extensively renovated and in the former „Inspector's House” a permanent exhibition was established about Thaer and his achievements. This exhibition had to be relocated in 2008 into another new building near the park.

The exhibition on Albrecht Daniel Thaer is divided into four parts:

- documents about his time; the course of his life
- his teaching on “The Rational Agriculture”

- economic activities and the teaching institution at Möglin
- in the service of the State of Prussia
- sources of inspiration and predecessors of Thaer;
- scientific setting and recognition of achievement

The exhibition is complemented by information about forerunners, supporters, colleagues and pupils; also copies of agricultural implements developed and used by Thaer are presented. All of the major as well as complementary tables are contained in a catalogue, which is continuously expanded and kept up to date.

On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the purchase of the Möglin farm by Thaer, in 2004 a permanent exhibition with catalogue, called „200 years Thaer in Möglin” was set up in the church of the village. The church had been repaired and got its present shape in 1962 when damages from the war had been removed and was again restored for the occasion in 2004.

The Society also does publishing work. These print products are available for purchase at the exhibition. They can also be ordered on the internet. The annual general meeting for members of the society will be combined with agrarian-historic conferences. The topics of these meetings will be published in the annual booklet. Within the bounds of possibility, special research topics have been and will be handled at the conference and in the booklet.

Möglin lies on the Barnim Plateau at the rim of Oderbruch. Nearby are: the open-air museum in Altranft with its presentation of the development of rural areas; the tomb of Mrs. von Friedland, one of Thaer's most important conversational partners, in Kunersdorf; Neuhardenberg, named after the chancellor Mr. von Hardenberg, who played an important role in Thaer's move from Celle to Möglin; and the domain Wollup which was farmed by J. G. Koppe, one of Thaer's colleagues and followers, after 1827.

Out of Thaer's Biography

- 1752 Born May 14th in Celle as the son of Johann Friedrich Thaer, the king's court and personal physician.
- 1770 Study of medicine in Göttingen until 1774, work as a physician in Celle after he obtained his doctorate.
- 1784 Member of the Prince Elector's Agriculture Society, Celle, and member of its committee after 1786.
- 1786 Marriage to Philippine von Willach, whose father was vice president of Celle's chief appellate court; purchase of a farm on 83 acres of land, increasing scientific interest in agriculture, especially English agriculture.
- 1798 Publication of the first volume of „Introduction to the knowledge of the English agriculture and it's new progress in praxis and theory in view of the perfection of the

German agriculture for contemplative farmers and cameralists“ (2nd volume in 1800, 3rd volume in 1804).

- 1799 First trip to Brandenburg and to Kunersdorf to meet Mrs.von Friedland.
- 1802 Opening of the first agricultural educational institute in Celle.
- 1804 Move to Möglin upon purchase of the Möglin farm and the Vorwerk Königshof in Oderbruch.
- 1806 Opening of the Möglin educational establishment; since 1819: „Royal Prussian Academy for Landholding“.
- 1809 Publication of the first volume of „The principles of rational agriculture“ (2nd to 4th volume 1810 to 1812).

Appointment as councillor of state in the Prussian ministry of the interior.

1810 to 1819 lectures at the Berlin University.

- 1815 Publication of „The history of my farm in Möglin“ and „Introduction to the general profession of agriculture“.
- 1817 Appointment as director of the Royal Prussian sheep farms.
- 1823 The Wool Convention in Leipzig elects Thaer as president.
- 1824 Celebrations on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his doctorate.
- 1828 Thaer's death on October 26th in Möglin, his son Albrecht Philipp takes over the farm and the academy.

Since 1799, Thaer also worked as editor of agricultural „annals“:

from 1799 to 1804, the annals of „The agriculture of Lower Saxony“;

from 1805 to 1810, the annals of „The Farming“;

from 1811 to 1812, the annals of „The progress of agriculture in theory and praxis“; and

from 1817 to 1824, the „Möglin's agricultural annals“ which were published up to 1833 by the Academy.

Memorials honouring him were erected in Leipzig, Berlin, Celle, Kaaden, Halle and Möglin.