on bush vegetation carried out at Kongwa for the Overseas Food Corporation.

The Colonial Economic Research Committee states in its brief second report that the Committee has been concerned with advising the Colonial Office on technical economic problems arising in the appreciation of economic conditions in Colonial territories, and has collaborated with the Colonial Office in preparing a comprehensive programme of Colonial economic research to be undertaken as and when qualified research workers become available. Two research studies undertaken by Colonial Research Fellows, and supervised by the Committee, are being prepared for publication, namely, Miss P. Deane's inquiry into national income, production and expenditure in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and Miss P. Ady's study of the occupational structure of representative communities in the Gold Coast as influenced by war-time Government expenditure.

124

J. B. DELAMBRE (1749-1822)

By ENG.-CAPT. EDGAR C. SMITH, O.B.E.

JEAN BAPTISTE JOSEPH DELAMBRE, an illustrious French astronomer, was born at Amiens on September 19, 1749. He was educated at the gymnasium of his native town, and there came under the influence of the poet Delille, with whom he began a life-long friendship. Afterwards, he was enabled to attend the Collège de Plessis in Paris, and at the close of his academic career began to earn a precarious living by the aid of his pen. His knowledge of languages was extensive, and he made many translations from Greek, Latin, Italian and English. He also undertook the duties of a private tutor, continuing meanwhile his own studies in mathematics.

At about the age of thirty-five, Delambre attended lectures at the Collège de France and there formed a friendship with Lalande. His first important scientific work was the preparation of the tables of the newly discovered planet Uranus, for which he received in 1790 a prize from the Academy of Sciences. Two years later, he was awarded a second prize, for his tables of Jupiter and Saturn, and was also elected a member of the Academy.

In 1790 the Revolutionary Government in France brought forward the project of determining a national system of weights and measures, and in connexion with this a commission including Lagrange, Laplace, Prunty and Delambre was formed to consider the matter. Besides the length of the seconds pendulum, two other units of length were suggested, namely, a quarter of the earth's circumference at the equator and a quadrant of the meridian. The latter was the one accepted, and Delambre and Mechain were detailed to measure an arc from Dunkirk to Barcelona. The operation extended over the years 1792-99, and the results were given to the world by Delambre in his work entitled "Base du System metrique decimal", the first volume being published in 1806, the third in 1810. Owing to the unsettled state of the country, the work of measurement was often difficult and dangerous, and at one time the operations were suspended altogether by a decree of Robespierre, who deposed Delambre and some of his colleagues from the commission as being deficient in "republican virtues and their hatred of kings". Arago and Biot eventually extended the arc measured by Delambre and Mechain to Formentera.

Delambre was given a seat in the Bureau des Longitudes, in 1802 he was appointed inspector-general of studies, and in the following year he was chosen permanent secretary to the Paris Academy of Sciences, in which capacity he wrote many *éloges*, reports, etc. In 1807 he succeeded Lalande at the Collège de France, and in 1808 was made treasurer of the Imperial Ministry. As an acknowledgment of his merits the Institute of France in 1810 gave him one of the decennial prizes instituted by Napoleon; but the Emperor for some reason refused to ratify the decision. The latter part of Delambre's life was taken up by his numerous duties and the collection of materials for his great "History of Astronomy". This work appeared in six volumes, five being published between 1817 and 1821 and the last in 1829, five years after his death. He died in Paris on August 19, 1822, after suffering for some time from severe fainting fits.

Delambre was distinguished no less for his impartiality than for his profound learning. "He was a man in whom the love of truth and accuracy was conspicuous. Learned and patient, he spared no pains in acquiring knowledge and in using it to the best purpose. He laboured as earnestly to restore to Hipparchus the credit due to him as to hold the balance between the merits of French and British astronomers. His character was as amiable as his life was blameless, and the frugal and simple habits of his early life were not abandoned when he occupied a distinguished position and was a chevalier of St. Michael and an officer of the Legion of Honour." His *éloge* was pronounced by Cuvier, who paid an eloquent tribute to his memory.

OBITUARIES

104

Prof. S. H. Reynolds

By the death of Sidney Hugh Reynolds on August 20, geology has lost one who made important contributions both as an investigator and as a teacher. Born at Brighton in 1867, he passed from Marlborough to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he studied natural science and, under the influence of T. McKenny Hughes and J. E. Marr, began to specialize in geology.

He was appointed to the staff of University College, Bristol, in 1894, teaching both geology and zoology under Lloyd Morgan. This wide range of activities was not unattractive to him, for he was fundamentally a naturalist with an interest in all field studies. Indeed, his text-book on "The Vertebrate Skeleton" remained for many years a standard work for students of zoology, while much later he showed how this interest had been continued by undertaking the preparation of Volume 3 (1922-39) of the Palaeontographical Society's monographs on the Pleistocene Mammalia, the first two volumes of which had been written by Boyd Dawkins in 1872 and 1878. But his principal work in Bristol was in field geology, and he was appointed to the chair of geology in 1910, a position which he held until his retirement in 1933.

Reynolds's geological writings cover a wide variety of topics. His early work dealt with the Lower Palaeozoic rocks of western Ireland; in this he collaborated with C. I. Gardiner, with whom he continued to work for many years. As his interest in the Bristol district grew, he wrote many papers on local