Prof. Seán P. Ó Ríordáin

By the death on April 11 of Prof. Seán P. Ó Ríordáin at the premature age of fifty-two, archaeology has lost its most brilliant Irish exponent, and his colleagues have lost an admired and trusted friend. Seán Ó Ríordáin was educated at a primary school, and first trained as a primary school teacher. His interest in archaeology took him as an evening student to University College, Cork, where he was encouraged by the late Canon Power, who did much for archaeology in Munster. From Cork, Ó Ríordáin gained both the coveted travelling scholarship of his University and a position in the National Museum in Dublin, where the late Adolph Mahr was galvanizing the Antiquities Division into a new life. Museum study and travel abroad led to his important monograph on the halberd in Ireland and western Europe.

Canon Power's death brought Ó Ríordáin back to Cork as professor, and at Cush he organized his first large-scale excavation. Here he put a very early date on the Irish ring-fort, and it was characteristic that he would never accept criticism of his dating, but rather sought out other sites where support for his view might be found. He then turned to Lough Gur, where his work, which ultimately extended to eighteen seasons, soon received international recognition. He was always prompt in publication, and a series of papers ranging from Neolithic to Viking times added enormously to knowledge of early Ireland.

Ó Ríordáin succeeded Macalister in University College, Dublin, in 1943, and as chairman of the

National Monuments Council, and president of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, became recognized as the doyen of Irish archaeologists. In 1952 he started to excavate at Tara, beginning in the already disturbed Rath of the Synods, and proceeding to the Mound of the Hostages. Here he found Middle Bronze Age material immediately below the sod, and was able to show that the sanctity of the site did not begin in the Iron Age, but was as old as that of Avebury and Stonehenge. The mound had a deep rind of clay which yielded several rich burials, and below the clay a cairn of stone, containing an intact passage-grave of Newgrange type.

Few deaths can have been more cruel. Though exhausted and already seriously ill, Ó Ríordáin carried on to the end of the 1956 season, by which time the decorated passage was partly cleared, and he could look into the chamber, still full of cremated bone. Now his colleagues must finish his task to his standards. Having worked with van Giffin and Wheeler, his excavation standards were high. Full of nervous energy, he sometimes forced the pace for his colleagues and his helpers. But if he forced others, he did not spare himself. Few of those who saw his last television appearance realized that he had come from a nursing-home, to which he was to return immediately for a serious operation. Seán Ó Ríordáin advanced archaeology by teaching, by writing and broadcasting, and above all by excavation. His death is a grave loss to scholarship in Europe.

G. F. MITCHELL

NEWS and VIEWS

New Chair at the College of Aeronautics:

Prof. A. J. Kennedy

THE increasing importance of materials in aeronautical design and propulsion, as well as in structures generally, has led the College of Aeronautics at Cranfield to reconsider the place of this subject in the teaching of the College. As a first step in advancing both the level of instruction and the nature and extent of the research work, particularly in the field of fundamental physical metallurgy, a professorship of materials and metallurgy has been created. Dr. A. J. Kennedy, formerly head of the Metal Physics Section of the British Iron and Steel Research Association, has now been appointed to this new post.

Dr. Kennedy, who is thirty-five years of age, graduated from University College, London, in physics in 1943. He was commissioned in the Royal Signals in 1944, serving as a staff major in telecommunications from 1945 until his demobilization in 1947. Returning to University College, he lectured in the Physics Department there until 1950, when, on being awarded a Ph.D. for his researches on the creep and recovery properties of metals, he went to the Royal Institution as a Research Fellow. A year later he was awarded the Royal Society Armourers' and Brasiers' research fellowship in metallurgy, a post he held until he joined the British Iron and Steel Research Association in 1954. During this period, Dr. Kennedy was able to extend his interests to a more general consideration of the problems of deformation and fatigue under complex stress and

temperature conditions and to develop electrical analogue methods for the solution of special cases. His more recent work on the interaction between the creep and fatigue processes, and the early detection of fatigue damage, has yielded results of considerable theoretical and technological significance.

British Welding Research Association:

Dr. R. Weck

DR. RICHARD WECK has been appointed director of research at the British Welding Research Association, in succession to Dr. H. G. Taylor, who goes as director to the Electrical Research Association (see *Nature*, 179, 290; 1957). Weck was educated in Prague and took his degree in civil engineering in 1936 at the University there. He came to England at the end of 1938. After four years experience in British industry, he was appointed to the staff of the Welding Research Council in 1943, acting as editor of the *Institute of Welding "Handbook on Structural Steelwork"*. In 1944 he became a research student at Cambridge working in the Engineering Department on the problems presented by the catastrophic failure of the wartime all-welded Liberty ships. Weck dealt with the effect of residual stresses, and the result of his research was published by the Admiralty in 1950. He was awarded the Ph.D. degree in 1948. He returned to the British Welding Research Association, which had been founded in 1946 from the Welding Research Council, and played a prominent part in setting up a fatigue laboratory. In 1951 he returned as a university