As with all the establishments of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, a large proportion of the time has to be devoted to answering inquiries and carrying out *ad hoc* investigations associated with them, and representatives of the Station sit on some forty-five committees of the British Standards Institution and other bodies.

At the present time the bulk of the work of the Station is being carried out in temporary laboratories,

which it is hoped to replace by permanent buildings in the near future. It may be recalled in this connexion that it was announced last year that the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and Fire Offices' Committee had agreed that new buildings and equipment should be provided at a cost of up to £365,000.

¹ Ministry of Works Post-War Building Studies No. 20. (H.M. Stationery Office, 1946.)

OBITUARIES

Mr. W. N. Edwards

WILFRED NORMAN EDWARDS, formerly keeper of the Department of Geology in the British Museum (Natural History), died suddenly on December 17 at the age of sixty-six. He was the second of three brothers, all of whom obtained distinction in a branch of natural science: the eldest, Fred, as an entomologist; the youngest, Donald, as an astronomer. Wilfred was educated with his two brothers at the Cambridge and County School, which at this time produced an outstanding group of naturalists, four of the boys, including the two elder Edwards, later joining the scientific staff of the British Museum (Natural History). Edwards gained a scholarship to Christ's College, and while at Cambridge came under the influence of the late Sir Albert Seward, an influence which determined his career as a palaeobotanist.

After graduation, he successfully competed for a post on the scientific staff of the British Museum (Natural History) and joined the Department of Geology in 1913. The rather austere atmosphere then prevailing in the Museum seems to have weighed heavily on the young man, and he welcomed the break afforded by military service in the First World War. He served with the R.A.M.C. in the Balkans, and his experiences there certainly gave him a taste for travel in those parts, which later he fully indulged. On returning to the Museum after the War, Edwards, who was the first palaeobotanist to be appointed to the staff, set about putting in order the gigantic but hitherto neglected collection of fossil plants, a task which he carried out admirably, for it was in curatorial rather than in research work that he excelled. Indeed, scientific research never seems to have been his major interest, although he was the author of more than forty publications—most of them brief—covering a wide range of palaeobotanical subjects from all geological periods and notable for their painstaking accuracy. In later years more general topics, especially the historical side of palaeontology, engaged his attention and he wrote an excellent little book as a guide to a special exhibit in the Department on the early history of palaeontology. He was awarded the Lyell Fund by the Geological Society in 1933, and the Lyell Medal in 1955, in which year he was president of Section C (Geology) of the British Association.

In 1931 Edwards became deputy keeper of the Department, and thereafter administrative duties claimed much of his time. Late in 1938 he succeeded Dr. W. D. Lang as keeper. It was a frustrating time in which to succeed to office; instead of being able

to put into practice his plans, especially for the development of the exhibition galleries, the whole of his attention was absorbed in arranging for the evacuation of the principal part of the collections and for the protection of the remainder. That so little of importance was lost, in spite of the extensive damage done to the building, was in no small measure due to his untiring efforts. The War ended, Edwards threw himself whole-heartedly into the work of reconstruction, and some of the most successful new exhibits, such as that in the Succession of Life Gallery, are due to his inspiration. Further, during the last years of his keepership he was responsible for the Department's new series of explanatory booklets or guides, which have become 'best-sellers', and did much to foster the production of a number of scientific publications, including the Geological Series of the Museum *Bulletin*. As an editor of scientific matter he was outstanding, and any publications for which he was responsible were excellent in format and quality.

Although little inclined to committee work, he served during the War as secretary of the Geological Society, and afterwards as a vice-president.

Kindly, and to his junior staff even indulgent, Edwards had on occasion a sharp tongue in controversy. But his criticisms were never pointless, and his most caustic humour was usually accepted with good grace as the price of worth-while advice. Edwards was essentially an individualist, and his dislike of the formal and orthodox was shown in many ways, not least perhaps in his strong agnosticism. By nature rather solitary, he admitted few to intimate friendship. One of his closest friends was the late W. B. Honey, keeper of ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Their association reflected, like the life-long interest in folk-dancing, his strong leaning towards the arts and crafts, in which he was given to experimenting in his own Department. His satisfaction in the results was often proportional to the surprise of his more conventional colleagues.

Edwards was very much a 'character', and his loss will be deeply felt for, in spite of his reserve, he was held in esteem and affection by his staff. He leaves a widow and a son.

E. I. WHITE

Prof. Methodi Popoff

It has been ascertained that Methodi Popoff, Bulgaria's foremost biologist, has died within recent years. As a son of a successful physician, he had his early training at the University of Sofia. Later, the king, Czar Ferdinand, himself an enthusiastic student