

OBITUARIES

Mr. A. R. Hinks, C.B.E., F.R.S.

THE death, on April 14, at the age of seventy-two, of Mr. Arthur Hinks, for thirty years the distinguished secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, leaves a gap which it will be difficult to fill.

A mathematician and a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, Hinks devoted his attention to astronomy during the earlier part of his career, and it was for his work bearing upon the determination of stellar and solar parallax that he was awarded the gold medal of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1912, and was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in the following year. In accordance with a tradition observed by Sir Isaac Newton, but reaching back to the Greeks, geography is merely a branch of astronomy, and Mr. Hinks's interest in the earth as a planet, expressing itself in a series of lectures, and later of admirable text-books, upon surveying, cartography and map projections, led to his connexion with the Royal Geographical Society. His appointment as assistant secretary, and two years later (in 1915) as secretary, in succession to Sir John Keltie, was particularly apposite, since the fellows and Council of that Society were still primarily interested in travel and exploration, and Mr. Hinks not only organized and supervised the *ad hoc* instruction of intending travellers in practical surveying, but also was able to assist them in the interpretation, working up and presentation of their observations on their return. The most recent edition of the well-known "Hints to Travellers" is largely from his pen, and represents the fruits of his numberless contacts with British and foreign explorers. During the War of 1914-18, he was also able to be of very great assistance to the military in solving or advising upon various technical problems connected with maps, and it was for his services in this direction that he was made a C.B.E.

Mr. Hinks's own preoccupation with mathematical geography, and the Society's traditional function as a headquarters for exploration, had the result that the university geographer, attempting the systematic regional study of the earth and the interpretation of landscape, received rather a cold welcome at the House in Kensington Gore. The secretary was also editor of the Society's *Journal*, and his criticism and rejection, as editor, of academic research was by many felt to be unsympathetic and unduly harsh; but actually his standard of scholarship was high, while the achievements of British geography have been decidedly mediocre. The reason is not far to seek. There is an almost complete absence of scholarships, fellowships, research endowments and other opportunities for advancement and reward in geography, which naturally deters young men and women of first-class calibre from reading the subject at the universities. It was peculiarly unfortunate, in view of the help he might have given, that Mr. Hinks accepted the Royal Society's view that geography is not a part of natural knowledge, and does not fall under the head of "the examination and investigation of experiments and of natural things" for which under the Charter of 1663 that Society could lawfully hold meetings. Hence, except in its mathematical aspects, the subject of geography lacks status and can command no financial assistance.

Within his chosen field, Mr. Hinks himself contributed many valuable papers to the *Geographical*

Journal, the subjects including photogrammetric survey, boundary delimitation, geodetic problems, cartographic technique, and novel or neglected projections. Quite recently, he designed and calculated a series of maps on the oblique Mercator network, accompanying them by a family of curves by means of which great circles could be plotted between any two points. The maps were immediately used in a discussion of the future of civil aviation. He was responsible, too, for the design and calculation of the very beautiful and effective map of Europe and the Middle East which was drawn by the Society's draughtsmen and published for the British Council. For beauty and elegance in map production, in so far as it was an expression of perfect fitness for function, he was always deeply concerned, and took part in many lively discussions upon alphabets and lettering with the officers of the Ordnance Survey.

Mr. Hinks's eminence in the fields of geodesy and cartography received world-wide recognition, and he was the recipient of the Royal Geographical Society's Victoria Medal in 1938, followed by the American Geographical Society's Cullum Medal in 1942. The present War robbed him of those years of leisure in retirement which were his due. He remained at his post, and only a few days before his death was answering correspondence upon projections, revising his standard text-book on the same subject, and giving vigorous expression to his opinion of a poorly conceived, badly designed and wretchedly executed map issued by a great public corporation.

E. G. R. TAYLOR.

Mr. G. V. Boys

GEOFFREY VERNON BOYS, secretary of the Institution of Naval Architects, died on March 15 at St. Mary Bourne, Andover. He was the only son of the late Sir Charles Vernon Boys, whose death at the age of eighty-nine occurred a year ago, and was born in 1893 at Oxford, where his father was then repeating, with improved accuracy, the Cavendish experiment, when he obtained 5.57 for the mean density of the earth.

G. V. Boys was educated at Marlborough and proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1913. At the outbreak of the War in 1914 he served in the Royal Engineers, but was taken prisoner in August 1914. After spending some time in German prison camps, he was interned in Switzerland and resumed his residence at Cambridge in 1919, graduating in 1921. In the year following he lectured at the Royal College of Science, South Kensington, and in January 1922 joined the staff of Messrs. Kennedy and Donkin. As a senior engineer in this firm, he showed great skill in the use and application of mathematics and physics to engineering, and was frequently given difficult problems in design and always solved them. His work had the great merit of being accurate, and he possessed the admirable quality, especially in the application of science to engineering, of judging correctly the accuracy required without wasting time on irrelevant places of decimals. He was engaged *inter alia* on the Uhl River hydro-electric scheme for the Punjab Public Works Department and on many electricity transmission schemes, such as those in the Isle of Man and in Northern Ireland. He was responsible for the design and testing of the Central Electricity Board's grid towers in Scotland and north-west and south-