

NEWS and VIEWS

Geological Survey of Great Britain :

Sir Edward Bailey, F.R.S.

SIR EDWARD BATTERSBY BAILEY, who has just retired from the directorship of the Geological Survey and Museum, joined the Scottish Branch of the Survey in 1902, at the age of twenty-one, and rapidly established an international reputation as a leading authority on the tectonics of the Scottish Highlands. He served with distinction throughout the War of 1914-18 and after the conclusion of hostilities became in 1919 district geologist in charge of the West Highland and Ayrshire work. An outstanding achievement during his tenure of this post should be mentioned, namely, the preparation of the classic memoir on the Tertiary igneous rocks of Mull (1924). In 1929 he resigned, on his appointment to the chair of geology at the University of Glasgow; but he returned to the Survey as director in 1937.

The short period from 1937 to the outbreak of the present War saw the inception of comprehensive plans for field-work to accelerate the mapping of districts urgently requiring revision. Sir Edward's directorship will, however, be remembered chiefly for the notable part he and his colleagues played in aiding the war effort, especially during the early critical years. When the events of 1940-41 made it necessary to develop the country's mineral resources to the utmost, he threw himself with characteristic energy into the task of carrying out an immediate investigation into the available supplies of such essential raw materials as iron ores, bauxite, limestone, lead, zinc, tin and copper ores, feldspar, mica and silica sands suitable for optical glass. He also extended and amplified the Survey's investigations into underground water supplies throughout Great Britain, and carried through the preparation of a large series of war-time pamphlets in which the results of Survey work were made easily and rapidly accessible. In addition, Sir Edward and his staff were able to give assistance in many engineering projects directly connected with the war effort, such as the siting of aerodromes, camps and emergency hospitals, the provision of underground storage, and the selection of localities suitable for open-cast coal production. He has also collaborated closely with Government departments concerned with post-war reconstruction and industrial development. All these varied activities he has pursued with energy and success, and the results may be said to have demonstrated anew the importance of the part which geology and geological research can play not only in the economy of a country at war, but also in the no less difficult problems of the years of peace ahead. Dr. W. F. P. McLintock, deputy director, is at present in charge of the work of the Geological Survey and Museum.

Sir Howard Florey, F.R.S. : Lister Medallist

THE Lister Medal for 1945 of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, which is awarded in recognition of distinguished contributions to surgical science, has been granted to Sir Howard Florey, professor of pathology in the University of Oxford, for the outstanding importance to surgical science of his work on penicillin and its application. He will deliver the Lister Memorial Lecture later in 1945. This is the eighth occasion of the award, which is made by a committee representative of the Royal Society, the

Royal College of Surgeons of England, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Glasgow.

Treatment of Leprosy

A NEW treatment of leprosy reported from Madagascar (*Brit. Med. J.*, 338, March 10, 1945; and *Lancet*, 357, March 17, 1945) suggests that it is, in some respects, a considerable advance in the fight against this ancient and terrible scourge of mankind. Drs. Boiteau and Grimes extracted, so long ago as 1937, a new glucoside from the umbelliferous plant *Hydrocotyle asiatica*, which gave encouraging results when it was tried for the treatment of leprosy; but it was too toxic. In 1938 Bontemps, working at Antananavivo, isolated another new glucoside which he called 'asiaticoside', and this was not only active against leprosy but was also much less toxic. It was insoluble in water, slightly soluble in alcohol and very soluble in pyridine. Later Boiteau obtained a solution of it suitable for injection, and Devanne and Razafimahery have studied its chemical constitution. Boiteau and Grimes think that it acts by dissolving the waxy covering of *B. lepræ*, so that the bacillus then becomes very fragile and may easily be destroyed by the tissues or by some other drug. The results of injections of the solution prepared by Boiteau are reported as being remarkable. Leprosy nodules are broken down, diffuse infiltrations disappear, perforating ulcers and lesions on the fingers heal and, most remarkable of all, eye lesions are rapidly cured if treatment is given before the posterior chamber of the eye is involved. If fuller reports of trials on a larger number of patients substantiate these claims, and if asiaticoside can be prepared in sufficient quantity, mankind will owe a great debt of gratitude to the discoverers of this remedy. If the view that it acts by dissolving the waxy coating of the bacillus is correct, it is not inconceivable that it may show the way towards the control of infections with other bacilli which have a waxy envelope, such as the bacillus of tuberculosis.

Historic St. Andrews and its University

THE year 1754 gave promise of being an important one in the annals of Scotland, for it saw steps taken to found the Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures and Agriculture. Within a decade, however, the Society had metamorphosed into a Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English in Scotland, which led to a fate justly deserved. But according to Prof. John Read, in the second edition of his pamphlet "Historic St. Andrews and its University" (W. C. Henderson and Sons, Ltd., St. Andrews, 1945), 1754 also saw a more enduring and certainly much more influential society formed by twenty-two "Noblemen and Gentlemen, being admirers of the ancient and healthful exercise of the Golf", namely, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club—legislative authority of the game. By that time, however, the University of St. Andrews, junior only to Oxford and Cambridge in Great Britain, was more than three centuries old, with a tradition and setting that make St. Andrews "at once the Canterbury and the Oxford (or Cambridge) of Scotland".

It is not surprising, then, that we learn from Prof. Read that the tomb of the founder of St. Salvator's College, erected in 1458, is "probably the finest specimen of mediæval work in Britain" and that the silver gilt College and Faculty maces are "older than