ment of honorary membership of the British Mycological Society, of which he had been president in 1920. He was also president of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union in 1931. Petch was a Yorkshireman of decided but completely honest views, the staunchest of friends, and a most interesting companion.

Petch married in 1908 the daughter of the late Dr. C. B. Plowright, of King's Lynn, who survives him, together with a son and a daughter. His extensive mycological collections have been bequeathed to the British Museum (Natural History).

F. T. BROOKS

M. Georges Truffaut

BY the sudden death in September last of M. Georges Truffaut, science has lost an international figure. Married to an Englishwoman, he spent much time in Britain during his younger days, and frequently visited Rothamsted, East Malling, Long Ashton and Cheshunt. From each of these he gathered much that interested him, and he created at Versailles a laboratory in which he conducted much research on partial soil disinfection, in which he was inspired by the ideas of Sir John Russell. He investigated the bacterial fixation of nitrogen under the influence of electric light, work initiated, or at least inspired, by his work at Rothamsted, and later, in his Versailles laboratory, his attention was led towards the use of colouring matters, at first in agriculture and later in horticulture.

Truffaut was early involved in the determination and use of various colouring matters as weed eradicants. In 1936 he was invited by the Royal Horticultural Society to visit London to put forward the results of his work, at a time that the utilization of 'Sinox' was still in its infancy. As things turned out, he and his laboratory were not able to carry out the extension of their programme as was done in the Anglo-Saxon countries, but they contributed to the development of the processes to the full measure of their abilities. In his last days Truffaut was occupied in working out a new formula for weed eradication which was more economic as well as more active; but his death occurred before these could be put forward. Had he lived, we should probably have heard more of him and his work in connexion with weed eradication.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Dr. Andrew Connal, O.B.E., formerly director of the Medical Research Institute, Lagos, on January 26.

The Right Hon. Lord Melchett, formerly deputy chairman of Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., on January 22, aged fifty.

Prof. John Percival, emeritus professor of agricultural botany in the University of Reading, on January 26, aged eighty-five.

NEWS and VIEWS

Chemistry at the Australian National University: Prof. Adrien Albert

DR. ADRIEN ALBERT has been appointed the first professor of chemistry in the John Curtin School for Medical Research, Australian National University. Arrangements have been made for the Department of Chemistry to be located temporarily in the Wellcome Research Institution, 183 Euston Road, London, N.W.1, until the necessary buildings have been erected in Canberra, when Prof. Albert will supervise their completion and equipment. Prof. Albert graduated in the University of Sydney in 1932 with honours in chemistry, and in 1937 was awarded the degree of Ph.D. of the University of London. He returned to Australia in 1938 as a research fellow in the Organic Chemistry Department of the University of Sydney, where he remained until 1947. He has recently held a research fellowship at the Wellcome Research Institution.

Defence Services Research Facilities Committee

AT the invitation of the Council of the Royal Society, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, the Army Council, the Air Council and the Ministry of Supply have appointed representatives on a Defence Services Research Facilities Committee. The terms of reference of the new Committee are as follow: "To consider proposals for the use of Service facilities and personnel for assisting scientific research, and to make recommendations to the Council of the Royal Society, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, the Army Council and the Air Council". The Committee has been constituted as follows: *Chairman*, Sir Geoffrey Taylor; *Royal Society*, Prof. P. M. S. Blackett, Sir Harold Spencer Jones, Dr. A. C. Menzies, Mr. F. S. Russell; *Admiralty*, Vice-Admiral A. G. N. Wyatt (hydrographer), Mr. F. Brundrett (C.R.N.S.S.); *War Office*, Lieut.-General Sir Kenneth Crawford (D.C.I.G.S.), Dr. O. H. Wansbrough-Jones (scientific adviser to the Army Council); *Air Ministry* Air Vice-Marshal C. E. N. Guest (assistant chief of Air Staff—Operations), Mr. G. S. Whittuck (head of *S*.6); *Ministry of Supply*, Dr. F. J. Wilkins (principal director of scientific research—defence), Mr. H. M. Garner (principal director of scientific research—air).

The Committee proposes to conduct its business through panels of scientific men and Service representatives who are specially interested in specific projects, and at its first meeting panels were formed to cover the following subjects: (*a*) submarine gravity measurements, (*b*) surplus explosives, (*c*) magnetic survey, (*d*) aerial photography, (*e*) scientific expeditions. Scientific workers wishing to submit proposals for consideration by the Committee should communicate their suggestions in the first instance to the Assistant Secretary, Royal Society, Burlington House, London, W.1.

Giant Sunspot and Geomagnetic Storm

A VERY large group of sunspots of 'bipolar' type crossed the solar disk during January 16–29. At central meridian passage on January 22·7 U.T., the middle of the group passed 28° above the centre of the disk. Two big spots were the chief components, with their centres separated 12° in longitude, or approximately 85,000 miles. The aggregate area of the spots for several days was about 2,300 millionths of the sun's hemisphere, or about 55 times the cross-section area of the earth. Greenwich data show that