

most comfortable size. For the present, all newspapers (except London newspapers before 1800) will continue to be consulted at Colindale; those which have been microfilmed will be consulted on film in the reading machines. Eventually it is hoped that accommodation for consultation of these microfilms will be available in the main Museum Library at Bloomsbury.

#### Vegetation Patterns in Somaliland

In a paper entitled "Vegetation Patterns in the Semi-desert Plains of British Somaliland" in the *Geographical Review* (116, 199; 1950), Dr. W. A. Macfadyen develops in some detail a thesis put forward in a letter in *Nature* (165, 121; 1950) that the arc-shaped ripple-like marks seen in air photographs of this semi-desert country are caused not, as sometimes believed, by wind erosion, but by the rhythmical arrangement of concentrations of vegetation. Accompanying photographs afford evidence of the existence of vegetation arcs, and the origin of these arcs is attributed by Dr. Macfadyen to the effect of storm water carrying along seeds, vegetation debris and animal excreta which are deposited in the form of strand lines giving rise to vegetation arcs. That the operative agent is water rather than wind is suggested by the fact that the arcs are always oriented so that their chords are at right angles to the direction of drainage, with their convex edges upslope. Sometimes the arcs are cut through, at right angles to their chords, by "water lanes" which are clearly visible on air photographs, but have not been identified on the ground. They appear to be drainage channels produced by flows of water which are more localized and intense than those producing the vegetation arcs. The detailed processes by which the vegetation arcs and water lanes are formed are obscure; but the phenomena are of sufficient interest to warrant further study. In particular, it is important to ascertain beyond question whether overgrazing, which is reputed to have caused much damage through wind erosion, is in fact occurring at all.

#### Sources for Social and Economic Research in Great Britain

THE standing Interdepartmental Committee on Social and Economic Research, which is composed of academic as well as departmental members, exists to survey and advise upon research work in government departments, to consider the extent to which material collected by departments is of potential value to research in the social sciences, to suggest new methods and areas of collection, and to advise how the information gathered can be made available to research workers. In 1948 the Committee issued as its first guide to official sources a descriptive survey of the material collected by the Ministry of Labour and National Service; a revised edition, which takes account of the changes of man-power and of the insured population brought about by the introduction of the National Insurance and National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Acts and of the Standard Industrial Classification, has recently been published (Guides to Official Sources, No. 1; pp. 38; London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1950; 1s. 3d. net). Besides reviewing the information collected by the Ministry, the booklet refers to factors affecting the continuity of statistical series and includes a list of the principal published sources of labour statistics. Appendixes contain notes on the principal measures administered by the Ministry, a subject index to

published sources of the Ministry's statistics, specimen forms used by the Ministry, references to sources of information on international labour statistics, definitions of employment and a list of Ministry of Labour and National Service Employment Exchanges and Branch Employment Offices by region and county. The revised edition should continue to be of real service to teachers and students in the universities as well as to other research workers.

#### Wattle Research Institute, Pietermaritzburg: Annual Report for 1949

In 1948 the combined exports from South Africa of wattle bark and extracts represented nearly a quarter of a million tons of dry bark, and it is expected that the exports for 1949 will exceed £5 million in value. Much of these wattle products goes to hard-currency areas, and the remainder is the main source of vegetable tanning material within the sterling area. Altogether, although the ground under wattle in Natal and eastern Transvaal is probably more than half a million acres in area, the world demand is greater than the immediate capacity to supply. Thus there is at the present time a great opportunity for expanding the industry; but it is imperative that any future development should be wisely planned. In this respect, the Wattle Research Institute, which forms a part of the Natal University College, recently raised to the status of the University of Natal, has an important part to play. The first report of the Institute was mainly historical and now the second annual report, which is for 1949 (pp. 43; Pietermaritzburg: Wattle Research Institute, 1950), indicates that a good start has been made and on correct lines. For example, a tour in 1949 is described, undertaken on behalf of the Colonial Development Corporation, to ascertain whether conditions in certain areas of Tanganyika and Nyasaland are suitable for large-scale wattle cultivation. The investigation was undertaken by S. P. Sherry, of the Research Institute. The investigations undertaken are carefully described. They resulted in a recommendation that forty thousand acres of plantable land could be used for a wattle project and supply a factory output of eight hundred tons. Other land will later gradually be available, and the factory is to be constructed so as to make extensions possible. The survey made in certain areas in Nyasaland, on the other hand, did not result in areas of land of a suitable size and so forth being available to enable a factory project to be drawn up, and, for the time being, no proposal for starting plantations was made. This forms a striking example as to how African land development, with particular objects in view, should be undertaken. Such disasters as the Kongwa groundnut scheme are thereby avoided.

#### Forestry Commission Research: Annual Report for 1948-49

THE Forestry Commission has recently published a report on forest research for the year ending March 1949 (pp. 80; London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1950; 1s. 9d. net). The report is divided into three parts: Part 1 deals with the work carried out by the Forestry Commission staff, Part 2 with the Committee on Nutrition Problems in Forest Nurseries, and Part 3 with research undertaken for the Forestry Commission by workers attached to the universities and other institutions. The headquarters of the Forestry Commission research is at the Research Station, Alice Holt, the alterations and adaptation of which