

## OBITUARIES

JAMES MANN WORDIE—1889–1962

SIR JAMES WORDIE's death will be widely mourned. Glaciologists have lost one of the best-known of those senior members who have long been familiar and very influential figures in all matters concerned with Polar research. Many members of this Society will recall the services that he has rendered to glaciology at the meetings of the Commission of Snow and Ice, of which he was Chairman at the Brussels Assembly of the I.U.G.G. in 1951; and on the Committee of this Society, on which he served as a Vice-President. He had been an active and encouraging influence in the Society since its inception.



A Scotsman, born in 1889, he read geology at Glasgow University, and then went on to Cambridge where his researches brought him into association with returning members of the earlier Shackleton and Scott expeditions. In 1914 he sailed with Shackleton in the ill-fated *Endurance* which was beset and finally sank in the Weddell Sea. On his return in 1917 he served on the Western Front as an artillery officer. After the war he returned to Cambridge and in 1921 was elected to a Fellowship of St. John's College. Throughout his later life he served his College and University as an active and much appreciated tutor and administrator; he was elected to the Mastership of the College in 1952. He was President of the Royal Geographical Society from 1951 to 1954, and Chairman of the Royal Society's British National Committee for the I.G.Y. from 1955 to 1960. From 1937 to 1955 he was Chairman of the Committee of the Scott Polar Research Institute. As an administrator and a very shrewd adviser, his even temperament and sound judgment of men were widely appreciated.

In the field of science his devotion to Polar research bore fruit in Scottish expeditions to Spitsbergen in 1919 and 1920. He did not, however, publish many papers and he lectured

but little, although the writer attended his course on oceanography which usually led to discussions based on his hard-gained experiences of the drift of the Weddell Sea ice.

His contribution to glaciology and research lay rather in the organization and leadership, from 1923 to 1937, of the series of summer expeditions to the Arctic, through which many young University men were introduced to Polar research. In Jan Mayen, east and west Greenland, Baffin Island, and Ellesmere Island, his parties made active contributions over a wide field, and gained invaluable experience. It gave him special pleasure that Sir Vivian Fuchs was a member of his own college, whom he himself introduced to the Arctic in 1929. The writer recalls very vividly the calm way in which, aided by his old tam o'shanter, he took all the vicissitudes that a force 10 gale off the Faroes, a spell in tight pack ice, an unexpected blizzard, a coal strike and two strandings can produce for a 64-ton sealer. The equally calm way in which, in later life, he navigated between the many personal rivalries that are wont to arise among able scientists eager to advance contending interests, was very evident. That the crossing of Antarctica, unsuccessfully essayed by the Shackleton party of which he had been a member, was eventually achieved by Fuchs, gave him the utmost pleasure. His talent for shrewd advice, his loyalty with a touch of that conservatism and caution that has done so much for Scotland, and the friendly relations he maintained with many senior glaciologists in other countries, will be widely remembered.

GORDON MANLEY

#### EDWARD THIEL—1928–1962

It was with great shock and regret that the news of the death of Edward Thiel in an aircraft accident in Antarctica was received by his many associates and friends. This misfortune was doubly severe in that it occurred not long after his marriage, and at a time when he was at the height of his unusual research abilities.

As one of the most promising students at the high school in his native city, Wausau, Wisconsin, these abilities had already become apparent. In 1950 he received the B.S. degree with Senior Honors in physics from the University of Wisconsin; he had conducted unsupervised research which would have been highly commendable even on a graduate level. A love for the out-of-doors, fostered by many camping and hunting trips with his father, led him into the study of earth science, and he remained at the University after graduation to pursue work in geophysics. After a tour of duty in the U.S. Air Force, he received his Ph.D. degree in 1955. Because of his excellent record he was awarded an American Chemical Society Post-doctoral Fellowship the following year at the Department of Geophysics, University of Utah, where he engaged in a regional gravity and magnetic study of the Uinta Mountains.

His investigation of polar problems, with which he became so intimately connected, began in 1954 when he established a network of gravity stations in Alaska as part of a study of Alaskan crustal structure and geology. During the summer of 1956 he returned to Alaska for the American Geographical Society in order to conduct seismic and gravity measurements on the Juneau Ice Field. But the exploratory spirit was strong in Thiel, and Alaska was not far enough afield, so when the search began for geophysicists to join the United States I.G.Y. expedition to Antarctica, he was one of the first to volunteer. In the fall of 1956 he sailed as a member of the party which established Ellsworth Station on the Weddell Sea coast where he "wintered over" as deputy station scientific leader. The winter was not an easy one, both because of the harshness of the environment and because of personality conflicts among station personnel. Thiel showed exceptional ability for compromise and co-operation which won him the respect and admiration of all at the station. The following summer he served as co-leader and chief geophysicist of the Ellsworth traverse party which made a number of major glaciological and geographical discoveries despite severe difficulties in travelling and working in the remote and badly crevassed interior of the Filchner Ice Shelf.