

FOREWORD

The formal opening of the new building of the Polar Research Institute will be performed on November 16 by the Rt. Hon. Stanley Baldwin, Chancellor of the University of Cambridge.

In our next issue it may be possible to print a full account of the building for the benefit of overseas readers; in the meantime it may be briefly described as follows.

Sir Herbert Baker was given the general requirements and has succeeded, we believe, not only in fulfilling them but in planning a building which, in form and decoration, is a worthy memorial in itself to the name of Captain Scott.

It consists of two main floors and an enlarged attic floor. On the ground floor the entrance doors open into a vestibule which is the chief decorative element inside the building. Above a mosaic floor in black and white there are two lofty domes, the surfaces of which have been decorated by Mr Macdonald Gill with coloured maps of the two polar regions, incorporating the ships of the more prominent explorers of the past.

Beyond the vestibule is the main room, shaped like an L, in one limb of which will be the more practical section of the collections and in the other the more historical section.

On either side of the oak staircase at one end are small rooms for the Director and the Director's Assistant. Above these, on the first floor, are two small research rooms, beyond which is the Library, perhaps the most important part of the whole building. This is of pleasing appearance, carried out in oak, with excellent lighting from two tiers of windows. Beyond the Library and reached through an entrance framed by solid oak pillars is the Map Room, and this, like the Library, is floored with an oak parquet.

The attic floor deserves a better title and will probably be known as the Gallery, since it is designed to accommodate the increasing number of pictures, drawings and photographs, which have a very utilitarian as well as an artistic value.

The floor is of oak parquet and the walls are faced with Gaboon mahogany, the pinkish tinge of which makes the attic rival the Library in appearance. One of the walls being sloping and therefore not available for hanging pictures, recourse has been had to an idea of Sir Sydney

Cockerell's, as used in the Fitzwilliam Museum, of having display cupboards let into the wall, each having several doors fitting one over the other on which can be fastened thin drawings.

The memorial character of the building is emphasised by its façade, which, in addition to having Lady Hilton Young's bust of Captain Scott over the entrance doors, has a large inscription at the level of the balustrade which runs round the building below the roof. This inscription was suggested by the Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher and runs: *QUAESIVIT ARCANA POLI VIDET DEI*, which may be rendered as "He sought the secrets of the Pole, he sees the secrets of God."

It is pleasant to record that His Majesty the King has approved the grant of the Polar Medal in bronze to the members of Sir Douglas Mawson's last expedition to the Antarctic. Sailing in the old *Discovery*, Captain Scott's first exploring ship, the expedition was in Antarctic waters for the summer seasons of 1929-30 and 1930-31 and traversed very thoroughly almost the whole of the coast which is now the Australian sector of the continent.

The wreck of the *Tcheluskin* in February might have been a very tragic event and the subsequent rescue of the whole party by aeroplanes is a very notable achievement. It has received the greatest commendation from all nations, and shows not only the great efforts the U.S.S.R. is making in its polar territories, but the very high efficiency of its pilots and air material used in Arctic service. It is very satisfactory to record that the Soviet Government has shown its appreciation by awarding special medals to the eight pilots who took part in the rescue.

The deep interest of Norway in polar exploration is reflected in the recent issue of a collected edition of the scientific results of the *Maud* expedition. They are dedicated very appropriately to its leader, the late Roald Amundsen, and consist of five large volumes, the cost of which has been largely defrayed from official sources, an example which might be noted by other countries.

The annual awards of the Royal Geographical Society include some for polar work. Most gratifying is the recognition of Captain Ejnar Mikkelsen by the King, in approving the award to him of the Patron's Medal. An appreciation of Captain Mikkelsen's work will appear in our next issue. The Murchison Grant was awarded to Mr John Rymill for his work in Greenland and the Cuthbert Peek Grant to Mr Edward Shackleton—son of Sir Ernest—for his projected expedition to Ellesmere Land.