



LAWRENCE RICKARD WAGER—1904–1965

LAWRENCE RICKARD WAGER died suddenly on 20 November 1965 at the age of 61. He was born in the Yorkshire dales on 5 February 1904, and was educated at Leeds Grammar School and Pembroke College, Cambridge. He came under the influence of the great Cambridge geologists, Hutchinson, Marr and Harker, and in 1926 he took a First Class in Geology in the Natural Sciences Tripos.

While still at Cambridge, Wager achieved the distinction of being recognized as one of the best rock climbers in the country. Apart from his geological experience, this was the main reason for him being invited to join the British Arctic Air Route Expedition to East Greenland in 1930–31. In 1932 he visited East Greenland again as a member of Mikkelsen's expedition. In the following year he joined Ruttledge's Mount Everest expedition, when he and Harris made the final attempt to reach the summit of the famous mountain but they narrowly failed, reaching 28,000 ft.

In 1935–36 he ran his own British East Greenland Expedition to continue his earlier geological work. With Professor W. A. Deer, he undertook an exhaustive investigation of the

remarkable Skærgård layered basic intrusion, with which his name is automatically associated by all petrologists. Their joint account of this intrusion is considered a classical study in igneous petrology and a major contribution to the fundamentals of the science.

Those who accompanied him in the field held him in high regard. He possessed considerable organizational skill, paying particular attention to minute detail. His leadership inspired his colleagues to give of their best all the time, even under the most arduous conditions, and they relied implicitly on his carefully judged decisions. Wager's own stamina and ability were clear to his companions, and he drove himself untiringly until the goal had been reached.

In the academic sphere he achieved high distinction. In 1929 he was appointed Lecturer in the Geology Department at Reading University, where he contributed to building up a young department. He was released from the Royal Air Force in 1944 to take the Chair of Geology at Durham University, where he again was responsible for creating a vigorous department. His important researches on the petrology and geochemistry of the Skærgård intrusion of East Greenland led to his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1946. In 1950 he was appointed to the much-coveted Chair of Geology at Oxford, where he was able to apply his skill in re-organizing and modernizing a department to its great benefit. His initiative, enthusiasm and remarkable ability for obtaining sufficient financial support were responsible for building one of the best-equipped geology laboratories in the country.

Probably as a direct result of his work in East Greenland and the Himalaya, Wager had acquired a deep interest in snow and ice—their properties and resulting landforms. He made an important study of the geomorphology and evolution of the drainage pattern of the Mount Everest area of the Himalayan range and the adjacent foothills. Although he never held office in either the British Glaciological Society or the Glaciological Society, he was instrumental in encouraging meetings to be held in Oxford, and not only attended regularly but also contributed to the usually lively discussion. He always maintained his interest in glaciology was that of an amateur rather than a professional, but his knowledge of the subject was nevertheless quite outstanding.

To those who knew him personally, Professor Wager will long remain in their memory. His total loyalty and generosity to all his friends, his high standards and phenomenal capacity for work, his encouragement to the young student and his remarkable ability to stimulate discussion—these are the features of his character that will be best remembered.

R. J. ADIE