In memoriam
Cyril Stanley Smith
1903–1992

Cyril Stanley Smith died peacefully at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on 25th August 1992, after a long illness. He was born on 4th October 1903, in Birmingham, England. He had an early interest in experimental science. He was allowed by his parents to have a home laboratory, and worked for a year as lab assistant at King Edward's Grammar School in Camp Hill before entering the University of Birmingham in 1921 with advanced standing. There he briefly considered studying philosophy before receiving the BSc degree in 1924.

An article in a French magazine extolling the Bell Telephone Laboratory inspired him to look for a job in the United States but immigration restrictions led instead to graduate study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where in 1926 he was awarded the Doctor of Science degree. He remained at MIT as a research associate in the X-ray laboratory, working under John Norton of the Physics Department, before obtaining a summer job in 1927 with the American Brass Company in Waterbury, Connecticut. This became a permanent position, in which his main task was alloy development. He became head of the Copper Alloys Research Laboratory and received some 20 patents. He married Alice Kimball in 1931 and they had two children. He returned to England to spend a year at Cambridge (1933–34) and another in London (1955–56). The occasion of his last visit to England was the annual conference of the Historical Metallurgy Society in 1984, which met a few miles from his birthplace in Birmingham; he was a long-standing member of HMS.

When the war came he went to Washington to work with the War Metallurgy Committee, and in 1943 was invited to join the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos, New Mexico, to direct the preparation of fissionable metal for the atomic bomb. The decision to go to Los Alamos was not easy for him. He told me that he went that evening to the tranquil and inspiring surroundings of the Lincoln Memorial to think it through. The years at Los Alamos were recorded by Alice Kimball Smith, who had received her doctorate in history from Yale. Professor Smith was awarded a Presidential Medal of Merit by President Truman for his work on the atomic bomb.

In January 1946 he founded and became first director of the Institute for the Study of Metals at the University of Chicago. This was the first academic interdisciplinary research organization in America dealing with materials. President Truman appointed him to the original nine-member General Advisory Committee to the Atomic Energy Commission that was chaired by Robert Oppenheimer. He resigned from this committee in 1952.

He served on the President's Science Advisory Committee under Dr. James Killian and Professor George Kistiakowsky, on the Advisory Committee for the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and was a member of the Committee on Science and Public Policy of the National Academy of Sciences. The ten years from 1966 to 1976 he served on the Council of the Smithsonian Institution.

He was the first chairman of the board of governors of Acta Metalliurgica, a member of the founding board of editors of Metallography, the journal of the International Metallographic Society (now Materials Characterization), and a member of the editorial board of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists. He was a founder and an early president of the Society for the History of Technology.

In 1961 he left Chicago to return to MIT, where he became Institute Professor with appointments in the departments of humanities and metallurgy, in order to "encourage the understanding of human history and human activity through the scientific investigation of the material record of the past." At MIT he established the Laboratory for Research on Archaeological Materials in 1967. Its success led to the founding with Professor Heather N. Lechtman ten years later of the Center for Materials Research in Archaeology and Ethnology (CMRAE), a consortium of eight Boston-area universities and museums devoted to research and graduate education in archaeometry.

Professor Smith was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Académie Internationale d'Histoire des Sciences as well as holding honorary membership in the Institute of Metals, the Akademie der Wissenschaften, the Indian Institute of Metals and the Institute of Metals of Japan. He received two John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowships, one in 1955 for a historical study of the inter-relation between pure science, applied science, and technology using the development of metallurgy as a particular example. The subject of the second, in 1978, was "A structural metaphor for matter and history."

He received many honours such as the Francis J. Clamer Medal of the Franklin Institute in 1952, the