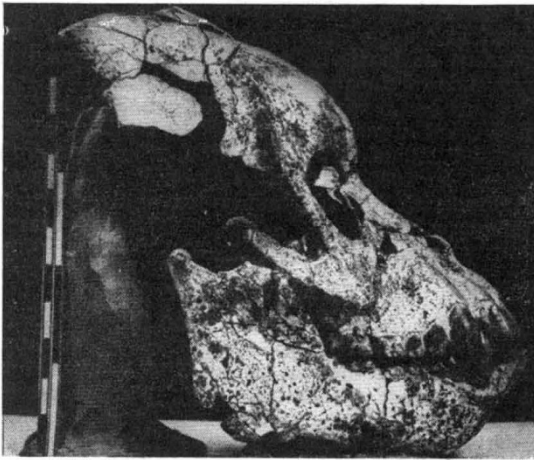


NEWS and VIEWS

Skull of *Proconsul* from Rusinga Island

THE second season's work of the British-Kenya Miocene Expedition in the Kavirondo region of Lake Victoria has culminated in one of the most important discoveries yet made there. Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, the field director of the Expedition, has announced the finding on Rusinga Island on October 2 of the greater part of a skull of one of the species of Miocene apes belonging to the genus *Proconsul*, probably *Pr. africanus* (Hopwood). Up to now, fossil remains of Miocene and Pliocene apes in Africa and other parts of the world have been practically confined to teeth and fragments of jaws, and this new discovery for



Skull of *Proconsul*. On the left are centimetre and inch scales. $\frac{1}{2}$ natural size

the first time provides information regarding the whole of the facial skeleton and much of the brain case. As will be seen from the accompanying photograph, the jaws and facial skeleton are remarkably complete, though they are somewhat displaced by distortion on the left side. The forehead region is particularly interesting, for it shows a complete absence of the supra-orbital torus which is so characteristic of the modern African anthropoid apes. Another interesting feature is the unusual thinness of the cranial wall. The specimen is extremely fragile, and evidently must have required consummate skill for its successful removal from the deposits in which it was found. Mrs. Leakey was actually the first to see some small fragments of the skull, where they had been washed out on the slope of one of the gullies which were being explored. She directed the attention of her husband who, cutting back into the beds, brought to light this most important, and indeed unique, fossil. Mrs. Leakey is bringing the skull by air to Great Britain, where she expects to arrive on October 31, and in the first instance it will be deposited at the Department of Human Anatomy at Oxford, where it will be studied in detail, in connexion with more than a hundred other specimens of Miocene fossil apes which the British-Kenya Miocene Expedition has collected over the last two years. It is particularly gratifying to note that this Expedition, which was mainly financed in its first year (1947) with the aid of a grant from the Royal Society, has proved such an outstanding success. Apart from the fine collection of fossil

Primate material, many hundred specimens of other Early Miocene vertebrates have also been accumulated.

Millport Marine Laboratory: Mr. R. Elmhirst

MR. R. ELMHIRST retires from the directorship of the Millport Laboratory on March 31, 1949. His association with the Laboratory goes back to 1906, when he was appointed to the staff as naturalist, after previous experience at Plymouth and Monaco. On the resignation of the director, Mr. S. Pace, in the following year, he was appointed superintendent and has been in charge of the Laboratory, apart from service with H.M. Navy during the First World War, since that date. He was appointed director in 1933. For many years Mr. Elmhirst was the Millport Laboratory, the sole member of the scientific staff, and he maintained it in being during the difficult years that preceded 1914. After 1921, when financial aid came from the Development Commission, the staff was enlarged and the Laboratory under his guidance made steady progress to its present high standing as a research institute. Mr. Elmhirst is an accomplished field naturalist who has guided and stimulated the interests of generations of students and research workers. The Easter classes he has conducted at Millport have played a big part in the education of British marine biologists, and he has lectured on marine ecology in the Department of Zoology at Cambridge. As a popular lecturer he has long been well known to Scottish audiences. His knowledge of the fauna and flora of the Clyde Sea area is unique and will be greatly missed when he leaves Millport. His observations and experiments are recorded in a long series of papers and also in his revision of Newbiggin's "Life by the Seashore". A bibliography of his writings and a more detailed account of his career will appear in the annual report for 1948-49 of the Scottish Marine Biological Association. Their many friends will join the members of the Association in wishing Mr. and Mrs. Elmhirst much happiness in retirement.

Mr. E. Ford

MR. E. FORD, assistant director of the Marine Laboratory, Plymouth, will succeed Mr. Elmhirst. After graduating at the Royal College of Science, Mr. Ford gained the Sarah Marshall Exhibition for research work as Huxley Scholar in 1913 and was appointed assistant naturalist at Plymouth at the end of that year. He served as an infantry officer in the First World War, when he was wounded in Belgium, and again on the staff of the R.A.F. as intelligence officer during 1941-45. His work at Plymouth, where steady promotion culminated in his appointment as assistant director in 1935, has been primarily on fish, and he is the author of a series of admirable studies on larval and post-larval fishes, on the life-history of the dogfish, on herring and on osteological variation in the backbone and the skull. In addition, he extended the quantitative survey of bottom fauna, initiated by Petersen, to the waters of Plymouth Sound. He was 'Buckland Professor' in 1936, and his lectures have been published under the title of "The Nation's Sea-Fish Supply". The Scottish Marine Biological Association may be considered most fortunate in persuading Mr. Ford to assume responsibility for the further development of the Millport Laboratory, where his administrative ability, his high scientific attainments and, above all, his qualities of friendly leadership will find full scope.

Mr. Ford will take over scientific staff and equipment greatly exceeding what existed before the War. Apart from Dr. A. P. Orr, recently appointed deputy director, and Dr. Sheina M. Marshall, who did so much to establish the reputation of the Laboratory before the War, the staff now consists of three zoologists, a chemist and an algologist, while a further post has been authorized but is not yet filled. A new research vessel, the *Calanus*, has recently been acquired and is now operating from the Laboratory. She is a motor fishing vessel, 75 ft. long, of which the hull only was built when she was purchased from the Admiralty, so that it has been possible to fit her out as a research vessel with all the modern equipment needed for both physical and biological investigations in the sea. She carries a permanent crew of five, and will enable the Millport Laboratory to extend the range of its work from the Clyde sea area to the west of Scotland generally. A much belated addition to the facilities of the Laboratory is the provision recently of electric current from the hydro-electric grid system. It will now be possible to use standard electrical equipment; further, a workshop with power-driven tools is being constructed. The Millport Laboratory, which has always had the advantage of being adjacent to clean waters with a rich fauna and flora, has now both the research vessel and the laboratory facilities for making full use of its natural advantages.

Prof. P. C. Mahalanobis, F.R.S.

PROF. P. C. MAHALANOBIS retired from the Indian Educational Service and from his post as principal of Presidency College, Calcutta, on June 30. He is chiefly known as a mathematical statistician with wide interests, and particularly as a pioneer in the theory and practice of sample survey. His work in building up the Statistical Laboratory at Presidency College is appreciated throughout the world, and it is undoubtedly one of the best centres for statistical research and advanced teaching. In recent years, Prof. Mahalanobis has been largely engaged on the Statistical Commission of the United Nations. He is still carrying on his scientific work, especially in the Indian Statistical Institute, of which he is honorary secretary.

Plant Physiology at Ghent: Prof. Paul Froeschel

DR. PAUL FROESCHEL has been appointed professor of plant physiology at Ghent State University as a successor to the late Prof. G. L. Funke. Dr. Froeschel was born in Vienna in 1888. He studied botany and especially plant physiology with Julius v. Wiesner, Richard v. Wettstein and Hans Molisch, and became known for his work on plant irritability and especially short phototropic presentation times. After graduating, Dr. Froeschel worked with Prof. Linsbauer (Czrnowitz), Prof. Goebel (Munich) and Prof. Wasitzky (Vienna). At the end of the First World War he took up agriculture; he worked on the cultivation of medicinal plants, and as an agricultural consultant he had the opportunity of becoming closely acquainted with agricultural problems. In 1938, Dr. Froeschel emigrated to Belgium, where he was given a place in the department of Prof. Funke, director of the plant physiology laboratories of Ghent State University. There Dr. Froeschel in the first place worked on the growth-inhibiting substances of plants, and furnished valuable contributions not only to the physiology of these substances, but also to their practical use.

Cocoa Disease in the Gold Coast

THE Secretary of State for the Colonies has appointed the following commission to visit the Gold Coast and report on the measures necessary for the eradication of swollen shoot disease of cocoa trees: Dr. G. Berkeley, of the Dominion Laboratory of Plant Pathology, Canada; Dr. W. Carter, head of the Department of Entomology, Pineapple Research Institute, Hawaii; and Prof. van Slogteren, of Holland. Their terms of reference are: "Having regard to the research work in swollen shoot disease of cocoa trees in the Gold Coast being carried out by the West African Cocoa Research Institute, to study the incidence and nature of the disease and to report on the technical measures necessary for its speedy eradication".

British Museum (Natural History): Acquisitions

THE following acquisitions to the British Museum (Natural History) have been announced: Sir Sidney Harmer, director of the Museum from 1919 to 1927, has presented 374 volumes of reprints and zoological publications dealing principally with Cetacea and Polyzoa, together with card-indexes of authors and subjects. The Governing Body of King's College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, have given about 10,000 slides of Crustacea and Foraminifera containing the type specimens of many species collected by the *Challenger* and other expeditions for the exploration of the sea; these slides were prepared by the late Prof. G. S. Brady. The extensive collection of Diptera formed by the late Colbran J. Wainwright, a recognized authority on the study of this order of insects, has been presented by his daughters, Miss Wainwright and Mrs. Reid; the collection is estimated to contain approximately 65,000 specimens, of which the greater part are from the palæarctic region, although some 18,000 are from other parts of the world. Finally, three important bequests have been made to the Department of Botany, the first being the remainder of the late Colonel A. H. Wolley-Dod's herbarium and consisting of about 10,000 sheets of British plants mainly of his own collecting (Colonel Wolley-Dod was the author of "Flora of Sussex", and his herbarium contains many of the specimens on which records were based). Second is the very important collection of British and European plants estimated at 30,000 specimens and brought together by the late Mr. Herbert William Pugsley; the material is excellently preserved and the alpine plants are exceptionally good. The third bequest is that of the late Mr. J. W. Long's herbarium of about 15,000 sheets of British and European plants.

Marconi Jubilee Congress

THE publication is announced of the *Proceedings* of the International Congress held in Rome last September in connexion with the Marconi Jubilee (see *Nature*, November 29, 1947, p. 473). The volume, which comprises some 970 pages and 470 illustrations, is published by Dr. Giovanni Bardi, Salita de' Crescenzi 16, Rome, at the price of 4,000 lire. In a preface, Prof. Gustavo Colonnetti, president of the Italian National Research Council, describes the aims of the Congress, and the success which accompanied it with the interested support of many participants from various nations. The full texts of the fifty-nine papers, of which ten are by British authors, are reproduced in the volume, classified in four sections under the titles of electromagnetic waves, electric