Prof. W. T. Astbury, F.R.S.

At the recent celebrations of the liberation of the city of Strasbourg in 1918 and 1944, the solemn 're-entry' of the University was marked, on November 22, by its first honorary degree ceremony since the end of the War. Among other recipients, the degree of *Docteur honoris causa* was conferred on Prof. W. T. Astbury, of the Department of Biomolecular Structure and Textile Physics Laboratory of the University of Leeds. Prof. Astbury was also recently elected a member of the Royal Society of Sciences of Uppsala.

L.M.S. Railway : Scientific Research

Mr. F. C. Johansen has been appointed deputy scientific research manager of the L.M.S. Railway. Mr. Johansen graduated with first-class honours from King's College, University of London, gaining the degree of B.Sc.(Eng.), and afterwards obtaining his M.Sc. On leaving the university, he took up an appointment with the Yorkshire Electric Power Co.; later he joined the National Physical Laboratory, where he did research into certain aspects of fluid motion, and carried out a comprehensive investigation into air resistance of trains. In 1932 he joined the Scientific Research Department of the L.M.S. Railway as engineering research officer.

University of Glasgow

Dr. Eric Clar has arrived from Czechoslovakia to work in the Chemistry Department as an I.C.I. Fellow. After graduating at Dresden and working for a time at Cambridge, Dr. Clar became head of the Chemistry Department of the Istituto Ronzoni at Milan in 1930. Since 1933 he has been working mainly in his own laboratory at Herrnskretschen, but has also been part-time lecturer in the University of Prague and has had connexions with Rütgers A.G. at Niederau. For many years he has been especially interested in polycyclic hydrocarbons and their derivatives, and he is author of the monograph, "Aromatische Kohlenwasserstoffe" (1941).

Mr. Cyril A. Halstead has been appointed assistant in geography. The following resignations have been accepted: Dr. G. F. Asprey (botany) to become lecturer in plant physiology in the University of Aberdeen; Mr. E. Duffy (bacteriology) to become assistant pathologist to the Royal Cancer Hospital, Glasgow; Dr. Janet S. F. Niven (pathology) to join the staff of the National Institute of Medical Research, London.

The North Ferriby Boats

Little is known about the efforts of primitive man in northern Europe to overcome the inherent defects of the dugout boat and to develop a seaworthy planked vessel. The Scandinavian tradition was to use the clinker build; but apart from the Hjortspring canoe, really early examples of this kind are so incomplete that it is impossible to gather any clear idea of their shape or size. In all of them, however, the planks are secured by stitching. The remains of two large boats as primitive as any planked vessel from Northern Europe and, in one case, sufficiently complete to allow reconstruction of the original form to be made with fair certainty, have been found by Mr. E. V. Wright and his brother, the first in 1937, the second in 1941. They were between high and low water, buried in the old river clays on the north bank of the River Humber at North Ferriby in east Yorkshire. Much of the first boat was lost during the War by erosion; but records survive of what has disappeared. The end of the War made it possible to recover what was left. The enthusiastic support was secured of the late Sir Geoffrey Callender and the National Maritime Museum, who organised the salvage of the boats with the help of the Admiralty. Although the first boat was not extracted in one piece, as was hoped, no information or timber was lost, and a successful restoration is certain.

The boats were highly developed examples of a technique of sewing planks together to form a 'fabricated dugout'. They had a flat bottom made up of three composite planks, the centre one being turned up like the end of a punt at the end that was preserved complete, and probably at the other also. The centre plank was twice as thick as the others but was made of two lengths joined with an absurdly short scarf joint in the middle. The seams were grooved, caulked with moss, with a covering slat and sewn up with yew withes. The bottom planks were further secured by groups of cross-battens passing through cleats left standing on the upper surface of the planks. Part of the first strake survived on one side. It was cut on the curve from the solid wood. No form of framing was discovered, although there were probably at least some thwarts to support the sides of the hull. The meagre archæological evidence at present points to an Early Iron Age date for the deposits in which the boats were found. The botanical evidence may throw further light on their age. The work of recording is now very nearly completed and that of preservation will shortly begin. All being well, these splendid monuments of primitive craftsmanship will in due course be on exhibition at the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich.

An Automatic Computing Engine for the National Physical Laboratory

Following upon Lord Mountbatten's presidential address to the Institution of Radio Engineers, in which he referred to the E.N.I.A.C. (described in an article in *Nature* of October 12, p. 500), a statement was issued from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research stating that plans for a machine to be called the Automatic Computing Engine (A.C.E.) are being completed at the National Physical Laboratory. A short statement about this machine was broadcast by Sir Charles Darwin, director of the National Physical Laboratory, in the B.B.C. Home Service on November 9. While paper plans have made good progress, the technical design is only beginning, and it will be a year or two before any units are operating. The completion of the machine will take several years. The project is under the charge of Mr. J. R. Womersley, superintendent of the Mathematics Division, and the machine will form part of the Division's equipment. The team of mathematicians who are planning the machine is led by Dr. A. M. Turing, formerly a fellow of King's College, Cambridge, in whose paper "On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem" (*Proc. Lond. Math. Soc.*, 1937), the possibility of such machines is foreseen, and methods of organising work on them are discussed.

Council for the Preservation of Rural England

In the report of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England the first after the war years, the aims, objects and policy of the Council are re-stated. Briefly, these relate to the protection of rural scenery,