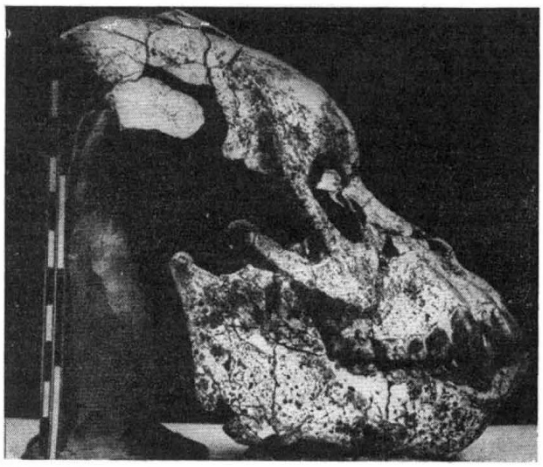
NEWS and VIEWS

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. ½ 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.