

animal life, dictated by Nature over countless years. The object of the expedition was to study the influence of land formation and climatic conditions on the vegetation of the island, even to an investigation of soil-salt content, which was found to vary considerably at different levels, the highest percentage of salt being at 500 ft., with diminishing amounts down to sea-level. Members of the party collected some 250 species of plant life, but no new records were discovered. Further work in the area is to be undertaken.

In a joint effort, the two speakers who followed (A. N. P. Butland and P. A. Crossley, of St. Peter's School, York) dealt with "Some Scientific Aspects of the River Ouse", the former confining himself to the work of the analytical chemist in connexion with water supply; a work in which he had taken part. Methods adopted in order to detect any possible contamination were described, and the results obtained at various points were given, from which it was apparent that the purity of Ouse water is well safeguarded.

P. A. Crossley concerned himself with 'foaming' in rivers and canals, a natural phenomenon the reason for which was explained, but in these days very much accentuated by the growing use of detergents. The River Don was said to foam much more than the Ouse; the Trent slightly less. Excellent slides were shown to illustrate foaming along these rivers, with graphs to present results of investigations made. Each speaker presented an interesting picture of problems involved.

"The Sedges of Askham Bog" formed the subject of Shaun Firth's paper, excellently illustrated by colour slides. The area investigated is well known to naturalists and close to York. It carries a variety of sedges but, so far as the speaker knew, no systematic study of them had been carried out, interest having ranged only around the rarer species, such as the handsome *Carex appropinquata*. In consequence a group of boys from Bootham School, York, including the speaker, undertook to remedy the omission. The aim was to compile a full list of species and, if possible, "to account for the presence and performance" of the sedges. "We are aware," remarked the speaker, "we have come nowhere near an exhaustive treatment of the subject . . . what made our study of the sedges so enjoyable was the fact that new data came to light with practically every visit to the Bog, to upset our rashly formed theories and force us to observe further and think again." So this, it would seem, is but the introduction to a hitherto neglected subject.

The Bar Convent Grammar School, York, was well represented by Nancy G. Proctor, who, after only

eighteen months residence in the City, has absorbed much of its history, having received an introduction by becoming an assistant to Mr. Wenham, history master of St. John's College, York, who is carrying out an excavation under the ægis of the two local archaeological societies. Thus Miss Proctor has in a short time been able to increase her knowledge of Roman antiquities, and to add this to her main interest in the archaeological field which embraces the works of prehistoric man, in particular the study of promontory forts. Her work in York, even of so short a period, enabled her to trace the City's growth from the time when there was only an "insignificant wooden fort founded on the site in 70 A.D.", and to describe graphically recent investigations which she and members of her school have undertaken.

Another well-known Yorkshire educational establishment supplied both speaker and illustrator for the final paper, "The Seasonal Rhythm and Behaviour of the Birds of Bempton Cliffs", the former in the person of Eileen Burton, and the latter Joanne Littlefair, pupils of the High School for Girls, Bridlington. A bird-watching group visited Bempton at weekly, or twice-weekly, intervals during the year, where along an eight hundred feet stretch of the highest cliff, members studied the seasonal variation of population and the behaviour of six species of nesting seabirds—kittiwake and herring gulls, gannet, guillemot, razorbill and fulmar petrel. The date of the arrival of each species was carefully noted, together with time of egg laying and hatching, and departure. A count made along 200 ft. of the cliff showed the kittiwake to be the commonest species present during May (915), followed by guillemot (543), razorbill (18), fulmar (15), gannet (13), and herring gull (5). Five gannet chicks were hatched and reared in 1959, and as a pair of this species nested on a new ledge there would appear to be hope for an extension of the nesting area, which is the solitary British mainland station, all others being found on islands. A study was made of bird display at various times, methods adopted during time of incubation, and of the feeding of young, which gave Miss Littlefair an opportunity of producing drawings of remarkable quality, which were used to illustrate the talk in wall-chart form.

The Countess of Albemarle, president of Section X, occupied the chair throughout the meeting and in her closing remarks complimented the sixth-formers on their powers of observation, method of presentation and keenness in the respective tasks undertaken, a tribute not only to the young people but to their teachers and leaders as well.

J. A. S. STENDALL

## THE MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION

THE sixty-fifth annual conference of the Museums Association was held at Worthing during June 15-19. The proceedings opened with an informal reception in the entirely re-organized Museum and Art Gallery and members were particularly interested in the additional accommodation provided by a new gallery, laboratory, workshop and storage space.

The Conference continued on the following day with an official welcome from the Mayor, Councillor Horace W. Bradley. This meeting, as the others, was

held in the spacious and attractive rooms of the Assembly Hall placed at the disposal of the Conference by the Corporation of Worthing.

Dr. W. E. Swinton, British Museum (Natural History), in his presidential address, after outlining the early struggles of the Association, emphasized the value of television and urged both museums and art galleries to use it extensively. It was, he said, the acceptable medium of to-day, 'easy, lazy but direct'. There was abundant evidence that already it had

attracted people to visit museums and see the actual objects. Dr. Swinton emphasized the close relation between science and the arts and stated that whereas thirty years ago they were pleading for more science in museums, which were then chiefly artistic, in this scientific age there was some need for a reversal of the process.

The main subject of the Conference was museums and finance, introduced by Lord Rosse, chairman of the Standing Commission on Museums and Art Galleries. After recalling the increase of grants from the government which had recently taken place, he emphasized particularly the need for more staff in museums. The present shortage of staff was both absolute, because there were not enough qualified people, and comparative, because museum rates of pay were not competitive with comparable professions. He felt that museums should not depend too much on the Exchequer but that local authorities and others should do their share. Dr. Barnett Stross hoped that curators would use the increased grant of £15,000 made available through the Victoria and Albert Museum. He felt that the chief needs of the museum movement were for staff of high status with adequate pay, a high standard of conservation and for more realistic purchase grants. Sir Hamilton Kerr thought that two stages were necessary, an immediate first aid operation and secondly an expert committee to consider all the problems confronting museums in Britain. Sir George Dyson outlined the help that the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust had given to museums over the past thirty years, and Sir Philip Hendy gave some striking facts of the magnitude of the loss suffered by the decay of private patronage since 1914. Sir John Hobhouse outlined the initial steps taken by the newly formed South-West Regional Council, and Mr. E. M. Hutchinson, National Institute of Adult Education, was anxious that local authorities should use to the fullest extent the power to raise money that has already been vested in them.

At the close of the discussion resolutions were passed endorsing the recommendations of the Standing Commission relating to tax reliefs on gifts and bequests which should be made applicable to all museums; urging the Standing Commission to form a joint committee with the Museums Association to advise on all professional matters and requesting the Joint Committee on Government Assistance to make a survey of existing conditions in museums and art galleries.

In a discussion on the country house and the museum, Mr. R. Romilly Fedden, secretary of the Historic Buildings Committee of the National Trust, emphasized that the great country house with its contents formed a living organism, and stated that the trust had close relations for expert advice and so on with museums. Lord Methuen suggested that the Government might take over some of the empty great houses not too far from London and use them for showing secondary pictures from the National Gallery. He also advocated the co-operation of persons with specialized knowledge on local authority committees. Mr. Philip James, director of Waddesdon Manor, stated that the crux of the problem for using furnished country houses as museums was how to get as many people as possible round the house without destroying its atmosphere as a home.

At the annual general meeting Dr. W. E. Swinton was re-elected president, Mr. G. L. Conran was elected secretary and Sir John Rothenstein, editor. Mr. Charles Carter (Aberdeen), Mr. R. R. Clarke (Norwich), Dr. D. Dilwyn John (Cardiff) and Dr. Mary Woodall (Birmingham) were the newly elected professional councillors and Sir Hamilton Kerr, the Institutional councillor. The Earl of Rosse and Dr. D. B. Harden were appointed as additional vice-presidents. It was decided to hold the 1960 Conference at Stoke-on-Trent during July 4-9.

The concluding day was devoted to field meetings to inspect the historic and archaeological wealth of Sussex.

## THE INTERNATIONAL VETERINARY CONGRESS

THE sixteenth International Veterinary Congress, held in Madrid during May 21-27, was attended by nearly 2,000 members of the veterinary profession from all continents, including official delegates from fifty-two countries and more than one hundred from the United Kingdom. The Congress, under the patronage of the members of the Spanish Government, enjoyed the hospitality of the University of Madrid. The inaugural general assembly and plenary session meetings took place in the large hall of the new and magnificent building of the Faculty of Law. The variety of the papers—about 400 in all—presented during the Congress was very great. They were concerned with physiology, nutrition, pathology, public health aspects of animal diseases, food products and veterinary education. A balanced review is not practicable here, but a few papers of greater general interest and a few more interesting papers presented by British delegations can be mentioned.

As a result of the extensive public interest and concern there has been considerable research and investigation into contamination of the Earth's surface with radioactivity, and its subsequent effect

on farm animals, as well as on man and human food of animal origin. It has been found that an extremely heavy environmental contamination with fission products would be necessary to produce any significant damage as a result of external exposure of farm animals to  $\beta$ - or  $\gamma$ -rays. The radiation exposure of farm animals from grazing in contaminated areas presents no significant hazard to the animals, except perhaps in localities very close to test sites. Cows contaminated with radionuclides may become a potential hazard to man through milk, in which they are secreted in more significant quantities than in any other animal food product. Papers on this problem were presented by American, German, Dutch and Swedish workers. It was generally agreed that in order to be able to appraise continually the effects of fall-out from atomic-weapon tests, and of the discharge into air and water of waste from all plants where nuclear energy is produced and applied, it is necessary to make regular measurements of the radioactivity present in soil, water, air and food.

A role of the veterinary profession which has not yet been fully exploited is that concerning public