

THE ROYAL SOCIETY CLUB OF EDINBURGH

FROM the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards, dining clubs have flourished in the United Kingdom. Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Donne, Dekker, Dr. Johnson, Boswell and Sir Joshua Reynolds were all men who relished good food and conversation around a tavern table. This taste was shared by leaders of scientific progress; and out of the meetings of twelve or twenty enthusiasts, who met at the Bull-Head Tavern in Cheapside in 1650 to eat and drink, to experiment and to discuss science, was born the Royal Society of London. The Royal Society Club, unofficially known as the "Royal Philosophers", dates its minutes from 1743, but, probably, became a regular dining club about 1725.

Dr. Douglas Guthrie, in a recently published volume, ably records the leading features of an equally select club*. He begins with a brief account of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, which was founded in 1783. This arose from the amalgamation of a Society for the Improvement of Medical Knowledge, dating from 1731, and a Philosophical Society (for Science and Literature) which had existed from 1739.

The Royal Society Club was founded in 1820 "with the view of promoting the objects of the Royal Society". Membership was limited to forty-six Fellows of the Society elected by ballot. Since 1950 the number has been raised to sixty. The Club met at various Edinburgh hotels up to 1909, but now normally meets in the rooms of the Royal Society in George Street. Dinners have also been held in or near Edinburgh.

* *A Short History of the Royal Society Club of Edinburgh 1820 to 1962*. By Douglas Guthrie, with a foreword by Prof. E. L. Hirst, president of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Pp. 40, illustrated. Published privately by the Royal Society Club, Edinburgh, 1962.

Interesting sketches are given of distinguished members of the Club. Sir Walter Scott was the third president of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (1820-32) and the only 'literary' president. He was an original member of the Club, and was preses (chairman) at the dinners of March 6, 1820, February 5, 1827, December 3, 1827, and January 18, 1830. He attended on other dates and was elected an honorary member in 1831. Other eminent members are mentioned, for example, James Skene, the first secretary, antiquary and close friend of Sir Walter; Lord Meadowbank, the judge; Sir Archibald Geikie, geologist; the versatile Prof. John Stuart Blackie; Sir Robert Christison; Lord Playfair; Lord Kelvin; and coming to later times, Dr. G. A. Gibson, Sir D'Arey Thompson and the great bacteriologist, Sir Robert Muir. In the nineteenth century music and song added to the conviviality of the dinners, and some of the witty songs sung were composed by the members. The Club has entertained many distinguished guests, including the Crown Prince of Sweden, the Prince of Monaco, Captain Peary, Fridtjof Nansen, Dr. Sven Hedin, Sir J. J. Thomson, the physicist, Lord Balfour, statesman and philosopher, and Sir Arthur Keith. An account is given of two other clubs (now extinct) for more junior Fellows, namely, the Royal Society New Club and the Royal Society Supper Club. The book is illustrated by portraits of certain members.

The Club has been fortunate in persuading Dr. Guthrie, who has been for many years a devoted member both of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and of the Royal Society Club, to write its interesting history.

ARTHUR MACNALTY

RESEARCH INTO EDUCATION IN BRITAIN

IN a debate in the House of Commons on July 24 on the Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations which was opened by Mr. J. Boyden, who expressed some concern about the establishment of such a council, Mr. F. Wiley referred to proposals made by the universities to the Minister for Science for the establishment of an educational research council. Mr. Wiley stressed the need for conditions of support which preserved for the individual worker the intellectual initiative essential for creative work. The universities, he said, pointed out that an educational research council should be independent of the executive departments of the Government, and directly responsible, not advisory, for the expansion of research, including research into problems of primary, secondary and tertiary education in Britain as a whole. They suggested a council of about 12 members, chosen for their distinction and bringing together wide experience in research. They would not be representative, and this body was the antithesis in character of the council of 58 or 59 which the Minister of Education was proposing to establish.

In reply, the Minister of Education, Sir Edward Boyle, said that he had convened a meeting on July 19 to discuss a memorandum which he had circulated widely, and which was inspired by the central thought that curriculum development on the scale now required demanded the willing and enthusiastic co-operation of all partners in Britain's educational service. The discussion was of extremely high quality, and at the end of the meeting a resolution was passed which (a) noted that there was wide

support for the proposal to establish co-operative machinery in the fields of school curriculum and examination; (b) appointed a working party, with Sir John Lockwood as chairman, comprising one representative of each of the bodies present at the meeting, together with assessors and a secretariat appointed by the Minister for Education, to consider how effect could best be given to the matters discussed and to make recommendations; (c) agreed to reconvene to consider and reach conclusions on the working party's recommendations.

On the general issue of research, Sir Edward Boyle said that while the sum allotted in this year's Estimate was only about £70,000, the total cost of all the projects being undertaken would, when completed, be between £200,000 and £250,000. One of the difficulties in this field, besides isolating the specific fields, was to find teams capable of doing full justice to them. Sir Edward assured the House that he was fully aware of the great importance of the research work in progress and for the future he thought that team work on curriculum and methods should proceed in a context which ensured the exchange of ideas between different teams. He pointed out that the curriculum study groups and the inspectorate were not entirely separate, the former including many of the ablest inspectors. He had discussed these ideas with a representative meeting of inspectors and there was no intention to diminish the role of the inspectorate, which was even more important in the educational system than many people realized. There was, however, a danger that some central bodies could be pushed into

extending their proper terms of reference, and he did not wish the establishment of the curriculum study groups to lead towards centralized control of the curriculum or towards misdirected central influence on it. If a schools council were set up, however, he would wish it to be more than a purely advisory body and that it should possess complete autonomy in all matters which did not fall within the Minister's statutory powers and responsibilities. With regard to the size of any such council, Sir Edward insisted that education in Britain was a shared service, and accordingly such a council must bring together the Ministry and local authorities and the teachers. He hoped that the council would also include not only

representatives of those concerned with the day-to-day work of education in the schools, but also some who could point out lines of research on issues which might be overlooked by others, members who were competent to challenge the Ministry and Britain's traditional day-to-day approaches to the kind of research which was most needed.

The proposals mentioned by Mr. Wiley were sent to the Minister for Science by the heads of departments and institutes of education of universities in England and Wales. They refer to the danger of a patchwork of short-term projects and base their proposals on the organization of the existing Research Councils responsible to Lord Hailsham.

TRANSLATIONS OF LITERATURE ON NUCLEAR ENERGY

THE European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), the United States Atomic Energy Commission, and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority have agreed to pool their efforts in order to collect and disseminate information on translations of nuclear literature, in particular of documents originally written in languages unfamiliar to the Western reader. An information office 'Transatom' has been set up at the headquarters of Euratom in Brussels for the collection of data concerning translations of interest, and a monthly guide to nuclear literature in translation, *Transatom Bulletin*, compiled by Euratom is published by the Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam. The *Bulletin* is in English and provides a unique survey of translations into English, French, German and Italian, of articles, monographs, books, reports, etc., in the field of nuclear science and technology originally published in the non-Western world. Precise bibliographical data of the original Russian, East European, Japanese and Chinese documents are included in the *Bulletin*, together with the addresses of the translation agencies which can supply copies of the translations listed and the conditions of availability of the translations. Certain journals receive cover-to-cover translation and a separate list of these is printed in every issue of the *Bulletin*. The various entries in the *Bulletin* are classified under fourteen headings, covering general and specialized areas of science and technology in which nuclear energy is either fundamental or has found some application.

A list of translations in preparation, but yet not completed, which may be of special value to many organizations so as to avoid duplication of effort and unnecessary expense, is an added feature of the *Bulletin*. Both

author and source indexes are given in every issue of the *Bulletin*, and cumulative quarterly indexes are included in the Nos. 3, 6 and 9 issues, with an annual cumulative author and source index in the final (No. 12) issue of the year and volume. The *Bulletin* is now in its third year of publication.

A new publication of Euratom, *Euratom-Information**, is to be published bi-monthly. The research undertaken by Euratom which is now five years old is beginning to give rise to a rapidly increasing number of reports, at present at about one a day, and the new publication will act primarily as a periodical catalogue of the reports. The contents of the first issue of *Euratom-Information* is divided into five sections. The first contains a list of 104 scientific and technical publications; the second 33 patents; the third the research contracts signed by the Euratom Commission up to December 31, 1962; the fourth details of the research activities which the Commission plans to carry out as from January 1, 1963, and in which individuals and organizations within Euratom can collaborate; and finally, a statement of the Euratom-United States of America joint research and development programme. In the first section, where the publication referred to is not in English, the foreign language summary together with the translation of both the title and summary are given. Details of how to obtain copies of the reports and publications listed are included.

S. WEINTROUB

* *Euratom-Information*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (May 1963). (A publication of the European Atomic Energy Community.) Pp. 1-81. Published at two-monthly intervals. (Düsseldorf: Handelsblatt, G.m.b.H., Kreuze-Strasse 21, 1963.) Annual subscription 15 dollars.

REFLECTED LIGHT MICROSCOPY

THE quantitative methods which can be applied to the study of opaque minerals (natural and synthetic) under the polarizing microscope are the measurement of reflectivity, of rotation properties, and of micro-indentation hardness. Recent advances in these methods have brought them to the point where it is believed that they can be generally applied in a way similar to the use of optical methods in the identification of transparent minerals.

With the view of disseminating knowledge of these methods as widely as possible, a small committee of British mineralogists was set up to organize an international Summer School. With the aid of a generous grant from the Scientific Affairs Division of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, an advanced study course was held during June 23-July 2 in the Department of Mineralogy and Petrology, Cambridge. There were thirty-one members, including eight observers, drawn from twenty-three different countries; all except two of

those in the observer category were mineralogists engaged in academic work.

The basic techniques and theory were covered in seven lectures and practical demonstrations, after which the members divided into two sections (ore minerals and coal petrology) for a further six lectures followed by practical work in either section. Each member had a total of thirty hours of practical work, and in addition there were three colloquia. Throughout the course emphasis was placed on the practical aspects of quantitative measurements, and this was made possible by the generous loan of equipment by several firms. Much of the apparatus, which included reflecting-polarizing microscopes, monochromators, photometers and micro-indentation hardness testers, was of recent design, and the opportunity was taken of obtaining comments from the members on the equipment.

Further information about this Summer School can be obtained from the secretary, Dr. N. F. M. Henry, Department of Mineralogy and Petrology, Cambridge.