

reassembly. Each timber must conform to the original tracing in horizontal shape and size before reconstruction can begin. The third dimension can be produced by heating but not the stretching of basic length and breadth.

Each of the five ships is different. The one being moved for reassembly this week is a 40-ft. ocean-going cargo vessel such as was used by Erik the Red and his successors for the early Norse voyages to Greenland and North America—"Vinland" as the sagas called it. This is a stout, decked sailing ship of pine on an oak frame with a heightened freeboard. Another is a classical "longship" such as chieftains used on coastal forays, 90 ft. long and built of oak. Another is the coastal assault craft which is well illustrated in the Bayeux tapestry of the Norman Conquest of England (the Normans were descended from the Norsemen). The best preserved of the Roskilde Viking ships is an oak ship thought to have been used for coastal freighting in the Baltic. And there is a smaller boat which remains something of a mystery—nothing similar has been found in the records. It may have been used for net-fishing. It has neither deck nor oar-holes and is built of pine which at that period was unknown in Denmark. This suggests that it may have originated in southern Norway.

Mr Ole Crumlin-Pedersen, the naval architect who has been responsible for the finds, plans to build a full-size replica of the Atlantic craft with identical materials and a set of Viking shipwright's tools, to see how she handles at sea. He has already done this for the assault craft shown on the Bayeux tapestry and found it quite easy to load and land horses from the foreshore as shown in the tapestry.

Pattern of Research

from Our Special Correspondent

THE MRC Metabolic Reactions Research Unit in the Biochemistry Department at Imperial College, London, under Professor E. B. Chain, shows a common pattern of research, as a public visit on Tuesday of this week illustrated. The pattern has four components: a belief that biochemistry done on complete organs or tissues is likely to yield results nearer to the reality of living animals than can be got from enzyme preparations; exceptional resources for making and processing analyses and counts of radioactive tracers in a multiplicity of materials; the facilities for pilot-scale fermentation on which Professor Chain insisted from the start; and the personal dominance which he still exercises. The unit has a scientifically qualified staff of 15 including attached workers and the department some 20. Interesting and potentially promising use of congenital obesity in mice is being made by Dr C. Chlouvrakis. His most recent experiment shows a difference in response to insulin between diaphragm muscle and adipose tissue in these mice, and also an age effect. Muscle does not respond to insulin; adipose tissue in five month old animals does. By the age of a year the second response has disappeared and at the same time the weight of the animals levels out. Recent medical evidence on maturity-onset diabetes and obesity suggests that Dr Chlouvrakis's research may be relevant to man. He plans next to look for biochemical differences associated with the tissue and age effects. Mr K. R. L. Mansford and others

are working on the metabolism of complete hearts. They are interested in the partial revival of activity which follows the initial severe drop induced by oxygen deficiency. Dr H. F. Bradford, Mr K. Corbett and Dr S. P. R. Rose have gone some way towards establishing that the brain of the snail, which has cells at least ten times larger than the human brain, can be used as a simplified model from which a biochemical picture of the working of brains, including the interrelation of neurones and glia, may be in time built up. Other research, at an early stage, follows the demonstration by Dr P. Mantle in the department that agroclavin (closely related to the ergot alkaloids and in particular to LSD) has a central and specific inhibitory effect on lactation. Because agroclavin is much less toxic than LSD, study of the mechanisms by which it produces central effects, some of which appear to be shared by LSD, may give some helpful leads on the latter. This research should be worth doing in any case because of the side effects of agroclavin that may be brought to light. There is also supporting development work on automated instrumentation and data processing applied to biochemical methods of analysis and separation. Because of the opportunities that the unit and department together provide, there will be a case (in better times) for more senior posts in the department.

Applying to See Stars

THE Science Research Council has set up a panel, chaired by the Astronomer Royal, to allocate time on the three large telescopes which it will eventually be supporting. These are the 74-inch reflector at Pretoria, leased from the Radcliffe Trustees for seven years from 1967, the 98-inch Isaac Newton telescope at Herstmonceux, now undergoing commissioning trials, and the projected Anglo-Australian 150-inch reflector at Siding Spring in New South Wales, half of the observing time on which will be available to United Kingdom astronomers. Observing time at the Radcliffe Observatory will be shared between the present staff, the Royal Greenwich and Cape Observatories and United Kingdom astronomers in general.

Astronomers based in the United Kingdom who wish to use the telescopes are asked to apply to the Secretary of the Panel, Dr A. Hunter, whose address is the Royal Greenwich Observatory, Herstmonceux Castle, Hailsham, Sussex. The panel's duty is to consider applications on their scientific merits and to allocate time to individual users in accordance with SRC policy. Applications to use the Radcliffe reflector should be made one year in advance, and to use the Isaac Newton telescope six months in advance.

The panel itself disposes only of time, not of money; applications for grant support should therefore be made in parallel to the Science Research Council.

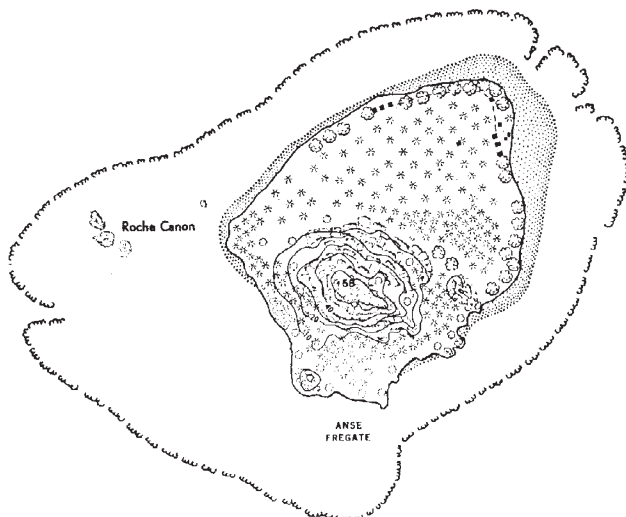
Cousin, not Cousine

COUSIN ISLAND is a small island of 67 acres (not to be confused with a neighbouring island, Cousine) in the Seychelles, about 800 miles north-east of Aldabra Island, which is shortly to be bought and turned into a nature reserve. That, at least, is the hope. For seven years the International Council for Bird Preservation has been bargaining to buy the island and now a firm offer for the island has been accepted. With the

help of the British national appeal of the World Wildlife Fund, it is hoped that at least £50,000 will be raised to cover the purchase, to maintain the island as a nature reserve and set up a permanent research study centre.

The Seychelles are important because of the large numbers of endemic land birds they support; the fact that the Seychelles are an archipelago has probably had something to do with this. In the early eighteenth century, when the islands were first colonized, there were about a dozen endemic species on most of them. As the human settlements became larger and the islands more cultivated, the birds became rarer. Last century, at least three and possibly four of the species became extinct, and today the remaining endemic species are to be found on only one or two of the islands. The felling of trees and the introduction of rodents and cats by man are thought to have led to the disappearance and restriction in range of these birds.

Cousin Island is still fairly well stocked with endemics and from all accounts it would be ideal as a sanctuary and as a centre for studying the whole archipelago. Unfortunately, pigs are being allowed to run wild in the scrub of the north-eastern plateau with disastrous results for the bird population. It is becoming more urgent than ever, therefore, to buy the island for conservation, so that control can be kept over the vegetation and the introduced animals.



Cousin Island (Crown copyright).

It seems to be agreed that Cousin is particularly important because it is the only remaining home of the brush warbler (*Nesillas (Bebrornis) sechellanis*), of which only 50 are left. The bird breeds in dense cover, especially over the marshy area in the south-west of the island. The turtle dove, *Streptopelia picturata rostrata*, is also unique to Cousin. This endemic subspecies has been swamped in the other islands by interbreeding with an introduced form, *S.p. picturata*, from Madagascar. On Cousin, however, the endemic characters are retained to a great extent. The island is also one of the three remaining places where the Seychelles fody or toq toq (*Foudia sechellarum*) is found, and it also the only breeding place in the Indian Ocean of the rare lesser noddy (*Anous t. tenuirostris*), which otherwise breeds only on a small group off Western Australia. Apart from these rare birds, there are large colonies of the fairy tern (*Anous alba monte*),

shearwaters and nesting tropicbirds (*Phaethon l. lepturus*).

There are also some giant tortoises introduced to the island by a previous owner. These are a different shape from those on Aldabra. Unfortunately the young were removed a long time ago as pets so that today only six adults remain. Apparently each tortoise has to be bought individually along with the island: it is anyone's guess how much each will fetch.

New Units for Nature

IN accordance with the advice of the Royal Society Conference of Editors that scientific journals should adopt the SI system of units (*Nature*, 216, 1272; 1967), *Nature* will be using the recommended symbols. This means that some of our abbreviations will be changed, as shown in the table. This will apply to all communications now accepted for publication.

Symbols previously used in <i>Nature</i>	Symbols to be adopted
sec	s
amp	A
candela	cd
steradian	sr
coulomb	C
farad	F
lumen	lm
lux	lx
cycles/sec	Hz
parsec	pc
c. (curie)	Ci

In the article referred to above, giga was shown as 10^6 and not 10^9 . One atmosphere should be 1.01325 N m^{-2} .

Parliament in Britain

Forestry

MR HAY, joint Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, gave the acres planted by the Forestry Commission in England, Scotland and Wales in each of the ten years 1958–1967. In 1967, of the 52,500 acres planted, 11,200 were in England, 34,500 in Scotland and 6,800 in Wales. Now planting in Scotland was planned to increase to 50,000 acres a year by 1976. The planting programmes for England and Wales were under review. (Written answer, January 17.)

School Leavers

THE Secretary of State for Education and Science, Mr P. Gordon Walker, stated that of school leavers in 1965–66, 5.5 per cent went into universities, 3.1 per cent to colleges of education, 1.1 per cent to full-time (and sandwich) degree and HND/HNC courses in further education establishments and 8.1 per cent to other full-time and sandwich courses at further education establishments, most of the latter courses being non-advanced. Between 50 and 55 per cent of boys and girls were expected to remain at school voluntarily in 1969–70 for a full year beyond the minimum statutory school-leaving age. (Written answer, January 17.)