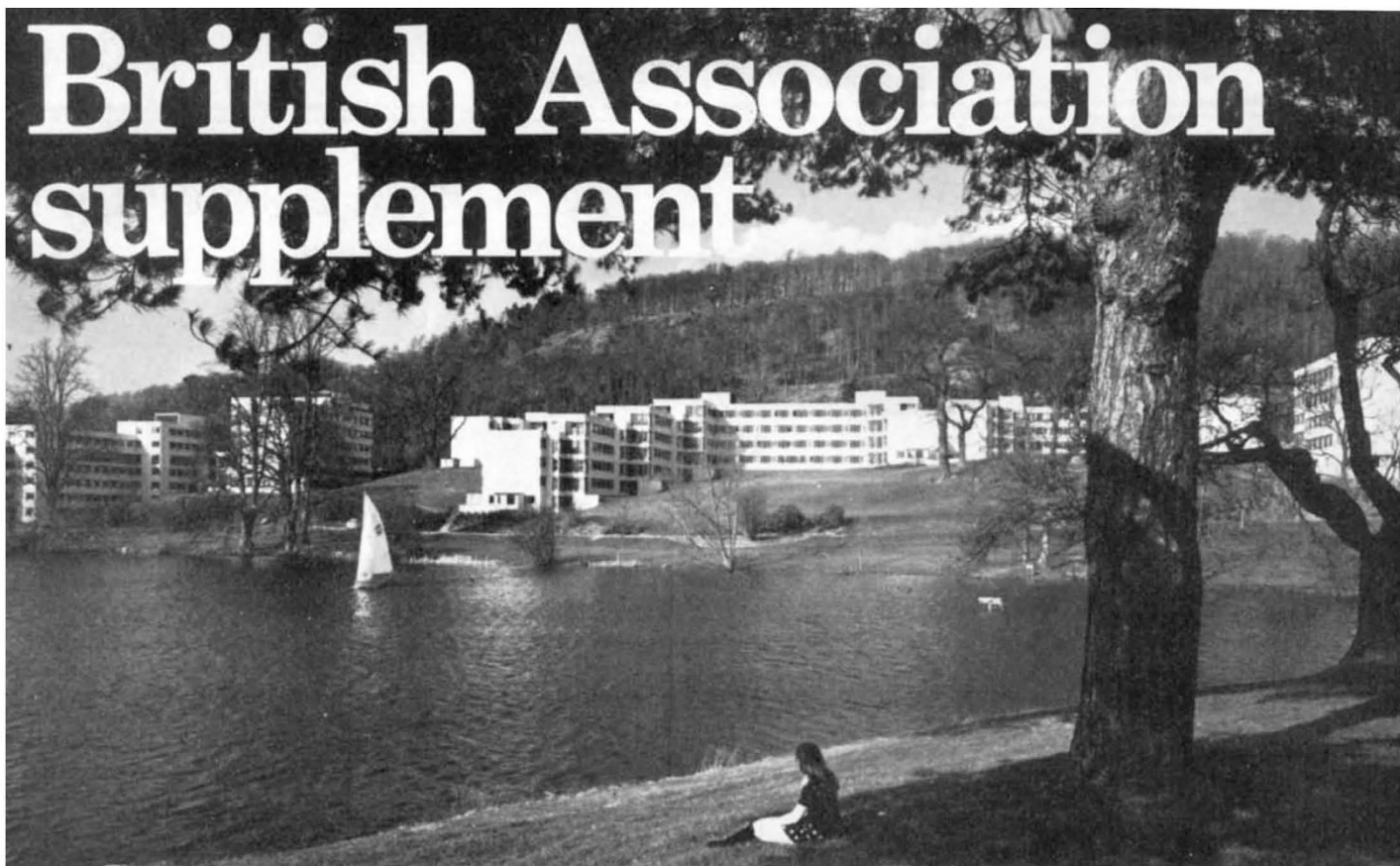


# British Association supplement



Architectural Review

**Stirling campus • Fishlock: Science journalism • 1874 transit of Venus**

**Goldsmith: Popularising science • Science in Northern Ireland**

**Hall: Social responsibility • Murder solution by fluorescence**

**Cotgrove: Objections to science • Art preservation • Bullard: Rutherford's Cavendish**

It has been possible in recent years to look at the British Association for the Advancement of Science from a slightly lofty viewpoint and wonder whether it is worth preserving. The annual meeting, the only occasion on which the association has surfaced, has also become a fairly regular occasion for pointed editorialising about an organisation that had outgrown its usefulness. No longer is this a reasonable line to take, and for that great credit above all to Magnus Pyke whose unique qualities have done much to breathe life into the body. If we talk here about the way ahead it is not without feeling admiration for the achievements of the recent past.

What, if anything, do scientists, those interested in science, and indeed those confronted with science need from a national organisation with a wide potential membership? Clearly not another forum for technical discussion; there are enough of these as it is, and why would a scientist take his latest results to Stirling when he could ride them to Stockholm, San Francisco or Sydney. Nor is it obvious that mere presentation and explanation of science to an enthusiastic audience will be other than an activity of moderate interest to scientists, particularly as the quality of science presentation by other media is often high.

There remains, however, a field which is as yet almost unexplored—the study of science itself. In this supplement we have tried to draw attention to some facets of science to which any scientist could contribute and from which he could draw some intellectual satisfaction. The history, socio-

logy, philosophy and way of going about science; the borderlands where science meets other disciplines; the morality of science; the way that science is presented to the public—there is much fertile ground here for regular discussion. To which we could add the deployment of scientists, science in defence, science in the Third World, education for scientists, government policy for science, nationalism in science. These are all subjects that scientists should have special knowledge of without needing to integrate a differential equation or operate a microscope. They emphasise common experiences, and may be the way towards bridging the gulf, both personal and professional, between teachers, academics, and scientists in government and industry. Here is also scope for the amateurs of science to make significant contributions to the world of learning.

The British Association is the ideal vehicle for all this, with its potentially very broadly based membership and its lack of political colour. It can point already to the increase in throughout-the-year activities both of its younger members and of its *ad hoc* committees. What is needed now is more nation-wide activity amongst its general membership and a vigorous campaign to persuade scientists that the study of science itself makes them a better practitioner. Cells of mutual instruction and discussion, rather like the Mechanics Institutes of the nineteenth century, could do the scientific community, in its broadest sense, much good and are well worth the serious attention of the association in the coming years. □