

point. This is the first instance recorded of a Saxon settlement in the marsh and forest area of south Essex between London and Southend. The absence of cinerary urns and signs of cremation point to a probable date not prior to the sixth century B.C. Nor does there appear to be any ground for connecting this settlement with the East Saxons of the coastal area from Colchester to Ipswich. It is thought to belong to an estuarine Saxon group scarcely differing from that on the north coast of Kent. The finds, of which a selection is shown, include two remarkable curved drinking horns of olive green glass, both broken, but one of which it has been found possible to reconstruct, bronze brooches and rings, wooden buckets with bronze mounts, shield bosses, spearheads, a sword of iron and Roman coins, pierced for use as pendants. The levels of the pit in which the antiquities were found are shown in photographs. The finds will be on view for two months.

#### Tuberculosis in Wild Voles

TUBERCULOSIS among wild animals living in their natural state is almost unknown, and the announcement by Dr. A. Q. Wells of the Bureau of Animal Population, Oxford, of the discovery of this disease among wild voles is of great interest and, it may be, importance (*Lancet*, 1, No. 21, 1221, May 22, 1937). Since last February, Dr. Wells has found in 134 voles caseous lesions, like those of tuberculosis, in which bacilli having the peculiar and characteristic 'acid-fast' staining reaction of the tubercle bacillus were present. In addition, cultures made from the lesions yielded growths resembling those of the tubercle bacillus, and guinea pigs inoculated with the material developed tuberculosis. The voles had been sent from seven different stations in the British Isles, so that the disease seems to be wide-spread among these animals and not a chance occurrence in one locality, and the existence of tuberculosis among them may be of importance in the spread of this disease to domestic animals and to man. The wild vole (*Microtus agrestis*), known as the short-tailed field or grass 'mouse', is a common rodent in meadows, and several sub-species occur in the north. It is of interest in respect to ecology and distribution, for the animals are subject to wide fluctuations in population, increasing over a period of three to four years, and then suddenly decreasing to a low figure in one or two months, and it has been surmised that the decrease may be caused by the occurrence of some epidemic disease among them.

#### A New Ceramic

EXPERIMENTAL work extending over a period of years at the Mellon Institute of Industrial Research has resulted in the production of a new laboratory table top material made of a porous, non-warping ceramic body that is impregnated with bituminous substances and then heated under special conditions to form coke in the pores. Unusually high resistance to thermal shock is imparted to the material because artificial cordierite, a mineral that has a very low

thermal expansion, is used in making up the ceramic body. The material can be polished to velvety smoothness, and possesses sufficient hardness to resist scratching and abrasion, ample structural and impact strength, denseness that prevents absorption of liquids, resistance to solvent action and chemical attack, and the ability to withstand perfectly the effect of rapid heating and cooling. Thus "Kemite", as it has been called, has none of the disadvantages of the commonly used table-top materials. While Kemite was developed primarily as a laboratory table-top material, it can be fabricated in complicated shapes of large size without joints. When high resistance to thermal shock is not required, cordierite is not used in the ceramic body, and ware made from the non-cordieritic body is called 'Karcite'. Kemite should prove useful for vats, tanks and other apparatus, because of its resistance to the action of chemicals and its low thermal expansion. In the electrical industry, the basic body, properly impregnated, can be employed for switchboard panels, specially moulded parts and complex shapes, and as an insulating material.

#### Broadcasting an Eclipse

THE National Geographic Society, Washington, claims that the broadcasting of a series of programmes before and during the eclipse of June 8-9 from one of the (normally) uninhabited islands of the Phoenix Group will be the first instance of broadcasting "from a desert island". It will not be the first eclipse which has been broadcast from an eclipse camp, as Dean Eve broadcast to Canada the total eclipse of 1932 from a camp at Magog, but it will probably be the first time when an announcer and two engineers of a national broadcasting company have formed part of an eclipse expedition to a foreign country. The scientific details of the eclipse expedition arranged by the National Geographic Society were published in *NATURE* of April 24, p. 698; but one or two points of general interest may be added here. The duration of totality at noon will be longer than at any other eclipse over a stretch of 1,238 years; unfortunately, it takes place at a point 1,500 miles from the nearest land. A special self-bailing boat will be used to take the equipment ashore, and the U.S. naval seaplane tender will stand by the island during the expedition's stay ashore. A complete black and white motion picture record of the eclipse will be made and colour 'movies' may also be taken.

#### Development in the Arctic

RECENT economic developments in the Siberian Arctic lands bear some testimony to Mr. V. Stefansson's contention of a 'friendly arctic'. A paper in the *Geographical Journal* of April by Mr. H. P. Smolka describes some of the recent Soviet schemes on the Yenisei, Khatanga and other rivers, where a few years ago a little native fishing and hunting were the sole interests. Igarka, 600 miles up the Yenisei, and some distance north of the Arctic Circle, is now a city of 14,000 inhabitants with well-built timber houses and timber roads. There are schools, theatres