

A centenary is a time for looking backward as well as forward, a time for history and assessment as well as plans for the future. So, in this special issue of the club's journal we offer you, besides articles of the usual type, a four-part history of the club and biographies of five of the eight founding members. If all goes well, biographies of the other three will follow in the next issue. The other unusual feature of this issue is an index to all the articles published in the journal since 1956 prepared by Richard French to whom the editors are very grateful for undertaking this laborious task. A perusal of the index shows the surprisingly wide scope of the journal. The main emphasis has been on vertebrates, especially birds, but articles on almost all the main phyla have appeared with the exception of the unicellular animals (Protozoa), worms (Annelida) and starfishes (Echinodermata). Even such obscure or minute animals as *Peripatus* and sandflies have had someone take an interest in them. Although plants do not arouse the same interest among amateur naturalists as do animals, there is still a fair number of articles on plants. The editors take some pride in this for the journal is obviously fulfilling its purpose of documenting the natural history of the country.

The founding members of the club were all young men. Caracciolo, the oldest, was only 32 and Guppy, the youngest, was 20. This circumstance should encourage our younger members to become more involved in the administration of the club. The editors have been fortunate to find relatives of three of the founders who were willing to write biographies of them. David Rooks is a grandnephew of Caracciolo, Nicholas Guppy is a nephew of P.L. Guppy and Karin De La Bastide is a granddaughter of T.I. Potter. We thank them all, particularly Nicholas Guppy who now lives in London. It is unfortunate, though, that information on Caracciolo is so scanty in view of his prominence during his lifetime. Five persons bearing the name Caracciolo who were contacted had never heard of Henry Caracciolo. There is obviously more research to be done here.

The remaining two articles on the founding members were shared by the editors. No descendant of Broadway has been traced but Mrs. Comeau, by locating much of his correspondence with museums abroad, has managed to give a

fairly complete account of his life and achievements. With R.R. Mole we were lucky. In 1980, Henry Howels Richardson Mole arrived in Trinidad to gather information about his grandfather who, up to that time, was only a name to him. The two authors met him then and were able to start him on his quest. From then on H.H.R. gathered a vast amount of information from which we culled the material for the present biography. H.H.R. himself died two years ago but not before he had written extensively about his grandfather so that, perhaps, we now know more about Mole than about any of the other founders.

For some years now I have thought of the 1890s as a golden age for natural history in Trinidad and therefore the founding of the club in 1891 is not surprising. By then the island's population had increased sufficiently to provide an adequate membership, but not enough to cause environmental degradation. Roads had been built in sufficient numbers to connect the major populated areas and a railway connected Arima, Princes Town and San Fernando with Port of Spain. Communication by horse-drawn cab had existed since 1862. Mule-drawn tramcars and the telephone had arrived in Port of Spain in 1883. Wildlife was still abundant and provided many opportunities for study and, indeed, for sport. That supreme polluter, the motor car, did not arrive until 1900. If Caracciolo had not thought of founding the club when he did, then someone else would have done it a few years later.

What a difference there is a hundred years later! Now, population pressure has caused massive environmental degradation. Many species that were formerly abundant have been extirpated or are barely holding on. Pollution spreads relentlessly. The motor car reigns supreme. To add to our local problems there are the worldwide problems of ozone depletion, global warming and acid rain. Conservation, a word that was probably unknown to our founders, or at any rate never used, is now in constant use among naturalists, its message ever more urgent. If the naturalists of the year 2091 are to have anything to celebrate, we in this club now must continue to be in the forefront of the conservation movement. The history of our club shows that we have won a battle or two. There are many more to be won. – VCQ.