

## The Midland Geotechnical Society

As a result of the 1953-4 Winter School in Soil Mechanics held at the University of Birmingham, it was decided to form the Midland Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering Society, and the first meeting was held on Monday, 1st November 1954, when Dr Cooling of the Building Research Stations lectured on "Recent Studies of Foundation Problems." The story goes that there was a short power cut during the meeting, but when the lights came on again, Dr Cooling was still writing on the blackboard!

The prime mover in founding the Society was Professor Kolbuszewski, who it can be said introduced Soil Mechanics to the Midlands, and he and Mr P G Boosie of R M Douglas Ltd designed the Society's logo and drew up its rules. An exciting evening must have been enjoyed by those who heard Professor Kolbuszewski describe "An Expedition to the Sahara," undertaken to investigate the limits of porosity in sand dunes.

In the early days the programme included talks on fundamental soil properties, as well as on the many building and road construction projects of the time. The Society remained small however, because the subject was relatively specialised.

Today, although construction activity is at a low level, attendance at the meetings, on average 100, is greater than ever before. This is partly due to the increased number of engineering geologists working in Geotechnics, and also to the fact that many London-based consultants have opened offices in the Midlands. Consultants accept that local experience is necessary in dealing with local soils, like Keuper Marl and the man-made "soils" left by declining industries.

Geotechnical problems today include waste disposal, contaminated land, and environmental protection, and an interdisciplinary approach is required to solve them. From time to time the Society has organised conferences on these and other developing aspects of Geotechnics, to provide an opportunity for engineers to share their experience and take part in discussion.