



Wellcome Film Project

Looking Around

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Produced by The Wellcome Film Unit with the co-operation of the staff of The Wellcome Foundation Limited and Mr JW Lester of the London Zoo.

Commentaries spoken by David Lloyd James and Gerard Hoffnung.

Taballet devised by Douglas Fisher.

Colour

Duration: 00:09:50:00

00:00:00:00

<Opening credits>

<Title>

Sealed in Resin

<David Lloyd James over still shot of caddisfly in amber and scorpion in resin.

The process of mounting in resin is then shown>

A long, long time ago, this caddisfly was trapped in a sticky resin and with the process of time, the resin hardened into amber. But today it is possible to mount a scorpion in a block of synthetic resin within a few hours.

<James over demonstration of mounting a scorpion in resin>

Wellcome Film Project

The method is simple. Into a glass mould is poured a layer of the liquid plastic, and on standing for an hour or so, this will gel. Meantime, the scorpion is pinned in position on a piece of cork and dried. It is laid in the mould and more of the resin is poured over it, taking care not to trap any air bubbles. When left overnight the resin polymerises into a solid and then the glass strips forming the mould can be removed.

The block is shaped and smoothed by grinding and it is finally polished with a buff. This method is very suitable for small specimens, larger ones are better mounted in liquid inside a plastic box.

<James over demonstration of how to mount a spider in a Perspex box>

This is made from Perspex sheet which can be cut on a circular saw using a special plastic cutting blade with fine teeth and thick enough to prevent over-heating. A strip of the Perspex is then warmed in a small pit flame so that it can be bent into shape to form two sides and the top of the container. It is laid on a glass plate while the edges are wetted with ethylene dichloride, which dissolves the Perspex locally. It is then transferred to the piece of Perspex which forms the third side and the two are held firmly in contact until the join has set. The fourth side is fixed in the same way. The edges are then trimmed, the corners are ground into shape and finally they are polished.

The container is completed with the specimen in position and the preserving fluid is added through a hole in the base which is afterwards sealed. The back and front plates are sufficiently flexible to allow for the expansion and contraction of the liquid under ordinary changes of temperature.

<James over variety of mounted insects>

These mounts can be adapted to a whole variety of specimens – a spider the size of a half crown is mounted inside a solid block; another contains the whole life story of the wood tick – from the eggs on the right to the engorged female on the left. A python skull is mounted dry in a plastic box and the head of a Gaboon viper is

Wellcome Film Project

displayed to show the fangs and the poison fangs. Another species of scorpion is mounted in liquid with its tail in the striking position. And whatever the specimen may be, a container can be made to display it to the best advantage.

00:03:58:00

<Titles>

Heterocephalus glaber

(Naked Mole Rat)

with comments by Mr Gerard Hoffnung.

<Gerard Hoffnung over shots of naked mole rat>

This extraordinary little animal comes from East Africa where he lives in the Savannah lands of the edge of the desert. Most of his life is spent underground but the natives sometimes catch him for he makes a succulent addition to the stew pot. Like me, he has only a few scattered hairs which sprout out of his body. His large, protruding teeth are used for gnawing through roots and for digging and carrying. His lips, unlike mine, close behind the teeth with the corners tucked tightly in so that no soil can get into his mouth. And his nostrils are valves so that they too can be tightly closed. His snout is tough enough to withstand a great deal of wear and since his skin is constantly being rubbed away against the side of his burrow, it must be continually replaced. Eyes and ears are both very small; he probably can't hear a thing but he's sensitive to the lightest touch of his bristles. He probably can't see either though he responds unhappily to light. When digging, he scoops up the sand with his front feet, then balances on them, steadying himself with his tail, while he thrusts the sand backwards with his back feet. The digits are well-fringed with hair and in action they are cupped to scoop up the earth – good gracious me, just look at that! Ha ha ha! Come along, come along, that's it.

Wellcome Film Project

Sometimes there's a sign of him from above the ground – a few spurts of soil thrown up into the air which gives the wicked natives a chance to strike him with a nail on the end of a stick. Hee hee – if the sand is loose inside his burrow, he turns and packs it down with a curious stamping movement. It is likely that he does the same thing to block up the entrance to the burrow, thus presenting snakes and other undesirable intruders from coming in.

Altogether an odd little animal, and he has no near relatives anywhere else in the world.

00:06:24:12

<Title>

Taballet

<James over shots of medicine production>

Take your drug and make your granules, then compress with dyes and punches, making each to suit its purpose. Penicillin, one throat lozenge, equal strength at two [*indecipherable word*]. Ten times stronger, hypodermic, flat or convex, plain or printed; fast dispersing, effervescent; enteric or sugar-coated; large ones, small ones, long ones, short ones; round ones, square ones, thick ones, thin ones. All of these and more besides them, pouring out each day in millions.

<Shots of tablet production, co-ordinated to appear dance-like, accompanied by lively music>

<End credits>