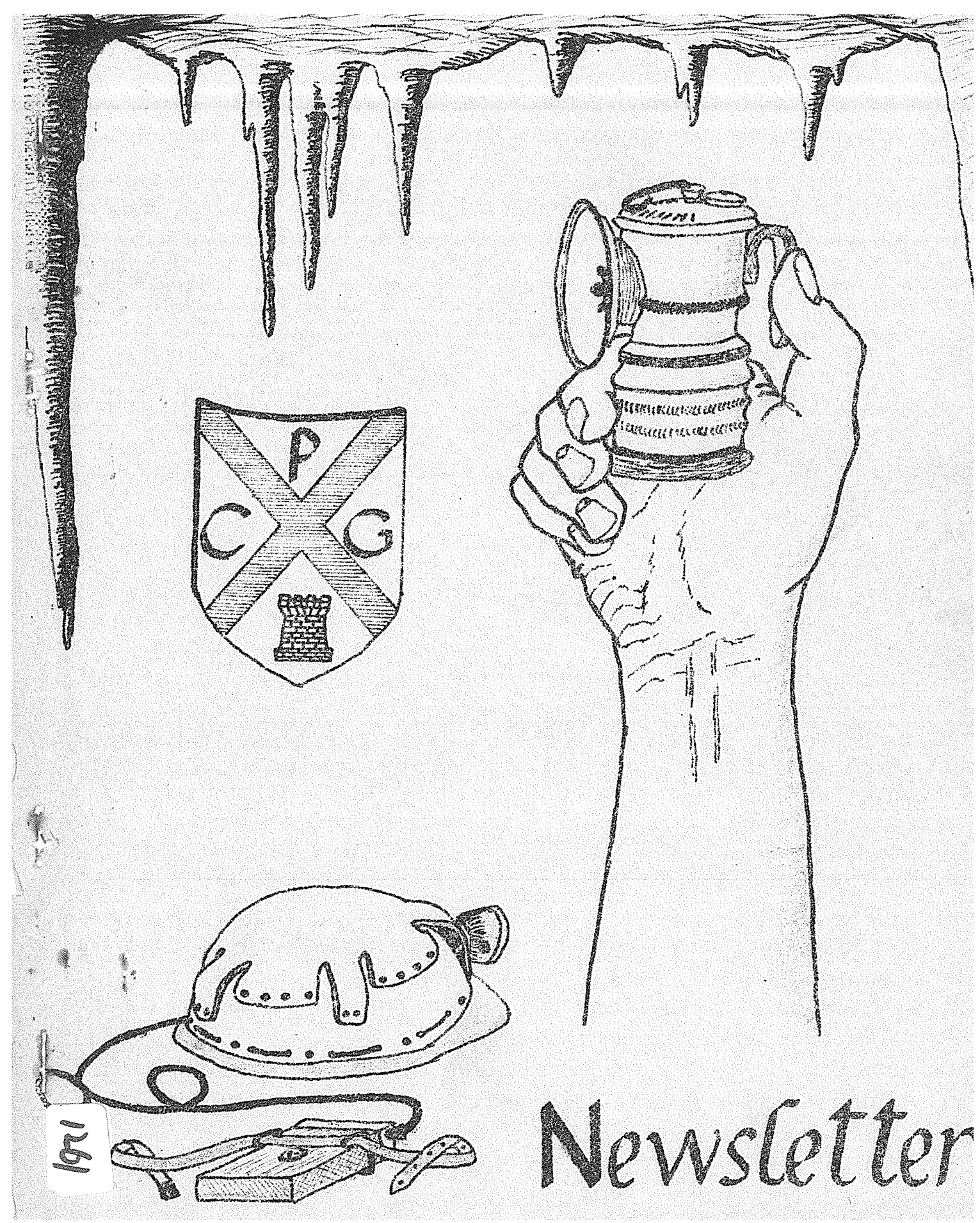


Newsletter

1921

PLYMOUTH CAVING GROUP.

Newsletter and Bulletin. Number Thirteen.

September 1964.

Future Meets.

Saturday - Sunday, September 19th - 20th.

Working and camping weekend at the Pengelly Cave Research Centre at Buckfastleigh.
Leader J.Percival.
10.30 am bus from Bretonside.
Bus fare about 6/-.
It is hoped that as many persons as possible will attend this meet, if you can't manage the whole weekend come for one day.
A number a beds are available and there are cooking facilities.

N.B.

Saturday, September 26th.

Yealmpton.
Leader D.Hurrell.
10.5 am bus from Bretonside.
Cost about 3/6.

Sunday, October 4th.

Afton Red Rift.
Leader L.Fletcher.
10 am bus from Bretonside.
Cost about 8/6.

Saturday, October 17th.

Tavy Valley Mines.
Leader R.C.Bray.
9.50 am bus from Bretonside.
Cost about 3/6.

Sunday, 8th November.

Pridhamsleigh Cavern
Leader R.G.Jeffery,
10.30 am Bus from Bretonside.
Cost about 6/-

W.E.A. Series of Autumn Lectures.

The Plymouth Branch of the Workers' Educational Association has arranged a series of lectures entitled "Caves and Rock Structures of Devon" to be given by T.J.Collings on Thursday evenings at 7.30 pm. starting on September 24th..There will be ten lectures in all and the cost will be 10/-,full time students half price. Enrolment for the course is to be made on the first night.The lectures will take place at Sutton High School,Plymouth.

This series of lectures is open to members of the general public but it is hoped that some of the younger members of the P.C.G. will be able to attend and,perhaps, bring some of their friends with them. The lectures are designed to give an overall account of the major caving topics both from the physical and scientific aspects.

Radford Cave.

Due to continued damage in this cave,the Committee has decided to enforce stricter control over access. In future a 10/- deposit on the key will be inforcable and the person drawing the key will sign an indemnity towards the P.C.G. (the parent of that person if he or she is under 21).- on behalf of each member of his party.

It would be appreciated if a week's notice be given if the key is required,prefferably in writting for,as many persons have found when calling,I am not always at home.

R.Hooper (Hon. Sec.)

Pridhamsleigh Cavern.

The E.C.C.,who have granted the P.C.G. access to this cave,have written to the Group to inform members that the DSS have gated the cave and that the key may be obtainable from Mr. E.Reed at Buckfastleigh.

Once again it seems that cave vandals have forced a cave to be gated.

-------oooooxxxxxooooo-----

NEW CAVE AT YEALMPTON.

by R.Cawthorne.

Torr Bridge Cave.

On Thursday,August 20th.,R Jeffery and I were investigating an outcrop of limestone near Kitley when we discovered a bank of limestone with a jumble of rocks at its base.We moved some of the rocks and uncovered a hole.After about an hour's work moving boulders we decided to leave further work till the following day when we would have full equipment.

The next day Bob and I,together with Bobs brother Dennis,returned to the entrance,descended and explored the cave system which followed. We did a Grade 2 survey which took us about 2 hours.

In all there are about 210 feet of passage.The entrance is really sporting and it was decided not to dig it any further but to leave it.The passage is down a 20' slope at about 75°,it is about 2' by 1' high which widens into a boulder chamber.The floor of this entrance passage is of loose earth and this introduces amazing fun when leaving the cave.The boulder chamber is about 25 feet long,to the right it slopes upwards and narrows to about 6' by 2' high.Through this narrow passage is another chamber about 10' by 8' and 3' high.This chamber has some very fine rimstone pools in it and there is a large stalagmite boss in the middle.

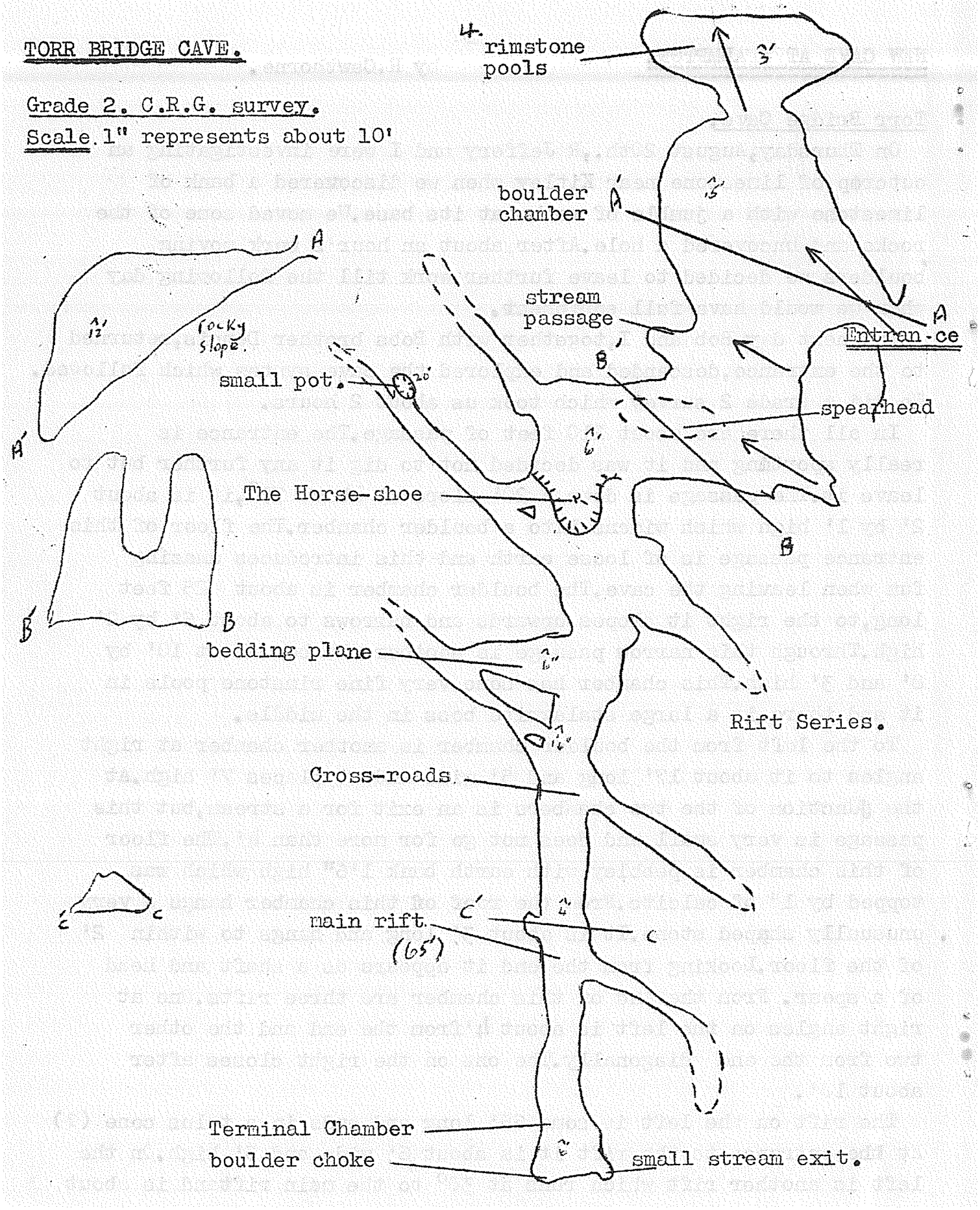
To the left from the boulder chamber is another chamber at right angles to it about 17' long and 5' wide and at places 7' high.At the junction of the two chambers is an exit for a stream,but this passage is very small and does not go for more than 4'.The floor of this chamber is pebbley with earth bank 1'6" high which was topped by 1" of calcite.From the roof of this chamber hangs a very unusually shaped stone.It is about 3' long and hangs to within 2' of the floor.Looking from the end it appears as a shaft and head of a spear. From the end of this chamber are three rifts.One at right angles on the left is about 4'from the end and the other two from the end diagonally.The one on the right closes after about 10'.

The rift on the left is some 65' long and ends in a talus cone (?) At the entrance to the rift it is about 6' wide and 5' high.On the left is another rift which runs at 30° to the main riftand is about

TORR BRIDGE CAVE.

Grade 2. C.R.G. survey.

Scale 1" represents about 10'



20' long when it closes up. Opposite is a corresponding rift which is about 20' long before it becomes too tight. About 4' along this rift it connects with the second rift from the end of the chamber. The flo of the main rift is calcite, 1" thick, there is a 1' drop down the 'horse-shoe' where it has been eroded back, to the level of the chamb About 23' along this rift is the 'cross-roads'. Here, another rift run at 30° to the passage and crosses it. On the left it closes after 10', on the right it extends for some 20' and connects with a bedding plane about 15' long and 10' wide at the passage and 4' wide where it runs into the rift. The rift at this point deepens and narrows so that it becomes 8' by 3" and continues for at least 10' and then turns slightly so that one cannot see further. There is, however, a definite draught coming out. There are some helectites in this bedding chamber.

About 20' along the main passage is another passage crossing the rift. The one on the left goes for about 10' and curves, it continues to the right and closes down after 5'. On the right, however, the rift closes down after a few feet. At the end of the rift it is about 3' 6" high and 1'6" wide, tapering to the top. Roots come down from the roof in the end 30'. The chamber widens to about 4'6" at the floor. and is 7' high. There is a tiny stream exit hole one corner which is too tight to investigate. The floor here is of boulders and rises to block the whole rift. Along the side of the wall near the floor are groups of splash stalagmites.

There is a small pot-hole at the end if the first side rift about 20' deep but unfortunately only about 6" wide. To go into the bedding plane and leave by the rift is rather sporting, being harder than the Twin Rifts in Pigeon Cave, Cattedown. As this is a new cave might I request any visitors to leave no trace of there visit in the cave.

Industrial Archaeology - Mining.

by W.G.Hoskins.

Acknowledgements to the Western Morning News.

In the past two or three years a new field of historical inquiry has come into official existence - the study of the surviving remains of past industrial activity.

This covers such subjects as industrial buildings - mills, warehouses, furnaces & etc - industrial housing, the mechanical processes of industry and their machinery and even the earth-works produced by industrial activity such as canals, railways, quarries and mine-workings.

This field of inquiry is so newly recognised that there is still argument about what it can properly be called, and also about what it can legitimately cover.

The orthodox aechaeologists are deeply pained by the appropiation of their hallowed title to a field of inquiry which, almost without exception, dispenses with excavation, and indeed regards it as something to be done as a last resort only, when one cannot discover the meaning of a site in any other way.

They complain also of the modernity of the remains under study.

Apt Title.

But, with all our thought, no better title for a new field of inquiry can be found than industrial archarology.

There is no validy reason why the definition of archaeology should be narrowly restricted to the Romano-British preiod and earlier, or even to the recent field of medieval archarology, or that it should involve digging.

As Kenneth Hudson says, in the first comprehensive book to be written in this field, "the label indistrial archaeology has come under heavy fire from economists, historians, and archaeolgists partly from sheer conservatism, partly from resentment against an upstart, and partly because of series doubts that industrial archaeology can be made into a satisfactory archaological discipline".

Nevertheless, it is here to stay, whatever we may eventually call it, and I, myself, think that the label ind ustrial archaeology is here to stay, too, and South-Western England is going to prove one of the most rewarding regions in the British Isles for this new field of historical inquiry.

Pioneers.

As with all new subjects, there have been pioneers who worked upon them, and wrote about them, without giving their activities a specific name. As long ago as 1878 a Mr Isaac Fletcher wrote a paper in the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society on the Archaeology of the West Cumberland Coal Trade, and may be regarded as the father of us all in this respect.

The essence of his work was the use of all the documents he could lay his hands on for the 18th and 19th centuries, and also personal visits to mines, inspections of drawings of old machinery and conversations with men who had spent a lifetime in the industry.

Entirely New.

It is the combination of the documentary evidence with the visual evidence drawn from surviving buildings, machinery, and earth-works that distinguished Fletchers work from that of the more orthodox local historian; and this is the essential approach today.

We now realise that documents leave many questions unanswered or not even hinted at; and that the visual evidence can start us off on something entirely new and unexpected by those who think that the final truth lies in the libaries and record offices.

There are profoundly important discoveries to be made by those who have learnt to use their eyes intelligently. Most of us are visually illiterate, and our education has helped to do so.

Some of the West Midland and Northern counties are by far the richest in the visible remains of the classic industrial revolution, deeply involved as they were in that cataclysm, but it would be quite wrong to write off Devon and Cornwall as any less rewarding

Cornwall itself, with its long and important mining industry, has attracted a considerable amount of attention, chiefly from Cornishmen.

The recent attention to Cornish engine-houses as industrial monuments, many of them as worthy of preservation as good domestic architecture, is only one example of the work being done.

Varied History.

Devon has attracted far less attention, yet it has perhaps a more varied industrial history than Cornwall. Its mining history is not as long, but it is as varied in its visible remains.

Mining, textiles, and fishing all left behind their characteristic types of 'monuments' and in some cases their characteristic earth-works. One can study the visible remains of mining at Morth Molton, for example, over a period of about a thousand years.

Saxon Mines.

The only mining activity hinted at in Devon in the Domesday Book (1086) is the existence of four iron workers under the Royal manor of North Molton, on the southern edge of Exmoor.

How much further back their activities could be traced we do not know, but very probably they were at work in late Saxon times.

An iron mine is referred to in Kent in a Saxon charter as early as the year 689, and it is unlikely that the iron ore of North Motlon remained undiscovered until Norman times.

What is more one can actually trace these early iron workings in the form of three series of pits, called Barton Pits, about 1½ miles N.N.W. of the village. Each set of pits is about 350 yards long, but two are overgrown. They are marked on the 2½" map, but not identified for what they really are.

The next mention of mining activity in this parish is of the king's copper mine in 1346. This was apparently a failure, but can the workings be identified today ? Another copper mine is referred to in 1528.

In 1568 German miners and their families were brought to North Molton to exploit the iron workings. There are adits below Tabor Hill, which may be the relics of the Elizabethan activity.

These iron workings had ceased by Westcote's time (early 17th century) but at the very end of the century there was an influx of Cornish miners, who worked the Florence and Marcia mines for

iron and copper.

These mines were abandoned about 1773; but in 1840, or there abouts, another rich copper mine was found. And to complete the story though there must be a lot more to it, the Florence mine was opened again in 1942 and worked for a few years.

The large scale maps of this fascinating parish are dotted with clues about the old adits and mines, the workings and the tramways and one can still trace some of the old buildings in various places.

This parish alone would make a splendid subject for a detailed survey along industrial-archaeological lines.

Evidence Perishing.

In West Devon the large parish of Tavistock is full of visible remains of old mining activity from the 13th century to the 19th, including the famous copper and arsenic mines at Blanchdown, from which much of the old machinery has been removed and presumably destroyed in recent years.

A vast amount of information about the Tavistock mines and workings lies in the Duke of Bedford's muniments, now transferred to the Devon record office. But the visual evidence is rapidly perishing.

So far only one County Council has recognised the need for official of industrial buildings and machinery on these lines, and that is Staffordshire.

Here the county has appointed an Archaeology Officer in the Planning Department whose principal duty is to record what still remains and to arrange for the preservation of what can reasonably be preserved.

I look forward to the day when the Devon County Council takes the enlightened step, for the work involved is far beyond the powers and resorces of a private individual.

-----ooooXXXXXXoooo-----

CLUB ROOM.

Work on Friday evenings at the club room is progressing slowly, all help is willingly accepted and it is hoped that the room will be ready for weekly meetings in the not so distant future. Materials of all kinds are still required.

Electron Ladders.

The Group now has all the necessary equipment and raw materials to make its own electron ladders. Initially about 80 to 100' will be made together will the necessary belays. When these are complete the Group will be able to extend the range of its investigations much further in mining explorations.

P.C.G. Trip to Mendip - Saturday 27th - Sunday 28th June, 1964.

Leader: Jim Giles (W.C.C.)

Party: L. Fletcher, J. Percival, P. Nottle, J. Collings, R. Bray, T. Marston, R. Leonard, H. Browning.

The object of this trip was to have a look at a couple of caves in the Mendip area, with a view to running club meets in the future. The caves chosen were Swildons Hole and St. Cuthbert's Swallets.

At about 6 p.m. on Friday night John Collings arrived in Paignton to collect me. We then set off for Wells where we were to meet the rest of the party who travelled in Phil Nottle's car. We walked around Wells for a while and had some fish and chips. Rod Leonard also lashed out and bought a rather poisonous looking faggot which ended up in the nearest litter bin! When Phil arrived we set off for Hillgrove Hut which belongs to the Wessex Caving Club. After dumping our kit in the hut we paid a visit to the Hunters Lodge, a small pub which seemed to be full of cavers.

On Saturday morning most of us got up at about 7 o'clock, cooked breakfast and then waited for a couple of hours or so. They seem to start late up there! When all was finally ready we drove to Manor Farm at Priddy to change in one of the barns. We were soon ready and then walked across a couple of fields to the entrance of Swildons Hole, which is covered with a grill but not locked. After removing the grill we climbed down into the stream about six feet below We soon left the stream for a little while, and made our way through various odd holes, to rejoin the stream by climbing down a rift which was about ten feet deep. The way on from here followed the stream through a typical stream passage, the roof of which was some 30 ft. high in places, on the way to the Forty Foot Pot. At the head of the pitch the passage narrows a bit, but then opens out into a shaft about 10 feet across. The ladder was hung from a rawlbolt permanently fixed at the edge of the pitch. When half of our party had descended Terry Marston led them on to the Twenty Foot Pot to fix a ladder. Meanwhile the rest of us climbed down the Forty Foot Pot, which incidentally has a drain pipe fixed to shoot the water out over the head of anyone on the ladder, but there is not much clearance, so it was a good thing that the water level was low. We caught up with Terry's party at the bottom of the Twenty Foot Pot and then moved off together down the stream, past the Double Pots, which are two pools about six feet across. The first one turned out to be only just over knee deep, but the second looked deeper so everyone climbed around the wall. We then just followed the stream through plenty of small pools and over banks of flowstone which kept us pretty busy but it paid to keep half an eye on the walls above, for there are quite a few good formations to be seen. After being underground for about a couple of hours we reached the first sump (I am never sure of time underground

because I haven't got a cave-proof watch!). The first sump is about six feet long from surface to surface, and has a guide wire fixed through it. Our leader advised those of us without wet suits not to dive, and then waded into the water to show how it was done. He took a breath and disappeared; a few seconds later two sharp pulls on the guide wire told us that he was through, and that the way was clear for the next one. Four of us passed the sump and carried on down stream to Sump Two, a distance of about three hundred feet. The cave changes considerably inside sump one, the roof becoming low and arched, with an air space of only a few inches in places. There is also plenty of mud, whereas outside sump one the cave is very clean. Since Sump Two is too long to dive without equipment we turned around and came out again. We then sat down by Sump One and had dinner, about four hundred feet below the level of the entrance. Lou and Jeff then instructed us in the art of opening sardine tins with a screwdriver and a lump of rock. After eating we started the return journey visiting the high level chamber called Tratman's Temple on the way. This chamber contains some rather good formations, but has unfortunately suffered from being the entrance to the St. Paul's Series and Paradise Regained. We met two parties coming in, one of which left some doubtful looking ladders on the Twenty and Forty Foot Pots. (The rungs of these ladders were pinned to the cables with nails!) After rolling up our ladders and ropes we rigged the other ladders for the party below and made our way to the entrance. We had been down for about four and a half hours but had not seen the whole cave by any means, for 4½ hours is but a short trip in this cave.

When we had changed out of our caving kit we returned to Hillgrove and had something to eat. The evening was spent helping a farmer to bring in two or three loads of hay. This was alright until twenty or thirty bales fell off the cart taking Lou, Jeff and Phil with them. No one was hurt I am glad to say, so we just reloaded and carried on.

On Sunday morning we got up a little later, but still seemed to be early by Mendip standards. This time those of us with wet suits changed at Hillgrove and then drove down the Priddy road for a couple of miles to a hut of the B.E.C., the Belfry, and made our way to the entrance of St. Cuthbert's Swallet which is near by. Our party was somewhat smaller as the drivers did not want to tire themselves for the long drive home. Terry also stayed above ground because of a damaged finger. The damage was done, by the way, above ground, not below. There are two shafts giving entry to the cave. The old shaft has timbered sides, but the new shaft is lined with concrete pipe sections like Baker's Pit. As we had a bit of trouble belaying our ladder in the new shaft we decided to climb down the old shaft which is only about fifteen feet deep. After reaching the bottom of the shaft we crawled downwards through a boulder jumble to the top of the first pitch. This pitch is a very narrow rift about twenty or thirty feet deep. Because the rift is so narrow we did not bother to use our feet on the ladder, but went down hand over hand using the friction of our bodies against the walls to help control our descent. Not long after the first pitch

we came to a second pitch, this time with a fixed iron ladder. After this the way on is along a high narrow rift, the floor of which slopes downwards fairly steeply. Halfway along this rift there is a deep hole in the floor, but a short length of iron ladder is fixed across it to make life easy. When we had reached the end of the rift we had to climb down two more fixed ladders, much easier than climbing electron ladders! We then went through a large chamber, the floor of which consisted of huge blocks of stone. On reaching the top of this chamber we came up against a sheer wall disappearing into the blackness above us. In an odd corner there was a small cluster of cave pearls, the first I have seen We then made our way out of this chamber and around a nice little corner called Fingers Traverse. We got ourselves lost in a small maze of low sandy passages for a few minutes before we found our way to part of a large rift in which there were many excellent formations, notably several beautiful curtains. From here we went through a series of low passages called the rabbit warren, which brought us into the stream passage. We followed the stream to Gour Hall, the roof of which is lost in the darkness. The entrance to Gour Hall is over a steep bank of flowstone with a chain hanging down to assist in climbing. Once over the top we found ourselves on the wall of an enormous gour. Here another chain is fixed to a rawlbolt, to enable people to climb down off the gour without too much trouble. At the other end of this very impressive chamber is the sump. Here we sat and had a bite to eat before starting our return journey. On the way out we visited Boulder Chamber, which we had to cross one at a time because the boulders were very loose. Near the bottom of the entrance pitch some of the party went to have a look at an eighty foot pitch, but I was tired so I sat and waited for them to come back. After a few minutes they returned and we then made our way to the foot of the entrance pitch. I found this pitch rather difficult when going up, although the others seemed to manage it fairly well. From the top of the entrance pitch it is a short climb through a boulder jumble to the bottom of the shaft. On reaching the surface we walked back to the cars where we washed our boiler suits off in a small pool. With our laundry done we drove to Hillgrove where we quickly changed and packed. The drive home was done in good time, the car I was in reaching Paignton at about half-past seven.

This trip was a great success, and I think everyone in the party is just waiting for the next, so let us hope that the P.C.G. will spread its wings to other areas as well as Mendip with ordinary club meets.

H.J. BROWNING.

Devon Great Consuls Mine.

On Wednesday, 29th July, 1964, Pat Evans, Hugh Browning, Bob Jeffery and I left Plymouth in an old wreck of a pre-war Austin 7 with the intention of visiting Devon Great Consols Mine near Gunnislake. Everyone who has read or heard anything of West Country mining cannot have failed to find mention of the phenomenal success story associated with the Devon Great Consols Mine. The mine is situated about ¾ mile N.N.W. of New Bridge within the National Grid square 4273 and is very conspicuous from the A390 Gunnislake-Tavistock road. The spoil heaps cover much of the higher valley side with a single chimney, all that remains intact of the extensive buildings.

There were originally (according to Spargo in 1865) five setts, Wheal Maria, Wheal Fanny, Wheal Anna Maria, Wheal Josiah, and Wheal Emma which were amalgamated as Devon Great Consolidated Mines in 1844. The property was divided into 1,024 shares of £1 each. Dues were to be paid to the land owner, the Duke of Bedford, of 1-15 to be raised to 1-12 as soon as the profit reached £20,000. In November 1844 a rich copper lode was cut and all working expenses were safely met. The lode, called Main Lode, proved to be the largest sulphide lode in the West of England, extending for nearly 2½ miles and has been stoped, almost without a break, for 2 miles. Situated along the strike, west to east, are the original mines, Maria, Fanny, Anna Maria, Josiah and Emma. (South of Main Lode are further lodes on which the later acquisitions of Watson's Mine and South Fanny are situated). The lode and other associated lodes proved so rich that in the six years, 1844 - 1850, the Company extracted and sold some 90,000 tons of copper ore which realised some £300,000 with all expenses paid. From this sum the Duke of Bedford received about £44,000 for royalties while the shareholders received £207,000 i.e. more than £200 for each £1 share. The annual average dividend of £35 per £1 share made these shares very attractive and greatly affected their market value.

The mine controlled the greatest labour force in the district and employed a total of 1,284 persons.....:- 861 men, 220 women and girls and 203 boys. There were in use 32 water wheels employed for a multitude of purposes, from pumping water from the workings to maintaining a water supply for the steam engines and for dressing the ore. Seven steam engines were in use: viz-

'1 pumping 40 inch cylinder

1 winding 30 inch

1 winding 24 inch

1 winding 22 inch

2 crushing each 30 inch

1 winding for lowering ores and hauling up coal, timber, etc. 30 inch cylinder. ..... ' (Spargo - 1865)

This rare example of mining success is best illustrated by reference to the accounts for the twenty years 1845 - 1865 of which the following is an extract:-

DR.

To 1st Mar. each year.	Copper Ore Sold Tons. Cwts. Qrs.	Amt. realised incl. carriage £ s d	Other Credits £ s d	Total £ s d
1845	382 1 2	4,313 19 5	1,024 0 0	5,337 19 5
1857	28,836 9 1	159,432 7 9	1,465 6 5	160,897 14 2
1865	25,786 3 0	134,785 19 2	3,887 13 4	138,683 12 6
				2,529,659 11 2
		Balance in hand £16,057.7. 2.		

CR.

To 1st March each yr.	Mine's Cost £ s d	Dues on Ore £ s d	Other Expenses £ s d	Dividends paid £ s d	TOTAL £ s
1845	2,605 2 8	.....	7 1 3	.....	2,612 3
1857	61,776 18 7	11,625 6 2	10,663 0 5	64,512 0 0	148,577 5
1865	56,310 1 11	11,219 10 1	12,923 1 11	63,488 0 0	143,941 1 1
					2,513,002 4
					16,057 7
		Balance in hand carried down £2,529,659 11 2			

The mine continued to prosper after 1865 and by 1879 had reached 200 fathoms below adit level which was at 60 fms. The mine ceased to operate on a large scale about 1902 although parts of it were worked intermittently for the next twenty years or so, during which period, the dumps were worked over for copper and arsenic, and the mine waters were treated for copper precipitate. The ore extraction can be divided into two distinct phases:-

(i) The early years when the emphasis was on copper and mispickel (Arsenopyrite - FeAsS) was left on the walls of the stopes.

(ii) In later years arsenic assumed an importance and the mispickel in the stopes was removed.

Production

1845 - 1903	742,400 tons of 6½% copper ore.
	21 tons of black tin.
1859 - 1876	9,555 tons of pyrite.
1869 - 1906	70,800 tons of crude arsenic.
	540 tons of mispickel.
	110 tons of ochre.
1906	27 tons of 5% copper ore.
	7 tons of 48% copper precipitate.
1918	13 tons of arsenic from the dumps.

.....

All this forms a fascinating and interesting view of a working mine, but for the average caver the thing he wants to know is how to penetrate the workings. The first thing he must appreciate is that all the workings below adit level will almost always be flooded and inaccessible. This thought immediately suggests a route which may be still open and will avoid laddering precarious shafts - i.e. the adit level itself! A large mine like Devon Great Consols could be expected to have a large, single adit or several smaller adits. The main drainage adit of Devon Great Consols is the Blanchdown Adit, which commences as a crosscut and enters the hillside 970 yds. W. by S. of the house at Honeytor.

"Driven in a general direction N 25°W., it strikes at 95 fms. from its entrance the 60 fm. Level on New South Lode at 30 fm. W. of the Count-house Shaft of Wheal Anna Maria. At 60 fms.W of this shaft the crosscut is continued in the same direction, intersecting at 105 fms. the 60 fm. Level on South Lode, and at 135 fms. the 60 fms. Level on Main Lode, 32 Fms. E. of Hitchen's Shaft. In Wheal Josiah and Wheal Emma, therefore,

the Deep Adit Level is the 60 fm. Level below shaft collar at Hitchen' Shaft, but, owing to the contour of the ground, the collars of shafts on Main Lode fall to successive lower levels going west and the adit level becomes the 40 fm. level in Wheal Anna Maria, the 35 fm. Level in Wheal Fanny and the 28 fm. Level in Wheal Maria. Eastwards the Adit has been continued at the 60 fm. Level of Wheal Emma, beyond the stoped ground to a point about 385 fms. E. of Thomas's Shaft. Here it is connected by a rise to a level 20 fms. higher, which continues on the course of the lode and in a further 255 fms. reaches a cross-course trending N.20°E; this it follows for 30 fms. and turns eastwards again for 105 fms. to a short crosscut north to the adit mouth on the west side of the valley of the River Lumburn, a quarter of a mile east of Artiscombe.' (Dines pp. 655/6)

Thus, from this quote it may be seen that the Blanchdown Adit, which is some two miles long, could offer a route into the mine and could offer an exciting route in itself. When the party of the 29th. July searched for the adit, the only sign that they could find was an adit fille to within 6 inches of the roof with mud and issuing a fair amount of water. Thus, the only way to enter the mine from the Blanchdown end would seem to be a concerted dig by the Group over a period, in fairly soft and liquid mud. However, as there is a rise in the adit near Thomas's Shaft, one must enter from the Artiscombe end in order to ladder the pitch and make a through route feasible, and this entrance has not yet been located, and little more can be done until this is achieved. If this route fails it would seem that the only other entrances would be the twelve shafts which connect with the Adit at depth and there are few who are able to climb 200 foot ladders in the Group at present and this points out the need for more ladders and more and harder ladder practice: furthermore is it possibl that the Group should possess a winch of some kind?

R.C. BRAY.

31st July, 1964.

It has been brought to my notice that a few members have not received Newsletter Number Twelve. If this is so will those members please contact me - Editor.

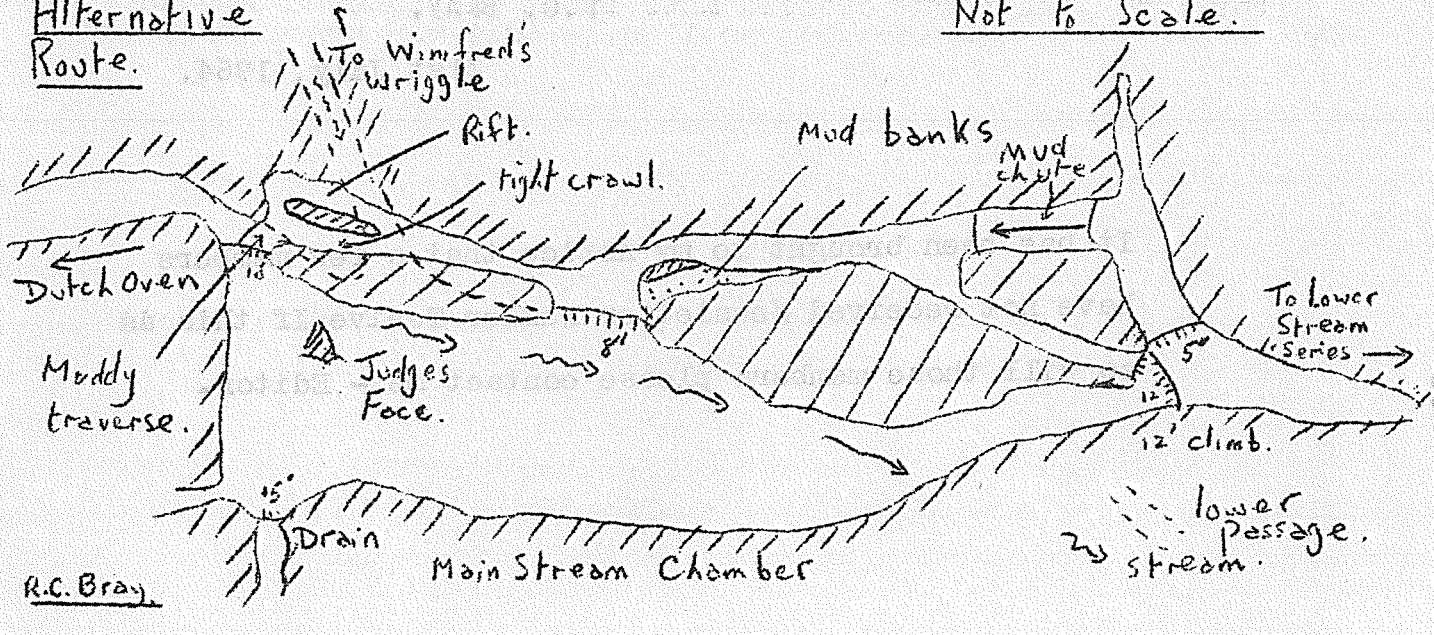
Meet at Baker's Rit Cave, Buckfastleigh. 8th August '64.

Leader R.C.Bray.
Party - Hugh Browning, Bob Jeffery, Gerry Widgery, John Collings, Terry Barbour and Bob Lake.

This meet was arranged as a trip through Read's Cave but due to Jeff Percival's bad memory (He didnt turn up -Editor) had to be moved to Baker 's pit. It was lucky that the Pit is so close and so few of the party had visited it more than once, consequently we were eager to go there

The party, except for Bob and John, descended the drain-pipe entrance (a pitch of 15') about 1.30 pmand, admiring the vastness of the First Chamber and of the Boulder Hall, moved on to the Sloping Rift and the Two Johns Tunnel route into the Glorious Devon Series. We went from here to the Crystal Leap via Red Chamber and entered the Great Rift. Some members had some difficulty on the traverse over the Leap as their boots were failing to grip the rock. From here it was but a short trip to the Judges Chamber where we reated and talked about the Rashbrook rescue.

We pushed on into the Lower Stream Series (Mud Series) which lived up to its expectations for clinging mud. Here we generally pottered around examining the various rifts, passages and chambers. On returning, instead of descending the 12' pitch we had climbed, we took the alternative route via the Mud Chute. This route, between mud banks, leads to the lower end of Judges Chamber, called the Main Stream Chamber, which it enterd some 8' up on a muddy ledge. Although not marked on the Hoopers' survey of the cave, a low muddy tunnel running parallel to a rift, leads from here to a hole in the Judges Chamber itself, and offers an interesting crawl. However, care must be taken when climbing down into the Judges Chamber itself since it is necessary to proform a tricky traverse on mud ledges about 10' up As the tail end of thepparty was climbing down we were met by Bob and John, who had descended later, who then accommpanied us out of the cave via Dutch Oven; we surfaced about 5 pm.



Meet at Clifford's Cave, Chudleigh. 4th July 1964.

Leader, R.C.Bray,
Party - Hugh Browning, B.Collister and D.Hurrell.

This meet was adversely affected by the G.C.E. exam period which prevented several members from attending. It was disappointing to see the absence of certain members who had specifically asked for a Saturday meet here.

The main party left Plymouth for Chudleigh by the 8 o'clock Exeter bus and were joined by Hugh at Bovey Tracey. We actually arrived at the Rock House Hotel, where the club enjoys the hospitality of the Boulton family, about 10.30 and were met by Bruce Boulton. It was decided that the morning should be spent in exploring what was left of Pixies Hole afetr the stone falls had blocked the Plughole about a year ago.

We entered Pixies Hole by a narrow entrance high above Toad's Penance, (a tricky climb into a wet rift some 30 ft high) and traversed along the rift until we reached the point above the Plughole. The walls and floor of the rift were littered by candle stubs and grease, relics apparently left by the Army during an 'Adventure' (!!!!?) Exercise. Climbing down the rift via Toad's Penance, we entered the main series of passages which are generally 6' high or so and about 10' wide. This series is generally uninteresting except for the site of Buckland's 1823 excavation and that perculiar stalagmite, the Pope's Head. It is claimed that anyone who leaves a shiny pin stuck in this formation for the pixies will be safe from being 'pixicated' for a certain period of time. Even today this superstition is still being carried out.

With still some time left before lunch, Bruce took us on a conducted tour of the Gorge showing us seversl small caves which I had not seen before, including one being dug out by a 'mad' professor interested in Roman remains.

After lunch, the party crossed Kate Brook and entered Clifford's Cave where a rich penetrating smell disclosed the presence of fox faeces in the second squeeze which had to be removed before we could proceed. The party made a fast progress up the narrow a nd uncomfortable Paradise Passage to a bailing pool where, with two of the party bailing, the rest of the party passed the duck and the trap to where some adventutous bods are digging for a way on... (and very promising it looks too).

Leaving this part of the cave, we headed for the main passage - Promise Passage - and went along to Razor Passage and Jim's Dispair. Two of the party entered the water-filled squeeze and succeeded in passing it to enter the Wormhole via Castration Corner. Beyond this corner a low chamber is entered with no routes leading on.

When the two had returned we decided to leave the cave rather than visit the Main Stream Passage. We surfaced at 5 pm wallowing and washing in the brook before returning to Rock House to change our saturated clothing.

R.C.Bray.

Meet to Afton Red Rift - Sunday, 21st June, 1964.

Leader: L. Fletcher.

Party: R. Lake, H. Browning, D. Horrell.

'Denny' Horrell, Bob Lake and myself left Plymouth Bus Station on the 10,o'clock bus, feeling rather amazed that only 3 people had turned up for such a popular cave. We arrived at Totnes at 11.15, and discovered that we had missed the link up bus to the Red Post garage,... so we walked. One hour, three miles, and six sore feet later we arrived at Red Post, and then walked the ½ mile or so to Afton, where we met Hugh. A party from Exeter University had descended. We did at 2.10 p.m., finding the rift rather wet. About 10 feet of awkward rift was roped, we passed the squeeze and on to the 'Flower Chamber', which as we found later was free climbed by the Exeter crowd. I could have had an accident when I chimneyed into the roof of the vault, instead of going down, having mistaken it for the Belfry. We carried on through the next chamber, and then the Belfry (the real one). We had our soup etc. in Cascade Chamber. We then proceeded to the lower series. We had to drop to a small chamber while the Exeter party passed over our heads, while en route from Mud Hall to Cascade, reaching the former a few minutes later. Bob and myself stayed in the Mud Hall, while Denny and Hugh carried on down the rift. According to Hugh, at one point at the end of the rift, he got in a bit of a muddle, and nearly chopped his finger off with his tricounis on his boots. While waiting the 40 minutes or so for them to return I made a small potholer's face on the wall of Mud Hall, in Afton Mud. When they returned we started out, picked up our tins etc. in the Cascade, and proceeded along the rift. The awkward corner was not roped, but passed very quickly, and we emerged at 6.30 p.m. catching the 8.30 Red Post bus, the Totnes 8.45 bus, arriving in Plymouth at 9.45. D. Horrell, one of our newest members, made a very good impression on the party of his capabilities in the Afton Rift.

(Signed) L.R. FLETCHER
Leader

R. LAKE.

Edited and Published by T.J.Collings,27,Queens Road,Lipson,
Plymouth