

## STONE CELTS IN DEVON

BY R. HANSFORD WORTH

IN Volume LXXVIII of our *Transactions*, pp. 171—175 inclusive, appeared a paper on "A Neolithic Celt from near Moretonhampstead," in which the author, Col. R. Pickard, C.B., C.M.G., was led from the description of a particular celt to a general discussion of celts found in Devon.

The author's data, methods and conclusions tempt to controversy, but, since controversy over hypotheses is too often a diversion from the more profitable course of accuracy in record, I confine this note to questions of record, and more particularly of one record.

In the list of celts and hammers found in Devon, Col. Pickard gives at the top of page 173 the following entry:—

" <i>Trans. Dev. Assn.</i>	<i>Legis Tor</i>	<i>Celt, "elvan or slate"</i>
<i>Vol. 28, p. 178.</i>	<i>nr. Tavistock</i>	<i>perforated."</i>

Page 178, Vol. 28, of our *Transactions* is the fifth page of the third Report of the Dartmoor Exploration Committee. Neither on that page nor on any other of the 20 pages of the report is there mention of any celt. The entry is wholly invalid.

The second column in the table gives the locality as "Legis Tor, near Tavistock." Needless to say the Dartmoor Exploration Committee, which mentioned no celt, gave no locality. Beyond which one may object that while the word "near" is sufficiently indefinite to be used in connection with very varying orders of magnitude, it scarcely seems appropriate to the fact that Legis Tor lies a trifle over eight miles to the south-east of the "Square" at Tavistock; a distance sufficient, to my mind, to exclude the idea of propinquity.

The information given in the third column is puzzling. As in the matter of locality, it seems at least unexpected that the Dartmoor Exploration Committee should specify the material or materials from which a non-existent implement had been shaped, unless indeed they had used the phrase "such stuff as dreams are made of."

The quotation marks used by Col. Pickard are sufficient to indicate that he intends he is quoting *ipsissima verba*; even so it is difficult to accept that he believes the Committee to have been capable of indecision as to whether an object was worked in elvan or in slate.

But on page 179 in the Dartmoor Exploration Committee's third Report there occurs the following passage:—"These rubber-stones are either smooth, fine-grained elvan, fine red grit, or soft, altered slate." And, although a rubber-stone is certainly not a celt, I think that our author, reading this passage, borrowed, for no assignable reason, some part of its wording.

The excavations at Legis Tor were conducted by myself; no celt nor anything resembling a celt was found during the course of those excavations, nor has any celt been recorded as having been found, at any time, on the slopes of Legis Tor. (Col. Pickard's statement cannot be accepted as a record.)

I have made no attempt to check the accuracy of Col. Pickard's other references, but two other mistakes have caught my eye. There is a reference to "Wallawork Quarry, near Tavistock" which should be *Wallabrook Quarry* and on page 173 the honoured name of *Robert Burnard*, has, in four places, been printed as "R. Burnand."

A statement made in error is the responsibility of its author to correct; and he should be given the opportunity of making the correction. I wrote to Col. Pickard setting out these particular blunders, but the reply was so far discouraging that I have reluctantly prepared this note.

Unfortunately the error has got away with a good start, and such inaccuracies are hard to overtake, especially when they occur in alleged citations of previously published work.

The Legis Tor celt, and the references with which it has been endowed at the start of its career, are alike mythical; they have been presented in a form which gives no obvious reason for caution on the part of the reader; and in that form they have been enshrined in print.