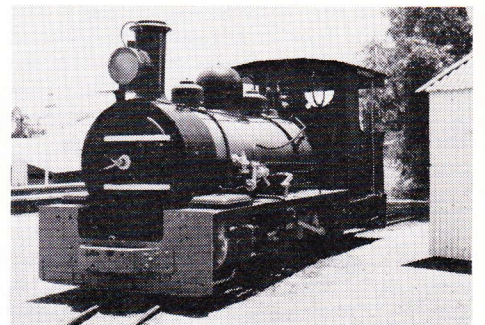
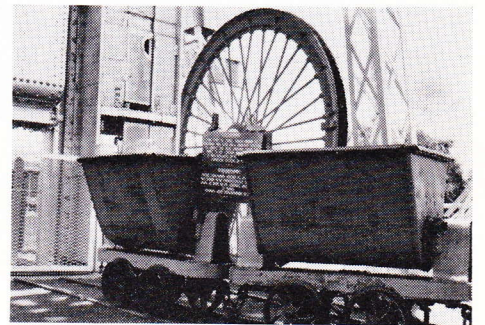


Biggest hole is 100

S. P. Smith visits old Kimberley and its famous diamond mine. Pictures by Clive Barrett.

There has always been a romantic attraction about diamonds, and Kimberley with its Big Hole stands for diamonds. I had heard a great deal about the Big Hole, and last year when I was in South Africa I paid it a visit.

Diamonds were first found here in July 1871, and in this centenary year they are adding buildings to the reconstruction of old Kimberley which has been there for some time. The new additions were not complete when I was there, but I found it fascinating to try to go back in imagination to the days when amidst feverish excitement prospectors were mining for diamonds.



■ *The Big Hole, a great tourist attraction, is the largest man-made hole in the world. From a gallery, you look down 500 feet on an expanse of green water 788 feet in depth. From the hole, 1 mile in perimeter, 25 million tons of earth were excavated and 14,504,566 $\frac{3}{4}$ carats of diamonds recovered, equivalent to 3 tons. Work ceased in August 1914. The Digger's Rest, left, a saloon bar, is complete with figures in period costume in a reconstruction of old Kimberley. Replicas of many other buildings have been constructed.*

■ *Above is the great shaft wheel and trucks which were used and, below, the little engine—a delight for those interested in railways. Inside a shed there is mining machinery which can be set in motion. Framed on the wall are newspapers from the early days of discovery. Two side by side report the finding of the first diamond, bought by the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope for £500, and a statement from a mineralogist saying the whole thing was an imposture. He explained the diamond had been brought by an ostrich!*