

From S.A. Craven
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ALADDIN'S CAVE IN KALK BAY MOUNTAIN

AGATE, SILICA AND BRIGHT PEBBLES.

A GREAT HALL FIFTY FEET HIGH.

The entrance to the cave in the Kalk Bay Mountain is in the bold and almost perpendicular face of the range, which directly overlooks Clovelly and the central part of Fish Hoek. This face shows the line of escarpment of a great geological fault, which was responsible for the formation of the Fish Hoek Valley in the far off geological period which preceded its becoming a broad channel between the oceans. The cave follows a course mainly northward, clean through the mountain, with an exit over the deep valley which bounds the range.

AN EXPLORING PARTY.

A REPRESENTATIVE of The Argus accepted the invitation of Mr. F. Grace, of "Randwick," Kalk Bay, to view the cave, other visitors, including Dr. Versfeld, a geologist of renown, and Mr. A. R. C. Walker, Senior Lecturer in Geology, Cape Town University. There were several ladies in the party, who experienced no difficulty either in reaching or exploring the cave. The geologists revelled in the experience, flashing their torches over the fantastic chambers, branching side passages, strange outlets which wind back to the main passage and other remarkable variations from regularity, and keeping their hammers busy in collecting specimens of technical value in the rock faces. They expressed wonder also that a cave of such magnitude and containing such interesting features, both for the scientist and the lover of Nature's beauties and eccentricities should be so little known. One gentleman to whom the cave was mentioned said, "I have tramped over these mountains for years, and I must frankly say I doubt the existence of any such cave." Another, born in the vicinity, said, "Oh, yes, I have been in that cave five or six times in

chamber which was likened to the "Lady's Chapel" of a cathedral. This has no other outlet, and the atmosphere is soon found oppressive. There is some clambering over fallen rocks in the main passage, and a half-inch or so of water in a couple of places makes stout shoes desirable, but, with ordinary torches or candles, progress is quite easy. Without lights it would be dangerous. The existence of this cave is due to the widening of the joint planes. Earth movement is to a certain extent responsible, then the action of water on the quartzite which forms the cement binding of the sandstone weak causes the rock to become friable and erosion follows. The appearance of this part of the mountain seems to indicate that there has at some time been a flow of water which had a much greater effect than is caused at present. No geological fault is traceable in this mountain, but, as has been pointed out, it forms one front of what was a great fault and the withdrawal of support from its terminal may have contributed to a very slight lean-over at that part. In fact, the huge rocks at this end of the wall

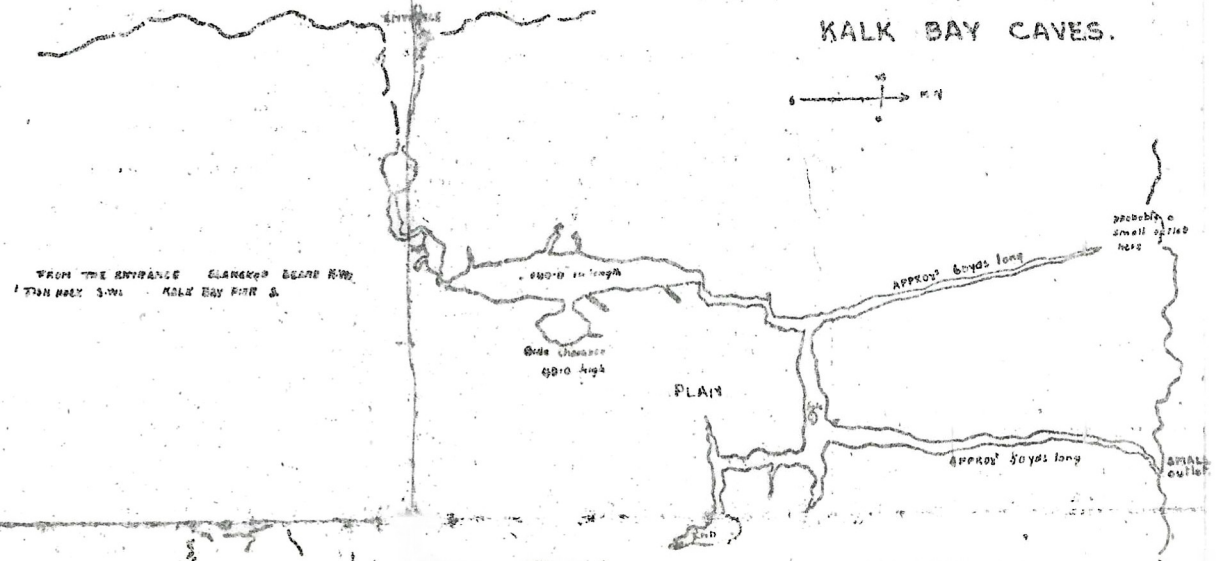
stream-bed in the rainy season. rocks at the side are covered curious encrustations found to form of silica, deposited by the colating water. These are a couple inches thick in places and, from slowness with which such deposit could be thus created, point to great antiquity of the caves. passage narrows so greatly that progress is difficult and later on branched into two, which finally die away out showing an exit.

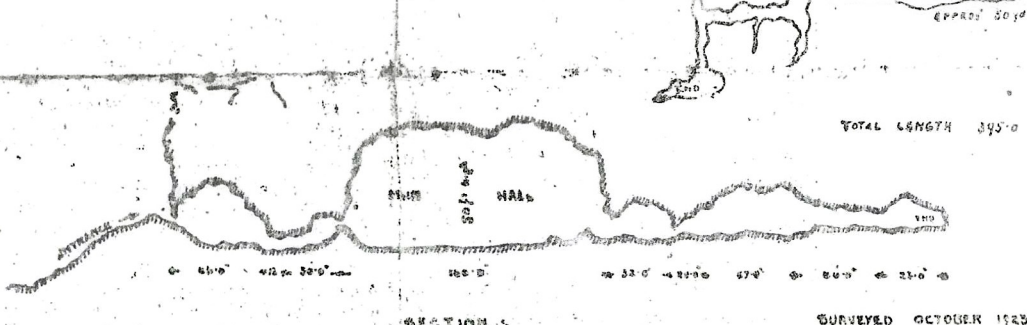
Below the passages referred to is another, situated about 200 feet below and directly below the entrance to the former. This has been partially explored and was found to contain a large quantity of water. From water-marks on the walls it is estimated that the water reaches a height of 15 feet above floor level times. It was estimated that the caves are commonly due to fissures simultaneously caused by a geological fault occurring at some remote period. The floors incline steeply in places, the caves are regarded as dangerous except to careful visitors well provided with lights strong enough to illumine the passages for a good distance ahead. This is doubtless the reason why they are so little visited another being that a rather abrupt descent of an apparently unattractive gorge has to be made before the trapce is revealed. Hence the services of a guide is needed.

TABLE MOUNTAIN SANDSTONE

The deposition of the Table Mountain sandstone occurred ages ago, long before the laying down of the measures of Europe, and material continued to accumulate until the granite and slates were buried beneath thousands of feet of rocks. Earth movements set in, elevating the African Continent and crumbling the beds of the whole of the south of the Peninsula. The hard sandstone bent into great arches and thus initiated the magnificent coast ranges of the Province. Since the agents of denudation—wind, rain and river—have gradually carved out the present valleys and have detached the block of the Peninsula the Drakenstein Mountains, with which it was at one time united.

The evolution of Table Mountain has been greatly influenced by the development of joint planes in the sandstone—nearly vertical and horizontal cracks which traverse the strata





The ground plan shows the course and widths of the cave and its principal branches from the entrance on the face of the mountain overlooking Fish Hook Valley to its only known exit on the opposite side of the mountain. The section drawing shows the height of the cave and its branches. The height of the passage from the great central chamber diminishes gradually to about ten inches at the exit.

a month when I was a boy, but I don't know if I could find it now." He had forgotten all about it, long ago.

THE ENTRANCE.

The entrance to the cave is certainly difficult to find, though the walk to it from the Main-road at Kalk Bay is quite easy. One leaves the Main-road at the outspan, proceeding up Clairvaux-road, thence up the valley to the saddle, which overlooks Cleavelly golf links. Following this saddle to the right one ascends to the foot of the buttressed and turreted ramparts of Table Mountain sandstone which run east and west some 1,500 or more feet above the level of the Fish Hook Valley. A short and not difficult climb leads to an upper path at the base of the precipitous rock wall and then one needs a guide.

"We are now near the cave," said Mr. Grace, and asked those whose first visit it was to go ahead and find the entrance. All passed the entrance, but Dr. Versfeld and he could not be sure the aperture was not similar to other short breaks into the face until confirmed in his guess. A growing tree completely hides the entrance and the visitor has to ascend a slight acclivity and then make a corresponding abrupt descent before it is realised that the elements have formed a passage through that apparently solid mountain. The ground and elevation plans which are reproduced illustrate the changes of width and height, the latter being approximated in the big chambers where the gothic roofs were only made visible by the aid of powerful torches. It was found that the main passage was 678 feet in length 300 feet of which ranged in height from ten to about fifty feet. At the end of this stage is a great hall with vaulted roof about fifty feet high at the apex, resembling a vast cathedral aisle.

AN ALADDIN'S CAVE.

Viewed from one end, with the lights of the party flashing on the studdings of agate, silica and bright pebbles at the sides, the remark of one visitor, "It is a perfect Aladdin's Cave," was fully justified. Expressions of delight fell from all the hitherto strangers to the cave. From this great chamber the cave continues to the outlet on the opposite face of the mountain. This part gradually decreases in height to the exit. The floor is thickly coated with sand, which water has eroded from the roof. From this chamber at the 500 feet point another well-defined passage runs obliquely off to the left. This is about four feet wide, with a level floor, but the roof bears downward until a "dead end" is found after going 180 feet. Another dead end is reached by a passage to the right, terminating in a

seem to have an outward lean, making them seem to be toppling gradually over, an impression which is heightened by the considerable weathering visible at the base.

As one of the geologists said, after inquiry: "Yes, I can guarantee that that great mass of rock will fall one day—about a million years hence, perhaps." The scientists had some very interesting discussions in the cave on certain occurring outcrops—"chalcedonic certainly," "agate round the quartzite," "proves silica does go into solution," and such like. But they very kindly answered the many questions put to them by members of the party, who were thus rid of many delusions.

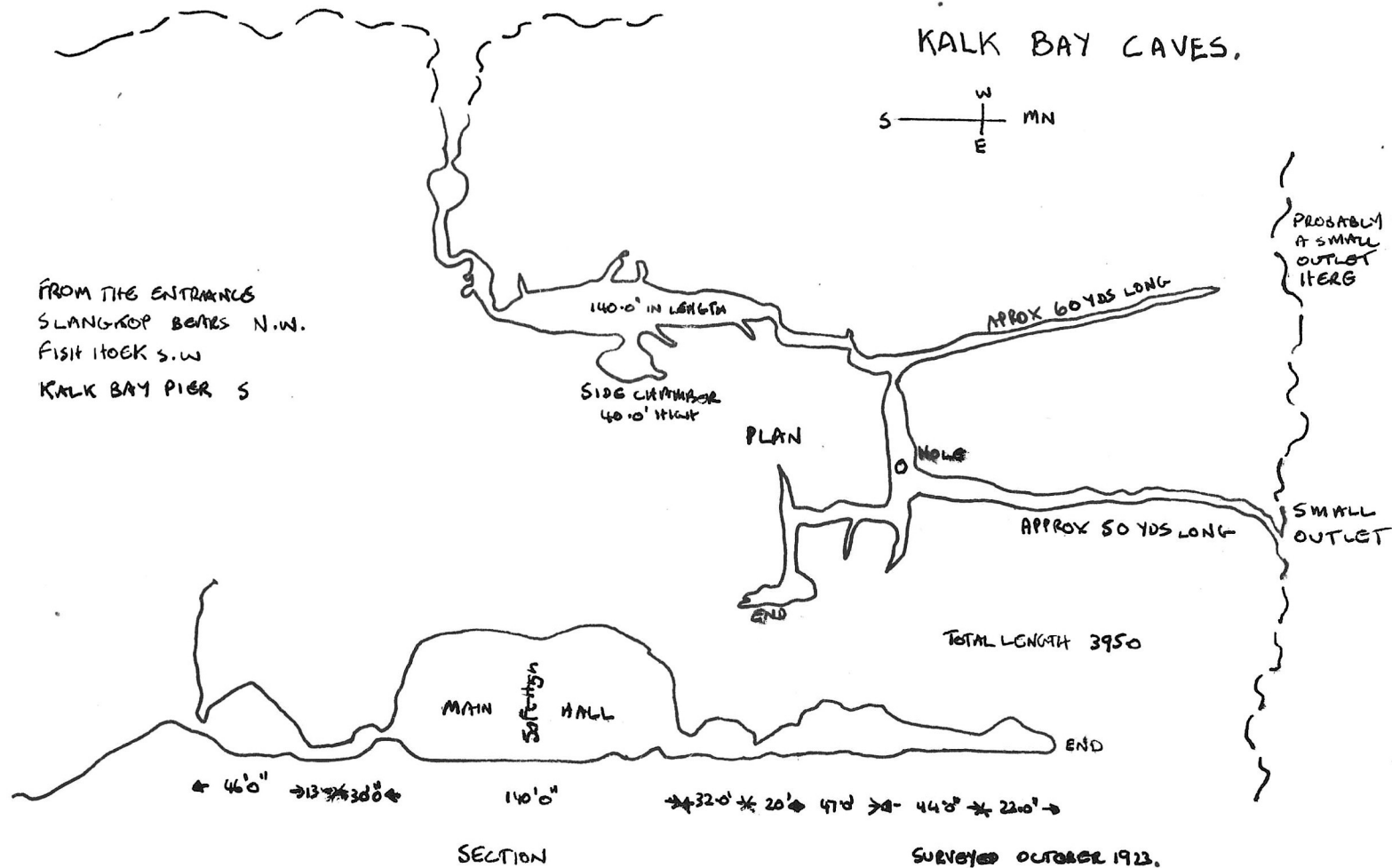
The exploration of the cave and its branches occupied a couple of hours, then the party climbed to the top of the mountain and found a small hole communicating with the cave, and through which a tiny ray of daylight had been visible while down in the depths. Also the exit was found from the outside and its position marked, as emergence from the cave in this direction was possible only to energetic young people of slender build.

THE WYNBERG CAVE.

In the mountains of the Peninsula are many caves, often of considerable extent, but quite different in character from Kalk Bay cave, and the only other one hitherto known is the Wynberg cave. The Muizenberg caves and several others in Table Mountain are of external formation, caused by the fretting away of the under sides of the great frontal rocks by the action of water. They are simply big openings of little depth. A description of Wynberg caves is appended for the sake of comparison with those at Kalk Bay.

Wynberg caves are situated near the Upper Wynberg Reservoir and run approximately parallel to the length of the ridge at an average depth of 120 feet. Entrance is obtained through a narrow opening halfway up the ridge. The passage dips sharply and, before going far, a drop of twelve feet is encountered which takes one into a narrow passage leading from a second entrance. At the end of this passage a descent of about 25 feet into a parallel passage is made by means of a series of ledges. This passage leads to a hole in the roof of a large cavern, the apex of which is seen about 40 feet below, and entrance to this is obtained by following a corkcrew passage which in places only just admits the passage of an adult. The big cavern is very lofty and is about 20 feet wide at the commencement, narrowing gradually down to 5-6 feet, the latter width continuing for 300 feet. The floor is of sand and is evidently a

In addition, the beds are crossed by vertical lines of fracturing, along which the rock has been broken bodily, while one moved upwards or downwards with the other. Nearly all ravines around Table Mountain have lines of fracture. Several have shifted the sandstone boundary; in one instance (E. Poort) the displacement is about 10 feet vertically.



ALLADIN'S CAVE (BOOMSLANG)

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