



December 2011 Newsletter

THE KUYPERSKRAAL MINE

Prof Peter Spargo

The workings of the Kuyperskraal mining operation are – at least by the modest standards of the Western Cape! – not trivial and a considerable amount of effort, and no doubt also capital, must have gone into this venture. It therefore comes as a surprise to discover how little is known of the detailed history of the rise and fall of this mine.

At this point it is important to note that 'Kuyperskraal' is a comparatively uncommon name for the mine, arising as it does from the current name of the farm near which it is situated, and during the exploration and working life of the mine it was known by the name Papkulsfontein – no doubt from an earlier name for this farm.

As far as can be ascertained, the first description of the mine occurs in P A Wagner's "Notes on the Tin Deposits in the Vicinity of Capetown," which appeared in the *Transactions of the Geological Society of South Africa* for 1909, **12**, pp.102-111, based on a paper which Wagner had read before the Society on the 21st of June 1909. This reads as follows:

"The deposits on the farms Papkulsfontein and Hoogekraal, which adjoin and are situated about 14½ miles N.E. of Cape Town, are of a totally different character. The outcrops and workings are near the summit of a hill which rises to the height of about 650 feet above the sea level. . . . The tin deposits, . . . appear to take the form of bedded quartz veins."

This brief general account of the deposit is followed by a fair amount of technical information relating to this deposit, including "an analysis of a specimen of arsenical ore by Dr. Marloth of Cape Town," which recorded the following elements: tin 12.9%; As 21.7%; Bi 0.3%; gold 2 dwts./ton, silver 1oz.12 dwts/ton, as well as a trace of copper. It is noteworthy that while the concentrations of gold and silver are relatively low by the standards of any of the great gold-bearing reefs of the world, they are not totally negligible and the more romantically inclined might be forgiven for referring to it as a gold (and silver) mine! ['dwt' is the abbreviation for a pennyweight, equal to 1.56 g.]

In 1910 the *Cape Times* carried the following intriguing announcement:

'CAPE TIN MINES LTD. (PAPKULSFONTEIN)

The list of applications in the above company opened yesterday, July 4, at Mr. J. Platnaeuer's Office, 24 Church Street, Cape Town.'

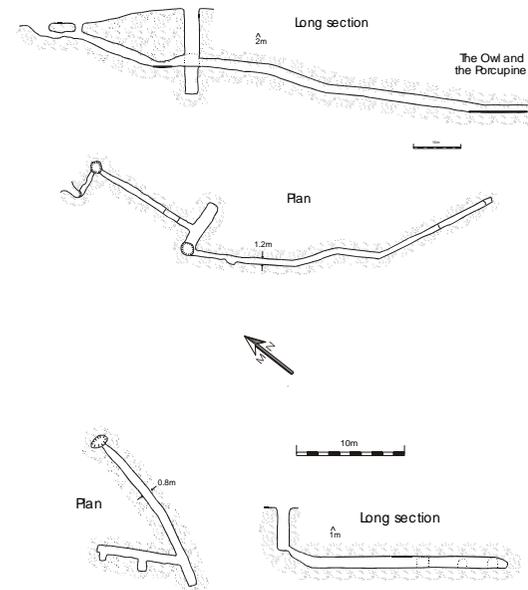
Thus one must assume that it was under the banner of this company, about which we as yet know little, that the mine was developed and operated. Unfortunately we have no information as to how many men were employed on the, how much – if any – profit resulted from the venture and when and why the mine eventually closed.

Tin mines

Some three years ago Ed Berry led a meet to the tin mines on a farm near Philadelphia and I thought it was time to revisit. Ed, no longer a member, researched and found the farmer's contact details for me. Eighteen people ventured to bash through the Rhenosterveld scrub to the hilltop. There are 3 vertical holes varying from 15m to 23m deep but not worth exploring. There are two adits however, the one 128m long and the other 30m and requiring a 5m ladder pitch to enter.

Last time, going down the long adit, a barn owl came flying towards me but because of my headlamp could not see me and collected me in the chest. Picking himself up it continued on his way. Just glad it wasn't a Hadedea. I told the explorers, "beware of the avian kamakazi and you should find porcupine". Sure enough there came the owl but being wiser now missed everyone. At the end, two porcupine. Judging by the number of quills found they should be half bald.

The explorers of the ladder entry shaft found a young bird of unknown specie not yet able to fly vertically out the shaft. Popping it into a rope bag it reached the surface where it eventually flew into a bush. Being a hot day there were no takers to try SRT into the 18m shaft intersecting the adit.



Cave Name	Philadelphia tin mines	BCRA Grade	5
Instruments	Compass, Clinometer, Tape	Survey Date	3rd September 2008
Survey group	Eugenie Bahlsen, Ron Zeeman	Extension	128m, 30m

Some of our miners



Table Mountain 27 – 30 December

Tradition – a few days on the mountain. Parks volunteers, first Eric and then Justin, oversaw our stay at the People's Trail hut. As for all the gear Parry and Ron provided the transport. Surprisingly it is nearly a 10km trip. Some participants came for only one day and the sleepovers varied from 11 to 14. This time the weather was kinder than last year. Apart from visits to some normal caves and an attempt to locate Erica cave, thwarted by dense vegetation some work was done on the connecting pushes. The most significant was an advance of nearly 20m from Pristine towards Giants and the location and survey of an upper chamber.

Building the dam

I was intrigued by the railway from the cable way at the top of Kasteelspoort to the dams. There seemed no way for a steam engine to reach the Woodhead dam, it was too steep. So I did some research. The October 2008 Journal of the South African Institute of Civil Engineers provided some answers.

As Cape Town grew the water supply became a problem, compounded by the initiation of flush toilets. From 1887 to 1891 a tunnel had been built through the mountain to divert the Disa river along a pipe track to town but this was only a temporary measure, a storage dam was required.

Scottish engineer Thomas Stewart was appointed to design and oversee the construction. After the construction of the cableway and simple railway line he arranged for a small town to be built for the 500 workforce including a post office, bank and bars. Using imported stonemasons and quarrymen from Scotland, work began in 1894 by excavating a trench down to bedrock. The wall is faced with dressed stone with a rubble core, 17m wide at the base and 40m high. Mules were used to pull the materials along the line from the cable way. It was completed in 1897.

Soon after completion it was realised that another storage dam was required. Stewart was recommissioned and he set about restoring the cableway, cranes and workforce. This time he procured a steam engine, Mountain Meg, and laid a solid line to the Hely Hutchinson site. The locomotive was disassembled and the smaller pieces brought up by cableway. The larger pieces were placed on wooden sleds and manhandled up Kasteelspoort. Construction was only completed in 1904 due to interruption by the Boer War.

The steam engine was only used for the Hely Hutchinson reservoir where the line would be level right up to the dam wall.

Here is a bit of our story re our outing to Pristine, Giants Extension and Bat cave on Tuesday 13 December 2011. *Lene Tempelhoff*

Our caving outing started at 8.30am - 12 hours later my opening words to the occupants of one of the staff houses in Orange Kloof was: "Hi, we are lost and about to die from hypothermia, please can we have a hot shower!"

Alf and I set off from Constantia Nek and headed off to explore Pristine, Giants extension and Bats cave. Pristine is one of those great caves where you do quite a bit of leopard crawling. We hid our bags (containing food, water, windbreakers, car keys and cell phones) near the entrance to Giants extension in the undergrowth and embarked on the next leg of our trip.

The architectural interior of Giants Ext. is highly tactile, complex and stimulating - a dream for those with an explorative nature. The cave calls for straddling ledges, edging through narrow passages, discovering tapering pathways that are a tad tight for humans, taking sand slides down bobsleigh type channels, crossing a wet sump on tiptoes and forearms and finally winding up towards the sound made by the bats roosting in Bats cave.

At the top of Bats cave we found ourselves on a collection of interesting shaped rocks. The next part of our journey can best be summarized as "beyond a path" and "lost" - indeed the hallmark of Zen. We dropped down, then came up and double backed a number of times, characteristic of exploring caverns under the ground in an endeavour to head back to our packs.

The fairylike luscious forested area that we walked through at one stage contrasted with the huge weathered rock formation where we did some free climbing. To create even more ambiance we noticed that the clouds were rolling out and misty patches were starting to close in on us. We were exposed on the side of the mountain, (where the contour lines are close together), precipitous is the word, or scary as Raymond wrote in his article on the Manganese mine in Houtbay. Soon our visibility was severely hampered by misty conditions - at times our visibility was about 4 metres which meant we suddenly came across cliff edges where the area below was pure blanket grey mist.

Alf's incredible sense of patience allowed us to traverse numerous cliffs and manage to get below them. Where there is a will there is a way. At one stage Alf disappeared over the edge of the mountain and I heard a loud crack - luckily not a bone. With the mist swirling around us I likewise jumped over the edge which was a story high - Alf and the foliage below breaking my fall.

We had decided that we were truly lost. The rain was coming down. What a saviour one's helmet can be! Alf mentioned something like Orange Kloof to me in an attempt to orientate us - we might as well have been on planet Malaisha in the Pleiades constellation.

No time for stopping, forget the bags our new goal was to get down and survive. The word hypothermia flashes in my mind. I start wracking my brains about the subject. My body is shaking, my upper arms are numbed with pain, the fingers are without feeling, I am yawning continually and yes dehydrated. We have been wet and cold for over 6 hours. Alf is getting cramps in his legs. So what does

the mind do under a bit of pressure. I come up with a figure of 6, that we have another 6 hours from 6pm before we join the spirit world.
Yes and I am excited to explore the other side - but not necessarily now!

The light was starting to fade as the evening set in. Somehow I think that knowing that we had headlamps and Alf had a new torch made us psychologically equipped to endure a few more hours on the now summit face.

Round about 7pm I spotted a dirt road way down below - it felt like an hour and a half of severe bundu bashing to get there. It was a bit like snakes and ladders getting there including scaling down a tree like a Koala bear - my frozen hands inside wet leather gloves somehow facilitated the slide down the tree. The next bit of terrain was beautiful to look at - tall lacy ferns but also induced a sense of terror being very difficult to walk through as often it felt like one was walking on air and would drop down a few meters before encountering terra firma.

Now standing on the road we had no idea which way to go! Some homing instinct /intuition must have kicked in as we headed to the left. It was starting to feel like night when we walked past a little stream and then low and behold we spotted some mirage like houses in the misty distant which we never reached. Instead the first sign we encountered along the dirt road said "staff housing" - we knocked ...

After the hot showers, borrowed clothing we were kindly dropped off at my abode which did involve another hurdle like vaulting over a high wall to break in as my house keys were to spend the night on the mountain. Ideas about our packs on the mountain and cars parked at the Constantia parking base had to be dealt with the next day as we had been pushed a little to our edge and instantly hit slumber land once the sheets had been turned down.

The next morning I call Ron to tell him about our adventure, he listens patiently and then announces that he and the Rescue Team have been up in the caves all night looking for us! Over to Ron to let us know how the rescue operations went.

I smelt like fynbos for days afterwards and something that did come to mind was that the Rescue Organization might consider enlisting some psychics on board who are skilled at locating lost people as we were classic examples of being so off track. A big thank you to all the rescuers involved in this project.

Name changes

Mario, in his successful cave location expeditions to Table Mountain, named one of his finds Canadian Cave in honour of the parents of our Canadian member Sheri Lim. (They actually laddered into the cave, never having caved before). Historical records show that this cave was originally called The Magistrates Court in association with the next two connected ones, The Dungeon and Hangman's Drop. Thus this should revert to its original name.

Now between the Magistrates Court and the Dungeon we found and connected a long low cave which we named Shallow Cave. This name always seemed inappropriate. I've tried to find a more suitable name for this connecting cave and have eventually come up with The Cul-de-Sac. The Afrikaans is much more descriptive, "Straat loop dood".

School caving

We were approached by Herschel school to take some of their girls caving. At the appointed hour Steve, Rudolf, Eugenie and I met them on Godfrey road, one teacher, four parents and 10 kids.

As always the test cave, Aladdin, sorts out the odd claustrophobic. Because of the party size and my promise of a 6 hour trip I intended to leave out The Wizards Cell. However as nobody seemed unfit and with a little mini persuasion we included it, some going around twice. Eugenie led Oread Halls and Rudolf took the girls into White Dome Grotto, no parents were willing to try. Through Boomslang and back to the cars we were only 15 minutes late.

My two favourite caves were Oread Halls and Boomslang Cave.

Oread Halls was quite a large cave system and to get in you had to drop through a narrow slot with footholds, ending up in a large but low sandy chamber. We followed a passage off this chamber which became very small and we had to crawl through on our stomachs for quite a while! Eventually we entered another chamber which had a skylight at the top and we could see daylight again, although it was too high and difficult to exit there. On the wall of this chamber was a stamp recording the first exploration of this cave and the date was 1941. We crawled through another passage which then widened out into what the guide called the Grand Hall. This had lots of graffiti on the walls which was a shame but it also had a very short circular passage in that we had to really squeeze through to get back to where we started - some of us went round this 3 times!!! We eventually climbed back out the way we had come in which was difficult, and realised we had spent about 45 minutes in the cave altogether, which was quite a long time!

The last cave we went to was Boomslang Cave. There were lots of rocks and boulders that we had to scramble up at the entrance. Then we had to duck under a boulder to get to the entrance of the cave. Inside the cave, we saw a few Cape Horseshoe bats. At first they were a little scary, but then we realised that they wouldn't actually do anything to us. We managed to get quite near to a few, and we thought that up close, they were actually very cute! It was quite wet in this cave, and we were told that in the winter there is actually a pool in there. Thankfully we didn't get too wet, though we did get very sandy and dirty as again, for the last part of the cave, we had to wriggle through on our bellies under a rock to get out! Then we had gone right through the mountain!

by Megan Cunnington

My favourite cave was called the Wizard's Cell. You had to go in through a very thin slot and go downwards and then you had to go through an even thinner bit called a keyhole which was so small you had to turn on your side. Then you came out at the bottom of the cave so it was very short. Some of the other caves were much longer. I had so much fun and wasn't scared at all! I would definitely go again!

by Josie Cunnington

CPSS members taking part in the 2011 Cape Times big walk

Sinead Hattingh

On the 13th of November 2011 it was the day many people were waiting for, the annual cape times big walk!

It was a rainy, windy and cold morning but it didn't stop us and the people!

Rudolf, Darryl and I took part in the 20km timed walk. Rudolf and I are regular speed walkers and compete in most of the road races and League walks.

As I was walking to see if I knew anybody familiar, I bumped into Darryl and he said to me he is also taking part in the 20km walk.

For me it was a very nice race, I finished in a time of 2:20:35 and was overall the 5th lady over the line and the first in my category 18-30 years and I finished 40 overall out of more than 2500 participants in the 20km.

Rudolf finished just in front of me with a time of 2:19:55 and 39 overall!

Darryl also finished in a good time of 2:40:30 and was the 211th finisher in the 20km walk.

It was a fun and challenging day and CPSS members name kept high by taking part in a big walk and it wasn't a big walk to a Cave!!!



October meet

Oh dear. The monthly meets are hopefully to get the members together for a day out and socialise while caving. We only had four but at least eleven visitors, including Leighan and Nante from Sanparks, made up for it.

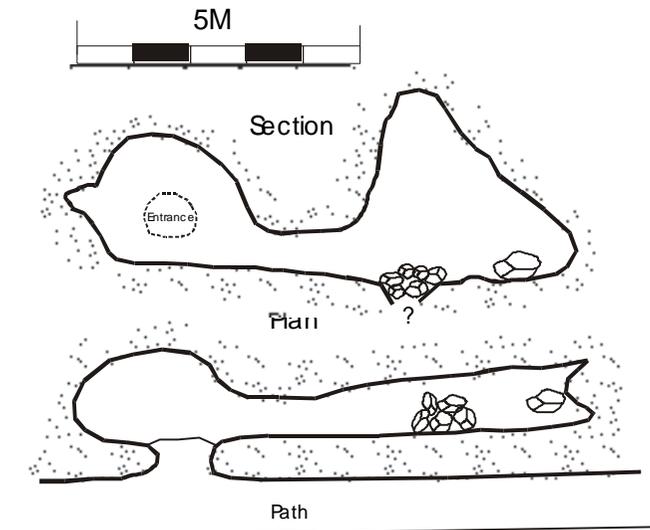
Ystervark, a long uphill plug to test the legs. This is still one of my Kalk Bay favourites. Then the adventure around the buttress to reach Vier Grotte. Joshua, the smallest in the party, wasn't sure of the little exit squeeze to join the exclusive club of those having achieved the through trip. Next on to Commemoration Hall and Johalvin. Josie's Trap had many takers.

Now there was a request, can we go back to Sunbeam Cavern. The entrance was a challenge for the somewhat larger folks. On the way home Rudolf suggested a detour to Crassula.

As always a good day of caving and making friends.

Kirstenbosch

If you've ever walked the contour path above Kirstenbosch between Nursery Ravine and Skeleton Gorge you might have seen a small hole alongside the path. It doesn't seem much but if you're ever up there pop in for a look.



Pain coming



Editor: Ron Zeeman