

BOOMSLANG CAVE - BY C.J. LARKIN

(The numbers in brackets also appear on the survey of the cave. This is to help the reader in the identification of the passages talked about in the text).

According to J.C.W. Moore, in his article on the "Caves in the Muizenberg Range" in the Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa (1944), "In 1913 Messrs Arderne and Samson wrote to the club claiming the discovery of a cave in 1911 and attaching a plan of it to their letter. This plan proves without doubt that it was the Boomslang Cave. I have made enquiries but have been unable to trace anyone who had been to this cave prior to 1911". Thus being discovered at an early date they have become well known over the years. This has led to it becoming one of the most frequented caves in the Cape Peninsula. It is situated in the mountains above Kalk Bay and runs from north to south through Cave Peak. It is flanked by two caves, Avernus and White Dome Grotto. Mr Mayer called the cave Upper Aladdin until he found it was named Boomslang. It is said the first thing the discoverer saw was a boomslang, hence the name.

discoverer's name

In June 1982 A. Hitchcock and D. Eckles surveyed Boomslang and White Dome Grotto. They noticed water falling through a shaft in White Dome Grotto. They became curious and entered Boomslang where they found water running down a crack. After much probing they found that the shaft joined the two caves (1). This added the 486 m of Boomslang and 117 m of White Dome Grotto together to make Boomslang now 603 m. They also found in relation to Boomslang the entrances of Avernus and White Dome Grotto.

I was given the surveys by A. Hitchcock and was asked to draw a plan of the caves. The combined survey indicates the possibility of a connection between Boomslang and Avernus. We (A. Hitchcock and the author) noted that at the end of Cathedral Passage in Boomslang a side passage (2) runs off towards Avernus and that directly opposite this a passage in Avernus leads towards Boomslang. Armed with this information, and that other side passages had not been surveyed and explored, we visited the cave on the 28 December 1982.

We first explored Cathedral Chamber where we noticed a couple of side passages (3). Crawling through these we found they joined and that after a couple of metres they became too tight. Pools were found in two of these passages. We surveyed another side passage (4) into Hurlingh's Chamber. This side passage ended in a large boulder choke. Mr Mayer, who was the leader of the "moles", named the Chamber after Mr Hurlingh, who was a member of the party which entered the cave.

After this we visited the side passage (2). I went down it for 7 m until it became very flat. I could see another 2 m ahead. This has closed the gap between Avernus and Boomslang to about 4 m. We then explored and surveyed another side system (5) near the exit from the cave. At the end of this side system a passage led off, but it became too tight. We then decided to survey the very complicated exit system (6). This system is situated under a shelf of rock. We found Wessels Grotto which was unknown to us, next to the exit and which proved to be part of Boomslang.

flying into
There appears to be an upper system above the side passage (7). Bats were seen to fly in this "passage". To get to these a maypole or fixed ladder would be needed as the rock is loose and unclimable. In all we added another 158 m to make the cave now 761 m. This is now the second largest known cave in the Kalk Bay Mountains. Exploration is still to be done around the boulder choke near the skylights.

REFERENCES

Moore J.C.W. (1944) "Caves of the Muizenberg Range" J. Mountain Club of S.A. (47), 7 - 22.

Eckles. D (1980) "Recent work above Kalk Bay and Muizenberg" Bull. S.A. Spel. Ass., 16 - 21.
