

## Cave Name

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### **Introduction**

John Meyer discovered this cave on the 20th March 1934. He records the event in his diary as follows:

*"Went up the mountain about 2 p.m., and was back shortly after five. Discovered a new cave\*. Also unexpectedly came upon Sarcophagus Cave, which I had visited once and named ten years ago (4/3/24). \*(Tartarus)*

The name is derived from Greek mythology. In Homer it is a region beneath Hades in which Zeus confined the defeated Titans.

The following Meyer diary entries record the early exploration of Tartarus.

*28/10/37 "There we first had coffee, took a few minutes rest and entered Tartarus right to the end. Then we came along the side passage to the Central Chamber. I clambered up the chimney and saw the candle, which we had placed there from the other side when first we had come in. Then we took turns in hammering away the rock, till Hurlingh crept through; and so the passage was opened. We went out for lunch, had a rest, and came in and worked for over an hour deepening and widening the passage."*

*02/11/37 on this day Meyer continues: "Close to the entrance of Tartarus we removed a big stone by means of a rope, and found a grotto which we decided to name 'Little Tartarus'."*

*21/05/38 "Worked on track before lunch, and did 42 paces in 1½ hours. After lunch did 30 paces in 1½ hours. I brought the track right to the mouth of Tartarus. I painted a white arrow near the cave's mouth, and another below the krans (rock cliff)."*

The significance of this entry is the impact of Meyer's path building on the mountain and caves.

### **Description**

Tartarus is found on top of Kalk Bay Mountain. The entrance is in the middle of the path that runs along the top of the ridge. It is situated approximately half way between the two beacons and below and behind a step in the path. The entrance developed when part of the ceiling collapsed exposing a small opening to the surface and resulting in a rubble

slope into a 5 x 10m chamber. There is a second smaller entrance 10m to the left, which joins the main passage.

Little Tartarus is a small grotto about 5m to the right of the main entrance. A narrow passage heads off in the general direction of Bobby's Grotto and is not far below the surface. It becomes too narrow after about 20m. A stream flows along the passage and it is possible to squeeze through this into the main Tartarus system.

Another very narrow passage about 12m long feeds a small streamlet into the far end of the entrance chamber. There is speculation that one or both of these passages drain the water rising in Bobby's Grotto because they head directly towards a complementary passage in that cave.

From the far end of the entrance chamber a four-meter high corridor leads off to the left. This passage collects water from the inlet passages and seepage from the rubble pile at the cave entrance. After a few meters the passage turns right, becoming narrower and forming a mini canyon as the water cuts deeper into the rock floor and drops away in steps until it reaches a chasm-like passage 30m away. At this juncture the water flows over a sill and down a 3m deep drop.

The 'chasm' has developed at right angles to the stream passage that comes from the entrance and is a major feature of this cave. It consists of an 8m long 'chasm' that continues as much narrower passages at either end. The remains of the original floor consists of shelves on either side of the chasm with a 3m deep crevice dropping away in the middle. The ceiling consists of a series of avens the highest being 8m above the shelf level. The avens become much lower as one heads left in the direction of the stream. The shelves close in and form solid floor save for a small opening shortly before this level closes down. There is a pool of clear drinking water at this point. The 'chasm' is 2-3m at it's widest and has a well-preserved record of early visitors painted neatly by John Meyer on the wall. (Please note that the Cape Peninsula Spelaeological Society does not encourage painting in caves or on rocks on the mountain or any natural area, but regards John Meyer's painted 'visitors books' and cave names as a historical record) (XXX photo of vistor's book)

The way on is through the small opening in the shelf and down a narrow crevice to the stream floor 3m below. The passage from here on is extremely narrow and difficult to explore. It forms a vertical slot about 2m high in places with constrictions past which only the thinnest explorer can progress. The passage continues in the same direction for about 8m and then angles back almost in the opposite direction. It continues as a very thin slot too narrow to enter. The stream flows along this passage, but we do not know where the water goes.

The right hand passage leading off the 'chasm' continues as a vertical traverse for 10m. There is a very narrow slot in the floor, which continues, but is far too narrow to explore. Water can be heard flowing along this crack towards the 'chasm' passage during the

winter months. This suggests more cave passage with the water perhaps also originating in Bobby's Grotto?

At ceiling level is a small opening that was widened by Meyer and Hurling in 1937. This is the entrance to a crawlway that rejoins the main passage about a third of the way back towards the entrance.

## ***Survey and Exploration***

A sketch of the cave was found along with some papers belonging to JCW Moore. We assume that John Meyer prepared the sketch. The sketch was done from memory and has some notes such as length from entrance to end of pit. (XXX insert sketch map) I completed the survey of the cave during May 1982. On the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1983 Peter Swart, Chris Larkin and I forced the breakthrough downstream in Tartarus. We climbed down the narrow drop of 3-4m in the chasm and pushed downstream past a very narrow constriction. The passage loops back on itself after 8m so that the stream flows away from the southern cliff. It is speculated that the water might rise at the resurgence at the top of Moss and Diamonds. An attempt to prove this using fluorecine was inconclusive. Attempts were made to push upstream in Little Tartarus, but little progress was made. Attempts to push the complementary passages in Bobby's Grotto also failed as they proved to be too tight.

## ***Safety***

Tartarus is potentially a dangerous cave. It has a number of very narrow passages where it is possible to get stuck. The passage downstream of the chasm is entered by sliding down a 3m slot. Not only is this passage very tight where explorers might become trapped, but it is also difficult to lever oneself back out of the slot. The walls of the passage to the right of the chasm are soft and easily break away.