

AN EXPLORATION GROUP REPORT

STOCKING THE BAVIAANS KLOOF RIVER — BAINS KLOOF

By G. A. SAUNDERS

THIS operation was carried out with almost military precision on December 7, 1963. The personnel concerned were Ron Bell and myself, assisted, as valuable bearers, by my son John and his friend Charles Garnett.

The timing, which went very much according to plan, was roughly as follows:—

7.30 a.m. Party assembled on the national road, near the Koeberg flyover bridge. From there Ron Bell had John Saunders as his co-pilot to Jonkershoek and thence to Bain's Kloof where the meeting place was the Garnett's stone holiday house in the small settlement near to the hotel. The writer accompanied by Charles Garnett proceeded direct to Bain's Kloof and, until the party reassembled, the time was well spent opening up the house and getting the rucksacks and lunches ready for the footslog to follow.

10 a.m. saw the arrival of Ron plus John and fingerlings. Jonkershoek had bagged up 600 brown trout in six packs, and we all had tea before commencing the hike. We had two large and two smaller rucksacks, the former accommodating two cartons and the latter one each. Our leader, Ron, humped a double pack all the way, whilst the writer (no doubt in deference to his grey hairs) had a single pack, leaving John and Charles with the other half of the consignment which they shared by taking turns with the heavier load.

The hike started at 10.30 a.m. The route is by a footpath leading from the back of the hotel to a crossing of the main Witte River where, on the other side, a fairly well-defined track leads sharply uphill out of the Witte River gorge, to join a bridle-path at right angles soon after level ground is reached. Turning left on to this path we continued at a good pace with Ron leading and Charles bringing up the rear (as a friendly gesture to keep me company) for the party soon became somewhat spread out. The day was cloudy, so the going, apart from the loose stones on the path that tend to keep one's head down, was good. For the first two miles or so the path climbs consistently, with one or two small breaks where minor runnels scar the hillside. At the highest point, the view looking back and to one's left is very fine indeed—the main river and road are to be seen for a considerable distance, whilst the tributary being followed is in a steep gorge and is not often visible. At about the three-mile mark the path traverses a side stream, falling steeply down a series of rocky steps.

From this point a boundary waterfall immediately below in the Baviaans Kloof stream becomes visible, the water cascading into a well-sheltered pool lying a hundred feet or more below the path. From there onwards the path tends to descend, and after walking for another three-quarters of an hour with the top waterfall now readily visible, the valley can be seen to be closing in. The point where the path joins the river bank provides a very pleasant camp, seemingly much used by mountaineers, and it was here that we dumped our loads—time then about noon. At this juncture it started to rain, and it continued, off and on, until we were halfway back at about 3 p.m.

Next to this camp site is a remarkable pool which, on the day in question, was at least twelve feet deep—two packs of trout went into this new home-from-home. The remaining packs were decanted in suitable pools above and below this camp site, and the operation was completed by about 1.30 p.m. As usual the oxygen packs produced excellent results, and nearly all fish swam out after the water temperatures had been equalised, with only one or two specimens showing signs of a "hangover" which it is hoped that the new surroundings quickly cured.

Hot coffee brewed up on an open fire was a welcome addition to our sandwich lunch. By this time we were plenty wet and we did not tarry as movement assisted in keeping warm. However, before leaving the river bed we turned up a number of stones and collected a cross-section of the multitudinous water "goggas" to enable A.C.H. to gauge the food sufficiency of the stream for the new arrivals. I was quite amazed to see so many creatures in the stream bed, and also noticed a number of newly hatched mayflies, so that seemingly the new arrivals should find their larder adequately stocked. A.C.H. studied the results two days later (very smelly indeed) in the club room, and after dosing same with some secret deodorant proclaimed the results as "good", meaning good as plentiful grub for the young trout. Personally I wondered if some of the more aversive creatures gathered from under the stones would not, if given the right opportunity, make a meal of the young trout, but I gathered from A.C.H. that my fears were, luckily, groundless.

(Corydalid larvae, dragonfly larvae and various caddis larvae.—A.C.H.)

Soon after 4 p.m. we were back at the house, where dry clothing and hot tea were an excellent combination. After tea Ron left us, for, with the boys, I had planned to stay overnight. My sleeping bag was in use by 9 p.m. and I did not read much of the



Baviaans River, Bain's Kloof. Camp Site Pool, about 12 feet deep—compare size with figure on rock in background. Two plastic bags of brown trout fingerlings (under oxygen) went into this pool.

(Photos: G. A. Saunders)

book by my bedside. Apart from vaguely hearing some heavy rain on the roof during the night I think we all slept the sleep of the just.

Opposite page 73 in "Trout in the Kloofs" will be found a map prepared by Alan Yates where, in the top left-hand corner, there is a stream marked "this tributary joins the Witte approximately one mile below the hotel", and this is the stream stocked on this occasion. The ordinance survey maps show the name "Baviaans Kloof", and I think that this name should be used and this important tributary named "Baviaans River". Reference to the same map will show that, measured from the hotel, this "Baviaans River" is just about the same length as the main Witte River to the Palmiet Pool.

(This should not be confused with another "Baviaans Kloof" marked on the map of Forest Reserves at the foot of the Witte River valley near the junction of the Witte and Breede rivers.—Ed.)

I have had my eye on this water for a good many years for, as thanks to my good friend Norman Garnett (Charles's father), I have enjoyed many visits to this area when using Norman's house as a temporary H.Q. It was, in fact, Norman and his wife Colleen who first took my wife and myself for a walk up Baviaans Kloof, using this same bridlepath. I was so impressed by the surroundings that I then decided to explore further, concluding with an expedition with my wife when, having taken a suitably-provisioned rucksack, we made our way to the camp site for the first time and went further with the intention of reaching the top waterfall. However, as is often the case, the distances were deceiving and we were beaten by the clock, having to turn back well short of our objective to be certain of recrossing the main river before darkness. It was this visit in particular that decided me to institute a studied policy of nagging Ron Bell, on all suitable occasions, anent this stocking venture, and of course he readily agreed.

From now on the proof of the pudding will be in the eating, and I very much hope in two year's time to be able to spend a day or so in the area to see what can be found of the survivors of the original 600 fish. During the winter months, i.e. the breeding season, this fishing will be naturally isolated by the flooding of the Witte river crossings, also in view of the nature of the terrain it is unlikely to be overfished. I judge the distance from the top waterfall to the lower waterfall (both definite fish barriers) as some 2 miles of which I have seen only a small section near to the camp site. I think it probable that by gaining access to the river near to the lower Barrier waterfall one could then fish upstream to the camp site, and in this way the possibilities of the various intervening pools and runs could be thoroughly explored. I think this will be found

Another pool, above the camp site, also stocked with brown trout.



to be a dry-fly fishery unless tackled by any of our experienced nymph fishermen. It might well be an exhausting day's fishing, but this should be mitigated by the scenery, whilst the bird life has been noted to be both varied and prolific.

I would mention that Norman Garnett assures me that there is a path leading further up the hillside before the camp site comes into view that climbs and joins the river again *above* the top waterfall. Here he tells me there is another stretch of at least one mile of open rocky mountain stream, with many nice sizeable pools, fed from the generous watershed of the surrounding mountains, and consequently always running, summer and winter. I do not propose nagging Ron Bell yet awhile on this project, and may well leave this entire proposition to someone with fewer (or no) grey hairs, so if any young enthusiast wants to follow up this idea I will at least guarantee to help him, even if only with the nagging, and I am equally sure that my good friend Norman Garnett will, if he does not join the expedition himself, be only too pleased to permit the use of his house again as an advanced H.Q.



Since writing these notes I have visited this kloof again and, on this occasion, explored right up to the top waterfall, taking some photographs on the way. From the camp site, rock-hopping in the river bed, it takes about an hour to reach the fall. There are a number of good pools to be seen on the way up, and it is to be hoped that many of them will be populated by the fingerlings eventually making their way upstream. Their passage upstream will probably be easier when the river is augmented by winter rains. The topography of this section of the stream is very similar to that of the main Witte River above the second tributary, though the ascent tends to be very much more abrupt.

On the return journey John, with a friend, followed the river bed from the camp site down to the junction with the Witte River below the hotel. This is a much longer route and John reported that there are several barrier falls before the bottom waterfall is reached—accordingly, for the benefit of anglers in the future, I must recommend that the camp site be used as a starting point and not the lower waterfall as previously suggested.



The top waterfall and pool.



Distant view up the valley, showing top waterfall.

BAVIAANS RIVER

Drawn by Sven Krohn from information supplied by members of the Exploration Group, December 1963.

TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY SHEETS, SERIES 3319 J.1/2, K.1/2.

RELIABILITY: Compiled from ground observation and information supplied by Trigonometrical Survey Dept.

