

north and south direction, with minor lateral passages branching off nearly at right angles to the main openings—the whole cave being formed in the joints, or natural divisional planes, of the rock.

The mouth or entrance to the cave originated, in the first instance, in an open joint or fissure in the Devonian limestone, which became widened by water flowing backwards and forwards, and was partly enlarged by the atmospheric water, which percolated through the cracks, fissures, and open joints in the overlying rock. The pebbles, forming the lowest deposit in the cave, were ordinary shingle or beach-gravel, washed in by the waves and tides. The cave-earth was the residual part of the limestone rock, after the calcareous portion had been dissolved and carried away in solution; and the stalactite and stalagmite were derived from the lime deposited from the percolating water.

With regard to bone-caves generally, it would seem that, like other such openings, they are most common in limestone rocks, where they have been formed by water, which has dissolved and carried away the calcareous ingredient of the rock. In the case of the Brixham cave, the mode of action of the water could be clearly traced in two ways: first, in widening out the principal passages by the rush of water backwards and forwards from the sea; and, secondly, by the infiltration and percolation of atmospheric water through the overlying rock. In both cases the active agents in producing the cave had taken advantage of a pre-existing fissure or crack, or an open joint, which they gradually enlarged and widened out, until the opening received its final proportions.

The cave presented no appearance of ever having been inhabited by man; or of having been the den of Hyænas or other animals, like Wookey Hole in the Mendips, and some other bone-caves. The most probable supposition is, that the hind quarter of the Bear and other bones which were found in the cave-earth, had been washed into the cave by the sea, in which they were floating about.

We draw some inferences of the greatest interest and significance from the Brixham cave and its contents.

We learn that this country was, at one time, inhabited by animals which are now extinct, and of whose existence we have not even a tradition; that man, then ignorant of the use of metal, and little better than the brutes, was the contemporary of the animals whose remains were found in the cave, together with a rude flint-implement—the only kind of weapon with which our savage ancestor defended himself against animals scarcely wilder than himself.

We also learn that after the cave had been formed and sealed up