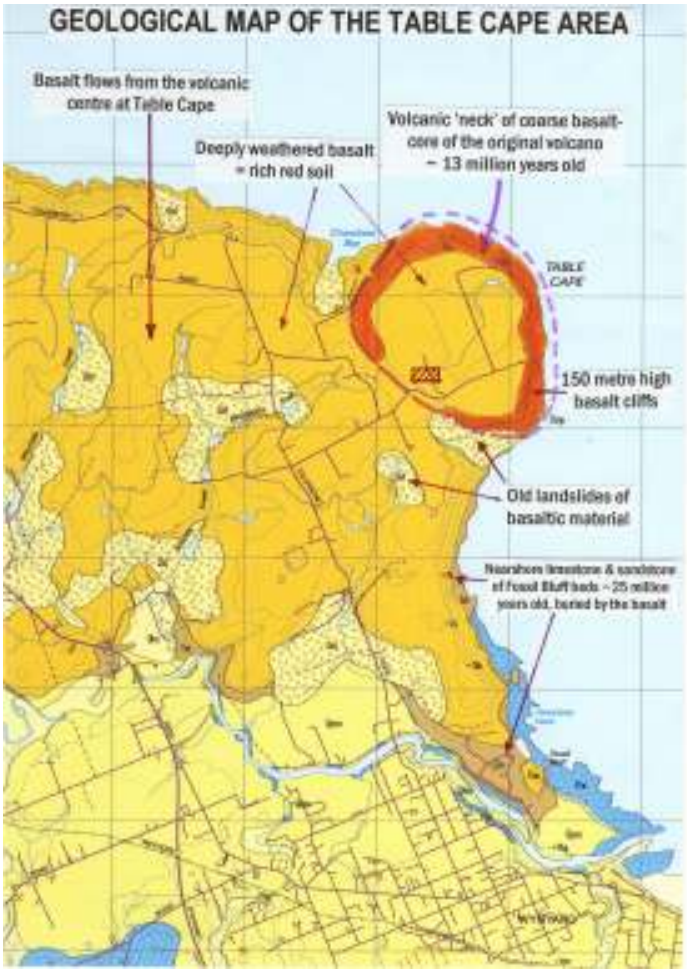
The Geology of Table Cape



Map of Table Cape showing the Geological features of the area

Table Cape from the air. The flat top is a results of a lava lake which formed around 13 million years ago.

Table Cape was formed around 13 million years ago when molten basalt filled the crater of a large volcano and solidified, forming a huge 160m high plateau of corse-grained lava on which the Tulip Farm is now located. The Nut at Stanley was formed around the same time and in a similar way.

The volcanic centre at Table Cape is 1.5km across and is dominated by basalt. Other flows from the eruptions of the Table Cape volcano spread out to form a basalt plain to the West and South and covering the older (25 million years) shell-rich limestone and sandstone beds at Fossil Bluff.

Over the millions of years following these eruptions the basalt has slowly been weathering and eroding away, and virtually all the volcanic ash deposits which originally surrounded the large volcano have now gone.

Long periods of weathering and high rainfall have resulted in the formation of deep red 'kraznozem' soil on the basalts. This soil extends across much of North-West Tasmania and is more fertile than other soils in the state.

The soil around Table Cape tends to be deep (up to several metres) and clay-rich, but reasonably friable. The soils are also moderately acidic (pH of 5-6) and quite high in organic matter. The strong colour is due to finely divided oxides of iron.

A consequence of this deep and fertile soil is that it developed, over thousands of years, a cover of dense, tall forest which created many difficulties for European explorers and early settlers in the area.