

# Our Field Trip Adventure

By John Boom

We left Coffs Harbour some 3 weeks ago and decided to visit some of the various well-known gemstone fields in Queensland. We returned on the 14/08/2006. I've written this for others that may have an interest in a similar trip.

## Marlborough - Chrysoprase

After leaving Coffs Harbour we headed up through Biggenden and had a look around that area but found the gold mine areas still active without access. So we then made our way up through Rockhampton and went to Marlborough to look for some Chrysoprase. To get to the area we went down the old Marlborough Road and turned left at Currumburra Road.

We searched the creek areas and found the odd white piece but nothing with any apple greens. We went further past Marlborough Station and again found some white pieces but nothing nice to speak of. But we had an enjoyable time in this area. There are perhaps better areas but most likely on private property.

We've never been this far into Queensland before so this trip was really just a bit of an adventure for us and at the same time it gave us the opportunity to decide on places to go again in the future. Basically eliminating areas of no interest.

## Mt Hay – Thunder Eggs - Ryolite

After this we headed back into Rockhampton and made our way to Mt Hay in the hope of finding some Thunder Eggs and Ryolite. This was a disappointment as we would have stayed at their caravan park for no doubt some days but when we got there the fossicking area had been apparently closed for the last five years due to public liability reasons we were told.

And now all that remains is basically a rock shop, caravan park and an area where they just dump some material you pay \$12.00 per person to look through. It's just not the same as fossicking for it yourself so we left that area a short time later and made our way toward the Anakie Sapphire fields. It would be hoped the owners will one-day turn this situation around.

## Anakie Sapphire Fields - Sapphires



### Photos at the Anakie Caravan Park

We stayed at the Anakie caravan park on our first night and did some digging at the Willows and Sapphire areas for a couple of days. We stayed at other parks in the sapphire areas as well. We found these areas to be of future interest and will no doubt go back there and spend a week or more there. These type of areas you

need to spend substantial time because it takes time to dig decent holes and get established in the areas you want to dig in. The Willows and Sapphire areas have some shallow areas where to dig and sieve.

**Tools Needed:**

I good large pick and long handle shovel.  
One quarter and eighth inch sieve. I used 500 mm round ones suspended from a tripod as you can see in the photos. You will need water and a drum for the final sieving to see if you have anything in your sieve. You could make your own sieves as well. A Hessian bag on a table is good to tip the final sieve lot onto to see if you've found anything.

All tools can be purchased at Sapphire if required. No power tools are permitted on any of the fields unless you have a lease and then only limited power tools are permitted. Although we didn't find any sapphires on this trip we feel these areas are well worth spending a few weeks holiday on. You need to put in the hard work and plenty of time.

The sapphires are located in the old wash, which is made up of small to very large pebbles, sand, dirt and clay. It's very, very hard work digging. The depth varies from field areas from near the surface to around 40 foot deep around the Rubyvale Fields. All the fields are located near each another so you can try different areas if you're interested. But even the surface areas are still hard work though. You could reach most areas by car but a 4x4 would be better for going down most tracks.



**The Big Pick, Shovel & Sieve just outside the Sapphire Caravan Park**



**Petrified Wood Logs Outside The Emerald Town Hall.**



**Shallow Digging.**



**Deeper Digging.**



**Deep Shaft Lease Digging at Rubyvale.**

### **Alpha – Petrified Wood**

We went to a town called Alpha and stayed there the night at the Caravan park because we heard there was some petrified wood in the area. The park owners were fairly new and also filled us in on where to find the wood.

**Directions:** Just before you come into Alpha you turn left into Tambo Road just before the large bridge that enters the town. The very first turn left again will take you to a roadside quarry area 1 km down that road on the right hand side. We found about a bucket of petrified wood between us from small tumbling to cutting size. You can also find some tumbling size pieces in the creek under the bridge near the town as well. But the quarry area is the main source area.



**Quarry Photo.**

### **Clermont – Gold Detecting**

After that area we spent a couple of days in the Clermont area and did a little metal detecting. In the caravan park you'll also find the Clermont detector shop. These people are friendly and give advice on the best places to detect in the area. You can also purchase a Fossicking Kit from them, which includes maps of the area etc. I think it was about \$5.50 for two days and more if you stay longer.

This is different than the fossickers license which is required throughout Queensland. The fossickers license can also be purchased from them if required. The Clermont detector shop sells new and used detectors and also hires them out. We didn't stay long enough to give the areas any justice and basically just had a look around for now and will no doubt go back there for an extended longer stay. This caravan park has all facilities. A four wheel drive vehicle is best in this area or if you can take a four wheel motorbike to get around the tracks would be just as good.

## O'Briens Creek – Topaz & Photos



**Sieves & Tripod.** I got the wife sieving in the Topaz hole. Center pic of topaz.



**Feeding my wife to the birds at the O'Briens Creek Caravan Park.**



### **Park facilities.**

Then it was off to Mount Surprise to look for Topaz. We stayed at the Mount Surprise Gem Caravan Park in the centre of town for the first night we arrived. They have a nice selection of gems on display as well as live birds and those miniature ponies.



The next day we headed off to O'Briens Creek which is the actual fossicking area for the Topaz. The caravan park there doesn't have power only showers and toilets. You can get some drinking water from a tap adjoining the toilet block. It's all very basic but a most beautiful area. This is an area well worth spending some weeks at for a holiday.

You have to travel approx. 35 kms down a corrugated dirt road from Mount Surprise to get there. It's around a 2 klm drive from this park to most of the fossicking areas. I suggest you bring enough food and water for the period you wish to stay before getting there. We stayed here for a few days and found some topaz as per the picture.

You can use the same tools as per sapphires but you'll only need a quarter inch sieve here. You can dry sieve but for best results it pays to dip the final sieve after dry sieving into water. It just shows the topaz up better. Digging here is a little easier but it's still hard work as you can see by the hole we were in on the photos.

Take some bread with you and feed the parrots in the caravan park and you'll find them all over you, as they were very tame. The park managers were very friendly and helpful with advice on the best places to search. You can have a campfire for your personal use there if you like. A four wheel drive vehicle is best in this area or if you can take a four wheel motorbike to get around the tracks would be just as good.

## **Agate Creek – Wild Brumbies & Agates**



**Entrance To The Safari Camp.  
(Caravan Park Area)**



**Agate on the tracks.**



**Agate can be dug  
at the top of this  
hill just next to the  
camp.**



**Camp Photos.**



## **Just some of the Agate found.**

After O'Briens Creek we made our way to Agate Creek in search of Agates. You have to go over at least 120 kms of corrugated dirt road from Georgetown to get there for a start. We stayed at the Safari Camp at the end of the track to Agate Creek.

On the way to Agate Creek you'll come to an intersection where you can turn right to go to Cobbold Gorge around 7 klms down that road. The road to Agate Creek is to the left as there is no sign there to let you know that. Take enough food, water and fuel for your period of stay.

There are no shops in Agate Creek. The closest town to Agate Creek is Forsayth over 70 klms away. Then Georgetown after that. Fuel and supplies can be purchased at both places at higher than city prices. Agate creek is a magic and mystical place well worth spending a whole holiday period if you like nature and getting back to the basics.

Wild brumbies roam everywhere, the odd wild pig runs here and there. With an abundance of wildlife it's a great place for a real camping experience for the whole

family. Again only basic facilities with showers and toilets and no power. There's drinking water from a tap at the toilet block.

We had seats around the campfire every night of our stay with host Laurie Baron keeping every night interesting. It's a fascinating place if you like bush walking and Aboriginal cave paintings not far from the camp in the hills. Cattle roam free in these areas outside the camp as do most outback Queensland areas so be watchful on all the roads when you travel.

There are areas like Crystal Hill where the agate actually lines the tracks. There is plenty of specimen agate to be found there still but for the good stuff you'll need to dig with a pick and a shovel. There are many areas to search and the agate is found in areas specific in that the agate is found in the volcanic flow areas. You'll need to have a fossickers licence before you get there which can be purchased from a mining registrar at Georgetown. (Around \$8.20 for a family for one month or dearer for a longer period.) You can again only use hand tools. I found that the biggest percentage of the agate you'll find is quartz filled and many with geode crystals. Agate can also be found in the creeks around the general fossicking areas here and there as well.

If you stay at the Agate Creek Safari Camp (I can highly recommend it) you can actually walk up the hill in a few locations and dig for agates surrounding the camp area. You can contact the camp manager: Laurie Baron on: (07) 4062 5574 or try his mobile on: 0409 463 192 to make an advance booking and just to make sure the camp is open as this area can only be accessed in the dry weather periods.

Usual periods are between April till September but ring before you go just to make sure. Laurie has a heliport area and phone for any absolute emergency situation. You can have a campfire for your personal use there if you like. If you have children they can easily find some nice colored agate chips and pieces everywhere around the areas on the ground surface. They will love the area.

**Tools needed:** Large pick, long handle shovel and small hand pick. A satellite phone is always good if you have one on a trip such as this. Always carry water with you and matches in case you get lost so you can light a signal fire in a safe manner.

A four-wheel drive vehicle is best in this area or if you can take a four-wheel motorbike to get around the tracks would be just as good. Make sure your vehicle is in top condition as this is an isolated area.

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