

# CHINCHILLA PETRIFIED WOOD LOCALITY

Petrified wood is a popular ornamental material used mainly for decorative pieces (bookends, clock faces, ashtrays etc) and for lapidary purposes as polished specimens, slabs, cabochons, tumbled stones and spheres. In the Chinchilla area, petrified wood occurs in abundance and is much sought after by lapidary enthusiasts for its quality and colours.

In accordance with the *Fossicking Act 1994*, one landowner in the Chinchilla area has given a “general permission” to the Mining Registrar, Brisbane for fossicking at a specific site on the property by holders of Fossickers Licences issued by this Department. Individual written permission is thus not required to visit this site but certain conditions apply and these must be complied with.

## Access

The town of Chinchilla is about 300km west-northwest of Brisbane on the Warrego Highway.

*(Thompson's)*

From Chinchilla take the Warrego Highway and travel about 4km westerly towards Miles, turn left off the highway and cross over the railway line and go through the gate (keep gate closed). Turn sharp right and follow the white gravel road to “Yarnham” homestead where final directions to the collecting area can be obtained

from the landowner (Ronald & Sally Thompson Telephone (07) 4662 7311). This site is a gravel pit and is worked intermittently.

Good specimens can also be readily found beside roads in the area, but remember collecting is only permitted from the ground surface in road reserves and digging is not allowed.

## Geology

Sedimentary rocks of the Kumbarilla beds of Jurassic to Lower Cretaceous age, which are part of the Surat Basin sequence, underlie the Chinchilla area. These include mainly sandstones and other fine-grained sediments that are generally deeply weathered. Most of the petrified wood is found in unconsolidated gravels capping low ridges of the Kumbarilla beds; these are probably remnants of earlier erosion episodes of the sediments although some may have been transported.

## Fossicking

Petrified wood (also referred to as silicified wood or fossilised wood) is material formed by the replacement of wood by silica ( $\text{SiO}_2$ ). The original form and structure of the wood is preserved in the process. Generally the silica is in the form of opal or chalcedony (jasper, agate) and colours are often variegated mostly shades

of grey, brown, cream, yellow, red and pink.

The yellow and red colours are sought after. The material has a Mohs' hardness of 6.5-7, and occurs as fragments in various sizes, some well worn and others irregular shapes and sections of trees with little or no abrasion evident.

The exact process of how the wood is petrified (becomes stone) after being embedded in sediments is not well understood. Particular questions remain as to how the silica is placed in contact with the wood in the first instance, and how the wood tissue is preserved in such fine detail.

Scientific studies of the genesis of agate and petrified wood have been undertaken in Germany in recent years and whilst the scientific community agree on some aspects of the silicification process the latest theories are not yet universally accepted. Little if any research has been conducted on the petrified woods from this area and the species of trees present are unknown. Apart from petrified wood good specimens of petrified palm have also been collected from the Chinchilla area.

Material is easily collected from the ground surface or in drainages. Some shallow excavation in suitable areas may also prove productive.

## Requirements

Fossicking for petrified wood requires a Fossickers Licence, which can be issued for varying periods upon payment of the relevant fee at Departmental District Offices, or locally in Chinchilla.

Chinchilla Tourist Information Centre, Warrego Highway  
Telephone: (07) 4668 9564  
Facsimile: (07) 4662 7879.

Licences are also available from other agents at various locations throughout the State (see list on the Department's website).

The holder of a Fossickers Licence must comply with the conditions of the "general permission" given by the landowner for entry at all times.

### Conditions of "general permission"

- permission is given only to holders of a Fossickers Licence
- camping is prohibited
- visitors need to be self sufficient in supplies including water
- visitors must not interfere with any stock, or improvements
- children must be supervised at all times by an adult
- gates must be left as found
- vehicle access is restricted to existing roads and tracks
- visitors must not interfere with any wildlife or flora
- all rubbish must be removed
- excavations should be refilled
- all human waste should be buried at least 20cm deep

In addition, the owners of the property "Yarnham" require fossickers to call at the homestead and notify their presence before beginning to fossick. An entry fee is also payable to them.

Please note that the landowner has the right to terminate the permission and may direct visitors to leave the land immediately for non-compliance with conditions as set out above.

Remember if you intend to fossick elsewhere outside this "general permission" area, the landholder's permission must be obtained first.

## Camping

Camping is not permitted on the property.

## Services and Accommodation

Visitor requirements are well catered for in Chinchilla, which has a variety of shops and services including food stores. Ample accommodation is available in motels, caravan parks and hotels.

## Code of conduct

In addition to the conditions of the "general permission" a person fossicking under a Fossickers Licence must comply with the requirements of the Fossicking Act and Regulation to maintain safety, hygiene and a high standard of behaviour during their visit.

## For further information:

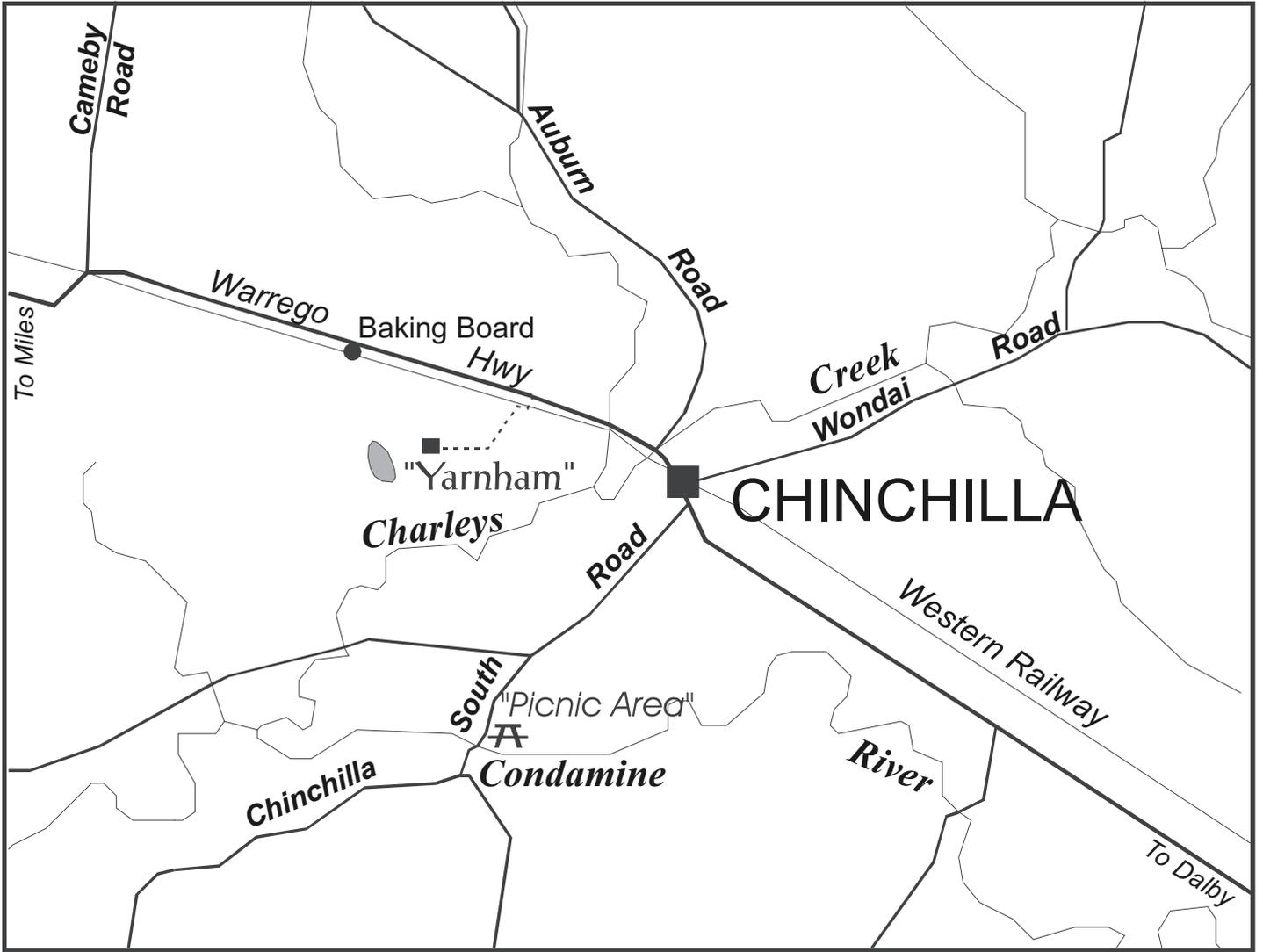
*The Mining Registrar  
Brisbane District Office  
Podium 2, Ground Floor  
Cnr Main and Vulture Streets  
Woolloongabba Qld 4102*

*(PO Box 1475)  
Coorparoo Qld 4151*

*Telephone (07) 3238 3733  
Facsimile (07) 3405 5346  
Website: [www.nrm.qld.gov.au](http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au)*

*Chinchilla Tourist Information  
Centre, Warrego Highway,  
Chinchilla Qld 4413  
Telephone: (07) 4668 9564  
Facsimile: (07) 4662 7879*

*Chinchilla\_GPA\_2006.doc*



dwg124 - chinpw.cdr  
pm 21-Nov-1996.