



MURRAYLANDS GEM & MINERAL CLUB INC. (MGMC) Incorporation No: A24186

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Autumn
Edition
2015

Murraylands Gem & Mineral Club News

Editorial

Granite Man

Diary Dates

2015

- 21st and 22nd March, 2015
Canberra Rock Swap, Wagtail Way, EPIC - Exhibition Park In Canberra, ACT.
- April 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th, 2015
National Gemboree, Horsham, VIC.
- May 1st to 3rd, 2015
Murraylands Gem and Mineral Club Rockarama 'Crystal and Craft Fair' incorporating SA Metal Detecting Championships.
- June 20th to 21st, 2015
Tea Tree Gully Gem and Mineral Club Exhibition (Biennial).

In this edition...

- Editorial.
- Catching up with 'Granite Man'.
- Competition Reports and Competition Schedule
- Working Bees.
- Work Shop.
- Mineral Matters - Quartz.
- Club Members 'Out and About'.

Stop Press

Pre-Rockarama Diary of Events

The club urgently requires the attention, attendance, and assistance of all members.

See full list of dates and details on page 4.

Hi everyone,

Again, Wow! And again, what a busy quarter this has been too! Sound familiar?

How about 'Granite Man' turning up again, and on holiday as well; at the same location as us. Too much!

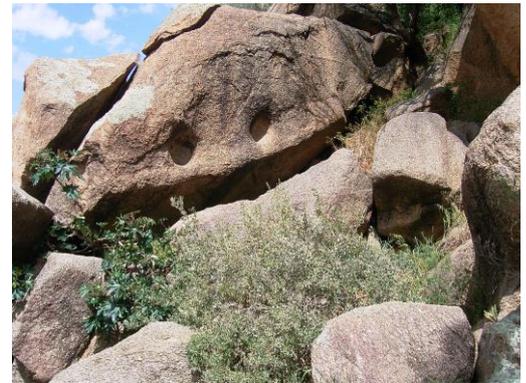
As promised in the 2014 Summer Edition Newsletter - the Quartz Extravaganza appears in the Mineral Matters section of this edition. It starts on page 5 and continues to page 15; and I enjoyed every minute taken to put it together. It's such a pity that we cannot continue to enjoy fossicking for the beautiful array and uniqueness of quartz specimens found and still exist across the Mount Lofty Ranges; it has all stopped, because the locations of interest have been made 'off limit' for the foreseeable future. However, on a totally different path, make sure you read my mysterious tale about 'The Meaning of Crystal Clear' and a 'White Rock Quartz Crystal' - see page 15.

The 2015 Rockarama 'Crystal and Craft Fair' is very much on our minds as we prepare for it. The Fair and the included South Australian Metal Detecting Championships, is our main annual opportunity to showcase our club and to raise money for the benefit of the club and its members. It is for this reason that we the members should all contribute in our own way to ensure that the fair is a success. All members are urged to attend meetings leading up to the fair, assist at working bees, sell raffle tickets, and distribute promotional flyers. Also, members are encouraged to assist with the running of the fair by offering to take on tasks as the need occurs, or to take on the responsibility for a particular role for the duration of the fair. A Pre-Rockarama Diary of events is listed on page 4. Attention to and attendance at these listed times and activities will provide you with the opportunity to make known to the Committee how you can assist with the running of the fair.

Kym, the field trip officer, organised a non-traditional fieldtrip for members to attend over the Australia Day Long Weekend (22/01/2015 to 26/01/2015) at a location alongside the Murray River; downstream from Scrubby Flat, South Australia (which is downstream from Walker Flat). The weekend was full of adventure and included camp cooking, fishing, canoeing, archery, an impressive visit to the [Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park](#), and of all things, some informal competitive slingshot shooting back at camp. See the three page picture gallery in the 'Out and About' section; starting on page 16. Regards, Mel.

Catching up with 'Granite Man'

Last year (Sunday 14th September 2014) while on a MGMC Field Trip to Mannum Waterfalls, I spotted and photographed 'Granite Man'. The following photo and caption appeared in the MGMC 2014 Summer Newsletter.



"Hello, my name is 'Granite Man'. I'm the live-in giant, guardian of the 'Mannum Waterfalls'. I hereby give permission to MGMC to visit my home and highlight its features in the following picture gallery. Please visit me again sometime soon. Bye for now."

2014 >>> 2015



Well! In January 2015, you wouldn't believe it; I caught up with 'Granite Man' on holiday at Port Elliot. In this photo he can be seen resting his head on his elbow and contemplating his.....navel! I think? You know; while taking his photo, I felt like a 'Peking Tong'! I'm just glad he remained deep in thought, just like his friend 'Knobby Rock'.

Regards, Mel.

The Murraylands Gem & Mineral Club Inc. is not and cannot be held responsible or liable for any personal injuries, loss or damage to property at any meeting, fieldtrip or activity organised by or on behalf of the club.

Competition Reports and 2015 Competition Schedule.

Competition Results	Competition Results	Competition Results
<p>Dec 9th 2014</p> <p>Minerals: Juniors 1st Tahlia. Novice 1st Tahlia. 2nd Maurice. 3rd Angie. Open - 1st Don. Micromounts - no entries.</p> <p>Fossils: 1st Courtney. 2nd Angie.</p> <p>Field trip: No entries.</p> <p>Metal detecting: 1st Kym.</p> <p>Novelty: 1st Don. 2nd Angie. 3rd Courtney.</p> <p>Brag Corner: 1st Maurice. 2nd Maurice. 3rd Angie.</p>	<p>Jan 14th 2014</p> <p>Minerals: Juniors 1st Tahlia. 2nd Chloe. Novice 1st Bronte. 2nd Tahlia. Open - 1st Angie. Micromounts - no entries.</p> <p>Fossils: 1st Chloe. 2nd Tahlia. 3rd Bronte.</p> <p>Field trip: No entries.</p> <p>Metal detecting: 1st Bronte. 2nd Kym.</p> <p>Novelty: 1st Tahlia. 2nd Kym. 3rd Gerri.</p> <p>Brag Corner: 1st Angie.</p>	<p>Feb 11th 2015</p> <p>Minerals: Juniors - no entries. Novice 1st Bronte. 2nd Courtney. Open - no entries. Micromounts - no entries.</p> <p>Fossils: 1st Angie 2nd Bronte. 3rd Courtney.</p> <p>Field trip: No entries.</p> <p>Metal detecting: No entries.</p> <p>Novelty: 1st Jill. 2nd Bronte. 3rd Courtney.</p> <p>Brag Corner: 1st Angie.</p>

MGMC Competition Schedule 2015

Open: 2 specimens, **Novice:** 1 specimen, **Junior:** 1 specimen. **Micromount:** 2 specimens
Fossil, Novelty and Field Trip: 1 article or specimen unless stated otherwise.

Native Element: Gold, Copper, Silver, Bismuth, Sulphur. Calcite Group: Calcite, Magnesite, Rhodocrosite, Siderite, Smithsonite.

Month	Mineral	Micromount	Fossil	Novelty	Metal Detecting
January	Overseas Mineral	As mineral	Any Fossil	Souvenir	2 Foreign Coins
February	Native Element	As mineral	Any Fossil	Stone Carving	A Sterling Silver Pendant
March	Double Terminated XL	As mineral	Any Fossil	Egg Cup	2 Bottle Tops
April	Copper Minerals	As mineral	Any Fossil	Bracelet	An Article of Gold
May	Broken Hill Minerals	As mineral	Any Fossil	Pair of Knitting Needles	Dog Registration Disc - Oldest
June	Craft Fair Best Buy	As mineral	Any Fossil	Jewellery or Cabochon	Article found in Metal Detecting Competition
July	Fluorite	As mineral	Any Fossil	An Old Tin	Most Unusual Item Found
August	Quartz var. Smoky	As mineral	Any Fossil	Model Car	Article Found Interstate
September	Calcite Group	As mineral	Any Fossil	An Old Bank Note	3 Australian Half Pennies
October	No competition a/c AGM	-	-	-	-
November	Favourite Specimen	As mineral	Any Fossil	A Candle	Article Made of Lead
December	No competition a/c X-mas	-	-	-	-

Working Bees - Wednesday 11-02-2015 and Saturday 21-02-2015

Preparing for Rockarama 2015.

On Wednesday 11th of February 2015, a few of us gathered at the clubrooms to prepare raffle tickets and invitation mail outs to potential campers / traders/ metal detector participants.

The following photo gallery records the happy participants engaged in their specific tasks based on their own personally assessed skill capacity and competence to actually perform a specific task to its satisfactory completion.



Bronte - Collator and Checker - Raffle Tickets



Rex - raffle ticket perforator.



Rex - raffle book cutter.



Jill, Doug, Leonie, and Janet - invitation mail out assemblers; included sticking address labels on envelopes, assembling, stapling, folding and inserting 4 pages of documents into each labeled envelope and sealing envelopes. (253 Envelopes were posted later).



View out in front of clubrooms on the day.

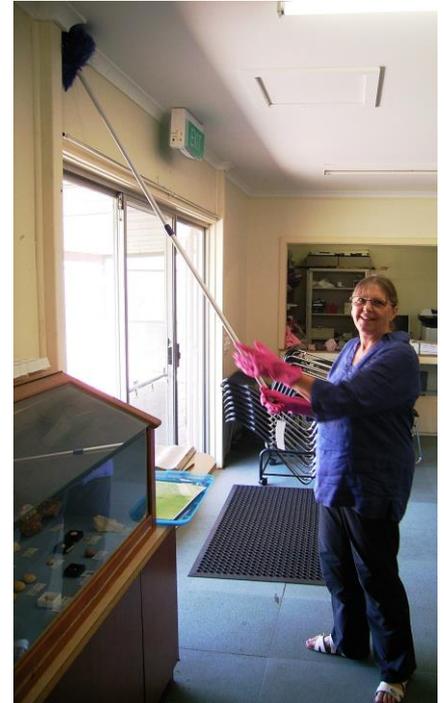


View out the back of clubrooms on the day. Mel (not shown) - was engaged in printing forms and taking photos.

Thank you Rex for repairing the wall!

Spring Summer cleaning the clubrooms ready for Rockarama 2015.

On Saturday 21st of February 2015, a few motivated and energetic members gathered at the clubrooms during workshop day to prepare the clubrooms for Rockarama 2015; a hot summer's day spring clean (like 39+ degrees in the shade outside).



Janet is seen here removing cob webs and other accumulations from the cornices and ceiling.



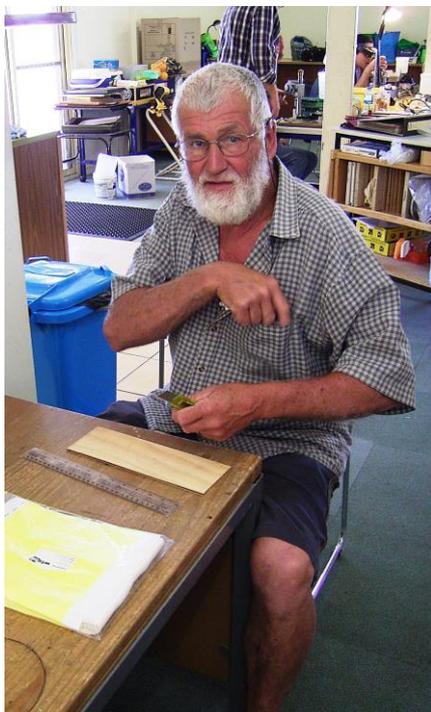
You might not believe it, but Gerri and Janet were engaged in spin cleaning the fans! No! Not true! My furphy; the fans were switched off first!

Working Bee and Workshop Saturday 21-02-2015

Spring Summer cleaning the clubrooms ready for the Rockarama - continued...



Bronte, "Hello, can anyone inside tell me whether this window is clean?"
(And, Bronte you may not have known it, but it was 39+ degrees in the shade.)



Rubein seen here at the clubrooms preparing competitors' kits ready for the South Australian Metal Detecting Championships to be held on the Sunday at the 2015 Rockarama 'Crystal and Craft Fair'.

Faceting Workshop Saturday 21st February 2015. Supervised by Doug Hughes.



Alan.



Hong (guest from Southern Rockhounds) and Alan.



Maurice and Robyn.



Hong, Alan, Doug, Robyn, and Maurice.

Pre-Rockarama Diary of Events

The club urgently requires the attention, attendance, and assistance of all members...

- **11th March 2015** - General Meeting 7.30 pm
- **15th March 2015** - Working Bee starting at 10am. at the clubrooms
 - General clean up of club rooms, toilets/showers, garden, and immediate perimeter
 - Setup packages and materials for Metal Detecting Competition - assisted and supervised by Rubein
- **21st March 2015** - monthly workshop starting at 10am. and Committee Meeting starting at 2pm
- **8th April 2015** - General Meeting 7.30pm
- **23rd & 24th April 2015** - Club and 2015 Rockarama 'Crystal and Craft Fair' Promotion
 - Starts at 9am. (both days) at the Market Place, Murray Bridge.
 - Sale of Rockarama Raffle Tickets
 - Distribution of information flyers and pamphlets promoting the club and the 2015 Rockarama 'Crystal and Craft Fair'
 - Contact Bronte 0885723320 if you are able to help with ticket sales
 - Raffle Books are available now please contact Bronte to collect your books
- **26th April 2015** - Marking out the Oval ready for Rockarama starting at 10am.
- **29th April 2015** - General meeting 7.30 pm. Please note this meeting will be held in lieu of the scheduled May meeting.
- **1st, 2nd, & 3rd May 2015** - Rockarama Crystal and Craft Fair.

Note a copy of Committee, Sub-Committee list and meeting schedules, and competition schedule is on the club notice board and on the club website: [Club Notices](#).

Due to newsletter content size limitations the committee, sub-committee lists, and general meeting details have been omitted from this particular newsletter. Regards, Mel.

☺☺☺

Are you 'Relaxing'?

Raju Singh decided to take a trip to the park and lay down in the grass. A man walks up to him and asks "that looks comfortable, are you relaxing?" Raju replies "No Sir, I am Raju Singh".

Later, another man comes up to Raju and also asks him "the grass looks great, are you relaxing?"

Annoyed, Raju says "No sir... I am Raju Singh". Finally a third man comes up to Raju and asks him the same question.

Annoyed, Raju gets up and walks to the other side of the park where he sees another man laying on the grass. He shouts "ARE YOU RELAXING?" the man replies "why, yes I am" Raju replies "good, they are looking for you on the other side of the park".

Extracted from

<http://geology.com/minerals/quartz.shtml>

What is Quartz?

Quartz is a chemical compound consisting of one part silicon and two parts oxygen. It is silicon dioxide (SiO₂). It is the most abundant mineral found at Earth's surface and its unique properties make it one of the most useful natural substances.

<http://geology.about.com/od/minerals/f/mostcommonmin.htm> indicates: 'If you consider it as one mineral, *feldspar* is the most common mineral and quartz comes in second, especially when you consider the whole crust, continental plus oceanic crust'.)

Where is Quartz Found?

Quartz is the most abundant and widely distributed mineral found at Earth's surface. It is present and plentiful in all parts of the world. It forms at all temperatures. It is abundant in igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary rocks. It is highly resistant to both mechanical and chemical weathering. This durability makes it the dominant mineral of mountaintops and the primary constituent of beach, river, and desert sand. Quartz is ubiquitous, plentiful, and durable. Mined deposits are found throughout the world.

Physical Properties of Quartz

Chemical Classification - silicate

Color - Quartz occurs in virtually every color.

Common colors are clear, white, gray, purple, yellow, brown, black, pink, green, red.

Streak - colorless (harder than the streak plate).

Luster - vitreous.

Diaphaneity - transparent to translucent.

Cleavage - none - typically breaks with a conchoidal fracture.

Mohs Hardness - 7.

Specific Gravity - 2.6 to 2.7

Diagnostic Properties - conchoidal fracture, glassy luster, hardness.

Chemical Composition - SiO₂

Crystal System - hexagonal.

Uses - glass making, abrasive, foundry sand, hydraulic fracturing proppant, gemstones.

What are the Uses for Quartz?

Quartz is one of the most useful natural materials. Its usefulness can be linked to its physical and chemical properties. It has a hardness of seven on the Mohs scale which makes it very durable. It is chemically inert in contact with most substances. It has electrical properties and heat resistance that make it valuable in electronic products. Its luster, colour, and diaphaneity make it useful as a gemstone and also in the making of glass.

Uses of Quartz in Glass Making

Geological processes have occasionally deposited sands that are composed of almost 100% quartz grains. These deposits have been identified and produced as sources of high purity silica sand. These sands are used in the glassmaking industry. Quartz sand is used in the production of container glass, flat plate glass, specialty glass, and fiberglass.

Uses of Quartz as an Abrasive

The high hardness of quartz, seven on the Mohs Scale, makes it harder than most other natural substances. As such it is an excellent abrasive material. Quartz sands and finely ground silica sand are used for sand blasting, scouring cleansers, grinding media, and grit for sanding and sawing.

Uses of Quartz as Foundry Sand

Quartz is very resistant to both chemicals and heat. It is therefore often used as foundry sand. With a melting temperature higher than most metals it can be used for the molds and cores of common foundry work. Refractory brick are often made of quartz sand because of its high heat resistance. Quartz sand is also used as a flux in the smelting of metals.

Uses in the Petroleum Industry

Quartz sand has a high resistance to being crushed. In the petroleum industry sand slurries are forced down oil and gas wells under very high pressures in a process known as hydraulic fracturing. This high pressure fractures the reservoir rocks and the sandy slurry injects into the fractures. The durable sand grains hold the fractures open after the pressure is released. These open fractures facilitate the flow of natural gas into the well bore.

Quartz as a Gemstone

Quartz makes an excellent gemstone. It is hard, durable and usually accepts a brilliant polish. Popular varieties of quartz that are widely used as gems include: amethyst, citrine, rose quartz, and aventurine. Agate and jasper are also varieties of quartz with a microcrystalline structure.

Special Silica Stone Uses

"Silica stone" is an industrial term for materials such as quartzite, novaculite and other microcrystalline quartz rocks. These are used to produce abrasive tools, deburring media, grinding stones, hones, oilstones, stone files, tube-mill liners, and whetstones.

Tripoli

Tripoli is crystalline silica of an extremely fine grain size (less than ten micrometers). Commercial Tripoli is a nearly pure silica material that is used for a variety of mild abrasive purposes which include: soaps, toothpastes, metal polishing compounds, and jewelry polishing compounds and buffing compounds. Tripoli is also used in brake friction products, fillers in enamel, caulking compounds, plastic, paint, rubber, and refractories.

Quartz Varieties

Extracted from:

<http://www.minerals.net/mineral/quartz.aspx>



Amethyst - purple variety of quartz.



Aqua Aura - quartz synthetically enhanced with a coating using gold (and sometimes other metals) to give it a neon blue or other neon color.



Aventurine - opaque form of compact quartz or Chalcedony containing small Mica, Hematite, or Goethite scales which cause a glistening effect. Although technically Aventurine is classified as rock due to its composition of several minerals, it most often is regarded as a variety of Quartz or Chalcedony.

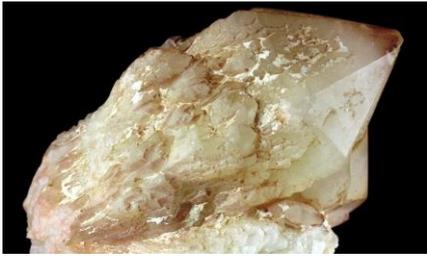


Blue Quartz - the blue variety of quartz, which is very uncommon in nature and rarely in crystal form. Most "Blue Quartz" is what is popularly known as "Aqua Aura", essentially clear Rock Crystal synthetically irradiated with gold to form a deep sky blue color. Blue Quartz may also refer to dull grayish-blue Quartz in massive form with Crocidolite inclusions.



Cactus Quartz - form of quartz, usually Amethyst, Citrine, or a combination of the two that contains a large crystal or crystals overgrown with a layer of spiky smaller crystals. *Quartz Varieties Continued next page...*

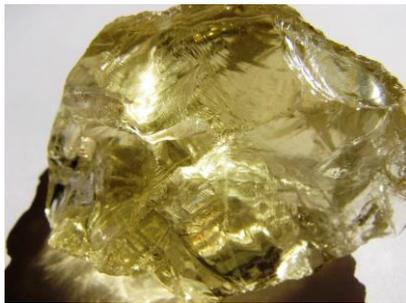
Quartz Varieties Continued...



Candle Quartz - candle quartz is normally very white & cloudy; the side crystals look like "dripping wax" each pointing towards the main termination.



Chalcedony - microcrystalline form of quartz.



Citrine - yellow, orange, or brown variety of quartz.



Faden Quartz - group of quartz crystals with a white thread-like zone running through the interior, with the crystals having formed around the thread axis.



Ferruginous Quartz - quartz with an opaque red to brown Hematite coating or internal inclusion.



Herkimer Diamond - exceptionally lustrous and clear quartz crystals from the Herkimer Co. vicinity in the Mohawk Valley region of Central New York State. Herkimer Diamond crystals are usually doubly terminated and short.



Japan Law Twins - is the only common twinning law of quartz where the two twin crystals are visible as individuals; the c-axis of two crystals meet at an angle of 84°33', with two of the main prism faces of both crystals being parallel. Very often they look platy, because the crystal grows faster between the two arms.



Milky Quartz - white, translucent to opaque variety of quartz.



Morion - opaque form of black quartz; a type of Smoky Quartz.



Phantom Quartz - quartz containing internal phantom growths, or ghostlike layers within a crystal.



Prase - light to emerald green, transparent to translucent quartz, with coloring caused from inclusions of green minerals, such as Actinolite, Hedenbergite, Chlorite, or Malachite.



Prasiolite - prasiolite describes a light green quartz often artificially colored by heat treatment of certain types of Amethyst; may also be called Green Amethyst by some jewelers.

Quartz Varieties Continued next page...



Rainbow Quartz - quartz synthetically colored with an iridescent layer formed from gold or other metals. Also, see Aqua Aura.



Rock Crystal - a colourless, transparent variety of quartz in large crystal form.



Rose Quartz - pink variety of quartz.



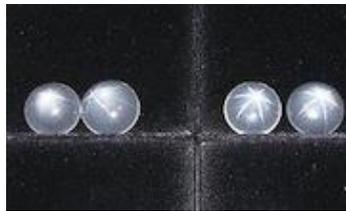
Rutilated Quartz - quartz with golden yellow, needle-like Rutile inclusions.



Scepter Quartz - a quartz crystal with a scepter like protrusion on the end of the crystal that is wider than the rest of the crystal.



Smoky Quartz - brown to black, "smoky" variety of quartz.



Star Quartz - polished quartz displaying asterism in the form of a six-rayed star.



Tourmalinated Quartz - quartz with splintery Tourmaline inclusions.

Some Australian Quartz Examples



Quartz var. Amethyst - Quamby, Qld.

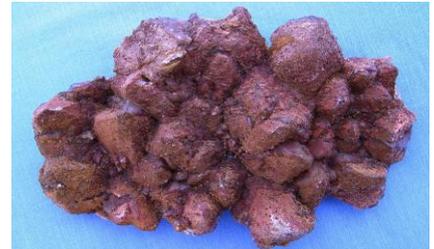


Polished Agate - Arnhem Land, N.T.

Australian Quartz Examples continued...



Quartz - Wadnaminga, Mannahill, SA.



Quartz & Hematite - Mt Tom, Cloncurry, Qld.



Quartz - Broken Hill, NSW.



Drusy Quartz - Linkes Lode, Flinders Ranges, SA.



Quartz var. Smoky - Duck Creek, Torrington NSW.



Polished Agate - Agate Creek, Qld.

Fossicking at Agate Creek, Qld.

In 1978, Janet and I (Mel) went on an outback holiday to Agate Creek via the Birdsville Track in our old tray-top Toyota Land Cruiser. The journey north was fairly uneventful apart from the track being impassable for a while due to floods, and a fuel filter issue that slowed us down to a maximum speed of 50 mph for a few days until the problem was rectified at Boulia.

Eventually, we arrived at Forsayth; the last petrol stop before Agate Creek. After staying overnight at Forsayth and getting petrol and some local information from John Smith, the local publican, we headed for Darcy Lamont's camp at the far end of the Agate Creek fossicking reserve. It was our intention to stay there just for the weekend; bag our fill of agates, and be on our way as we still had many miles of touring ahead of us.

However, this did not happen in the way we had planned. The road (bush track!) into Agate Creek was one of the roughest we had encountered on our trip so far. And, when we were within close proximity to Darcy's camp things got really bad; the cruiser's water pump failed! We cautiously drove to a point within walking distance of Athol Smith's camp, setup our camp, and then proceeded on foot to Athol's to discuss our options.

There were a number of long stay fossickers in the reserve, but most left the area during the wet. One person, Colin Abbott, was an exception. It was Colin, when visiting Athol's camp that evening, who heard our story and offered to help. Once a fortnight, he made the rough-road, round journey from his camp near Black Rock Waterhole to Forsayth and then to Georgetown and return to Agate Creek. We were offered a ride.

The next day we were required to walk to Colin's camp. On arrival we found Colin filling his Toyota Land Cruiser utility with petrol straight from a plastic bucket (no funnel) and with a lit, self rolled, cigarette hanging from his lips. He was amused when we backed off a short distance for our safety's sake. His notion was that the fumes in the open were not concentrated enough to ignite. Well, luck was in his and our favour!

The trip with Colin was an adventure in itself. He had two, untethered, empty, forty four gallon drums in the back of his land cruiser utility. Also, the one and half sized passenger seat in the cabin, which straddled over the vehicle's petrol tank, was not bolted down to the cabin's floor.

Well! Colin drove like a mad-hatter; like there was no tomorrow! The route was like a roller coaster - down and up one creek crossing after another, and around one bend after another. Our cramped, unbolted seat was in constant motion and the drums in the back slammed back and forward between the back of the cab and the tail gate. This story indicates that we survived!

First stop was Forsayth, where Colin was assisted by his "Secretary" (a lady friend who

managed his bookwork) to dispatch a consignment of agates (Sardonics) via the local train terminal; to be freighted to Cairns (and eventually to Germany where the sardonics were processed to make carved cameos).

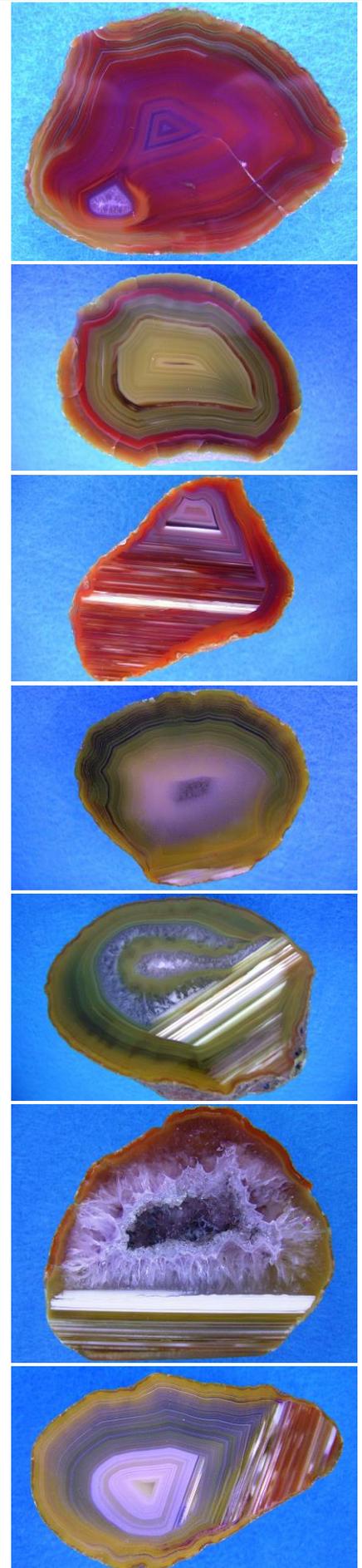
After morning tea, we proceeded to Georgetown to stock-up on provisions and petrol. It was at Georgetown where we arranged, with a local garage owner, for a water pump to be ordered from Cairns, air-freighted to Georgetown, and given to a receptive fossicking tourist bound for Agate Creek to deliver to us at Darcy's Camp area. To pay for the pump, the air-freight and the service, we had to ask the manager of the 'closed-for-lunch', local Bank of New South Wales to open his bank so that we could withdraw cash from our Bank of Adelaide account using a bankcard which we had never used before. No electronic support services then. Nevertheless, it was a good service provided in outback Queensland.

Our weekend venture was now to be extended by two weeks. Each day we went out to the fossicking field with Colin and watched and learnt; and eventually setup our own digging site. Colin also took us around to other locations and allowed us time to explore and dig for a short while. On one of these excursions we met up with a Victorian couple who were well sponsored; with product advertising strategically placed over their four wheel drive. Helmut and Gemma Kummer were on a working, fossicking holiday as journalists. Their article in the September, 1979 edition of the 'Australian Outdoor' magazine appears later in this newsletter. Both Janet and I are mentioned as 'Jan' and 'Mal' in a number of places in the article. It was a pity that Colin wasn't mentioned as he had extended his pilot service around the reserve to Helmut and Gemma as well.

Each day, back at camp, when a vehicle approached we would walk out to greet its passengers and checked whether they had come via Georgetown; in the hope that they had brought our 'water pump'. But each time they had come via Forsayth and had bypassed Georgetown. Eventually, on the fourteenth day, a chap and his wife had come via Georgetown, and no they did not know anything about a 'water pump'! And, after a lengthy complaint about how rough the 'bloody so called road' was, the chap reached down under his seat. And, from under the seat he pulled out a small parcel and handed it to me. He exclaimed, "Think yourself bloody lucky! I was about to turnaround and drive back out, on several occasions, because of the rough track. Except, I gave an undertaking in Georgetown to deliver your bloody water pump!"

We thanked him and offered him money and agates for his good will, but he refused. He said that he hoped that somebody would do the same for him, if stuck in a similar situation.

The following photo gallery is an indication of how well we did fossicking for agates and the pictures on the next page show some of the activities at Agate Creek. Helmut and Gemma's article (following on) is a good read too.





Janet taking a tea-break alongside our stranded vehicle in the vicinity of Darcy's Camp, Agate Creek Fossicking Reserve, Qld.



And, I'm doing likewise, prior to us both walking a kilometre to Athol Smith's camp for the evening fossickers' get together.



After borrowing several 2.5lb picks from Colin Abbott, I got stuck into digging for agates.



Janet had a go and got involved too!



Janet still going at it!



Janet on her way to China!



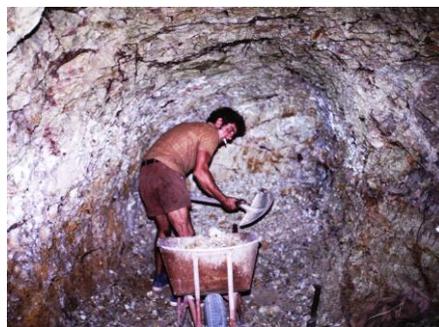
Athol Smith prepared agates for sawing throughout each evening for customers curious to know whether their finds were good.



Athol filled in sawing wait time by spinning many stories. - Janet is sat on the far left.



Colin Abbott seen here preparing Athol's saw and no he wasn't the one responsible for the wing nut having its wing sawn off!



Each morning, Colin would work his dimly lit shaft - flat chat and with sparks clearly visible when his pick struck agate.



Dig a long shaft - you end up with a long journey to the mullock heap. Discharge was made easy because Colin was working on ground that sloped down and away from his entrance.



Gemma is very pleased with her find - nice colour and pattern.



Colin primes up the 'Ampol' forge.



Colin demonstrates the art of forge-sharpening his picks while Janet and Mel look and learn.



Colin splashed a collection of his agates, thunder eggs, and quartz crystal specimens to enhance their colour for a few camera shots. To give you an idea just how big some of these specimens are I have inserted a black, pointing finger at a shot gun cartridge laying in the dirt to the left rear. The specimen serving as a prop for the other stones is huge. Also, see the identical water splashed scene (albeit closely cropped) in the Sept 1979 'Australian Outdoors' magazine article by Helmut and Gemma Kummer (in the following pages).



Colin stoking up the heat again to forge-sharpen our borrowed picks. Janet patiently waiting for it all to finish.

We didn't make a fortune digging thunder eggs at Agate Creek

They were sane when they first arrived at this gemhunter's Mecca, but the agates, thunder eggs, people and atmosphere of the diggings soon reinfected HELMUT and GEMMA KUMMER with rock fever.

THE SWEAT was running in rivers down our backs; even the dogs were panting madly. And we had been driving for only a few hours. Eighty nine kilometres from Forsyth to Agate Creek and rough going all the way. The road had just been graded but the Toyota was down in the gears and up on the revs a hundred times. We were glad we had taken the Forsyth publican's advice to leave our caravan behind.

We dipped into, and spun out of Agate Creek six times before reaching the colorful collection of tents and caravans known as Darcey's Camp — the end of the road. What a welcome sight! And public showers! We made full use of them, laughing and splashing and letting the soft caresses of the water soothe life back into our battered, hot bodies. There's a small fee to use the showers, but the money helps run the generator to drive the shower pump, so who's to complain?

The focal point of the camp, set under a canopy of tall, shady gums, in Five Gullies, is Athol Smith's caravan home and its adjoining workshop and large vegetable garden. It's here that tourists and keen rockhounds gather religiously at sunset, the rockhounds clutching small bundles of rocks to be cut on Athol's big cutting machine. For them it is the culmination of a day's hard work, the moment they find whether they have brought a good stone to light. There are excited sighs and laughs as an ugly lump of rock reveals a beautiful suspended tear-drop agate set in soft reds and greens, or an odd, round, chalky hunk of thunder egg displays brilliant reds convoluted into shapes to twist the mind. And inevitably the fossicker's brows occasionally knit in disappointment as a stone is cut — and reveals the flat nothingness of a dead heart.

You never hear a complaint at these early evening sessions. In this fantastic atmosphere the pains and irritations of the day's hard work are soon forgotten — especially when someone has claimed a super gem from the hard dry earth. The cutting machine grinds away into the background

of the evening, and the toil of the day slips the memory under the spell of Athol's exciting yarns. Enough to stir the spirits of even the most unfeeling spectator. He enjoys his life out here, surrounded by interesting and friendly people, and unveiling the hidden beauties of many wonderful stones. He charges only about 10 cents for each 500 sq mm of stone cut — just enough to cover the cost of running the generator and the equipment he uses.



The colors of the agates from the five hills are quite distinct. This sample shows blues and reds.

The ideal time to work the fields at Agate Creek is between April and September when the weather is generally pleasantly cool. The essential tools include a geological pick, a one-kilogram universal miner's pick, and a shovel — I found a Number 2 size was best. In case you decide to follow a run deep, a crow bar and safety helmet will be needed, and at all times you should wear a wide-brimmed hat and carry an insulated

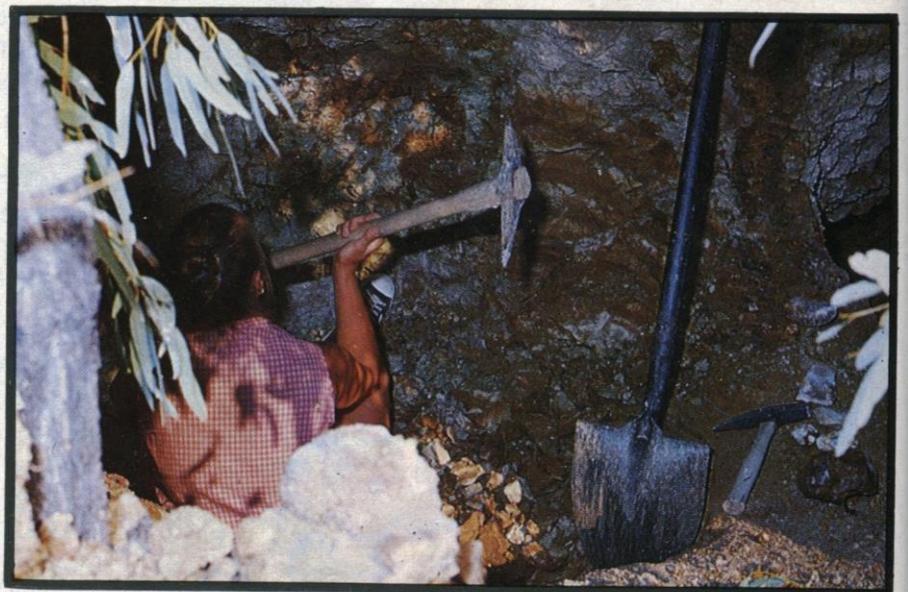
water container — you can't count on finding your agate run in the shade of a tree. Out in the sunny days it is all too easy to forget that the evening temperatures in winter can drop to bitter levels, so a good jumper and heavy woollen blanket will be needed.

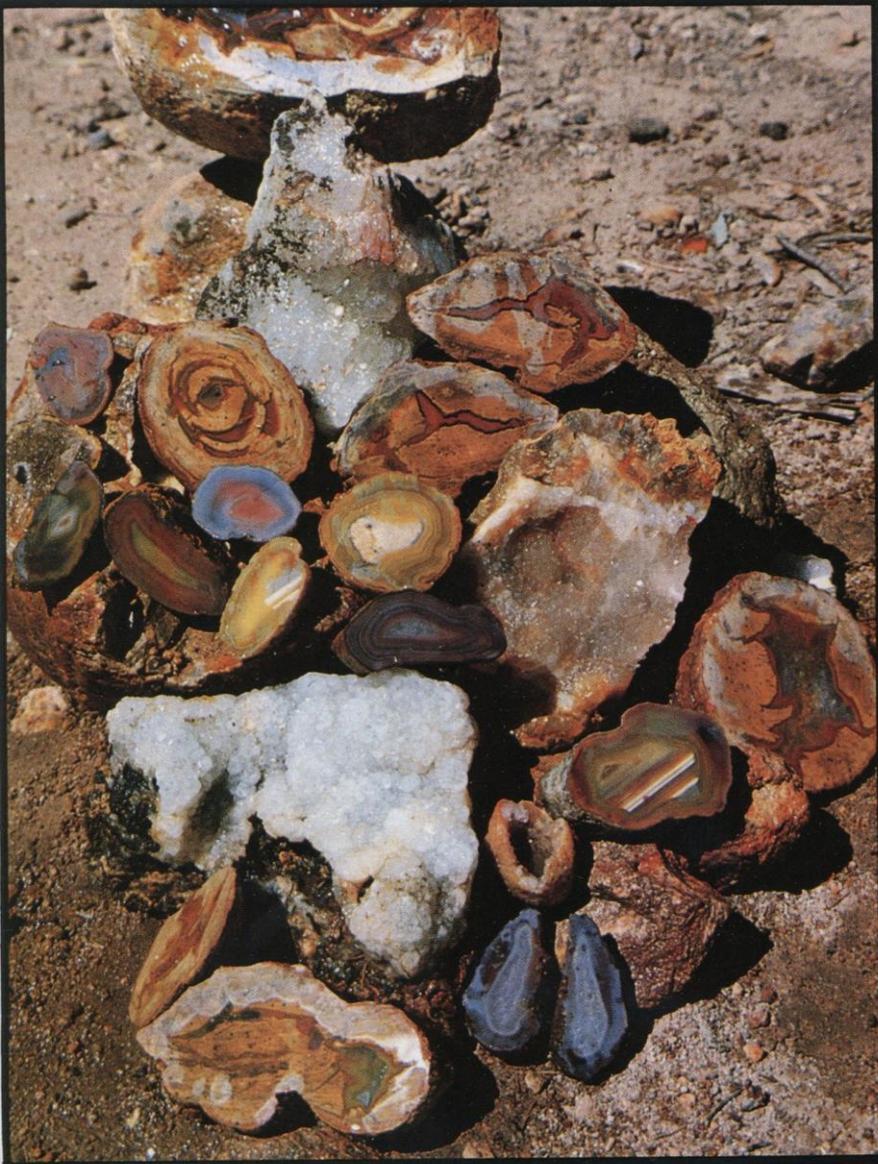
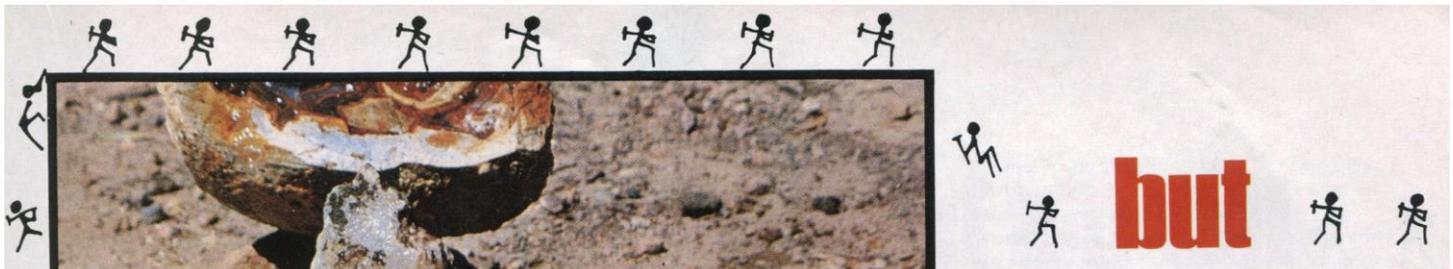
The Agate Creek area offers a great deal to the wildlife-loving family, and as dogs are permitted nobody needs be left at home. Rock wallabies are common, and wild brumbies roam freely. Wild orchids perched high in the trees display masses of perfect blooms in rich deep purples.

Those happy to wander about on foot will find interesting areas aplenty, such as the unusual and aptly named Mushroom Rock formation and the ancient, little-known Aboriginal rock paintings at Spring Creek.

Many of the tourists stopping at Darcey's Camp are content just to roam over the hills that give the area its name of Five Gullies, leaving the more strenuous work to the keen rockhounds. Each of the five hills bears agate of a particular color, and although the area has been thoroughly worked some large samples are still found.

Gemma and I had read many books and magazine articles about Agate Creek and the stones for which it is famous, but it wasn't until we arrived and began to investigate the area that we found how much they failed to describe. We teamed up with Mal and Jan, a couple we had met on the way, and they showed us a similarly misleading recent article. Like us they believed that finding agate was no more difficult than walking along the creek and picking up prize specimens. A large labourer's pick they had brought to help them out would do





 **but**   

the job splendidly — if you wanted to take up body building as well. We had been digging for sapphire at Rubyvale on a previous trip and so had some idea of the equipment needed for agate and thunder egg digging.

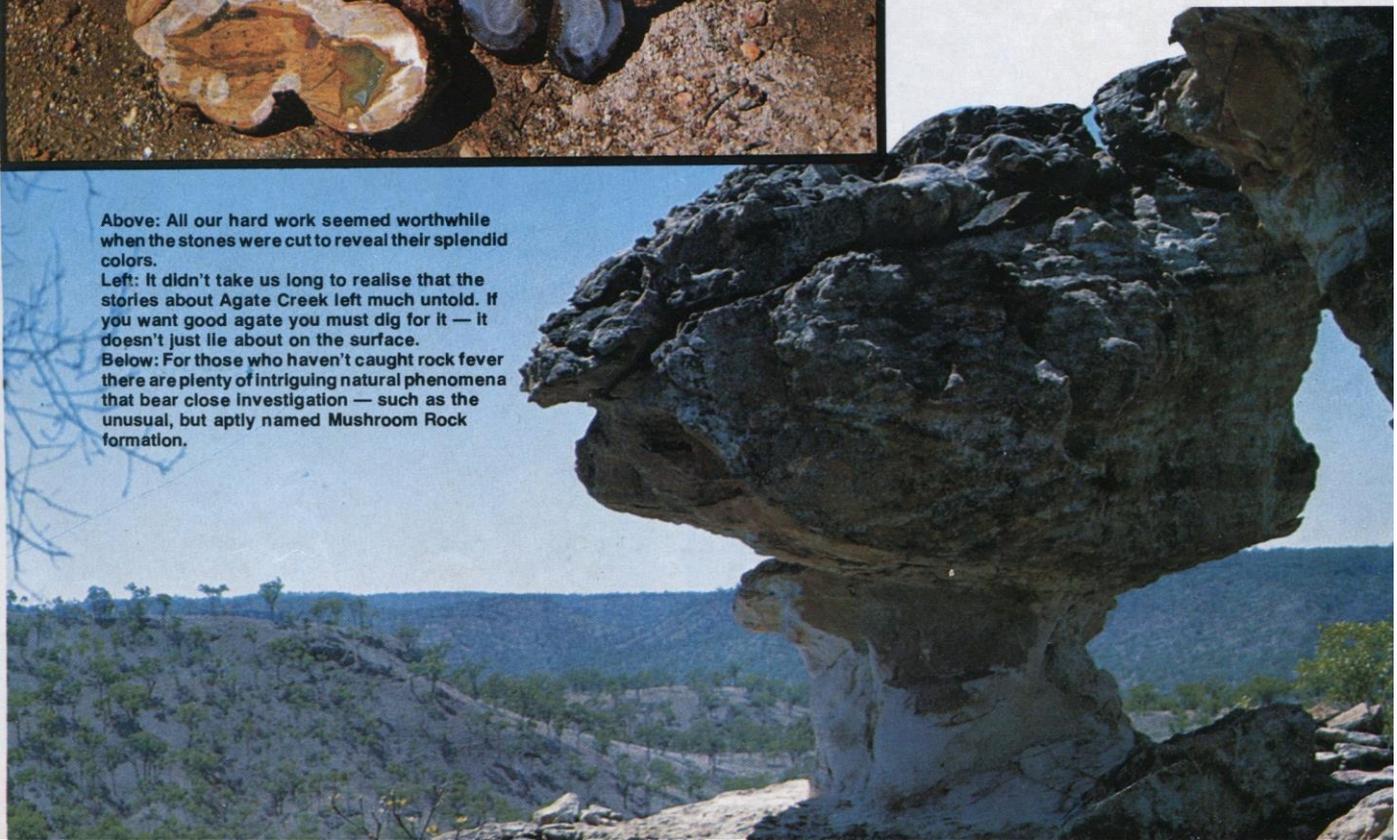
The books we had read also failed to tell us where to start our fossicking, so we were pleased indeed to have stopped at Forsyth Hotel before tackling that long rough road to Agate Creek. John Smith, the publican, has an excellent display of cut polished agate and is well-informed about Five Gullies, the surrounding areas, and the state of the road. Petrol and some supplies can be bought from John (there is no store at Agate Creek) and it is worth noting that Forsyth sells beer and petrol at lower prices than Georgetown. While you must take a good supply of water for the trip to Agate Creek, there is such a plentiful supply when you arrive that you have a year-round choice of good water from seven natural springs.

- According to the permanent residents it is useless to work the bed of Agate Creek, which has been thoroughly dug many a time. However, those prepared to visit the area in the wet season may be able to pick up decent agate, loosened by the running water, while walking in the creek.

Agate seekers prepared to work hard and find a new area must travel as we did. The

Continued on page 82

Above: All our hard work seemed worthwhile when the stones were cut to reveal their splendid colors.
Left: It didn't take us long to realise that the stories about Agate Creek left much untold. If you want good agate you must dig for it — it doesn't just lie about on the surface.
Below: For those who haven't caught rock fever there are plenty of intriguing natural phenomena that bear close investigation — such as the unusual, but aptly named Mushroom Rock formation.



Thunder eggs at Agate Creek

Continued from page 23



It is a shame that Agate Creek is one of the least accessible of all the fields, and that many travellers don't dare face the bad roads.

four of us trekked up to an area called Black Soil and there, amongst pegged and claimed areas, began searching for nodules — roundish or oblong stones. Our first find was 600 mm below ground. We followed the gravel bed down, collecting a bucketful of what appeared to be good cutting agate. As we chopped away in our digging we listened for the characteristic sound that would indicate our picks had hit a solid stone. We toiled from sunrise until lunchtime.

Gemma sat back in the shade and carefully studied the nodules we had found to ensure that they were indeed agate, not basalt stones. It is always a good idea to take the doubtful stones back to camp where some local expert, like Athol, can give you a hand with your sorting.

After a week of solid digging I believed my hole was exhausted of agate, but in that time I had scored a decent sackful of various shaped stones. Athol cut 14 of them for me and found that only four were crystallised and full of rubbish. Jan and Mal had scored just as well.

The different colored agates from the five hills are quite distinctive. The bottom end of Black Soil bears greens and blues, while the top end shows greens and reds, and the best quality thunder eggs. The Saddle bears agate of fine greens and reds with white lines (sardonyx) and the Big and Little Simpson, along with Blue Hills, bear reds

and blues. The best agate found in the area is on Flanagans, which bears reds and greens. Lacking time to dig about all these hills we stopped around the top and bottom ends of Black Soil.

Thunder eggs at the top end were plentiful, closer to the surface than I had realised, and easy to dig for. Chats with the permanent residents had guided us to the good spots, saving our fruitless sweating for days in a useless spot we had considered good. They certainly had helped us, and I had to exercise considerable control on the number of thunder eggs I claimed — travelling back to Melbourne with too many of these lumps is no joke.

Large trenches, some two to three metres deep, had already been started, and broken sections of thunder eggs lay over the surface. Both Mal and I dug out four decent specimens, and we each had one cut that evening. Mal's was rich in browns and reds and displayed a Chinese dragon, while mine was a star in sardonyx reds and greens — both beautiful stones.

Agate Creek, long considered the Mecca of gemhunters, has been set aside for tourists and rockhounds, and no heavy machinery is allowed to work there. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately) it is the least accessible of all the fields, and many travellers don't dare face the bad roads. Some 50 square kilometres have been set aside there for rockhounds, who require



Many large trenches had already been started in the best areas, and broken sections of thunder eggs littered the surface.

only a Miner's Right (costing \$3.) which gives right of access to all Crown land other than mining leases, and leasehold land, but not to freehold land. Depending on your interests and budget, the equipment can be simple or complicated. For agate and thunder eggs the basics are usually sufficient.

If you don't have rock fever before you arrive, you soon will when you start digging. It's an infectious disease transmitted by the wonderful people — a breed of their own — who are always found around the diggings. We spent many a pleasant night chatting, exchanging ideas, and just enjoying the company, and we made friends from all parts of Australia, and other parts of the world.

When Jan and Mal required another pick to make their work lighter, someone was there to help them out. When we arrived back at Darcey's Camp with the rewards of a day's sweat in our hands everybody took an interest and accepted us into the big happy family. We never ventured to the evening gatherings without a mug, as somebody always had the billy on for a brew of tea and no one was ever left out — even if they had to share a mug. People from all walks of life were there, every one of them infected by the fever.

If you venture to Agate Creek for fun and enjoyment you'll not be disappointed. But be warned — you'll be more than likely to catch rock fever.



Quartz, Anstey Hill Quarry, S.A.



Quartz, Arkaroola Bore, Flinders Ranges, S.A.



Quartz var. Smoky, Black Top Quarry, S.A.



Quartz, Bridge Road Quarry, S.A.



Quartz, Bridge Road Quarry, S.A.



Quartz, Kapunda, S.A.



Quartz, Ashton Quarry, S.A.



Coated Quartz as found, Ashton Quarry, S.A.



Similar Quartz with coating removed, Ashton Quarry, S.A.



Quartz var. Smoky, Black Top Quarry, S.A.



Quartz (Nail Hole) Blue Mine Creek, Arkaroola, S.A.



Quartz, Bundaleer, Spalding, S.A.



Quartz, Anstey Hill Quarry, S.A.



Quartz, Arkaroola Bore, Flinders Ranges, S.A.



Quartz, Ashton Quarry, S.A.



Quartz var. Smoky, Black Top Quarry, S.A.



Healed Quartz, Bridge Road Quarry, S.A.



Quartz, Kapunda, S.A.



Quartz (Drusy) Linkes Lode, Flinders Ranges, S.A.



Quartz (Jap Twin) Montacute Quarry, S.A.



Quartz, Linkes Lode, Flinders Ranges, S.A.



Quartz var. Smoky, Olary Region, S.A.



Quartz, Montacute Quarry, S.A.



Quartz var. Amethyst, Mt Gee, Arkaroola, S.A.



Quartz, Dolomite & Chalcopyrite, River View Quarry, S.A.



Dolomite and Quartz, Montacute Quarry, S.A.



Quartz, Dolomite & Chalcopyrite, River View Quarry, S.A.



Quartz, Stonyfell Quarry, S.A.



Quartz and Chalcopyrite, Moonta, S.A.



Quartz, Stonyfell Quarry, S.A.



Quartz, Tea Tree Gully, S.A.



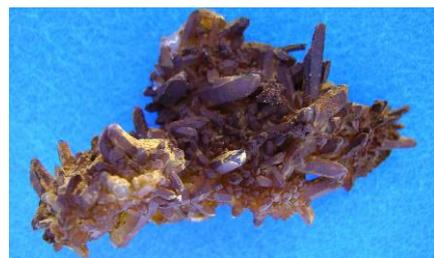
Quartz, Mt Gee, Arkaroola, S.A.



Quartz, Wadnaminga, S.A.



Quartz, White Rock Quarry, Magill, S.A.



Quartz, Stonyfell Quarry, S.A.



Quartz, White Rock Quarry, Magill, S.A.

Club Members Out and About - Down stream from Scrubby Flat

Australia Day Long Weekend Fieldtrip
 22-01-2015 to 26-01-2015
Day One: 23-01-2015
 Downstream from Scrubby Flat, S.A.



Tahlea and Kim sorting the bait.



Janet, Kim, and John. What a location.



In full steam - PS James Maiden.



Kym, that fish would have looked a lot bigger if strung from a line and not hand held.



Fishing preparations: John and Kim.



Fishing - John heading for deep water



Fishing or Bathing? - Tahlea, Chloe & Bonnie.



Paddle Steamer 'James Maiden' from Wentworth, N.S.W. - passing by on its long journey to the Wooden Boat Festival, Goolwa S.A.



Bonnie on target.



Kane on target.



Tahlea - casting with skill.



What about fish-tail soup? Bonnie & Tahlea.



Meal preparations - chief cook - Kym.

Club Members Out and About - Down stream from Scrubby Flat

Australia Day Long Weekend Fieldtrip
 22-01-2015 to 26-01-2015
Day Two: 24-01-2015
 Downstream from Scrubby Flat, S.A.



Good morning!



Four pelicans slowly fishing.



Camp 'Long Weekend of Adventure'.



1 of 3 locals which visited us over the W/E.



All snagged up!



John, "Here Kym, I've un-snagged your fish."



Kym and John. Mine's smaller than yours!

Visit to the [Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park](#)



On the way... Walker Flat looking upstream from Forster Lookout.



Looking down river from Forster Lookout toward Scrubby Flat.



Chat with Cynthia, before her Ngaut Ngaut talk.



Cynthia leading the group to the interpretation centre.



Cynthia explains what it's all about.



Excavation details.



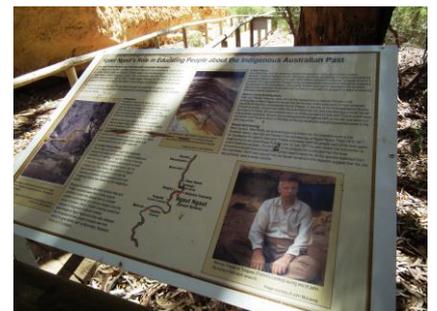
Extensive indigenous carvings.



Closer view of indigenous carvings.



Carvings portraying flat and round backed turtles.



The role of Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park.

Club Members Out and About

Australia Day Long Weekend Fieldtrip
 22-01-2015 to 26-01-2015
 Day Three: 25-01-2015
 Downstream from Scrubby Flat, S.A.



Everyone is very busy relaxing!



Ian, watch out for the toilet behind the target!



Fish bait.



Bonnie's catch.



Informal sling shot competition.



Chow time.



Bill Shakespeare's Bubble and chops.



Now there, that's relaxing!

Contributed by Leonie Hughes...

29th Grampians Jazz Festival 2015 held at Halls Gap Vic. 13th to 15th February, 2015.

I have just returned from a very enjoyable weekend of Jazz at Halls Gap. I drove over with Robyn and we met up with Pauline and shared accommodation. Later, we met up with Maurice and we all enjoyed the music.

The musicians did a wonderful job despite the heat. As an audience member, I found it pretty hot and uncomfortable, but the musicians were brilliant to carry on and continue to entertain us. There were no fans or air-conditioners in the marquee to provide relief.



Inside the (hot) main marquee.

Not only was the weather very hot, it was made worse when we had a thunder and lightning storm on the Friday night; and this was further exacerbated (it means, made 'worse' still!) by a 10mm downfall of rain. Nevertheless, it was eventually a welcome drop in temperature.

A highlight on Saturday morning was the parade of jazz clubs and bands up and down the main street. Throughout the day, there were around 150 musicians performing at various venues around the town.

Sunday was another hot day; 38 degrees. Not to be put off, we went to the local market at the Halls Gap Primary School in the morning, then back to the main marquee for the rest of the afternoon.

I would highly recommend the ice-cream shop in Halls Gap; the only problem I found, at the time, was the need to eat the ice-cream very quickly so it didn't melt and run down my arm.

Leonie Hughes.



Inside the Halls Gap Town Hall.
