

BIG BESSIE FOSSICKING AREA

Big Bessie is one of five Fossicking Areas on the central Queensland sapphire fields, which were set aside in 1985 for recreational and tourist fossicking. Such fossicking is also possible on another six areas of Designated Fossicking Land, but on those certain commercial mining tenures are also allowed.

Big Bessie comprises 33ha of semi-cleared bushland extending north from Retreat Creek and surrounding the southern end of a Rifle Range Reserve. Although it is small and has been extensively worked in the past, it remains popular because of its proximity to Sapphire township and its shallow wash.

Access and roads

Turn off the Capricorn Highway at Anakie, and take the sealed road for 10km to Sapphire. From there take the unsealed road to the west for 2km to the signposted entrance of *Big Bessie* on its eastern boundary. Minor tracks lead north to the 'Big Bessie' diggings and to the south to the 'Little Bessie' diggings. The main track continues to skirt the Rifle Range Reserve to the south, and then branches left to *Graves Hill* and right beside the Rifle range to *Reward Designated Fossicking Land* (4WD only). Whilst roads are unformed they are suitable for conventional vehicles except in wet weather.

Note: Fossickers must not enter the Rifle Range Reserve and MHP leases to the north of the area.

Requirements

Fossicking requires a Fossickers Licence under the *Fossicking Act*

1994. Individual, family, club, educational organisation and commercial tour operator licences can be obtained for this area or for the whole of the State for periods between one and twelve months, with fees varying accordingly. They can be obtained from the Mining Registrar at Emerald, selected local businesses, or the Department's other offices throughout the State. Hand tools only are permitted.

Camping

Camping is allowed for a maximum period of 3 months. A camping permit is required, which can be obtained for the payment of a small fee from the Emerald, Rockhampton, Mackay and Brisbane offices of the Department or the local businesses that issue the Fossickers Licences. No facilities exist in the area and water needs to be carried in.

Sapphire occurrence

Sapphire bearing wash covers most of the area and is generally less than 500mm from the surface.

West of the Rifle Range shallow wash consisting of pebbles and boulders in a red-brown soil extends to a depth of 500mm. In places it is overlain by 300mm of chocolate soil.

In the 'Little Bessie' section, shallow surface wash containing white quartz fragments and billy cobbles in a reddish to chocolate sandy soil overlies basement schist and limestone. The area has been extensively worked and some parts have been scraped to basement by machinery. Very

little virgin ground remains and the area has only limited potential in disturbed ground.

In the 'Big Bessie' section, surface wash to 300mm deep ranges from pebbles to boulders of billy and silicified pebbly sandstone, and lies on basement rocks. Much of this area also has been worked, but there are patches of virgin ground that are likely to contain sapphires.

Code of Conduct

- Use only safe working practices. Holes deeper than 2m or undermined overhangs **are not permitted**.
- Workings should be left in a safe, tidy condition so as not to endanger other persons or stock.
- Dismantle any structures upon vacating a campsite.
- Remove all rubbish** and bury human waste at least 20cm deep.
- Do not interfere with any vegetation, stock or wildlife. Shooting is prohibited.
- Minimise noise and control pets at all times.
- Clear a 2m space around campfires.

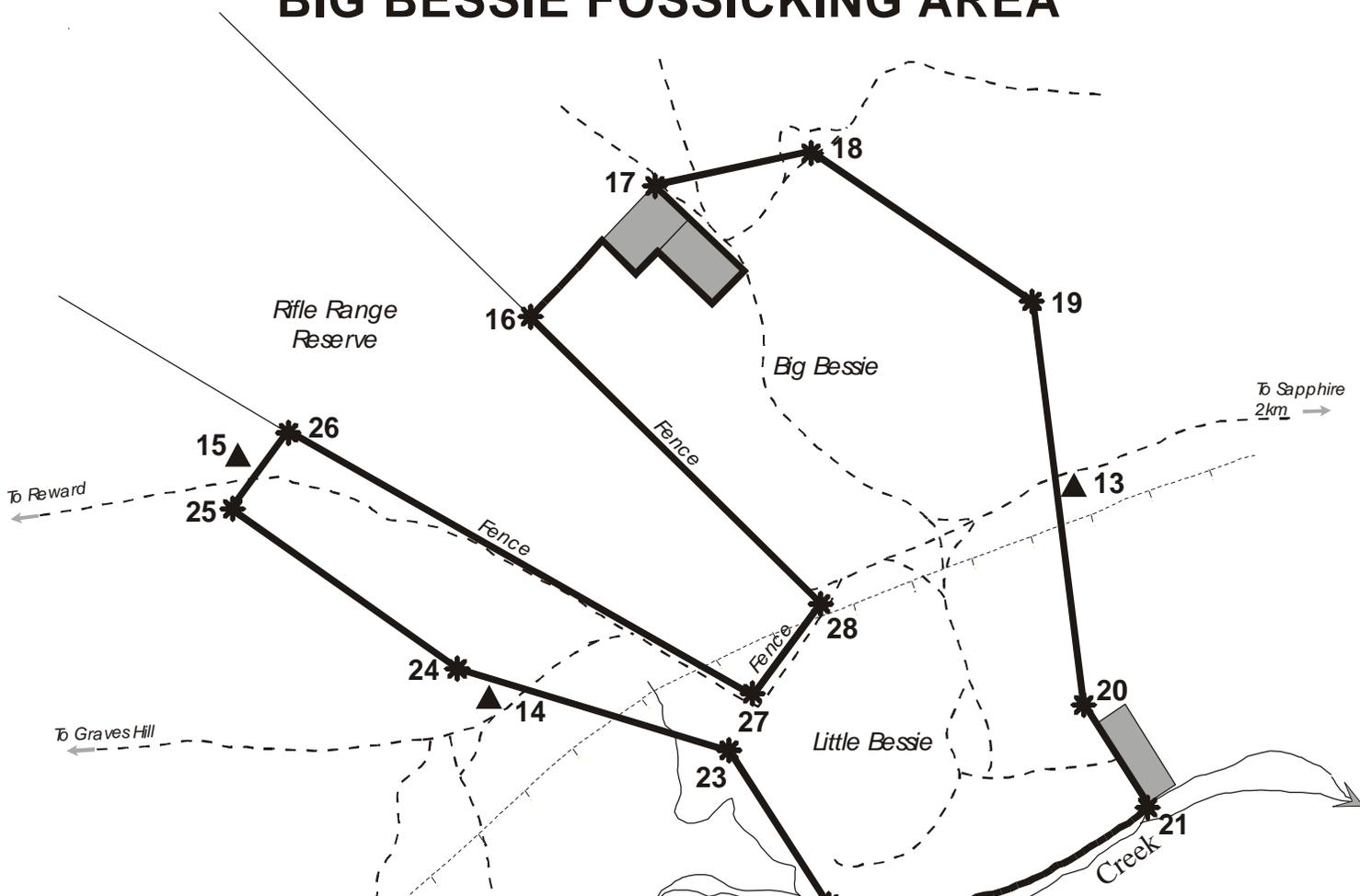
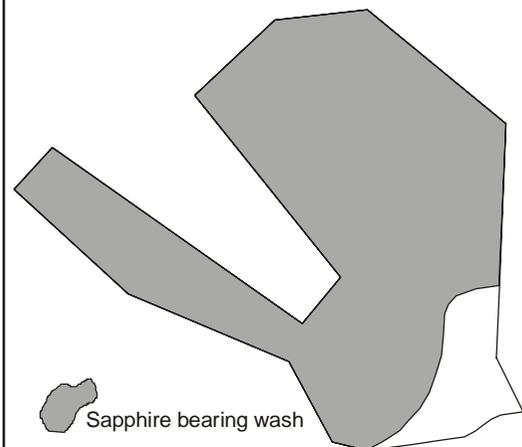
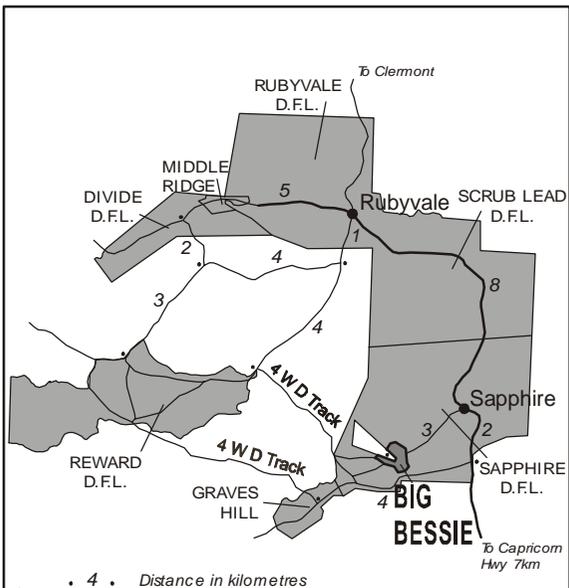
For further information:

*The Mining Registrar
Department of Natural Resources
and Mines
State Government Building
99 Hospital Road
Emerald Qld 4720*

*PO Box 19
Emerald Qld 4720*

*Telephone: (07) 4987 9373
Facsimile: (07) 4987 9333
Website: www.nrm.qld.gov.au*

BIG BESSIE FOSSICKING AREA



LEGEND

- Boundary
- * 25 Numbered boundary marker
- ▲ 15 Numbered entrance sign
- Telephone line (underground)
- Miners Homestead Lease

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