

MIDDLE RIDGE FOSSICKING AREA

Middle Ridge 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. Another brochure describes the general background to the field.

Middle Ridge of 32ha is close to the township of Rubyvale and comprises medium-dense bushland in the east, and cleared areas in the west. It offers the choice of finding sapphires either near the surface or at slightly greater depth.

Access and roads

Turn off the Capricorn Highway at Anakie, and take the sealed road through Sapphire to Rubyvale (18km). Follow the partly unsealed Goanna Flat road to the west for 3km to the signposted entrance of *Middle Ridge* on its eastern boundary. Minor tracks lead north to the 'Shotgun Hill' diggings whilst the main track continues to cross Policeman Creek. From there it disperses into minor tracks leading in several directions to the diggings of 'Policemans Flat' and 'Russian Gully'.

Water

Water needs to be carried as there is no local supply. The nearest public facility is at Sapphire.

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, but a suitable clear flat area is west of 'Shotgun Hill'.

Sapphire occurrence

At 'Shotgun Hill' at the eastern end two separate washes occur within 2m of the surface. A surface wash 400mm deep, consisting of rubbly, pebbly soil, is secondary, and rarely contains gems. Beneath this is a 200-500mm thick layer of tight brown clay, then 500mm of the bottom wash. This is very clayey, and generally needs soaking for some time to break it down prior to sieving. Digging is quite hard, and there are some very large 'billy' boulders in places. Some good stones, mostly blues, have been found and are often large. Large pieces of corundum (bombs) are common, as are zircons. Beneath the bottom wash is a 300mm thick layer of heavy blue-grey clay, described locally as decomposed volcanic ash. In the central section, shallow surface wash 400mm deep has been worked on 'Policemans Flat'.

A reddish-brown bouldery wash 600mm thick beneath 1.7m of soil and sand has been worked in deeper pits. There is also a deeper wash reported at a maximum depth of 6m.

Around 'Russian Gully' in the southwest, extensive potholing has occurred, but depths and the type of wash are not apparent. South of 'Russian Gully' granitic basement crops out. A thin layer of rubbly soil covers it but although not a true wash, it may yield the odd sapphire.

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:

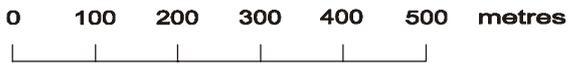
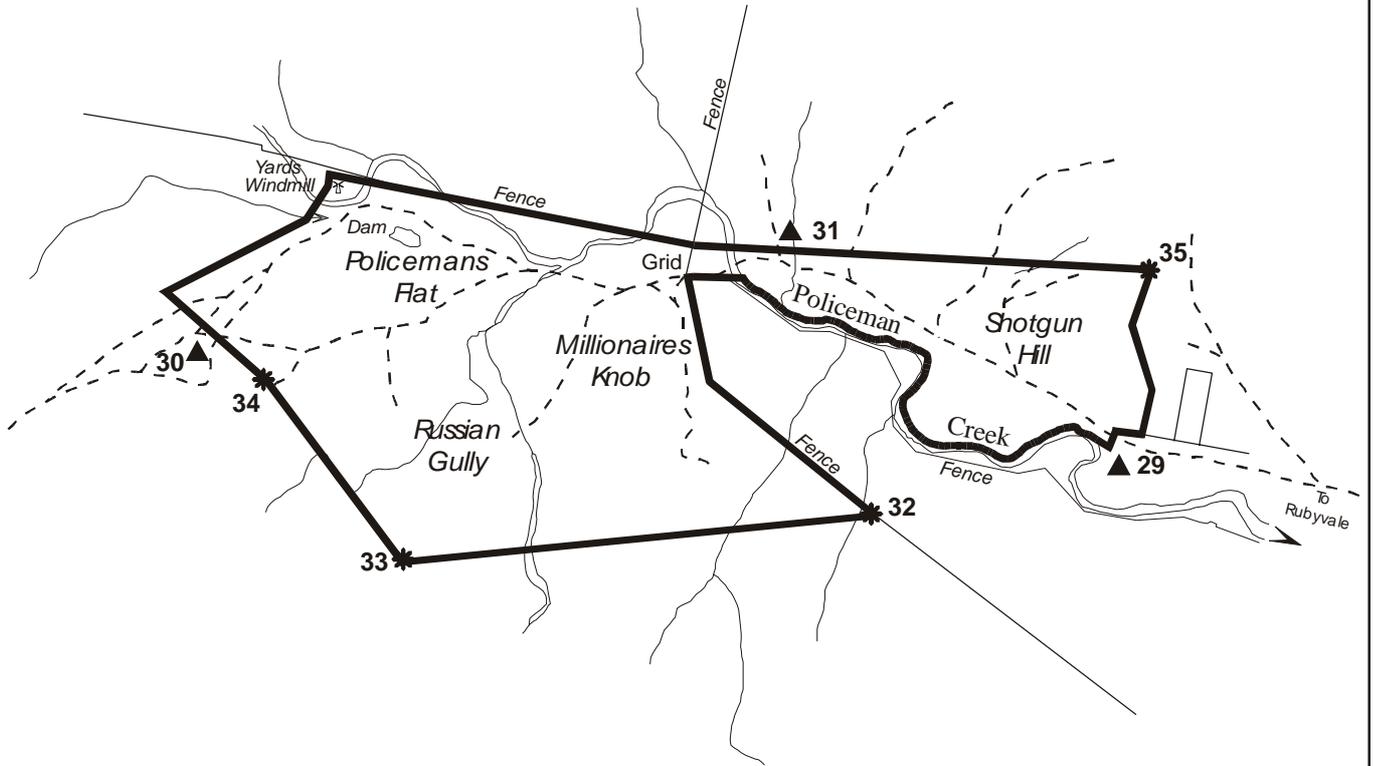
The Mining Registrar
Department of Natural Resources
and Mines
State Government Building
99 Hospital Road
Emerald Qld 4720

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Emerald Qld 4720

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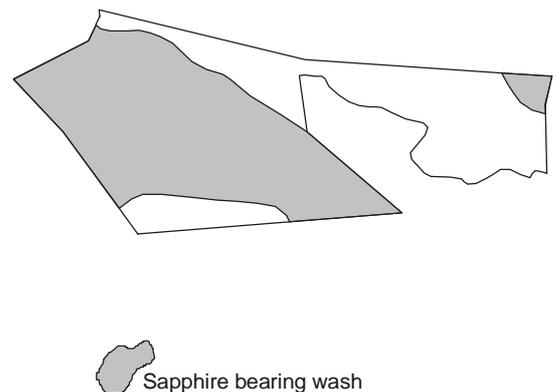
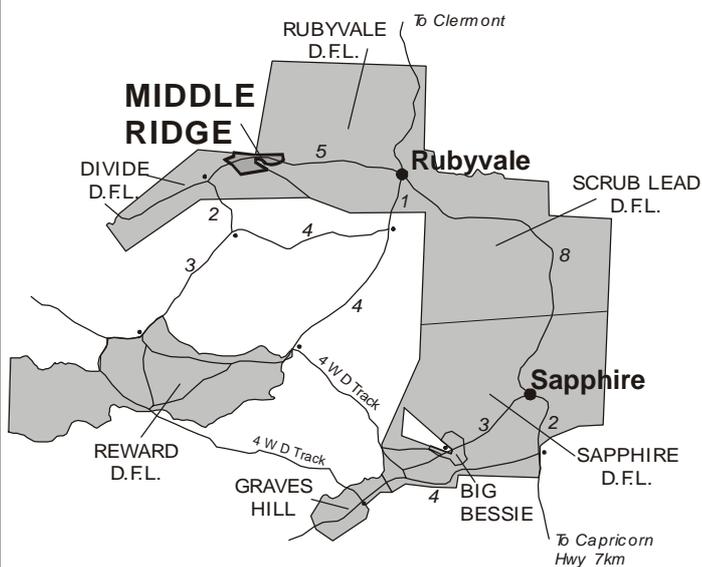
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MIDDLE RIDGE FOSSICKING AREA



LEGEND

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. 4 . Distance in kilometres