



The petrified tree trunk - estimated to be 34 million years old - is removed from a property north of Armidale

Petrified tree trunk from 34 million years ago

The following story appeared in *The Armidale Express* in 1966:

WHAT may be the largest uncut precious stone in Australia will soon be chipped out of volcanic rock on a property north of Armidale.

The precious stone is of opaline silica, weights between two and three tons, and is 34 million years old.

It is a petrified tree trunk, believed to be the largest and best preserved specimen yet discovered in northern NSW.

About 50 per cent of the trunk is agate, a hydrous form of silicate, used in making jewellery.

Cut up and polished, the trunk would be worth several thousand dollars.

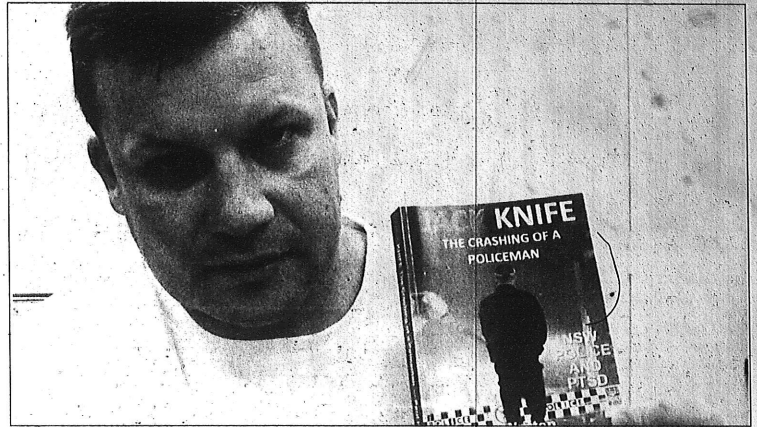
The Gem and Mineral Club hopes to make the trunk a tourist attraction for Armidale.

The trunk was discovered last

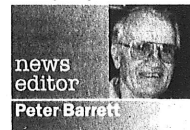
In History's Page

Bill Oates is the UNE archivist. If you have an old photograph depicting local history, email to him on woates@une.edu.au or drop it in to The Express Office in Faulkner St.

Nightmare on paper



WINDOW INTO LIFE AS A COP: Former police officer, Paul Horner, with his book which he says "gives the reader an insight into my life as a policeman and my demise thereafter".



PAUL Horner's job ultimately became his nightmare.

Now he is helping to ensure that others don't go down the same tragic track.

Mr Horner, 38, is a former police officer with 11 years in the NSW Police Force, medically discharged in April 2010 after a diagnosis of chronic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression.

The illness was, he said, a

direct result of coping with the stress of being a fully operational police officer, "living in a world offering a constant and relentless level of increasing violence."

"It came to the point where I just couldn't cope," he said. "My job ultimately became my nightmare."

Today, two years later, while he manages his illness "to some degree," Mr Horner still struggles with depression and "extreme nightmares."

One way of coping has been to write a book.

"*The Crashing of a Policeman (NSW Police and PTSD)*" tells the story of his career at some of the busiest and hardest police beats in NSW, with a range of stories from saving

people's lives to "almost losing my own."

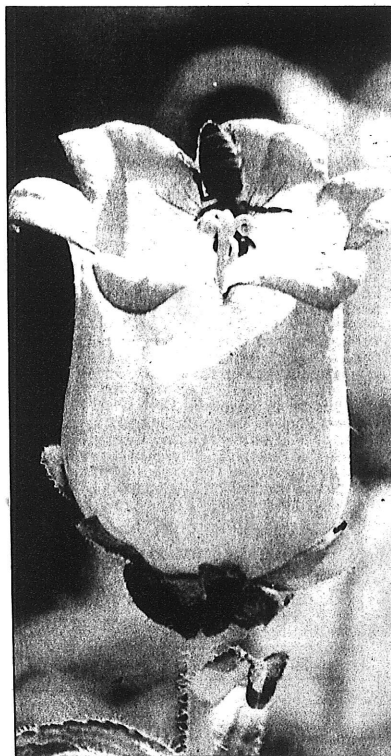
Mr Horner also talks of "the failing of the system which I trusted and believed in."

"I want to help police and their families, who also suffer as a consequence of a copper's job," he said.

At the same time, he wants the book to "put positive pressure on every police force in Australia to change their ways so that the engine room of the force is looked after in the way in which they deserve and treated with respect."

Mr Horner's book is available through the publishers, www.zeus-publications.com, or emailing the author at crumbshorner@hotmail.com.

Key tips for life after rain in your garden



IN BLOOM: A Canterbury bell

GARDENS have been under considerable stress with recent continual rain resulting from the 'La Nina' weather pattern.

Although summer is drawing to its calendar end it has been such a strange season and a warm spell could mean you need to turn sprinkler systems on.

Now is the time to take softwood cuttings

Agapanthus, Belladonna lilies and Hydrangea have finished blooming and now is a good time to spot non-Australian shrubs and bulbs for adding to your garden in the future.

Choose the best plants for your area after observing and inquiring what is suited to your location as you can waste space with a plant in an unsuitable position.

Don't locate flower or vegetable beds in shady spots, or within three metres of trees or in areas exposed to wind.

Vegetable beds are best running north to south. If you want early onions, start sowing seeds now.

URGENT

* Rake up early leaf fall and use in your compost bin
* Refer to vegetables list for planting before it gets too cool to plant.

* Keep vegetables moving with liquid manure or fertiliser.

* Prune shrubs that have



Your garden

The expert
Ray Monty

finished flowering, also pelargoniums.

* Look under leaves for greyish powdery mildew on cucumbers, squash, etc. Spray with fungicide.

PROPAGATING SOFTWOOD OR HALF-RIPENED CUTTINGS

Raising your own plants from cuttings is not as hard as you may think.

And exchanging bits and pieces with friends is pleasant as well as economical. Hardwood cuttings are propagated in winter but 'softwood' or 'half-ripened wood' is available now.

It's quite easy, using liquid or powder growth-promoting substances, to speed up the formation of roots.

For the home gardener,

plastic covers/bags will keep the leaf surfaces constantly moist.

Place the containers in a well-lit spot and make sure drainage is good.

Softwood cuttings: Cut the top two to three centre metres of a rapidly growing shoot, remove most of the lower leaves and firm half the length in a potting mix with perlite or polystyrene. Take care not to let cuttings wilt.

You can propagate Erica, Penstemon, Fuschia and Coleus quite rapidly this way.

Try Callistemon and Leptospermum. Half-ripened cuttings: Take shoots that have stopped growing and woody; cut pieces five to eight centre metres and bury half length in your potting mix.

This method is generally used for conifers, fibrous-rooted begonias, carnations and pinks, geraniums, the various daisies, hydrangeas, correas, grevilleas and melaleucas.

Cuttings must never be allowed to dry out. When they have produced a good root system and newly shot leaves, transplant them into the garden or into pots on a scool-ish day and water well.

MID FEBRUARY NOTES

Flowers are fading so get around to see other gardens before it's too late!

Observe the best plants in your area for the end of the season and note them for future use. Choosing the right plant is essential - don't waste time and effort on a plant that just won't thrive.

With the approach of autumn many plants are storing up food and energy for their dormant period and the flush of new growth in spring. Seasonal winds may damage trees and shrubs so you should prune out any broken branches and cover with a wound-dressing paint.

Bulbs: The last of Agapanthus have bloomed and bulbs now go into their dormant period. Order your bulbs from various catalogs now.

FLOWERS AND VEGETABLES TO PLANT

Flowers: alyssum, calendula, Canterbury bell, delphinium, gypsophila, larkspur, lupin, pansy, stock, sweet pea, wallflower.

Seedlings: alyssum, delphinium, dianthus
Vegetables: Seeds: beet-root, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, lettuce, leek, white onion, silver beet, spinach. Seedlings: broccoli, cabbage, celery, leek, silver beet.