

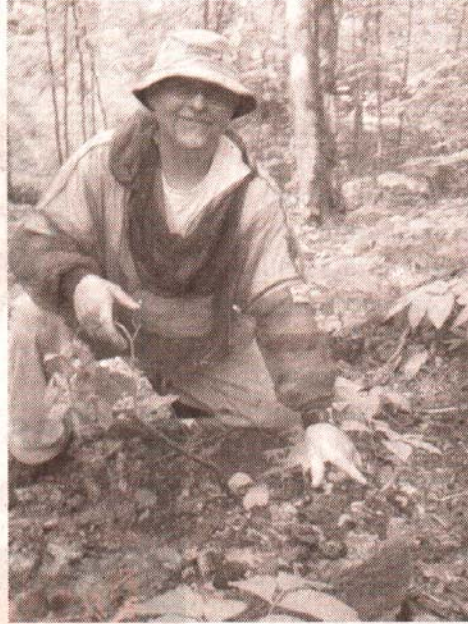
# A Fun Thing To Do!!

## Greenmantle Mineral Eco Tours

By George Farrell

Thursday June 31 was one hot, muggy, humid, sticky day. Even at 9:30 in the morning, as I pulled into the driveway of Sandra and Mark Bramhams', I was sweating. Emerging from the van to a cloud of moskies the size of humming birds, I made a grab for the spray-of-death- canister that I had bought along for the occasion. The occasion was a foray into the deep woods on the Bramhams property. "Here, put on one of these bug jackets," Mark said by way of introduction. Aha, I knew I'd like this guy right away. I tend to like anyone who can make a situation more tenable. Not that I'm a suck mind you. I can stand having my blood sopped up with the best of them, but I'd rather not, if you know what I mean. Anyway, without any further ado, I was invited to sit on the back of a very comfortable ATV, with independent rear suspension. Mark got up front, and accompanied by his three large friendly dogs of indeterminate lineage, off we took.

Now I've been all over this wonderful county of ours, and



foraged in many a fertile forest, and I like to think that I'm relatively knowledgeable about much of the fauna and flora found therein. But on this trip I was a neophyte, as Mark is a mineral man, and he was taking me on a Mineral Eco-Tour. Prior to our meeting I had gone to the Greenmantle Farm web site, which told me:

*Greenmantle Farm is located just off the Essonville Line in Wilberforce, Ontario. Owned by Mark and Sandra Bramham, the Greenmantle Farm Mineral Occurrence has never been disturbed by modern man, and there is even evidence to suggest that the site was never touched by native North Americans. This combination of rarity and the undisturbed state of the mineral occurrence provides a great opportunity for those wishing to view the site.*

With mud asunder and hounds afoot, and myself encased in mesh, I felt the drying, cooling breeze caress my face, as the ATV picked up speed. I was just returning to a tepid temp when Mark stopped at a low wooden bridge, spanning a small stream. Of course the dogs plunged in with gleeful relish, and Mark started his tour-talk by explaining to me some of the topography of what lay before us, which was an open area, like a little valley. I could tell that he was both very passionate and knowledgeable about the land, and how the formations gave birth to the minerals they encased. Mark reminded me of one of those rare teachers who make learning such a joy. Later I was to find out that both Mark and Sandra were teachers, in and around the Oshawa and Port Perry area.

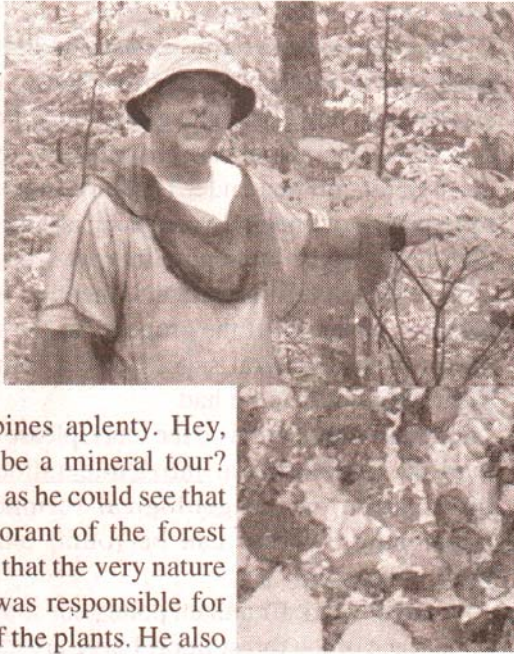
With his rear passenger now a bit wiser, Mark drove the ATV into the northern jungle. It was a forest that was unlike any I had ever been in before. For a start it was very much like what we think of as a traditional jungle. The canopy was very far above, the trees

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being extremely tall. There was a lush carpeting of plants of all descriptions on the forest floor. Everything was very verdant. All the plants looked like they were on steroids. There were huge trillium, including ones with green stripes, and a red one which was the Swartzeneggerian equivalent of its species. There were jack-in-the-pulpits, strange and wonderful ferns, blue bead lilies, morel mushrooms, and columbines aplenty. Hey, wasn't this supposed to be a mineral tour? Mark warmed to me a bit, as he could see that I wasn't completely ignorant of the forest flora. He explained to me that the very nature of the mineral-rich soil was responsible for the diversity and health of the plants. He also made mention that Sandra was the botanist, and that she very often took over the tour when Mark was busy.



mossy grotto. He mentioned that porcupines gathered at the entrance, and I suspected that they were ingesting minerals, as they are wont to do on occasion; so it's been said. All too soon though we had to head back to base, where over a very deliciously cold glass of well-water, we sat on the front porch and talked a bit.

"It's all about preservation and education," Mark explains. "We're trying to preserve the minerals on the property in their natural setting. Seeing them like that you get a better understanding of how they were formed. We decided we didn't want to see our land turn into an open-pit mine which would be devastated by rock hounds with insatiable appetites." Sandra was quick to point out that "not all people are like that, but the whole idea is to keep it as natural as possible."

"The whole area around Wilberforce is very rich geologically," continues Mark. "Other minerals in the area have mainly been picked out, but because our property was not easily accessible, the minerals have remained. We've owned the property since 1971, when we were in our mid 20's." Since then the Bramhams have raised 3 children; Melissa, currently teaching at Camp Muskoka,



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In a series of stops, Mark showed me small, fault formations in the earth, which revealed delicate and dark crystalline structures. He took me to uprooted trees which had pulled away a layer of soil and revealed a beautiful green and orange-striped mineral called apatite. He showed me, wonderful mineral formations just sticking out of the soil, with exotic names like fluorrichterite, actinolite, hornblende, orthoclase, tremolite, and stunning quartz crystals. I had never seen minerals in their natural setting. It was a total revelation, and unlike anything that I had previously experienced in the Highlands.

The information kept delightfully coming, and I was a happy camper. I didn't want it to end. And it didn't, not right then anyway, as Mark showed me the entrance to a cave, a real grossy motto, er

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Matthew, who is at Seneca College in Toronto taking a course in Information Technology, and Josh, who owns and operates Esson Creek Construction. Josh owns adjacent property, so the Bramhams have access to 300 acres.

The Greenmantle Farm is included in the Celebration of Trails, Hike Haliburton, and Haliburton Rocks, tour events. The Farm is also open to individual and group tours. Prices for the two and one-half hour mineral tours are an extremely reasonable: \$15 for adults, and \$12 for children under 12. Mark and Sandra like to limit groups to 15 people or under. If your group is larger than that, it is suggested that the group be broken up into two separate tours.

One thing that is important to mention is the fact that you cannot take any minerals off the property, as the whole concept is to leave things in their natural state. Bring a camera though, as there are great photo ops' to be had.

For more information on the tours, please call (705) 448-3948, or e-mail the Bramhams at [info@mineraltours.net](mailto:info@mineraltours.net). More technical information on the geological formations, and minerals on Greenmantle Farm, can be found on the excellent website [www.mineraltours.net](http://www.mineraltours.net).

Pictured: Mark Bramham points out some minerals lying on the surface of the forest floor; Large crystal mineral formations. Quartz crystals.