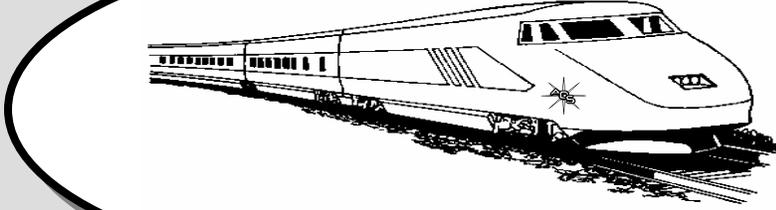


# The Opal Express



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## President's Message

*By Jim Lambert*

I believe we all owe a great deal of gratitude and appreciation to Dr. John Potter and John Rance for their presentation at our May meeting. They truly educated the Opal Society Members in attendance with useful information about the opal trade in Australia. It was truly inspiring to understand the reason opal values will increase significantly in the possibly near future. For our June meeting, we have scheduled Bob Gullage to give a presentation about the changing gold, and silver market. He may even give very useful information about where to send your old scrap gold to obtain it's true value. Our June meeting is one meeting that you do NOT want to miss! See you there!

## Members Only Website Password

To log onto the website's members only area at: [http://opalsociety.org/aos\\_members\\_only\\_area.htm](http://opalsociety.org/aos_members_only_area.htm) type: Name: "member" and Password: "hyalite".

## Opal Society Workshop

The American Opal Society's workshop is open at Ball Jr. High School every **Thursday** from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

The school is located at 1500 W. Ball Road in Anaheim. If you are traveling east on Ball Rd. the parking lot entrance you need to use is just before the railroad tracks Room 37 is in the center of the campus. Please bring a roll of PAPER TOWELS with you for clean-up as the room is a science lab and needs to be kept spotless.

To attend, membership in the American Opal Society is a must due to insurance. A nightly fee of \$2 is asked to help keep the equipment in good running condition.

## New Table of Contents Webpage for Newsletter Archives

I have completed a Table of Contents webpage to help find articles in the Opal Express Newsletter Archives. The link to the index page is [http://opalsociety.org/aos\\_newsletter\\_TOC.htm](http://opalsociety.org/aos_newsletter_TOC.htm).

## May Lecture Summary:

### State of the Opal Industry in Australia

We want to thank John Lance and Dr. John Potter for giving us an excellent lecture of the state of the opal industry in Australia.

The two John's were concerned about the future of opal mining in Australia. First, there are fewer miners mining. Many old miners are retiring and selling their old stashes. They are not being replaced by younger miners. New miners are working on the uranium mines and iron mines where they can make up to \$200k per year.

The second problem is profitability. Much of the opal rough trade is cornered by the Chinese dealers, which has kept prices somewhat low. In addition, costs have risen. High fuel costs, which are bad here, are much worse in Australia, especially in the Outback. This is driving up the cost of mining and driving out miners.

John and John's suggestion is that the opal miners band together to form a consortium to help control the flow, cost, and retail of opal.

They also talked about a major nephrite jade deposit in South Australia discovered relatively recently. The deposit is in limestone base rock, with the jade appearing as nodules within it. It is laced with iron and mostly black but many other colors have been found.

John & John were in the US looking for partners to help sell their wares. We hope they visit again!

## June Lecture – Bob Gullage on Precious Metals

Bob Gullage will be our guest speaker at the AOS general meeting on June 12th. Bob is a GIA certified gemologist and works at Gems & Opals in Anaheim. Bob will give a presentation about the changing gold and silver market. Bob discuss gold, silver, and platinum; how to identify it and how to obtain a true value if you wish to turn in scrap gold for money.

## AOS is Awarded Anaheim Arts Council Grant

The American Opal Society is happy to announce that it has been awarded a \$1500 Grant from the Anaheim Arts Council (AAC) (see <http://anaheimartscouncil.com>). The AOS applied for a grant to help offset the costs of the Opal & Gem Show.

The AOS thanks the AAC for it's generous grant and will be active in the Arts community of the Anaheim area for years to come.

# Hunting for Jade at Big Sur

By Jim Pisani

It was spring break and a good time for a family vacation, so we decided to go to Big Sur, California. Big Sur was named by the Spanish in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the “*el país Grande del Sur*”, or the Big Country of the South of the Monterey Mission, because of its vastness and impenetrability, and is just that - BIG!

I wanted to visit this wonderful place again and show my family, having first visited it in the early 80's. The spectacular coastline is probably one of the most dramatic in the world. Famous Highway 1, built in the 1930's, winds its way around the rugged western flank of the Santa Lucia Mountains with spectacular

vistas on every turn, climbing from sea level to 1000's of feet high, skirting shear drops plunging into the Pacific Ocean. The rugged coastline below sports monstrous jagged rocks with huge waves crashing into them. One also sees groves of giant coastal redwoods along sylvan streams in hidden canyons. We would top off the vacation by visiting the Monterey Bay Aquarium at the end of the road.

As usual with our vacations I had a hidden rockhound agenda; I had always wanted to visit Jade Cove and search for jade, which, by chance, just happened to be situated right in the middle of Big Sur!

We started our vacation in Southern California, where we live, and started driving north on CA-101 in the early afternoon. After around 4½ hours of driving, we got as far as Cambria, a beautiful artist/touristy destination near San Simeon. Here is where you turn onto Highway 1 and the Big Sur begins. Cambria and San Simeon are the last two towns with plenty of hotels and restaurants before you start the 100 mile drive to Monterey, the next town of any size.

In examining the AAA book for a hotel to stay the night in Cambria (we were there in April – plenty of rooms available), I noticed that the beach front area was called Moonstone Beach, which piqued my rockhounding interests. This is a short stretch of sandy coastline with hotels just above a pristine beach on a bluff. We found a great motel with a wonderful view and proceeded to have an excellent seafood dinner in a neighboring restaurant.

The next morning we explored the beach looking for, of course, moonstones. I had talked to a few local folks and researched over the internet (we brought our laptop and had Wi-Fi at our hotel) and found out that there are indeed “moonstones” on the beach. However, they are not officially moonstones, which are precious feldspar, but a form of clear agates that have washed down on the

beach from the surrounding hills. These agates, when polished, do indeed resemble moonstones, sometimes having sheen due to the fine agate layers.

We collected a handful of these agates, typically small, less than an inch in size, though I imagine that there are larger ones if you search harder. They can be distinguished from the other rocks by a white crust on the outside of the stone.

Feeling already successful in collecting something, we proceeded on our journey.

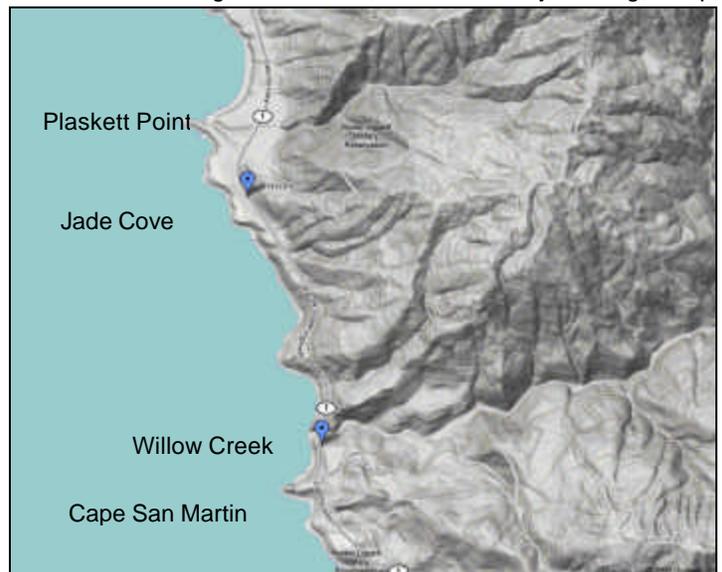
On the way to Big Sur we had to, of course, stop at San Simeon, Randolph Heart's grand monument to best that money can buy and something not be missed. After spending a few hours there, we stopped and viewed the elephant seals of Piedras Blancas, a few miles north of San Simeon. These huge, amazing animals were almost extinct

in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but have made an amazing comeback. You can view them in the hundreds, sunbathing and carrying on with their bellowing on the beach here.

So we started back onto Highway 1 and entered the rugged coastline called Big Sur, about 100 miles from San Simeon to Monterey. We had reservations at Big Sur Lodge in Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, about half way to Monterey. This would be about a two hour drive. One thing to remember, the road is very winding, steep,



Map of California Coastline



Coastline between Jade Cove and Willow Creek



*Johnny looking for jade at Willow Creek*

and narrow. It can be intimidating to the uninitiated. Take it slow; pull over at designated areas to let faster traffic get on their hurried way. The scenery is spectacular and world class and can be appreciated at the numerous places to stop view, take pictures, hike etc.

I had with me a new toy that had since proven invaluable for vacationing – a Garmin NUVI GPS receiver. From my research I was able to find the cove on Google Earth and was able to retrieve its coordinates. I had also had the coordinates on Willow Creek, which is where a stream empties into the Pacific about a mile south of Jade Cove were one can also find jade. We encountered Willow Creek first, about 30 miles north of San Simeon, and decided to stop



*Nice size jade boulder found at Willow Creek found by a local jade hunter.*

at the co-located reststop and try our luck for jade.

We stopped, got out our car, my wife Rhonda and 8 year old son John and immediately spotted a large, dark green boulder 3 feet in diameter used as a parking lot border that appeared to be jade! I believe we found the right spot! Later, I found out that these boulders were actually serpentine. The color and texture if serpentine appears a lot like jade, fooling many people. Once one actually handles real jade the differences are distinct and obvious. I'll discuss more on that later.

We were obvious in what we were doing; walking in the middle of the creek bed; heads down, turning over rocks, examining cobbles, etc. We saw some young men doing a similar exercise, and started a conversation. These fellows were local, and indeed were also looking for jade. There were quite friendly and willing to give us their advice and lore about jade. Being a baby boomer who

grew up in the 60's and 70's, I was immediately thrown back 30 years ago. These guys had long hair and beards, tie-dye tee shirts, etc.; and appeared to be what we used to call hippies! I later found

out that the Big Sur area has a culture that preserved the relaxed lifestyle after they flooded the area in the 1960's. Most left, but some stayed on, living the relaxed, back to nature lifestyle. These guys would find hunks of jade and sell them to artists, tourists, etc. They had quite a love for the stuff, and had metaphysical ideas about it; e.g. you had to be one with the jade to find it and had mystic theories on how to find it. They searched for it with almost a religious intensity; you needed to have a "feel" for the jade; good intentions will let you find it easier, etc. All that aside and without any judgment on their lifestyle, I did learn from them how to differentiate jade from other rocks. This is a common problem when looking for jade; there are quite a few of jade imitators out there; serpentine being the best.

My family and I searched here for about an hour without much luck and then had to continue to get to our reserved room in a reasonable hour. After leaving Willow Creek, we came upon Jade Cove. We knew this by two ways: first, my new GPS receiver said we had arrived and second, there is an obvious sign that says so! However, it was getting late in the day and we had to be at our hotel. So we did a quick look from the top of the bluff, got back in the car and decided to come the next day. We proceeded another 30 miles up the coast to Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park to our hotel. This took about an hour; one does not speed along the mountainous road with breathtaking scenery with every turn.

The next day we got early, and arrived at Jade Cove late morning. The cove is across a level plateau from Highway 1 where a well traveled, obvious trail crosses it for a couple hundred yards. There the trail approaches a gate at the edge of a fairly steep cliff face and then descends. The trail switches back and forth downward twice for about a hundred feet, with plenty of width and can be walked easily. However, the last 15 to 20 feet is fairly steep and a little treacherous; this is due to the last piece of trail being in the surf zone and eroded by large waves during storms. An experienced hiker or rock scrambler would have little trouble getting down; we had to be somewhat careful because my 7 year-old was a little scared of the steepness and we had to help him down. On the return trip, he didn't bat an eye going up the trail.

The cove is quite rugged and beautiful; it was a bright and sunny and was a glorious day to be at the beach. It was cool, but the shoreline blocked the westerly winds which made it quite comfortable. There are huge boulders everywhere; where good shoes or boots when scrambling. There was a cobble beach to your right facing the ocean after we descended; this looked like an easy place to dig so we proceeded there. Once down on the



*View from Highway 1 looking towards Jade Cove. The wood gate leads to a path that goes across the mesa to the bluffs, where a trail switchbacks to the cove.*

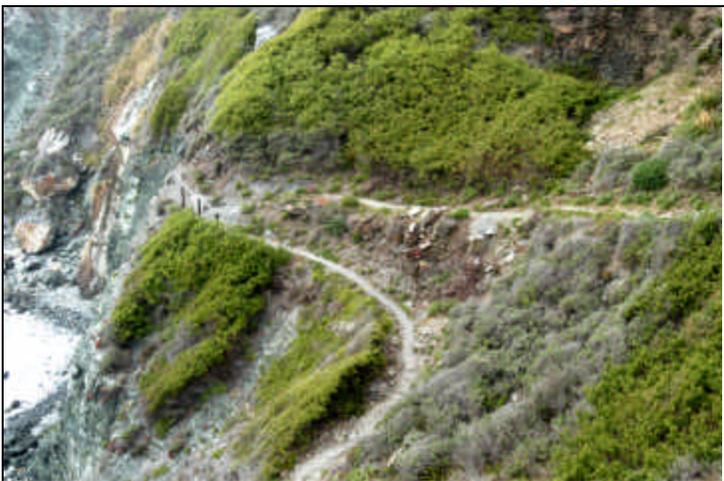


*Jade Cove from the top of the bluff. This picture is a continuation of the above picture. Notice the railing on the right.*

beach ones notices that the many of the rocks look green. It turns out that the whole cove is one giant outcropping of serpentine. The jade is actually small nodules that get eroded out of the serpentine. One should try to plan the journey here to be a low tide since you need to be concerned about the surf when you are search for jade. The cove has a rather steep shoreline; there can be fairly large swells coming across the Pacific. While I was searching with my head down with back to the surf, I got clobbered by a fairly large breaker that snuck in, soaking me.

We starting digging, collecting the jade – rounded green rocks - which seemed to be everywhere. About an hour later, some more folks arrived to do what we were doing. We struck up a conversation and I showed them my jade; I was immediately told that what I had was not jade, but serpentine. They showed me what real jade looked like – much, much, less common and much, much smaller! This started my real education on how to differentiate jade. We continued digging and actually found a number of pieces about the size of a nickel to quarter size (Figure 1). I'm sure if we had spent a whole day searching we would have found more. However, after spending around 3 hours, a seven year-old interest starts to wane, stomachs start to growl, waves get bigger and the tide came in, and we called it a day. The yield was meager, but at least we had some samples. Later I was able to purchase a number of nice size boulders of Jade Cove jade at an estate sale (Figure 2), which satiated my jade desires.

So what is jade? What is called jade by the general public are actually two distinct minerals – jadeite and nephrite. They are



*Path down the bluffs to Jade Cove. It is a good trail that switchbacks once to just above the cove, where the last 15 feet is steep.*

lumped together is because they have a number of similar characteristics. They are both fine-grained, massive, extremely tough minerals. Both are sometimes green and found in similar geological environments. Both are complex silicates formed by metamorphic actions on serpentine and or schist. Both are somewhat rare in the USA, with jadeite being rarer. Nephrite is a member of the amphibole family, while jadeite is a member of the pyroxene group. Nephrite jade is found in a number of locations around the world; in North America, the main locations are British Columbia, Wyoming, and Alaska. It is formed in schists, gneisses,



*Author and son Johnny at the bottom of Jade Cove. Notice the huge serpentine boulders.*

limestones, and in Jade Cove's case, serpentines.

Jade was discovered by early cultures and have been found at many prehistoric sites. It was used as both tools, such as axes and knives, and as simple ornaments. The Maori, Eskimo, and Mesoamerican cultures also revered jade. However, the Chinese are the most famous for their love of jade; nephrite jade holding a very special significance for thousands of years and is an integral part of their history and culture. The Chinese used jade to make beautiful sculptures and carvings that evolved into a fine art; often used in the furnishings buried with Chinese Emperors. Jade was and is valued in a manner that gold and diamonds are valued in Western cultures. . Today, many of the ancient carvings are considered priceless.

Jadeite is newer, discovered in 1783 in Burma. It has finer structure, is not as strong, but takes a higher polish and has a more glassy appearance. Jadeite has more vibrant colors, specifically the greens; however, only nephrite jade is white. Jadeite is better for jewelry while nephrite is better for carving, it being stronger.

Monterey or Big Sur nephrite jade has been found all along the



*The Author looking for nephrite Jade in Jade Cove, unknowingly about to get soaked by a rogue wave.*



Some of Jade collected at Jade Cove. The jade is on the left of the coin. On the right, the top stone is talc and the bottom stones are serpentine.

Big Sur coastline in Monterey County but the primary area is between Plaskett Point to the north and Cape San Martin to the south. Along this coastline there are schist outcroppings that have intrusions of peridotite type rocks that have metamorphosed into serpentine. The jade is found in lenses and nodules in the serpentine. Serpentine is considerably softer than jade so often the jade will erode out of the hillside and form rounded cobbles. The two main outcroppings are at Jade Cove and just south of Willow creek, 1250 feet northeast of Cape San Martin.

How can you differentiate jade? Here are some characteristics that may help you.

**Hardness:** Jade has a hardness around 6.5. A typical steel knife blade has a hardness around 5.5. A knife blade will not scratch jade and will leave a mark like a pencil on the surface. It will however, scratch serpentine and talc.

**Toughness:** Nephrite jade is extremely tough- probably the toughest rock there is. If you can break a piece of jade with a hammer or another rock without too much difficulty, it is probably not jade.

**Texture:** Almost always, jade has a smooth, texture on it that is a result of the abrasion with other rocks. The exception is jade "in place", or in the original rock outcropping. Jade has an almost greasy feel to it. If you rub a piece of jade across your face, the oil of your skin will coat the jade, giving it a richer color and making the grain visible. Also, jade does not typically have many cracks. If it does have cracks, the cracks usually run parallel to the thin side of the stone. Jade is also seen better when wet. Botryoidal Jade is a very rare type of jade where the surface has a grape like structure. This type of jade is very desirable so keep it you find it!

**Specific gravity:** 2.90-3.03.

**Streak:** White.

**Cleavage:** None.

**Fracture:** splintery; sharp edged, brittle.

**Chemical composition:**  $\text{Ca}_2(\text{Mg,Fe})_5\text{Si}_8\text{O}_{22}(\text{OH})_2$  – basic calcium magnesium iron silicate.

**Refractive index:** 1.600-1.627.

**Fluorescence:** None.

**Color:** Nephrite jade from the Big Sur area (sometimes called Monterey Jade) has a typical olive green color. However, this color can vary from being very dark, almost black, to a light green. There is a rare red variety called Indian jade or fire jade that was used by Native Americans to, heating them in a fire and putting them in a basket cook their food. The fire left a permanent color. Some of the jade can be a blue color – this is rare. Big Sur jade does not have feldspar speckle to it. If it does, it is serpentine. Jade will sometimes exhibit a glow about it when the light hits it. This is

sometimes obvious, especially under water. The best jade is free of cracks, has a good green color.

### Planning

If you plan to go to Jade Cove, here are some tips. First, if are in poor health, have bad knees, etc., avoid Jade Cove and stick to Willow Creek where the access is much easier and your chances are almost as good to find some nice pieces of jade. The GPS coordinates to the Jade Cove parking area: Latitude: -121° 28.10104', Longitude: 35° 54.81675'. The coordinates for Willow Creek are Latitude: 35° 53.593, Longitude: 121° 27.642.

Dress warmly in layers with a windbreaker. The weather of Big Sur can be cold, damp and windy, or it can be warm and sunny. Where good, sturdy shoes or hiking boots. Bring a small backpack to keep your lunch, water, etc. in while you walk down the narrow trail to Jade Cove. This allows you to keep your hands free for balance. A camera is a great idea; the area is about as scenic as it gets. Bring a small pocket knife to scratch rocks as a jade test. As far as tools to dig with, I brought a rock hammer, an army shovel, and an Estwing pick. I believe these met the restrictions of the MBNMS (See Table 1). I used the small shovel the most in the cobble area of the beach.

Pick up a local tide table ( you can find one on the internet and plan your trip at low tide. This gives you much more real estate to search to find your piece of jade. A good on-line tide table is here, with San Simeon as the closest spot:

<http://www.freetidetables.com/?sid=211049f4&mid=2008:05&uid>.

You can visit Jade Cove any time of the year. The climate of the Big Sur area is almost always cool and rarely hot most of the year. Searching after a good storm is a good idea since the more hidden jade has been uncovered. However, don't go during storm; wait for the surf to die down.

Keep in mind that the Big Sur Jade Festival is held in October. Here they have all the jade you could desire, plus many artists, crafts, musicians, etc. This year's show will be held on Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008. It is held at the Pacific Valley School, which is

### Table 1: Jade Collection Restrictions

**Jade cove resides in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and collectors must abide by their rules.**

- Only jade already loose from the seabed may be collected;
- No tool may be used to collect jade except:
  - A hand tool<sup>1</sup> to maneuver or lift the jade or scratch the surface of a stone as necessary to determine if it is jade;
  - A lift bag or multiple lift bags with a combined lift capacity of no more than 200 pounds; or
  - A vessel (motorized personal watercraft<sup>2</sup> prohibited) to provide access to the authorized area;
- Each person may collect only what that person individually carries; and
- For any loose piece of jade that cannot be collected, any person may apply for a Sanctuary permit to collect such a loose piece.

<sup>1</sup>A hand tool is defined as a hand-held implement utilized for the collection of jade, that is no greater than 36 inches in length and has no moving parts (e.g. dive knife, pry bar, or abalone iron). Pneumatic, mechanical, electrical, hydraulic or explosive tools are, therefore, examples of what does not meet this definition.

<sup>2</sup>A motorized personal watercraft is any motorized vessel that is less than fifteen feet in length as manufactured, is capable of exceeding a speed of fifteen knots, and has the capacity to carry not more than the operator and one other person while in operation. The term includes, but is not limited to, jet skis, wet bikes, surf jets, miniature speed boats, airboats, and hovercraft.

From <http://montereybay.noaa.gov/resourcepro/jade.html>



*The boulder on the left is serpentine while the one the right of the knife are jade. The knife shown could scratch the serpentine but not the jade.*

located across Highway One from Sand Dollar Beach and adjacent to the Plaskett Campground, located about 1 mile north of Jade Cove. For more information, see <http://www.surcoast.com/jfest.html>.

**Scuba Diving**

More adventurous types may go scuba diving for jade just off the coast. Your chances of finding a good piece are much higher, but you have to work a lot harder for it. Diving in Jade Cove is cold water diving with wetsuits or dry suits being required. This is advanced, dangerous diving due to the potentially strong surge and wave action, cold water, and thick kelp, so you need to be well-trained. Unless you dive from a boat, you also have to lug your gear down the steep trail from your vehicles.

**Warnings & Restrictions**

The cliffs of Big Sur can be very dangerous. Climb them at your own risk. Additionally, the surf can be large and treacherous. Big swells, being sporadic, can surprise you, as they did me (I got soaked!). Keep one eye on the ocean while collecting. This area is a wild place, where lifeguards are not around and rescue may not be nearby. There are restrictions in digging; see Table 1. Also, one cannot dig above the mean-high-tide line; this means no digging on top of the bluff.



*A very nice boulder of nephrite jade from Jade Cove. This piece was purchased at the estate sale of Faye McDowell, an avid collector who had collected it years ago herself.*

**Lodging & Dining**

Make sure you reserve a hotel room ahead of time if you are planning on staying within Big Sur. If you stay at the edges of Big Sur in the San Simeon, Cambria, or Monterey-Carmel area, there is plenty of lodging. However, rooms are quite scarce along the 100

mile stretch of Big Sur, numbering only around 300. We stayed at Big Sur Lodge in Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, in a nice but old and rustic cabin. The price was \$190 per night but it could sleep 6. It is one of the only acts around, so you don't have too much choice. They do have a very nice campground where you can camp under giant coastal redwoods for \$20 per night. There are other resorts and campgrounds along the way, some cheaper, but most being more expensive; some are very exclusive. There are a number of restaurants along Big Sur, some being the finest in the state. Be prepared to pay more than usual.

In conclusion, The Jade Cove and Willow Creek area makes for an excellent rockhounding location for those who want to find a good piece of nephrite. In addition, it is located in an area that provides other amenities to keep happy those in your family who are not as dedicated rockhounds as you.

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**Lightning Ridge: Australia's Capital of Broken Dreams**

*By Kiran Pahwa, May 13th, 2008*

Lightning Ridge, Australia - British writer Ben Rice did very well with Pobby and Dingan, a story about an opal mining family in Lightning Ridge who didn't do all that well.

A trip to the Outback town 800 kilometers north-west of Sydney gives an insight into the inspiration he found for a novel published in 2000 and now with French and German translations.

It's tempting to think that Rice stood outside the public notice board on the corner of Opal Street and Pandora Street and saw an advertisement like this: Mining gear for sale, truck, Case front-end loader, hoist, bogger, generator, pram, outboard motor.

A scrawled note from a mining family giving up hope of striking it rich and wanting to raise the cash for the trip back to the city might well have been his muse.

But the people of the Ridge - estimates of the population vary between 2,000 and 5,000 - don't easily give up searching for black opals, which along with diamonds, emeralds, sapphires and rubies are the most valuable of gemstones.

Few of them reckon to be living in the Ridge only on the chance of making a fortune in what is the world's biggest repository of black opal.

"It's the lifestyle that makes this place," says Carol Ramsay, who left Australia's biggest city 13 years ago and now runs a motel in the Ridge. "The best thing about Sydney is the road out."

It's not a place where there need to be any privations - even in the southern hemisphere summer months when the temperature can pass 40 degrees.

There's a supermarket stocking anything from blue cheese to brown rice. There's an outdoor Olympic-size swimming pool for the summer and a heated indoor one being built for the winter.

The accommodation for visitors is basic but there's competition to keep prices down. There's a massive bowling club with bistro and, given this is Australia, severe air-condition and the ever-jangling poker machines.

Even when mining is not a full-time job it seems to remain a passion. Trevor Hudson, who takes tourists down a spruced up mine site called The Chambers of the Black Hand, still chases the opal on his own claim.

Opal mining doesn't lend itself to massive investment and some strike lucky in their first week underground. A few thousand dollars and you can be in business; invest a million and you might lose the lot.

A look around the Ridge and there doesn't seem to be a lot of money about: old cars, untended shops, restaurants with most tables empty. But who's to know? Just like farmers never seem to have good harvests, opal miners don't shout about their big finds.

Out on the claims it's the same story. Old caravans and even older disused railway carriages suggest some miners are really struggling to make a go of it.

There are huge compensations for the backbreaking labour and the meager returns for most miners. Along Pandora Street there's a hot spring, free to all, and where clothing is optional when midnight comes.

The therapeutic potassium-rich water bubbles up from the sub-artesian basin about a kilometer below. The temperature, summer and winter, is a steady 42 degrees.

Tour guide Marilyn Miller, the daughter of a miner who has lived in the Ridge all her life, is still entranced by its big sky and wide-open spaces.

"There are so many stars at night it looks untidy, as though someone should come and sweep them up because there are so many," Miller said. . From <http://www.topnews.in>

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**Bid to Stop Mining Spread – Greens MLC Calls For Rehabilitation**

5/16/2008

Following a visit to the Narran Lakes and Walgett earlier this month Greens MLC Lee Rhiannon is calling for a stop to any expansion of opal mining at Opal Prospecting Area 4 (OPA4) until areas one, two and three are exhausted of opal and rehabilitated.

Only one space on the property 'Kurrajong' is currently open to mining on OPA4 but Lightning Ridge Miners Association (LRMA) secretary Maxine O'Brien said they hoped to open up space at Barfield next.

The other opal mining areas are located closer to Lightning Ridge. OPA1 is located around the town, OPA2 is further north and covers half of Wyoming while OPA3 runs from the Coocoran to Glengarry.

Ms O'Brien said the LRMA had signed an access management agreement with the landholder, but were waiting for the department to finalize their requirements under the EPA act.

However, Ms Rhiannon said she wanted Mineral Resources minister Ian McDonald to inspect the area before he considered any expansion request.

"One of the concerns of the Greens is that there are plans by the opal miners associations to expand," Ms Rhiannon said on Wednesday. "But the Green's aren't against opal mining."

Ms Rhiannon's statement came following her visit to the area recently. She was invited by the Dharriwaa elders group who expressed their concern about further expansion of OPA4.

Meanwhile, Ms O'Brien said it was not feasible to wait until other opal mining areas were exhausted and rehabilitated before anything else opened up.

"You don't know if it's worked out or not, you never know," she said.

Ms O'Brien said several sites had already been rehabilitated and there were three more in the works. There are two stages to the rehabilitation process; the first involves getting the titleholder to remove all machinery and white dirt.

Ms O'Brien said a levee put on all title holders allowed the LRMA to remove any excess mullock and repair any depressions which is part of stage two.

"Because we are such a small scale there is a relatively low impact," Ms O'Brien said of the overall damage done to the environment.

She said in the initial assessment aspects of flora, fauna and cultural heritage sites were all taken into account and environmental and culturally vulnerable areas were exempt from mining.

However, Ms Rhiannon said she did not see any evidence of rehabilitation during her trip.

She also said she was concerned about the rehabilitation levee imposed on miners. "

The levee for rehabilitation is incredibly low; \$30 per claim is not credible."

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**Bozeman Trustees Name New School Hyalite**

From The Associated Press • May 13, 2008

BOZEMAN — The Bozeman School Board has voted to name its new school Hyalite Elementary.

The board voted 7-0 Monday night to adopt the name, which won the most votes in an informal public poll. It will be the only public school in Montana named Hyalite.

Winning nearly 25 percent of the 2,734 votes cast on the Internet or in person, Hyalite beat out eight other finalists. Meadowlark was runner-up with 20 percent, and Robert Frost came in third with nearly 12 percent.

Hyalite is a translucent mineral of the opal family, as well as the name of a mountain peak and a popular recreation area south of Bozeman.

The new school is under construction and set to open in August 2009. From <http://www.greatfalltribune.com>

First time I heard of a school named after a type of opal! – The Editor.

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**Cash and Treasures: Digging for Black Opals in Australia**

By [Jamie Rhein](#) May 16th 2008

Cash and Treasures, as mentioned in a [previous post](#), is a Travel Channel show that often features kid friendly places. Host Kirsten Gum, an engaging sort, heads to where you can dig up treasure. I've been watching every Wednesday for the past several weeks, finding out more and more about the bounty one can find above and below ground. The finder gets to keep all of it for a price.

**Episode:** Digging for black opals

**What are they?** Stones of a variety of color ranging from black to blue with the shades in between that shine up into various patterns and designs. The design influences their value. Most of the opals in the world--95% come from this part of the world.

**Location:** [Lightning Ridge](#), Australia--a small mining town that's a bit of a poke to get to. Gum said it took 11 hours through the Outback.

**Digging details:** Gum started her quest by heading to [Black Opal Tours](#) located in Lightning Ridge. This tour establishment is a place to find out about the various types of opal patterns and their value, as well as the history of opal mining in the area. While Gum was in Lightning Ridge, besides digging, she hob-nobbed with some of the miners and downed some beers, "stubbies," to find out about the miners experience and secrets. They kept the secrets to themselves. None of them looked like they are getting rich.

After sitting in the sun in 110 degree weather, sifting through mine dirt piles by hand, hoping to find an opal that someone missed - but to no avail, Gum headed down into the mine of two brothers whose family has been mining for four generations. The brothers blasted one wall of the mine to loosen dirt for Gum's benefit which gave her the view she wanted--seams of color. As she describes it, the colors range from blues to purples to greens.



Kirsten Gum



Lightning Ridge

Gum grabbed some rock with black opals inside and headed to Sidney to get them appraised at the [National Opal Collection](#), Australia's leading opal company. The aim was to find out their value and to see which ones might be turned into jewelry. Only one of the stones was worth turning into something. The others weren't big enough, or didn't have enough value. For example, Gum was told one of them might be a nice addition for a kid's rock collection. My son would find it cool.



The 4½ carat opal that hung around Gum's neck at the end of the episode was worth \$500. Gum was pleased with the results and felt that getting hot and dirty to get this opal was worth the effort.

In case you may think that finding black opals could be easy, here's a telling comment by one of the miners who sifted through the dirt with Gum for awhile. "You need the patience of a 99 year-old virgin."

Other things to see in Lightning Ridge:

- [Artesian Bore Baths](#)--Gum did bask in these hot spring mineral baths.
- Take a [Big Opal Mine Tour](#)
- [Goonedee Keeping](#) Place--A museum of Aboriginal heritage.
- Check out Kirsten's [blog](#) for her impressions of Lightning Ridge and what it's like to mine for opals. From <http://www.gadling.com/>

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### June 2008 Gem & Mineral Shows

66-7--SAN FRANCISCO, CA: Show, "San Francisco Crystal Fair"; Pacific Crystal Guild; Laguna Ave. and Marina Blvd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; admission \$6; contact Jerry Tomlinson, (415) 383-7837; e-mail: [sfxtl@earthlink.net](mailto:sfxtl@earthlink.net); Web site: [www.crystalfair.com](http://www.crystalfair.com)  
 6-8--SAN MATEO, CA: Show; International Gem & Jewelry Show Inc.; San Mateo County Event Center, 2495 S. DE St.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 11-5;

adults \$7; contact Laurie Reluzco, 120 Derwood Cir., Rockville, MD 20850, (301) 294-1640; e-mail: [laurie@intergem.net](mailto:laurie@intergem.net); Web site: [www.InterGem.com](http://www.InterGem.com)  
 7-8--LA HABRA, CA: Show, "Jubilee of Gems"; North Orange County Gem & Mineral Society, City of La Habra; La Habra Community Center, corner of Euclid Ave. and La Habra Blvd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; dealers, demonstrations, exhibits, youth activities; contact Richard Schirer, 14602 Calpella St., La Mirada, CA 90638, (562) 944-9445; e-mail: [rich477@cr.rr.com](mailto:rich477@cr.rr.com)

7-8--SAN FRANCISCO, CA: Show, "The Great San Francisco Crystal Fair"; Pacific Crystal Guild; Fort Mason Center, Bldg. A, Laguna and Marina Ave.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; adults \$6, children under 12 free; gems, jewelry, crystals, beads, psychics; contact Jerry Tomlinson, (415) 383-7837; e-mail: [sfxtl@earthlink.net](mailto:sfxtl@earthlink.net); Web site: [www.crystalfair.com](http://www.crystalfair.com)

13-15--SANTA MONICA, CA: Show; International Gem & Jewelry Show Inc.; Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, 1855 Main St.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 11-5; adults \$7; contact Laurie Reluzco, 120 Derwood Cir., Rockville, MD 20850, (301) 294-1640; e-mail: [laurie@intergem.net](mailto:laurie@intergem.net); Web site: [www.InterGem.com](http://www.InterGem.com)

14-15--CAYUCOS, CA: 48th annual show; San Luis Obispo Gem & Mineral Club; Cayucos Vets Hall at the Pier; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; free door prizes, gems, minerals, jewelry, beads, fossils, tools, finding, wire wrapping, carvings, rough slabs, jade, polished cabs, gifts; contact Dianna Deem, (805) 909-2514, or Richard Sittinger, (805)927-2223; e-mail: [Richard@Mineralofthemonthclub.org](mailto:Richard@Mineralofthemonthclub.org); Web site: [www.mineralofthemonthclub.org](http://www.mineralofthemonthclub.org)

20-22--SAN DIEGO, CA: Show; Gem Faire; Scottish Rite Center, 1895 Camino del Rio S; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; \$5 weekend pass; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: [info@gemfaire.com](mailto:info@gemfaire.com); Web site: [www.gemfaire.com](http://www.gemfaire.com)

27-29--VENTURA, CA: 69th annual show, "The Statewide Golden Bear Gem & Mineral Show"; CA Federation of Mineralogical Societies; Seaside Park, Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 W. Harbor Blvd., just off the 101 Fwy.; Fri. 10-5, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; adults \$5, seniors (60+) \$4, students \$3, kids under 12 free with paid adult; contact Bural LaRue, (909) 874-5664; e-mail: [bplarue@earthlink.net](mailto:bplarue@earthlink.net); Web site: [www.cfmsinc.org](http://www.cfmsinc.org)

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### OPAL FROM LIGHTNING RIDGE

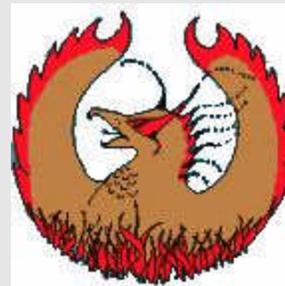
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# American Opal Society Membership Renewal

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP		DUES / FEES)	AMOUNT PAID
<u>DUES:</u> <u>SELECT ONE</u>	All <u>US</u> Addresses including Alaska and Hawaii	\$30	
	<u>International Members</u> All addresses <u>outside</u> of US Addresses	\$40	
<u>ADDITIONAL BADGES</u> \$10 each (Your First Badge is <u>free</u> when joining)		\$10	
<u>ONE TIME INITIATION FEE</u> All <u>New</u> members		\$10	
<u>SENIOR DISCOUNT</u> Age 65 or over deduct \$5		-\$5	
<b>TOTAL PAID DUES, less Senior Discount plus Badge plus Initiation Fee (if Applicable)</b>			

Please make check or money order payable to "**American Opal Society**". Mail payment and application to:  
**American Opal Society; PO BOX 4875; Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875**  
 An optional, quicker method of payment is via the **Internet**. To pay, just visit the membership page on our website at [http://opalsociety.org/aos\\_application\\_by\\_web.htm](http://opalsociety.org/aos_application_by_web.htm) and complete the form. You June pay with a **Credit Card** or via **PayPal** account. The transaction is completely secure and the AOS never sees your credit card number. The AOS PayPal account is **membership@opalsociety.org**.

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**NAME BADGE ORDER FORM:**  
 PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WISH IT TO APPEAR ON YOUR BADGE using up to two (2) lines of text for your name, nickname, or name of your opal related business.

**MEMBERSHIP ROSTER and NEWSLETTER MAILING:** The AOS publishes a membership directory once per year in its Newsletter, the *Opal Express*. Your name will be included. Please check what additional personal information that you want listed for other members. If it is different from the information above, please note that on the application.

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  Website   
  E-Mail the Opal Express Newsletter instead of Postal Mail  
 Include my name & address on a list provided to the Dealers selling at our Annual Opal & Gem Show.

Please sign here: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Are Your Dues Due Now?**  
**PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL.** If your label shows the current month/year your dues are **DUE NOW**. If the date is older, your dues are overdue.  
**A Renewal Grace Period** of two months will be provided. If your dues are due now you will receive two additional issues of the newsletter. Please note, however, that as the system is now set up, if your renewal is not received you will be **AUTOMATICALLY** dropped from membership thereafter. It is your responsibility to assure your dues are current.  
 Thank you,  
 The Editor

# The Opal Express

American Opal Society  
P.O. Box 4875  
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875



**Volume #41 Issue #6  
June 2008**

TO:

### Some Topics In This Issue:

- New Table of Contents for Archives
- May Lecture – Opal Industry in Australia
- AOS is Awarded Grant
- Hunting for Jade at Big Sur
- Lightning Ridge and Broken Dreams
- Bid to Stop Mining Spread
- Bozeman Name New School Hyalite
- Cash and Treasures: Opals in Australia

### Important Info: Board Meeting – June 3<sup>rd</sup>

### General Meeting - June 12<sup>th</sup> June Lecture – Bob Gullage on the Precious Metals Market

Bob Gullage will give a presentation about the changing precious metal market. Bob discuss gold, silver, and platinum; how to identify it and how to obtain a true value if you wish to turn in scrap gold for money.

### — GENERAL MEETINGS —

2nd Thursday of the Month  
7:00 pm - 9:00 PM

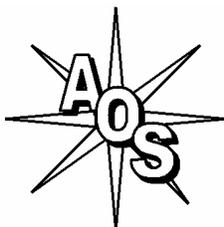
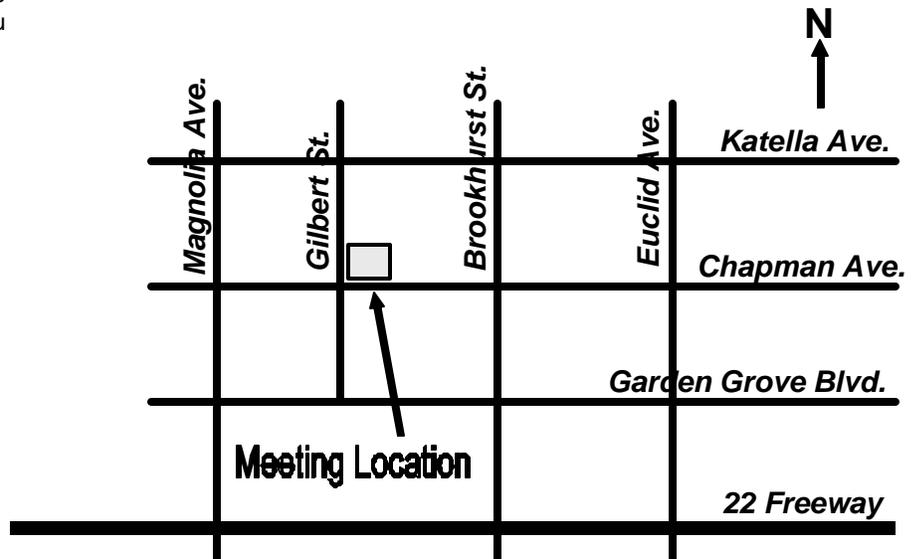
Garden Grove Civic Women's Club  
9501 Chapman Ave.  
Garden Grove, CA 92841

(NE corner of Gilbert & Chapman)

### MEETING ACTIVITIES

Opal Cutting, Advice, Guest Speakers,  
Slide Shows, Videos, Other Activities

## June 12th Lecture Bob Gullage on the Changing Precious Metals Market



## The American Opal Society

<http://OpalSociety.org>

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