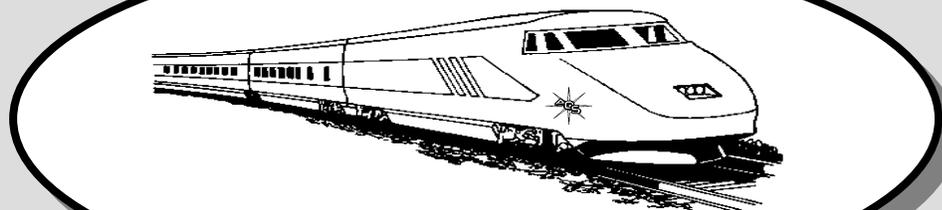


The Opal Express

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President's Message

By Pete Goetz

Hey fellow OPALHOLICS, wish I had a lot to say.. I don't... writers block I guess.

Preparations for our annual OPAL and Gem show are moving along, thanks to the efforts of our show chairperson, Veronica. Go Big V!

We need to start thinking about membership. We need active members to stay healthy, our numbers seem to be growing (slowly) but we need new blood to keep things moving forward. As mentioned before, many of us belong to other groups with similar interest, we should be able to find interested folks among the various clubs we belong to.

I hope to see a lot more of you at the next General Meeting: August 15th at the Garden Grove Women's Civic Club, corner of Gilbert and Chapman, 7:30pm.

August Speaker: Rescheduled! Justin Zzyzx on So. Cal. Agates

This Thursday, August 8, Justin Zzyzx will give a talk on Agates of Southern California.

Justin missed the July meeting due to a car breakdown right before the meeting. Justin promised he will be here this time!

Justin is the owner of the Zzyzx Gallery of Natural Science in Los Angeles, CA (<http://www.zzyzxgallery.com>). He also owns and manages <http://www.the-vug.com>, the largest mineralogical database online, and founded <http://www.fakeminerals.com>, and Rockhounding Videos (<http://www.rockhoundingvideos.com>)

Justin Zzyzx has worked for over a decade within the greater mineral, rock, & gem collecting community.

He gives lectures and leads public field trips for many of the local Southern California mineral clubs and organizations. Through direct contact and hands on education, he is able to promote a

greater understanding of the vast mineral resources within, not only California, but the American Southwest.

He is the co-owner and Director of Public Relations for the 2nd most visited mineralogical website online, The-Vug.com.

In 2008, Justin began publishing The-Vug.com Quarterly Magazine, a free, color trade magazine, targeting the international, amateur, mineral collecting public.

This magazine features guides, articles, and stories relating to all aspects of mineral, rock & gem collecting, but primarily focuses on providing scientifically accurate information, written in language that can be understood, even by a novice to the hobby. Now entering its 4th year in publication, The-Vug Quarterly, as it is affectionately known by its readers, distributes over 4,500 hard copies per issue, covering 36 states, 6 countries, and boasts thousands of additional downloads a month via [the free .pdf archive](#). In February of 2011 Justin was named Gallery Coordinator for the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk.

AOS Calendar for 2013

Below is the AOS Calendar for 2013.

American Opal Society Calendar	
Date	General Meeting Topic / Speaker
10-Jan-13	Opals of The Americas, Part 2 – Jim Pisani
14-Feb-13	Fluorescent Minerals and Opals - Jim Pisani
14-Mar-13	Michael Greyshock on Gold Detecting
11-Apr-13	Dr. Walt Johnson on Jewelry Making
09-May-13	Video on Opal Mining in Brazil
13-Jun-13	Live Opal Auction
11-Jul-13	Opal Show Working Meeting
08-Aug-13	Jason Zzyzx on Agates of Southern California
12-Sep-13	Jim Bowden, History of Southern CA Gold Rush
10-Oct-13	Dr Brandon Browne, CSUF, Mammoth volcano
03-Nov-13	46th Annual Opal & Gem Show
04-Nov-13	46th Annual Opal & Gem Show
14-Nov-13	Opal & Gem Show Recap
12-Dec-13	AOS Christmas Party Potluck

It's Coming!
The American Opal Society's 46th Annual
OPAL & GEM SHOW

The Largest Opal Show in USA!

Sat. Nov. 3, 2013 - 10AM - 6PM

Sun. Nov. 4, 2013 - 10 AM - 5PM

Opal and Gem Dealers from the USA and Australia.
Rough and Cut Opals; gemstones; jewelry & supplies.
Huge Raffle many prizes of gemstones, jewelry, tools, etc.
Free Opal Seminars on Saturday with Paid Admission.
Free Demonstrations on gem cutting, jewelry making, etc.

New location!

The Phoenix Club - Festhalle

1340 S. Sanderson Ave., Anaheim, CA 92806

Dealer spots are still available!

If you are interested, contact us ASAP!

Veronica Pupura

(714) 974-3982 angeldragonoflight@yahoo.com

Jim Pisani

(714) 815-4638, editor@opalsociety.org

Since Welo Ethiopia Opals are hydrophane this making them very porous, allowing for them to deeply soak in the smoke. The time frame for the treatment process normally takes around 2 hours sometimes longer and is a permanent treatment.

It is amazing to see this treatment done because you can start out with Welo opal performs that all look to be the same base color and after the treatment will end up with all the pictured mixture of base colors mixture from green, tan/brown, yellow, dark black. Normally there is only around 25% that turn yellow or green base color. Majority turn tan/black base after treatment.

After the treatment process the fire color play is very much enhanced. Most all smoked Welo opals end up with fire play brightness of at least 4/5-5/5

A lot of people have never seen or heard of smoke treated Welo opals. Some people that do know of this treatment think it is horrible for the Welo opal business because of people not disclosing whether a opal has been treated.

The major concern is the mixing up of the natural base color Welo Opals with the treated. Natural Untreated Welo opals are found in a variety of natural base colors. Some of which include clear / silk / brown / tan / green / dark crystal / white/ grey / purple / red / yellow / lavender / blue crystal / pinkish white.

Konjo Opals wants you to be aware of this treatment process. We will always label any smoke treated opal that we offer for sale with full discloser of treatment. We also offer Lab certification from a choice of labs if you would like on any of our opals. Send a message for more details on lab certifications. If you would like to buy any smoked treated Welo opals send a message for pricing.



From <http://www.opalauctions.com/auctions/ethiopian-opals/item-317852>

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Members Only Website Password

AOS website's members only area: Name: "member" and Password: "opalyear".

+++++
Here's an excerpt from advertisement from opalauctions.com on smoked Welo opals that our members should be interested in. Very interesting.
The Editor



Introduction to Smoke Treated Welo Ethiopia Opals. NFS

Smoke treatment for Welo Ethiopia opals begins when the preformed opals are placed into a box with a small wood chip fire underneath. This set up allows only the smoke to pass through the opals and not the heat. Setting up the perfect smoking box system took us a long time to figure out the right distance to keep the opals from the fire to ensure the best yield of finished smoke treated opals without cracks from the heat of the fire. We lost many opals to heat cracks fine tuning this treatment.

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From Rags to Riches
Chapter 37 – New Friends and Exciting News

By Peter Greisl

The next few days went without any hassles we kept driving and were following traces; unfortunately they did not amount to anything spectacular.

While I was working at the Butcher Shop, Johnny was driving and we covered quite some distance, and whenever I arrived we pulled up the Mullock, the level itself did not produce colour only colourless patch.

But this is still a good indicator that Opal has formed here all we need now for colour to appear.

It was Wednesday and the last three days were without any rewards for our hard work.

Just as I got to the Claim I heard the sound of a Plane and I could see it was Doug's twin engine Comanche. I told Johnny I have to go and pick up Doug and take him home I will return as quickly as possible.

I left and drove to the Air Strip and there was Doug just climbing out of the Cockpit. We greeted each other and I told him everything was quiet and OK here.

He finalized the required security measures and locked up the plane.

He got in my Car and I took him home, he thanked me and told me he will be leaving on Sunday afternoon and fly to Adelaide. I assured him of no problem with taking him to the strip.

I went back to the Claim and we continued to pull dirt.

I said to Johnny 'we can veer off to the east as there is still a lot of virgin ground left according to your map' He replied 'we still have in this directions another 20 feet or so before we should be breaking through to another shaft.' I acknowledged and we will continue in this direction till we hit the other shaft.

The trouble is I got spoiled with the results we had over the last few weeks so I got a little despondent and impatient.

Unfortunately there was no improvement, we worked and worked without any results just the tantalizing potch.

By the time Friday came we had moved another 10 feet and lots of dirt.

We cleaned out everything and dropped the level which was a disappointment, but we were ready for next week.

We changed the work schedule, we work the mine 5 days, and due to the fact work Saturdays in the Shop, We decided that Saturday was Opal cleaning day, That is Johnny can get the anything we have tumbled, and clean up with the grinder, also all the tools and the equipment will have to be serviced and made sure that it is in top condition.

I said to Johnny, we better clean up what we have in the linen bag and also get the stuff tumbled which is in the couple hessian bags. Johnny said he will do this on the weekend.

I reminded him of the BBQ we going to at Rob's and Trevor's place.

I will have it done in time.

While I was in the shop Johnny was working on the equipment, changed the oils in the compressor and the Winch, cleaned all the Jack hammers and greased them where required.

I just got home as Johnny was loading up the Ute with the hessian bags and was going to White Dam to see Klaus and Ludwig, just as he was getting in to the Ute, Trevor came and reminded us about the BBQ,

He was on the way into town. I told him that Johnny is going to White Dam to do a little tumbling Job as Klaus got cement mixer and sieves etc.

Trevor replied, 'don't got there it is bloody long way, we got all the gear here you welcome to use it, just drive across Rob is there tell him you just saw me and I told you go and see him', 'That's great,' Johnny replied and went across to see Rob, He told him about the meeting with Trevor and Rob said no problem, he took Johnny behind his house where there was a Concrete Mixer and three different sizes of sieves and a 44 gallon drum cut in halve with 4 legs on it, where he dumped the washed dirt on some sieves and he recycled the water from the drum.

Johnny got the Hessian Bags and tipped the first one in to concrete mixer, Rob started it up for him and got a couple buckets of water out of the 44 gallon drum which he tipped into the mixer, the mixer rumbled away and Rob told him give it about 10 minute to give it a good wash.

Rob the got three different sizes of sieves which were square boxes they fitted across the drum and he had a fine on the bottom then the next size up and then a fairly large one, the object was these three sieves were catching the different sizes of stones right down to small chips.

While Johnny was working on the mullock I was doing mi chores at the house, like fill up the Generator with oil and fuel also changed over the gas bottle, and whatever needed doing which Chris could not attend to.

I said to Chris 'I am not too happy with the Dunny, I think I make an investment here' Chris replied 'I agree with you, but what have you got in mind?' Well if I get to drill a 30 foot hole (Shaft) put a 4 foot by 4 foot 4 inch slab down with a hole just big enough to for a toilet pan and put three walls of besser blocks and a door jamb and door, on top I would

put a small round 200 liter water tank and put in a cistern and a stink pipe that would give us a flush toilet.' That would be nice Chris replied but how much would that cost? I said the most expensive part would be the Drill to sink the shaft, the rest would be not more than \$500 including the besser blocks and the tank, I would build it with Johnny.'

I am going to get in touch with Felix; he has his Drill on Boundary Rider and see what he would charge me to sink a shaft.

We better get ready for the BBQ, I took the meat out of the Fridge what I brought home, which were 6 T-Bones, 6 Lamb Chops and 12 Snags, and obviously I paid for it and had my weekend meat for us.

Trevor he organized the beer and the wine for the girls.

We went across to their place and Lorraine told us to come in, Rob is out the back with Johnny, while Johnny is tumbling Rob has the BBQ lit and a heap of wood beside it, Wood was a luxury here in Andamooka, since there is virtually no vegetation, since there is no town gas or electricity most of the cooking and heating is done with wood fire. But Trevor drive always to Stuart Creek and bring back a load of wood, stumps, big branches and then chops it up and stacks it in there Shed.

Anyhow Trevor came back from Town and said hello and handed me a cool bottle of beer, and also to Rob and Johnny.

I went over to Johnny and said 'How you doing Slugger?' He replied the last lot in the drum and he is just about to tip it into the sieves.

We still had sunlight and he had the Halve 44 with the sieves facing in the right direction to get the benefit from the afternoon sun. Johnny tipped the stuff out into the biggest sieve and the smaller stones went through and then the next lot went through the next sieve, nothing other than rock and stones were retained the dirt was washed through in to the halve 44 Drum.

I joined him and was rummaging through the stuff and picked up the odd piece of coloured potch, I really did not expect anything, but to my surprise Johnny had a large pickled cucumber jar full of stuff which looks like Jelly, Johnny said there is more, a lot of really nice dark blue jelly plus we have a few stones and again mostly milky a lot of chips, but nothing of any great value meaning solid or doublet material, I would say this was our worst parcel, but hey it is better than nothing and maybe there is enough here to pay for the Toilet modification.

Well finally Johnny was finished and put away all our stuff and cleaned the sieves and the drum.

Rob had the Steaks smoldering and the aroma of the BBQ tantalized my sensitive to food nostrils, Chris helped Lorraine and Beatrix of course was also a little helper in bringing things on the Table.

Rob, Trevor, Johnny and I we were talking shop of course, Rob was telling us that he has been here for two years and they found enough by putting in a cut to buy a Backhoe which they use now and working by taking out the Ramps the Dozers made when they put in a cut.

They ask us if we don't get fed up with the situation of braking through into other tunnels and collapses, I told them this is the first hill I ever worked on I have no idea or any background on any other hill than Tea Tree Hill. Trevor replied "We had been working couple years ago on Tea Tree Hill as well and we had collapses and had a very hard time in producing anything. So we decided to pull pegs

and move on. We had been told by an old timer about Boundary Rider, which is a hill too soft to do successfully underground mining hence there are so many open cuts on this hill. So we moved there and we started driving in the sides of the walls from the Open Cuts it is very difficult to move your dirt as you could not use a winch or any other implement to move your dirt from your drive. But we were very fortunate, picked up a nice parcel, which bought us this Shack and the backhoe, and we save for another couple years.

Well we listened quite attentively and I told them of our plans and said if nothing happens within the next couple month which is then nearly October then we have to move and try our luck somewhere else but not without putting in a cut.

Rob said 'there is a claim next to us which someone started to drive in the side and quit after a short while. If you got a spare set of Pegs, why don't you go and put them in tomorrow, if you like. I looked at Johnny and he said can't do any harm. I put them in tomorrow.

We joined the girls and sat down to a great steak, and salad, we laughed and joked and had a real great time and we built a tremendous relationship with them.

Trevor suddenly said 'Shit I nearly forgot Schultz gave a letter addressed to you, He handed it to me I looked at the sender and it was from Harry and Anne our Land lords. Nice People Lorraine said, yes I acknowledged I liked working with Anne at the shop.

I gave Chris the letter you can read it, Chris read the letter and just said well, well, they don't come back to the Fields any more, Harry had landed a great Job which will take them to Melbourne. They offered us the house here if we would like to buy it Chris said. That's great Lorraine cooed, It depends what price they want for, I remember ho9w Harry and his Father built this place, you never own the land so it cannot be too steep. Trevor said I would offer then \$2500 for it which should cover the material and the appliances and little furniture.' I said I will contact them and find out how much they want for it, and which way they want to be paid for it. As I could not pay out this amount it would absolutely skin us.

We dropped this subject and found out that Rob & Trevor's Parents coming up to Visit for a couple weeks. This is nice for them.

We finished the BBQ and decided to call it a day, and I thanked them for using their equipment and they thanked me for the meat all in all we had a great time.

We went back to our place and Johnny said he will go on the Machine for a while and clean some of the stuff he tumbled. He asked me are you considering in buying this place. I said yes I am, if the price and conditions are right, I am not buying it to make money, but if we have to stay here for a couple years or more then I like to give Chris as much comfort as possible.

Ok he replied, grabbed everything he needs and went to start the generator, and we could hear the humming and faint grinding noise.

Chris said to me, they are lovely people, I agreed with her and emphasized that it is always good to have some close friends by.

Chris continued by asking me if I am thinking of buying the House. I told her that this is a joint decision, between you and Beatrix and me, majority rules. If you and Beatrix like to get away from the fields as soon as possible then we will not buy, but if you two don't mind spending a couple years here then yes I will buy if the price and conditions are right for me.

The day drew to a close and I looked at Chris as she was walking to the bathroom, and I could not help noticing she has been putting on weight.

I said 'Darling have you been having Picnics while I am at work, she replied why, I am noticing you are putting on a little weight around your belly' She came over and sat on my lap and looked me in the eyes and said Sweetheart I am 3month pregnant, And the culprit was you and a beautiful starry night at Tea Tree Hill. Well sweet heart this puts a different light on the subject of Opal Mining. Chris replied nothing has and will Change when the time comes the fly me to Port Augusta and when I am ready to come out you will

pick me up and we drive back to Andamooka and life goes on as if nothing has happened, "Capish" she said in a stern tone.

OK darling but please don't overdo it, and as you know Summer here can be hell, She replied I am not made out of Sugar and Chocolate, I thought you are because you very sweet.

We kissed and I have to come to grips with becoming a father again and Beatrix going to have a Brother or Sister.

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Opal Mining: A Damn Good Way to Get Yourself Killed

From <http://io9.com>



Opal-mining is one of the world's most harrowing pursuits, but potentially one of the most rewarding as well. To find opals, a modern treasure hunter must dig random holes in areas of known deposits, and then lowering him- or herself down a 20 meter shaft. Besides the obvious problem of claustrophobia, and the danger of plummeting down a deep, narrow hole, opal mining holds some other horrors.

But for some adventure seekers, the danger and terror are still worth it.

Opal and the Australian Outback

Opal is often found in a raw, white form. A small, valuable percentage of opal, however, contains segments with refractive properties, allowing the surface of the stone to alter the angle of observed light and give off a red, blue, yellow or green hue.



Refraction adds tremendous eye appeal., and increases the value of this silica-based rock on the secondary market as jewelry, leading to a burgeoning opal mining industry.

The earth beneath Australia provides nearly [100%](#) of the world's opal supply. Most of the Australian supply is found around the town of Coober Pedy, home to just roughly [1700](#) people, most of whom make their living and risk their lives conducting opal mining activities. Miners found the multimillion dollar [Olympic Australis Opal](#), a three and a half kilogram opal with refractive properties, at Coober Pedy six decades ago in a shaft ten meters below the surface.

Over 200,000 of these mine shafts litter the area around the town of Coober Pedy, with additional shafts waiting to catch passerby across the Australian Outback. These evils of the Australian Outback, ideally, are supposed to be filled in or covered with sheet metal after mining operations cease — but many remain open to the air, endangering people and animals as they pass over the terrain.



Digging for treasure

Opal mining is conducted blindly — a miner may know the general location of an opal deposit (like the area around Coober Pedy), but there are no advanced techniques for narrowing down the location, since the opals are hidden within similarly structured but worthless rock.

A simple, hand-held black light will help point out opals with refractive properties, but these surfaces still need to be exposed by digging.

The majority of opal miners are self-employed, operating as a small business and renting or purchasing equipment as needed. Miners often prepare and sell the opal they find, eliminating a middle man in the jewelry trade and allowing the miners to maximize the amount of money of they can make.

The good news? You don't need much start-up money, thanks to the prevalence of previously dug shafts in the Outback. These existing shafts are left over from industrial mining operations, and opal hunters use them as a starting point, with these independent miners burrowing tunnels through the bottom of the existing shaft. Entering an old shaft is dangerous even with protective equipment, since these shafts can be flooded or have an insufficient oxygen supply.

Creating tunnels using homemade explosives

Once you're down an existing mining shaft, how do you create tunnels to get around? Using explosives (often homemade or mixed by the miners), plus equipment that vacuums dirt and debris up as the miners bore the tunnel. Opals can be found at any time in the process, but most opal is retrieved by sifting through the rock and debris created while making the tunnels.

Combining homemade explosives with 20 meter deep shafts sounds is a crazy idea, but we are talking about some pretty tough men and women here. As tunnels are extended, miners further expose themselves to dangers from sudden cave-ins.

Opal seekers often work on their own, leaving them without a safety or communication fail-safe if a life-threatening accident does occur. The financial reward and thrill-seeking nature of opal mining is enough to bring people back down the holes, with poor and new miners often using a series of ladders or winches precariously attached to the front of their trucks to lower them down to the hunting grounds.

Searching for opal is not just carried out for profit, but it is also a recreational activity in some parts of the Outback. Vacationers often "fossick" through small holes or leftover mounds of extracted dirt already sifted through by experienced miners.

But what happens when the Outback runs out of opals, or is closed off to mining in the future? In that case, civilization could turn to [Mars](#) to feed all its opal gemstone needs.

Top image is a sunset over an opal mining shaft at Coober Pedy via [David Webster/Flickr](#). Additional images from [JJ Harrison/CC](#) and

[Simon Brown/Flickr](#). Check out [Stuart Bird's blog](#) for a rambling, hilarious, and very detailed personal account of life as an opal miner.

Discussion:

[Corpore Metal](#)

I wonder if we'll get to the point of making opals artificially some day.

[lillian butler](#)

They do make artificial opal. It's not very good, though.

[Corpore Metal](#)

Well, hopefully, like synthetic diamond it will only get better as time goes on. I'm just wondering when we get to the Star Trek point where Kirk can brag to some alien that making zillions of gemstones of the rarest (naturally speaking.) sort is trivially easy for their replicators.

[RemusShepherd](#)

The coolest thing about opals is that they are sedimentary gemstones, which means they can fossilize a skeleton. The most famous opalized fossil is Eric the Pliosaur, who is on display in the Australian national Museum.

I wouldn't jump down a hole to find a gem, but I might consider it for a dinosaur *made of gems*...

[raiju](#)

This is what ammolite is, one of the rarest (and, IMO, most beautiful) forms of opal. It's fossilized ammonite shells.

[raiju](#)

I wonder how much a Martian opal would have to cost per carat in order to make a profit. I suspect that, if it were remotely feasible to get them, they would be the most expensive gemstone in the history of commerce. Somehow I suspect there's a billionaire somewhere that would buy one regardless.

[cylonsarecuddly](#)

Coober Pedy is so hot and dry that many of the lodgings are built underground. When I visited there (admittedly thirty years ago), the shower in the motel was coin operated.

Conditions are really, really harsh there, which is why Opals are not cheap.

Those open shafts are everywhere and extremely dangerous.

[Phil](#)

I saw a show on, maybe the Travel Channel(?) a couple of years ago about underground dwellings. Coober Pedy was on it, and it seems they've modernized it a bit. It looked like some of the cave dwelling were furnished quite well - for a cave dwelling at least.

[Rossum](#)

Disused mine shafts are also a fantastic place to dispose of murdered bodies...

Moving on, however, opals are beautiful, and Coober Pedy is an incredible place. I haven't been there in *quick calculation* OMFG, 20 years. I should visit it again.

[cesariojpn](#)

Of course, let's not forget the miners probably are drunk as hell and whatnot (among other things). Here's a part of a series of episodes following life in Kalgoorie.

[albo](#)

Am I correct in seeing no supporting timbers in that opal mine in the video? That's just delayed suicide

[alsoSprachAISO](#)

Mike Rowe did Opal mining in an episode of Dirty Jobs recently.

[Cinnamon-bite](#)

Dangerous? So totally worth it! Opals are gorgeous

Gold! \$250K in Centuries-old Coins Found

By Leslie Holland, July 15, 2013



"Constantly searching for a needle in a haystack" is what Brent Brisben says he does for a living, and on days like Saturday, the payoff makes the work worthwhile.

Brisben owns the 1715 Treasure Fleet Queen's Jewels salvage company. This weekend, he and his crew of three found quite a few "needles" in their oceanic "haystack" -- 48 gold coins that date back 300 years, to be exact.

The coins, called escudos, were part of the treasure aboard a fleet of 11 Spanish galleons wrecked by a hurricane off the Florida coast on July 31, 1715. It was this famous shipwreck that gave this part of Florida its nickname, The Treasure Coast.

The coins appear to be in good condition, and still have some legible dates and markings. The oldest bears the date 1697; the youngest is dated 1714.

The 48 coins have an estimated value of \$200,000 to \$250,000, said Brisben.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about the expedition is that the coins were found just 100 feet from the shoreline, in only six feet of water.

Though Brisben admits his work is exciting, he says it's not like you see in the movies. "You may expect to see a big galleon on its side with treasure chests overflowing, but it's not like that at all," he said.

"With shipwrecks that old, most of the organic material like the actual wood of the ship is gone, due to deterioration. What's left are mostly metals and pottery... china, silver buckles, bronze cannons and gold coins."

The coins will be sold to private collectors and the money raised from the sale will finance further searching of the wreckage site, Brisben said.

From <http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/14/us/florida-treasure-found>

Would You Buy a 'Man-Made' Diamond?

By Sri Jegarajah 16 Apr 2013

With their polished sales pitch and discrete security, it looks like just another high-end diamond show room in a well-heeled Asian capital.

The stones were probably mined in South Africa; cut, polished and finished in India

The Opal Express



and shipped to the luxury-hungry markets of Singapore, Hong Kong and Shanghai.

But the source of these precious stones is way closer than you think.

Just yards from the display cases in an unassuming industrial park in northern Singapore is the city's first 'above-ground' diamond mine owned and operated by privately-held Type Ila Technologies.

But there's not a grim-faced mine worker in sight.

That's because the company claims it can produce - or grow - the purest and rarest grade of rough diamonds (Type Ila) in a laboratory process called Microwave Plasma Chemical Vapor Deposition. Put simply, carbon atoms are layered on top of an initial diamond 'seed,' fast-tracking a natural process lasting many millennia to a matter of months.

And because these stones are lab-made, they're good for the environment and are free of the 'blood diamonds' stigma that's so tainted their traditionally-mined counterparts.

Breakthrough?

According to the company, competitors around the world have been trying to develop the purest Type Ila diamonds, but here, in Singapore, is where the breakthrough has happened.

Technical director DS Misra says eight years of R&D gave them the edge.

"That eight years was enough time for us to understand each and every bit of the technology in the process, to be able to achieve the success, which others have found very hard," Misra told CNBC.

We couldn't film the process as the developers said it was commercially-sensitive. But Managing Director Vishal Mehta says there's increasingly strong demand for its lab-grown diamonds from high-tech industries like semi-conductor makers to heavy industry.

"We are really excited to say that the overwhelming response from customers has been absolutely fantastic," Mehta said. "We bring the ability to use diamonds in many, many different applications beyond the traditional usage of diamonds."

The World Jewelry Confederation defines synthetic diamonds as: "A man-made reproduction of a diamond that has essentially the same chemical composition, crystal structure and physical properties as its natural counterpart."

Prestigious

Steve Benson, communications director at the Confederation says there is nothing illegal about a synthetic diamond, as long as the consumer is expressly informed that this is what he or she is buying.

"If the diamond is not qualified as 'synthetic' then the consumer has not been provided with what is necessary in order to make an informed purchasing decision, and he or can claim to have been deceived," Benson said.

But do lab-grown diamonds command the same recognition, premium and prestige as their traditionally-mined counterparts?

Yes, they do - depending on the market segment - according to the International Diamond Council's Ya'akov Almor.

Man-made diamonds have a critical and growing role to play in industrial applications such as mining, construction and electronics.

"Synthetics have a place in the market and it's completely legitimate market. There is a need for flawless, clean, synthetic diamonds especially for the semi-conductor industry," Almor said.

In fact, synthetics have a decades-old history in the industrial market.

History

Starting in the 1950s, research scientists at GE began developing near-gemstone quality synthetic diamonds for industrial purposes using an ultra-high pressure system called the 'diamond press.' In 1982, Sumitomo Electric synthesized a 1.2 -carat single crystal diamond, one of the world's largest man-made stones at the time.

And for over 50 years, Element 6 - part of the De Beers group - has been designing, developing and creating what it calls synthetic diamond super-materials. And De Beers sees "very exciting potential" for synthetics in industrial applications, spokesperson Lynette Gould told CNBC.

Naturally, problems arise when synthetic diamonds are mixed in with natural stones. "That's the last thing that jewelers want," remarked the International Diamond Council's Almor.

Such adulteration happened two years ago with the appearance in 2011 of a large batch of synthetic diamonds believed by their dealer to be natural.

"An analysis by a grading lab revealed that the entire batch was synthetic," according to a 2012 report on the global diamond industry by Bain & Co. and the Antwerp World Diamond Center.

"The event was unsettling, raising concerns that high-quality counterfeit diamonds had slipped into the market. The batch in question was created through a process known as chemical vapor deposition (CVD), which produces stones that a diamond dealer cannot distinguish from natural diamonds without special equipment," the report said.

The event highlighted the importance of diamond certificates to ensure the authenticity of purchased stones.

Distinction

De Beers' Lynette Gould is also swift to stress the distinction.

"Diamonds are a natural mineral, created in the earth billions of years ago," she says. "Synthetics aren't the same thing, and to call them diamonds is misleading. Diamonds have captured peoples' hearts and imaginations for centuries and as such have always held their value, both financially and emotionally."

Veterans of the diamond industry are crystal clear on one further matter. Consumers of high-end diamond jewelry want the real deal and are willing to pay up.

"The majority of consumers have told us during extensive independent research that they want the real thing and aren't prepared to settle for anything less," De Beers' Gould said.

IDC's Almor is equally emphatic. "Synthetic diamonds take the emotion out of the equation and put the price point in the center and that's not always what the customer wants."

Shlomo Tidhar, CEO of Singapore Diamond Exchange has the last word.

"I believe that it will be very hard for me as a man to buy a woman I love a synthetic diamond," said Tidhar. "That's going to be difficult for me to do, I'm not sure if she will accept it and me myself would be reluctant to do it."

From <http://www.cnbc.com/id/100647697>

Miner's Shares Surge After It Finds 100-Carat Diamond

By Holly Ellyatt, 26 Jun 2013

Mining company Gem Diamonds, announced on Wednesday it had found a 100 carat rough diamond, the third big diamond found by the company in just two months.

The company, which owns the Letšeng mine in the South African country of Lesotho, said it had recovered the white Type IIa diamond - a very rare type which is almost devoid of any impurities - on June 22 this year. Shares in the company were up 6 percent at 120 pence on Wednesday morning.

On May 31, the company announced it had discovered two large diamonds, one of 164 carats, and the other, 103 carat yellow diamond.

The first diamond was sold for \$9 million into a partnership arrangement, while the second one was sold at tender for an undisclosed price.

The Letšeng mine has produced four of the world's top 20 diamonds, including the 15th largest, the 603 carat Lesotho Promise

which was recovered in August 2006 and sold for \$12.4 million. In 2007, the world's 18th largest rough diamond of 494 carats was also discovered there.

Yet, despite the apparently bumper hoard in the Lesotho mine, the London-listed mining company's share price has fallen 42.26 percent over the last twelve months, hurt by weak diamond prices in 2012 against a backdrop of increased production and weakened demand from emerging and developed markets.

Investor sentiment was also not helped by a sharp decline in production at the mine, which fell 38 percent from the preceding quarter. Gem, announced a 61 percent fall in full-year earnings in March, with revenue down to \$65.5 million in 2012 from \$166.5 million a year earlier.

The company was not alone in suffering a decline in profits, with rough stone prices falling by about 15 percent last year on average, Neil Gregson, the manager of JPMorgan's Natural Resource Fund, told CNBC recently.

After modernizing infrastructure at the mine, Gem's chief executive Clifford Elphick said production would step up later in the year.

"Mining will steadily increase in the higher value and higher grade Satellite pipe in the second half of this year, and it is anticipated that revenues will therefore show a resulting increase," he said in a statement on the company's website.

The latest diamond find could make for a good second quarter for Gem Diamonds, according to Jon Bergtheil, Citi's metals and mining analyst.

"The recovery of three diamonds each with a likely price-tag in the \$6-\$10 million range should be viewed against total 2012 revenue of \$202 million. The three diamonds alone could come to represent more than 13 percent of 2012 turnover," Citi's Bergtheil said in a note on Wednesday.

"Rio Tinto recently decided not to sell its diamond assets, arguing that the commodity outlook was positive for the decade ahead. We agree," Bergtheil said.

"The diamonds produced by Gem Diamonds are for the luxury goods market. We are positive on the outlook for diamond prices, particularly for large, high-value stones," he said before warning, "Any change in consumer spending habits and/or further economic deterioration could result in lower demand and lower prices."

From <http://www.cnbc.com/id/100844868>

August 2013 Gem & Mineral Shows

More shows can be found at <http://www.rockngem.com/show-dates-display/?ShowState=ALL>

August 2013

2-4—NORTH BEND, OR: Annual show; Far West Lapidary & Gem Society; North Bend Community Center; 2222 Broadway; Fri. 10-5, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; adults \$1, children (under 12) free; gemstones, findings, beads, lapidary supplies, tools, finished jewelry, slabs, fluorescent display, kiddie corner, spinning wheel, demonstrations, silent auction; contact Don Innes, 54416 Arago-Fishtrap Rd., Myrtle Point, OR 97458, (541) 396-5722; e-mail: doninnes.innes20@gmail.com

2-4—PRESCOTT VALLEY, AZ: Annual show; Prescott Gem & Mineral Club; Tim's Toyota Center; Glassford Hill and Florentine Rd., 3201 N. Main St.; Fri. 9-5, Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-4; adults \$4, seniors and students \$3, children (12 and under) free; rocks, gems, jewelry, minerals, fossils, beads, slabs, cabochons, equipment, findings, demonstrations, fluorescent display, member displays, kids' activities, raffles; contact Judy Sullins, 4550 Ramada Dr., Prescott, AZ



A diamond cut from Gem Diamond's 'Lesotho Promise,' found at the Lesotho mine in 2006

86301, (928) 445-1117; e-mail: sullinsjs@cableone.net; Web site: www.prescottgemmineral.org

9-11—BUTTE, MT: Northwest Federation's 75th Anniversary Show; Butte Mineral & Gem Club; Butte Civic Center; 1340 Harrison Ave.; Fri. 9-5, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; adults \$5, seniors \$4, students (10-17) \$3, children (under 10) free with adult; more than 26 dealers, more than 100 exhibits, daily field trips, silent auction, speakers; contact Pete Knudesen, 1301 W. Gold St., Butte, MT 59701, (406) 723-8524

99-11—PORT TOWNSEND, WA: Annual show; Port Townsend Rock Club; Jefferson County Fairgrounds; 4907 Landers St.; Fri. 10-9, Sat. 10-9, Sun. 10-6; adults \$6; contact Dave Eddie, PO Box 237, Port Hadlock, WA 98339, (360) 379-5633

9-11—SANTA BARBARA, CA: Wholesale and retail show; Gem Faire Inc.; Earl Warren Showgrounds; 3400 Calle Real; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults and students (12 and up) \$7, children (11 and under) free; fine jewelry, gems, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals, exhibitors, on-site jewelry repair; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

10-11—WALNUT CREEK, CA: Retail show; Pacific Crystal Guild; Civic Park Community Center; 1375 Civic Dr.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; adults \$6, children (under 12) free; 30 dealers, minerals, gems, crystals, beads, metaphysical healing tools; contact Jerry Tomlinson, PO Box 1371, Sausalito, CA 94966, (415) 383-7837; e-mail: jerry@crystalfair.com; Web site: www.crystalfair.com

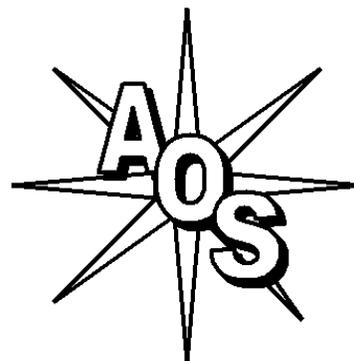
16-18—SACRAMENTO, CA: Wholesale and retail show; Gem Faire Inc.; Scottish Rite Center; 6151 H St.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults and students (12 and up) \$7, children (11 and under) free; fine jewelry, gems, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals, exhibitors, on-site jewelry repair; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

23-25—COSTA MESA, CA: Wholesale and retail show; Gem Faire Inc.; OC Fair & Event Center; 88 Fair Dr.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults and students (12 and up) \$7, children (11 and under) free; fine jewelry, gems, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals, exhibitors, on-site jewelry repair; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

24-25—SAN FRANCISCO, CA: Annual show; San Francisco Gem & Mineral Society; San Francisco County Fair Bldg.; 9th Ave. and Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$10, seniors and students \$8, children free with adult; "Golden Gateway to Gems"; dealers, exhibits, demonstrations; contact Ellen Nott, 4134 Judah St., San Francisco, CA 94122; Web site: www.sfgms.org

August 2013-September 2013

30-2—FORT BRAGG, CA: Show; Mendocino Coast Gem & Mineral Society; Town Hall; Main and Laurel; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-9, Mon. 10-4; free admission; contact Jane Webb, PO Box 868, Fort Bragg, CA 95437, (707) 964-7182; e-mail: ejwebb@mcn.org



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Are Your Dues Due Now?
 PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or NEWSLETTER E-MAIL. There should be a date that shows the current month/year of your membership. If the date is older than the current date, your dues are overdue. A warning will be stated if you are overdue.
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 Thank you,
 The Editor

The Opal Express

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**Volume #46 Issue #8
August 2013**

Some Topics In This Issue:

- Intro to Smoke Treated Welo Ethiopia Opals
- From Rags to Riches – Ch. 37 New Friends and Exciting News
- Opal Mining: A Damn Good Way to Get Yourself Killed
- Gold! \$250K in old coins found
- Would You Buy a 'Man-Made' Diamond?
- Miner's Finds 100-Ct Diamond

Important Dates:

- August 8 - General Meeting: Rescheduled! Justin Zzyzx on Agates of California

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

2nd Thurs. of the Month
7:30 pm - 9:30 PM

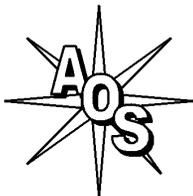
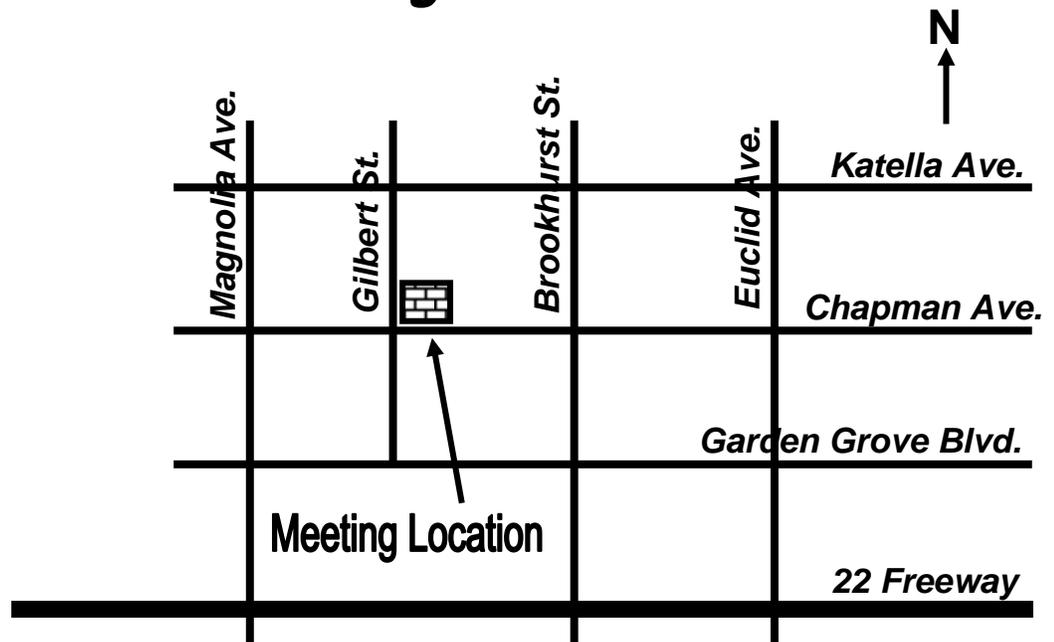
Garden Grove Civic Women's Club
9501 Chapman Ave.
Garden Grove, CA 92841
(NE corner of Gilbert & Chapman)

MEETING ACTIVITIES

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

TO:

August 8 Meeting RESCHEDULED! Justin Zzyzx on Agates of California



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