

The Opal Express

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Merry Christmas

Table of Contents

President's Message	1
Members Only Website Password	1
What is the story behind mistletoe?	1
Visit Your Local Gem Shows	1
Why the New Mining Act replaced The Miner's Right	2
Bench Tips	6
Uncovered: The Truth about Opal Formation	7
Upcoming Events	8

President's Message

Greetings Opalholics!

Merry Christmas! I still cannot believe how fast this year has gone by! Do you feel the same way? So many projects waiting to be started and finished – they are definitely on my list for 2022!

As I mentioned last month, we're working very hard to make the show a reality again for 2022! Stayed tuned for details about the show. We are currently trying to get our old room back at the Anaheim Community Center. As soon as we have a schedule, we will let everyone know.

As always, stay safe and healthy and keep busy!

Stan McCall
AOS President
Custom Creative Gem Cutting

Member area access is available only to members in good standing. Any other entry is unauthorized.

**USER NAME: member
PASSWORD: 4BLuefiRE3 (case sensitive).**

What is the story behind mistletoe?

In the Norse culture, the Mistletoe plant was a sign of love and peace. The story goes that the goddess, Figg lost her son, the god Baldur, to an arrow made of mistletoe. After his death, she vowed that Mistletoe would kiss anyone who passed beneath so long as it was never again used as a weapon.

*Be sure to visit your local
gem and mineral shows.
It's a great way to learn
about these natural
wonders and meet other
people who have a passion
for this fascinating hobby.*

Why the New Mining Act 1973-1974 replaced The Miner's Right

by Mary Aracic
as told to AOS editor, Kathleen James



Life in the Outback can be a big challenge as you are dealing with nature, but when it comes to opal mining, you face the biggest challenge of all time - where to start digging for opal.

Way back in the early days of mining, most of the books on opal were by safari writers, who gained their knowledge from miners that told them, "There are no rules to finding opal, opal is where you find it." Just go digging was the attitude.

There were many rushes over the years that left claims abandoned in the excitement. It brought great excitement to Lightning Ridge, as everyone was in on the action - men and women.

So it was best not to get caught up in it, as the best claims are taken already and you are left on the fringes. However, with the advent of so many rushes and publicity in city newspapers, Lightning Ridge became a popular place to live. The wonderful sparking colour of opal had brought scores of buyers to The Ridge and new markets were opened up all over the world, as opal had become a very popular gem to wear.

The increase in mining brought with it changes in mining techniques, so a

new mining law was introduced and opal prices increased for top grade opal. But it was hard to understand why the big time miners could be so put of touch with opal bearing ground, other than to tip the opal from it with heavy machinery.

It should be dug out with due respect and care for its beauty. It is the most wonderful feeling to hear the "chink" of the pick hitting opal down the mine. It lights up your life for it means you've struck opal!

The feeling of excitement that wells up at that sweet sound - at the thought "this could be the one" is indescribable. And then to chip away at the first to reveal the extent of the colour bar is something else. To have missed that moment of excitement and anticipation to the noise of machinery is beyond our ability to comprehend, other than to say, "those miners want to dig as much opal as possible and spend the money it brings just as quick". When you take into consideration that the bigger the machinery, the higher the expense, the claim had better produce good quality opal, or it will be a lesson in futility for many of them.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

It is also futile to ask “machinery miners” what part of the claim produced the most opal because they often wouldn’t have a clue, not finding opals until “wet puddling” the dirt, which could have come from any area of the claim.

Jim Lawrie, Deputy Registrar of the Department of Mines in 1974, had come to Lightning Ridge to sort out problems created by the introduction of the “New Mining Act 1973-1974”. It was good for the small-time miners as it meant that only two claims per person were allowed. Therefore a lot of ground that had been tied up by selfish miners was released, thus giving the individual miner a fair to, as opposed to multiple pegging and real-estating that went on for a long time.



Sketch by Shibaun Aracic

A lot of the bigger scale miners objected strongly and a dark cloud descended upon Lightning Ridge. When “The Miner’s Right” was replaced by a more

Accurate form of registering claims. Their cries of protest rang far and wide and union support was sought. It dragged on for so long that it became a major concern and something had to be done to break the dead lock.

When some of the original members of the Lightning Ridge Miners Association (LRMA) that had formed back in the late 1960s did not want the present leader of the Association to lead it into what was believed to be the wrong direction. A petition was started amongst law abiding miners and very soon enough signatures from the members, as required by the Constitution, to call a special meeting. This was handed to the President of the LRMA.

But the so-called Eureka Protest March was organized, mostly by those affected by the New Act. The Eureka Flag was raised aloft and off they went to the beat of a drum and the wail of a bagpipe down Opal Street and around the corner of the Town Hall in Morilla Street, followed by the crowds.

The hall was packed to capacity and the problem that had befallen the miners was thrashed out before Jim Lawrie, who sat next to the President of the LRMA. However, the “Eurekens” were out-numbered and new mining regulations went into full effect.

Continued on page 4

It took time for things to settle down and happiness was regained as everyone became used to the laws. But then another problem arose. Claim measurements were so far out that when the miner took his measurements to the mining office, the Registrar looked at him and said, "You've pegged the school grounds." The miner was so shocked, he protested, "But my claim is up at Canfell's." "Not according to your survey plan it isn't." was the reply.

That's when Stephen's sense of direction came in mighty useful. He'd learned orientation skills from his Uncle when measuring land with him in the wilds of Bosnia. So his investment in a good, reliable compass and measuring tape paid off!

Soon he became known to miners as a good, reliable claim surveyor, recognized and often recommended by the Mining Office.

Surveying claims took him all over Lightning Ridge opal fields, both near and far, and so the school, the Bowling Club and the shops were safe!

With the small income this generated, Stephen was able to support his family while continuing to mine for opals. It also enabled him to see and compare all different mining fields and discover where opal was found and where it had not, and the surface conditions of each spot. He continued doing this for many years.

Stephen was glad to relate, that not only did it give him a bit of money, but constant walking over the ground enabled him to observe the contours of the land, the rocky outcrops and specific types of trees that favoured opal bearing ground, compared to non-opal bearing ground.

This knowledge was invaluable. He also put divining to the test in a couple of favourable areas that produced opal for him, but he needed more time to profitably mine them, as our children were nearing school exams, so their future prospects came first. To Stephen it was like being an apprentice from the time he had sunk the first shaft - and he sank many of them in the early years of mining thus gaining valuable knowledge in many of them. The experience gave him a chance to compare the ground strata, layer-for-layer with the shafts that produced traces. Full of hope, he would follow the opal traces with a gouging pick, digging tunnels in all directions by candlelight.

Sometimes it paid and sometimes it didn't, such was the luck of the game. So with the bit of money we have saved from selling opal, we published our first book in 1979 and an updated edition in 1988, including more opal mining experiences.

Those that bought our books were happy with it and found it most useful.

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

Two women, mining opal at Lightning ridge, who bought our book told Stephen how they selected a claim in virgin ground. The area they chose had two wild orange trees on it. One of the surface indications our book mentioned. When they sank a shaft between the trees, they got lots of gem opal.

Over the years of surveying claims, Stephen found that miners were puzzled about the lay of the ground. Why should one claim produce millions of dollars worth of opal, when the claim next to it could send them broke? Therefore, Stephen decided to write a comprehensive book in which he could impart his knowledge gained to future generations of opal miners. He not only wanted to fill the pages with colourful pictures of opals that would light up people's lives, but he also wanted to fill their world with action pictures to inspire them with a sense of adventure in the real Outback.

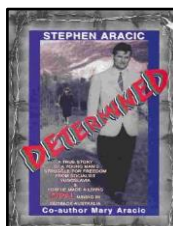
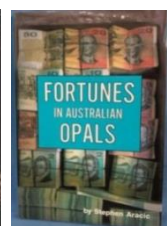
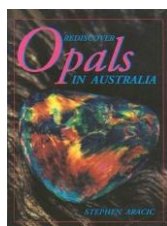
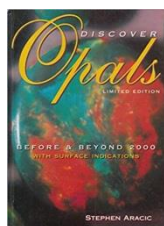
Up until this point Stephen's only experience was from Lightning Ridge. We'd been to White Cliffs in 1981, but he wanted to further his knowledge and include all the other commercial opal fields as well. He decided to utilize all the experience gained in his years of mining for opal in the Ridge and travel the Outback opal fields of Australia comparing the different mining fields and the opal bearing regions with non-opal bearing land and see the similarities

or differences. That way he could write a comprehensive opal book on all the fields of Australia. He dreamed of the day it would happen. Then one day his gouging pick hit a small pocket of nobbies with sparkling gem colour. We quit mining for the day in hopes of the "dream trip of a lifetime".

Stephen set about cutting and shaping them into nice size gems. A visiting opal buyer was so fascinated with the sparking gems and paid so well for them, that we could go on that wonderful trip.

Having packed our car, we left Lightning Ridge in 1991 with a feeling of great excitement and no preconceived idea of what it would be like to visit such far away places as Coober Pedy or the isolated opal fields in Queensland. The car we had at the time was a Citroen DS23. It was designed for all roads, with an adjustable lever for up or down, as well as 4WD in places.

As AOS Editor, I would like to thank Mary and Stephen Aracic once again for allowing us to share their wonderful stories from Lightning Ridge. I look forward to sharing more opal stories from Stephen and Mary in future newsletters!



You'll find more opal stories from Stephen and Mary in these books.

~ Bench Tips ~

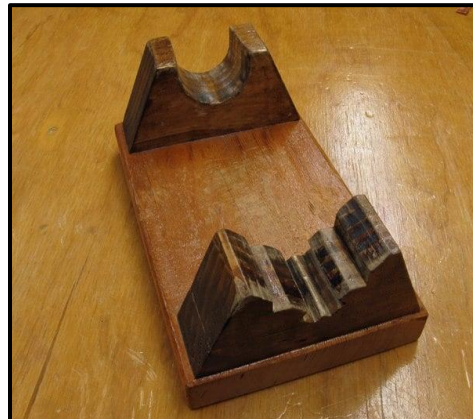
This page will be dedicated to bench tips and techniques from our readers. If you have bench tips you'd like to share, let us know! Bench tips can be anything - metal work, lapidary, wirework - anything creative that you would like to share. Send your tips to: aos.editor.02@gmail.com

BRACELET MANDREL HOLDER

by Brad Smith

A bracelet mandrel is usually held in a vise to free up both hands for holding the workpiece and forming it into final shape. But this isn't always possible at workshops or demonstrations where only a conference table is provided. In these situations, a wooden holder can be constructed to cradle the mandrel and hold it in proper position for pounding.

I made this one with the help of a band saw. Materials are some scraps of 2"x4" and a 1"x6" board for the base. The notches in one end hold the mandrel in various positions.



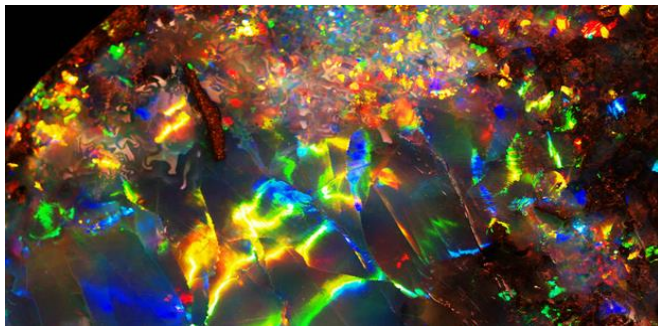
Work Smarter & Be More Productive with Brad's "How To" Jewelry Books on [Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)



Uncovered: The Truth about Opal Formation

by Amy Middleton
3 June 2013

The secret of how opals formed in Australia's Red Centre could shed light on the landscape on Mars.



Researchers say opals formed when Australia's rainforests receded over 90 million years ago. (Credit: Wikipedia)

New research has explained the mysterious formation of opals, found in abundance in Australia's red center, and the information could shed light on the environment on Mars. Australia produces over 90 per cent of the world's precious opals, but before now scientists have never been able to explain precisely how the gemstones formed.

"Before this we did not know [opal's] origin, why it forms at such shallow depths or why it can be found in central Australia and almost nowhere else on Earth," says lead researcher Professor Patrice Rey, a geologist at the University of Sydney.

Opals formed by acidic weathering

Patrice says the findings, published this week in the *Australian Journal of Earth Sciences*, reveal that opals formed during "an extraordinary episode of acidic weathering, during the drying out of the central Australian landscape."

Between 100 million and 97 million years ago, a vast sea that covered 60 per cent of Australia – from Coober Pedy in South Australia to the Gulf of Carpentaria in



Mars-like landscape near Coober Pedy, SA. (Credit: University of Sydney)

northern Australia – began retreating. This drying out of Australia's center increased the acidity levels at shallow depth, releasing silica through the weathering of sandstone. Further weathering then lowered the acidity to a level at which precious opal can form in the silica-rich gel.

Australia's Red Centre similar to Mars

Central Australia is believed to be the only place on earth where acidic weathering of this scale has ever taken place, although similar conditions have been observed on the surface of Mars. Non-precious opal deposits were discovered on the Red Planet by NASA in 2008.

"If you look at Mars and the Red Centre, they share similar characteristics," says Patrice. "Similar rocks went through similar weathering processes, so potentially precious opals might exist there."

Patrice says central Australia offers a "unique natural laboratory", where researchers can study biological processes that could potentially be present on Mars.

Mike Snow, a minerals expert at the South Australian Museum, says the findings are compelling, and may well provide a glimpse into the landscape on Mars.

"The landscapes of Mars and the [Red] Centre both have large amounts of red oxidized iron," says Mike. "This is part of the opal story."

"Perhaps opal may well occur on Mars if it is similar to the Great Artesian Basin."

From: <http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/uncovered-the-truth-about-opal-formation.htm>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Reader: If your organization has an opal or rockhound-related event, please email particulars to info@opalsociety.org.
Upcoming Event listings will be included at the discretion of The Opal Express editor as space and scheduling permit.

December 5, 2021 – Lake Elsinore, CA

Lake Elsinore Gem & Mineral Society
Rock 'n Craft Winter Festival, 32097 Corydon Rd., Lake Elsinore, CA 92530
Hours: Sunday, December 5 – 10 AM – 4 PM
Contact: (909) 208-6956, berylman50@aol.com
Website: Facebook: Lake Elsinore Gem & Mineral Society

2022 Shows

January 15-16, 2022 – Exeter, CA

Tule Gem & Mineral Society
Exeter Memorial Building, 324 N. Kaweah Ave., Exeter, CA
Contact: (559) 802-6029

February 12-13, 2022 – Antioch, CA

Antioch Lapidary Club
Jewelry, Gem & Rock Show
1201 West 10th St., Antioch, CA 94509
Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM
Admission: \$6
Contact: edysnyder@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.antiochlapidaryclub.com>

February 26-27, 2022 – Vallejo, CA

Vallejo Gem and Mineral Society
McCormack Hall, Solano County Fairgrounds, Vallejo, CA
900 Fairgrounds Dr., Vallejo, CA
Spring Bling 2022
Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM both days
Contact: (510) 377-4545
Website: <http://vjgems.co/>

March 5-6, 2022 – Ventura, CA

Ventura Gem and Mineral Society
Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 W. Harbor Blvd., Ventura
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Gems and Minerals, fossils, jewelry, healing stones, silent auction, exhibits, dealers, kids activities, lapidary arts demonstrations, raffle, flea market, plant sale. A successful and valued South Coast show since 1963. We are happy to be back again after COVID!
Website: <http://www.vgms.org>

March 5-6, 2022 – Newark, CA

Gem and Mineral Society of Castro Valley
Newark Pavilion, 6530 Thornton Ave., Newark, CA 94560
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM
Contact: info@mgscv.org
Website: <http://mgscv.org>

March 12-13, 2022 – Arcadia, CA

Pasadena Lapidary Society
"Inspiration Unearthed", 62nd Annual Tournament of Gems
Arcadia Masonic Center, 50 W. Duarte Rd., Arcadia
Hours: 10-5 Daily
Contact: Ellen Ferrell 1-727-512-0381
Email: ellenbf2007@aol.com
Website: <https://www.pasadenalapidary.org>

March 12-13, 2022 – Turlock, CA

Mother Lode Mineral Society
Stanislaus Fairgrounds, 900 N. Broadway in Turlock, CA 95380
Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM daily
55th Annual Rock, Mineral & Jewelry Show! EDUCATIONAL FAMILY EVENT! Rocks, Minerals, Fossils, Jewelry, Beads, Fluorescents, Children's activities, and More! Learn to make beautiful jewelry out of natural rocks and gemstones from our demonstrators.
Children's activities including making your own bracelet, Touch and See Rock cycle, Mineral and fossil display, Treasure Hunt, Geode cutting. Large Fossil Museum including Megalodon courtesy of The Tethy's Ocean Project. HUGE fluorescent walk-through display room.
There are over 45 dealers selling rocks, minerals, fossils, jewelry, beads, tools, & supplies. We have much much more. Visit our website for more info and pictures!
Admission: \$6 adult, children 12 and under free with paid adult.
Contact: Bud & Terry McMillin (209) 484-4416, terry.mcmillin@yahoo.com
Website: <http://www.turlockgemshow.com>

April 1-3, 2022, Vista CA

Vista Gem and Mineral Society
Vista Gem and Mineral Show
Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum, 2040 N. Santa Fe Ave., Vista, CA 92083
Hours: April 1 & 2, 10 AM – 5 PM, April 3, 10 AM – 4 PM
Come on out for a fun-filled weekend at the Vista Gem and Mineral Show April 1-3, 2022. Held outdoors at the Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum, you'll find everything from crystals and gems to rough, slabs, and cabs – and even lapidary tools. Not only can you find all the supplies you are looking for, but we are also known for our raffle held on Sunday afternoon. All prizes are donated by our vendors and VGMS. All proceeds go to support our non-profit school and you do not need to be present to win.
Contact: info@vistarocks.org
Website: <https://vistarocks.org>

April 9-10, 2022 – Mariposa

Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club
Mountains of Minerals
Mariposa County Fairgrounds, 5005 Fairgrounds Road, Mariposa, CA 95338
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Contact: mgmc@sti.net
Website: <http://mariposagemclub.org>

April 30 – May 1, 2022 – Anaheim, CA

Searchers Gem & Mineral Society
Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM
Website: <https://searchersrocks.org>

May 6-7-8, 2022 – Lancaster, CA

CFMS Gems, Minerals, Fossils & Jewelry Show
Antelope Valley Fairgrounds, 2551 W Avenue H, Lancaster, CA
Hours: Friday, Saturday 9 AM -5 PM, Sunday 9 AM – 4 PM
Gems, Minerals, Fossils, Jewelry, Demonstrations, Exhibits, Dealers, Kid's and Family Activities. Free parking and Free Admission.
Contact:
Bob Backus (661) 526-3564, email: lbackus@aol.com
Susan Chaisson-Walblom (661) 406-0143, email: slchaisson@yahoo.com
More information coming!!

American Opal Society Membership Application

FILL IN APPLICABLE INFORMATION		DUES / FEES	AMOUNT PAID
DUES:	RENEWING MEMBERS	\$35.00	
SELECT ONE	NEW MEMBERS	\$45.00	
INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP FEE (All addresses <u>outside</u> of USA)		\$15.00	
PRINTED NEWSLETTER FEE (Paper copy postal mailed instead of PDF file by e-mail)		\$10.00	
ADDITIONAL BADGES (Your first badge is <u>free</u> when joining)		\$15.00	
TOTAL PAID DUES plus International, Print or Badge Fees if Applicable:			

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 via PayPal, please visit the membership page on our website at http://opalsociety.org/aos_application_by_web.htm to complete the form and make your PayPal payment. You may 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.

NAME	
BUSINESS NAME	
ADDRESS	APT # or PO BOX
CITY	STATE
ZIP OR POSTAL CODE	COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE USA)
PHONE - Home ()	PHONE - Business ()
E-MAIL	
WEBSITE	
OCCUPATION	HOBBIES and INTERESTS

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: The AOS publishes a membership roster once per year in its newsletter, The Opal Express. Your name will be included. Please check what additional personal information you listed for other members. If it is different from the information above, please note that on the application.

☐ Address ☐ Phone-landline ☐ Phone-cell ☐ E-mail ☐ Website

Please sign here: _____

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Are Your Dues Due Now?

PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL OR NEWSLETTER E-MAIL.

There will 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 Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. Please note, that as the system is 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

(revised 11/27/19)

The Opal Express

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

Volume 54, Issue 12

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

4th Wednesday of the Month
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Anaheim Community Center
250 E. Center Street
Anaheim, CA 92805



*No General Meeting
for December*



TO:

General Meeting Location at:

Anaheim Downtown Community Center

**250 E. Center Street
Anaheim, CA 92805**

Stayed tuned! We may be starting up meetings again at the Anaheim Community Center. We are currently checking into getting our old room for meetings.

American Opal Society

Website: <http://OpalSociety.org>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/opalsociety>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AmericanOpalSociety>
Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/opalsociety>
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCegTIH1IEyO7y8wdqvRfyUA?view_as=subscriber

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