

Rockgrinders Gazette



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Club Rooms Opening Hours

Monday	9 am till 1 pm
Wednesday	9 am till 1 pm
Friday	5 pm till 9 pm
Saturday	9 am till 1 pm

October 2021 – Opal/Tourmaline

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New members are welcome

Are you interested in: Lapidary, Fossils, Gems, Crystals, Beading, Silver Smithing or Lost wax casting in a relaxed and friendly environment?

Give us a call on 9618 3206 and leave your details. Someone will get back to you after lockdown, which should be ending in the very near future.

Looking forward to meeting some new members soon.

Annual Membership Fees

Enquiries to: ctownlapidarytreas@gmail.com

Adult – including insurance	\$15
Pensioner/student – including insurance	\$10
Family - excluding \$5 p/p insurance	\$20

From the President

Lockdown is still going on, but the end is looking a little closer. We don't know yet what we will have to do to be allowed to re-open, but we are keeping up with the latest regulations.

As soon as lockdown is over, will be opening as soon as practicable.

Due to Covid and lockdown, the October meeting and Open Day will not be taking place.

A big thank you to Judy. She has kept this newsletter going through lockdown and has given it a re-vamp. Great reading Judy.

I hope everyone is keeping busy, I would love to see photos of any of your projects you have been working on.

Suzy Brandstater
President

From the Editor

A big thank you to those who have already sent in contributions for the newsletter. Your support is much appreciated.

I look forward to receiving more in the future, so please continue to send in your stories, relevant photos, samples of your work, and any other interesting anecdotes you might like to share in the newsletter to ctownlapidaryclub.editor@gmail.com before the last week of the month.

Seems like we could be back at the Club in the fairly near future, and am sure looking forward to that. Just what it will look like in terms of covid regulations remains to be seen, but anything will be better than nothing.

Our Human Gems and Fossils

This month we feature the Club's President, Suzy Brandstater. I'm sure you will find Suzy's story interesting and inspiring. It shows just what can be achieved following a simple visit to the Club's Annual Exhibition held at Ingleburn.

Look forward to next year's Exhibition. It should be bigger and better than ever, after being unfortunately cancelled for the last two years, due to Covid-19.

Thank you Suzy, for your submission and great photos.

Here's what Suzy had to say, followed by some photos of her pursuing her interest and love of rocks.

Suzy Brandstater

"Our family joined the club in 2010. I was suffering chronic pain and was seriously considering medically retiring from teaching. Don thought that I needed cheering up and took me to the club's annual exhibition at the Greg Percival Centre in Ingleburn. I was so excited as I had always loved rocks and I was desperate to learn how to polish them.

When we arrived, we were quickly shown to the Gemstone Identification table. I am not sure how interested my two boys were, but I was fascinated.

While looking around at the amazing treasure trove, I found out that anyone could join the club. My excitement levels increased ... they would actually let you polish rocks.

Don thought joining the club would be a good idea as I needed to do something in my life that wasn't teaching, do something that I could just relax and let other people run things. That worked really well until I had my knee replacements. Once my chronic pain had gone, nothing could stop me and Don's plan for a quiet little activity got completely out of control. It completely took over my life. So much so that I now have a small business selling crystals, rocks and jewellery.

I had some wonderful mentors in my early days in the club. Clarice started me polishing my first cab and then the following week Bob Pullen took over and made me start again. Bob was a wonderful mentor to me. Lil also created a monster, she taught me how to string beads, my passion was even further ignited. Barry and Dorothy taught me silver casting and Steve McCulloch taught me the basics of wire wrapping. I was gradually learning a variety of skills.

Things were going well, I was still trying to keep my head down and then at the AGM, Margaret suggested I put myself up for Vice President. That was the end of my keeping my head down days.

I have gained so much from the club, friends, skills and a business to keep me occupied now that I have retired from teaching."



Step 1 Find the stone/gem - Suzy fossicking on the mullock heaps on the Grawin Opal Fields at Lightning Ridge



Step 2 - Shape and polish the stone/gem - Suzy in the clubhouse grinding room



Step 3 - Wrap and set the stone/gem - One of Suzy's fine productions created at home during lockdown.



Step 4 - Hey Presto! – This shows just what Suzy's innocent love of rocks has turned into ... her nice little business that feeds on passion, creativity and dedication to her craft.

Show and Tell

Who's doing what – at home?

Thank you to **Peter Mulhall** for your contribution below, and a pertinent follow-on from last month's feature on Argentium Silver.

"Hi my name is Peter. I first became aware of the Campbelltown & Districts Lapidary Club while working at M.B.I.S.C Carpentry T.A.F.E of Ingleburn. One of the tutors, Mr Neil Wynn, told me about the club. The only other club I have ever been a member of was the Bankstown Bush Music club by invitation. (guitarist).

PKJM Fine Art is a local start-up which began experimenting with small scale production of jewellery items in 2015.

With the initial focus on designing 3d mesh pendants, these then being 3d printed to astonishing levels of accuracy, on to utilising the most advanced moulding compounds and techniques to perfect the art of Argentium 935 Silver casting using a small Neycraft Spincaster centrifuge.

The Argentium Silversmiths Guild welcomed the second member of only 2 worldwide, who casts with a basic, (but heavily customised), centrifuge.

With development pace being dictated by irregular funding, the tiny part time venture continued to tool & tech up, marching on through upgrades & equipment customisation, bushfires and the onslaught of Covid-19.

At writing, the final adjustments are yet to be applied to the last "device" requiring fine tuning, being a custom .75mm kangaroo leather strip cutter to plait 4 braid micro necklaces.

PKJM Fine Art is finally in a position to implement 5 ½ years of planning, research and development using brilliant, glorious, hypoallergenic Argentium 935 Silver.

Initial designs consist of symbols through the mists of time of which the copyright is public domain, and one or two originals. Late 2021 will see the design of the Flora & Fauna series."



1 True meaning lost over time. This represents Saturn. Known as J Page of Led Zeppelins ZoFo or ZoSo.



2 Same Sex Marriage, family union pendant, ©PKJM Fine Art – 2016.

Handy Tips and Hints

Cleaning your tumbler barrel

Believe it or not, many people use flat Coke as a cleaner in their tumbler barrel. Coke contains phosphoric acid which is a corrosive chemical used to remove rust from steel and iron. (Think about that next time you're enjoying a cold glass of Coke!) The pH is very acidic, ranging from 2.8 to 4.5, which seems to strip the sludge very effectively from the barrel. Lemon juice and vinegar have a similar pH and could be tried especially if you don't keep Coke around the house. CLR has a pH of 1 to 1.5 and has been used with success as well. We also use CLR to clean our carbon steel shot if there is any evidence of rust (orange water or the smell of rust). No matter which of these liquids you use, run the tumbler and shot for 3 twenty-minute cycles – changing the liquid “cleaner” for each cycle until your shot is shiny and clean, then rinse well with clean water. Once your drum is decontaminated, use only mild soap (Ivory) when tumbling jewellery to prevent future contamination.

Unfortunately, this may not work for tumbler barrels of poor-quality rubber, or ones that have been badly damaged. In that case, buy a new, good quality tumbler and follow the above instructions to ensure that it remains contaminant free.

[reference: WorkingSilver.com](http://WorkingSilver.com)

Historical stones

Thanks to Clarice for this interesting article. We may have to introduce this strategy in the battle against Covid After all, we've got a few large stones in Australia!

Great Stone Park

As a girl I attended a local High School which was situated close to Great Stone Park, Stretford, Manchester, UK. At the entrance to the park stood a large boulder, about the size of a large chest freezer. On the top of the boulder are two depressions which, during the Great Plague epidemic of 1665, were filled with vinegar. The stone stands at the border between the city of Manchester and the farming community of Stretford. The people of Manchester used to put money in the vinegar to disinfect it and to pay for produce left by the farmers of Stretford. The stone has been recorded here from the 13th century so

was probably used as a plague stone during the Black Death epidemic of 1350 as well as in 1665. In present times, my brother-in-law attends an exercise class where the instructor, following local Council guidelines, has a money box containing disinfectant where the class members place their class fees. Not much has changed in 350 years.



October Birthdays – Opal/Tourmaline



<p>Ray Moulang Ahmed Nasser Kamilla Shepherd Elaine Dean Ron Dean Mario Desillas Cassandra Ridding</p>	<p>Opal</p> <p>The October birthstone's dramatic play-of-colour has inspired writers to compare it to fireworks, galaxies and volcanoes. Bedouins once believed opal held lightning and fell from the sky during thunderstorms. Ancient Greeks thought opals bestowed the gift of prophesy and protection from disease. Europeans long maintained opal to be a symbol of purity, hope and truth. Hundreds of years ago, opal was believed to embody the virtues and powers of all coloured stones.</p>
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The opal birthstone can be found in many places. The fields of Australia are the most productive in the world ... Ethiopia, Mexico and Brazil are also important sources. Additional deposits have been found in Central Europe, Honduras, Indonesia, Madagascar, Peru, Turkey and the United States.

Lightning Ridge, a small town in New South Wales, Australia, is famed for producing prized black opal. ... Lightning Ridge gets little rain and bakes in the scorching summer temperatures ... so miners often live underground to find respite from the punishing heat. White opal is found in the White Cliffs area of New South Wales, as well as in Mintabie, Andamooka and Coober Pedy in South Australia. Boulder opal, which comes from only one location in the world, is mined in Queensland.

Opal may be treated by impregnation with oil, wax or plastic. Opal doublets or triplets are fine slices of opal glued to a base material and covered with a thin dome of clear quartz. The safest way to clean Opal is with warm, soapy water. Note that prolonged exposure to water may weaken the adhesive in opal doublets and triplets. Even natural opal can fracture if exposed to high heat or sudden temperature changes.

Opal ranges from 5 to 6.5 on the Mohs scale of hardness. Store opal by itself to prevent jewellery set with harder gems (such as Diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds) from scratching it.

Tourmaline

The name comes from the Sinhalese word toramalli, which means “stone with mixed colours,” because it often has multiple colours in one crystal. Very few gems match tourmaline's dazzling array of colours. Perhaps this is why ancient mystics believed this October birthstone could inspire artistic expression – it has a colour palette for every mood. Among the most popular are the pink and red rubellites, the emerald green “chrome” tourmalines, and the neon green and blue-to-violet “paraíba” tourmalines.

Because of its vast range of colours, tourmaline was often mistaken for other gemstones. One of the “rubies” in the Russian crown jewels, the “Caesar's Ruby” pendant, is actually red (rubellite) tourmaline. A Spanish conquistador found green tourmaline crystals in Brazil in the 1500s and confused the stones with emerald. These cases of mistaken identity continued for centuries until scientists recognized tourmaline as a distinct mineral species in the 1800s.

Different colours of tourmaline are thought to have their own healing properties. Black tourmaline is believed to protect the wearer and give a sense of self-confidence. Pink tourmaline embodies love and is associated with compassion and gentleness. Green tourmaline promotes courage, strength and stamina.

Most commonly found in Brazil, it is also mined in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kenya, Madagascar and Mozambique (among other countries in Africa). California and Maine are historically important producers of fine tourmaline in the United States.

The tourmaline birthstone is rated 7 to 7.5 on the Mohs scale of hardness and is generally suitable for everyday wear. They are usually stable enough to withstand light and most chemicals, but heat can be damaging. It is best cleaned with warm, soapy water and a soft brush. The use of ultrasonic and steam cleaners is not recommended. <https://www.gia.edu/birthstones/october-birthstones>



What's On Or Not ?

Hopefully will have come out of “lock down” and be free of travel restrictions by the scheduled time.

Events info from the Gem & Lapidary Council of NSW <http://www.gemlapidarycouncilnsw.org.au/events/>

You can download back issues from the Club's website. <http://www.campbelltownlapidary.org.au/> We are grateful for any and all submissions.

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
<i>Please note all events are subject to rules and restrictions relating to Covid-19 pandemic.</i>		
TBA	Campbelltown & Districts Lapidary Club <i>Annual General Meeting</i> Time: 9.30 am	Venue: Lot 1 Bensley Road, Ingleburn
22 October 2021	Australian Opal Centre – Lightning Ridge <i>Science of Opal Formation Symposium</i> Time: 9 am – 1.30 pm Entry: \$15 - Students FREE	Venue: Online Visit to https://bit.ly/3BCTeGw to register. Flyer attached for your information.
30 – 31 October 2021	Canberra Lapidary Club <i>Spring Gemcraft & Mineral Show.</i> Time: Sat 10 am to 5 pm Sun 10 am to 4 pm	TBA
13 – 14 November 2021	Hornsby Crystal, Mineral, Fossil & Craft Festival Entry: \$7 – no concessions Kids under 12 FREE	Venue: Hornsby Memorial Hall For information: Email crystalfestivalsaustralia@gmail.com or Call 0405904881.
27 – 28 November 2021	Carlingford Gem & Mineral Expo.	Venue: Roselea Community Centre 645 Pennant Hills Road, Carlingford

Words of Wisdom

The more you know, the more you know you don't know. Aristotle

Have fun, take care and stay safe!



THE SCIENCE OF OPAL FORMATION

A SYMPOSIUM HOSTED BY THE AUSTRALIAN OPAL CENTRE

22 OCTOBER, 2021
ONLINE EVENT
COST: \$15 (students free)

Join us for a special half-day symposium on the state-of-the-art of the science of opal formation, our current knowledge, and enduring questions

Sessions on the geological environment of opal formation, physical and chemical processes, the age of opal, fossil formation, and cutting edge opal exploration

With invited speakers from research and industry

Register at <https://bit.ly/3BCTeGw>

Photos: Robert A. Smith, Paul Thomas

Organising Committee

<p>Laurie Aldridge Deakin University</p> <p>Anthony Smallwood International Opal Academy</p> <p>Jenni Brammall Australian Opal Centre</p>	<p>Laz Katona Geological Survey of SA</p> <p>Paul Thomas University of Technology Sydney</p> <p>Phil Bell University of New England Armidale</p>	<p>Kurt Steffens Queensland Boulder Opal Association</p> <p>Elizabeth Smith Australian Opal Centre</p> <p>John Butcher Towrah / Lightning Ridge</p>
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