



Harold Hodges' Opal Teeth

The newsletter of the Lightning Ridge Opal and Fossil Centre Project

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THANKS

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copy of GEO
magazine,
Spring 2006
issue, featuring
Lightning Ridge.
Great pictures; a
collectors' item.

Thanks to Ruth Thomas
of Gemfish Opals for
donating copies of GEO.

PROTECTING OUR ENDANGERED OPAL MINING HERITAGE

Lightning Ridge's famous Lunatic Hill open cut mine is a step closer to heritage listing, after a recent site visit by Heritage Officer Dr Bronwyn Hanna and Indigenous Liaison Officer Rick Shapter of the NSW Heritage Office.

The Heritage Office is responding to a nomination seeking to protect the open cut's historical, scientific and tourism values and its unique place in Australian mining and pioneering history.

Rick and Bronwyn were impressed not only by Lunatic Hill, but also by the rich heritage values throughout the Preserved Fields of Lightning Ridge.

Mining heritage in Lightning Ridge offers special opportunities and challenges because of its 'living heritage' character. On-field heritage protection must be compatible with ongoing mining and other traditional activities.

While the Heritage Office concentrates on Lunatic Hill and its immediate surrounds, a local group has formed to address other pressing heritage issues on the opal fields.

The on-field heritage group contains delegates from Lightning Ridge Opal and Fossil Centre, Lightning Ridge Historical Society and Lightning Ridge Tourist Association. The group initially contacted the NSW Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Ian Macdonald, then met with representatives of the Department of Primary Industries (Mineral Resources) in Lightning Ridge. With the DPI's support, a program is being established to document and protect items of heritage significance on the opal fields.

If you would like to join or support the on-field heritage group, please contact the Opal and Fossil Centre.

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GET BEHIND MEMBERSHIP DRIVE TARGETTING OUR FIRST 1000! NEW MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Lightning Ridge Opal and Fossil Centre has well over 250 members, and we thank you all! But there are many, many more people out there who want to get involved...so it's time for a concerted membership drive.

Our target is 1000 members by the end of September 2006. **We need you to sign up your friends, family,**

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Highlights of current LROFC project activities

Susan Freeman of Freeman Ryan Design has developed digital renderings of the exhibition spaces planned for Lightning Ridge Opal and Fossil Centre. Exciting!

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More media: in June, 2 CUZ FM recorded an interview with LROFC project manager Jenni Brammall, focusing on the centre's potential for tourism and economic development, and the importance of indigenous involvement and content in developing the centre.



Dr Bronwyn Hanna, NSW Heritage Office (anti-clockwise from top) at Fred Bodel's Hut (circa 1916), Three Mile Flat, Lightning Ridge; with Elizabeth Smith and Barbara Moritz; in a 1960s miners' hut with bottle wall; examining Lunatic Hill open cut.



colleagues and business associates! Copy a membership form if you have one, or download the form from www.wj.com.au/opalfossil/join.html

Standard membership remains an affordable \$10 per year.

New categories of membership have been developed for Business Members and - for those wanting a more substantial involvement - annual Sponsor Memberships.

Life Membership is now also available and we encourage you to consider joining this very special group of members.

Business, Sponsor and Life members will receive rewards and privileges including valuable promotional opportunities. If you haven't received a list of the new membership types and benefits, contact us and we'll be happy to advise you.

Welcome to Life Member No.1 - Vic Morgan of Cumborah.

* * *

Below: closeup of a remarkable opal specimen donated to Lightning Ridge Opal and Fossil Centre. Tiny cells of colour wink on and off like Christmas lights when the opal is moved.



COMING EVENTS - GRAB YOUR CALENDAR

Migration Memories exhibition in Lightning Ridge
Aug 18 - Sept 3

Historical Society Cottage Hospital Gallery, Morilla St

This beautiful exhibition has been developed by Dr Mary Hutchison and designer Iona Walsh in collaboration with nine local storytellers. For Ridge people, *Migration Memories* will be both familiar, moving and surprising.

YOU ARE ALL INVITED to the opening of *Migration Memories* at **5pm** on **Friday 18 August 2006**, or to visit any time during its stay.

The exhibition is part of work Mary is doing with the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research and the National Museum in Canberra.

In Lightning Ridge, Mary has been supported by the Historical Society, the Transcultural Community Council and Lightning Ridge Opal & Fossil Centre.

Admission is free.

In August 2007 this very special exhibition will be on show at the National Museum. Don't miss it while it's here in Lightning Ridge.

Bob Pelchen - Lightning Ridge watercolours

Late August 2006
Date & venue TBA

Bob Pelchen paints as he travels, and in June 2006 Bob was in Lightning Ridge. This month he will be back to exhibit his recent works. Keep an eye out for announcements of the date and venue.

Bob writes:

"It is the remnants of the hundreds of miners' dreams, both broken and realised, which make Lightning Ridge a truly living historic village, the likes of which councils spend millions of dollars trying to recreate."

Preview Bob's work at www.bobpelchen.com - but to see Bob's Lightning Ridge work, you'll have to be there when it's unveiled!

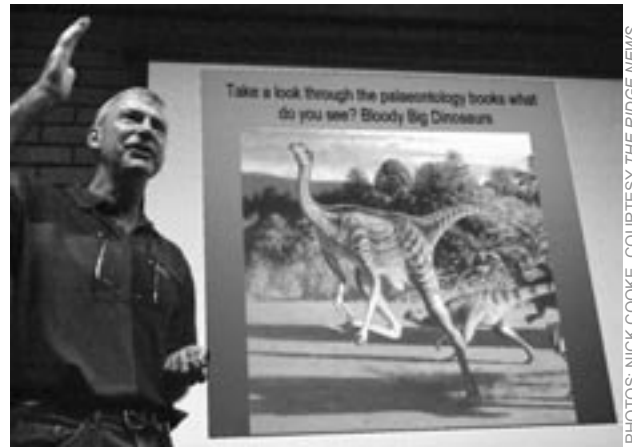
PALAEO'S PERFORMANCE PACKS OUT NIGHTCLUB

Once a month an upstairs room at Lightning Ridge District Bowling Club writhes with the dancing forms of the young (and not-so-young), who emerge after dark to experience the Ridge's 'Shaft' nightclub.

On 18 May the atmosphere was a little different, but enthusiasm just as high and seats as hard to find, as palaeontologist Henk Godthelp gave an illustrated presentation titled 'All Creatures Great and Small: Rocks and Big Game at Lightning Ridge.'

Henk was in Lightning Ridge on one of the frequent visits he makes from the University of New South Wales, to collect opalised fossils and study the geology of the opal fields.

This wasn't just a night for fossil enthusiasts: Henk's



Henk Godthelp (above and below left)

research is shedding light on hitherto mysterious aspects of opal formation, matters still hotly debated in forums such as the Annual Opal Symposium - not to mention in the scientific literature and in hundreds of Lightning Ridge mines, lounge rooms and back yards.

Henk will return to Lightning Ridge in August this year.

Thanks to Lightning Ridge Bowling Club for providing a venue for this Opal and Fossil Centre public event.

HONORARY APPOINTMENTS

Lightning Ridge Opal and Fossil Centre is delighted to announce the appointment of two Honorary Advisers to its research and curation programs.

DR BRIAN SENIOR is one of the world's leading authorities on the geology of Australian opal.

A consulting geologist, Brian has more than 20 years of experience in the opal fields of Queensland and NSW. He has done extensive work on the geology of the Artesian Basin and has worked in many remote and exotic places both in Australia and abroad.

Brian has donated a set of his opal-related scientific publications to LROFC for its growing

research library. Once the library is catalogued, members will be welcome to make use of it.

HENK GODTHELP is Director of Vertebrate Palaeontology Laboratories at the University of NSW and has also worked at the University of Queensland, the Queensland Museum and the Queensland Education Department.

Henk has led over 200 field trips into often remote areas of Australia and has conducted fieldwork in Argentina, Borneo, England and Canada. He is author or coauthor of more than 50 scientific papers. Lightning Ridge's opalised fossils are one of Henk's main research interests.

GENEROUS DONATION BY UNIVERSITY SCIENTIST

During his recent visit to Lightning Ridge, University of New South Wales palaeontologist Henk Godthelp donated 45 opalised fossils to Lightning Ridge Opal and Fossil Centre, including fragile microfossils recovered by painstaking microscope work.

Henk also donated a number of books and papers from his personal library, and geological specimens relevant to Lightning Ridge's opal deposits.

Our sincere thanks to Henk for his continued involvement and support.

TAFE CUTTING PARTNERSHIP

Plans for the Opal and Fossil Centre include a fully-equipped workshop for classes in opal cutting and carving at beginner and advanced levels, with TAFE NSW administering many of these courses.

In the world's only 'black opal town,' there is presently no accredited course of instruction available in how to cut, carve or make jewellery using opal.

The gap yawns even wider because Lightning Ridge's black opal is found in a nodular ('nobby') formation that not only helps to make it the most valuable opal in the world, but also presents unique challenges that confound lapidaries and opal enthusiasts the world over.

A teaching facility is needed to meet both local training needs (vital for continued development of value-adding industries) and demand from visitors to Lightning Ridge - including a large potential international market. There is a call for both short 'overview' classes and longer, comprehensive courses of instruction.

Following discussions last year with TAFE opal cutting teacher Ralph Pownall, LROFC recently met with TAFE's Michelle Cowles-Kosef. Michelle is seeking to establish accredited opal cutting courses at Lightning Ridge, in addition to the short courses currently run under TAFE's Outreach program.

Course outlines were established some time ago by Rilda Mossop, in consultation with local cutters and cutting teachers and with reference to the successful program conducted by TAFE in Coober Pedy. Gyorgyi Nyers of Lightning Ridge Transcultural Community Council has continued the campaign to have accredited courses implemented in Lightning Ridge.

Obstacles for TAFE have included establishment and fitting out of a suitable facility; and demonstrating a need and demand for accredited courses. A partnership with the Opal and Fossil Centre will help to overcome these hurdles.

Michelle Cowles-Kosef is conducting a survey gauging interest in opal cutting courses at Lightning Ridge. Please support this initiative by filling out a survey form at the Neighbourhood Centre in Opal St or Dani's Opal Cutting in Harlequin St, Lightning Ridge, before the end of August.
