



**AUSTRALIAN  
OPAL  
CENTRE**  
LIGHTNING RIDGE • NSW

# Harold Hodges' Opal Teeth

The newsletter of the Australian Opal Centre, Lightning Ridge, NSW, Australia

## LROFC Incorporated

PO Box 229 • Lightning Ridge  
NSW 2834 • AUSTRALIA  
Ph. (+61 2) 6829 1667  
Fax (+61 2) 6829 1665  
opalfoossil@wj.com.au  
australianopalcentre.com

### PRESIDENT

Vicki Bokros

### VICE PRESIDENT

Elizabeth Smith

### SECRETARY

Barbara Moritz

### TREASURER

Vicki Bokros

### COMMITTEE

Warwick Schofield

Christopher Tome

Rory Treweeke

### MANAGER

Jenni Brammall

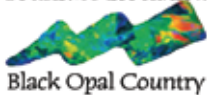
Proudly building the  
Australian Opal Centre  
at Lightning Ridge

**THANKS**  
to our supporters,  
including:



Australian Government  
Department of Resources,  
Energy and Tourism

Lightning Ridge  
Tourism Association



Black Opal Country



## HERITAGE AND FOSSIL SEARCH SHED OPENS



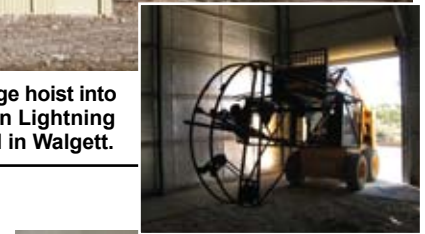
**Above:** Landscaping underway outside the shed earlier in 2011. **Right:** Moving a vintage hoist into the shed. **Lower right:** The AOC's Dr Elizabeth Smith with students from Gosford, in Lightning Ridge to visit the Australian Opal Centre before contesting the Ricky Walford shield in Walgett.

The Australian Opal Centre has completed construction of its Black Opal Heritage and Fossil Shed.

Measuring 12x18 metres and with an additional open bay, the shed's high roof, ventilation system and insulation keep the inside temperature pleasant even on hot days. One end contains a display of vintage opal mining machinery; the other is being fitted out for search and preparation of opalised fossils. The shed will open to the public once the fossil search area has been

completed, but has already proven to be a fine venue, hosting a successful Meet and Greet night for the 7th National Opal Symposium in July, photographic and pottery exhibitions, school group programs and a visiting heritage group.

The shed project was made possible by grant funding from the Australian Government's RLCIP (Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program) Round 2 and the NSW Government's Community Building Partnership, support from Walgett Shire



PHOTOS: JENNI BRAMMALL

Council and vital assistance from dozens of local businesses and volunteers. Local suppliers and contractors were used on the project wherever possible.

The Black Opal Heritage and Fossil Shed enables the Australian Opal Centre to expand operations and offer more activities, while fundraising continues for its planned national facility. \* \* \*



PHOTO: MARK SIMSPON

**Left:** Students from schools in the Gosford City Council area enjoyed a half day program at the Black Opal Heritage and Fossil Shed in August.

## RESULTS OF NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

Lightning Ridge photographer Viki Murray has received the grand prize in the inaugural Cody Australian Opal Centre Photographic Prize.

Entries were exhibited and winners announced on 25 July at the Meet & Greet Evening for the 7th National Opal Symposium, at the Australian Opal Centre's Black Opal Heritage Shed. Murray's 'Opal 4 Sale' was chosen by judges Greg Weight and Chris Gleisner from 149 diverse entries, with Hanna Deisenberger's 'Young Herons' and Connie Amooore's 'One Miner's

Work of Art' receiving commendations.



PHOTO: ANDREW KEMENY



**Grand Prize runners up, Young Herons by Hanna Deisenberger (above left) and One Miner's Work of Art by Connie Amooore (above right). Right: cover of the exhibition catalogue, featuring Grand Prize winner Opal 4 Sale by Viki Murray.**



of finalists in next year's Prize at NSW Parliament House, or a prominent Sydney gallery.

The Australian Opal Centre congratulates all entrants and thanks Cody Opal, Peter Carroll Opal & Gems and Lomax Opals for their generous sponsorship.

Exhibition catalogues, including contact details for next year's Prize, are available from the Australian Opal Centre for \$5.00.

**Left:** Exhibition of entries at the Black Opal Heritage Shed.

Below: comments from some of the architecture students who visited Lightning Ridge recently (story this page).

"With the help of friendly locals with an abundance of knowledge about their area, a lot was learnt and experienced about this exceptional place. It was clear to us that the people of Lightning Ridge were proud of their community and the local history, truly captivated its uniqueness.

"It was a delight to experience something so different to Sydney, and be given the opportunity to witness the harsh reality and extremes of the Australian outback. Particularly the extremes in weather from day to night that some of us were perhaps not properly prepared for! We were also given an insight to how mining and the opal mining community has shaped the area in more ways than one. We have come away with a new understanding of something that at first seemed quite foreign....

"This was certainly a trip that will be remembered thanks to the great people of the Ridge!"  
*Julia Ciano, student*

"Lightning Ridge is a very special place unlike anywhere I have been - the extreme conditions, the gorgeous landscape and the interesting mining history all make for a wonderful place to visit. Not to mention the many friendly locals we met along the way, making our visit all the more enjoyable and who were very generous with their time, giving us useful information to contribute to our research."

*Giselle Moore, student*

"There's an incredible presence about this place. Despite knowing you're virtually in the middle of 'nowhere,' that distinct contrast with the vast landscape places you 'somewhere.' In a place people are said to go to disappear, I never felt more aware of my existence as a dot on its map.... Lightning Ridge's promise of discovery extends beyond that of opals. It is also of people and landscapes brimming with amazing stories."

*Keena Vazquez, student*



PHOTO: ASHLEY DUNN

# OPAL FIELDS CHALLENGE AND INSPIRE GREAT ARCHITECTS OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE

Australian Opal Centre architects Glenn Murcutt and Wendy Lewin travelled to Lightning Ridge in July, on a field trip with 71 third year architecture students from the University of NSW, Sydney (UNSW).

Coordinator of the trip was Catherine Lassen of the acclaimed UNSW Faculty of Built Environment; also tutoring the students were architects Shaowen Wang, Fergus Scott, Jonathan Temple, Ashley Dunn and Ian Martin.

The goal of the field trip was to visit, document and analyse a physically and culturally complex site in detail, then develop an appropriate architectural strategy. The students' brief was to design a hypothetical building to accommodate three artists in residence, with studio facilities, exhibition space and car park. Their study site was on the Three Mile opal field, south of Lunatic Hill, beyond the fabled Leaning Tree Claim.



PHOTO: JENNI BRAMMALL



PHOTOS: ASHLEY DUNN



For many of the students, this was a first experience of outback Australia, its dust, temperature extremes and open spaces.

Dr Elizabeth Smith, vice president of the Australian Opal Centre, was asked to talk to the group about life at Lightning Ridge.

"The students were inspired

**Top left: opal miner George Mulder with Wendy Lewin and Ian Martin.**  
**Middle left: Glenn Murcutt briefs the students.**  
**Bottom left: documenting the study site.**

by the opal field landscape and its rich natural and cultural heritage," said Elizabeth.

"It will be fascinating to see how the unique physical and environmental conditions influence their building designs."

On Sunday 31 July, after the students had departed, the architects visited one of the miners' tanks, where they were intrigued by the unique built environment and the design of the miners' ingenious opal processing machinery.

"It was an extraordinary experience...not only the spectacular outback life but also the friendly hospitality we received....

"[The site] holds the landscape of mother earth, but what makes the land really amazing are the thousands of stories beneath the earth-- the stories will be told and continue to be made...."

*(Angel) YiZhang, student*



PHOTO: JENNI BRAMMALL

**Architects Glenn Murcutt, Catherine Lassen, Wendy Lewin and Shaowen Wang at the Three Mile, Lightning Ridge.**

Back in Sydney, eight of Australia's finest architects and 71 of its brightest architectural students then spent three months exploring the challenges and opportunities of design for the opal fields of Lightning Ridge. The students' final works were exhibited at the University of New South Wales on 3 November 2011.

\*\*\*

## FASCINATION WITH THE TECHNOLOGY OF OPAL MINING

22 members of the Australian Society for the History of Engineering and Technology (ASHET) visited Lightning Ridge in August, led by Rob Renew, ASHET vice president and former head curator at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

The visitors were interested in opal mining machinery, processes and landscapes, and in seeing what measures were underway

to preserve and document examples of the unique technological heritage of Lightning Ridge.

The group included mining

engineers, historians and museum workers. They received a grand tour of the fields, guided by Barbara Moritz of Lightning Ridge

Historical Society, Sebastian Deisenberger, president of Lightning Ridge Miners' Association, and Elizabeth Smith, AOC vice president.



PHOTOS: BARBARA MORITZ

**From left: ASHET's Rob Renew and Winnie XXXX at the miners' tanks; walking Three Mile Flat; examining the first hydraulic digger made by local engineer Knud Nexø; underground with Sebastian Deisenberger.**