



January 2026

The Cutting Edge

Monthly Newsletter of the Ottawa Lapsmith and Mineral Club

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President's Message

The Ottawa Psychic and Crystal fair will be held this weekend at the Nepean Sportsplex. We now have four competing shows in the Ottawa area. The pie is getting cut up pretty thin!

I don't have the statistics, but we have been taking in good money from memberships, workshop fees, club sales and auctions. We need to boost these alternative income sources to make the club less reliant on show income. On that subject please don't forget that 2026 fees are due by Feb 01. If you paid at the show or then after you are covered for 2026.

The next OLMC auction will be in March. Please put some thought into what you want to contribute.

The club accepts all rock and jewelry donations from people wanting to clean out their garages and basements.

Kerry Day

OLMC President

All members are invited to submit articles, proposals, and thoughts that could be included in the newsletters. Also, feel free to send your Classified ads by e-mail to: news@olmc.ca

Notes from the Executive Committee Meeting 2025-12-01

Judy Courteau was unanimously approved to be the new Membership Chair.

The club has over 230 members; of course we want more members.

Silversmith budget of \$3000/year was approved. Changes to the silversmith area of the workshop are already planned to start in January. To create more walking space, the library area table may be replaced with a narrower one, and more things could be hung from the wall (note: steel studs).

The Faceting group is a big success

2026 Gem Show preparation is underway. The venue contract is ready, a bit more expensive as expected.

On Finances, the club is in a very good position. About \$2,000 revenue came from the November auction -- almost one month's rent. Rent went up by \$60/month; insurance went up by \$100 – 200.

November Auction Results

The November auction had 149 lots for sale. Here are some statistics. Of the lots that were sold, 50% had three or fewer bids. Over 80% were sold for \$30 or less.

\$ 1-10	30 %
\$11-15	25 %
\$16-20	10 %
\$21-30	16 %

Two lots with the most bids were a box of petrified wood from Bay of Fundy with 32 bids and a used Flat lap polisher with 30 bids.

The most expensive items, which only had one bid each, were a Pepetools Dust Collector cabinet for \$300, and a raw tourmaline necklace and earring set for \$165.



Thanks to the Bergens

Thanks goes out to Mike and Pam Bergen who donated a large box of slab pieces to the shop. These slabs will get good use from our members.

Oil Saw Maintenance

A recent problem with the large oil saw was caused by a loose set set screw on the main flywheel. Also know that the blade speed can be changed to suit stone hardness by putting the belt on different gears.



Christmas Potluck Party

December 13, 2025

Fifteen club members attended this year's potluck Christmas dinner. There was a great assortment of entrees and desserts, and gifts for all.



Get Ready for the 2026 Annual General Meeting



The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is a critical event for the club. All club members are invited. The Executive Committee and the various Chairs report on activities of the last year, including meeting minutes from the last AGM. Finally, the members present vote on who will be the new Executive Committee for the next year from the slates of nominees.

Officially, there are four elected Executive positions, and an advisory position for the Past President. Nominations for any position are always very welcome. If there is only one nominee for a position, that person is acclaimed.

The Executive Committee, which includes the Chairs, usually meets once a month for about an hour. They chat about news affecting the club, plan general events and services, report on finances, discuss other club-related topics, and delegate tasks. The Committee decides on actions to take to support the club, and sets budgets for the Chairs. For example, the Executive Committee sets the fees that members pay for various services.

Any number of Chairs are appointed by the new Committee, typically at the next monthly Committee meeting. The Chairs may organize their own meetings based on their needs (e.g. workshop supervisor meeting, show committee meeting). The Chairs do not act alone; the entire membership can help them to brainstorm, to make suggestions, to do a task.

Executive Committee Positions

Past President (Acclaimed)

When a new President is elected by the membership, the past president may move to an advisory position. Now this position is unfilled.



President

At Committee meetings, the President is the Chairperson, sets the agenda, and announces votes on motions. The President also represents the club when interacting with other organizations like the CCFMS and other lapidary clubs.

Vice-President

The Vice-President is the back-up to the President, taking over that role when needed.

Treasurer

The Treasurer keeps track of revenues and expenses, and makes quarterly reports. The club hires a professional accountant to perform an annual audit. If you can balance a cheque book, then you have the skills to do this job.

Secretary

The Secretary records and distributes minutes of Executive Committee meetings, handles insurance paperwork for the club, and sends "Thank you" notes to people.

Appointed Chairs

Workshop Chair

The Workshop Chair is responsible for keeping the workshop in a good state: making sure the machines are in working order, acquiring supplies, managing supervisors, training courses, setting ways of working, and workshop safety.



- The library is part of the workshop. The club has a librarian, but it is not a Chair position.
- The size of the silversmith group means it has a representative invited to the Committee meetings to present their needs and activities.

Membership Chair

The paperwork to maintain the membership list is handled by the Membership Chair, including the design and distribution of the membership form, member cards, the introductory brochure, and keeping the membership list accurate.

Newsletter Chair

The Newsletter Chair is responsible for publishing ten newsletters per year (reviewed by the Executive Committee), maintains the club web site, and updates various social media accounts to advertise club activities and to answer general questions.

Show Chair

The Show Chair is responsible for organizing the annual Gem, Mineral & Jewellery Show and Sale. A lot of this work is delegates to the Show Committee: logistics, advertising, show partners, and club volunteers.

Dealer Chair

The Dealer Chair assists the Show Chair by handling all of the paperwork related to vendors, including invites, vendor needs, payments, and post-show follow-up.

The next AGM will be held this April. Already some new people have shown interest in taking these positions. If any club member is interested in participating in this important committee, please contact the current President Kerry Day (pres@olmc.ca) to nominate yourself. If you would like more information about any position, feel free to contact any member of the current Executive Committee (see page 9 of this newsletter).

Ammolite Fossil For Sale

Ammolite fossil "# D15 51" for sale. Approximate size 27x23 cm, and 1.0 kg weight. Excavated from the Lethbridge Mining District in Alberta, and purchased from Enchanted Designs Ltd. in 2022. Certificate is included. Asking \$6,000. Contact seguin.dawn@rogers.com .



Sand Casting with Delft Clay

Presented by Janet Borzecki at the Silversmiths Meeting 2023-03-21

Sand casting has a number of benefits. It is the simplest and most accessible form of casting, quick to set up, and provides re-usable mold for casting. It is easy to do at home, does not use much equipment, and it works well for organic shapes.

On the other hand, sand casting does not work for everything. You cannot cast objects with undercuts (like an open pine cone). Undercutting, when talking about molds, is any piece that will prevent clean removal from the mold. The design has to slope outward from the centre. Porosity is guaranteed in the final cast, because a certain amount of air gets trapped, which can interfere with soldering. Sand casting can also create a poor surface finish, like seams, requiring some clean up. Defects are common. Finally, using objects that are too thin interferes with liquid metal flowing to all parts of the mold.

Though sand casting has been largely replaced by centrifugal casting in recent decades, for hundreds of years it was the most popular of all casting methods. It still plays an important role in the production of large metal forms, and can offer the advantages of low cost, quick results and ease of duplication to those goldsmiths who take the time to master it. Though sometimes thought of as coarse, sandcasting can yield results that are as fine and true to detail as any other casting method.

Professor Dr. Erhard Brepoli,
[Ganoksin Jewelry Making Resources](http://GanoksinJewelryMakingResources)

What You Need

- metal trays
- metal ruler
- casting sand (e.g. delft clay is one type, expensive but good)
- X-acto knife
- small metal rod or toothpicks
- hammer
- nitrile gloves (optional, clay is sticky)
- baby powder or cornstarch
- small paint brush
- crucible with handle to melt silver
- MAP gas torch to melt silver (butane will not work)
- respirator
- welding glasses for eye protection
- heat proof glove
- water to quench

Commercially available casting flasks
You can make your own casting flask out of metal or wood casting. It should be large enough that the mold does not touch the sides. Typical molds look like these:

- large rectangle for large objects, takes a lot of clay
- a cylinder with a square hole in the side allows for pouring in silver from the top or the side
- a cylinder that can only be filled from the top



Principles of Sand Casting

Molten metal is poured quickly through the funnel into the sprue. The metal continues its course to the core. The less resistance or turns on the way, the easier the flow. Most commercial casting uses one right-angle turn.

The air pocket is heated rapidly, and the air must escape for the metal to continue flowing. This can be accomplished with either porous sand or vent holes. Vent holes help in three ways: escape route for hot gas; create a slight vacuum from the rushing hot gas; air elimination reduces porosity in the finished piece.

If the air cannot escape, then it will block the flow of the molten metal into the mold, and it will end up in the finished piece and cause it to be pitted.



Casting silver is trickier than casting gold. There is less metal used in gold casting, and the sprue is smaller.

Things to Remember

Gravity is your friend. Use enough silver; now is not the time to skimp. The weight of the silver drives the metal through the mold. Plus, a larger quantity of silver will remain liquid longer. You will often need triple the weight required for the cast piece, even more if it is really small.

Many well-placed vent holes are your friend as well! Make sure you place them anywhere the molten silver might meet resistance to aid in flow. Don't make them so big that you will have tons of clean up.

The size and placement of your sprue will depend on the size of your piece and on the path of the metal. A ring will need a bigger sprue than a small twig because of how much resistance is created by the turns. Position your sprue at the largest part of the piece.

Your First Sand Cast

Dump the sand or clay into a tray. Often when it arrives in the package it is clumped up and lumpy, so use the ruler to break it up.

The casting frame comes in two pieces.

Fill up the "male" part (the slightly smaller one) with the sand. Pack it down with your thumbs, and then compact it further with a hammer. Use as much sand as you can; it can be re-used. Then use the ruler to scrape off the excess sand and make it level with the frame rim.





Sprinkle talcum powder or similar on top of the sand. This prevents the two halves of the sand-filled frame from sticking together. Not too much powder. Use a brush to cover the whole top side and remove the excess.

Press your mold item into the sand about half way. Then connect the second half of the frame and fill it with sand just like the first half, and then scrape off the excess.

Then take the two halves of the frame apart. You will be left with an impression of the mold in the sand.

Use a knife or dowel to make the sprue in the sand. Then use a knife to cut out part of the funnel. Then cut in some air vents. Then use a rod to punch through the sand at the end of each vent, right to the outside.



Re-connect the frame pieces and cut out the rest of the funnel. You do not want any loose sand that might be picked up when the metal is poured in. Finally, mark where the other half of the sprue will be. Take the frame apart and complete the sprue. Make sure the sprue touches the impression of the piece to be cast.

Prepare the metal by melting it with a torch in the crucible. It should form a round ball and, if you shake the crucible, it will move like water. Some impurities in the metal may appear at this point, and a pinch of borax might help. Then quickly pour it into the waiting mold. It will flame and smoke a bit, so watch your fire alarm.

The casting frame does not get hot, and the sand is a great insulator. You can pull it apart right away to look at your piece. Use tongs to remove the piece from the sand and quench it in water.

Some of the sand will be burnt in the process. Remove it, and you can re-use the rest of the sand.

Unfortunately, if you want to make a second piece, you must start over from the start with clean sand. The cast process ruins a bit of the sand and removes some of the details from the original mold.



All graphics and photos are screen captures from the presentation and live demonstration.

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From the Library

A force of five hundred miners was recruited, comprising twenty companies of twenty-five men, each under the command of a captain, who received free transportation (where walking was not the means of locomotion), food and lodging, but no wages. The trail, about a hundred miles in length, did not attempt to ascend the canyons of the Fraser, but followed an easier route by way of Harrison, Lillooet, Anderson and Seaton lakes with their connecting streams, reaching the river at Lillooet. ... At the outset, the builders had to conquer the gorges of the Fraser Canyon, where the river bursts through the ramparts of the Cascades, thundering past the precipitous walls of rock that compress it to but a fraction of its normal width. To find a footing for a road along the face of such cliffs was almost a superhuman task, yet the Royal Engineers marked out a track that even a goat might have hesitated to follow, and along it an eighteen-foot passage was constructed.

D. M. LeBourdais
 Metals and Men

Workshop Schedule

January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 	2	3 Lapidary 10 am-4 pm (JM/DA)
4	5	6 Lapidary 10-2 pm (RV) Silversmiths 6:30-9 (DA)	7 Lapidary 5-9 pm (CG)	8 Faceting 6:30-9 pm (RB)	9	10 Lapidary 10 am-4 pm (CG, KD)
11	12	13 Lapidary 10-2 pm (RV) Silversmiths 6:30-9 (JB)	14 Lapidary 5-9 pm (JGB)	15 Faceting 6:30-9 pm (DA)	16	17 Lapidary 10 am-4 pm (SJ, EC)
18	19	20 Lapidary 10-2 pm (RV) Silversmiths 6:30-9 (DA)	21 Lapidary 5-9 pm (DP)	22 Faceting 6:30-9 pm (JL)	23	24 Lapidary 10 am-4 pm (DF, JM)
25	26	27 Lapidary 10-2 pm (RV) Silversmiths 6:30-9 (JB)	22 Lapidary 5-9 pm (JGB)	29 Faceting 6:30-9 pm (JL)	30	31 Lapidary 10 am-4 pm (JL, DF)



OLMC Membership Application

<input type="checkbox"/> New Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> Membership Renewal
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$20	
<input type="checkbox"/> Family (2+ persons in the same residence) \$30	

Benefits:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Monthly Newsletter	
<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter advertisement: \$25 per year for members or \$55 for businesses	
<i>(Ten quarter pages per year over ten newsletters).</i>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OLMC online auctions	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OLMC field trips	

*More information can be found at <https://olmc.ca>
You can also go on our Facebook page: [OttawaLapsmithMineralClub](https://www.facebook.com/OttawaLapsmithMineralClub)*

Names(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____

Please specify your e-mail address to receive OLMC's newsletter:

Do you require a receipt?

Yes

Payments are payable by **cash, cheque** to Ottawa Lapsmith and Mineral Club, or
E Transfer at treasurer@olmc.ca with the application form

Please mail your membership form and fees to:

Ottawa Lapsmith and Mineral Club
PO Box 57012, Ottawa RPO Gladstone, Ottawa, ON, K1R 1A1

Please note that all membership information is used only for administrative purposes.

Administration use only

Card provided: Yes No

Supervisor signed: Yes No

Date: _____