

THE CMLC NEWS



April 2026

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- ▶ An Awesome Auction From Julian
- ▶ Abandoned Big River Gold Town
- ▶ April Speakers – A Boring Video on Spheres
- ▶ Carve Your Own Jade!

Looking south from Motunau Beach

General Meeting (7:30pm): 9th April

Annual General Meeting (7.30pm): 11th June 2026

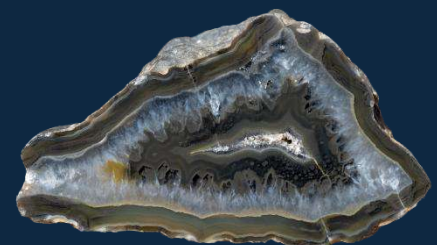
Committee Meeting (7pm): 16th April

Micro Mineral Meeting (7pm): Tuesday evenings

Workshop (6.30/7:00pm – 9:00pm): Every Tuesday & Friday

CMLC Clubroom

110 Waltham Road, Waltham,
Christchurch



Scammed on Scampi

(March field trip report)

The morning started like any other acceptable early autumn day in Canterbury, not a breath of wind or any chance of rain. An ideal day to get amongst the cliffs of one of the most well-known fossil beaches in the region!

Kamen drove to my place to pick me up. 8:15am, right on schedule. Tessa was in the front seat. I noticed an awkward silence as I got in, like a conversation had been abruptly cut off. I didn't say anything and instead handed Kamen some gas money before we took off and got the conversation flowing. I later found out that they were talking about how terrible yours truly would be at being club president! How I wish I could have been a fly on the wall for that conversation. I know I would have likely agreed with their valid points! We arrived at the meeting place on Schools Rd, Woodend, and greeted Jo Walton before waiting a few minutes for another person who agreed to attend, but failed to show. After a short stop at Z to grab lunch, we soon arrived at the beach at 9am. The tide was high, and the ocean was muddy, but it was on its way out, which was the main thing. Low tide would be at 1:30pm, so we all had plenty of time to find something worthwhile.

Kamen told us how he wanted to find a nice fossil scampi that had been exposed by the elements. The fossil scampi (*Metanephrops motunauensis*) is a unique fossil Decapod currently only known from the Pliocene/Miocene deposits at Motunau beach. I wanted to find a fossil Penguin, and Tessa wanted to find a starfish or something else in the rock pools!

We left Jo to potter around near the car park, as her mobility on the large slippery rocks wasn't up to snuff, but we said we'd find some stuff for her to take home.

It wasn't long before I found the first fossil crab of the day. A pretty mashed-up *Trichopeltarion greggi* spider crab, which is one of the more common species on this beach to find. We continued on, and the finds kept rolling in! Small fragments and larger blocks of fossil bone was uncovered, especially by Kamen, who was the king of finding fossil bone and petrified wood, it seemed. Within the next hour of searching, I found my first keeper of the day. A large fossil scampi with only a couple of legs exposed. Perfect for preparing for a future date!

Tessa soon got bored and wandered off to the rock pools to look at the hermit crabs and starfish, meanwhile, Kamen and I took our fossil excursion seriously! We bumped into a few people on

the beach who were interested in the fossils, and I offered them a piece of Cetacean bone that I found as we chatted. We discussed how lovely Kaikoura was, and the marvellous shore



Tessa's find of the day. A wandering sea anemone within the rock-pools



Kamen with a *Trichopeltarion greggi* crab fossil next to Tessa with a fossil bone block that she loves dearly.

we were currently walking on. As we three ventured south more, we arrived at Kamens' honey hole. A place with an abundance of *Trichopeltarion greggi* crabs. Kamen has always been quite autistically enthusiastic in this area and is keen to find concretions to find his treasures. It wasn't Kamen or I who found the best find at this spot, though. Tessa found three crabs in one concretion in her first look around! Talk about beginner's luck. All I got was an injured finger from a misplaced whack from my rock hammer.

The tide was on its way in now, and we decided to make our way back. For some reason, I found an abundance of scampi this day, yet Kamen didn't find hardly any. Certainly not the prized specimen he was hoping for! As we headed back, Tessa deviated towards the rock pools again like a curious child. It's hard to believe she is our club's president when she would prefer to look at anemones rather than rocks! Kamen and I pottered slowly and spoke about various trips we wished to go to in the future. It was 3pm by the time we arrived at the car park.

Joanne was waiting patiently and curious about our finds. We gave her a few nice scampi, crabs and other odds

and sods that we picked up before finally calling it a day and heading home. Not before stopping at the petrol station for an ice cream first of course. Cream on.

- Tyler McBeth

One off club member deal

Bonz 'n' Stonz is offering a deal to carve your own Jade in Hokitika for \$120 per person during easter weekend only. It is normally \$200. If this interests you, you can phone Steve Gwaliasi at 03 755 6504 or email bonznstonzonline@gmail.com or at stevengwaliasi@gmail.com



April Auction

For April, we have more material from Julian Twiss. The rocks for auction will consist of New Zealand and overseas material of agate, petrified wood and minerals.

April Speakers

Rather unfortunately, we have had two speakers pull out this month due to other commitments, so we will be playing a few informative lapidary videos instead. The feature video will be from YouTuber “Michigan Rocks” who has recently done a few videos showing off his home-made sphere machine.

April Field Trip

None organised at this stage.

Zena Wilson had kindly offered to run a trip to the West Coast, however that has fallen through due to flooding and poor weather.

Welcome New Members

Christian Diprose, Matt McEwen, Lara McConshie and John & David Friend

Meet The CMLC

Julian Twiss (The Golden Man)



When and why did you join the CMLC?

I joined the club in 2013. I saw an agate collection from Terry Crumb and was enamoured by it. He no longer collects agates, but he showed me the agates on the beach

If you could choose one place to go rockhounding anywhere in the world, where would you go?

The Ashburton foothills, land of agates and petrified wood. Beautiful countries with immense views, but doesn't give its treasures up easily!

What is your favourite rock or mineral?

My favourite is agatised wood because it was once living. Mt Somers wood is my favourite type of wood, it has grain and you can see that it was alive at one time in history, and you can see range of colours. It's quite beautiful.

Do you have any hobbies outside of the rock related hobbies?

I do a lot of outdoors stuff. I have kept and breed livestock. I do hunting and fishing, gardening and all of the above

What do you like most about the CMLC?

Probably the camaraderie with like-minded people.

Monthly Competition Results for March

Some beautiful rocks were entered for the March competition, including an amazing Canterbury plume agate from Chris Thian, top quality Akatore rhodonite spheres that were expertly crafted by Robin Hall, and also some rare fossils from Canterbury.



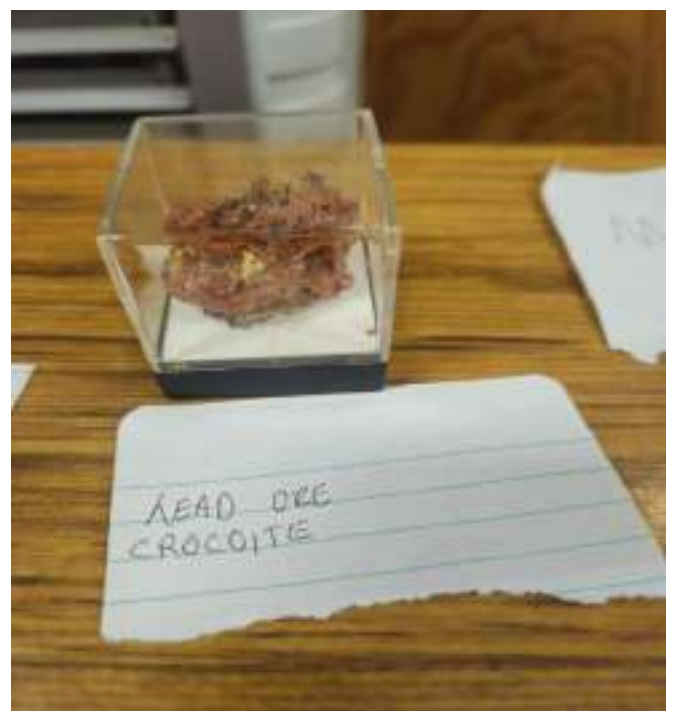
New Zealand agates don't come much better than this in my opinion!



Holding up a dolphin/Beaked whale Skull that me and Morne had been working on. This was my entry for bring n brag



Robin Hall is a fantastic sphere creator. Look at the gleam on this rhodonite from Akatore in the Otago region



The Wilsons are hard to beat with some of the material they enter!

Ranking	Lapidary own work: <i>Any sphere</i>	Fossil: <i>Something marine</i>	Mineral: <i>Any lead mineral</i>	Alphabet cup: <i>State or country starting with (Q,F)</i>	Agate Arena: <i>Tubes/Plumes</i>	Bring N Brag
1	Robin Hall	Tyler McBeth	Robin Hall	Ava Wilson	John Taylor	Tyler McBeth
2	Chris Thian	Chris Thian	Zena Wilson	Zena Wilson	Chris Thian	Robin Hall
3		Robin Hall	John Taylor	Robin Hall	Robin Hall	
4		John Taylor	Ava Wilson		Tyler McBeth	

Competitions for 2025/2026:

Category	Lapidary <u>own work</u>	Fossil	Mineral	Alphabet cup: <i>State or country starting with the corresponding letters</i>	Agate arena
Apr-26	Flint/Chert	Trilobite	Tourmaline	W, U	Any Otago
May-26	Carnelian	Something from Canterbury	Any form of calcite	Y, P, V	Any uncut nodule

March Auction

The March club auction was fantastic, with heaps of agates from all over New Zealand up for grabs. There were rough, polished and tumbled stones, and even the greatest VHS train set you'd ever see in your life. At least, that's what Liam thought!



Liam couldn't believe his luck!



Auctioneer John Taylor doing a good job



Left: Plenty of lots such as this ice cream container full of worked material. Stunning stuff!

Big River gold town

Big River is the site of an old gold town hidden in a sunny valley 14km south of Reefton.



A DOC hut sits on a hillside overlooking the community where a few buildings still stand. Other historic sites can be visited as short walks from here. There is much to see so it is worthwhile to allow an extra day. The town is accessible via the Big River Road from Reefton, making it popular on weekends with mountain bikers, motorcyclists, four wheel drive vehicles and even horse parties. Trampers can walk in from Waiuta in the southwest, or from State Highway 7 via Deep Creek. The prescribed DOC route is from Waiuta to Big River, and then out along Deep Creek. A more practical option would be to walk in from Waiuta and then to return the same way; this is probably the easiest option. The route described here is more challenging: walk in via Deep Creek, trudging 1-1½ hours up a spur; from Big River follow the road out to Merrijiggs and then turn onto an old miners' road over to Rainy Creek. The road down Rainy Creek is overgrown, which is unfortunate because it is otherwise easy walking. You come out 2km north of your starting point.

Warning: The Big River Road-Rainy Creek section is affected by mining developments. Track details may have changed or been obliterated.

Access

Eleven kilometres south of Reefton on State Highway 7 a bridge crosses Rough or Tobin Stream (labelled, nevertheless, as "Branch Stream" on the bridge itself). Immediately north of this bridge a small road is signposted, giving access to the Inangahua Swingbridge. Follow it to a pretty picnic area.

Inangahua Swingbridge-Inangahua River Ford: ¾-1 hr, very easy

Cross the bridge and follow a well-maintained track up stairs and alongside an old, dry water race. Tunnels can be seen passing through small spurs and old timbers are visible where once small gullies were bridged. A series of long staircases drop into and back out of side-creeks, but the walking is easy (although the traffic noise is disconcerting). Finally you drop down to the Inangahua River where a sign indicates a ford back to the highway (don't ford the river). Good swimming here.





Inangahua River Ford-Golden Lead Battery: 2-2½ hr, easy-moderate

The track from here is rougher and all the old bridges have been knocked down, resulting in awkward scrambles. Along Deep Creek it is easier and quicker to drop down to the riverbed than to follow the track, which struggles along the valley well above the river and has slipped magnificently at one point. Eventually the valley flattens out and the track crosses the Cumberland Battery site, where there is little to see. A swingbridge crosses Deep

Creek near here. If you have been following the riverbed, regain the track at this point. Fifteen minutes further on, a new wooden bridge crosses Golden Lead Creek over to the Golden Lead Battery, an excellent



Birdwood Ave, Beckenham, Christchurch.

Also: Akaroa and Queenstown



lunch stop (there's even a picnic table!). This battery is one of the best preserved in the region. The Golden Lead Mine is on the Big River Road on the hillside opposite and was once connected to this site by a cableway. Quartz was crushed here to extract the gold. A two minute track into the bush leads to a collapsed miner's hut. There is also a track up to the Big River Road.

Golden Lead Battery-Head of Golden Lead Creek: 1½-2 hr, easy-moderate

Collect some water and cross back over Golden Lead Creek. Follow the track to the right up a spur. The track climbs 440m in an unpleasant, continuous ascent. The forest changes as you climb, becoming lower and brighter, with rata, celery pine and cedar present; Kakariki could be heard overhead. At the top, the track sidles and then drops steeply back into Golden Lead Creek.

Golden Lead Creek-Big River: 1½ hr, easy

An old tramway starts here with narrow rails accompanying you along a muddy track for the next half hour. After the end of the rails, the track continues on an old wide road. This climbs gradually, past a side track to the site of an old sawmill, eventually crossing a ridge where a track leads to the poppet head sitting atop the Big River Mine. Here you have two choices:



- Continue down the road to the boilers in the valley beneath the mine. At one point the track crosses a scree slope, which is tailings from the mine on the ridge above.

- A challenging shortcut is to take the side track to the poppet head. From here you will find a thin steel cable which is useful on the five minute descent of the scree to the buildings below.

The remains of a cableway leading down to the battery at Big River can be seen in a nearby gully. It's twenty minutes to Big River, past an adit into the hillside on the right, the school site and a track to the left leading to "Tin Town," the single miners' huts. Ford Big River to the township site, which is largely bog. The hut is at the top of a short track on the low hillside opposite.

Big River

All that remain standing here are the battery, a series of cyanide tanks and two cottages. The cyanide process was employed in New Zealand from the turn of the century as a means to separate the gold from the quartz. It was twice as efficient as the previous method, which used mercury. The larger of the huts is Rooney's Cottage, and you can read all about Vera Rooney in the hut book. Frogs may be heard in the boggy flats and pipits are the dominant bird presence. Beside the track up to the hut grow tiny red sundews. About the size of a 50c piece, they supplement their mineral diet from the poor soil with live insects. Also visible are magnificent *Thelymitra cyanea*, beautiful blue sun orchids. The hut is quite new, with a sunny balcony. It has bunks for 35 but there is little living space and it gets cramped with far fewer occupants.



Big River DOC hut

From the hut, the poppet head and the scree around the Big River Mine are clearly visible on a distant ridge. If you stay an extra day at the hut, it may be worth walking back to the boilers. From here you can climb up the scree to the mine shaft. This is covered by a heavy grille, so you can have fun listening to the air rushing past pieces of tailings as you drop them back in. It is a long way down (535m). 100 000 ounces of gold came out of this little hole. The poppet head is a large red beech structure, reconstructed recently by the Forest Service. It once supported the cables that lifted ore out of the mine.



An hour's walk from the hut leads to the old dam, from which a wooden race once carried water to the Big River Battery. The track branches off the route to Waiuta after a few minutes. It is lightly used and trees have fallen at several points. You soon break out onto boggy tussock river flats with a poled route marked across them. The dam is located at a narrow point between rock outcrops at the junction of two streams. The environment is

wide, flat and rather surreal. Large, shiny flakes of muscovite mica along with tiny red garnets can be found in the pieces of granite here. The open plain upstream is a peat bog. Peat occurs in areas of poor drainage, where aerobic decomposition is not possible in the waterlogged soil. Organic matter builds up, becoming compressed as peat, and later, coal. The brown stain of the water also results from the peatland. Tannins are dissolved in the water, which is also the reason a cup of tea is brown.

Big River-Sir Francis Drake Mine Site: 2½-3 hr, very easy

The route out from Big River Hut follows the four wheel drive road upriver, ascending gently and following a ridge beside Carr Creek. The travel is fast and easy although dull, with rare views and no water. Large sections of low, regenerating manuka forest are passed through, and bellbirds may accompany you some of the way. After 1½ hours a short adit is passed. The ceilings of some of these adits are covered with (harmless) cave wetas, which come out at night to feed on the forest floor. Glow worms can also be found. After a further 20 minutes an old road leads off to the left and the northern side of this thoroughly probed hill while the Big River Road climbs to traverse the southern side. Twenty minutes later the A1 Adit is passed, quickly succeeded by the OK Adit. This passage leads to a number of old, wet tunnels that head far into the hillside. A track soon leads to the right descending one hour to the Golden Lead Battery, and another soon after leads up to the Golden Lead Mine on the left. Further mines are passed to the left and a road bends down also from the left. Mounds of tailings from the Drake Mine are obvious on the right. There is a small creek here.

Sir Francis Drake Mine Site-SH 7: 2-2½ hr, moderate + route unmarked + river crossing

It's ten minutes to the Merrijiggs Hotel site, a grassy space on the left, with the Scotia Mine site immediately after. An unused road branches off here to the right. Leave the Big River Road at this point. The old road continues as far as the Inangahua River and ensures a gentle gradient, if nothing else. Soon the track crosses the intersection of two new, wide mining roads on the diagonal. These roads are associated with the Macraes opencast mining operation, which threatens this landscape. The roads, needless to say, have been put through with no regard for the old roads or the trampers who use them. The track is rough on the other side and soon meets one of the roads again where a track branches leftward to Cornishtown. Our track crosses the new road and heads for Rainy Creek. When you turn onto Rainy Creek proper, the track disappears. The old road is overgrown with horopito, hook grass and tree ferns. But where you can find it, it is easier travel than the river bed. It can be found on the **true right** bank but becomes impenetrable quickly. Follow the creek down to a small two metre fall and try again on the true right. Occasional markers on trees provide little encouragement. A while later the road crosses to the **true left** and climbs a few metres above the river. A wide ledge is visible from the creekbed a few metres up on the left bank, and you can walk back to find the ford. The road continues on a high side, well above the river, for some time before dropping down again. An old moss-covered bridge is very nearly invisible, but quite rotten. The track becomes vague and eventually reappears on the true right, where it remains as a stripe of regrowth out to the Inangahua River. Ford the river, which is full of coal here, to the highway. It's only a couple of kilometres south to the Inangahua Swingbridge.

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