



The Rockblast

The Kitchener-Waterloo Gem and Mineral Newsletter

March 2007



President's Message

Yesterday the sun was shining and the snow melting. It felt like an early day of spring when the sap begins to flow. Maple syrup festivals should be just around the corner. But, I awoke this morning with the trees covered in snow and more heavy shovelling awaiting in the driveway. Alas, winter is still with us.

At January's meeting we learnt about synthetic minerals from club member Rob Allie, and heard a talk with many pictures on hiking the Grand Canyon, by yours truly. I had about 1000 pictures to choose from, and it was a challenge for me to reduce that to 200. However, we did manage to go home at a reasonable time.

In February, Stephanie Martin presented the minerals of Poland, with lots of excellent specimens on display. She also generously donated several specimens for the raffle. In addition, we heard about the healing powers of stones from Sandi Loytomaki, Holly Oaks. She gave several demonstrations and involved the audience in learning these techniques. Not everyone agrees with the scientific explanations, but for some these methods seem to offer results.

This past month, some of our members were roaming Arizona and attending the Tucson Gem and Mineral shows. We sent them with a mission to return with a box of raffle material, using club funds. They did not disappoint us. Gary Winkler returned with several boxes of quality specimens, all within budget. You can look forward to some excellent raffle items throughout 2007.

The club set up a table at Dinosaur Daze, Waterloo Town Square, in February. We displayed our banner, demonstrated micromounts, showed off some pretty specimens and provided some free rocks and minerals for kids. Though traffic was light, the effort was still worthwhile. Thanks to club members Gary W., Jeff, Jean, Aimee and Reiner for their help.

Coming up: our club gem and mineral show in May! Hope to see you at the March meeting!

-- Gary Partlow



Report from the Tucson Show

Several club members, including Peter Russell, Gary Winkler, and your newsletter editor, made it to the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show in late January and early February. Tucson is the rockhound's Mecca, and there are dozens of shows to attend.

This year's theme was minerals from Australia, and there were some great exhibits at the main show. Gary Winkler was sent with \$250 to buy items for our monthly raffle, and he picked up some real surprises.

At left is something you **won't** see at our raffle -- a

truly spectacular aquamarine cluster, about a foot across, from the Roz and Gene Meieran collection in Phoenix, Arizona. A display case containing their "recent acquisitions" was a highlight of the main show. (Their "recent acquisitions" would easily be the highlight of a major museum collection.)

At right club co-president Gary Winkler shows off his true collecting mania: spheres (or "balls" as



Gary insists on calling them.) These gigantic pieces of rose quartz were a little too large to fit in the rental car, so Gary was content to simply stand next to them and absorb their vibrations. He vibrated for some time afterwards, although it might have just been the coffee.

Keith Proctor is the proud owner of this spectacular rhodochrosite specimen, known as "Big Red", from the legendary Sweet Home Mine in Alma, Colorado. It is about two feet across, and consists of large gemmy rhombs of deep red rhodochrosite together with fluorite, quartz, and tetrahedrite.



Calendar of Events

February 24, 2007: Club member **Jeff Shallit** is giving two identical talks, at 11 AM and 2 PM, on “Asteroids and Meteorites”, in the “UWaterloosaurus” store inside Waterloo Town Square. Meteorites will be available to view. For more information, visit <http://www.uwaterloosaurus.uwaterloo.ca/> . Also, see the progress on the Parasauroloplus mural by **Peter Etril Snyder**. Free admission; kids and adults welcome.

March 3-4, 2007: the **Peterborough Gem, Mineral, and Fossil Show** will take place at the Evinrude Centre, 911 Monaghan Road, Peterborough, Ontario. Saturday, Sunday, 10-5. \$2 admission for adults, children free. For more information, contact Mark Stanley, (705) 639-2406.

March 17-18, 2007: the **Willowdale Gem and Mineral Club Annual Show** will be held at the Armour Heights Community Centre, 2140 Avenue Road, Toronto. 10 AM to 6 PM Saturday; 11 AM to 5 PM Sunday.

March 7 2007: **Nick Eyles**, U of T professor and author of *Ontario Rocks*, will speak at 7:30 PM at our club meeting, Waterloo Community Arts Centre, 25 Regina St. S., Waterloo. The mineral of the month is ruby, and **André Mongeon** will give a mini-talk. Members and guests welcome.

March 31 and April 1, 2007: the Brantford Lapidary Society hosts the **Paris show** at the Paris Fairgrounds, 139 Silver Street, Paris. Saturday & Sunday, 10 AM - 5 PM. Admission \$3 adults, \$1 children. For more information, contact Jenny, (519) 750-0953 or write turtlefeathers@brant.net .

April 4 2007: **Mike Skebo** will give a show-and-tell on micromounting. He may bring slides and tell us some quarry tales. 7:30 PM, Waterloo Community Arts Centre, 25 Regina St. S., Waterloo.

April 20-22, 2007: the **22nd Salon des pierres, minéraux et fossiles de Montréal** will take place at the Centre Pierre-Charbonneau, near Viau Metro stop, Montréal. Friday, 3 PM - 10 PM; Saturday, 10 AM - 7 PM; Sunday, 10 AM - 5 PM. Admission \$8, children 6-12, \$4.

May 5, 2007: our club will host the **Kitchener-Waterloo Gem and Mineral Show**, Waterloo Community Arts Centre (aka "The Button Factory"), 25 Regina St. S., Waterloo, Ontario, 10 AM - 4 PM. Rocks, minerals, fossils, gems, meteorites, and more. Free stuff for kids! Everyone welcome. Free admission!

Interesting Web Site to Visit

Here is an interesting rock-related web site:

MapMuse's Interactive Map of US Rock Shops: http://find.mapmuse.com/interest/rock_shops

Mystery of the Himalayas Solved?

The Himalayas include the world's highest mountains, including Mt. Everest at 8848 m. But why are the Himalayas so much taller than other mountain ranges on earth?

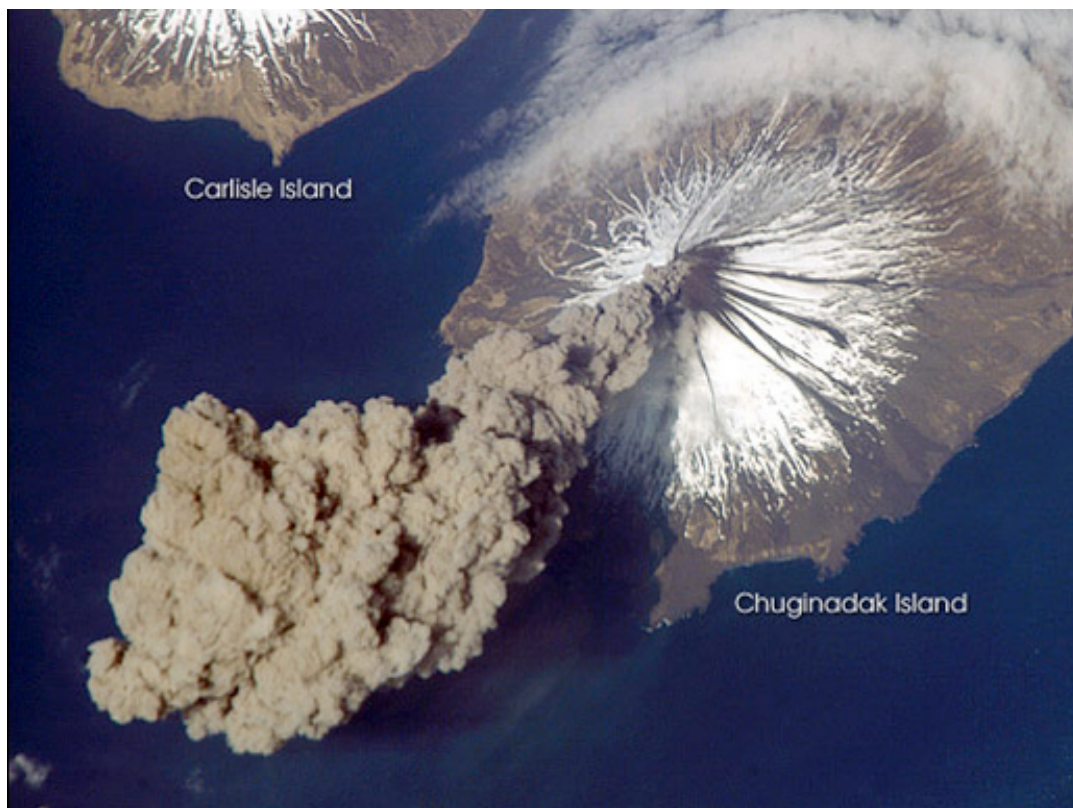
According to a [February 18 2007 article](#) in the British newspaper *The Independent*, the mystery has now been solved by Wang-Ping Chen of the University of Illinois. Using a network of 200 seismometers, Chen determined that the Himalayas had been “anchored” by a giant piece of the Earth's mantle that broke off an estimated 15 million years ago, thus confirming a 1989 prediction by Oxford geophysicist Philip England.

This giant piece of mantle is currently an estimated 670 km below the earth's surface and continues to fall at a rate of 10 cm/year.

Chen's article will appear in the *Journal of Geophysical Research*.

Mt. Cleveland Eruption Picture Captured by Astronaut

Mt. Cleveland, a volcano on Chuginadak Island in Alaska, erupted briefly on May 23 2006. Although the eruption lasted only two hours, it was captured by NASA astronaut Jeffrey Williams on board the International Space Shuttle. Mt. Cleveland is 1730m in height and is formed by the Pacific Plate moving under the North American Plate.



Peter Etril Snyder Dinosaur Painting Almost Finished



Local painter Peter Etril Snyder is almost finished his large mural of *Parasaurolophus* dinosaurs. Snyder has been working on the painting in a storefront in Waterloo Town Square (just down from the Shopper's Drug Mart). On Saturdays he is present to discuss the painting and its creation.

Snyder is probably best known for his depiction of rural Mennonite life; his website is

<http://www.snyder-gallery.com> .

Pictures of the mural's progress can be found at

<http://www.uwaterloosaurus.uwaterloo.ca/mural/index.html> .

On March 3 2007 the painting will be transferred to the University of Waterloo for display in the Earth Sciences Museum.



Our Club Table at the UWaterloosaurus Store Front

On February 17 our club had a table at the UWaterloosaurus store front in Waterloo Town Square. Club members who staffed the table included **Gary Winkler, Reiner Mielke, Jean Scott, Aimee Partlow, and Jeff Shallit**. At right **Gary Winkler** shows off a plate of blue fluorite crystals from Bingham, New Mexico.

Canadian Meteorite Offers Clues to Birth of Solar System

The Tagish Lake meteorite, found in the Yukon in 2000, may offer important clues about the birth of the solar system. According to an article published in the December 1 2006 issue of the journal *Science*, the meteorite contains organic globules that “probably originated as organic ice coatings on preexisting grains that were photochemically processed into refractory organic matter.”

The authors, Keiko Nakamura-Messenger, Scott Messenger, Lindsay P. Keller, Simon J. Clemett, and Michael E. Zolensky of the Johnson Space Center, write that “the globules resemble cometary carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen (CHON) particles, suggesting that such grains were important constituents of the solar system starting materials.”

Tagish Lake is a carbonaceous chondrite that fell on January 18, 2000. Specimens were collected shortly after the fall by Jim Brook, who had the foresight to collect them in a plastic bag and keep them frozen. According to a December 1 *Canadian Press* article, these samples may represent “the cleanest meteorite we have”.

Aboriginal Meteorite Hunter Finds Success in Manitoba

According to an article in the September/October issue of *explore* magazine, Derek Erstelle, an Aboriginal artist, has found 3 iron meteorites near his home in eastern Manitoba, without using a metal detector. He uses a binocular to explore gravel deposited by glaciers near Whiteshell. As is known from Antarctica, glacier ice flows can “concentrate” meteorites.

Kitchener-Waterloo Gem and Mineral Club

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