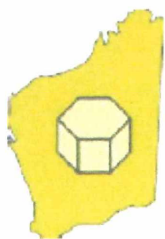


December 2008 Newsletter



Mineralogical Society of Western Australia Inc Newsletter

Editorial

This Newsletter is only as good as the contributions made for it. This month I have provided a report on the annual seminar in Zeehan as I was the only member from WA attending, if any members from other states discover any errors in the report please let me know so that I can make a correction in the next issue of the newsletter. In future issues I would like to see other people providing articles.

December Meeting 7:30 pm Wednesday December 3rd at the WA Lapidary Club rooms 31 Gladstone Street Rivervale.

Guest speaker: Margot Willing

Topic: *The story of "Tanzanite" – variety of the mineral Zoisite – (The gemstone of the 20th and 21st centuries)*



February 2009: Speaker: Ben Grguric "Pegmatite Minerals from the Barbara Mine"

The 31st Annual Seminar of the Joint Mineralogical Societies of Australasia

6th-7th November 2008, Zeehan, Tasmania, with field trips 3rd-5th November.

The weather forecast was for rain.

I travelled to Zeehan from Hobart with Bob Beattie on the Sunday before the seminar. The weather forecast was fine in the morning and rain in the afternoon. This rain did not eventuate.

On Monday to Mt Bischoff. We all met in Waratah where we had to purchase a Prospecting Licence valid for 12 months which allows us to collect rock and mineral specimens by hand. Then on to the collecting area. Mt Bischoff mine has set up a collecting area outside of the mine site where they have deposited large rocks containing minerals sought after by collectors. The mine replenishes this as necessary. In this area the main minerals which I saw were sulphides (pyrite and possibly pyrrhotite), fluorite and magnesite. When the opportunity came to go into the actual mine, some people decided to stay in the collecting area, claiming that was where the best specimens were. Inside the mine we found more sulphides including galena and sphalerite as well as more fluorite. I did not see any cassiterite. It threatened to rain all day but there was only very fine rain – not enough to get wet. After this 4 of us decided to go on to the Magnet mine. This is where the so-called chrome-cerussite comes from (apparently analysis has revealed that it does not contain any chromium). I was the only one amongst the 4 of us to find any cerussite, and that was only 1 very small piece, whereas Brett managed to find a number of pieces of crocoite.

Overall this was a very enjoyable day with many fine specimens collected.



**Sign for mineral collecting area
Mt Bischoff**



Collecting in collecting area



**Fluorite at Mt Bischoff
Collecting area**

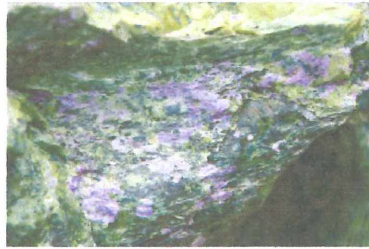


Mt Bischoff mine

On Tuesday we were supposed to go to the Avery mine and to the Adelaide mine. Unfortunately due to a change of management we were not able to get into the Avery mine, so instead it was organised for us to go to a stichtite deposit. Many fine specimens of stichtite in serpentinite were collected. At the Adelaide mine only 3 people could go in at a time, due to the narrowness of the the passageway – turning around was difficult.. It was interesting seeing the crocoite in the actual mine.



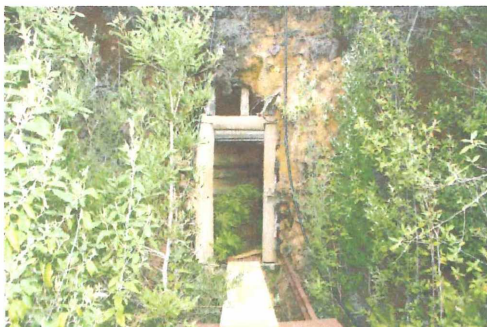
Track into stichtite deposit



**Stichtite (purple) in
serpentinite (green)**



**The piece I had to leave
behind**



Entrance to the Adelaide Mine



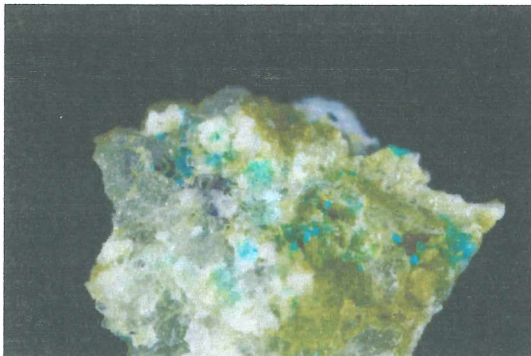
small crocoite crystals on the ground

Wednesday we went to the Mt Lyell copper mine, starting with a short talk about the mine. Here we managed to find small nodules of native copper coated with malachite, chalcocite, one of the copper sulphate minerals and chalcoprite.

The weather was fine on the Tuesday and Wednesday but on Thursday and Friday we had some quite heavy rain, but during this time we were inside listening to the seminars so it did not bother us. The seminars varied in the level of how technical they were – some just showed a series of photos of minerals while others discussed the internal crystal structures of minerals. All were very enjoyable. Minerals covered ranged from the well-known malachite, azurite, chalcopryite, cuprite and native copper to lesser known minerals (some of which you may not have heard of) such as pellouxite (a copper silver lead antimony sulphide), Francisite (a copper bismuth selenite), Wesselsite (a strontium copper silicate) and effenbergite (a barium copper silicate) as well as a number of others. One seminar was devoted to a new mineral Birchite (a copper cadmium phosphate sulphate named after Bill Birch) found at Broken Hill. There were 2 seminars devoted to items in the Australian Museum – one on copper minerals, and the other was on copper gem materials (the name was changed from minerals to materials so as to encompass synthetic materials such as “goldstone” (copper flakes in glass) and synthetic turquoise.

The annual dinner was held at the Heemskirk Motor Hotel and had about 80 attendees. The menu consisted of a choice between pumpkin soup and prawn cocktail for the entrée, roast lamb or oven roasted chicken breast for the main course and pavlova or chocolate mud cake for desert. It was noted that there was only one person from WA and only one person from New Zealand there.

The Zeehan gem and mineral fair was held on the Saturday and Sunday after the seminar. There were a number of people selling minerals and fossils. There were a lot of mineral and fossil specimens there not seen in shops or shows in Perth. Prices varied from about \$2 to several thousand dollars. Some of the minerals discussed in the seminars (such as the blue azurite suns from the Northern Territory) and the new mineral Birchite were also for sale there.



Birchite



Azurite suns

Specimens purchased at the Zeehan Gem and mineral fair illustrating minerals discussed in the seminars

A few of us went out to the Red Lead crocoite mine on the Saturday afternoon. This is an open cut crocoite mine and was very interesting to see. Unfortunately it was raining too heavy for me to take photos.

On the Saturday night there was a fireworks display. This was quite interesting, with part of the display being quite spectacular.