

FOSAGAMS Newsletter 8/2012

Everyone reading this newsletter has good reason to be proud.

MINERALOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (Cape Town Gem and Mineral Club)

The club is celebrating its 50th anniversary. According to the SA Lapidary Magazine (April 1967) the prime mover in the formation of the club was Mr. George Swanson. In 1961 he had his lawyer draw up a constitution. The club was found on January 5 1962.

PRETORIA GEM AND MINERAL CLUB

The club is celebrating its 55th year of existence. The present historical documents relating to the club state that the first meeting was held on July 22 1957. Dieter Schidlowsky, a founder member, is still a member of the club.

ROY BRAIN (NATAL MINERAL AND GEM SOCIETY) - winner of the gold medal at the USFG International Masters' Faceting Competition

Roy has sent the following information:



My initial interest was Gemology and not faceting so I studied Gemology with the IGS and to my horror once I had an idea what I was doing discovered that most of my “priceless” collection acquired on Bid or Buy was practically worthless. Unfortunately until this point I was as clueless as most of the general public about what makes a good Gemstone. I was then introduced to a dealer by a friend who wanted a number of Tourmalines authenticated and graded. The Tourmalines were excellent quality but were cut in Madagascar and the cutting work left much to be desired and I told him so. A few weeks later the dealer approached us and asked why we don't start cutting gemstones, quite a daunting task when one knows nothing about the process so we got a number of books searched the net and built some Cabochon making equipment. Our first assignment was 300 Turquoise and 200 Labradorite Cabochons, which to our surprise turned out extremely well. So for the next few months we did many Cabs for the dealer and had an enormous amount of fun. During this time we were offered a box of Faceting machine parts and some rough which we bought, this box of bits and pieces included a very old Imashi handset which looked promising. I expressed an interest in faceting and Colin decided it was now time to build a faceting machine, constructed from an inverted drill press using the side plates from computers as laps and Silicone Carbide as grit, I cut my first Gem. Again the result, even if I say so myself, was rather impressive for the crude equipment I was using. That was it, I was hooked and decided that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. A week or so later the dealer brought a few more Gems for grading, I showed him my attempt at faceting he was impressed and promptly handed over four pieces of Tanzanite. It was beautiful and excellent

quality rough so I had no intention of attempting this on the inverted Drill Press so I started the search for a Faceting Machine. The obvious choice was to import one and this fell flat as there was import licenses that needed to be got and I was told that it could take anything from six to eight weeks. I then started the search to see if there was anything available in South Africa and thankfully I made contact with Douw Steyn who had a Raytech Shaw for sale. Now with my newly acquired Faceting machine set up, Stunning rough to work with I began the task of faceting the first piece of Tanzanite, which started off as a 19.26ct piece of rough and ended up as a 16.79ct Barrion.

It was a nightmare to cut it, being only the second Gem I had ever cut and knowing that value of the rough I was a nervous wreck and broke out in hives all over my face but when the dealer produced a rapport (I did not feel comfortable giving a rapport on my cutting) he had got from the EGL down in Cape Town stating that the Gem was excellently cut I gained a tad of confidence and proceeded to cut the other three pieces. Sadly this particular dealer was not as honest as one would have hoped and diddled myself and two other people that I know of out of quite a lot of money. Needless to say he disappeared off the radar and was never seen again. For the next three years, slightly disillusioned by the Gem industry I cut only for friends and family.

Then in 2010 I made contact with Jeff Ford of the USFG who encouraged me to enter the USFG competition. I faceted my gem and sent it off to America. What a surprise when I got an email from Jeff saying that I had won in the Novice section with a score of 99.4315. It was at this point that I started making contact with other facetors and got to know Duncan Miller who has also been a great inspiration; he encouraged me to join a club and forwarded me the details of the Natal Mineral and Gem Society which Colin and I promptly joined. In 2011 I again entered the USFG Masters and also the African Faceting Challenge, I only achieved 6th in the USFG Masters with a score of 92.5259 and 2nd in the African Faceting Challenge. In the Masters I lost most of my marks due to grooved facets, I just could not get a satisfactory polish on this piece of Synthetic Ruby. I have since purchased a Darkside polishing lap manufactured by Gearloose and have obtained satisfactory results with the same piece of Synthetic Ruby. Incidentally I have not found anything that the Darkside does not polish with the exception of one or two facets which I then use a Batt Lap for.

Then along rolls 2011 and I decide to have another bash at the USFG Masters. It was not the easiest diagram to cut as some of the meets were a little tricky but I got the Gem cut and posted, then came the long wait for the results. On the 8th of August I got email from Jeff Ford simply stating "Are you wondering about your score?" needless to say I asked him if he was kidding, I was awaiting anxiously as I am not normally a very patient person. He then left me for another day to stew before letting me know that I had won the Masters. I scored 98.3315, Strangely enough my gem and score sheet have just arrived, literally five minutes ago after a very long detour in the postal system. I lost marks on this gem for a slight misalignment of a meet point and a slight scratch that would have put another meet out if I removed it and would also have taken the gem out of allowed tolerance.

I plan to enter the Grand Masters next year and at some point the Australian Open. There is a division in the Australian Open where a country can enter as a team and I think it would be great if South Africa could enter. We would need to put together a team of five entrants and if there are any other Facetors in South Africa that have qualified for entry in this competition I would be appreciative if they can make contact with me so that we can see if we can put together a team.

Here are pictures of the medals achieved so far and the 2012 gem.



Congratulations to all of you!

NATAL MINERAL AND GEM SOCIETY

This club has launched its website (nmags.co.za). This is a beautiful and artistic website. Do pay them a visit!

SA LAPIDARY MAGAZINE

Volume 44/2 has been distributed. Many thanks to Allan Fraser who once again produced a magazine which all of us can be proud of.

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