



Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland

www.minersoc.org

LONDON NEWS

Happy New Year to all *Elements* readers. That wish carries a special resonance for those affected by the current international recession, perhaps best illustrated by the financial woes of countries like Iceland, Greece and my native Ireland. Scientific publishers are not immune to the downturn, and it is likely that the effects will be most severe in terms of library cuts to journal subscriptions in 2011, the lifeblood of most learned societies.

I'm pleased to report, though, that the Mineralogical Society is facing the challenges head on. Economies have been made in printing and storage costs, and we have made changes to our financial management. These adjustments should allow the Society to continue to provide the services to which its members have become accustomed.

Outreach

Over the past three years, under the presidencies of Michael Carpenter and Richard Patrick and with the support of successive Councils, we have begun to establish firmer links with other societies within the UK and internationally. Our involvement with the EMU series is bearing fruit, and sales agreements with the Geological Society (London) and the Mineralogical Society of America ensure that these books can be sold to and read by as many professional and student scientists as possible.

Goldschmidt Conference

In 2011, the Mineralogical Society will publish the abstracts from the Goldschmidt Conference (Prague) in a supplementary issue of *Mineralogical Magazine*. Unlike previous years, these abstracts will be published on an open-access (electronic only) basis, making them available to all to search and use. This is a significant advance for the Society and for the Goldschmidt Conference.

GeoScienceWorld

The Society has been a member of the GeoScienceWorld (GSW) journal aggregate since its inception. We are represented at all the Advisory Council meetings, which represent a vital opportunity to learn about, and propose, developments in the product. GSW continues to buck the trend in library cuts with another increase in subscriptions – to 362 as of September 2010.

Max Hey Medal



Takeshi Kasama, Hey medallist, 2010

In November, the Max Hey Medal for 2010 was presented to Takeshi Kasama during the biannual President's Lunch. The citation was read by Richard Harrison, himself a former winner of the medal. The lunch is an occasion for friends and associates of the Society to get together to talk about its affairs, and for the President and Council to thank those who serve the organization so well.



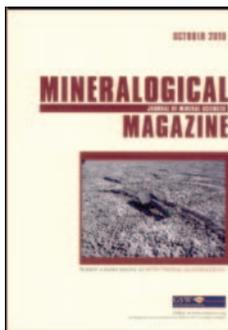
Nature's Treasures

Council has also seen fit to support some "miner-evangelical" work, via our Nature's Treasures meetings (see a report on the third such meeting, next page and online) and now through the production of materials suitable for teaching secondary school students (up to the age of 16). This, while not fund-generating in itself, is a way to help preserve our discipline for the future.

Website Rebuilt

The Society's new website is almost complete, and the online bookshop will soon be up and running. This will be a drastic improvement in terms of usability and presentation. Visit www.minersoc.org and let us know what you think. Don't forget to buy a book while you're there!

Mineralogical Magazine



In December 2010, the Society appointed two new joint principal editors for *Mineralogical Magazine*: Peter Williams and Roger Mitchell. Four candidates kindly came forward for an interview, and any two of the four could have been elected to the post. Williams and Mitchell will initially participate in a six-month handover period with the current editor, Mark Welch, and then they will serve for an initial term of three years. The appointments may be renewed. Good luck and many thanks to them both for taking on this task.

Chartered Status

At the time of writing, our application to become a licensed body of the Science Council is being considered. This deliberation will determine whether the Society can begin to award chartered status to its members. Proposed developments in the scheme may mean that we will be able to award different levels of chartered status; that is, those who are studying the subject (or a related one) would be able to apply for a basic level of chartership and, as they continue in their careers and as members of the Society, rise to full chartered status. This project will be good for members and will be beneficial to the Society in terms of growing its membership.

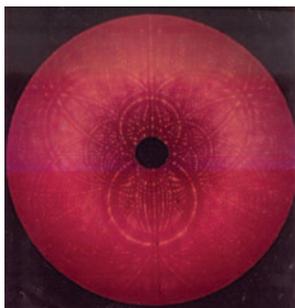
In Conclusion

So, in spite of my downbeat opening, I am very optimistic about the future of our Society, our conferences and our publications. Our continued success depends on the support of members and in particular those willing to give of their time in service of the Society: Councillors, members of the special interest group committees, departmental representatives, editors, members of the editorial boards, conference organizers, and others who do unsung work, like proofreading journal and book proofs. The willingness of all these people is heartening and is ultimately what will secure our future.

Kevin Murphy
Executive Director

NATURE'S TREASURES 3 GOES FOR GOLD!

The third meeting in the Nature's Treasures series was held in London on Sunday, 12 December 2010. Seven speakers served up a day of great scientific entertainment to an enthusiastic audience of 105 people, which included youngsters in their early teens and a few youngsters whose teens are long since past but whose enthusiasm matched that of their younger counterparts.



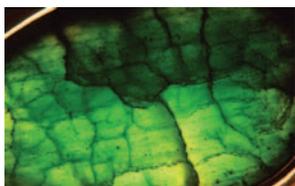
Synchrotron image

The day began with a session of three talks on how we analyse minerals and gems. Fred Mosselmans spoke about the Diamond Synchrotron in Oxfordshire, the largest national synchrotron facility in Europe. Fred's introduction to the history of synchrotron radiation was followed by an animated (both Fred and the images were animated!) guided tour of the facility.



Peter Treloar

Pete Treloar, a mineral chemist, spoke about how new research at Kingston University is being used to test precious materials in a non-destructive way. Pete promises reduced prices for trade analyses when the service moves into the commercial realm!



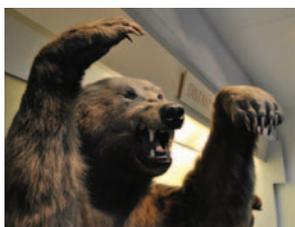
Dyed quartz

Doug Garrod, a staff member at Gem-A, gave a beautifully illustrated talk on the myriad ways in which flawed gemstones are treated to enhance their appearance (and of course their value).



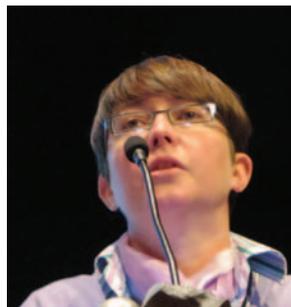
Gold panning at Nature's Treasures 3

During the lunch break, Ron Callender gave an enthusiastically attended demonstration of gold panning. Many of the delegates tried their hands at the carefully salted sample provided by Ron. Several budding prospectors were born! After the lunch break, the talks were more general in nature. Ron Callender spoke about the history of gold in the UK, with an emphasis on his native Scotland. Panning devices, ably demonstrated during the lunchtime display, were shown being used in the field, and Ron gave an endearing history of the Baile an Or gold rush of 1869.



Bear claws have been worn as jewellery for centuries.

Maggie Campbell Pedersen, an organic-gems specialist, gave a wonderful description of the sources and uses of natural (and some synthetic) copals, amber and ivory. Maggie's original career was as a commercial photographer of gems for the gem press, and this skill was brought to bear in a delightfully illustrated talk.



Caroline Smith

The third talk of the afternoon session – an introduction to meteorites – was given by Caroline Smith of London's Natural History Museum. This talk featured stunning images, still and moving, of meteorites in the field and was further enhanced by the passing around of two meteorite samples from the museum's collection.



Arsenic-laced water used for irrigation

The final talk, by hydrogeologist Willy Burgess of University College London, concerned the issue of arsenic, with a special focus on the Bay of Bengal. This topic has been highlighted at numerous Society conferences in the past, and it was presented wonderfully by Willy. This subject does not receive sufficient attention

in the world's media, in spite of the fact that tens of millions of people live under the threat of poisoning from drinking water, often laced with arsenic at levels that are many times greater than the World Health Organization's recommended limit of 10 ppb.

During the breaks, delegates enjoyed viewing displays of minerals belonging to Richard Tayler, the minerals and gems of Marcus McCallum, the Virtual Microscope demonstrated by its developer, Andy Tindle of the Open University, and displays by the societies which co-organized the event: Gem-A, the Russell Society and of course the Mineralogical Society.



Demonstration of the 'Virtual Microscope' by Ian Tindle (www.open.ac.uk/earth-research/tindle/aAGT/AGT_Home_2010/VM_Team.html)

The talks (audio) and slides (some removed for copyright reasons) of most of the presentations are available for download from the Mineralogical Society meetings archive pages at www.minersoc.org/pages/meetings/nature3/nature3-archive.html.

We are pleased to report that there are plans for a Nature's Treasures 4. The next meeting in the series will probably be held in the spring of 2012 at a new venue. The convenors are very grateful for support from the Bassil Shippam & Alford Trust and from the Curry Fund of the Geologists' Association, who subsidized the attendance of the younger members of the audience.