

# Newsletter

Issue 04 April 2024



*Mourne Mountains,  
Northern Ireland*

## *From the Editor*

Welcome to the fourth edition of the SMLS Newsletter. Spring is finally here and we can look forward to tulips and chocolate eggs!

Thank you to all this month's contributors, I hope you enjoy the selection and we look forward to seeing you at the club show and tell meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> April.

*Samantha*

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## *Inside this issue*

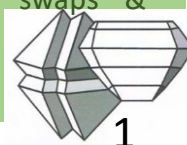
Pg2 – From the Chair

Pg3 – Events, a roundup of what's on over the next couple of months

Pg4-5 – News, a selection of articles covering, minerals, fossils, gemstones and more

Pg6-14 - Articles, topical selection for your interest

Pg15-17 – Sales, swaps & wants



## *From the Chair*



Dear Members,

Welcome to the spring edition of the SMLS newsletter. Apart from the flowers and the slightly warmer weather spring was also the start of the local fieldtrips to Sheppey and Shakespear Cliff, details below. We have also enjoyed a zoom talk on Minerals of Yorkshire by Steve Warren and a return to our joint zoom/face to face meetings with Life in the Eocene, evidence from the London Clay from Margaret Collinson. For those that missed Steve's talk a link to the recording in Dropbox is in the newsletter. As Margaret's talk contained, as yet unpublished research findings, we were asked not to record the talk.

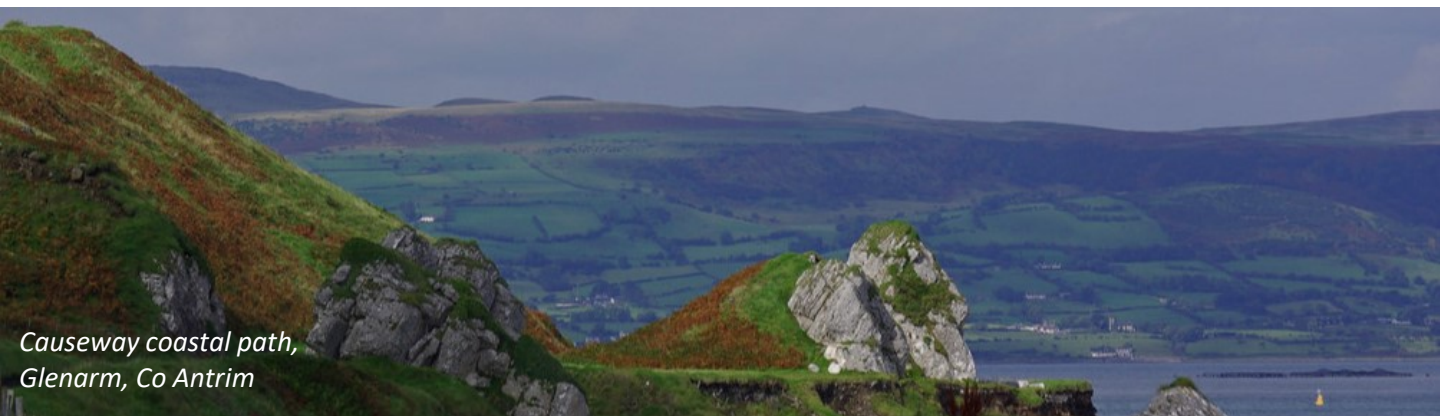
As a reminder, the next meeting on April 5th is the Members evening with a 'show and tell' theme, refreshments and an invitation to bring along any minerals sales or mineral swaps. Also a reminder that the May meeting by Norman Moles on Minerals of Northern Ireland is actually on Friday 26th April to avoid a conflict with the SMLS fieldtrip to Wanlockhead and Skye.

The first committee meeting of the year was held in March and is the starting point for the November Show planning, it does take some effort to organise! We now have a draft outline for the talks and displays and can begin work on preparing the show program, this will get its first use at the Lindfield Summer Fair in June. Although November is a very long way off and lots of summer to enjoy first I would ask if you can mark your calendar and volunteer as a helper for the show day, this can be part of the day or the whole day, it's great fun and relies on your help to be successful.

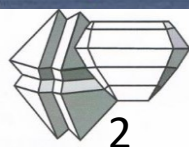
The Committee is also restarting the discussions regarding the future of SMLS, essentially looking at options for the short, medium and longer term.

I look forward to seeing you at the Members evening on 5th April

*Colin*



*Causeway coastal path,  
Glenarm, Co Antrim*



# Events

23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> March – [Rock and Gem](#), Brighton

5<sup>th</sup> April SMLS Club meeting in person, no zoom

12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> April – Annual Russell Society Meeting

20<sup>th</sup> April – Yorkshire Mineral & Fossil Fair

26<sup>th</sup> April – SMLS Club meeting in person, Minerals of Northern Ireland, Norman Moles, zoom details [here](#)

1<sup>st</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> May – Field Trip Wanlockhead & Skye

12<sup>th</sup> May – Oxford Mineral Show

7<sup>th</sup> June – SMLS club meeting Novel Lapidary Commissions, John White, zoom details [here](#)

## Next Club Meeting – Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April

The evening will be a members show and tell, with food and drink and an opportunity to purchase minerals

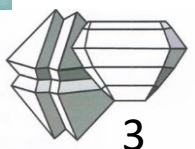


### *In case you missed it*

The recordings of the latest club meetings can be found below;

Wanlockhead by Jon Evans - [here](#)

Yorkshire Dales by Steve Warren -- [here](#)





Details of a silicified fern fossil. Credit: Geoff Thompson/Queensland Museum

## Fossils

240 million year old dragon [fossil](#)

30 million year old plant [fossils](#)

NHM - Seven greatest dinosaur [discoveries](#)

The Tridentinosaurus [counterfeit](#)

Rare 3D tree [fossils](#)

French site of worldwide [importance](#)

BBC fossil round [up](#)

Fossils shine light on kelp [forests](#)

Fossil eyes of [caddisflies](#)

Earth's earliest forest revealed in Somerset [fossils](#)

Fossil named 'Attenborough's strange bird' was the first in its kind without [teeth](#)

Alaska dinosaur tracks reveal a lush, wet [environment](#)

## Minerals & Rocks

Ghosts of Cornish miners and the lithium [revolution](#)

Asbestos the strange past of the magic [mineral](#)

Buying ethically sourced crystals and [gemstones](#)

Rob Lavinsky donates massive [stibnite](#)

Old labels – show, discuss, [translate](#)

Sugar fluorite from China, [real?](#)

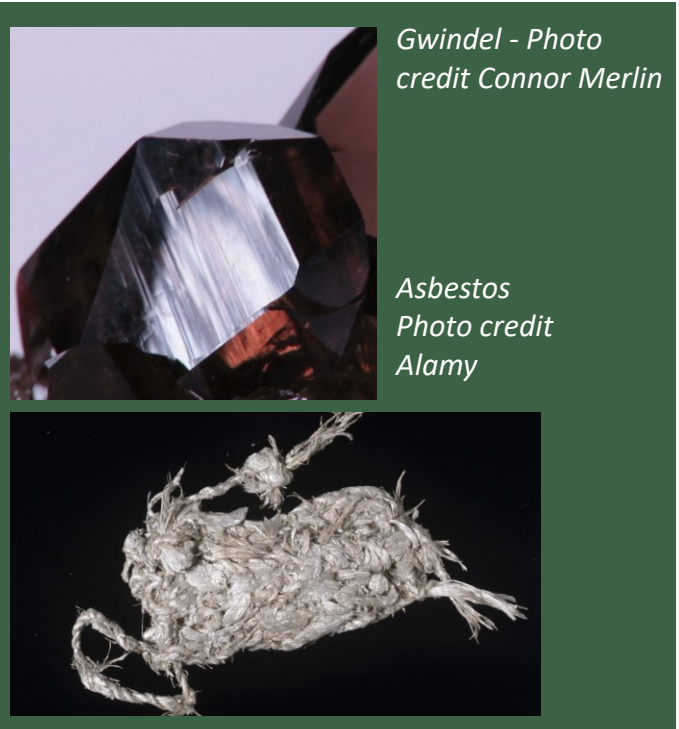
Campaign to save mineralogy at Cardiff National [Museum](#)

Identifying [gwindels](#)

Synthetic and manmade [minerals](#)

Fine mineral [photography](#)

Turquoise Hill – a profile of the Cerrillos Turquoise [Mines](#)



## Gems & Lapidary

The 69<sup>th</sup> Gems & Jewellery Fair [Bangkok](#)

Lab grown diamond boom is [over](#)

The three muses gem [cut](#)

A guide to Belle Epoque [jewellery](#)

Faceting [anorthite](#)

All about [chrysoberyl](#)

Interview with Justin Prim and Victoria [Raynaud](#)

Modern lapidary [equipment](#)

Behind the Gavel: Violaine d'Astorg/[Christies](#)



## Something to share?

If you have read or watched something interesting email it to The Editor at [smlsnews72@gmail.com](mailto:smlsnews72@gmail.com) and it will be considered for future issues.

Use Ctrl + Click on the underlined text to link straight to the articles.

## Videos & Podcasts

Young Guns opal hunters latest [adventure](#)

When Jewellery Becomes Art, Michael [Robinson](#)



## Objects of Vertu - Faberge

When you hear the word Faberge, you often think of glorious jewelled eggs, perfect for Easter, but did you know Faberge created so many other wonderful objects?

See below for a quick introduction to the wonderful world of Faberge.

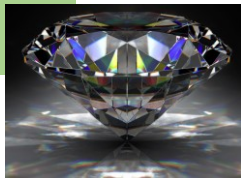
The History of [Faberge](#)

The story behind the Game of Thrones [Egg](#) (above)

The journey of a Faberge [Egg](#)

The 20 most expensive eggs of all [time](#)





## April is for Diamond

Traditionally Diamond is the stone for those born in April, more recently Rock Crystal has been helpfully introduced as an alternative.

Derivation - Old French diamant, from Medieval Latin diamantem, from Vulgar Latin \*admantem (which was subsequently altered by influence of the many Greek words in dia-), from Latin adamantem "the hardest metal," later, "diamond," from Greek adamas (genitive adamantos), name of a hypothetical hardest material, noun use of an adjective meaning "unbreakable, inflexible," a word of uncertain origin, well that's simple then.....

The [Cullinan](#) remains the largest gem quality rough diamond ever found at 3106cts.



Wells and the diamond

Natural diamonds have had a bit of a rough time lately, the explosion in lab created diamonds and the fact that they are 80% cheaper than natural ones has seen natural diamond prices freefall. Tough times for diamond dealers and what of the miners who rely on natural stones for an income and livelihood?

Sanctions on Russia, who supplied 38% of the diamond market prior to the war in Europe have also had an impact, although many believe that the stones are just going out of Russia via India with a different label on them.

All about diamonds from [GIA](#)



## Mineral Identification Competition (3)

How good are your mineral identification skills? Take part for a chance to win a specimen, points will be accumulated over the year. Identity = 2 points, Country = 1 point, specific locality = 1 point. Email answers to [smlsnews72@gmail.com](mailto:smlsnews72@gmail.com)

Specimen 02 answers were – Scheelite from China



Joint 1<sup>st</sup> place – Rob Tripp/Robert Turner

There is still time to catch them up though!

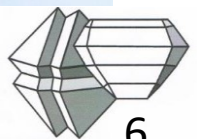
## Specimen 03



## Chuckle Corner

WHY WASN'T THE GEOLOGIST HUNGRY?

THEY'D LOST THEIR APATITE.



## Kempton Park Rock and Gem Show

I have been going to this show for more than twenty years as a mineral collector and the last two as a dealer. I felt an article was in order because if you mention Rock and Gem these days to any mineral collector you are typically met with wrinkled noses and it is dismissed as a place that any serious collector would go to. I would like to challenge that belief!

Let's be honest, it has changed a lot, many of the dealers we remember have now retired and there are less mineral dealers. The name is now Rock and Gem and Bead and there are a lot of beads and polished hardstone material aimed at the crystal healing type customers. This is perhaps no surprise since the wellbeing market is expanding and the mineral collecting market is shrinking.

However if you skip past all the things you are not interested in is there enough to interest a mineral collector? I did a show walk-about and this is what I found.

Dave from Harlequin Minerals had a fantastic selection of pieces, plenty to covet and spend your cash on.



Rod always has an eclectic mix, including a beautiful pair of Edar Oberstein geodes and a whopper of a German amethyst geode.



Charlie Bexfield always has an interesting selection of small but perfect pieces.



Vince had a beautiful quartz and pyrite cluster.



Vince is an avid collector of very fine pieces, he will bring amazing pieces to the show if asked personally. He always has special bits hidden away just for discerning customers.



Joe from Agate Bands had some cracking halite specimens, amongst very fine pieces.



Kamran never disappoints with his fine heulandites from India and I really did want that spinel in matrix (a lot).



Precious Gems from the Himalayas had several tables of interesting pieces.

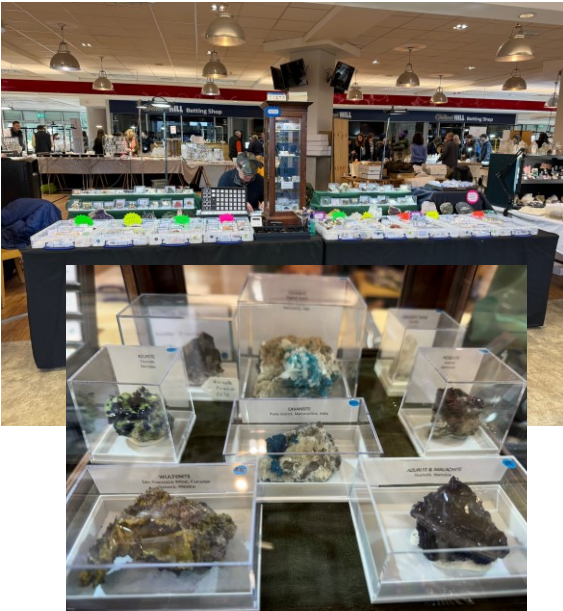




There were some really large and perfect Himalayan quartz clusters. This was a whopper.....



Lastly, I had a lot of interesting and fine material! Including pictured below some wulfenite, azurite, roselite and cavansite.



There are of course other dealers selling mineral specimens amongst agate slices and the like, this tourmaline was getting a lot of interest.



I have just included the dealers who mostly sell minerals, but there are others dotted around with more of a mix.

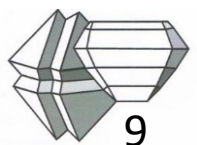
The question remains “is it worth going or is it just a load of old beads?!”

I may be a bit biased, but honestly I think you can still find some cracking pieces amongst all the beads, you just have to hone in on the minerals.

Next show at Kempton is 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> July. I have not been to many of the others but here is the Rock and Gem schedule.

- 13th & 14th April 2024 National Agricultural Centre Stoneleigh CV8 2LZ
  - 20th & 21st April 2024 Newark Showground NG24 2NY
- 27th & 28th April 2024 Newmarket Rowley Mile Racecourse CB8 0TF
  - 11th & 12th May 2024 Chepstow Racecourse NP16 6BE
  - 18th & 19th May 2024 Bath & West Showground BA4 6QN
    - 1st & 2nd June Westpoint Arena EX5 1DJ
    - 8th & 9th June Worcester Racecourse WR1 3EJ
    - 6th & 7th July 2024 Windsor Racecourse SL4 5EZ
  - 20th & 21st July 2024 Newcastle Racecourse NE3 5HP
  - 27th & 28th July 2024 Kempton Park Racecourse TW16 5AQ
  - 3rd & 4th August 2024 Royal Welsh Showground LD2 3SY
    - 10th & 11th August 2024 The Hop Farm TN12 6QF
  - 17th & 18th August 2024 The Pavilions Harrogate HG2 8NZ
- 31st August & 1st September 2024 Newmarket Rowley Mile Racecourse CB8 0TF
  - 14th & 15th September 2024 Brockenhurst Village Hall SO42 7RY
  - 21st & 22nd September 2024 Newark Showground NG24 2NY
  - 28th & 29th September 2024 Nantwich Civic Hall CW5 5DG
- 19th & 20th October National Agricultural Centre Stoneleigh CV8 2LZ
  - 26th & 27th October Newton Abbot Racecourse TQ12 3AF
- 9th & 10th November 2024 Kempton Park Racecourse TW16 5AQ
  - 16th & 17th November Brighton Racecourse BN2 9XZ

Link to the Rock and Gem website [here](#)



## Sri Lanka – In Search of Gems

Sri Lanka, population 22 million and an island the size of just half of England. The first thing that strikes you as you leave the airport is how wonderfully green and lush everywhere is. The second thing is how good the main roads are compared to the UK! The third thing is the heat, little below 33 degrees the entire time we were there and that was the lowest it gets.

It was our honeymoon, so for the most part we were tourists, seeing the sights, eating rice and curry and buzzing about in tuk tuks. I'll not cover that here. We did have some fun at a gem market, read on if you are interested.

Our original plans were to spend a few days in Ratnapura (translation-city of gems) but on arrival we learnt that due to unseasonal amounts of rain the mines were flooded and there was little point in going because not much was happening. This was really disappointing as we had planned to visit mines and see artisanal workers cutting and treating stones. We also thought it was the main trading centre for gemstones.

It turned out that Ratnapura is the main trading centre for rough material these days and the main trading centre for cut stones is in a town on the coast called Beruwala. We changed our plans and headed to the coast. We learnt that the gem market is open every Wednesday and Saturday, so we arranged to meet a broker at the market (for translation and bartering) and headed off with Rochan, our tuk Rocha man in the area.

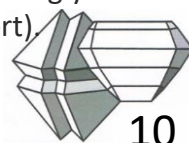
We were a little surprised when we found the roads surrounding the China Fort area closed to traffic.



Some local negotiation got us through the barriers and it soon became clear that this was no ordinary market. A large area of the city was completely closed for the gem market, there were no stalls just hundreds of men gathering and milling in the streets. On arrival I rang Henry our broker, who informed us he was going to be an hour and a half late. This was tricky because the arrival of two white "tourists" and one of them a "woman" had not gone unnoticed. We were already being circled as fair game. The option of waiting for our broker in a coffee shop was thwarted by the fact that none of them were open yet.

A local who spoke good English saw our predicament and suggested that we could wait in his office until our broker arrived. This was fortunate because an office with AC would be very welcome in the heat but unfortunate because the only offices in the area were gem dealers. Once you are in one it is very Rocha hard to get out and I knew what was likely to happen next. We really had no choice so headed off with Nasmin. Dealers saw and followed us, we soon had an entourage.

Before we sat down stones were appearing. The dealers and brokers packed the room and were queuing down the stairs to the street. A mountain of flip flops was outside the door. For the next seven hours we examined stones. The queue never ended and fuel was ginger biscuits and coffee. We saw an amazing variety of stones, unsurprisingly a lot of sapphires (Sri Lanka's main export).



I had expected to be tested by the dealers and presented with glass and synthetics but there was only one “iffy” pair toward the end of the day. Many high quality stones, mostly unheated and they knew their stones and they knew how to sell!

At times you have twenty people thrusting stones at you, its hard to keep track of what stone belongs to who. You have to stay calm.

We were not short of choice by a long way. Our main challenge was the “unexpected” Chinese factor. Since Covid Chinese buyers have been buying everything at hugely inflated prices because they can sell at high prices to their own market. Many other buyers are now priced out of the market. Stones I could buy for £80 per carat in the UK were selling for £800 per carat at trade prices. Really good for the owners and dealers but so frustrating for us.

Bartering is done by means of two calculators, you work out what you want to pay for the stone in rupees then divide by four and show that number on the calculator to the dealer. He puts his number on his calculator, which is always ridiculously high and you go back and forth like that. A sense of humour helps. Despite my magpie tendencies I did stick to my pricing, I had to let a lot of stones go back out to the market. I did manage to acquire some though! (see below)



At the end of the day we were pleased that we had survived, not dropped any stones on the floor or done anything to bely the fact that before then we had been gem market virgins.

I had done a significant amount of research on gem buying before going to Sri Lanka but nothing on earth can prepare you for the China Fort Experience. It was amazing!



### *A word about mineral specimens*

It is illegal to export rough material which makes buying mineral specimens difficult. The Government Gem Authority is very “active” and profitable. Everywhere we went I tried to find minerals, apart from battered bits of quartz and “rough” gem materials there was nothing. I was offered the tiniest sapphire crystal ever for a ridiculous amount of money. Next time I hope to fare better with mineral specimens in Ratnapura.

*Samantha*

## Journey to the Rose Quartz Mountains

The Rose Quartz Mountain Range – referred to as the Jathika Namal Uyana by the locals – is a scenic series of pink quartz mountains that are covered in a verdant stretch of ironwood forests – the largest collection of such forests found in Sri Lanka. The ironwood tree is actually endemic to Sri Lanka, so the site is extremely important from a conservation standpoint as well.

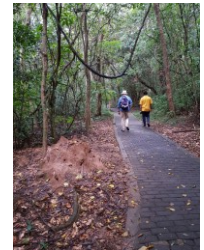
The Rose Quartz Mountain Range has a history that spans back over 550 million years. The forests that cover it are relatively recent addition by comparison. It is believed that the ironwood forest was first planted during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa in the 8th century AD. The forest was to serve as a sanctuary for the newly arrived Buddhist monks from India. Its purpose shifted in later centuries with certain rulers turning it into a prison camp where criminals would have to continuously work by planting Na trees.



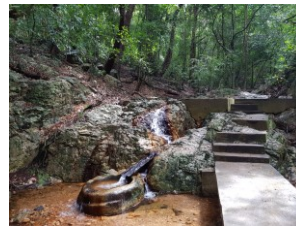
Not often mentioned in tourist literature, but to a rockhound it was a must do on our tour of the area between Sigiriya and Anuradhapura. We set off with our host and guide for the day Lakmal. A few miles out from our destination the road was blocked by a large pile of boulders. Helpfully placed to prevent people driving into the river, since most of the road had fallen into the river. The remaining bit of road was just wide enough to walk on or go across on a motorbike. We left the car and continued on foot unsure of how we would travel the rest of the way. Not deterred we flagged down a random man on a motorbike and asked him to phone a friend with a tuk Sigiriya. He obliged and the tuk Sigiriya guy met us from the



...other direction to continue our journey. Sometime later we arrived at the Forest of Na, purchased tickets and set off into the jungle.



We didn't see anyone else on our trek, the jungle was quiet. I had hoped to see the monk who lived in the jungle but he was busy meditating. As treks go it was fairly short and easy, a path had recently been laid for most of the way.



At the end of the track is a short scramble over boulders and you emerge onto the mountains. The first thing you notice is that they are not really pink like the oversaturated photos online! Quartz is a “fader” and the entire area is more of a grey with a bit of pink here and there. Apparently if you dig down a few metres it is more pink, but it is illegal to dig or take any quartz away so we had to satisfy ourselves with a few photos before making our way back. We were very pleased with ourselves for getting to the largest rose quartz deposit in Southern Asia and even more pleased that the tuk Sigiriya guy came back for us!

**Samantha**



## Field Trip to Shakespear Cliff 16th March, by Colin Brough



Pete, Mike, Rob, Claudia and me enjoying a spring day at Shakespear Cliff (that's the cliff in the background)



Shakespear Cliff and beach is a short walk along the promenade from Samphire Hoe Country Park. We have been there is some pretty awful weather, cold, wind and rain, but on this occasion it was a glorious spring day.

The challenge is to find Pyrite and Marcasite within the Grey Marl that is exposed at sea level. This is in the cliff but also extends out at low tide for maybe 20m-30m beyond the shingle beach. As well as its famous name it is also the point with the shortest distance to France and the cliffs at Calais can easily be seen across the channel.

Why its name? - Shakespeare was at Dover, in 1597, to perform some of his plays with his travelling players. Being struck by the drama of the local cliffs and their setting, he included the locality in King Lear Act IV Scene VI where the characters (Edgar and Gloucester) are awestruck by the scale of the landscape. Looking down, Edgar is moved to say:

"How fearful and dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!....."

"The fishermen, that walk upon the beach, appear like mice.....almost too small for sight."

Of course, back in 1597 the cliff was probably 3-4 times higher than it is today due to erosion, so not as dramatic as in Shakespeare days. Marcasite, a polymorph of Iron Sulphide, forms in beautiful twinned arrow head sprays in the marl, usually very close to narrow pyrite veins running out from the cliff. It can also be found in the cliff marl as balls, some Pyrite but some with Pyrite and Marcasite. The Marcasite is easily distinguished by its shape but also by its colour with Pyrite (fools gold) being gold and Marcasite a bright steel colour.

But it is not so easy to see. I managed to find two samples on the day, one fell apart during the HCl etching to remove the Marl but the second one survived, see pictures below.

You have to look very closely for small steel like points sticking out of the Marl. You then have to carefully chisel out a ring of marl around the specimen, approx. 8cm-10cm diameter and 8cm deep to get underneath the spray. This is not so easy and the marl easily breaks in the wrong place. The spray below broke in half during extraction but still makes a nice specimen.



*Small arrow head, steel coloured tip of a Marcasite spray*

*The back of the spray had broken during extraction but top half becoming visible during the HCl etch*



*Marcasite spray, 4cm across ready for the cabinet. But they do decay and may only survive for 2-3 years*

## Field Trip to Sheppey, 17th February by Colin Brough

You need the winter rain to cause landslips in the clay and it also to wash out the Baryte nodules (Concretions) onto the beach. But the unpleasant side effect of this a thick layer of sticky clay covering the beach and a danger of getting stuck if you venture into the deeper areas of clay.

Fortunately, the day was bright and sunny but it was heavy going in the clay, there is approx. a 1.5 mile walk along the beach to the main collecting site but you can find Baryte concretions on the way, washed along the beach by the tide, also Selenite crystals and plenty of pyritised fossils. The recent talk by Margaret Collinson showed some nice pictures of what you can find.

Most of the concretions are phosphates and these were collected in the early 1900's for fertiliser. The Calcareous Baryte concretion band occurs high up in the cliff and they are a ready/orange colour. The band is only present beyond Warden Point and are brought down by a huge rotational landslip that has been active for more than 20years, but noticeably slowing down.



*Almost there, but a pretty desolate spot*



*First Sheppey Baryte Rose for Emma and a very nice Selenite star*



*Made it to the beach, just a mile and a half to walk! Mike, Robert, Catherine, Dave, Emma, Chris and me.*

*Emma was also successful in finding half of a large shark vertebra, not sure what species*



*Lovely Baryte rose from Robert*

## ***Sales, Wants & Swaps – new feature***

If you would like to post in this section about about a specimen that you “want” or one you are “selling” or would like to “swap”, please get in touch. You do not have to be a dealer to take part in this section.

### ***Highlighted specimens for sale from Steetley Minerals***

Witherite, Nentsberry Hags Mine, Alston Moor, England. Ref 2464

<https://www.steetleyminerals.com/2464-witherite.html>



Wulfenite, San Francisco mine, Mexico. Ref. 2410

<https://www.steetleyminerals.com/2410-wulfenite.html>



Calcite on Dolomite, Beckermitt Mine, Egremont, Cumbria, England Ref 2376

<https://www.steetleyminerals.com/2376-calcite-on-dolomite.html>



Fluorite, Ladywash Mine, Eyam, Derbyshire, England. Ref 2307

<https://www.steetleyminerals.com/2307-fluorite.html>



Azurite, Malbunka Copper mine, Areyonga, Northern Territory, Australia. Ref 2463

<https://www.steetleyminerals.com/2463-azurite.html>



**STEETLEY MINERALS**

FINE MINERAL SPECIMENS & CRYSTALS

[www.steetleyminerals.co.uk](http://www.steetleyminerals.co.uk)

*Highlighted artwork for sale from Chris Duque-Smith*



*Highlighted minerals for sale from Geminological – [shop here](#)*



Native gold on quartz



Cerussite twin



Welsh Calcite



Diopside



Axinite



**Chris Smith Duque**

Fine mineral and landscape artwork, commissions

<https://chrissmithduque.myporfolio.com/>



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FINE MINERAL SPECIMENS & CRYSTALS

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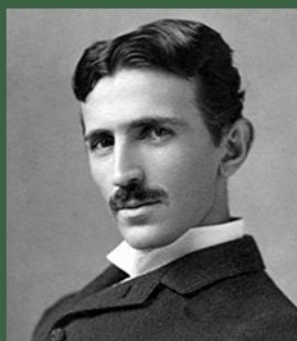


**GEMINOLOGICAL**

MINERALS, CRYSTALS, GEMS AND JEWELS

[geminological.co.uk](http://geminological.co.uk)

Click [here](#) to shop



Nikola **Tesla**

*Quote of the month*

*„In crystal we have a pure evidence of the existence of a formative life principle, and although in spite of everything we cannot understand the life of crystals - it is still a living being.“ (Nikola Tesla, 1900)*

**SMLS Online**

The club [website](#)

The club Facebook [Pages](#)

