BRITISH MICROMOUNT SOCIETY

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CHERS AMIS MICROMONTEURS
Tim Riley

Sorry to hear (Newsletter 48) that you couldn't make the annual assembly of Association Française de Microminéralogie (AFM). You missed a good one; but then they always are.

I came to live in France in l991 and joined AFM a couple of years later when I could say "La calcite de ma tante est sous la loupe". Currently (Oct. 1997) we number 241 members, 30 having joined this year. The membership is mainly French, with a sprinkling of Belgians, Swiss, Germans, Italians and Dutch. I appear to be the only British, let alone BMS member. That's insularity for you.

Membership subscription to AFM is 175 French Francs per year and basically covers the cost of the quarterly bulletin, "Le Cahier des Micromonteurs". "Le Cahier" is A4 format and normally of 28 to 36 pages. It is principally a vehicle for news and members' papers, the latter usually locality-orientated, but also on crystallography, chemistry, etc. One issue each year is currently a single-locality monograph; La Verrière, Rhône in 1996, and Falgayrolles, Aveyron in 1997. Professionally produced and illustrated, they have respectively 51 and 41 high quality colour photographs (mainly by Robert Vernet), plus electron microscope images and computer-aided crystal drawings, both describe mineralogies not unlike Penberthy Croft. Obviously, their usefulness in identification, etc. transcends national frontiers. At 70 French Francs each plus postage, they are available from the Secretary.

AFM has also produced more substantial occasional publications on "Mines and Minerals of Pyrénées Orientales", "Padern Montgaillard in Aude" and "Uranium deposits and minerals of Lodève, Herault". In addition, they have supported by soliciting and placing pre-publication orders, the publication of "Laacher See" by Eddy Van Der Meersche (1997).

Two members have made available their translations into French of several articles from foreign journals and, with the publishers' approval, the books on "Hagendorf" by Kastning and Schluter, and "Die Mineralien der Eifelvulkane" by Hentschel. Finally, on publications, AFM has just organised a bulk purchase of "Dana's New Mineralogy", which attracted a 30% or so discount - worth having on a book costing nearly £200.

In computing, AFM has loaned funds to develop the mineral catalogue software "Ordiminérite", produced jointly by a member and a computer programmer. Another member, our President, has produced the crystal-drawing software "Faces", although I believe without AFM support.

However, for me, the highlight of AFM activities are the meetings. Living in Pyrénées Orientales, I have a spring regional meeting organised by members in the "Grand Sud", followed by a national meeting in the autumn. The latter is hosted and organised by each of France's 23(?) regions in turn, thus spreading the load. In October 1997 we met in Boissy St. Leger on the south-east outskirts of Paris.

What can I say about Boissy St. Leger? For a start, from where I live with one foot in the Mediterranean, it's a long way off. 1000 kilometres each way, or 2 days in each direction by car on non-motorway (i.e. free) roads. The need to carry microscope, accessories, minerals for exchange, sleeping bag, wine, etc. effectively precludes public transport. Sad, as I could fly there in 1½ hours. In all, I'll be away 6 days and much lighter financially. However, I look upon it as a holiday and it's worth it.

The meeting information lists a range of hotels, but to save money I opt to spend 3 nights at a member's home. I might get a bed; I might be on the floor - I don't know him; he doesn't know me. It reflects well the camaraderie within AFM. There is no charge, but I bring him bottles of wine in recompense. However, there is one formality - I must declare myself in advance on "l'échelle du ronfleur" (snoring level). This must be a joke, but I go along with it. You never know.

I arrive on the Friday evening - my fourteen year old car has made it, save for a minor problem with an indicator light which a garage fixed free of charge en route. I find the house of André Mercier, my host, but he's not there so I try the meeting venue close by. It appears to be an interpretation centre and is sited on the edge of a forest. Success, he's there with other Parisian members and several who have travelled a long way - Belgians, Germans, etc. They are laying out electric cables and sockets to serve lines of tables in two large rooms which we will occupy. Fire regulations require that the cables be taped down, so we all lend a hand. We may not speak each other's language, but two fingers are sufficient to indicate a particular length of tape. I suppose that's what they do at EEC headquarters.

EEC notwithstanding, it's useful to know in advance that British plugs in general don't fit Continental sockets. Perhaps that's where we have been going wrong.

We finish the job and open some bottles. Already we've broken the ice and made new contacts. It augers well for tomorrow.

The day starts early. It's a cold, sunny morning when we return to the centre and it's only 07:30. Already the reception desk are handing out name tags together with a time-tabled programme, a list of participants with addresses and table numbers, plus a plan of the two rooms showing the location of each person. It's well organised. Additionally, each female participant is given an orchid corsage - Boissy is the centre of commercial orchid cultivation in France. Ninety members and invitees are here, plus some spouses, a few children and several dogs. A kitchen is in use and the coffee starts to flow. There are croissants and rolls for those who have missed breakfast, or simply fancy another.

We set up our microscopes and start the exchanges. No sales are allowed other than publications and collecting equipment - Cedric Lheur is taking orders for his new book "La mine de Vialas en Lozère". (251 Francs plus postage from the author at 11, rue de la Bièvre, 94250 Gentilly, France.) He has some copies here and it's very nice with 192 pages and 86 colour photographs of slag "minerals". However, I've seen something else on the table of Eddy Van Der Meersche. Besides his "Laacher See" book, and "Laurion - the minerals in the ancient slags" by Gelaude et al, both of which I already have. I see two copies of "Micro minerals of Mont Saint-Hilaire, Québec" by Fisher and Glenn - I missed it first time around and had given up hope. In seconds I have a copy, a bargain at 150 Francs - all I need now are the minerals - (My MSH collection numbers 5; two of which are ancylite.)

I have brought about 300 specimens to exchange. Like most collectors here, I use 28x28x22mm clear boxes and "tack" the specimens - I have only found one person who mounts on pedestals. Enough said. I get my tack from Britain as I haven't seen any on sale here. However, it must exist as my colleagues use every colour and consistency imaginable, including rather runny. Some must be considered conservationally suspect judging by the odour on opening a box.

Labelling, too, generally leaves something to be desired. The French departments (equivalent to counties) are usually abbreviated to their official number; "France", if it appears at all, is normally "F". Hence, "Cap Garonne mine F83" (for Var). Date of collection seldom appears - collector's name almost never - but you can always ask.

Specimen quality, on the other hand, I consider rather good with plenty of well crystallised material. Most is from French localities, followed perhaps by Eifel volcanics from Germany. Thereafter there is a little from Western European and World sources. There is practically nothing at all from Britain. This suits me fine as, for the most part, I have British material to exchange and I do a good trade.

Cornish and Cumbrian specialities are popular, but Loanhead Quarry, I think, goes down best. Perhaps it's because good crystals score over poor rarities. Where British minerals, e.g. cyanotrichite, are generally inferior to those from some French localities, they also get the thumbs down.

In return I acquire a wide range of foreign (to Britain) specimens from both classic and, to me, unknown localities. It's a great tonic to a palate somewhat jaded with British fare. We exchange on a one-for-one basis, usually not concerned to know what goes for what. Our boxes and trays of micros circulate freely with minimum control. If you are happy with what you are offered in return, that's fine; if not, you diplomatically decline the exchange.

I house my micros for exchange and my collection at home in standard video cassette boxes, which I buy empty at 20 Francs for ten (about 20p each). No-one else here seems to use them and I can't think why not. They are cheap, clean, more or less dust and light-proof, and are easily labelled (and re-labelled) by slipping a sheet under the outer cover. It is sometimes necessary to snip out interior mouldings, but it is easily done. Like the uniform store boxes used by insect collectors, they are ideal for inserting into a growing collection without the need for wholesale re-organisation. However, I digress...

I wander around the tables looking for interesting material - it's my fifth meeting so I renew several old acquaintances. I avoid exchanges with members from my part of France and they seem to do likewise. We have probably already met once this year and there is plenty of new blood. Although I'm interested in most minerals, I'm particularly into phosphates, which make up a third of my collection. Several are represented by a dozen or so examples to illustrate different localities and mineral assemblages. It is essentially a working collection; not many items would win prizes.

I find a table stiff with pegmatite phosphates, manned, if that's the word, by a lady with a dog. No, they're not hers, nor do they belong to the dog, but her husband is around somewhere. I find him and take away several of his trays to put under the microscope. It's fabulous stuff with rarities like lautite, scholzite and a nice churchite spray perched on brazilianite. And it's all French! I select twenty boxes or so and I could go on, however I doubt that he'll find that many amongst my collection. Too true, and I have to put half of them back.

We discuss the localities around Echassière, Allier, where he has collected the material. Would I like to join him on a trip? You bet, but sadly I don't follow it up. Only when I get home do I check the map to find that I've virtually driven through it en route. (Add appropriate expletive!) He's writing an article on the sites which I think is intended for the Belgian “Journal of 4M” and perhaps our "Cahier". We'll meet again with or without the dog.

I make a point of visiting all the Germans who I presume to be harbouring large quantities of Hagendorf Sud quarry, now full of water and inaccessible. It is, after all, a big hole. I pick one out and put it to him straight: "Avez-vous les phosphates?" "Stop, stop", he says, "Speak in English". That is alright by me, and we get along fine. Yes, he has phosphates but they are mainly at home. Just as I thought. I settle for some Swedish funnies; manganosite I have heard of, but not blatterite (nice crystals) and allactite (least said the better). In exchange he takes a suite of Loanhead Quarry minerals.

"These are very nice. Very, very nice." I guess that he likes them so I give him a few extra on account against some phosphates which he promises to send by post.

I return to my table and immediately pack away the newly acquired items, to avoid them being exchanged again. I check unfamiliar names in Fleischer, if I have not done so at the selection stage. I have annotated my copy with the localities against minerals represented in my collection. It is very useful and saves buying a computer.

I ply myself with coffee through the morning and at lunch-time we eat ham rolls and the like. It is a chance to take a breather. During the afternoon there are scheduled projections of slides, one of which is an identification competition with a prize for the winner. The standard is high and, as most minerals shown come from French localities, more difficult for us foreigners. I did not watch them this year, but kept my nose to the microscope. (Now that I would like to have seen - Ed.) Previously I have seen showings of Robert Vernet's stereo pairs in 3D. Magnificent.

It is a long day and, by the time we get to 19:15 and the AGM, I am tired out. It is also, for me, the most difficult part of the weekend. Speaking French is one thing; hearing and understanding it is another. The more so in the mêlée of a large meeting. Voting is difficult when you do not know the question and abstainers may be asked why. It is the only time when I feel a bit nervous.

Not to worry. We are assured that we are financially sound, almost too sound. There is an upper limit set by law to the money that we can hold. Future meetings are planned and future projects. We are already embarked upon a monograph on the talc quarry at Trimouns, Ariège, well known for its rare earth minerals. Members with potentially interesting, but unidentified specimens are requested to submit them to a central referee for examination and possible analysis. There is a fair chance of finding minerals new to the site. Publication is anticipated at the end of 1998.

There is also concern. Several members remark that legal restrictions prohibiting collecting in national parks and elsewhere are increasing. Favourite mines and dumps are also being scheduled as archaeological monuments to similar effect. The regional representative for Alsace passionately describes how two collectors were surrounded by armed troops (on exercise?) and held in custody by the police for many hours. I believe that a prosecution may be pending.

Another member suggests that mineral collectors should be more forward in stating and lobbying their cause. Perhaps, he says, we should get together in the European Forum. Is there a role for BMS here?

The AGM is business-like and for good reason. We are booked into a restaurant at 20:30. There is a rush to the cars and it is follow-my-leader through the lamp-lit streets. At the restaurant we sit at reserved tables and I join five others whom I have never met before. No problem. We make friends and tomorrow some exchanges - a very nice roedderite and a zircon, both from volcanics in the Auvergne. I have a few zircons, but this one is bright yellow!

It is customary before the meal for the President to say a few words. I cannot remember what happened this time, however it usually goes like this: He stands up and says "Bon appétit". He sits down and we get stuck in.

The well-lubricated menu from well-lubricated memory was salmon pâté, a main course of pork, Brie cheese (the town is just down the road) and gateau. Or rather three gateaux presented on a tiered stand. Lights are dimmed, a sparkler in each gateau is lit and stroboscopic lights flash to the sound of "Star Wars"-type music. We all cheer - it has been that sort of day.

Sunday is more gentle. We start at 08:30. Others go on a conducted tour of the orchid greenhouses. Somewhere out of sight, a panel is judging the micromineral competition. Around mid-day the winners are announced and the prizes awarded. There are toasts all round, then we have lunch.

People drift away though the afternoon, only the die-hards and homeless are left by the close at 18:00. I plan to leave the following morning, so I give a hand clearing up, stacking tables and sweeping the floor. An hour or so later, I return with André to his house where we are immediately joined by the local organisers. Champagne is opened, they think that they deserve it. I think so too - "A la vôtre!"

Our venue for 1998 will be Espalion in Aveyron and for 1999 possibly Brest in Finistère. Now that is almost on your doorstep. See you there.

Note: Robert Pecorini is secretary of AFM. He lives at 8, Place de Chênes Verts, 34820 Teyran, France. He handles membership applications, publication sales and produces four substantial bulletins a year! Please enquire as to the postage cost before ordering a publication and ask how it is best paid. Remember that to change a sterling cheque here usually involves a bank charge equivalent to £16 or so. Similarly, very few French banks will accept Eurocheques - Roll on the Euro!

STAPLE SUPPLIES?
A Note from Roy Starkey

Staples, the office stationery store are currently offering a good deal on steel drawer cabinets suitable for micromounts. They have a 10 drawer Bisley cabinet in brown and cream for £50 including VAT, or a grey 15 drawer version for £80. The ten drawer unit stands 68cm tall, and the 15 drawer is 96cm. Members can call a free phone number 0800 141414 for details of their nearest store, or alternatively free delivery is available on orders over £30 (excluding VAT).

I have just purchased a 15 drawer unit in grey and am very pleased with it.

A MINERAL COLLECTING TRIP TO IRELAND

Ike Wilson

After a smooth fast crossing from Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire we travelled through the Wicklow Mountains to Waterford, home of the famous crystal works, and on to Knockmahon where we were greeted by Karen, owner of our first B & B stop. First things first, which means being treated to a cup of tea and the usual chit-chat before heading for Trawnamoe mine on the beach. Once there, we kitted up and, after a low crawl, arrived at the stopes to begin digging. Beautiful connellite was collected at this site and, after packing what was needed, we headed back to the B & B for a welcome shower and evening meal.

Fortified next morning by a gigantic breakfast, we headed for the Tankardstown mining area, part of which is on the beach at Knockmahon. This time it was down cliffs to explore several adits which we had noticed on our last trip. In one of these we found atacamite crystals. Exploring an adit further along the beach we found it filled with water but, after wading through it, were rewarded with a sight which I shall never forget; there was blue copper staining on the walls, on the floor, on the ceiling and on all of the timbers and ladders.

After some time spent collecting we found langite equal to that found at Fowey Consuls many years ago. We also found connellite and took *lots* of photographs but I made a mental note to bring along my video recorder next time around. Some parts of this mine are so near the cliff you can hear the sea through the rock falls, and other parts could be the cause of grey hair were one to venture into them!!!!

Next day saw us moving on to Schull stopping on the way at Minane Bridge to look for wavellite which we found in nice green spheres. On arrival in Schull we went straight to the Station House for dinner and our next overnight stay. Early morning found us making a quick exploration of several localities and collecting copper secondaries. At Mount Gabriell I was fortunate enough to find a complete Bronze Age maul.

After our breakfast we drove on through beautiful scenery to Allihies, making a short photo-call stop on the way at Dunboy Castle. Arrival at the Yellow House in Allihies and the usual welcoming cup of tea was quickly followed by a visit to Duneen Cliffs. This calls for a 120' scramble down the cliffs in order to enter an adit. The walls of the mine here are covered in blue/green mineralisation and, after crawling through the adit, we came to a cliff face some 130' high and covered in green copper staining - botallackite. We selected what we wanted before entering the mine to collect a pale green mineral, which proved later to be atacamite, as well as langite and chalcanthite. After carefully wrapping the crystals we started the long climb up the cliff. Another welcome shower was followed by a trip into Castletownbere for the evening meal.

The following day entailed a long drive to Silvermines where we booked in at our usual B & B, Hillview. Guess what? That's right, another cup of tea followed by another scout around. This time we collected superb hemimorphite on the tips behind the church.

Another night's rest and the usual breakfast and we were off to visit Tynagh mine. We collected the key and started to search for another 2 ton boulder just like the one we found last time we were here - it had been full of anglesite specimens up to 1" in size. Sure enough, after a lot of digging, we did find yet another boulder but, this time, it was full of ammonites replaced by a galena/barite/anglesite mixture - a most unusual occurrence. We also found a nice selection of the more usual Tynagh material before heading back for the evening meal and bed once more.

The morning of our penultimate day found us heading out to the Burren in order to have a look at Sheshodonnell mine. After the mandatory tea and biscuits with the owner our excavations into the tip commenced. Sure enough we were rewarded with the expected fluorite and smithsonite specimens, some of which were superb!! The Burren can be a wild, wet and windy place where collecting specimens becomes a labour of love - enough said! Our after dinner entertainment on this our final night was provided by Quiz Night at the local pub.

The last morning we chose to drive over the mountain to visit Gortrum opencast. Now, this is a huge area where one could spend years but, in the few hours available, we found azurite, malachite and cinnabar; (you can even find native mercury if you are lucky). Picking up our "goodies" we finally headed back to the ferry for our return crossing and home.

This condensed account of mineral collecting in Southern Ireland is intended as a taster. (There are many variations possible - for instance, on the return journey from Silvermines one could stop in the Wicklow Mountains to look at the mines situated around the Wicklow Gap. There are mines in this area which will produce good specimens if one is prepared for some hard climbing and hard digging into the numerous tips.) I have only scratched the surface of the mineral scene. Having been there 2 or 3 times a year for several years now, I have only ever met with friendliness and kindness. The people are always ready to help or to give advice. I have made many friends on my visits and it is my belief that "the more you go, the more you know". Try it sometime!! I am always prepared to help if anyone cares to ask.

References: The area which Ike's trip covers was described, for the most part, in the first of three articles which were published in the UK Journal of Mines and Minerals - Issue No 10. "Microminerals from Ireland. Part 1: The South-West (Munster)", Ryback & Moreton The Tynagh area was covered in "Part 2: The North-West (Connacht & Donegal)" by the same authors and published in Issue No 11.

A PEACH FROM DRAKEWALLS MINE, CORNWALL

Steve Rust

Chloritic veinstuff has recently been arousing great interest due to the finding of monazite-(La) with anatase from Penberthy Croft, and monazite-(Ce) from Croft Gothal - both recorded by John Betterton. Thin platy black anatase also occurs at Croft Gothal mine.

With the above in mind, a number of chlorite rich specimens were collected from Drakewalls mine, although no indication of unusual minerals could be seen on site. When examined at home, discrete dark blue tabular crystals of anatase to 1mm were found. On three specimens single crystals of dark brown striated brookite occur with almost colourless to pale brown dendritic rutile. Most of the titanium minerals are hard to see against the dark green chlorite. The veinstuff also carries corroded quartz crystals, orange-brown siderite, and needles and creamy patches of bismuthinite.

THE SAGA OF LOANHEAD "ACANTHITE" AND SILVER MIGRATION

Kemp Meikle

My paper on Growth of Acanthite on Native Silver (Meikle, 1992), gave a brief description, among others, of unusual material from Loanhead quarry, Beith, Ayrshire.

In succeeding years detailed examinations carried out on that material disclosed highly interesting results, indicating the likely mode of formation of these growths.

This seemed worthy of record and much effort has been made to seek subsequent publication. Following seven successive suggested revisions, however, involving four re-submissions of the paper over a period of three years, this has unfortunately resulted only in final rejection, by an un-named journal, as an unsuitable subject.

The object had been to describe and comment on what apparently was a highly unusual mineral occurrence, namely the selective manner of growth of silver sulphides within prehnite subsequent to the earlier deposition there of apparently sulphur-free native silver, with the growth of these sulphides and their apparent migration presumably also taking place within the prehnite prior to any atmospheric exposure.

Apart from only limited access to professional investigative facilities, it is stressed the physical character and surface of the specimen available for test did in any event restrict the desired degree of analyses for explicit characterisation of those sulphide growths.

However, following carbon coating, scanning electron microscope (SEM) studies to high magnification were carried out, with appropriate, albeit only qualitative, analyses (EPMA), to confirm the morphology and composition details of one of the prominent silver wires with its halo and outer rim. This gave the following results:

Wire - Major Ag with minor S, considered as native silver with sulphide coating.
Halo - Si>Ca>Al>Ag>Cu>S, considered as sparse silver/copper sulphide with prominent underlying prehnite.
Margin - Ag>S>Si>Ca>Al>Cu, considered as prominent silver sulphide with minor copper on less prominent prehnite.

The SEM study and photographs clearly confirmed the prominence and substantial discontinuities from the parent silver wire of the localised aggregates of tiny crystal platelets, confirmed to be silver sulphide and referred to as "acanthite", forming the rim and to a lesser extent within the halo area. At high magnification, these aggregates are seen generally to have arborescent growth form similar to native silver and significantly the growth is always outward away from the "parent" wire. EDX qualitative analysis of a small area of one arborescent growth indicated Ag>S alone which is considered as "acanthite". These aggregates are believed to result from migration of silver atoms from the native silver and over and through silver sulphide (?"acanthite"), formed by continued sulphur reaction.

Filament sulphide growths on silver or copper with H_2S reaction has been the subject of chemical and metallurgical studies (Drott, 1960) and others, and transport to the tips of crystals is recognised to occur by diffusion of the metal.

This is noted by Mozgova et al, (1994) in their discussion of Ag and Cu sulphide growths on polished sections of primary ores, which either covered whole surfaces or had grown only on their boundaries and, additionally, were seen to have migrated and spread to adjacent phases, including non-opaque minerals and also to epoxy mounting medium. They pointed out that being non-stoicheiometric compounds, these Ag and Cu sulphides have a composition field permitting a portion of the metal atoms to be mobile within the structure and allowing them to migrate to the surface of previously formed grains, transporting by diffusion to their edges, and to react there as native metals with H_2S.

As such compounds, they are also able to lose some metal atoms without physical decomposition within the limits of their field of homogeneity.

The appropriate formula for such non-stoicheiometric "acanthite" has been suggested as $Ag_{2-x}S$ and it is considered likely that the Loanhead halo and margin formed in this manner.

The reaction between the silver and sulphur is presumed to be from hydrogen sulphide, but its origin remains problematical since it was able to react within the prehnite for an unknown period, although certainly subsequent to the original deposition of the native silver.

Despite the recent refusal of publication, the occurrence does remain worthy of record and should be of particular note by fellow members of the Micromount Society in view of the reported incidence of both Cu (?covellite) and Ag (?acanthite) sulphides now noted to have grown on micromounts in individual collections over the last few years. I am informed that the Society's Reference Collection has been noted to have quite a large number of such incidences. Indeed Max, our Curator, has spent a great deal of his time on experimental chemistry in an endeavour to establish the likely process and cause for such growths.

Perhaps members will be prompted to comment on all or any observations and I will be more than pleased to respond. Max, I am sure, will also welcome details of individual's experiences which may contribute to his investigations.

Failing any such responses, I can only say in conclusion that at least I have now put the acanthite subject finally to bed!

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS
Max Wirth

Having enjoyed Roy Starkey's reminiscences maybe I could add one of my own. Way back in 1966, when I was living in Dollar in Scotland, I saw a small advert in the Glasgow Herald: 'West of Scotland Mineral and Lapidary Society, this new Society will have it's first meeting on Nov. the xth in the YMCA in Bothwell Street.'. I went by car, 40 miles to Glasgow (no motorways!), through the Gorbals, to that old hall. It was dimly lit, but there were six people already sitting at a table under the only light and I joined them. One of them glared at me and said "What d'you think you're doing? you're not on the committee, go and sit at the back". I later found that he was the vice-chairman, a chap called Meikle, Kemp Meikle.

Thereafter of course we became the best of friends. Kemp showed me all the best locations and we were probably the first micromount collectors in the Loanhead quarry where we shifted many bags full of rock over the years.

Kemp also kept good records and the 'Stonechat', newsletter of the society, states, in 1969, that 'The small mineral group started this year was headed by Mr. Wirth. Unfortunately the first practical session on Thursday 29th May was attended by himself and only two others ...' (including Kemp!).

COSSH REGULATIONS SIMPLIFIED
Trevor Bridges

(After noting the concern expressed at the AGM concerning the effect of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations on the use of small quantities of reagents, Trevor kindly offered to contribute the following notes which are based upon his extensive experience in the paint industry. It does not address the question of how to obtain the supplies in the first place - scope for further contributions please! However, having obtained them, it does give a realistic interpretation of how the Regulations do or do not apply. Editor.)

The COSHH Regulations only apply to the workplace, not to what you do at home. If you hold a workshop free of charge at home, the regulations would not apply. If you made a charge, they might. If the workshop were held at a University, the regulations would apply because the University is a place of work, even though you were there for pleasure.

However, meeting the requirements of the regulations is not at all difficult and is a very logical way to ensure your own safety. All you have to do is to decide what the hazards are, what is the risk of them happening and how you are going to control them. Here are a couple of relevant examples.

COSHH Assessment No 1
Use of 1 Molar Hydrochloric and Nitric Acids in Mineralogy

Task

Use of 1M hydrochloric and nitric acids to test for mineral carbonates. two methods are used:

1 Application of 1 or 2 drops to a piece of mineral on a tile under a microscope.

2 Heating a small piece of mineral with acid in a test tube.

Hazards

The acids are very corrosive to the eyes and mildly corrosive to the skin.

Risk

1 Risk from application under a microscope is considered negligible.

2 When warming in a test tube there is a risk of material spurting out of the tube.

Control measures

None required for application under a microscope which acts as an effective barrier.

When warming in a test tube, wear safety glasses and ensure that the mouth of the tube points away from any person in the room, including yourself.

In all cases, when using acids ensure that a plentiful supply of clean water is available for washing any contaminated skin.

COSHH Assessment No 2
Handling Poisonous Materials (Non radioactive)

Task

The curation of mineral specimens involves the handling of many poisonous species.

Hazards

Many minerals are poisonous by ingestion (eating!), some, such as orpiment, are very poisonous. They are not poisonous by absorption through the skin.

Risk

Handling poisonous minerals will result in the hands becoming contaminated with small amounts of poisonous material. This presents a risk to health if not removed before eating and drinking.

Control Measures

Always wash hands thoroughly after handling minerals and before eating or drinking.

In fact, for very simple tasks like those above, the regulations do not require you to write anything down, but it is good practice to do so if you are holding a workshop for which you are being paid. One final comment! Having decided what you need to do, always follow your procedure. Failure to do this is by far the commonest cause of injuries under the COSSH regulations in industry.

ROCKWATCH AND ADULT SOCIETIES
Austin Lockwood

There are few of us who would disagree with the notion that we should do everything possible to encourage youngsters to take an interest in earth sciences, and particularly in mineralogy. A number of societies admit young people into membership and some, have successful junior sections, but these are few and far between.

The vast majority of societies hold their meetings in the evening, when youngsters should either be doing their homework, or studying. Parents are not inclined to take and collect their children from evening meetings, particularly during the winter months. These days it is most unwise to offer youngsters a lift, however well you may know them, or their parents.

The other problem concerns site visits, particularly to quarries and mine dumps. Most, well organised societies, will require members to sign a standard form, acknowledging the risk they are taking, and indemnifying the leader against any claim for negligence. A signature from a young person under the age of 16 would not be valid in law, leaving the leader at risk. In any case persons under the age of 18 are legally prohibited from entering a working quarry.

It is unreasonable to expect leaders to have to take responsibility for young persons on site visits and there would be practical difficulties in parents/guardians attending many of these events. There are enough problems in visiting quarries already without bringing young persons into the equation. Two 14 year olds, bent on mischief, can cause very serious problems.

I would suggest that the best way to encourage youngsters is to organise events for Rockwatch, working either through their Headquarters in Lincoln, or through the local Wildlife Watch Groups. Membership of Rockwatch, which provides for youngsters from 8 to 16 years of age, grew quite remarkably from 2,257 in December 1996 to 2,929 in December 1997 - a rise of nearly 30% in a year! There are numerous activities that adult geological and mineralogical societies can organise, including displays at local libraries, identification workshops, quiz games and the like. However, make sure the activity is undertaken in a public place and avoid being alone with a child or even several children. It is best to have some parents or guardians present at all times.

Around 10% of the Rockwatch membership is aged 15 and above and a pack has been prepared for these older members which gives advice on pursuing geology as an adult, either as a career or as a part-time or leisure activity. To help existing leaders, and to recruit new ones, a very useful leaders' support pack was issued at the end of last year. This outlines who Rockwatch are, what they do, and how people can get involved. It provides information on how to run a successful event, safety and insurance, and, most importantly, what Rockwatch can offer in return.

If you want to help youngsters, then do it through Rockwatch. Better still, you can join your society as an adult institutional member for only £10.00 per annum and that way you will receive information concerning future events, first hand. From their very readable magazines and fact sheets, you might even be able to keep up with the youngsters in their quest for knowledge. Rockwatch membership includes an increasing number of geological and mineralogical societies, adult associate members and schools. I would like to see the BMS supporting Rockwatch - the Russell Society are already doing so and, as a result of their recent mineral quiz in the Rock 'n' Gem magazine, have helped the membership numbers to grow to over 3,000. For further details of Rockwatch, and of the leaders' support pack, please contact:

Helen Freeston, Rockwatch, Witham Park, Waterside South, Lincoln, LN5 7JR.

Tel: 01522 544400.

e-mail: rockwatch@wildlife-trusts.compulink.co.uk.

BRANCH NEWS

Please note that, if Branches wish to have the dates of meetings publicised it is sufficient to telephone details to the Editor by the deadline dates for the Newsletter. Branch secretaries should note that these are 1st February, 1st June and 1st October. Any other news will be very welcome!

South-East Branch

The branch seems to continue to prosper with some 30 or so members at the November meeting. The idea of an identification table, introduced at the Symposium, is proving popular at branch level. Elsie Handford and Peter Wallace put on an excellent display once again at the GA Reunion and FLAGS Exhibition.

During 1998, meetings will be held on the 26th April, 9th August and 15th November. Please contact Austin Lockwood for details of time and venue.

Northern Branch

Occasional meetings continue to be held at Bircotes Library and are very informal. The next meeting will be on Saturday 4th April. Any members who can arrive by 1:30pm will be most welcome (to help with a little furniture shifting!) The meeting proper will begin at 2:00pm.

IF YOUR BRANCH IS NOT INCLUDED HERE - PLEASE REMEMBER THAT SPACE IS AVAILABLE FOR *YOUR* BRANCH ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS!

OVERSEAS NEWS

Members who have connections with the Canadian Micro Mineral Society should note that the unthinkable has happened. Muriel and Eric Wood were obliged, through Eric's ill health, to give up editing the Society's Newsletter after many, many years. The new editorial address is:

Mike Skebo, 221 Hendrie Ave., Burlington, Ontario, Canada, L7T 4B2

EDITORIAL
Mike Dannatt

Let me re-introduce myself. Hands up all those who failed to recognise the name of the contributor of the article on "bustituppite" in the last issue - Youred Itor. No, please, stay with me a little while longer. Of course you realised that it was really me and that my word processor had just made a little slip, but not everyone did. There is one respected international journal which reproduced the article, word for word, attributing it to the very same Youred Itor (but to a different Journal!) All that was missing was the reference to Sheila and Steve. I've already written to the editor because, if I let it go on, I have visions of it appearing one day in Fleischer and elsewhere with the original description attributed to poor old Youred! Please do not put it in the database, Harry!

John Pearce suggested to me some time ago that we might try running a new theme in the Newsletter. This would be along the lines "How I am using the Database" or "How I would like to use the Database". If you are actually using the data, or if you plan to use it, on a computer, why not write to me so that we can share ideas among the membership. To start the ball rolling, let me say that I have imported it into Microsoft Access along with the current catalogue of the Reference Collection which Max has kindly provided to me. If members can let me have information for the next issue this will go out in June - nice time to gather our thoughts and get feedback for the Symposium in September.

With this issue you will find a copy of the 1998 events list prepared by FLAGS. There is also a copy of the membership list provided by Mick Wolfe. Mick asks that you check your details and contact him if there are any errors or omissions.

Tim Riley has contributed a fairly lengthy article intended to further Anglo/French relations in micromounting. It seemed to me, on reading it, that it gave a good impression of the sort of laid-back and enjoyable event that it is. For that reason I have included it in full. The South-East Branch Newsletter includes a note to the effect that no-one from the BMS appears interested in a link with the AFM. Perhaps Tim will succeed in persuading some members otherwise.

I want to take this opportunity to clarify the situation regarding material which was collected on Bradwell Moor, Derbyshire, last year. A quantity of material was dumped at a site on Bradwell Moor. It appears that this was done a couple of years ago but without consent from the planning authority. When it was discovered by a BMS member last year it was thought that the owner was the person working the adjoining site and permission was sought from him to take specimens. Subsequently it was found that the owner was someone entirely different and permission was secured for a couple of trips by the Peak Lap. & Min. Soc. Subsequent unauthorised visits caused him to ban collecting. A quantity of micro-specimens is now in circulation and the origin of the material needs to be clarified.

The manager at Mill Dam mine, Great Hucklow, has confirmed that it all came out of that mine. This mine, which has been extended in recent years, has been driven under Hucklow Edge to join up with the old Ladywash mine workings at the Eyam end of the Edge. As far as we can tell. all of the material came from that part of the new mine which is closest to Ladywash and far removed from the original Mill Dam mine. I hope that this resolves any labelling problems!

Please note the following changes of address and/or telephone number:

Mick Cooper	Clare Villas, 33 Rosetta Road, New Basford, Nottingham, NG7 7GX	0115 970 6330
Alan Hanton	27 Coronation Road, Hellesdon, Norwich, NR6 5HB	01603 412604
Tim Riley	New telephone number only	00 33 4 68 89 36 13
Beverley Yates	"Craig Roan", Barclay Road, Rockcliffe, Dalbeattie, DG5 4QS	01556 630461
Peter Todhunter	18 Knox Road, Blakenhall, Wolverhampton, WV2 3EF	

NEW MEMBERS

New members are urged to inform the editor should any of their particulars (as noted below) be incorrect:

Arthur Constable	12 Shadowbrook Road, Coundon, Coventry, CV6 1QQ	01203 594205
Tom Levinson	4 Cote Park, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol, BS9 2AD	0117 968 1956

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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The Bungalow, Litton Mill, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 8SW
Tel: 01298 871004
E-mail: mjd@peakdistrict.org

Please note that the deadline for articles for Newsletter 50 will be June 1, 1998. Please let me have contributions as soon as possible in order to spread the load. Articles or reports on PC disc are particularly welcome but should be in one of these formats, please:

Plain text (ASCII or TXT files)

Rich text format (RTF)

Word for Windows 2 or Word 6

Word Perfect 5.1 for MS-DOS.

Articles sent via the Internet should be part of the body of the E-mail message - please do not attach documents to E-mails. Many thanks.