

# BRITISH MICROMOUNT SOCIETY



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NEWSLETTER NO.30      MAY 1991

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**UK Journal of Mines & Minerals**  
**BMS 10th anniversary issue**

Several good articles for inclusion in UKJMM no. 10 have been received and processing of them is well under way. Although we probably have sufficient full articles for the magazine we would still welcome shorter contributions from BMS members for inclusion in the Mineralogical Notes of Mineral News columns. So, if you have any interesting new finds, have visited a noteworthy mineral show or museum or simply have some worthwhile hobby-horse to climb upon please let us know.

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## ADDITIONS TO THE BMS COLLECTION

Max Wirth

A listing of the latest 50 additions to the BMS Reference Collection is included with this newsletter. All 50 are interesting in one way or another and it is an invidious task to select a few for description in this column.

Caledonite (952) from Hendre Felen does not form the blades or stubby prisms common in this species, but slender prismatic needles.

Pyromorphite from Driggith, Caldbeck Fells, Cumbria (954/955) occurs in yellow prisms with a diameter greater than the height, growing on quartz. I have also found an earlier generation of pyromorphite (1002 not yet entered) as elongated prisms in matrix overgrown by quartz. When a small group of collectors visited Driggith recently, most of us potted about finding nothing much. John Dickinson beavered away, digging into the spoil heap and saying nothing. He came up with a lump of quartz which yielded a splendid suite of caledonite (957) and leadhillite (958). He also contributed the above pyromorphite and a probable adamite. My crude analysis of the pyromorphite indicates quite a low level of arsenate. The adamite appears to be a post-mining formation.

Roy Starkey has contributed a most unusual crystal of sphalerite on quartz with fluorite (960) from Abergairn in Scotland.

John Betterton found another specimen of birnessite (the last one shattered in the post) associated with ?woodwardite. He also gave us two excellent specimens of mottramite. All these came from Penberthy Croft. (Cornish collector Michael Merry tells me that, according to analyses by Stefan Weiss some of the so-called mottramite from Penberthy Croft is actually duftite - Ed.)

Mike Rothwell provided a fine specimen of the rare zeolite edingtonite from Shropshire (967). He finds the most unusual minerals. No. 968 is queitite, only recently discovered in the UK [second world locality - Ed.]. It is accompanied by fine caledonite and what is probably susannite. Mike also donated botallackite (990) and a beautiful paratacamite (991) from Levant mine, Cornwall.

Nick Zachariades gave us a photogenic strontianite on calcite from Dulcotes Quarry - at least I think it is strontianite and not aragonite. He has also provided a perfect vug of well-terminated wavellite (971) from Highdown Quarry, quite unlike the usual flat fans.

Mike Leppington has contributed an unknown from Short Grain, Caldbeck (978). According to R.S.W. Braithwaite of UMIST it may be the recently discovered geminite. It is currently being examined.

Chloroxiphite is a rare mineral. I found a representative sample (983) as a dark olive green rim around mendipite on a specimen given me a few years ago by M. Thomas.

Following a begging letter from me, Dick Braithwaite of UMIST donated five interesting specimens: xonotlite (993) a zeolite from near Huntly; nakauriite (994) from the Hagdale quarry, Unst; kidwellite (995) from Wheal Phoenix; and phurcalite (996) and autunite (997) from Merrivale quarry, Dartmoor.

Norman Thomson recently found perfect alstonite from Brownley Hill, Nenthead.

Specimen BMS 928 was said to be baryte in the last list. I now believe this to be bavenite and it is currently being identified at the NHM.

**BMS SYMPOSIUM 1991**

Ken Luff

If they have not reached you already, registration forms for the 1991 BMS Symposium will be reaching you shortly. Please return them as soon as possible if you wish to attend this 10th Anniversary event.

The University redecorations and alterations have been completed and the ingenuity tests of last year will not be necessary. Some important topics will be discussed, including comment on Penberthy Croft: please bring along any unusual specimens from this site. There will be the usual time for swapping and gossiping but the Saturday evening will differ from last year with the re-introduction of a quiz and an after-dinner speech to mark the tenth anniversary occasion. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Leicester once again.

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**WARRINGTON BRANCH NEWS**

Isobel Geldart

Our branch had a very good year in 1990 and by popular demand decided to extend our meetings to once a fortnight, the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month.

Six of us did a round tour of Scotland in the summer. We started at Ratho (no joy) then went on to Orrock, Fife, Laverock Braes, Aberdeen, Bin Garry, Huntly, Gedloch and Netherglen, Elgin, Lossiemouth, Strontian and finally across to Mull. We all found lots of interesting specimens.

Beryl Taylor (not on the same outing) found a first record for Scotland of chlorargyite-bromyrite from Carsaig Bay, Mull. It was identified by the Natural History Museum who sent her a scanning electron micrograph of it. She also had pumpellyite, aragonite, and albite identified from the same place.

Anne Rathbone won the cup for the best micromount at the Warrington Mineral and Lapidary Society. This was a cogwheel phosgenite found on the trip to Lossiemouth.

During 1990 we intend going to Chichester House in Newquay for a week. Ten members have expressed a wish to join us.

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**SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER**

BMS Membership Secretary Pearl Freeman will still be happy to receive cheques (£4.00 single £6.00 family) from those members who have not yet paid their subs for 1991.

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**MAGNETIC SWIVEL STAGE**  
George Page

A novel form of micromount support (see diagram) devised by BMS and Warrington Mineral and Lapidary Society member George Page has been communicated to the newsletter by Isobel Geldart of the Warrington Branch. It is a development of the Cornelius swivel stage described in the Complete guide to micromounts by Speckels. It comprises a steel hemisphere machined to accept a standard one inch square micromount box, which is held in place by a clip. Three magnets, fitted to an alloy base, support and retain the hemisphere while allowing it to be rotated in any direction thus altering the angle of view while ensuring that the specimen remains as close as possible to the original focus. The base of the assembly is made of steel and has three small rubber friction pads bonded to the lower surface. The baseboard upon which the microscope and swivel stage stand incorporates two other large flat surface plate magnets. These are recessed into the underside of the board to within 5mm of the top surface beneath the position of the stage. It is intended that the magnetic force acting upon the base of the swivel stage assembly should partly simulate the action of a 'grease board' and assist in setting the position of the stage.

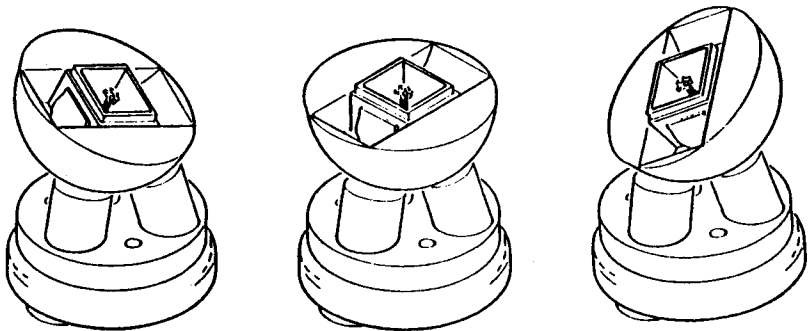
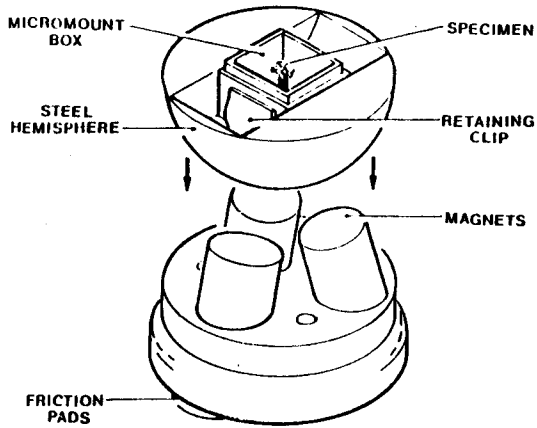
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**LOANHEAD QUARRY**  
Kemp Meikle

Last spring some large blocks of rock, set aside for later crushing, were investigated by myself and Phil Jackman. Two of these yielded some interesting minerals and appear, although found at some distance from each other, to have come from the same part of the quarry. In one we found a pocket or vein of chalcocite and covellite with chrysocolla and attractive tufts of malachite. Of particular interest are the associated crystals of harmotome which occurred as water-clear elongated prisms, terminated by sharp re-entrant faces typifying the fourling twinning, in small cavities on calcite in the vein margins along with crystals of late secondary prehnite, calcite, and occasional small irregular crystals of chalcocite. The harmotome crystals range up to about 4.5 mm by 1.4 mm.

In the second boulder a similar association of calcite and covellite or chalcocite showed some small brownish-yellow irregular crystals of greenockite either on or included in the calcite. This occurrence is reminiscent of circumstances preceding the major find of greenockite in the quarry in 1979/80 when similar vein or pocket chalcocite was encountered.

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A magnetic swivel stage

## ORGANIC MINERALS

Max M. Wirth

The Russell Society now receives some foreign journals in exchange for its own and these are kept in the Leicester Museum. They are administered by Gill Weightman of the Geology Department and she can supply them on postal loan. I borrowed the Rivista Mineralogica Italiana and I found it is quite easy to read, all the more so as there are good English and German summaries. The articles are interesting and illustrated with many colour photographs. No. 4 for 1990 started with an interesting article on organic minerals which I found useful food for thought:

The term "organic minerals" may be confusing to some of us but refers to salts of organic acids such as oxalic or mellitic acids (oxalates or mellates). I have often wondered where such organic acid came from and it appears that it appears that they are mainly derived from coal deposits or from animal (guano) or vegetable (roots) residues. In some cases it seems that the acid must have had a hydrothermal origin. There are about 30 mineral species officially recognised by the IMA; they are generally calcium or magnesium salts. The most likely situations in which these may be found are in the vicinity of coal seams or at an interface between rock and lichen.

I am only familiar with weddellite, a hydrated calcium oxalate which has been found in the limestone quarry at Milltown near Ashover in Derbyshire (SK 360 619). The species was originally discovered in 1936 in deep sea dredgings in the central part of the Weddell sea, 5000m down! It was not named until 1942 when it was identified in gallstones. The Ashover weddellite forms tetragonal prisms, about 1mm in size, nestling in fluorite from which it is rather difficult to distinguish. According to the Italian article, the similar whewellite (which contains less water) is much more common. It occurs in crystals up to 10cm in Romania and Hungary.

The assemblage at the Milltown quarry is strange. From here the BMS Reference Collection has gained the following: the zinc hydroxides sweetite and ashoverite; the lead oxide litharge; hydrocarbon globules; the carbonates cerussite and smithsonite; and the sulphates anglesite and ettringite. We also have calcite and fluorite. Perhaps someone will enlighten us as to the origin of the unusual species here in the next Newsletter. [See forthcoming article on this occurrence in the UKJMM - Ed.]

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**MICROMOUNT COMPETITION**  
Mick Wolfe

At the last BMS Symposium a competition was organised for micromounts. Despite a low response in its first year, it is hoped that it will become a regular event. Peter Braithwaite has kindly agreed to act as judge again and all entries should be sent to him at 34 Field Close, Hilton, Derbyshire DE6 5GL. Closing date for the competition is the first week in August. An entry form is enclosed with this Newsletter and the rules are set out below. Potential entrants should check their collections for suitable candidates NOW before they forget. Those worried about posting their prized specimens should bear in mind the possibility of the ad hoc postal service available through BMS members' travels around the country to shows, collecting sites, or BMS local group meetings.

**Micromount Competition Rules**

- 1 Entries will be judged on specimen quality, labelling, and micromounting technique.
- 2 A maximum of two entries per member.
- 3 All specimen material to be British and collected by the entrant.
- 4 Each entry to be contained in a box no more than 25mm cube.
- 5 Each entry to be permanently mounted and oriented for viewing, by microscope, in the horizontal position.
- 6 Each entry to be labelled with the name of the mineral and its source location as a minimum.
- 7 All entries submitted at the owner's risk and must reach the judge two months before the Symposium start date. Each entry must be accompanied by a completed entry form.
- 8 The judge will be appointed annually by the committee and will not be eligible to enter the competition that year.
- 9 All entries will be returned at the Symposium. Please note that entrants not attending the Symposium need to organize collection of their entries on their behalf.

It is expected that a small prize will be awarded in addition to the trophy. The winner will be announced at the Symposium.

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**OLD MEMBERS**  
Mick Wolfe

Tim Riley has taken early retirement from his position as Principal Keeper (Natural Sciences) at Sheffield Museum. Gaynor Boon will be taking over his responsibilities for the mineral collection. Tim was last seen at the recent Leicester Mineral Show en route for Perpignon in south western France where he intends to spend as much time as possible "just gardening". We wish him all the best.

Douglas Bliss, a member of the BMS for five years, died last November. Douglas was retired, and as well as collecting minerals was interested in astronomy having been a member of the Croydon Astronomical Society for a number of years.

Muriel Tissington, BMS Archivist, and Bill Swindell, a past chairman of the Central Branch of the Russell Society, have announced their engagement. Although we must congratulate them on their 'twinning' it seems a serious move just to save the £2 difference in membership fees between 2 individuals or one family. Nevertheless, our best wishes to you both.

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**NEW MEMBERS**

The new members listed below are urged to check their entries and to contact the Newsletter Editor should there be any errors.

Marie STRONG, Flat 1, 53-57 King Street, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2XS  
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Colin J. FULLER, 185 The Headlands, Northampton, NN3 2NO. Tel (1604) 407009

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