

# BRITISH MICROMOUNT SOCIETY



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NEWSLETTER NO. 32    JULY 1992

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## EDITORIAL

Mick Cooper

Readers with long memories will recall my plea in the last Newsletter for editorial assistance. Disappointingly there was no-one prepared to offer me the preferred alternative of £5m, but there was a volunteer prepared to take over the job. Although I remain nominally the editor of the BMS Newsletter until the next AGM, the 'letter you are now reading was actually put together by society newcomer, and professional mineralogist Malcolm Southwood of Peterborough. Unless there is a massive outcry, Malcolm will be proposed for, and officially invested with, the office of Editor at the next AGM. He has promised to wield the whip mercilessly in his search for copy; he is bursting with ideas and enthusiasm and I trust he will receive due cooperation from the membership.

I am interested to note the readership's comments on the Newsletter in response to Mick Wolfe's questionnaire - some of them sound very familiar, such as the desire for regular meeting and field trip reports...but I am sorry to see that the museum visit to the Carnegie in Pittsburgh got short shrift. They have an excellent micromount collection [Mineralogical Record 2, 151, 163-164 (1971)].

## 1991 B.M.S. QUESTIONNAIRE

Mick Wolfe

I would like to thank the 40 members who took the time to complete and return the questionnaire enclosed with Newsletter 31. No one took up the option of remaining anonymous, although I am still trying to decipher a couple of signatures. This level of response - approaching 25% of the membership - means that the results can be safely extrapolated to represent the whole society and should be more reliable than the polls taken before the recent general election.

### 1. General

Everyone considers the subscription value for money. 60% of the membership are members of a local group within the BMS with half of these belonging to the south-east (London) group, one third to the Bircotes and the remainder to the Warrington group. Of the remaining 40%, one third are not interested in belonging to a local group and 20% are just too remote from other members to make it worthwhile. This means that the likes of Mike Leppington in Cockermouth, Kemp Meikle in East Kilbride and Geoff Deverall will have to fly the BMS flag unaided for the foreseeable future - sorry gentlemen! I was able to put five respondents in touch with local groups. 15% of the replies indicated a willingness to become officers of the society. This is, I feel, a good indication of the future of the BMS and the following suggestions for the future were also forthcoming:

- The reinstatement of society field trips.
- An interim get-together between symposia (but without lectures).
- An improvement in communication between the local groups and the rest of the society.
- A list of contact names and addresses for site access permission.
- Increased co-operation with the Natural History Museum.
- The continuation of the original aims of the society - to promote contact between micromounters in the UK, to encourage the development of micromounting and to promote contact with other societies in the UK and overseas.

### 2. Symposium

80% of the membership have attended at least one symposium. The remainder had specific reasons, such as distance and shift work, which make it impractical for them. Everyone was happy with the format and the talks with only one dissenter who considered the speaker standard as unsatisfactory. 20% of the society are prepared to give a talk at some time and all members are happy with the evening facilities. Less than 10% of the BMS want to see the auction discontinued and 80% are in favour of a raffle for mineral prizes. Suggestions for the topics of talks are almost as numerous as ideas for the symposium in general. The former have been passed to the symposium organiser for his (and his successor's)

consideration. The general ideas for the symposium included an identification workshop for beginners, a demonstration of micromounting techniques, a pre- or post-symposium field trip, a demonstration of mineral photography techniques, an experts' table for specimen identification with a charge per identification to go to society funds, and a change of location for the symposium every two years. Some of these suggestions will be incorporated into this year's symposium (but not the change of location!).

### **3. The Reference Collection**

Members who have donated specimens now number more than half the Society whereas less than 40% have ever requested anything on loan. The second edition of the catalogue is rated as OK by 5%, good by 25% and very good by 70%. When to issue the next edition of the catalogue drew a wide variety of replies ranging from "once a year" to "the year 2008 AD" - shame on you Max Wirth! A compromise of "when the number of specimens reaches 1500", with the possibility of annual index updates might be the most practical.

Ideas and suggestions included the creation of a photographic file of selected specimens, the inclusion of some foreign specimens for comparison and education and the elimination of duplicates. Max also appealed for all submissions to be washed and to have accompanying index slips and literature references as well as having the not-so-obvious species identified along with the nominated mineral.

### **4. Directory of Micromounters**

Over 90% of the members find this a useful reference with three quarters finding the biographical format preferable to that used previously. The only suggestion that was made for improvement was to include a photograph of the symposium attendees so that members could associate names with faces.

### **5. Newsletter**

The entire membership both enjoy the Newsletter and are happy with its format. However, less than 35% have ever contributed anything to the 32 issues. Again, the full list of suggestions has been passed to the editor for his consideration. Among them is the request for regular reports of local group meetings, activities and field trips; a section for beginners on such subjects as typical habits, associations and identification tips; an index to each edition; larger print; members' swaps and wants lists and more locality articles.

### **6. Society Activities**

Some eleven museums were suggested for possible visits. Oxford University Museum was the most popular and a visit has already been arranged (see elsewhere in this Newsletter). Others will be considered if there is sufficient support although the Carnegie Museum in

Pittsburgh and the Hermitage in St Petersburg may prove to have limited support. Over 70% of members would be happy to allow other members to view their private collections. This is probably best arranged through our local groups. Ideas and suggestions include:

- The publicising of local group field trips in the Newsletter.
- A repeat of the sponsorship of the UK Journal of Mines and Minerals.
- Increased contact with other societies.
- The production of a booklet on micromounting techniques.
- Society visits to Continental mineral shows
- A workshop and the publication of a booklet on mineral identification techniques for amateurs.
- The creation of a central library of slides of minerals and sites. This would be available to members both for research and for illustrating talks.
- The creation and eventual publication of a UK mineral site catalogue detailing the possible minerals to be found at each location.

## 7. Conclusion

While I may not be in agreement with all of the suggestions outlined above, it is obvious that the society continues to flourish, with the vast majority of the membership happy with the way things are going - although there are still areas for improvement. In addition, the members are full of bright ideas for new projects and improvements to existing activities. Some of the suggestions have certainly given me food for thought - what about you? It would be a pity to let this initiative die for lack of a follow-through. Are you prepared to help? The responses to the questionnaire provide the officers of the BMS with directions for the future but if you want the BMS to grow into what you want the Society to be it will require your assistance.

## SYMPOSIUM NEWS

Ken Luff

This year's Symposium will be held in Leicester on the weekend of 19/20 September and members should receive their registration forms before the end of June. If you have not received yours please let me know.

The speakers have been booked. Mick Cooper will run a photographic advisory workshop if there is sufficient demand and I would like some indication of interest from members before the event. Peter Braithwaite (who will again judge the micromount competition) has offered to run a workshop to demonstrate methods of setting up micromounts for such a competition and for your own collection. I am also hoping that Michael Edwardes will join us once again to set up his "microscope hospital" and the programme will again include a mineral auction. For the Saturday I have hired a video player and TV monitor from the

university. The intention is to enable speakers to use videos as alternative visual aids. It will also give members an opportunity to display any videos which may be of interest to us, although I would suggest that these videos should have some educational value rather than shots of members smiling at the camera. Please get in touch with me before the event if you have such videos available so that your presentation can be properly integrated into the programme.

I regret the increase in this year's registration fee (i.e. to £9 per person), but market forces have necessitated it. The programme is still being offered at cost and represents very good value for money. There is an increase in the cost of the buffet meal too (now £8) but you will have a choice of two portions from three meats and smoked fish. At present the plan for after dinner is to regale you all with another competition unless a visiting member would like to give a presentation in its place. A raffle for a substantial mineral specimen will take place during the day and will be drawn either at the buffet or on the Sunday.

I look forward to seeing you all once again in September.

### **MICROMOUNT COMPETITION**

**Mick Wolfe**

As you will have seen from the notice announcing our eleventh Symposium, it is intended to hold a micromount competition once again. In spite of a low number of entries in the last two years, Peter Braithwaite is once again prepared to act as our judge. The rules are as before and are given again below for new members. Please support this competition! We are the British Micromount Society and this is one of the few opportunities for other members to see how you mount and label your specimens.

#### **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 specimens to be British and collected by the entrant.
4. Each entry to be contained in a box no larger than a 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 organise collection of their entries on their behalf.

## **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Mick Wolfe**

A fellow member, Colin Fuller, is also the treasurer of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society. He has kindly invited the BMS to visit their premises in Northampton to view their collection of mineral specimens. Because of parking difficulties, this visit will be organised on a Sunday at a date yet to be settled. In addition to the mineral collection, the society also has collections of sand, fossils and shells which may be of interest to some members. They are also interested in seeing some micromounts and BMS members will be encouraged to bring their microscopes and some specimens along with them. Interested members should contact the Chairman at the address on the front of the Newsletter.

## **OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUM**

**Mick Wolfe**

A "behind-the-scenes" visit to Oxford University Museum has been arranged for Saturday 31 October. Due to space limitations, however, it will be necessary to restrict the size of the party to 12 members. These will be accepted on a first come first served basis and interested persons should contact Roy Starkey (15 Warwick Avenue, Fringe Green, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B20 2AH) as soon as possible. If the demand is sufficient a further visit might be arranged in 1993.

## **LATEST ADDITIONS (Nos. 1101-1150) TO THE BMS COLLECTION**

**Max Wirth**

We no longer receive spectacular additions to the collection. Nevertheless, contributions are still arriving and make up for their lack of aesthetic value with interest.

Everyone loves wulfenite, but it takes a practised eye to find the one from Kinniside (1103). Richard Bell contributed glassy, clear and colourless scorodite (1104) from the Prince of Wales mine, as well as nicely crystallised paratacamite (1106) from Trebarwith Strand. Following my plea for Red Gill linarite, we now have a good specimen (1111), although it came from my own spares! Phil Jackman gave us hemimorphite (1112) from the Wapping mine at Matlock. It is noteworthy for its excellent terminations. His malachite sheaves from the Bardon Hill quarry are really photogenic. Roy Starkey brought back a nice spinel tetrahedron embedded in matrix (1121) from Mull as well as mullite (1122) and sapphire (1123). The latter is not as spectacular as some he found but it shows the hexagonal form very well. Coatesgate quarry near Beattock in Scotland is a new site for us and Roy has provided some fine specimens of chabazite (1125), andradite garnet (1127) and hematite and amphibole (1128/9). Also from Coatesgate, Kemp Meikle contributed a specimen with two crystals of gmelinite. All of these specimens are very photogenic and I am sure that many more good specimens will come from this locality.

A little tarnished copper crystal in prehnite (1135) was found at Carsaig Bay, Mull by Beryl Harison. (According to the index slip the copper is in aragonite but I think this may be incorrect). Harry Foy has again produced some unusual, if not strikingly beautiful, specimens of tacharanite (1139) and cristobalite (1140) from Northern Ireland. Mike Rothwell and others went on a gold hunt in Wales and Mike produced a specimen (1141) of gold in matrix which is a very nice addition to the collection. I am proud to have contributed a specimen of cinnabar on barite (1147) from Myers Head in Patterdale - a first for this site. Strangely enough, both Norman Thomson and myself found similar specimens on the same day and both were confirmed by Mike Rothwell using EDAX. I believe that I have also found valentinite needles from Hogget Gill in Patterdale (1148) judging by the optical properties.

George Ryback sent us an astonishing brown siderite crystal (1151) sitting on the point of a quartz termination. He also sent chalcocyanite spherules from Wheal Phoenix in Cornwall (1152) and "rashleighite" (a non-recognised species; the specimen should be described as turquoise) from Castel-an-Dinas. George also gave us the water-soluble chalcantite from Geevor (1155), rare and unspectacular metavoltine (1156) from Wheal Edward, a fine coloured lironite (1157), uraninite or pitchblende from Tyndrum (1162), thaumasite from Glasdir mine (1173; we only had a slag thaumasite in the collection previously), and black stilpnomelane (1176) as mica-like blades from Snowdonia. It is always good to receive new species for the collection and I expect many more.

We already had stilbite and other zeolites from the Port Glasgow road cutting (no longer accessible) and I have added to further species - hematite (1177) and apophyllite (1178). The latter could be confused with heulandite which has similar perfect cleavage, but different optical properties. From near Stirling I have added orange albite reminiscent of the orange orthoclase from the nearby Touch Hills (1179). From Kilmartin, we had loose anatase crystals, but Kemp Meikle has now given us anatase on matrix (1181). Mike Leppington had an interesting find of olivenite (1182) at Potts Gill in the Caldbeck Fells. The crystals are small but very clear on a quartz matrix.

In general, we try to avoid having more than two specimens of one species from the same site. However, I thought it worth including seven specimens of mimetite from Dry Gill (1185-1191) contributed by Geoff Deverell. The site is famous and the habits are all different. The most interesting one consists of the usual prisms capped by oversize tabular mimetites. Mimetite from this locality is not necessarily of end-member composition, but may contain a high proportion of phosphate. From the same site we also have poor cerussite (1193; unusual from here), and barite as opaque, almost cubic prisms.

Nick Zachariades contributed two specimens (1195/6) of remarkable acicular pyrite, free standing or occluded in calcite. He also found a delightful specimen of goethite (1200) with tiny calcites growing on the tips of the blades.

## FRONGOCH MINE, DYFED

BMS member and eagle-eyed collector, Steve Rust, is researching this mine and its minerals and would be pleased to hear from anyone with information or specimens.

## OBITUARY - BOB WEATHERALL

**Ken Luff**

Sadly, Bob Weatherall of the South-East Group died after a long illness on Friday 13 March, 1992 at Orpington Hospital. He had been a member of the BMS from the early days and a regular attendee of the Symposium and field trips. He was also vice-chairman of the Sidcup Lapidary and Mineral Society for around 14 years. He was very knowledgeable in the practical areas of earth science studies. As a collector, he was skilled at locating the most productive area within a quarry. His skill and interest extended to lapidary and gemstone faceting - hobbies which he pursued for many years.

He was a very private man and his friends in the the hobby had little knowledge of his past. We had to wait for the eulogy at his funeral to learn that there was more to Bob than he disclosed. In World War II, he was awarded two bravery commendations for extinguishing incendiary bombs and served as a navigator in the RAF. He later taught navigation. More recently, as London area manager for British Telecom, he requested a lower office in order to be closer to his ill wife in Bromley. Widowed for many years, and a diabetic, he died at the age of 71 following a heart attack. A son survives him in the USA.

## NEW ADDRESS

Robert (Bob) C. Snowball; The Oaks Bungalow, Oak Street, Fakenham, NR219DY, Norfolk. Tel: (0328) 862394

## NEW MEMBERS

New members are urged to inform the Newsletter editor should there be any errors.

Douglas and Emma JOHNSTONE-BROWN, 2 Willow Cottages, Raspberry Hill Lane, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8SN. Tel: (0795) 477745

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## NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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