



Bathurst Lapidary & Collectors Club Inc

NEWSLETTER

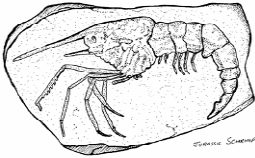
Issue 246 – March – April 2024

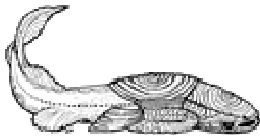
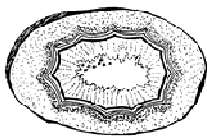
MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE FIRST WEDNESDAY EACH MONTH AT
12 NOON - EXCEPT JANUARY AT THE CLUBHOUSE (OLD EGLINTON
FIRE SHED), PARK STREET, EGLINTON.

Enquires 63315404 or write P.O. Box 9156, Bathurst 2795

Editor amcrae@lisp.com.au www.philas.org.au/bathurst




MARCH – APRIL 2024 - UPCOMING PROGRAM

- 25th February** **Sunday workshop opening** – 9am to 3pm. Note – the lapidary workshop openings are on the 2nd and 4th Sundays in each month NOT every second Sunday.
- 6th March** **Wednesday – Monthly Meeting** – 12noon (after the normal Workshop Session). Remember your 'Latest Acquisition'.
- 9th & 10th March** **Saturday and Sunday – Bathurst Arms Fair and Collectables displays** – Bathurst Showgrounds. Modern and antique firearms, militaria collectables, knives and accessories. Historic, colonial and informative collectables display. 9am to 4.30pm Saturday and 9am to 3.30pm Sunday. Over 50 plus licensed dealers. Lots to do and see. Tickets at the door – entry adults \$15, family 2 adults plus children under 16 is \$24. Children under 16 must be under adult supervision.
- 10th March** **Sunday workshop opening** – 9am to 3pm. Note – the lapidary workshop openings are on the 2nd and 4th Sundays in each month NOT every second Sunday.
- 16th & 17th March** **Heritage Trades Trail at the Bathurst Showground.** Our club has a display area with demonstrations happening. If you can help, please let Judy Attard or Paul Martensz know in advance. This massive exhibition is well worth a visit.
- 22nd March** **Friday – Seniors Week Historic Talk** titled 'Australiana in the Applied Arts – a trip down memory lane!!' by Paul Storm from Sydney. A fascinating Australiana talk and trip down memory lane for 'Seniors Week'. The talk includes everyday items that were often decorated with Australian themes from your school ruler and bottle opener to your oven door and the plasterwork in the ceiling over your head. Paul's talk will take place at 2.30pm in the Bathurst District Historical Society Museum, East Wing Bathurst Courthouse, Russell Street. Light refreshments will take place at the end of the talk. Entry by gold coin donation on entry. To celebrate Seniors Week the Bathurst District Historical Society Museum will offer free admission to Seniors from 11am to 2pm.
- 24th March** **Sunday workshop opening** – 9am to 3pm. Note – the lapidary workshop openings are on the 2nd and 4th Sundays in each month.
- 29th March – 1st April** **GEMBOREE 2024** will be held over Easter at Willunga in South Australia - booklet may be downloaded from AFLACA website <https://aflaca.org.au/gemboree/> It is the 60th National Gem & Mineral Show. Don't forget entries must reach the Committee by Monday 15th March, 2024. See some superb displays of lapidary entries. There will be lots of fascinating crystals, fossils, rocks, minerals, gemstones, faceting, prospecting equipment, lapidary equipment and jewellery for sale. See the International Faceting Challenge, which is a world class faceting competition, run and sponsored by the Australian Faceters' Guild.
- 3rd April** **Wednesday – Monthly Meeting** – 12noon (after the normal Workshop Session). Remember your 'Latest Acquisition'.

The logo for Bathurst Lapidary & Collectors Club Inc. is a circular emblem. The text "Bathurst Lapidary &" is arched across the top, and "Collectors Club Inc." is arched across the bottom. In the center of the circle are five distinct items: a faceted diamond at the top left, a circular coin (likely a US dime) at the top right, a rough-cut gemstone at the bottom left, a tall, slender tower or monument in the center, and a small bottle or vial at the bottom right.

Our Club continues with a very active year with two Holiday Lapidary Workshops being held - one for beginners and another for those who have done lapidary workshops previously. Again, both were fully subscribed and were very busy times for both participants and tutors.

Just a reminder that the Sunday Openings are the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month. NOT every second Sunday. Note that if the Sunday Opening clashes with a major event such as the Bathurst Royal Show it may not happen that Sunday. Opening times are 9.00 am to 3.00 pm.

Remember that the Bathurst Heritage Trades Trail will take place on Saturday and Sunday the 16th and 17th March at the Bathurst Showground. Bathurst will celebrate its rich history, paying homage to the trades and traditions that have helped shape our region. Rare and lost trades and crafts will be showcased with traditional Aboriginal tool and weapon making, blacksmithing, saddlery, dry stone walling, whip cracking and making, glass artistry, lace making, tapestry, embroidery, carpentry and joinery, cigar box guitar making and violin making are among many unique talents to be demonstrated by local and guest artisans. Our club has various displays and demonstrations happening.

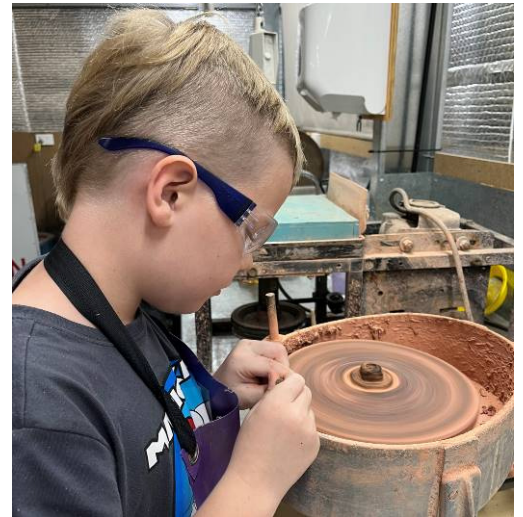
If you are able to assist with the Club's Bathurst Heritage Trades Trail display and demonstrations, please let Judy Attard or Paul Martensz know in advance.

The Royal Bathurst Show 2024 will take place on Friday to Sunday - 12th to 14th April at the Bathurst Showground. Entries can already be made online from 30th January, 2024 with entries closing on Friday 22nd March, 2024. More information has already been provided in a separate Updates Email. Please think about putting your Entries in NOW, and if you can devote some time to helping before, during and after the Show, it would be of great assistance.

Remember the Club's Monthly Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month, except January, from 12noon after the normal Workshop Session. All Club members are welcome to attend these meetings which help run the club. It has been a tradition for a long time to bring along to show around your 'Latest Acquisition'. This could be a new lapidary addition to your collection or some other collectable.

Till next issue

2024 SCHOOL HOLIDAY WORKSHOPS



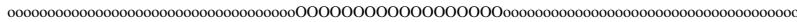
Above - Some of the keen students at our Beginners' Workshop on Monday and Tuesday 15th and 16th January in the school holidays. Some eight students subscribed. The numbers dropped over the two days as sickness struck some of them! Despite this, the tutors had their time filled with enthusiastic participants plus a couple of their parents pushing to learn the basic skills involved in making cabochons.





Above and bottom of previous page - On 22nd and 23rd January, 2024, a workshop was held for those who had completed at least the Beginners' Course. This workshop focused on building on the basic skills by requiring the participants to learn to select rocks appropriate to bezels supplied and then to measure, cut, polish and fit the completed item to the bezel chosen. Again, a couple of adults were drawn into the skills being taught and many items were produced. Tutors were kept very busy to ensure standards were met and the quality of the finished items was achieved at a good level. It was exciting to witness the enthusiasm of participants as they were encouraged to learn more skills.

The commitment and hard work of all tutors was amazing and greatly appreciated by all students. A huge 'thank you' goes out to them all for giving up their time to pass on skills to the upcoming lapidarists in our club!



CLUB'S NEW KITCHEN

We have waited a long time for this to happen. For those who have visited our clubrooms in recent times you would have noticed that the Club's old kitchen has been undergoing a refit and refurbishment. So, you will understand that a certain amount of chaos exists! Normal sessions still will progress even though we have to work around the kitchen space not being in action. Other arrangements have been put in place to provide for tea, coffee and morning teas so you won't miss out! Some progress photos below.





The Australian Commonwealth of Australia was a 'Gold Bearing Series' Half Sovereign or Ten Shilling note on the previous page which was overprinted 'HALF SOVEREIGN' in red in three locations. It was denominated at one-half of a pound sterling as we were tied to Great Britain. The note has the serial number - A 19 839008. This note was brownish with a greenish multicoloured underprint and was issued in 1923 with the design used till 1925.

The note is signed by Denison Miller, the Chairman of Directors, CBA., and James Collins, Secretary to the Treasury. The note measures 180mm x 78mm. This note became known as the 'Harrison Issue' as it was designed by Australian's Note Printer Mr. T.S. Harrison. The two earlier designs were known as the 'Treasury Issues'.

The wording on the note had "The Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia promises to pay the bearer Half a Sovereign in gold coin on Demand at the Head Office of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia."

The obverse, or front of the note, features the monarch King George V facing left directly opposite the Australian Royal Coat of Arms which has the shield in the middle with the emu on the right and kangaroo on the left. The portrait of King George V was introduced in the mid-1920s on the 10 shilling note through to the 10 pound notes. These paper notes still denoted to the currency's convertibility to actual gold on demand.

The matter of the gold to back the notes up was discussed in the late 1920s and just after the Great Depression started during 1933. It was decided to cease the policy of the redeemable gold which maintained the rate of one gold sovereign for one pound currency. This led to the design of a new series of legal tender notes.

The reverse of the note has a vignette of the Goulburn Weir which was built between 1887 and early 1891 across the Goulburn River near Nagambie in Victoria. It was the first major diversion structure built for irrigation development in Australia. The words 'HALF' appear on either side of the vignette on a mosaic background,



Gold sovereigns and half sovereigns had been minted in Australia at the Sydney Mint since 1855. These were used to back up the notes.

Left – A typical Australian gold half sovereign minted in 1893.

Our first mint was set up and housed in a section of the old Rum Hospital in Sydney. Initially it was under the control of a British Naval Officer. All the half and one sovereigns produced at the Sydney Mint can be distinguished by the small 'S' mintmark located on the

reverse of the gold coins.

The gold sovereigns and half sovereigns were made from gold purchased from prospectors and gold miners and were the first coins of the realm to be coined at an overseas branch of Britain's Royal Mint in London.

Over 116 million gold sovereigns were minted over the Sydney Mint's life before it closed in 1926. Ironically, it took until the late 1870s for gold coinage which had been minted in Sydney and Melbourne to be accepted as legal tender in Great Britain and the majority of the British Commonwealth. The Mints in Melbourne and Perth stopped minting sovereigns after 1931.



Left - A silver Edwardian sovereign and half sovereign purse made for one to carry their gold coins. This purse type was usually kept in one's waistcoat pocket or purse. All cases were used for carrying these gold coins with each case usually holding about 4 or 5 sovereigns. Smaller cases were often worn on a gentleman's Albert or silver watch chains. The coins could be stacked firmly together by a strong spring action mechanism.

A large number of these sovereign cases and purses were made in Birmingham in England and were often given as gifts and for farewells. Often one's initials were carved onto them. Frequently other coin purses were designed and manufactured to house a gold sovereign and half sovereign, and a silver shilling, six-pence and three pence.

SALT MONEY



The mountainous region in the central highlands of New Guinea was home to the Enga tribe, though the tribe is now part of Indonesia. Known as Enga Province of West Papua it is just one tribe along with hundreds and hundreds of others. Few people will disagree that the landscape is very rugged.

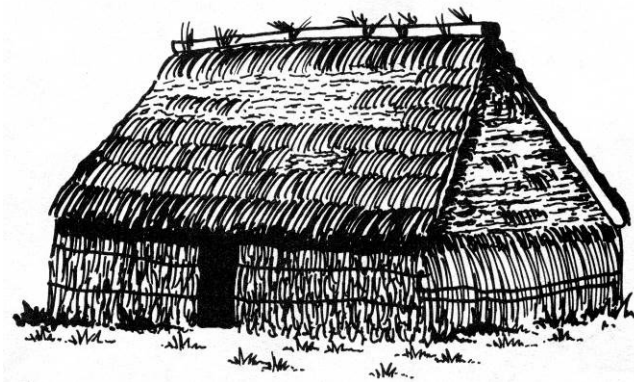
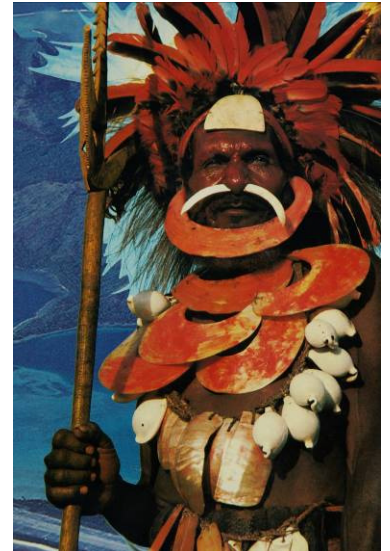
The tribesmen of Enga Province were once fierce warriors fighting surrounding tribes but also prominent makers of lumps of salt.

The Irian Jaya Enga Tribe made salt by burning salt impregnated soil. The 'salt' was wrapped in leaves

with a thin cane net secured by vines. Another of their methods saw the tribesmen soaking plants in salt springs. One location where the salt was made was at the Laiagam salt ponds near Lake Surunki.

The bundles of coarse salt measured about 18 x 15 inches and were about one inch thick. In the earlier days tribesmen traded it for large pearl shells, pottery items or a good handmade stone axe or bush knives.

Enga salt was a highly prized barter trading commodity in the country's ancient trading routes. In the past, the Engans traded salt with the other provinces of Papua New Guinea for steel axes, sago, fired clay pots, Digaso oil, and kina shells, seen on the dancer at right.



Left - Tribesmen, along with their families, lived in huts made of bush vegetation.

Pigs still continue as culturally valued items in the region with an intricate system of swine exchange, which is commonly known as 'tee.' The practice symbolises and adds to the social life by the tribesmen and throughout the province. In the earlier days pigs were part of bride price

along with the salt.

Salt for trading is not a recent thing as the early Greek slave traders would use baskets of salt to barter for slaves, which, over time, gave the expression that somebody was "not worth his salt." In earlier times the Roman legionnaires were paid in salt called their *salarium*, which in Latin leads to the word 'salary.' The Romans even had a word for giving salt as part of their wage, it was 'sal dare'. The Chinese, around 2200 BC, with the Emperor of China, Hsia Yu, ordered that there would be a tax on salt, one of the first known taxes.

During the Middle Ages salt was so important that roads were built especially for the purpose of transporting the bags of salt.

Salt is still used to preserve and flavour food in countries around the world. The population in West Africa need extra salt to replace what their bodies have used in their very hot climate.

The Ghanaians in Africa around 800 and 900 BC reached their height of power by trading salt and gold. Even today the nomads on Ethiopia's Danakil Plains still use salt as money. The Enga tribe still harvests and trade salt.

Salt is a crystalline mineral, composed primarily of sodium chloride (NaCl), which is a chemical compound. At one time, would you believe, salt was worth its weight in gold.

THE ROYAL MAUNDY

Most readers will have never heard of the 'Royal Maundy' but with Easter looming this may enlighten you. It is a most interesting of the ancient ceremonies retained by the Church of England and is the distribution of the Royal Maundy, which takes place annually on Maundy Thursday at Easter in Great Britain. It is the fascinating survival of an ancient custom.



Left - The Royal Almonry Seal.

Right – A set of 1895 Maundy coins in their original case issued during the reign of Queen Victoria.



It initially involved the washing of the feet of the poor. The observance of the feet washing took place around the world in Christian countries with the Pope, for example, washing the feet of thirteen priests or pilgrims. The Pope then served them bread and wine.

In England the Maundy ceremony first took place about AD 600 as mentioned by St Augustine when it took place by the Sovereign of England until the seventeenth century. Queen Elizabeth I was the first monarch to give money to each person, twenty shillings in a small leather purse. In 1572 Queen Elizabeth took part in the Grand Maundy Ceremony in the Hall in Greenwich where the recipients were brought together and a cushion was placed before them. First the laundress, who had been provided with a silver basin within which was warm water and sweet-smelling flower, washed the feet of the poor people. Then the Sub-Almonder and the Lord High Almonder in turn repeated the process.

Right - King George V's bodyguard leaving St. James Palace to attend Maundy Ceremony in Westminster Abbey.



The chaplain then read a lesson describing the washing of the Disciple's feet before the Queen entered the hall. She was attended by thirty-nine ladies and gentlemen. They then donned aprons and took up towels and basins of warm water. The Queen and the men washed, crossed and kissed the feet of the poor women. The Queen then distributed presents such as some broadcloth to make gowns, a pair of sleeves, a wooden platter upon which was a half side of salmon, the same in ling fish, six red herrings and six loaves of 'cheat-bread', together with red wine.



Left - Officials of Royal Almonry placing Maundy money in purses for distribution by King George V in 1932

By 1837 King William IV decided to sanction a monetary allowance in lieu of the cloth and provisions. This was due to the recipients often selling their gifts for a trifling sum. He decided on three shillings a head. Another reason for the monetary change was that the recipient was too poor to afford a new suit to be made.

In Queen Elizabeth II's time men received their Royal Maundy Money in a red and white leather purse. They received a total of 4 pound 18 shillings and 7 pence in 1937. Included was 3 shillings and 7 pence representing

the number of pence, according to the age of the reigning Sovereign in silver coins, freshly minted by the Royal Mint and comprising of a penny, twopenny, threepenny and fourpenny.

Women received the same amount, except for their clothing amount which was 10 shillings less and was given in a green purse.

Maundy money is technically legal tender, but normally they are not found in circulation due to their silver content and added numismatic worth. Until the 18th century the Maundy coinage used were taken out of regular circulating currency, however by the middle of the century it was decided to specially strike the Maundy pieces, polishing the dies for each coin struck.

Images from the Royal Mint London and private collection.



The largest fossil crinoid stem which has ever been found is 130 ft (40 m) long. Archaeologists have dug up fossilised segments from the crinoid stalks that were once used as beads for primitive man's necklaces and rosaries.

COLOURFUL AZURITE AND MALACHITE NODULES FROM BURRA BURRA

The general public who attended our GEMBOREE and GEMKHANA Gem and Mineral Shows over the years are often amazed at the colours of the various minerals that are in competition displays or for sale by the dealers. These azurite and malachite would be contenders.

Early and later miners who worked the Burra mine in South Australia must have been impressed with the specimens of rich green malachite and blue azurite from the veins and nodules amongst the mass of host rock. The azurite and malachite were formed from copper sulphide minerals within the ore bodies some 300 to 400 million years ago.



Left – A rich blue azurite nodule from the copper mines at Burra Burra in the Bald Hills range, which is part of the northern Mount Lofty Ranges, in South Australia. This old copper mine opened during 1845.

The mine was located on Burra Creek which ran through the township and attracted many miners from Scotland, Cornwall, Germany and Wales.

William Peter, a squatter and station owner, was the first European resident in this area with his head station on Gum Creek near Manoora.

Right – A brightly coloured azurite ball from

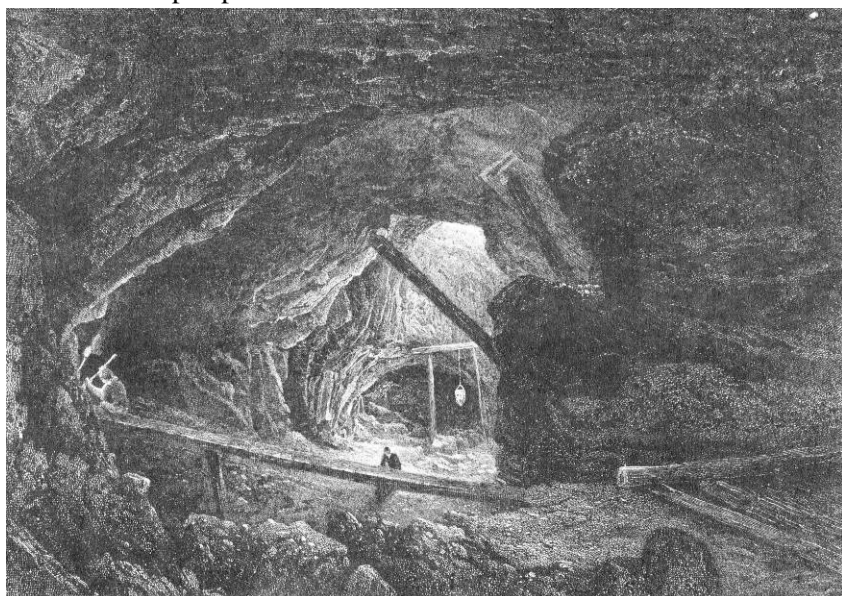


the Burra Burra mine in South Australia.

Just 57 years after the First Fleet arrived a young shepherd named William Streair took some examples of what he thought could be copper ore into the premises of Henry Ayres. The latter was the secretary of the South Australian Mining Association. It was early in June 1845 and the young shepherd had to walk some ninety miles from Burra to show what he had located. Once the samples had been assayed little time was lost in getting things organised. The newspapers in Adelaide soon got onto the story and the news was out.

The land where the copper ore was found was surveyed and made into two blocks which were quickly sold off to two syndicates. At the end of September 1845 miners had been employed and blasting began on the Burra Burra copper mine's pit. About a year later the Bon Accord Mining Company was underway.

Like many early copper mines in Australia the ore was initially sent by ship to Cromwell to be smelted. The Burra Burra mine purchased a Cornish beam steam engine which was shipped to South Australia and installed in 1848. By 1868 the underground mine was some 600 feet deep and added to the mounting issues so the operator's turned the mine into an open pit mine.



Left – An early engraving of the Burra Copper Mine.

The mine employed a considerable number of miners from over 550 up to over 1200 men though they were offered low wages which caused strikes.

The Cornish miners tunnelled the shafts and other tunnels into the rock to enable them to get to the copper ore body. They were paid based on the quantity of the rock that they brought to the surface. Called 'tut' workers they sometimes had to participate in an auction to get the work which would be paid by measure or weight. Large amounts of native copper were found in the early days.

The board of directors during June of 1868 had sought out a Mr John Darlington, from Adelaide. Mr. Darlington was considered an expert on the new copper mining technique and of open cut mining. He arrived in Burra to ascertain if the Burra mine would be suitable to be converted. In his report he noted that the Burra copper ore body occurred in soft clay-like soil which would require a significant lumbering programme which would require a large amount of timber props. By September of 1868 he had reported to the Directors who accepted his recommendations of opening the mine up.

Right – This azurite nodule is from the old Burra Burra Mine and has the chemical formula of $\text{Cu}_3(\text{CO}_3)_2(\text{OH})_2$.

Various numbers of infrastructure were constructed over time including a stone Graves Engine House near the open cut mine which was built in 1868. The Crusher Chimney was erected during 1874 while the Morphetts Engine House was fabricated in 1858.



Initially numbers of men's accommodation were in dugouts burrowed in the embankments of Burra creek. At first a fair number took advantage of them but after a flood in 1851 most had moved out less than a decade later. Like all copper mines the industry was prone to very erratic copper prices.

The east wall produced some wonderful specimens over the years. Some of the very early drives dug by the Cornish miners from the mid 1840s was from 1.5 to 1.8 meters high.

In 1847 S.T. Gill, an early artist, arrived to produce a series of drawings of the Burra Burra mine, some of which included Gill himself in some of the drawings of the scene. Gill had a man hold a candle up so he could see to draw the details.

The mine then basically closed in 1877.

IMPERIAL RUSSIAN POSTAGE STAMP MONEY

When one sees a postage stamp few would even think of it as currency or money. This stamp appears in the Stanley Gibbon's stamp catalogue, but only as an unused stamp and there is no gum on it.



World War One, between 1914 and 1918, around the world was a tumultuous time for not only the Russian economy but worldwide. Especially in Russia there were hard times with everyday shortages with clothing, food necessities, housing and shelter and coal and timber firewood. This led to Russia's monetary system failing which saw the ruble well nigh valueless.

The obverse of the blue 10 kopeck stamp, left, is of an earlier design of 1913, which was able to be used on one's letters but turn it over to the opposite side, next page, and one can see an inscription stating that "it will circulate on par with silver subsidiary coins" of Imperialist Russia. The stamp money was printed on cardstock, so is thicker than a normal Russian stamp.

Other denominations issued by the Russian Treasury in 1916 were the brown 1 kopek, green 2 kopek, red 3 kopek, as well as the orange 15 kopeks and the olive 20 kopeks, the pieces resembling the Romanov jubilee issue of postage stamps. The front of the postage stamp money was printed in the same colours as the existing Russian postage stamps. The Russian E.S.S. known as the Expedition of State Securities engraved the stamp money issues.

This dual purpose stamp was issued during the Revolution in 1915. By 1917 there was a shortage of copper coins in Russia so it was decided to issue a pair of stamps surcharged 1 and 2 kopeck that would circulate side by side with the Russian copper coinage.

Right - The reverse of the postage stamp money had the Imperial Russian Arms or eagle at the top with five lines of text in black underneath in Russian cyrillic. These specialised stamps were issued Russia wide which forced numbers of the local post offices to issue their own stamps in a comparable manner.

The industrious Russians soon learnt how to alter the numeral of value on the reverses of the 1 and 2 kopeck stamp tokens before trying to pass them to shopkeepers and others as 10 and 20 kopeck tokens, that had been issued the previous year.

Alexander III and the Russian authorities issued instructions that using the stamp money was illegal for postage though it appears that some in the population did so.



China is finding some exquisite calcite groups of crystals as the world's collectors are deeming that more be located.



Left – A large orange-red calcite crystal sitting in a plate of small calcite crystals. The specimen is from the Shuikoushan Mine, in Changning County, Hengyang Prefecture, Hunan Province, in China.

The rich, orange-red colouration is caused by inclusions of hematite within the calcite, as well as a coating along the exterior of the calcite crystals.

The mineral calcite is found in abundant quantities in most environments and is formed by water from surface and underground precipitation which forms the limestone in the ocean, lakes and rivers. Most limestone is greyish to yellow, but all colours of limestone

from white to black have been found.

Calcite comes in a great variety of colours such as orange, reddish, greenish, bluish, pink, yellow, lavender, black or even brown, the variations due to the presence of diverse impurities. Specimens may be transparent, translucent, or opaque. Calcite is quite soft defining hardness as 3 on the Mohs scale of mineral hardness. Its chemical formula is CaCO_3 .

Calcite boasts more purposes than almost any other mineral. Its properties have made it become one of the most widely used minerals in abrasives, home and building material, paint pigments, in pharmaceutical products and farming treatments.

Its name comes from 'calx', the Latin name for lime. Some specimens of calcite will fluoresce thus glowing in a variety of colours.

Calcite is quite common and found throughout the world, most notably in Australia, England, Russia, New Jersey, Ohio, Germany, Canada, Tennessee, Massachusetts, Kansas, Indiana, Illinois, Nevada, China, Namibia, Brazil, Romania, Mexico, Missouri, Colorado and Pakistan.

Ancient tales of the Norse mariners over a thousand years ago tells of them using mysterious transparent calcite crystal sunstones to help navigate the oceans, rivers and harbours when the clouds or fog obscured the sun and stars. Also referred to as Iceland spars, they were not a myth as the Vikings could get a true bearing as to their position to be able to steer their oceangoing ships. The Norsemen would hold up the crystal to the sky and rotate it to check the direction of polarization of the light passing through it, thus deducing the position of the unseen sun.

COUNTERMARKED BANK OF ENGLAND EMERGENCY SILVER MONEY

During the reign of the British King George III there was a great expansion of the British Empire after England defeated the French and its Allies in the Seven Years' War. The war had proven to be costly with Great Britain amassing a substantial debt. The win then allowed the British, in 1763, to develop into the most dominant European power in countries such as North America, India and the Southern Colonies in New South Wales.

Seizing the opportunity to despatch some of Britain's convicts to other lands, such as in America and New South Wales, the English authorities in the late 18th century put a statute before King George III. At the time, prisoners usually received the customary sentence of transportation, which was for seven years, however if a crime was more serious, they could get life. In the past most convicts had been sent to America but with the American War of Independence finally ending in 1783 the procedure stopped. From this time America said no to accepting any more convicts from England so they had to find somewhere else to send their convicts.

Britain had a real problem with their gaols running out of space, even to the point of housing them in old ship hulks on the Thames River. This soon saw Captain Arthur Phillip, a British Royal Navy officer, appointed as the first Governor of Australia by King George III. It had been decided that transportation to New South Wales was the answer.

By May 1787 Captain Phillip had set out with the First Fleet comprising eleven ships and some 200 sailors and 700 convicts. They were attempting to find a convict settlement near Botany Bay using Captain Cook's notes. The fleet had departed England on 13th May, 1787, and arrived some eight months later, around mid January 1788. The settlement went through its ups and downs and it wasn't long before requests were being sent back to England requesting coinage of the realm but it was refused as Britain was having coin shortages as well.

There seemed to be crisis after crisis as the British was again at war with the Republican France and her allies in 1796. The Irish was once more in turmoil with the French trying to invade them and England itself could be invaded. Another issue was the hoarding of the remainder of the silver coinage that continued in circulation. England's finances were acute and something needed to be done. Then a run on the reserves of gold at British banks later in February 1797 saw a real panic. The answer was to countermark foreign Spanish large silver coins.

Whilst the Bank of England had worthwhile reserves of foreign silver it was necessary to obtain more. One source was from the Spanish Mexican mines, another was to acquire dollars from Portugal and the West Indies and lastly captured Spanish treasure taken from pirates.



Left – King George III (1760-1820) octagon countermarked 8 reale coin from Spain that was issued by the British Treasury in the late 1700s. It circulated at a value of 4 shillings 9 pence. It is a 1795 Spanish Piece of Eight Reales of King Charles IV of Spain with the British counterstamp.

The front of the coin features a small octagonal counterstamp bearing a laureate bust of George III facing right. The original coin has a laureate and draped bust of Spain's Charles III facing right with 'CAROLUS III DEI GRATIA' around the edge.

The countermarking was undertaken during 1797 and 1804 and though it was approved by the Government Treasury there were those who thought the operations may be illegal. The Bank of England delivered almost three million large silver coins, the majority of them Spanish eight reales. The countermarking was carried out by workmen at the Royal Mint on Tower Hill. Completed coins were then despatched to banks for issuing. In addition, the House of Commons

wanted more coins minted and the Treasury had £1 and £2 paper notes printed.

A Treasury Warrant was despatched on 3rd March, 1797, ordering the Comptroller at the Royal London Mint to prepare the necessary dies with King George III's head and to commence the job as soon as possible. Special punches were to be used, the same as used on Maundy Money.

By 1802 the Bank of England was paying out over £100 of notes to get £60 worth of British struck silver coinage. Inflation was serious, silver prices were rising and there were still money shortages. A deputation of private bankers approached the Bank of England. Then Parliament moved quite quickly, after all parliamentarians had an interest in the banks so on 2nd January, 1804, the Government Treasury sent a warrant informing the Mint to countermark the sizable Spanish dollars that the Bank of England would send them. The job on the 400,000 coins was completed in under two weeks, though a smaller number were countermarked this time.

each bank in England received around £1,000 worth of countermarked dollars as long as they exchanged them for paper notes. This series of 1802 countermarks had an oval stamp on them though this stamp was counterfeited a great deal before their withdrawal. When withdrawn the counterfeits were not paid out on.

A silver coin of Philip IV of Spain, featuring the royal coat of arms and the inscription 'PHILIPPO REX HISPANIAE'. The coin is circular with a beaded border. The central emblem is the Spanish coat of arms, which includes a crown at the top, a shield with various symbols (a castle, a lion, and a globe), and two pillars on either side. The text 'PHILIPPO REX HISPANIAE' is inscribed around the perimeter of the coin.

Boulton's Mint overmarked further dollars from mid 1804 up to 1811, though both lots were dated the same – 1804. Certainly, some of these countermarked coins would have reached Australian shores.

+ In 1798 early ship owners gathered loose coal scattered around on the surface at Newcastle and brought it down the coast to Sydney to sell to the public to use in their fires.

+ That the Vikings obtained raw amber, which is fossilised tree resin, from the shores of the Baltic Sea region. They had arrived in Russia around 750 BC and soon afterwards reached the shores of the mighty Baltic Sea. When visiting they would trade some amber pieces thereafter moulding the yellowish-orange globs of resin making them into beads or other jewel pendants and rings.

+ The native American Indians crushed up hematite and other iron containing ores making clays to be rubbed on their faces and bodies as war paint. This was due to its strong red colour.

+ The Romans believed that hematite could connect them to Mars, their God of War, so they carried it in a small bag by their side into battle.

- Calcite, of the type known as ‘Iceland Spar’ or ‘Optical Calcite’ exhibits some interesting optical properties. It has been said that the Vikings used the stone to find the sun on a cloudy day, by using the polarising effects of the stone. There are references to a ‘sunstone’ helping navigators to find the sun on overcast days in the Saga of Saint Olaf. Archaeologists have exhumed pieces of ‘Iceland Spar’ in wrecked Viking ships.

+ In October 1891 reports that gold had been found in highly payable quantities in some of the quartz veins, notably at the Fontana Reef near Bathurst, where stone was obtained yielding an average of 160oz. per ton of gold worth £4 per ounce. This vein was worked until nearly thirty years ago.