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FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER 2008

Welcome back everyone and hope the Christmas break was well worth it at regenerating the batteries.

While I was holidaying on the South Coast, I had a very interesting discussion with an acquaintance who, for the last 6 months, has been working in South Africa. He thought that I would be interested in his latest acquisitions that he purchased from over there and bought back to Australia.

He went into great detail of the Verdite stone carvings he purchased from roadside artisans of the wild animals that inhabit the savannahs. These artists have primitive tools to carve these magnificent beasts like hippopotami, rhinos and the like and do not charge very much for them. They carve all day on the roadsides just to make a very humble living.

What I found interesting, though, was the way they finished off the carvings to give them a lustrous shine. Firstly, they heat the stone with a Bunsen burner and while the stone was warm they would then cover the whole stone with a mixture of methylated spirits and liquid black shoe polish. Apparently, heating the stone opens the surface pores and allows the black mixture to penetrate and when it cools the colour is trapped beneath the surface. The mixture he said resembled the consistency of thickened cream.....food for thought! (Pardon the pun).

Out of interest, please allow me to indulge and share some information I found on the internet that will put this all into perspective.

VERDITE – Is a green stone from Africa dating as far back as 3500 million years. This rare mineral vein stretches from Barbeton in the north of South Africa to the wilds of Zimbabwe. It has been used by witchdoctors for hundreds of years and used as a preparation for producing fertility in its powdered form.

Verdite is a variety of Fuchsite generally thought of as a deep green colour, but is found in shades of green, often mottled with yellow, red, white and light green patches. It is a fairly rare gem and not commonly used in jewellery – but can be used in natural shapes and carved items. Verdite is a member of the mica group and is often used for carvings. It can be easily worked with woodworking files and saws and takes a fantastic polish with tin oxide. It is now very difficult to obtain and is no longer being exported outside Africa. This stone is classed as a semi-precious stone with a MOH's hardness of 7-9. In Africa, Verdite is often called "Green Gold" and is very sought after by artists and is also used as a substitute for jade.

Other stones commonly used by artists in Zimbabwe, are serpentine and ranges in different colours with the hardest being black, also known as Springstone. Springstone is generally the hardest stone that is carved and is very fine grained and polishes to an amazing black lustrous finish that resembles black opal. Serpentine is thought to have formed 2.6 billion years ago and is formed in and from a rock, Dunite, and is rich in the mineral Olivine.

Soapstone is also found here and is used by sculptors and is a soft and fragile stone with a waxy feel about it.

Steatite is brown or green in colour and is harder than soapstone and many artists prefer it for it has a better look to it when carved.

I was fascinated by what Phil had told me of what life is like in South Africa and he promised me that on his next return visit he would bring me back a small carved animal to add to my already bulging collection of 'odds and bods'.....Can't wait!!

Happy Hunting,
Brenda

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'- an artist is not a special sort of man;
each man is a special sort of artist.'

- Mr. Kato

George and Johns 'Timely Timber & Tool Tips'

February 2008

Hello 'Rock Hounds'

Hope that you all had a relaxing and enjoyable break over the Christmas, New Year period and you're all keen to get back to some serious woodworking.

Did anyone happen to read the article published in the Sunday Life magazine a few weeks ago? It related to the removal (and later return) of stones and other materials from various well known tourist sites such as Ayres Rock / Uluru. Many people have returned pieces taken as souvenirs, believing that the stones are cursed and have brought them bad luck.

I wonder if anyone returned a stone which may have brought them good luck!!!!!!

It would also seem that taking them is a no no, but buying them from souvenir / gift shops is ok?

This month we'll bring you some more tips on rotary tool bits. Many of you will have bought a rotary tool that came with a set of accessories. While the obvious ones such as sanders / high speed and tungsten cutters and router bits are suitable for our daiza making, many of the other bits can be put to good use. Here is a list of the main types of bits that we can use.

* **Router Bits:** Mainly for use on wood. Specifically for removing waste material and for decorative work such as fancy edging.

* **High Speed Cutters:** For use on soft wood and other soft materials such as plastic or aluminium. A variety of shapes from ball to thin circular saw. Ideal for shaping, hollowing and grooving, they're designed to cut on the side of the bit, not the bottom.

* **Tungsten Carbide Cutters:** Similar to High Speed Cutters but can be used on harder materials like hardwood, stainless steel and cast iron. These are more expensive to buy than High Speed Cutters.

* **Structured Tooth Carbide Cutters:** Aka 'Hedgehogs' / 'Porcupines' and 'Burrs'. As the name implies, these have small pieces of tungsten carbide imbedded into the bit to give a coarse cutting surface. They are shaped from long cylindrical to wheel, and are the best tool for removing material quickly. They are not ideal for finishing and tend to clog so must be cleared regularly to maintain the best performance. (See November TTTT's).

These are expensive (average \$40.00 or so) but having a couple in your tool box is a worthwhile investment.

* **Sanding Bits:** These are available in 3 main styles;

1. 'Flap' good for irregular surfaces.
2. 'Band / Drum' good for irregular and curved surfaces.
3. 'Disc' good for flat surfaces. Needs to be mounted on a mandrel (see next month's TTTT's).

Next month we'll talk about some of the other pieces in your accessory case and how they can be used for woodworking.

So long till next time,
G&J

FOSSICKING & DAIZA MAKING WEEKEND (25-27 April 2008)

A reminder re our fossicking and daiza making weekend at the Rectory (an Anglican Youthworks conference centre in Kangaroo Valley). The dates are Anzac day, Friday 25 April 2008 (in after 4pm) to Sunday 27 April (out before 6pm). The Rectory is a beautiful heritage sandstone building listed with the National Trust and was designed by Horbury Hunt the parish of Kangaroo Valley was established in 1882. The verandah has scenic views of the Valley. Travelling time from Sydney CBD is approximately 2 hours. Details of the weekend are as follows:

- Youthworks have confirmed the new rate for 2008, which is only a slight increase, and depending on numbers, would be approx \$25 per night per person (based on 14 people).
- This is a self-catered facility so meals are not provided. If the group wishes we could have a food kitty as we have done with our previous Oallen weekends.
- A barbecue is available and there are also many excellent restaurants in Kangaroo Valley, the Thai restaurant being recommended by Youthworks staff.
- The facility caters for up to 20 people in single and trundle beds; however a possible combination for room allocations could be 4 women, 4 men and 3 couples, or depending on response we could split the rooms half women and half men.
- A possible itinerary for the weekend would be for Day 1 to travel to Oallen for fossicking (approximately 1½ hour drive), and Day 2 to have a daiza making workshop. There is also the possibility of visiting Wade and Roger Hinnrichsen at Cambewarra Bonsai Nursery. Roger has a large collection of excellent suiseki and usually has many stones for sale.

All we need now is an indication of who would like to join us at this great location – I have already received commitment from 5 members – the places will go to the first to notify me. Please let me know your interest **as soon as possible**. We have already received You can do this by email: jan.briggs@bigpond.com or by phoning 9528.5749 or mail C/- PO Box 294, Jannali 2226. Please advise me:

- Your name, phone number, email address
- Number of people

- Whether you are interested, or are **definitely interested**

On previous weekends at Oallen everyone (without exception) has found a great variety of good stones. The usual group of members who are able to attend meetings would very much like the opportunity to meet and get to know those out-of-towners who are unable to come to our regular meetings, and what better way than over a rock hunt. Please check out the Rectory on Youthworks website www.youthworks.net

Regards, Jan Briggs

WHERE AND WHEN

Our meetings are held at the Don Moore Community Centre, North Rocks Road, North Rocks, N.S.W. on the third Wednesday of every month except at school holiday time to start at 7.30pm sharp.

You can contact me at brendap7@bigpond.com if you require any further information. Alternatively you can contact me on my mobile 0412 384 834 or at (W) 02 9522 9399.

In the coming months I would like to reprint the notes on styles of suiseki that were compiled by a former President of Suiseki Australia, Alan Rochester, who very sadly passed away a few years ago. I feel these to be very educational and informative and deserve to be repeated especially for our newer members. So in memory of Alan please enjoy!

STYLES IN BRIEF – by Alan Rochester

Waterfall Shape Stone (Taki-ishi)

The waterfall style can be portrayed in a number of classifications of suiseki. The main ones are that of a waterfall running down the face of a Distant Mountain Shape Stone and a Near-View Mountain shape stone. It can also be represented in a Coastal Shape Stone, Island Stone and Plateau Stone. It is often displayed in a Single Mountain Shape Stone.

The waterfall can be either a “wet” waterfall or “dry” waterfall.

The “wet” waterfall describes a stone that has a vein of a light coloured mineral, usually quartz, running vertically down the face.

The “dry” waterfall represents a waterfall that has dried up; either permanently or over summer and the waterfall in the past has cut a vertical channel in the stone, which gives the impression where the waterfall once fell. This form of the category has an absence of light coloured minerals.

There are a number of sub-classifications that governs the waterfall category and they can be in either “wet” or “dry”. They are “sheet” waterfalls, “thread” waterfalls and “hidden” waterfalls.

The “sheet” waterfall is represented by one or more wide bands of quartz running vertically down the face. The waterfall should ideally be wider at the base than that of the top.

The “thread” waterfall has one or more thin trails or thread-like waterfalls that run vertically down the face.

The “hidden” waterfall has either the source of the waterfall hidden or the fall of the waterfall is behind a fold or a crevice on the stone.

In all of the main categories and the sub-groups the waterfall should start at the top of the stone or ideally just near the top. It should run vertically down the face and not horizontally nor diagonally. The waterfall should not run over and down the back of the stone. An ideal single waterfall should be located 1/3 off the centre of the stone. The waterfall, whether “wet” or “dry” should be heavy and pronounced.

MOUNTAIN STREAM SUISEKI (KEIRYU-SEKI)

This category sometimes gets confused with the “waterfall” category but differs in many ways. The “stream” may be represented as a river or a creek running through the mountains. These watercourses are not as “heavy” in appearance as in the “waterfall” classification. They are usually “threadlike” and can be a single stream or many that cross over each other. The streams can run in any direction i.e. vertically, horizontally and diagonally with the latter being the desired position. As with the “waterfall” category the stream should not run over the back of the stone. These streams can be represented as either “dry” or “wet” or both. Sometimes this category can also incorporate a lake or water pool that one or more of the streams run into. Again as with the “waterfall” category this classification can be represented in any of the “mountain”, Island, Plateau or Coastal Shape Stones categories.

DIARY DATES FOR 2008

20th February – newly acquired stones, either purchased or found on holidays

19th March – miniatures

25th-27th April – suiseki and daiza woodworking weekend at Kangaroo Valley (see the notes in this newsletter)

April – no meeting school holidays

21st May – stones that resemble food

18th June – photographing stones (one of our members to show us how)

July – no meeting school holidays

20th August – funny, strange and even naughty stones!

17th September – human shaped stones

15th October – shapes, letters and number stones

19th November – suiseki books and any internet information that would interest us at the meeting

(I will let you know of the daiza woodworking sessions at Ray Nesci’s Bonsai Nursery in the next newsletter as we have to confirm dates at our first club meeting on the 20th)

A FRIENDLY REMINDER – In the last newsletter of 2007 I informed you of the membership fees that were now due. This will be your last newsletter if your fees are not received at the address at the

top of the newsletter. To ensure you have a continued membership please send your cheque or money order before the end of February and no later than mid March. Thanking you all in anticipation.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

POETIC MEANDERINGS FOLLOWING THE SUISEKI GROUP FIELD TRIP TO TRAVESTON CROSSING

By FRANK BRYANT (EUMUNDI, QUEENSLAND)

Remember Romeo and his Juliet
And that question of what's in a name,
Take a stone and what ere you call it,
It will always look the same.

Thank goodness for Suiseki,
Which turns that all around,
With vision and lateral thinking,
Images in stones are found.
I know it sounds a bit far fetched,
But when a closer look you take,
That lovely stone – the green one,
Becomes an island in a lake.
I hope by now I've opened your mind
To look with viewpoint changes,
Then that bigger rock with it's jagged textures
Is a rugged peak of some mountain ranges.

And so you see, there's a lot in a name,
Or at least in the eye of the beholder,
But in the end a stone's a stone,
Unless, perchance, it's a boulder!!

NEXT MEETING

This meeting on the 20th February, we hope to see some newly acquired stones that were gathered on holiday walks and fossicking. Bring them along for show-and-tell so we can discuss their future status either to be displayed on a daiza or in a suiban. See you all then.