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FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER 2009
(Holiday ponderings)

Dear Members,

I trust that you all had a great time with family and friends during the Christmas break? If in indeed you did and you had some adventures finding stones on walks on the beach or in the bush please let us know by sending a short note to us at the above address or to my email address brendap7@bigpond.com so we can share your experiences and delight in your 'treasures'. Maybe a photo or two would be good also so we can see first hand on your finds.

As usual I went to my caravan down at Lake Conjola, which is on the south coast of New South Wales. I was there to 'rest and recline' as I had had a very full year in 2008 and I needed to recharge the batteries. Of course the weather was woeful, as it was everywhere, with oppressively hot and humid days that all you could do was to stay under shelter and consume copious amounts of drink, of the H2O variety, humongous amounts of food with friends and family and then a nap or two to give the mouth a rest!

One day it was very overcast and it was a chance for me to explore across the other side of the lake, which I might add is huge. This was a job for a trip in the car around the circumference to the other side where on the beach is a large outcrop of stones that I just had to go and explore. I didn't realize that the lake was so big as when I did get to the other side of course I got lost and had to endure the embarrassment of stopping quite a few times to ask for directions. Finally, I got to the vicinity that I needed to be in and then, again, how silly I must have sounded when I asked a couple where was the beach I was looking for when they told me to just go down this path and you are there.....guess what, they were backpackers from England....oops!!

Anyway, I have included a couple of photos of the stones but unfortunately they were all rounded with grooves across them that didn't really fit into the suiseki mould. They were black, very hard and very heavy but not just in the shapes we are looking for to display. At least I made the effort to have a look on a slightly cooler day that got me out and about and that we must do. You never know when that one trip you will find that elusive stone that is a treasure. It has happened to me and so it can also happen to you. Give it a go!



So remember, if you have some adventures you would like to share please forward them on so we can include them in future issues of the newsletter.

Happy Hunting,
Brenda

FINAL THOUGHT

‘ROCKS do not recommend the land to the tiller of the soil,
but they recommend it to those who reap a harvest of another sort-
the artist, the poet, the walker, the student,
the lover of all primitive open-air things.’ -John Burroughs (1837-1921)

APOLOGY from the boys, George and John, for their ‘Timely Timber & Tool Tips’ for this month as they have experienced a computer glitch that will not allow them to send them to me. They assure me that they will be back next month to keep you in touch with the finer points of daiza making and wood treatments. Until then I will fill this spot with an article that was produced by John at one of our meetings last year on photography and tips on how to photograph our stones.

TOP 10 PHOTO TAKING TIPS

Although photo editing software can do wonders when fixing mistakes to improve your photographs, there is no substitute for a perfect photo. Below are a few tips that can help you become the photographer you have always wanted to be.

1. **Watch your background** - Sometimes the background is more important to a photo’s composition than the foreground, or centre of attention. Keep the background simple so the main image stands out easily. Make sure there are no distracting elements like poles or trees sticking through someone’s head.
2. **Go outdoors if possible** – In almost all cases, natural sunlight produces better photo lighting results. Skin colour is natural and unaffected by the strange colors generated from artificial lighting. Using a flash indoors also creates a harsh contrast causing faces to be washed out or too light with a vague, dark background.
3. **Use a flash outdoors** – Bright sun can create dark shadows, especially around faces. Set your flash to fire outdoors if possible to eliminate the shadows and bring your subject into harmony with the sunny, well-lit background.
4. **Know your camera. Experiment** – Every camera is different. Flash ranges and focus depths may vary. Experiment by taking the same shot several different ways. Try shooting with a flash, without a flash, 5 feet away, 10 feet away or close up. Get to know

your camera's strengths and limitations and eventually you'll be able to select the best circumstances for a given shot intuitively.

5. **Move in close, (but not too close)** – Aunt Bertha may think your camera is too close for comfort, but the most interesting photos are ones where subtle details are brought to life. Facial expressions can't be seen from a distance. You will also get better lighting results with close-up shots. But if your pictures turn out blurry, you are too close. Again, get to know your own camera's optimal focus depth.
6. **Move the subject slightly off centre** – Resist the temptation to make every subject stand like a totem pole in the centre of your picture; this gets boring. If you were to divide a square photo into a grid like a tic-tac-toe game, the main focal points should be where the lines cross around the centre square. Even if the background isn't the goal, interesting lines offset behind a subject can make a more interesting photo.
7. **Learn when to take vertical pictures** – With a little practice, switching from horizontal to vertical will come naturally. If the subject you are shooting is taller than it is wide, turn your camera 90 degrees to maximize the area of the subject in your camera viewfinder.
8. **Not everyone likes 'Cheesy smiles'** – Candid shots are usually better than the results you get when everyone says: 'Cheese'. Forced smiles look, well, forced. But if you must warn your audience to gain their attention, try something a more unusual than 'say cheese' and you might get a candid laugh after all. Save your best jokes for the time you spend behind the lens and see if you can get your audience to smile the old-fashioned way.
9. **Be aware of your surroundings** – Before you snap the shot, watch for things that might indirectly affect your picture. If there is glass or a reflective surface behind your subject, shoot at a slight angle when using a flash. And don't aim your camera straight at the sun (unless you are properly set up to take photos during a full eclipse).
10. **Take lots of pictures** – The greatest benefit of digital photography is the ability to take hundreds of photos without paying an extra penny for developing. Simply transfer your images to a PC when your camera card is full and keep on snapping. You can always delete images you don't want later. And, with new software capabilities, you can even combine the best parts of multiple photos for an original work of art.

There are some great tips that we can apply to photographing our stones here so I would like to thank John Cowgill for allowing me to reprint this article.

This is an article sent to us by Bradley Barlow, a very well respected bonsai artist from Brisbane. You will be truly amazed....

I am Bradley Barlow from Brisbane, Australia and I have collected stones for a few years now. Originally a Bonsai and now a Landscape Penjing fanatic, I began my immersion into the world of stones during a number of trips to our Asian neighbours, in search for enlightenment at BCI and ASPAC conventions. Having won many international, national and local bonsai awards for my efforts, I was more prepared than I realized to lose my spirit in the passionate pursuit of stone art.

Contentious as it may be, one of my great joys in stone collecting is to interpret the spirit within a stone and release it using the creativity of design and complex when appropriate, shizuo carving as my friends in China refer to traditional Japanese diaza.

Rather than try to convince the skeptics, I will let a small sample of my stones reveal themselves for your appreciation.

If this article should prove useful to the members, I will share more thoughts and stones another time.

Some of these stones were collected directly from overseas collectors, while others have been selected over the internet (much easier than travel) before they all undergo my design and carving transformations.

The carving is mastered by my great friend Mr Qin and his family and staff in Shanghai, China.

Some stones are already medal winners in China and my most famous purchase is a Lingbi Stone from the late Richard Rosenblum Collection.....but that for another time.



This stone composition captures the enlightenment of Buddha under the Bodhi Tree. The radiance of the enlightened, Golden Buddha is a spectacular feature of this stone.

The tree is Chinese White Jade and the Buddha is a valuable Gobi Dessert Stone with a high degree of natural ‘Dessert Varnish’ which indicates that this stone has weathered for many, many years on top of the ground, buffeted by dessert sands and not just dug up as is more frequently the case.



This Kangaroo was hidden for many years as a piece of Chinese Lingbi stone which was displayed as a soaring eagle.

A very noble and intuitive interpretation, but with some redesign magic, the Kangaroo is revealed.

Also displayed is “Shouxing” the God of Longevity as captured in Yellow Wax stone. This is one of the four traditional stone types collected by the original Chinese Emperor’s Scholars so long ago.



This breathtaking stone is a form of Chinese Grape Agate whose natural shapes and colours are miraculous. The parrot within the stone is obvious and the intricately carved base showcases this masterpiece.



Princess Dianna in her natural beauty was never more radiant than the image captured inside of this stone. Including more of the human form and featuring the necklace, greatly enhances the overall presentation.

Around the base is a chain of hearts to represent “The Queen of Peoples Hearts” as she is so fondly remembered.

NEXT MEETING – Will be held on Wednesday the 18th February, at 7.30 pm. We will have a guest speaker at this meeting and it will be Vince Frizza. He will be bringing along his expertise in anything to do with staining, varnishing and treating wood. He has worked at Wattyl for many years and this talk will be invaluable to us for when we make our daizas. Don't forget your note book and a pen to jot down all the info.

Please bring along anything new that you have come across over the holidays and also we will need a good stone display for our first night back for this year.

See you all then!