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JULY NEWSLETTER 2012

PLEASE NOTE: Suiseki Australia now has a new postal address as seen above and also a new contact mobile number. The website address is still the same. If you have any articles or photos that you would like to share with other members via the newsletter please feel free to do so and you can contact me on brendap7@bigpond.com

Dear Members,

My son, who is a geologist, has just recently returned from a trip out to central Australia, and his trip is very reminiscent of the trip that Roger and Ron did last month.

He bought me back some very interesting small brown waxy stones known as gibber stones from near the Diamantina National Park. The desert pavement surfaces on these stones are often coated with this desert varnish which is dark brown, sometimes shiny coating that contains clay minerals.

The name 'gibber' comes from the Aboriginal word for stone. The gibber is what is left when the sand and dust are blown away by the desert winds. Blowing sand polishes and smooths the stones and gravel. A stone shaped by windblown sand is called a ventifact. In many places, the gibbers have a desert varnish, a veneer of iron – or silica-rich material. The Gibson Desert and Sturt's Stony Desert have developed a covering of these stones.

There are gibber plains over many parts of the world e.g. the Mojave Desert in California, Ahaggar Mountains in central Sahara in Africa and the desert known as Reg de l'Adrar in Mauritania. There is a place actually called Gibber Plain and it is located in central South Australia, Australia and it is situated about 610km northwest of Adelaide (the state's capital) and is about 170m above sea level. The Gibber Plain is one of the northernmost localities in South Australia. The nearest town is Coober Pedy which is 160km away with a population of about 2,600. This town is very famous for its opal mining.

From a geologist's point of interest is that some desert pavements (gibber plains) preserve a long history of dust deposition beneath them. The dust is a record of ancient climate, just as it is on the deep sea floor and in the world's ice caps.

My son also visited the Ochre Pits near Alice Springs and that mine belongs to the Western Arrernte people. These pits consist of several layers of multi-coloured layered rock that was traditionally used by Australian Aborigines in ceremonies and played an important part in the continent's economy. It was considered some of the best ochre – soft to touch, vivid and with a slight sheen to it. The colours range from gold to crimson. When this ochre was mined it was ground and mixed with Emu fat and used for ceremonial body adornment.

There were other uses for ochre –

- Red ochre is mixed with grease and applied as an ointment to relieve breathing congestion when mixed with eucalyptus leaves.
- White ochre was used as a magical charm and when it was mixed with water and sprayed from the mouth it is believed to help with the heat of the sun and the force of the wind.
- Weapons were painted with ochre to increase the success of hunting and also to protect the wood from termites.

NOTE: When out visiting these ochre pits it is very important not to touch or disturb the ochre as these areas are very important sacred sites of the local Aboriginal People. Serious penalties apply for disturbing these sites.

Not far from the ochre pits at Ellery Creek Big Hole my son came across a piece of zebra stone that was about 70cm across (see photo below) with great striations.

Both the ochre pits (see photo below) and Ellery Creek Big Hole are both in the West MacDonnell Range, 50km west of Alice Springs.

I can only feel envy for these trips to our great outback to see all of these wonderful unique qualities of our great country. Maybe we can all delight in reading these stories bought back for us to read and learn!



The Ochre Pit



Zebra Stone

Happy Hunting,
Brenda

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

‘Stones add more effect to the scenery by erosion and weathering, and form the basis of the natural harmonious beauty together with vegetation.’

- Onuki Chuzo

George and Johns ‘Timely Timber & Tool Tips’

July 2012

Hello ‘Rock Hounds’

Just looking at last year’s tips for July reminded me that 12 months ago we had just gotten back from our WA trip, my how time does fly, seems like just a distant memory now.

Not much happening at this time of the year, days are short and generally cold, so there’s not much incentive to get out and about looking for stones. You can always continue daiza carving, but sometimes you just can’t go past sitting down in front of the fire with a good book or a good video (if there is such a beast).

One shining light, if you are based in Sydney*, is the annual Timber & Woodworking Show. This year there has been a change of venue with the show being held at Olympic Park at Homebush rather than the usual site at Moore Park. Dates for the show are 27th /28th / 29th July. We haven’t been able to attend the last couple of years, but this time we can make it so we’re already writing the shopping, aka ‘Must Have’ list. This show is a great place to pick up specialty timbers that don’t appear on the shelves of your local Bunnings outlet. There are any number

of sellers with a wide variety of local and imported timbers, some of which can be expensive but you can buy small, seasoned pieces that are ideal for Daiza making. Also on sale are local timber 'Slices' that can, with a little time and effort, be turned into beautifully polished display bases / stands for your suiseki or bonsai.

Another worthwhile pastime is checking out the latest toys (sorry, I meant to say tools). In going through my workshop, I've discovered that I already have most of the 'You Beaut' power tools that I'm ever likely to need (and a few that I bought but will never need!!), however, there is always a spot for just one more. This year I'll be looking for a Laminate Trimmer. George has owned one for a number of years which he uses regularly at our suiseki workshops. For those who aren't familiar with the machine, it's like a small router that is used for trimming laminate and veneers. It doesn't have a 'plunge' capability but is quite small, and lighter than a small router. These have been pretty expensive in the past, about \$350 - \$400, but the prices have come down and you can buy a Royobi / Ozito for about \$100 or a Makita for \$160 or so. If you're thinking of buying one go for the Makita, the build quality is a lot better. There are dearer machines like Fesco, but these are top of the line and not really worth the money for the use that you want.

These machines take a standard ¼ inch (6mm) shaft router bit and will really speed up the removal of bulk wood from your daiza. **As always, remember the safety angle when using these (or any power tool). They are a great help with your work but will remove flesh and bone just as easily as they remove wood. Always wear eye protection and keep your hands away from the pointy end.**

Maybe see you there at the end of the month.

*For interstate and 'out of towners', these shows are held throughout the year in most capital cities and some major country centres, they're always worth a look.

That's it for this month, so long till next time,
G&J

MY FIRST 'PROPER' SUISEKI

By Dean Wilson

This is the story about how I got my first 'proper' suiseki.

It was my first trip to Japan and we had a free afternoon in Kyoto. I decided to go shopping to the art and antique shops, always looking for the elusive netsuke or work of art to take home and admire. I walked into this tiny shop, which was about 3 metres wide and about 10 metres long. Along both walls were shelves from floor to ceiling crammed with what's called in the antique trade as bric-a-brac.

At the end of the shop was a slightly raised platform that went from wall to wall and behind this were curtains. The curtains opened and an elderly Japanese lady came out, kneeled, bowed and gave me the customary shopkeepers welcome (Australian retailers please take note!) As I rummaged the dusty shelves I found nothing of quality, even the ceramics were so-so, and then, there it was!

In my hand I had an exquisite dark mountain stone, 11cms long by 5cms high, crisscrossed with tiny waterfalls, and I knew that I just had to have it. "Ikura dess ka?" (How much is this?) I asked the lady, as I handed her the stone. She bowed yet again and got up, and as she parted the curtains I could see a frail, elderly man, her husband I presumed, sitting up in a bed and she handed him the tiny mountain. When she returned she told me the price which wasn't exorbitant. I didn't have enough money on me so I said ginko (bank) and went back to my hotel to get some more money. I returned in a while, probably to the surprise of the shopkeepers. The elderly man called the lady back behind the curtains and wrote on a piece of paper something in Japanese which I presumed was the provenance of the suiseki and he also told her a new price which was cheaper.

On two subsequent trips to Kyoto I have not managed to find that shop again and I haven't had the note translated yet, but I can still gaze at my mighty mountain and fondly remember from whence it came.



The beautiful mountain stone that Dean purchased in Japan. On the right is the stone with a 5c piece to show the actual size.

ADDENDUM: To Ron and Roger’s Birdsville Suiseki Safari which was in our last newsletter.

To clarify further of the expenditure of \$2,700 for food and accommodation – this of course included beer (one of the essential ‘food groups’ after all)!

Some of the small hotels/motels in the outback don’t have sufficient trade to justify keg beer on tap, subsequently only stubbies or canned beer is available. The local hotel and the regular locals are quite often very knowledgeable regarding possible suiseki sites so of course it’s very wise to partake in a ‘fewish’ beers at each hotel, purely to gain knowledge, of course!! The average price of a carton of VB for example, in populated areas is between \$35 - \$40. In the outback stubbies and cans average at \$5.50 each, when sold as a single item over the counter. This totals up to \$132 per carton! (The carton prices in the outback are from \$50 to \$90).

[I am glad you clarified that up for all of us Roger! Ed].

A fascinating tradition in the outback pubs, including Birdsville and Mungerannie, is a display of dozens and dozens of Aussie Akubra hats and Slouch hats displayed complete with the name of the person which are then attached on the ceilings of the hotels. This privilege of hanging your hat on the ceiling is that you would have worked in and around the outback for over 10 years. Then when you return to the ‘great outback in the sky’ that is when your hat is transferred to a more ‘sacred’ area on the ceiling. (Great Aussie thinking!)

For those wine drinkers out there (which of course is very good for your arteries – and so is beer?), you may like to read the following important health information.

Cheers Roger

‘One for all my fellow wine drinkers out there.

Do you have feelings of inadequacy?

Do you suffer from shyness?

Do you sometimes wish you were more assertive?

If you answered ‘yes’ to any of these questions, ask your doctor or pharmacist about Cabernet Sauvignon.

Cabernet Sauvignon is the safe, natural way to feel better and more confident about yourself and your actions. It can help ease you out of your shyness and let you tell the world that you’re ready and willing to do just about anything.

You will notice the benefits of Cabernet Sauvignon almost immediately and, with a regimen of regular doses, you can overcome any obstacles that prevent you from living the life you want to live.

Shyness and awkwardness will be a thing of the past and you will discover many talents you never knew you had.

Stop hiding and start living.

Side effects may include: dizziness, nausea, vomiting, incarceration, loss of motor control, loss of clothing, loss of money, delusions of grandeur, headache, dehydration, dry mouth and a desire to sing Karaoke.

WARNINGS:

1. *The consumption of Cabernet Sauvignon may make you think you are whispering when you are not.*
2. *The consumption of Cabernet Sauvignon may cause you to tell your friends over and over again that you love them.*
3. *The consumption of Cabernet Sauvignon may cause you to think you can sing.*
4. *The consumption of Cabernet Sauvignon may create the illusion that you are tougher, smarter, faster and better looking than most people.*

Please feel free to share this important information with as many as you feel may benefit!

Now just imagine what you could achieve with a good Shiraz!'



A couple of bartenders at the Mungerannie Hotel with the many hats on the ceiling.

STONES FOR SALE

Aiseki Kai member, Freeman Wang, would like to invite you to his on line store.
He has hundreds of stones for sale and new arrivals on a regular basis.

Freeman Wang
626-524-5021

Suiseki, Viewing Stone sale
eBay shop

Advanced search seller "the stoneking"

<http://stores.ebay.com/thestoneking>

SUISEKI WEBSITE

Have you visited the new suiseki site <http://vsana.org> yet? Every month you get new information on all types of stones both traditional and contemporary. Great historical facts and great photos explaining the differences – colours, textures and the mohs hardness of all the stones. Remember every month there is a ‘Stone of the Month’ to get acquainted with.

This site was generated by Dr. Thomas S. Elias and Dr. Hiromi Nakaoji to further educate the western world of the antiquities of ancient China in the great tradition of their abundant stone collectors and collections.

I would thoroughly recommend you visiting this site on a regular basis to further your knowledge and appreciate the wonderful world of stones.

This year the Wood and Working with Wood Show is at a new venue on the 27th – 29th July, 2012 at The Dome, Corner Showground Road and Murray Rose Avenue, Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush.

If you love working with wood and want to see what is new in the tool department – this is a must. Also there will be fine arts to see and buy made from beautiful timbers that will astound you.

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be held on the 18th July at 7.30pm.

One of our members, Georgina Kretschmar, will be demonstrating Chinese painting. It may enthruse us to make sketches of our stones like the scholars and scribes did all of those eons ago.

Reminder: There will also be a daiza making workshop at Ray Nesci’s Bonsai Nursery, Sagars Road, Dural on the 21st July commencing at 9am.

PICTURE GALLERY

[More stones from Ron and Roger’s outback trip]



Animal Stone



Animal Stone



Pattern Stone



Pattern Stone



Tunnel Stone



Outback Picture Stone



Mountain Stone



Food Stone