

Scottish Gemmological Conference 2011

As a first-time attendee at the Scottish Gemmological Conference, I wanted to take a moment to let you know my impressions of this conference. As many know, I have been attending gemmological conferences for many years, in many parts of the world. The timing of the Scottish conference, however, always prevented my being able to attend due to conflicts, but this year the timing worked out well and I eagerly looked forward to being both in Scotland, and at the conference, for the first time! This conference has now moved to the top of my "must do" list and I look forward to being at many future SGA conferences.

It is increasingly rare in today's world to have an experience that far exceeds your expectations, but this was one of those occasions. While I was expecting an excellent conference based on the timely topics and exceptional speakers, the organization and quality of the workshops was unrivaled. And I never anticipated such warmth from the entire gathering, such energy (especially during the Scottish dancing during the dinner), and the wonderful sense of humor that made the time go by all too quickly.

The workshops were among the best sessions I've ever attended anywhere. My only regret is that the conference couldn't have been one day longer so I could have attended them all. Of the two I selected -- Jade by Dominic Mok, and Optical Phenomena by Brian Jackson -- I not only learned an incredible amount in terms of the gemological aspects of the topics, but also found we were challenged to re-think what we've been previously taught. It was refreshing and stimulating.

I couldn't begin to cover all of the things I learned from Dominic's jade workshop, but one of the things I'd like to share (for reasons immediately obvious to those who know me well) concerns Chelsea filter reactions for dyed versus natural green Fei Cui (pronounced Fay choy), which, prior to this workshop I would have called "jadeite." I had been taught many years ago that even though the Chelsea filter would not reveal *all* dyed green material, whenever the reaction through the filter showed some brownish/reddish color reaction this was definitive proof of dyeing. What I was surprised to learn from Dominic is that the very finest color, rarest Fei Cui lacks the iron content that blocks a reaction through the filter and so it *will* show a slightly brownish reaction through the Chelsea filter and will *not show the 437 absorption band identified with natural green jadeite!* We examined some pieces that showed this brownish reaction, pieces proven by very advanced instrumentation to be the fine color, *natural* green Fei Cui.

Another important tip we learned from Dominic is the proper term to use with knowledgeable Chinese jade buyers when referring to what we gemologists typically refer to as "the finest imperial jadeite:" the term we *should be* using with knowledgeable Chinese dealers is Fei Cui Jadeite, Old Mine Type (to distinguish this rare material from other material sold under the Chinese umbrella term for "jade," which is Yu, and also from other types of "jadeite" such as Fei Cui omphacite, and Fei

Cui kosmochlor, and so on. For "the rest of the story," hopefully the SGA will invite Dominic to return..

Brian Jackson's presentation on optical phenomena would have served equally well as a magic show for youngsters; in fact, we were all enthralled by his demos! I have never seen so many **bags** of stones, literally, provided for any workshop, let alone for 23 different types of phenomena! In particular, his demonstration of the "usambara effect" with chrome tourmaline was dramatic and memorable (and I'm going to borrow it for my own classes)! And maybe someone else will write about the animated discussion Brian generated related to the oft-used and not properly-understood term "color shift" and the cause of it; I'd need at least 2 more pages to do it justice. And I haven't even commented on the other 21 phenomenon he covered.

Nor have I commented yet on the great presentations preceding the workshops. So maybe just a few more words (really, just a few) are in order. Karl Schmetzer's fascinating presentation on alexandrite truly brought his new book on alexandrite to life! Alan Hodgkinson's presentation on specific gravity was great fun (as was his workshop I was told by all who were there). Stuart Robertson's insights into current market trends were on the mark -- and "thank you" Stuart for introducing a new term -- *blended ruby* -- for the lead-glass/corundum mixtures now posing as, and being represented as, "traditionally treated ruby"! And David Callaghan's look at magnificent jewels prior to the workshop sessions ever so eloquently reminded us of what it's really all about. And now, I'm really out of space and out of time.

All of this to say, see you next year!

Antoinette Matlins