
What's New in the Mineral World?



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by **Thomas P. Moore**
The Mineralogical
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TPMoore1@cox.net



A week and a half ago I returned from France, where I went, naturally, to the Ste.-Marie-aux-Mines Show (you will see the resulting report in our September-October 2014 issue), and now it's time for some quiet midsummer web-surfing. Here's some of what I have found, which I hope you'll have the leisure time to enjoy with me:

On July 14, Jordi Fabre of *Fabre Minerals* (fabreminerals.com) posted his first "Ste.-Marie update," showing, among other things, some beautiful cabinet-size **barite** specimens he had acquired in Ste.-Marie, from both of the new localities in Morocco which have been making the barite news of late. In fact, these two kinds of Moroccan barite have become increasingly common since I first saw them in Ste.-Marie in 2012, and described them in *that* year's print report (in September-October 2012). Reporting *this* year from Ste.-Marie, I mentioned again the beauty and abundance of (especially) the pale blue barite from the Ouichane (or Sidi Lahcem) mine in Nador Province, and furthermore I cautioned against confusing this with the barite from the Bou Nahas (or Afrou) mine in the Oumjrane-Alnif district near Meknes. Really, though, it's not that they look much alike: barite from Ouichane forms subparallel bundles of bladed blue crystals on hematite/limonite matrix while that from Bou Nahas makes sharp, fat, diamond-shaped, yellow-brown crystals with pyrite, chalcopyrite and other sulfides. Both places are quite busy now, anyway, and if you don't believe me on this point you can take it from Jordi; in fact, you can take one of his spiffy specimens, which range in price from \$200 to almost \$700, and which look like this:



Barite, 7.9 cm, from the Ouichane mines, Beni Bou Ifrou, Nador, Morocco. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.



Barite, 7.7 cm, from Bou Nahas, Oumjrane, Alnif, El Rachidia, Morocco. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

Jordi's July 14 update also has several cabinet-size specimens of a brand-new thing from China: **pentahydroborite**, a triclinic, colorless to white borate species with a type locality in the Ural Mountains. These new specimens come from the Shijiangshan Pb-Zn mine, which Jordi locates close to "Jipeng" in the Huanggang complex of mines which lies near the town of Chifeng (= "Jipeng"?), in Linxi County, Chifeng Prefecture, Inner Mongolia. For summary descriptions of the geology, mineralogy and recent mining history of this red-hot mineral area, which comprises much, much more than the famous Huanggang Sn-Fe mine, see the articles in our September-October 2012 China Issue. Jordi's specimens of pentahydroborite are thick matrix coverages of transparent and colorless to milky white and translucent crystals with individuals ranging between 3 and 8 mm; many crystals stand up at high angles from matrix and are clearly seen to be triclinic, resembling tarbuttite crystals from the old Broken Hill mine at Kabwe, Zambia. Mixed with them, on matrix plates from 6 to more than 10 cm across, are microcrystals of andradite, galena and wurtzite. Perhaps in time we will learn more about the minerals of the Shijiangshan mine, which is not mentioned in either of the two articles on the Huanggang mine complex in September-October 2012: meanwhile, Jordi says he has learned that the Shijiangshan mine, and not the Huanggang mine, is the real source of the specimens of pale green **borcarite** (sprinkled with microcrystals of cahnite!) which have been known, and attributed to the Huanggang mine, for the last two or three years.



Pentahydroborite, 6.2 cm, from the Shijiangshan mine, Jipeng, Inner Mongolia, China. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.



Beryl, 2.7 cm, from the Gilgit district, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. The Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.

The new, totally redesigned website of Rob Lavinsky's *The Arkenstone* (irocks.com) is experiencing heavy traffic of intriguing new postings. Most recently—July 14—there have appeared thumbnail and miniature-size specimens (and one matrix piece measuring 8.6 cm) showing lustrous, thin-tabular-hexagonal crystals of a blue **beryl** variety which Rob calls both “vorobeyevite” and “rosterite”—though according to Bayliss's *Glossary of Obsolete Mineral Names* (2000), vorobeyevite is a “pink gem Cs-rich beryl” and rosterite is a “red Na-rich beryl.” Well, these specimens, from some unknown site in the Gilgit district of Gilgit-Baltistan (formerly Northern Areas), Pakistan, are said to be cesium-rich, and they have the tabular habit characteristic of morganite, which of course is pink and is cesium-rich, but these new ones are very attractively *blue*. Some specimens are single, loose crystals while others are clusters, with platy crystals lightly attached at varying angles. At dusk on the day when the posting had first gone up, four specimens already had been marked “sold,” with 30 still up for sale; the specimens mainly carry high-three-figure and low-four-figure prices.

Two other recent pages on the *Arkenstone* site are called “Mixed Fine Minerals” (June 6) and “Little Treasures” (July 11), and these bear miscellaneous things, including many old classics, of such quality that what begins as a quick surf is likely to bog down into an hour-long gawking trance. Just for your enjoyment I show three examples on the next page: one of the extraordinary **thaumasite** specimens found in the late 1980s in the Kalahari manganese field of South Africa; a fine Arizona antique, **chrysocolla coating and replacing malachite pseudomorphs after azurite**, from the Live Oak pit at Miami; and a thumbnail of otherworldly-iridescent **stephanite** from the great stephanite/polybasite find made in 1977 in the Husky mine near Mayo, Yukon Territory, Canada.



Thaumassite, 5.6 cm, from the N'Chwaning I mine, Kalahari manganese field, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. The Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.



Chrysocolla pseudo malachite pseudo azurite, 8.6 cm, from the Live Oak Pit mine, Miami, Arizona. The Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.



Stephanite, 2.9 cm, from the Husky mine near Mayo, Yukon Territory, Canada. The Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.

More to the point of what's *new* in minerals, *The Arkenstone* also has a page offering 17 big specimens of **fluorapophyllite with stilbite** from a January 2014 find at Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India. Pale green and translucent, lustrous, thick-tabular to pseudocubic apophyllite crystals to more than 6 cm rest on and amid gleaming pink bulbous sheaves of stilbite, in specimens measuring 10 to 30 cm across. Here I show one specimen which is mainly apophyllite and one which is mainly stilbite. Let's not get *too* jaded with gorgeous zeolite-type things like these from the Indian Deccan Plateau basalts, remembering always that if they weren't so familiar they would be absolutely mind-blowing.



Fluorapophyllite with Stilbite, 13.2 cm, from Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India. The Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.



Stilbite with Fluorapophyllite, 19.1 cm, from Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India. The Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.

Speaking of **apophyllite**, an unusual one-shot find in 2013 in a new mine in the Kalahari manganese field called the UMK (United Manganese Kalahari) mine produced about 40 specimens of apophyllite (whether fluorapophyllite or hydroxyapophyllite remains undetermined), with tabular crystals to 1.5 cm colored uniformly red-brown by included hematite. The crystals occur scattered over matrix and also form loose clusters, associated with specular hematite, hausmannite and white fluorite. Isaias Casanova of *IC Minerals* bought up the best of the lot in 2013, and now just one specimen remains for sale on his site (icminerals.com); I am late in mentioning this occurrence and so must hope that *more* such specimens come, any day now, from the UMK mine, where large-scale ore production began in 2010.



Apophyllite included by Hematite, 5.2 cm, from the UMK mine, Kalahari manganese field, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. IC Minerals specimen; Isaias Casanova photo.

Ian Bruce's *Crystal Classics* (crystalclassics.co.uk) has a July 10 update offering 34 **gold** specimens in a wide variety of styles and sizes, from localities including the Venezuelan gold fields; the Eagle's Nest, Red Ledge and Christmas mines in California; the defunct Hope's Nose, Devon, England occurrence; the Round Mountain mine in Nevada; and lone examples from Washington, Idaho, British Columbia and Baja California, Mexico. It is quite an impressive assemblage of good gold specimens, and you should check it out. Also Ian has many fine **fluorite** specimens, the majority from England, and extensive representation of the Iranian material that he's been channeling for the last couple of years now. Among this last, the mimetite, cerussite, wulfenite, hemimorphite and others are fairly familiar by now—but the July 10 site update also

shows two very nice-looking miniatures of **native copper** from a “new find” at the Qaleh-Zari mine, South Khorasan Province (source also of botryoidal baby-blue hemimorphite, as seen at shows lately). A third one of Ian’s new Qaleh-Zari mine specimens shows sharp, 3-mm octahedral crystals of **cuprite** on copper, and strongly recalls specimens from Russia’s Rubtsovskoe mine.



Copper and Cuprite, 3.1 cm, from the Qaleh-Zari mine, South Khorasan Province, Iran. Crystal Classics specimen and photo.

For a while now I have been issuing little bulletins, both in print and online, concerning the new and (in some cases) very fine specimens of **andradite variety demantoid** which have found their ways to Western dealerships from a new locality in Iran, namely Belqeys Mountain, reported to lie 34 km northeast of the town of Takab, West Azerbaijan Province. The trapezohedral crystals, reaching 3.5 cm or so, are not very lustrous, and invariably they show rough spots from contacts and damage, but they are sharp and very dark green, and in matrix specimens they contrast well with the pale yellow-green, earthy-looking material they rest on. Now Geoff Krasnov of *Geokrazy Minerals* (geokrazy.com) is offering four excellent specimens of the material in his Thumbnail Gallery, one of them a loose, complete, 2-cm crystal for \$300, the others (\$250, \$140, \$120) showing smaller demantoid crystals perched on matrix. By standards already in place these are quite inexpensive examples of what it’s safe to say is a major occurrence of colorful and unusual garnets—thumbnail collectors take note.



Andradite variety Demantoid, 2.2 cm, from Belqeys Mountain near Takab, West Azerbaijan Province, Iran. Geokrazy Minerals specimen and photo.

The luxuriant-looking site of Rudolf Watzl's *Saphira Minerals* (saphiraminerals.com) has a June 17 update consisting of three generous pages of **elbaite**, each specimen gorgeous, and gorgeously photographed, and there's even a "watch video" feature such that, with a mouseclick, you can see each crystal slowly revolve in strong, scintillating light. Localities include the Sahatany Valley (Madagascar), the Paprok mine (Afghanistan), the Himalaya mine (California), Oyo (Nigeria), and, in Brazil, the Teixeira, Golconda and Jonas mines; by far the best represented of such classic places is the Cruzeiro mine, Minas Gerais, Brazil. And in these pages there is a single amazing matrix specimen from the Golconda mine: a 7.4-cm matrix of lepidolite from which rise two thin, gemmy blue-green elbaite crystals to 5.8 cm and a sharp yellow-brown, fishtail-twinned hydroxylherderite crystal. Steve Smale acquired this piece in Brazil in the 1970s, and even if you can't handle its price of 4500 Euros (about \$6300) you owe it your respectful attention, and so I show it here. An April 10 update of Rudolf's dazzles us further with very fine specimens of transparent, deep purple fluorite and of fluorite/barite/quartz combinations from the well-known Berbes mining area, Ribadesella, Asturias, Spain...and of course there's a page of "Alpine Treasures" to represent the base stock of this son of a famous Austrian *Strahler*.



Elbaite, 5.6 cm, from the Cruzeiro mine, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Saphira Minerals specimen and photo.



Elbaite and hydroxylherderite, 7.4 cm, from the Golconda mine, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Saphira Minerals specimen and photo.



**Datolite, 8.4 cm, from Charcas, San Luis Potosí, Mexico.
McDougall Minerals specimen and photo.**

Ray McDougall of *McDougall Minerals* (mcdougallminerals.com) has just recently gone into the specimen-selling business, and already has scored at least a couple of excellent specimen lots, one representing an earlier-known occurrence and one representing something quite new. The “old” occurrence is of the fine **datolite** that has come intermittently from Charcas, San Luis Potosí, Mexico. The specimens are much less frequently seen on the market than the datolite from Dalnegorsk and the Virginia and New Jersey traprock quarries, but it is fully their equal for quality. Clean, glassy, translucent datolite crystals to more than 5 cm, pale green with a hint of blue, form groups spotted with microcrystals of pyrite and chalcopyrite, some resting on gray sulfide matrix.

The really *new* item now offered on Ray’s site is the rare tourmaline-group species **magnesio-foitite** (confirmed by analytical testing), as 13 loose, compound, highly lustrous crystals measuring from 3.8 to 9.8 cm, jet-black to the casual glance but internally very dark brown and seen when backlit to be gemmy. These specimens came within the year from a large collapsed pocket in the Tsitondroina Commune, Ikalamavony district, Matsiatra region, Fianarantsoa Province, Madagascar. Ray says that the pocket gave up about 100 damaged magnesio-foitite crystals besides the elite 13 he acquired, and that a few years ago another pocket of the same kind was opened in the same area but that the crystals then were assumed to be schorl.



Magnesio-foitite, 4.8 cm, from the Tsitondroina Commune, Ikalamavony district, Matsiatra region, Fianarantsoa Province, Madagascar. McDougall Minerals specimen and photo.

Geologic Desires (geologicdesires.com) is a site run by expert “North Country” New York field collector Mike Walter, and while at first it offered almost exclusively minerals from the northeastern U.S. it has been diversifying of late: go to the Localities Index and find your favorite well mineralized part of the world, and see what Mike can come up with. This time, though, I went to “United States,” then to “N-Z,” then to “Pennsylvania,” and found two surprisingly well-stocked pages of fine specimens from several localities within 100 miles of Philadelphia (i.e. localities such as I cut my own field-collecting teeth on when young). Mike has sharp, loose, thumbnail-size pyrite crystals from the Cornwall and Grace mines; calcite and strontianite cabinet specimens from the Faylor-Middlecreek quarry in Union County; a 3.4-cm plate with 1.2-cm brucite crystals standing up vertically, from the Cedar Hill (Stoltzfus) quarry in Lancaster County; very good apophyllite and andradite miniatures from the Cornwall mine, and plenty more. Here too was the best miniature specimen of **celestine with strontianite** from the Meckley quarry, Mandata, Northumberland County, that I’ve yet seen; and, to top off the show, four outstanding specimens of **pyrite** from the long-gone locality of French Creek, Chester County. The best of these latter is a 3.3-cm crystal group of distinctive stepped-octahedral form, sharp edges, and no “pyrite rot” at all (for some reason, most old French Creek pyrites do seem immune to the tendency to oxidize that can afflict pyrite from other places). At \$300 that French Creek piece (shown here) is a bargain, I’d say, for an item so famously “classic.”



Celestine and Strontianite, 4.9 cm, from the Meckley quarry, Mandata, Northumberland County, Pennsylvania. Geologic Desires specimen and photo.



Pyrite, 3.3 cm, from the French Creek mine, St. Peters Village, Chester County, Pennsylvania. Geologic Desires specimen and photo.

And now for something odd from the other end of the country. Californian Mike Keim’s *Marin Minerals* site (marinmineral.com) has an April 16 page of **epidote pseudomorphs after andradite** from Garnet Hill, Calaveras County—an old-favorite collecting site for Californians, I’m told, which became inaccessible around 2002. It is a small skarn deposit which crops out on a hilltop (on, indeed, “Garnet Hill”), and it has

yielded some major specimens of both epidote and andradite, as well as quartz “snowball” pseudomorphs after garnet. Mike Keim’s specimens show faithful replacements of dull pistachio-green epidote after dodecahedral andradite crystals to more than 2 cm individually; some show concentric and overlapping layers of green epidote and yellow-brown andradite; some crystals are partially hollow within; and there is microcrystallized quartz in there too. These specimens are a bit raggedy-looking, as most have broken areas and as the pseudocrystals and half-and-half crystals all have somewhat rough surfaces, but still they are interesting pieces, just right for pseudomorph fans.



Epidote pseudo andradite, 4.3 cm, from Garnet Hill, Walker, Calaveras County, California. Marin Minerals specimen and photo.

Shelter Rock Minerals (shelterrockminerals.com) is another new site, introduced in this space in my last report, which is going strong now, posting large, colorful, tasteful contemporary specimens of many kinds (e.g. Milpillas azurite, Ouichane blue barite, Ojuela mimetite, Elmwood calcite, Spanish pyrite), and I recommend a visit. In the site’s special page called “The Vault” there are five miscellaneous killer pieces, and I admit that it is for the sake of showing one of them here that I’m plugging the site this time. The killer in question is one of the great **purple adamite** crystal groups found by Mike New’s crew in the San Judas Chimney in the Ojuela mine, Mapimí, Durango, Mexico, in October 1981—read the story in Mike’s “Purple Adamite Tales” in the September-October 2003 “Ojuela Issue”—and this 3.9-cm specimen has been spending its time until now in Scott Rudolph’s collection. The price is \$4,500, for great is the glory of *any* good specimen of this material which finds its way back onto the market today.



Adamite, 3.9 cm, from the San Judas Chimney, Ojuela mine, Mapimí, Durango, Mexico. Shelter Rock Minerals specimen and photo.

The Italian dealership called *The Webmineralshop* (webmineralshop.com) has a July 3 update with a few good-looking specimens of **magnetite on epidote** newly found at Marki Khel, Spin Ghar Range, Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. Brilliant metallic black octahedral crystals of magnetite with sharp growth features on their mirror faces rest on druses of translucent peridot-green epidote lining open seams. The picture quality here is not the best, but still one can tell that these are handsome specimens of Alpine cleft-type magnetite, the crystals rivaling the famous old ones from Binntal, Switzerland for sharpness of form and brightness of luster.



**Magnetite on epidote, 7 cm, from Marki Khel, Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan.
Webmineralshop specimen and photo.**

Finally, another Italian dealership, this one with the friendly name *Your Mineral Collection* (yourmineralcollection.com), has a June 21 update on which are five miniatures (all but one of them already sold at this mid-July writing) of the new **wurtzite** from the Agios Philippos mine, Évros Prefecture, Thraki (Thrace), northeastern Greece. Wurtzite specimens from this inactive lead-zinc mine debuted with Jordi Fabre at the 2013 Munich Show (see my report in January-February 2014), but I think that the specimens now online at *Your Mineral Collection* are a bit better: they are matrix plates with areas of dense coverage by sharp, lustrous, red-brown to yellow-brown, 1.5-mm crystals of wurtzite, accompanied in some cases by black microcrystals of jordanite.



Wurtzite, field of view 3 cm, from the Agios Philippos mine, Évros, Thraki, Greece. Your Mineral Collection specimen and photo.

That will do it for this midsummer online update-of-updates. If you are planning to be among the fall pilgrims to the big Denver Show, remember that this year, for the first time, there will be *three* big Denver shows of interest to serious mineral collectors: the “Main Show” at the Merchandise Mart; the usual show at the Ramada Inn (until recently the Holiday Inn) run by Marty Zinn; and Dave Waisman’s *new* hotel show at the Denver Marriott West, 1717 Denver West Boulevard in Golden. This new “Denver Fine Mineral Show” will run from Saturday September 6 through Tuesday September 9, with about 40 dealers, including a lot of the “majors,” set to participate. Just seven weeks and three days to go...