

Alan Hodgkinson's Address at the 2009 Gem-A Presentation of Awards and Graduation Ceremony

What a privilege it is to be here this evening, and present prizes to those of you who aspire to a career in the world of diamonds and gemstones. This occasion marks the completion of a gemmological circle which for me began in 1961 when, in the splendour of this wonderful venue of Goldsmiths Hall, I was presented with my Diploma in Gemmology and I was elected a Fellow of the Association (FGA). Since then that stepping stone of the Fellowship of the Gemmological Association, and the Diamond Diploma has led to a wonderful lifetime journey of experiences that I could never have dreamed of.

But to begin at the beginning. I was born in Liverpool. However, the Queen in her wisdom, sent me North of the Border to do my National Service in Scotland. In the time of the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius, The Ninth Legion of the Roman army was sent North soon after AD 109 to quell the untameable natives of what is now Scotland. They never returned. I never returned from Scotland either, but unlike the Roman Legion which was annihilated by the natives, I was accepted and assimilated in 1957, thanks to the offer of a job with David Henderson the jewellers in Aberdeen.

In my contract of employment, my boss insisted that I qualify as a gemmologist. If I failed my exams, I would lose the job. I qualified – with distinction, but who wouldn't with that threat hanging over you? My fascination with gemmology then grew further, as I read books outside the actual syllabus. Books on minerals, which amazed me by their enormous numbers compared with the few I had seen in the jewellery trade.

But remember, it is the minerals that provide the raw material of our gemstone industry. Every year, new gem varieties are found and cut. Some make beautiful gemstones as with the new find of orange kyanite in Tanzania. Some are oddities such as villiaumite which actually dissolves in water. Two years ago at the Tucson Gem and Mineral Fair I saw a pair of matching talcs – you know – that mineral which has a Mohs' hardness of one. Open your eyes to the wider field of gemmology, and its niche in the world of science. Don't stop now. Continue your interest and push your gemmology further. One thing is certain: success in your career will only come, if you are prepared to go the extra mile.

What other learning points can I share from my gemmological journey? An early Chinese philosopher noted. "the strongest memory is weaker than the palest ink". A man who took this to heart was Gaius Plinius Secundus – This elder Pliny took a writing tablet with him wherever he went, and was constantly recording observations, even when he was being transported in a rickshaw. A contemporary describes how in the coldest weather, Pliny wore gloves, but still kept on recording.

My plea to you this evening is to record everything you see of interest in the world of gemstones. You are enormously helped today by the laptop or hand held computers, and the cell phone with its in-built camera. Of course, others have the same opportunities, but to you I say "Go that extra mile".

In addition to our Journal of Gemmology, It does not cost too much to subscribe to other gemmological journals: the Australian Gemmologist, the American Gems & Gemology, For those of you with language skills there are the German, Japanese and French Journals. If they are more than you can afford, share the cost with a gemmological friend.

There is so much happening in the world of gemmology today. There are websites and chat rooms teeming with information on gems. Also, much earlier gemmological literature is now readily available. Some of it makes for fascinating



Alan Hodgkinson's address at the Graduation Ceremony.
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reading. The American physicist and gemmologist Kurt Nassau assisted in translating the gemmological content of the Stockholm Papyrus, written in Greek about AD 300. In it are listed 73 recipes for making or improving gemstones. One such recipe is for making emeralds from rock crystal. Part of the recipe requires 2 drachmas of verdigris, three drachmas of powdered chrysocolla and a cup full of urine from an uncorrupted youth. This transformation of colourless rock crystal to the green of an emerald is still produced today, but fortunately, the recipe has changed.

Your gemmological notes now form the starting point of your own unique gemmological experiences. Keep adding to them, and be sure of this. If they are based on your own observations, they will have a later use as your gemmological life unfolds. With today's technology at your fingertips, the recordings of colour could not be easier, but keep the charger handy, or a spare battery for your camera so that you do not miss out on the next stone seen.

Start your own collection of gemstones, though they may seem costly at the time. I remember in 1975 buying a 13.79 carat pink beryl morganite, for £1.25 a carat. It seemed so much then, but at the very least I could make a profit today. You can sometimes trade gemstones, and there will be gem merchants or jewellery manufacturers who will see your commitment, and give you a discount, or even a gift of some stones, but only if you show your enthusiasm for gemmology. Some of these gifts may be damaged or poor quality gems, but these may have their own surprises or unbelievable inclusions. Study the inclusion photos and information in the books of Eduard Gübelin and John Koivula. The internal content are not flaws. They are the very birthmarks which add so much to our understanding of gemstones and to this planet we inhabit.

In the 1970s I began a series of practical Hands-On

Gem Identification courses. These achieved their greatest success and benefit when I ran them residentially in rural Nottinghamshire. Their success was due to three factors: Firstly, a team of volunteer gemmological friends gathered round to help including Pat Daly, Doug Morgan, Gwyn Green, Clive Burch, Jamie Nelson and David Larcher. Second was the extraordinary collection of gems to work with, all accessible for handling and testing. Thirdly, the residential nature of the courses. While the programme ran from 9am to 5.30pm, the fact was that within the security of Upton Hall, we could all work on through the evening, and even after midnight, sharing our experience with the keenest participants, and equally important, we shared our latest findings with each other. What a vast learning experience that was for all of us.

Gemmology is never tiring if you are keen. Become more involved with gems and minerals, but remember to go the extra mile. Why not make a resolution to get out of bed earlier in the morning, and give yourself some gemmological experience before others have even left their bed. Ken Scarratt was the successful Director of the Gem Lab here in London in the 1980s. Ken has now gone on to run the world's most advanced gem testing laboratory and diamond certification facility in Bangkok for GIA. Ken's secret. Well there are various factors, but he rises at 4am every morning, goes for a ten mile run, has his breakfast, and then starts work. I said it earlier. You have to go that extra mile. If you sleep on in bed, the gemmological world is passing you by, but note this: Like you, Ken Scarratt holds the Gem-A Diploma in Gemmology and is also an FGA.

Be sure of one thing. While we are surely fascinated by gemstones, the general public are equally fascinated, but they do not have your gemmological understanding. You will find yourself being asked all sorts of questions, and you will be turned to for all sorts of answers to satisfy the public's curiosity. As you become more gemmologically knowledgeable, the jewellery trade will want to use your knowledge and ask your advice. This public curiosity and the trade's need is your greatest opportunity for advancement in your career.

Part of your role now is to help promote and maintain the public's trust in the gemstone industry. This despite attempts by some to market red beryls as red emeralds, or prasiolite quartz as green amethyst. This last two years has seen the scam with pale yellow labradorite feldspars. After intensive copper diffusion, they become attractive saturated red feldspar andesines. They were said to have come from various localities including China, and appeared in such numbers, that China adopted them as the national stone for the 2008 Olympic games. The scam was uncovered by the gemmologist Robert James who was suspicious as to why all these identical gems were suddenly appearing, with no real details of their location, and why were there no crystals Robert James asked? At first he was ridiculed, but eventually it was acknowledged that he was right. Robert James was using his gemmological nouse, but then he is an FGA

You will no doubt meet opposition in life at times. Some will confront you with sarcasm and sniping. As a newly quali-

fied gemmologist, I was asked disparagingly by a jeweller, 'What good do you think your FGA will do you?'. At the time I could only say I found gemmology so fascinating. I was not to know that gemmology was to take me on a wonderful lifetime journey to many parts of the world to share my gemmological knowledge, but wonderfully, the more I travelled to teach, the more gemmology I saw and learned.

It is by this sharing and pooling of information that has lead to the growth of mutual gemmological understanding throughout the world. That in essence has been the role of the Gemmological Association which has been in existence these one hundred and one years. Gem-A has now shared its information with you through your course of study. Use it well.

Back in 1961, the exams were a fairly simple undertaking. Today's gemmological syllabus is a far more demanding commitment, and you have all succeeded. Those of you who have collected your Diplomas today are now qualified gemmologists. My sincere congratulations, and I would ask the rest of us to stand and give a standing ovation for your achievement

You are now free to explore outside the confines of your gemmological notes. Suddenly those limiting boundaries of the syllabus are blown away, and you are in the real world. It is a time when the world's economies are in dire straits, where jobs are harder to come by, where competition in the industry worldwide is the more vigorous and demanding.

Welcome to the real world. Don't sit back and admire the view of yourself with your Diploma. Increase your gemmological endeavours, Don't miss an opportunity to improve and increase your gemmological knowledge. Go that extra mile.

Go and see gem and mineral exhibitions and trade fairs. Contact your local museum and university and find out who is involved in the geology, the gem and mineral departments. You will mostly find these curators and lecturers give you encouragement. Visit a lapidary club where you might find you have a flair for gem cutting. Be sure and join a local Gemmological branch. Volunteer to help. Look for the opportunities of refresher courses, conferences, lectures. Some of you will feel confident to push yourself further, and you may be able to pursue an advanced gemmological study, as here in London at Kingston University. Professor Andy Rankine, our current President at Gem-A. offers a one year course leading to a BSc Honours Degree in Gemmology and Applied Mineralogy. There, you can learn the workings of gemmology at laboratory level.

Of all the careers that are on offer, I cannot imagine one which is so full of fascination and opportunity. Gemmology can bring rewards far greater than the merely financial for your own success and enjoyment of life. So head back for home full of gemmological commitment. Work as hard at building your career as building friends. Both need a good foundation, and you now have that foundation by your award tonight.

And finally realise this simple fact. If you enjoy your work, you will never have to work another day in your life. I wish you well.