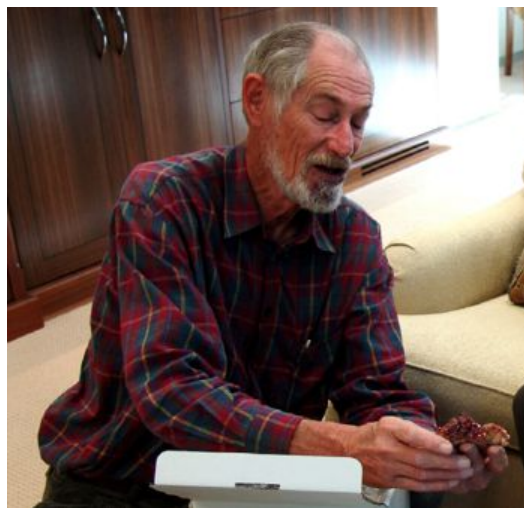


A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MINERALS HERITAGE MUSEUM (MHM) – By Ron Young 2009

The Mineralogical Society of Queensland (MinSocQ) was founded during the first half of 1986. Around that time, its first president, Jim Harrison, was discussing with our mutual friend and MinSocQ member, the late Diane Stacey, the fact that the display of minerals in the Queensland Museum was not particularly satisfactory. Further, it seemed likely that the Queensland Museum's mineral specimens would soon be shipped to Mt Isa.

As a result, Jim proposed that MinSocQ should establish its own museum, and Diane agreed. At the next MinSocQ meeting, the idea was put to members, who agreed unanimously with the proposal. After some discussion, it was agreed that I should be responsible for 'getting the museum going'.

The purpose of the museum was to collect and display fine mineral specimens to the public, as most people (unless involved in lapidary clubs etc.) are entirely unaware of the existence of the beautiful treasures that occur in the earth's crust. Neither MinSocQ's Management Committee nor I had any idea as to how this endeavour would end up. However, I decided to 'go for broke' and try for a proper government approved museum.



Ron Young, the first curator, and a driving force behind the Minerals Heritage Museum.

Without going into the minutiae of the ongoing saga, I will record only that I visited the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) on many occasions and showed them a great many fine mineral specimens and explained that the Mineralogical Society of Queensland wanted to establish a museum for the purpose of collecting, housing and exhibiting to the public a selection of these rare and beautiful wonders of nature. I explained that the conservation of these treasures is at least as important as the conservation of man-made treasures because the naturally occurring specimens cannot be duplicated or re-created.

As well as the numerous personal visits to the ATO, there was extensive correspondence concerning the establishment of our museum. The ATO eventually decided that it might be possible to establish a museum but it would need to have a 'home', and a physical address.

In August 1987, I approached the curator of the Geology Museum at what was then called the Department of Geology and Mineralogy, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, and he suggested that I write to Dr. Richard Chapman, acting Head of the Department, with a view to having our Heritage Museum based within the Geology Museum. A formal Document of Association was drawn up between the Mineralogical Society of Queensland and the Department of Geology and Mineralogy at UQ. This stated that the Mineralogical Society of Queensland's Heritage Museum would be situated within the Geology Museum at UQ, and that a dedicated, lockable display cabinet and storage space would be made available to our Heritage Museum, and that we would rotate display quality specimens in the cabinet provided.

The Document of Association was vetted and subsequently approved by the UQ Legal Department, and was signed by both parties in February 1988. It was submitted to the ATO which agreed that our Heritage Museum now had a 'home' and that it might now be possible to have it established as an 'approved museum'.

I was provided with a 'Model Trust Deed' which was the document required by the ATO to allow for the establishment of our Heritage Museum. The Deed required the appointment of four trustees and I nominated John Innes, a highly qualified specialist mineralogist, Diane Stacy, proprietor of Brisbane's only retail shop dealing in mineral specimens, Jim Harrison, President of MinSocQ and myself as the facilitator of the project and a mineral specimen collector with 35 years experience.

The Deed was dated 18th June 1988 and in their letter dated 4th October 1988 the ATO advised that *'the Mineralogical Society of Queensland Heritage Museum has been accepted as a public museum in terms of sub-paragraph 78 (1) (a) (XXVII) of the Income Tax Assessment Act. In terms of this approval gifts of \$2 and upwards to the museum are allowable deductions to donors for income tax purposes. The museum is also an eligible recipient institution for the purposes of the Taxation Incentives for the Arts Scheme'*.

It subsequently became obvious that it was through my persistence and the establishment of credibility through the personal visits, the correspondence, and the showing of numerous specimens to the ATO that the whole exercise resulted in success. It is extremely unlikely that such a result could be achieved now, whatever the circumstances.

Remember, our Heritage Museum started as an idea; no address, no home, no money, no specimens. It is now the only government approved public museum in Australia devoted exclusively to minerals and mineralogy.

There were some questions asked within MinSocQ concerning the relationship between the Society, and the Heritage Museum. In particular whether I was trying to separate the Heritage Museum from the Society. It is obvious that this was never the case; the Society initiated the establishment of the Heritage Museum and it was always intended that the Heritage Museum be part of the Society. However, the Trust Deed required by the ATO in order to establish the Heritage Museum does legally make the Heritage Museum a 'stand alone' entity with no affiliations to any other body. This is unfortunate in that the Heritage Museum is legally separate from the Society, but the fact remains that in thought, act and spirit they are both interwoven. It is worthy of note that the establishment of the museum is mentioned in the Constitution of the Incorporated Society. (Incorporation was achieved on 26th June 1990).

In the meantime Jim Harrison had arranged that our Heritage Museum would provide a display of fine mineral specimens in the foyer of the Central Plaza One (CP1) on the occasion of the opening of the building on the 14th September 1988. I shopped around for quotes for the building of a display cabinet in the shape of the CP1 building and in June 1988 we accepted a quote of \$3,000.

My friend, Ian Griffiths at The Rock Shop in Adelaide Street (still there in 2008) provided the \$3,000. Our Society was to refund to him \$1,500 which, bearing in mind his tax deduction, would leave him not much out of pocket. I then raised \$1,000 in donations for our Heritage Museum which I passed on to Ian. The Society paid \$500 to Ian to complete the transaction. The end result was that the Society paid \$500 for a purpose built display cabinet which cost \$3,000.

The cabinet was duly installed in the foyer of CP1 and several MinSocQ members supervised the mounting of an impressive display which received appropriate recognition from 'the powers that be'.

I was appointed Curator of our Heritage Museum at a MinSocQ meeting on 30th July 1988.

Subsequent to the CP1 display other presentations were made including:

- a very large and comprehensive display in the State Library in the Cultural Centre (opened by the Director General of the Mines Dept.)
- displays at two Pacific-Rim Geological conferences
- displays on two separate occasions in the foyer of the Mines Dept.
- a display which stayed in place for several years in the Minerals and Energy Club (presented in the CP1 cabinet)
- displays at numerous mineral shows
- a display changed from time to time in my employer's office
- a display for several years in the foyer of the AMP building (presented in the CP1 cabinet)
- the display in the Geology Museum at UQ changed from time to time, in line with the department's requirements
- a major presentation in the Myer Centre during Mining Week
- a display in the foyer of 61 Mary Street (presented in the CP1 cabinet)
- a large presentation in the Sunnybank Hills Library
- two major presentations within the Queensland Museum, one of which was in place for 12 months and the other for one month. Tony Forsyth and I did these together.
- Displays at 20 of the 21 shows presented every November in Buderim by the Suncoast Gem and Fossicking Club; (on the one other occasion, the venue was not able to accommodate our presentation).
- Many other comparatively minor displays for various specific reasons.

In the meantime I wrote to every mining company whose address I could find (they were numerous, as I had access to Stock Exchange data). Results were disappointing, and it became obvious that no one was about to donate money to allow for the purchase of mineral specimens which neither I nor they had seen. It was apparent that I had to be able to show a specimen to a potential donor and hope that funds might be forthcoming.

Fortunately, I know many dealers well enough that I was able to 'borrow' suitable specimens in order to show them to prospective donors. One of my first approaches was to my long-time friend Bob Bryan, who was then chairman of Pan Australian Mining. Bob was well disposed and empathetic with the cause, but thought that I should do a bit more homework. I did some refining of my approach to possible corporate donors and Bob's Pan Australian Mining became the first donor by providing \$2,000.

Queensland Coal Trust (Clive Hildebrand) was a generous donor on several occasions, MIM Holdings Ltd., Henderson Charlton Ltd., MinSocQ, and many others provided funds for which we were most grateful. There was some criticism that our Heritage Museum owned only a few specimens and that most were very expensive. It was necessary for me to explain that it is preferable to have a corporate donor provide \$2,000 for one really nice museum piece than for a handful of lesser pieces (which would have been impractical to gather together and show to a prospective donor)

The name of our Museum was changed to the Minerals Heritage Museum by agreement of all four trustees on 1st October 2003, hence the abbreviation 'MHM'. In April 2004 we received our first donation under the Taxation Incentives for the Arts Scheme (now known as the Cultural Gifts Programme).

Since then we have received substantial donations via the programme including the Roger Staley Collection and some very fine specimens donated by George Stacey. A large and handsome pyromorphite was donated by Kelvin Olzard (son of Tom Olzard of Tom's Mountain fame). Exotic Gems and Minerals P/L (Nick Zdrilic), Tony Forsyth and I myself have also made donations, gratefully received.

After the death of John Innes, Bob Bryan accepted our offer to be a trustee of the Heritage Museum. In April 1989 Bob had agreed to be patron of MinSocQ. Then upon the death of Diane Stacey, the Society itself accepted the offer to be the fourth trustee. At every second AGM of the Society, a member is appointed for a two year period to represent the society as a trustee of the Heritage Museum. Tony Forsyth was the first so appointed, and has been re-appointed on each subsequent occasion. Tony is the Deputy Curator of the MHM.

Taking a step backwards, it will be remembered that the last venue at which the CP1 cabinet was installed was in the foyer of the 61 Mary Street building. It was a nice presentation but there is no way that a single cabinet in a very large foyer could be a 'traffic stopping' event. The presentation occurred via Tony Forsyth who worked in the building (as did his wife, Judy) and who sought and gained permission from the relevant people to allow us to mount the display.

After the display had been in place for a lengthy period of time Tony received a phone call from Jane Fitzpatrick, a friend of Tony's wife and the legal representative for Enertrade, the owners of the building at that time.

Tony's first thought was that we were about to be asked to remove our display. However, it transpired that Jane was a very perceptive lady and realized that there might be potential for a much bigger, brighter and better display in the foyer.

Tony assured Jane that we could mount a magnificent presentation in the foyer but we had no money for cabinets, lighting etc. Jane indicated that Enertrade was prepared to spend some money on rejuvenating the foyer and invited Tony to design cabinets which would be suitable for a fine display. Tony duly designed the cabinets, consulted suppliers, obtained quotes and submitted the details to Jane. Enertrade provided the funds for the purchase of three truly handsome display cabinets with internal lighting and storage space underneath.

I gathered from the Heritage Museum collection and from willing friends enough museum quality and first class specimens to create a beautiful presentation.

Tony produced all of the specimen labels and we 'invented' an eminently satisfactory system of labelling. We divided the presentation into several categories; overseas specimens, Australian specimens, crystal systems, chemical compositions, gem minerals etc. Tony made huge and very beautiful educational wall posters and descriptive educational cards to mount within the display. He also designed and produced a magnificent 'Invitation' to the official opening of the Minerals Heritage Museum which took place on the 25th August 2004.

Bob Bryan, patron of MinSocQ and a trustee of our museum spoke briefly about the history of the MHM and Bernard Rowley, chairman of Enertrade, welcomed our presentation as a beautiful enhancement to the foyer of the building and then declared the Minerals Heritage Museum open.

The three display cabinets were arranged against the eastern wall of the foyer and then there was a space before the southern wall which went off at right angles. One day Jane Fitzpatrick spoke with Tony and observed that there was enough space between the last cabinet and the southern wall to fit another cabinet. Even though Enertrade had sold the building, the company funded the purchase of a fourth cabinet to fill the gap, a hugely generous gesture. The fourth cabinet has of course been filled with a variety of colourful specimens and the whole presentation is quite magnificent.

Thus, after more than 20 years of serious effort the Minerals Heritage Museum has its 'home' and a beautiful permanent display of top quality mineral specimens in the foyer of the building at 61 Mary Street.

Rather than my trying to describe some of the specimens on display, I suggest that you visit 61 Mary Street and enjoy the presentation. Please write in the Visitors Book so we will know that you have seen the display.

RON YOUNG

Curator and Trustee of the Minerals Heritage Museum, January 2009.