Fact Sheet

The Albert Chapman Collection - Remarkable Minerals from the Australian Museum exhibition

On tour at the Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum, Bathurst from 8 June 2019

What is the Albert Chapman Collection - Remarkable Minerals from the Australian Museum exhibition?

The Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum (AFMM) will host the Albert Chapman Collection – Remarkable Minerals from the Australian Museum (AM) exhibition, featuring more than 570 outstanding Australian and overseas mineral specimens including stunning smithsonite, rhodonite, pyromorphite, azurite, anglesite, cerussite and spessartine. These minerals make up two-thirds of the incredible collection assembled by the late Albert Chapman during his lifetime and now in the care of the Australian Museum.

“All of the Chapman minerals are world class, and some even considered the finest examples of their type in the world. They are also a unique part of Australia’s heritage representing all periods of our mining history. We’re delighted to be touring them to Bathurst and giving communities in central and western NSW direct access to this incredibly important collection,” Australian Museum Director and CEO Kim McKay said.

“It is also fitting that while in Bathurst, the Chapman Collection will be displayed alongside the Somerville Collection. Not only are these collections respectively the two best mineral collections in Australia, Professor Warren Somerville AM was also a great friend of the late Albert Chapman, often seen together fossicking for minerals. Now more than 60 years later, these minerals are being brought back together and may well inspire the next generation of geologists,” Ms McKay said.

When on display in Bathurst, the Chapman Collection will be alongside the AM’s Somerville Mineral Collection, and combined it will be the largest and most significant exhibition of minerals in Australia – with more than 1400 world-class minerals on show.

During the tour, the Australian Museum will undertake a significant refurbishment to its Sydney site with the entire Chapman Collection expected to return in a new exhibition once works are complete.
Over 570 minerals (or two-thirds of the Chapman Collection) will tour to Bathurst. These outstanding minerals are predominantly from central and western NSW including from Cobar, New England, and Broken Hill, as well as specimens from around the world.

Visitors will see historical and irreplaceable mineral heritage items from some of Australia’s most important mining regions including:

- azurite and malachite from Cobar, NSW
- stibnite, cassiterite, scheelite and fluorite from New England, NSW
- azurite and chrysocolla from Chillagoe, QLD
- crocoite and cerussite from Dundas, TAS
- atacamite, chalcopryite and malachite from Moonta and Burra, SA

**What is the Albert Chapman Mineral Collection?**

Albert Chapman assembled one of the finest mineral collections in the world. This collection is a tribute to his passion for minerals and quest for the highest standards of perfection.

All of Albert’s minerals are world-class, with some considered the finest examples of their type in the world.

The Albert Chapman Mineral Collection was purchased by the New South Wales Government in 1988, with assistance from Conzinc Rio Tinto Australia, North Broken Hill and BHP. The collection was housed in the Geological and Mining (‘Earth Exchange’) Museum until its closure in late 1995.

In December 1995, the New South Wales Government transferred care of this collection to the Australian Museum, where it was on display from 27 September 1996 until January, when preparation began for its tour to Bathurst.

The Chapman Collection is renowned worldwide for its mineralogical diversity, crystal perfection, aesthetic appeal and high Australian content. Half of the 820 specimens are Australian, with one quarter from Broken Hill, NSW. Many of these outstanding specimens are the best ever found at Broken Hill.

They are some of the finest crystallised minerals from all periods of Australia’s mining history, from the mid-19th century and later. As such they are a unique part of Australia’s cultural heritage.
Who was Albert Chapman?

Albert Chapman was born in Mackay, Queensland in 1912.

Albert’s father was a sea captain and amateur naturalist, who often brought home natural history specimens such as sea shells and encouraged Albert to collect minerals.

One of the first specimens in Albert's collection, gold in quartz, was given to him by his father. In the 1920s, aged 12, Albert collected rocks on the shores of the Parramatta River, Sydney, where he later lived, and became interested in the sparkling crystals they contained. He began to collect these specimens, some of which had been used in breakwaters and came from Prospect Quarry in western Sydney and others, like garnet gneiss from South America, which were ballast dumped from ships which anchored nearby. He later collected from the Prospect quarries, finding beautiful prehnite and other minerals.

Albert trained as a cabinet maker and carpenter, later establishing a building business in Sydney, however collecting and trading minerals was the ‘hobby’ that dominated his life. Being a perfectionist in his craft as well as his hobby, ensured that Albert's collection was very special indeed. The mines of Broken Hill, with their incredible variety of fine mineral specimens, also attracted him at an early stage, and many collecting trips were made underground through contacts with mine managers and miners, who became firm friends.

These specimens were not often seen overseas, so Albert was able to trade them with collectors and museums in Europe and America, to further build up his collection. These travels were often made with his wife Doreen, who was also a collector. Through his collecting, reading and travelling, he became a very knowledgeable amateur mineralogist and an authority on Australian minerals. This reputation earned him automatic entry to the great museums of the world, with whom he traded specimens.

Albert was a shrewd mineral trader and fine judge of mineral quality. He set high standards in the selection and collection of minerals and because of his efforts Australian mineral collecting became important on the world scene. Albert was a founding member of the Mineralogical Society of New South Wales and assisted Australian museums in acquiring important specimens. His advice on mineral specimens was sought after by professional and amateur alike. He was the first Australian mineral collector to visit the famous Tucson Gem and Mineral Show in the USA and became a regular, well-known and respected attendee, exhibitor and trader of minerals.

Through his dedication and passion for fine minerals, Albert assembled one of the top ten private mineral collections of the world. He still maintained a keen interest in minerals right up to his death, on 20 July 1996, aged 84.
Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum, Bathurst NSW

The Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum is located in the centre of Bathurst and is operated by Bathurst Regional Council. The museum houses the Somerville Collection, owned by the Australian Museum. The Collection comprises 3,500 specimens of minerals and fossils including the second best mineral display in Australia (after the Chapman Collection), and Australia’s largest collection of fossils in amber, fossil dinosaur eggs and a large collection of opalised fossils.

The Somerville Collection comprises the lifetime collection of Professor Warren Somerville AM. The Museum and Collection are overseen by a legally constituted company entitled the Somerville Collection and a representative of the Australian Museum sits on the Board of Directors.

90-year-old Professor Somerville was a good friend of Albert Chapman and is very excited to have part of the Chapman Collection temporarily on display alongside the Somerville Collection.

Australian Museum, Sydney NSW

The Australia Museum (AM) was founded in 1827 and is the nation’s first museum. It is internationally recognised as a natural science and culture institution focused on Australia and the Pacific. As custodian of more than 21.9 million objects, the AM is uniquely positioned to provide a greater understanding of the region through its scientific research, exhibitions and public and education programs. Through the Australian Museum Research Institute (AMRI), the AM also has a leading role in conserving Australia’s biodiversity through understanding the environmental impacts of climate change, potential biosecurity threats and invasive species.
Interesting Chapman specimens

Pyrargyrite (silver antimony sulphide), St. Andreasberg, Harz, Germany
DS0120

Albert bought this outstanding pyrargyrite specimen from an Italian mineral dealer in Rome, Roberto Palumbo. Just after WW II Palumbo sent a sketch of the specimen to Albert, with a note stating the price of US$50, a large sum at the time. Albert immediately recognised that the specimen was worth much more than this and set about acquiring the specimen. Luckily, Albert still had credit to that value with Wards, a mineral dealing firm, in New York. Wards paid the amount to Palumbo and Albert was able to add the pyrargyrite to his collection.

Uvarovite garnet (calcium chromium silicate), Outokumpu, Finland
DS0691

This is one of the finest specimens of the chromium rich garnet, uvarovite in existence. It was found in the 1950s and acquired by well-known and respected American collector, Stan Alexander. In 1980, the specimen appeared for auction at the world’s premiere mineral fair, the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show. Interest in this rare and well-formed mineral was high. The uvarovite was auctioned through a system whereby buyers placed their bids in sealed envelopes. Albert’s mineral dealing skills allowed him to correctly judge the value of the specimen and make the winning bid.

Corundum (ruby) (aluminium oxide) in calcite, Mogok, Myanmar
DS0550

Topaz, Minas Gerais, Brazil
DS0142

These minerals were first owned by Baroness Burdett-Coutts, a member of the British aristocracy who lived from 1814 to 1906. In her day it was uncommon for a woman to collect minerals yet the Baroness acquired an impressive collection. After her death, her collection was acquired by other renowned collectors such as Sir Arthur Russell, whose collection now makes up a large part of the British Museum’s mineral collection. Albert acquired the ruby in 1945 and the topaz in 1950.
Notable specimens

Cassiterite (tin oxide) with quartz, The Gulf, Emmaville, NSW
D50672
This is one of the finest cassiterite specimen to come from Emmaville. Albert acquired this from miners around 1969.

Fluorite (calcium fluoride) on dolomite, Fluorite (calcium fluoride) on granite, Goscheneralp, Canton Uri, Switzerland
D50335, D50400
These pink fluorites are considered rare and much sought after, and the Swiss rarely allow them to go out of their country. They were found in the 1930s during tunneling operations and acquired by Albert from an American mineral collector in the early 1950s.

Chalcopyrite (copper iron sulphide) with quartz and hematite, Moonta, South Australia
D50666
A superb specimen with large well-formed chalcopyrite crystals, once part of the McCloud collection, acquired by Albert from a South Australian mineral collector in the 1960s.

Atacamite (copper chloride hydroxide), Moonta, South Australia
D50478
A superb well-terminated single crystal of unusually large size and perfection for this species.
Albert purchased this from an Adelaide antique dealer in the 1940s and it had come out of an old collection.

Malachite (copper carbonate hydroxide), Great Cobar Mine, Cobar, NSW
D50673
A beautifully-patterned botryoidal malachite of large size mined around the 1890s.
Albert acquired it in the 1950s from the nephew of Oscar Armstrong. Armstrong was the first Manager of the Great Cobar Mine.
Topaz (aluminium silicate with fluorine) with albite, muscovite and quartz, Alabashka, Sverdlovsk Oblast, Russia
D50157
An exceptional crystal group of superb clarity and perfection, collected in the 19th century from a classic Russian locality. Albert purchased this from an American mineral collector in 1984.

Cuprite (copper oxide), Emke Mine, Onganja, Namibia
D50195
A single crystal of very large size and perfect crystal shape (cube and octahedron) on matrix. It is sometimes cut as a dark red gem when translucent to semi-transparent, but such pieces are uncommon. Albert purchased it from a mineral dealer in 1977. The mine had a very short life but produced the best cuprite crystals ever found.