

# LOUGHBOROUGH 2011

**THE N.A.G.'S INSTITUTE OF REGISTERED VALUERS  
LOUGHBOROUGH CONFERENCE  
Saturday 24 to Monday 26 September**



## **LOUGHBOROUGH: AS POPULAR AS EVER**

*THIS YEAR'S N.A.G.'s Institute of Registered Valuers' Loughborough Annual Conference for valuers and jewellers proved to be as popular as ever with all who attended. The 2011 Conference (our 23rd) took place at its regular venue, Loughborough University over the weekend of Saturday 24 to Monday 26 September. We managed to attract 150 people which included 35% of the IRV membership: this support continues to inspire those responsible for organising the Conference. IRVs attending the Conference gain Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points towards FIRV (Fellow of the Institute of Registered Valuer) status which we are delighted to report more and more MIRVs aspire to become. The Conference attracts not only IRVs but people with a passion for our trade who view "Loughborough", as a vital part of their life as valuers/jewellers.*

As in previous years the jam-packed business programme (this year covering 16+ hours) included the ever-popular programme of Workshop Sessions, main presentations and discussion sessions. The usual fine weather allowed delegates, guest speakers and supporters of the Conference to enjoy two and a half days to expand their knowledge and share their expertise with others rain-free (the little rain we did have on the Monday appeared whilst delegates were in workshops or main presentations!).

For the first time, this year delegates were offered the

opportunity to arrive at Burleigh Court (the hotel on the University Campus where delegates are accommodated and fed) on Friday in order to avoid traffic problems on the Saturday morning. This was taken up by 30 participants, delegates and guest speakers alike, and provided extra opportunity to get together and chat before the manic pace of the Conference started on the Saturday afternoon.

On the Saturday morning the "Early Birds" were invited to join in informal discussion sessions and/or take the Munsell Colour Test and Colour Blindness Test.



## The Conference Begins

THE CONFERENCE started off on Saturday afternoon with a welcome from Institute Chairman, **Jonathan Lambert** who promised delegates another full and entertaining Conference.

### Today's World of Coloured Gemstones

The afternoon's first main speaker was making a welcomed return to the Conference after a break of nine years. **Richard Drucker**, the author of the "GemGuide", the renowned gemstone price guide, accepted the Institute's invitation to lecture at this year's Conference on "Market Trends & Industry Issues" (as well as run a number of practical workshops which you'll learn about later in this report).

Richard told delegates, "Although we have experienced recessionary economics globally, gem prices have been on the rise in recent years. China and India are main reasons with stronger economies and better buying power compared to the US dollar, which is the international currency of gems. In diamonds, the first half of 2011 saw huge increases. A 1.00ct G VS2 diamond for example rose by 47% from January to September. While DeBeers predicted prices to remain strong and possibly increase more, recently, it seems that prices have softened as consumers can't pay these high prices.



"With coloured gems, we have been shocked at the high price of finer goods, going up by 50% or more in top ruby, emerald, and sapphire. The lack of new mining with tight financing, and low supplies have kept prices high. The increased availability and advancement of treated gems has caused an increase in demand for untreated goods from sophisticated buyers and this has driven up the prices of untreated gems considerably. An unenhanced extra fine ruby for example, now sells for a 200-300% premium over a heated ruby.

"In pearls, the trend has been toward growth of the Chinese freshwater product. Production for these pearls is greater than all other pearl varieties combined. Sizes continue to increase and now you can find these freshwater pearls (bead nucleated) in sizes up to 25mm in round and baroque.

"The big issue with treatments is in nomenclature. It seems that we continue to accept treated products so now the definition of natural will include 'trade accepted' treatments such as heat. Coatings are becoming more challenging and more are turning up in major gem labs worldwide. Some coatings change or improve colour while others improve durability or lustre.

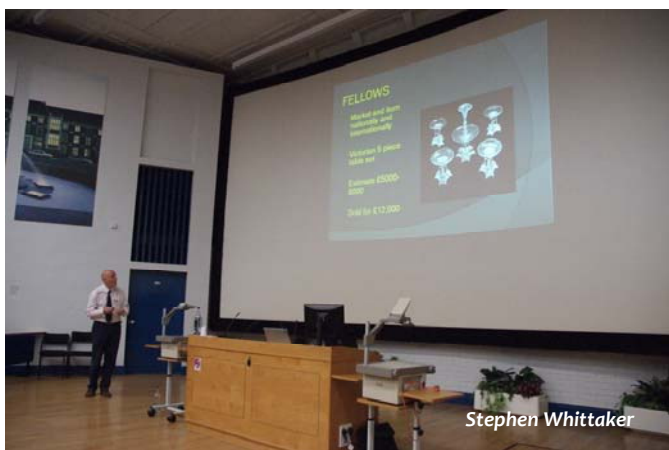
"Oiling today is not just for emeralds. Ruby, tourmaline, amethyst, and alexandrite are all routinely oiled. Any stone with surface reaching fissures can be oiled.

"With diamonds, our greatest challenges ahead will be with synthetics and treated diamonds. Identification is the biggest problem, especially with melee. Detecting whether pink and yellow diamond melee are natural, treated, or synthetic are problematic. Valuers will have to assume or guess to complete an appraisal assignment. The GIA is working on batch testing methods for the future but individual testing will not be cost-effective.

"With the increased availability of treated gems, we are redefining the definition of 'gem'. Should we classify these treatments like glass-filled ruby as a fashion or luxury product? Are they really gemstones? Today, beryllium treated sapphires in many colours sell for only US\$35 per carat in half-carat sizes compared to heated sapphires of the same apparent quality and size for up to \$200 per carat.

"Our industry continues to struggle with disclosure and has for decades. The AGTA (American Gem Trade Association), CIBJO, and the ICA (International Colored Stone Association) have finally agreed on one set of codes for treated gems.

"We must strive to answer basic questions on treatments or we are seriously hurting consumer confidence. We are in danger of seriously hurting the industry if we continue to sell without product knowledge."



### Are They the Enemy?

Next delegates were entertained by regular Loughborough supporter **Stephen Whittaker** of Fellows Auctioneers. Stephen is a Managing Partner of Fellows who auction jewellery, silver and watches 39 times a year. He has 20+ years' experience but admits to still learning something new each day!

Stephen's presentation, entitled "**Auctioneers – Public Enemy No 1!**" proved to be popular with the delegates. He gave them a candid insight into what goes into running a profitable auction house. The costs involved in producing high quality glossy catalogues alone was astronomical (all delegates were given a copy of the catalogue for Fellows' next auction) not to mention the investment the company has made in its staff of experts covering numerous areas of our trade. Many delegates were surprised by Stephen's willingness to share such data with them but this made them all the more appreciative of how vital auction houses are to our trade.

### Training for Valuers

Next Jonathan invited **Heather McPherson FIRV** to update delegates on the Institute's new valuation training programme which will lead to **CAT (the Certificate of Appraisal Theory)**.

Since the relaunch of the N.A.G.'s Registered Valuer Scheme as the Institute of Registered Valuers in 2008, the Institute has been working towards the objective of achieving the highest standards in valuation practice. Over those three years the Institute has become identified by many major retailers and insurance companies as one of the most reliable associations for valuations. When seeking to achieve the highest standards, it is important to understand how to continue to monitor your members' progress and update these standards in-line with industry expectations. The Institute does this by regularly monitoring its members. It was as one of these annual monitoring phases came to an end that Heather took to the stage to discuss the new ways in which the IRV can ensure valuers applying to join the Institute perform with the greatest of expertise.

Heather told delegates, "Currently one of the criteria for entrance into the Institute is having the Professional Jewellers' Valuation Diploma (PJValDip), and although that will continue to be valid for anyone that already holds it or is still undertaking it, it was felt that the JET Valuation Course had become somewhat out-of-date in its approach. What became blatantly clear during this review of valuation education was that many of the essential



and specific skills a competent jewellery valuer needed to acquire were either covered in JET 1 & 2 or were actually more effectively and comprehensibly delivered by other bodies and organisations, eg the Gem-A or GIA for gemmological training and diamond assessment skills or courses on hallmarking like those run by the Birmingham Assay Office."

During her research, Heather discovered, "What was clearly missing here in the UK was something that gave potential valuers a good grounding in valuation theory, methodologies, and good working practices. With this in mind, I was asked to co-ordinate, with the brains of the Institute, the creation of CAT; the new Certificate for Appraisal Theory: an entry level qualification to teach the fundamentals of valuation theory." As Heather continued to outline, "Some would call this valuation science, the theory of how to actually value anything at all. What this gives students is the basic theories, methodologies and good working practices needed to become a competent jewellery valuer."

Heather went on to clarify what exactly CAT is and what it does and doesn't do. "CAT is a modular programme, designed with the greatest flexibility in mind. It's currently composed as a number of modules which overall will give the student a recognised qualification – and gain them a chance of applying for membership of the Institute. It doesn't replace the Professional Jewellers' Valuation Diploma, which has been an entry requirement in previous years, but at the moment it does seem to be taking the role of the Diploma by granting access to a coveted IRV membership. Applicants will still have to have five years practical experience in the trade, a recognised gemmological qualification, and a diamond grading training certificate, as in

previous years – but CAT will be part of the essential knowledge needed to gain membership of the Institute.

“This would be the first qualification of its kind in the industry, and we are all agreed that it’s desperately needed. Our students are crying out for this basic knowledge that will allow them to look to become jewellery valuers in the future. As CAT has no specific entry requirements, it’s something people can do alongside gaining the other experience and qualifications they need to become a jewellery valuer. It’s really exciting to see this project coming to fruition and we hope that CAT will create students who work from the IRV ethos, and apply the greatest expertise to each valuation.”

The final editing of CAT is underway and the Institute hopes to launch the new product in spring 2012. (For more information you can contact Sandra on [irv@jewellers-online.org](mailto:irv@jewellers-online.org).)

## The Delegates’ Conference Favourite

FOLLOWING A break for coffee the programme continued with the first of five **Workshop Sessions** on offer over the weekend. A total of 16 different topics were available to delegates.

**Peter Buckie FIRV** ran four workshops entitled “**Back 2 Basics**”. These workshops were prompted primarily by his involvement in the Institute’s Monitoring Panel where he has seen at first hand the problems many IRVs wrestle with on an everyday basis when it comes to basic valuation principles, theory and methodology. Furthermore, as one of the authors of the forthcoming modular education programme (CAT), Peter surprised himself by realising just how much there is to learn in this respect and how much of it he himself had forgotten! Accordingly, his Back 2 Basics workshops were not only designed for budding young valuers but also respectfully intended for the more senior valuers who, like Peter, have forgotten some of the fundamental principles and have perhaps been compounding their mistakes over many years believing them to be correct.

Once again delegates were entertained by regular Conference lecturer **David Callaghan**, who this year, offered workshops entitled “**The Camera Is Not the Only Seeing Eye**”.

From the evidence of the work submitted for monitoring over the last two years, David formed the view that many valuers are forsaking giving a full written description of an item being valued in favour of reliance on a photograph of the item. Facetiously he suggests that in time to come – and it may be soon – the narrative of a valuation will state: *Bangle (et al) – see attached photograph!!*

However, being serious, his theme was how important it is to give a full description of an item because over-reliance on a photograph can lead to problems.

Many valuers are called upon to assist Executors/Solicitors to identify items which form part of a bequest and without a full description it can be very difficult to determine what the benefactor had in mind. People not in the jewellery trade tend to recall items in non-trade terms and describe items such as: “My sapphire and diamond engagement ring; my ‘water under the bridge’ brooch; the largest of my three diamond brooches,” terms all of which are distinctly unhelpful.

He highlighted also how important it is to be specific when valuing a composite piece of jewellery so that the more valuable component is correctly valued as an individual item if it is more



**Brooch:** an Art Deco period brooch all set in platinum circa 1930 comprising carved ruby, emerald and sapphire ‘trees’ with a calibre emerald ‘stream’ flowing under a bridge – all suggesting the mnemonic ‘water under the bridge’.

**Necklace:** a twisted strand rope of natural ruby beads emanating from a central diamond set clip brooch by Cartier featuring carved emerald, sapphire and ruby leaves. The clip – made by Cartier London circa 1935 – is detachable from its frame to be worn separately, the ruby beads being a modern addition.

often worn separately. As an illustration he showed a necklace formed of strands of ruby beads twisted to form a rope with a single clip brooch by Cartier as the central feature. The clip is detachable and is worn separately, but the necklace would not be worn separately because, without the central clip, it has no central feature – just the frame to which the clip is fitted.

He completed his talk by showing a series of slides showing items of a curious and/or historic nature to demonstrate how important it is to research around an item to uncover the reasons for which it was made – an anniversary; a piece exhibited at a major exhibition; a souvenir – thus perhaps uncovering a provenance.



**Rosamond Clayton FIRV** ran four workshops in diamonds entitled **What is Excellence?**

David Wilkins and Michael Norman set out many years ago to educate valuers to a professional standard. The N.A.G. Valuations Committee and the Forum of the N.A.G.'s Institute of Registered Valuers have tried by every means to make the initial dream a reality and it is an outstanding feature of the Loughborough Conference that, from the first to the last delegate, enthusiasm for this aim is perpetuated.

In respect of the valuation of diamonds, the fourth 'C' is the one that, in the past, has received least attention and, therefore, for many valuers the understanding and knowledge of CUT has been woefully lacking. Lately, and due to the research into proportions, symmetry and finish by the GIA, HRD and other laboratories, cut has taken on a much greater significance in the trading of diamonds and the achievement of a 'triple X' ('Excellent' for all three categories: proportions, symmetry and finish) is now greatly desired by the trade and carries a substantial financial premium.

In order to maintain our Excellence as valuers it is time to understand and be able to assess the cut grade. It is important to remember that when diamonds are mounted in jewellery and, therefore, viewed face-up, it is the one aspect that has the greatest influence on appearance: colour cannot be accurately perceived and in most cases clarity cannot be seen at all, unless the diamond is of extremely low quality. However, brilliance, fire and scintillation are there for all to see.

In the Loughborough workshops the effect of cut was discussed and the parameters required for the grade of 'Excellent' to be given on a diamond grading report by GIA and HRD. The methods of judging the proportions were also described and delegates examined a number of mounted diamonds, kindly loaned by Fellows Auctioneers, in order to commence on the path of knowledge to recognize and assess the required parameters.

Delegate **Roger Mitchell MIRV** of N G Bolton, Guiseley attended Rosamond's workshop. He said, "This workshop was inspired by the recent vogue among London customers for brilliant-cut diamonds certificated as 'triple X' (that is, being graded 'excellent' for cut, symmetry and polish by the GIA or HRD) and the subsequent premium of 12% - 15% being asked for these stones if of good colour.

"We were shown the parameters set by the laboratories, for factors such as table diameter, crown and pavilion angles and heights, total depth percentage, length of pavilion 'halves' and so on, for excellent grades to be awarded.

"Then came the practical aspect: how, given an uncertificated diamond to grade and value, could delegates estimate these qualities with some certainty (and put themselves ahead of half the London Diamond Bourse, according to Harry Levy in his main presentation!)? Many things to be observed with one's trusty 10x, such as the appearance of the pavilion facets through the crown and the bowing of the table facet edges, were shown to us, with appropriate diagrams on screen.

"Following this, we were each given a (mounted) sample to work on and a worksheet on which to record our findings. Regrettably, time ran out before most of us were able to check our findings against the 'official' ones. Also, it might have been beneficial to examine an actual triple-excellent stone before this final stage.

"To sum up, we experienced a meticulously prepared and delivered workshop of immediate relevance and were given an

excellent set of notes which will assist us in carrying it through into our daily work."

The Institute welcomed **Steve Collins**, the sales and business development manager for the Goldsmiths' Company Assay Office who offered delegates three workshops entitled "**Hallmarks – What Are You Looking At?**"

Steve's first Loughborough workshop managed to cover a number of hallmarking related topics all in one sitting.

He split the 90 minute session into three, with the first section covering some more odd, rare and unusual hallmarks including the rarest English mark that was only applied for seven months. Many of these marks are only seen once in a blue moon and are often misidentified as fakes.

This led into the second section which covered the ongoing issue of fakes and forgeries. Delegates were shown many of the techniques used from centuries ago up to the modern day scams. It also covered methods of identification and assessment, and demonstrated a checklist that can be used to help in the identification of fakes. The section concluded by explaining your options and the help available if you are still unsure whether or not you are dealing with a fake.

The final section was all hands-on, and Steve had brought with him a wide selection of antique and modern items for delegates to examine and discuss all of which contravened the Hallmarking Act, including a cream and sugar bowl that sold at auction for £100,000 but which turned out to be a fake. He also brought an example of the rarest of hallmarks, applied to a rather small, but hugely valuable item belonging to the Goldsmiths' Company's private silver collection. This was a rare treat for delegates, who may never have the opportunity to see this exceptionally rare mark again in their lifetime.





This was **Richard Digby's** fourth presentation at Loughborough; his Workshop Sessions were entitled "**Cameos & Intaglios**" and included advice on handling, buying and selling cameos and intaglios, recommended reference books for the valuer's library and provided delegates with an opportunity to handle some rare and unusual examples. Richard is a co-author of the Institute's guide on cameos entitled "*On the Face of It*" which he used during his workshops.

**Jackie Sanders FIRV** attended one of **Richard Drucker's** workshops entitled "**Corundum: Treatments & Pricing**". She said, "Having waited nine years for a return visit, Richard Drucker, President of Gemworld International, Inc. and publisher of *The GemGuide*, was warmly welcomed back.

"His workshop, much anticipated and oversubscribed, was limited to 25 delegates per session. If you were one of the lucky ones to attend – then you were in for a treat.

"A short PowerPoint presentation updated us on how Gemworld International strives to keep abreast of the market, industry trends and related issues.

"Forever forward thinking, they decided to venture forth into a new field – education. Looking ahead internationally, Richard has planned forthcoming 'educational talks' which are arranged for Scotland, Canada, Tucson and others.

"Our workshop, focused on prevalent corundum treatments and their pricing. Richard brought along stones to study and inspect, and acknowledged technical advisor Christopher Smith, President of American Gemological Laboratories for identifying and cataloguing the material. Accordingly each stone was



identified as 'natural' or 'treated' and accompanied by an analysis/report identifying the characteristic features visible. Interestingly, some treatments could be seen with the naked eye, some required 10x loupe inspection, and others required use of the microscope.

"Richard reported on the premiums commanded for 'natural' and 'untreated' material. He then talked us through the various treatments available, and current and ongoing discussions on what the industry finds 'acceptable', and which treatments require disclosure. Furthermore, with such a broad range of treatments available and prevalent, it is essential to be conversant in recognising and identifying the distinguishing features of each.

"Richard's workshop gave us the opportunity to handle and examine many examples of both natural and treated corundum. Amongst which, treatments included: heat treatment, surface diffusion, flux treatment, titanium diffusion, beryllium diffusion (which is extremely difficult to detect), oiled rubies, glass filled rubies, and the very latest development – which by some is being described as 'glass blended' – essentially a product whereby low-grade corundum is completely masked by high volumes of coloured glass (the before and after images bearing witness to the sorry product).

"Richard stressed the importance of identifying treatments, and the resultant effects on price per carat (hand-outs/examples of price differentials from the "*GemGuide*" were also distributed). Questions and answers ensued, and then we were invited to view the stones before us, and it was quite literally a race against time to see and experience as many stones as possible – an opportunity not to be missed.

"From the perspective of retailer, valuer, gemmologist, or student – this is 'our Conference' at its very finest – hands-on



Doug Garrard with first-timer Kay Murphy (in pink) and Anne Gill FIRV

for in our everyday working lives and how to use the instrument to a fuller extent. There was an emphasis of practical, with study stones to learn from and test stones to practise new knowledge on. The workshop was designed for people working in the trade, in order to make their gem ID's quicker and more accurate.”

In more detail it covered the basic and typical reactions one might see in gemstones, and also highlighted how reality can differ from textbooks and course notes; also covering anomalies and what to look out for; Kerry showed stones that had characteristic reactions and are, therefore, possible to identify on a polariscope; further use of the polariscope over and above what most people would use it for; and advanced use of the polariscope to determine optic sign of gemstones.

**Alistir Tait MIRV** attended Kerry's sessions and said, “As a fan of Michael Palin's television journey 'Pole to Pole' I was almost seduced into believing that Kerry had some similar adventure in store for those of us who attended her workshop. I do, however, know Kerry well enough to presume that her introduction to the polariscope would be no less exciting. In fact, an introduction would not be a fair summary as she presented an enthusiastic presentation for beginner and advanced user alike.

“I'm afraid that, as someone who does not even own a polariscope, I felt one notch below those gemmologists that Kerry scathingly denounced for finding new uses for their instrument, such as an improvised bookend or office dust-trap.

“For rusty gemmologists, like me, she explained the instrument from the basics up. She took us through a progression of gemstones to illustrate how we should observe single and double refraction as well as tabby extinction (no animals were harmed) and the effects observed with polycrystalline materials. Differentiating uniaxial from biaxial gems with the aid of a coniscope proved trickier but with Kerry's sympathetic one-to-one assistance we all became 'experts'.

“A thorough and well thought out presentation, structured and accessible to the novice or experienced gemmologist. And Kerry, I promise my newly purchased polariscope will never grace my bookshelf or gather dust through neglect.”

N.A.G. Valuations Committee member and **Avril Plant FIRV** also attended Kerry's workshops. She said, “Kerry is a passionate gemmologist who is clearly determined to keep the science alive for those of us who toil on the shop floor. Her teaching style is clear and logical and shines a light onto the textbook.

“For the class she made her own collection of gems which she had sourced herself, photographed herself and had a CD made from her photographs. We were able to see more clearly what we were supposed to be looking for and then view a similar gem on the polariscope in front of us. It was lovely to have this reminder of how useful the polariscope can be in our everyday lives and also to have some practise in how to use it.

“I was very impressed with the class and filled with hope that the next difficult gemstone that may be hiding in my next valuation can be dealt with a little more quickly.

“For more insight into Kerry's skills, have a look in the latest edition of Gem-A's magazine "Gems and Jewellery". Her article is on page 6, entitled "Myth busting mineral". Read also her review of the Scottish Gemmological Conference which made me determined (pension funds permitting!) not to miss next year in Perth.”

experience, with the opportunity to learn from the best, in a friendly relaxed informed environment. Thank you Richard – an excellent workshop, in an area of expertise we all need to maintain, nurture, and be aware of the challenges before us!”

**Doug Garrod** and **Claire Mitchell** from the Gem-A were welcomed back to present their popular hands-on gemmological sessions. This year's workshops were aimed at all abilities. “**Let There be Light**” looked at the various light sources available, both mains and battery, and the suitability or otherwise of the lamps for various gem testing instruments, while “**Countertop Testing**” considered the lightweight and portable equipment that is available to the valuer, when working away from the office, and how to maximize the information from these tools.

Gemmological workshops are always popular with delegates.

Regular Conference attendee **Kerry Gregory** offered to run workshops at this year's Conference on the use of the polariscope. Entitled “**Crossed Polars**” it proved to be a popular choice with delegates. Kerry said the object of her workshops was, “What we as jewellers and valuers can use the polariscope

N.A.G. Valuations Committee member **Peter Hering FIRV** offered delegates his popular workshops on valuing cultured pearls. Entitled **“A Cultured Approach”** delegates learnt how to deal with valuation methodology concentrating principally on Akoya cultured pearls but also discussed the higher value freshwater cultured pearls and the latest developments. Delegates enjoyed this practical hands-on session using a variety of examples which helped them to assess the qualities and apply a value with the help of Richard Drucker’s **“GemGuide”**.

**Shirley Mitchell FIRV** ran a workshop promoting the soon to be introduced N.A.G. Valuation Days. Entitled **“Let’s Make a Day of It”**, Shirley encouraged retailers and valuers alike to offer N.A.G. Valuation Days to the public.

She said, “With the increase in the gold fix and diamond prices and the never ending ‘Cash for Gold’ adverts the public are becoming more aware of the value of their jewellery and insurance companies have started insisting on valuations prepared by an IRV. In response to this the IRV are planning to launch N.A.G. Valuation Days.”

Shirley told her workshop delegates that the Institute will provide materials such as appointment booking forms, customer confirmation leaflets, posters for the windows and mailshot flyers/cards as well as offer a staff training package (after all they are your best asset – if they understand the process they can introduce it much easier) and guidance on advertising/promoting the event.

In addition to this there will be a dedicated web page on the IRV site to advertise N.A.G. Valuation Days.

The only stipulation is that the valuer must be an IRV. If a retailer does not have an IRV the Institute will be able to supply a list of participating IRVs.

Shirley then went on to explain the benefits of holding a valuation day and mentioned guidelines to follow.

She continued, “It is a superb opportunity to promote your business and increase your client base, increase consumer confidence and provides opportunities for increasing staff knowledge.”

Shirley pointed out that another plus side to a well run/organised valuation day is retailers can realise up to £2,000 in extra business by way of increased foot flow, add-ons such as repairs, remodelling, straps, chains etc, and larger sales – pieces they see while waiting.

We welcomed back **Craig O’Donnell**, a Senior Valuer and silver expert for SafeGuard who offered workshops entitled **“Name That Spoon”**. A quirky dimension to the Conference, his workshop focussed on historic regional marks and hallmarks. A collection of 28 different spoons, taken from The Birmingham Assay Office’s private collection, illustrated regional marks from Aberdeen to Taunton and historic hallmarks from Exeter, York, Newcastle, Norwich, Chester and Glasgow. As always the story of the hallmarked items chronicled political and social history.

Craig had found the silver spoons from Taunton to contain 0.5% gold, an indication of less efficient refining in the seventeenth century as silversmiths recycled their own lemel and scrap. Double duty marks were a reminder of the huge national debt following the American War of Independence which prompted the imposition of duty on silver in 1784, subsequently doubled for a short period during 1797. Large spread marks on the reverse of spoon handles were clearly intended for display, being set out on



Craig O’Donnell



the dinner table with hallmarked side up to impress guests. Craig alluded to the utility mark used during World War II when the use of precious metals for jewellery was heavily restricted and also showed a platinum spoon, the first platinum item to be hallmarked by The Birmingham Assay Office in 1975.

The story of the spoons provided a fascinating trip through the UK and through history and the final quiz was hotly contested with triumphant delegates claiming a spoon generously donated from Craig's private collection.

Craig said, "I think the participants gained some extra knowledge from the talk which may come in handy from a valuation point of view and if it prevents a rare spoon from hitting the melting pot then it was worthwhile."

**Chris Simpson** and **Alice Keverne** from the Guild of Valuers & Jewellers offered a workshop on **GuildPro**. Chris said, "Our workshop was a complete run through of the system with emphasis on backing up the data with comprehensive working notes. We demonstrated how the price source information could be added with a click of a button, automatic population of riders/caveats into the main appraisal and how outputs could be personalized for individual businesses. We have been beta testing the latest version v3.8 over the last few weeks and we were able to demonstrate the new functionality to the delegates by valuing a piece of jewellery. New parts now added include free text option allowing the user to 'describe' the item in full on the opening line and additional descriptions added to drop down boxes. The feedback from users was excellent with new additions being suggested; we are already updating these to the system as we speak. We concluded the workshop with an insight into where we see GuildPro in the future and confirmed that our developers are already looking at a prototype online version."

**Barry Sullivan FIRV**, together with **Adam Georgiou** and **Maria Gkolfinopoulou** of Adams Gold, a major London manufacturer, offered delegates workshops entitled "**Spot the Different Method**" which illustrated some of the benefits of modern CAD technology while harnessing the age-old lost wax casting method of jewellery manufacture. This technology can, if required, be used at the shop counter level to enhance personalised jewellery sales.

Barry said, "We have always tried to make our workshops hands-on and this year was no exception; we divided the number of delegates into three separate tables and presented all the delegates with original pattern models, rubber moulds, wax casting pattern trees, investment tubes and sample metal finished castings.

"The purpose of our workshop was to demonstrate the difference between conventional lost wax models and those of the computer aided designs, each having a different cost methodology.

"We discussed the cost of hand-making master models which are then used to cast mass produced facsimiles and the less expensive and precision CAD methods which when finished to a high standard are very much more utilised in today's production methods along with the new resins used instead of, or along side the traditional waxes.

"Adam explained the different waxes and resins used and the new harder substance used as a wearable sample that could be used for counter sales before proceeding to make up a specific design on CAD.



*Ian Rook, Nick Bailey FIRV and Chris Simpson from the Guild of Valuers & Jewellers*



*Barry Sullivan FIRV and Adam Georgiou's workshop*



*Barry Sullivan FIRV*

Geoff Whitefield's MIRV workshop



“Maria demonstrated her talents in drawing up computer designed rings showing delegates her methods and skills using widely available design software.

“Delegates were asked to group the different pieces and later to examine some finished rings to determine which method of manufacture was used.

“We were able to answer all delegates’ questions and offered them the facility of a future visit to a Hatton Garden workshop in progress.

“We closed the sessions with a costing for each of the methods. This would enable valuers to adjust their values for the different methods of manufacture and to enable sales teams to be able to estimate accurately retail prices accordingly.”

Delegate **Ewen Taylor FIRV** attended one of the workshops and reports, “As Institute Registered Valuers it is very important when assessing jewellery to distinguish what processes were used to produce any item of jewellery (not just the gemstones that are set within them). There are many, and understanding this fact, gives a better result when providing a good valuation. This year the workshop provided by Barry Sullivan concentrated on the differences in casting jewellery, now brought to the industry by Computer Aided Design (CAD). Barry’s workshops are always well worth attending and this one was no exception because in one part of the room a laptop was set up and everyone was able to see the production of a design using CAD. In normal operations a setter can sit with the designer and assess how much metal will be needed to safely secure the gemstones.

“The resulting highly accurate resin models produced by this method means that little effort is needed to ‘click’ multiples of tiny stones into place within complex multi-stone pieces and, therefore, setting prices are reduced, sometimes by half in the CAD produced pieces. The detection between the resin castings produced by CAD, and previously used lost wax methods were ultra-fine horizontal lines, which produced in the moulds were still to be seen faintly within the insides of finished items. Of critical importance, however, was the speed with which a design could be created and produced using CAD to finished product, in a matter of days. As ever with Barry’s workshop there was no shortage of examples of wax castings, the newer resin models, unfinished ‘trees’ and finished stock to handle and examine. Watching Maria produce and manipulate ring designs on-screen in minutes was wonderful. We have to be grateful to Barry, Adam and Maria for a great workshop, regrettably there is not the space here to do it justice.”

Geoff Whitefield MIRV



IRV Forum Member **Geoff Whitefield MIRV** repeated his popular workshops on customised wristwatches entitled “**Authentic or Assumed: Customised Watches**”.

Building on from previous workshops with updates and additional information Geoff shared some helpful ‘golden rules’ and hints to highlight how importance it is to check, check and check again when it comes to many of the Swiss and luxury brand watches and jewellery currently available. Many watches, etc, fall victim to a variety of post sale alterations which can affect values and maintenance/ insurance options significantly. The standard and quality of after-set work can be extremely convincing but many do not know what to look for. He answered questions such as can it still be regarded as a genuine product? Can it be replaced in the same form? Should it be assessed for NRV or SHRV basis? He included genuine parts creating hybrids; copy/custom parts

added to imitate the real deal; counterfeit parts, bracelets and add-ons; gem attributes after-set to dials/directly into cases etc; 'cut 'n shunts' and cloned/false numbering!

In addition to his main presentation **Stephen Whittaker** presented workshops entitled “**Second-hand Jewellery: Pre-loved or Pre-hated**”. Stephen looked at second-hand jewellery with a commentary on current trends at auction and also investigated the use of the Rapaport Diamond Report as a tool for valuers to form a basis for discussion about values – stressing that the Report wasn't a price guide as such but just a starting point for an informed discussion using the figures as a common denominator. Delegates were also asked to inspect 30 pieces of jewellery and arrive at an 'open market' valuation for each piece. Some of the pieces were antique and others relatively modern. Although this wasn't a test, it was interesting to note that most delegates were in broad agreement with the values that Stephen suggested!



Stephen Whittaker's workshop



Delegates (front) Anne Gill FIRV, Graham Wakefield MIRV and Les Stanley MIRV (right) during one of the breaks.



An opportunity to catch up with friends.

## A First-Timer's View of the Conference

WE ARE delighted that the Conference regularly attracts many first-time attendees, this year we had 26. As in previous years many of this year's "Loughborough Virgins" (they get green dots on their lapel badges!) said that they had thoroughly enjoyed their first taste of "Loughborough" and looked forward to attending in the future. Many first-timers from previous years are now regular attendees and proudly display the red dots on their badges.

**Ellen Bishop** from Cape Dunn & Co Auctioneers in Manchester attended her first Conference this year. She said, "I must admit that on arrival at the Conference my overriding emotion was one of nervous excitement not to mention apprehension, as I am only half way through studying for my FGA. I was conscious that my knowledge would be limited in comparison to many. However, these emotions were soon dispelled as the erudition and experience within the Conference suite was matched with kindness and understanding to an obvious newcomer. Coming from an auctioneering background I found myself in the minority with regards to profession, however, the insight gained from discussions, lectures, and the odd trinket test over dinner was as enlightening as it was enjoyable.

"The topics raised were diverse and contained a healthy amount of debate and discussion, including a lively debate on the selling of ivory that contained some fascinating insights. The conversations that grew from these debates over lunch and dinner were another more informal but equally stimulating experience.

"The workshops themselves were incredibly motivating and enabled me to put into practise particular techniques, and expand in a practical way the knowledge gained through the academic side of my FGA. Richard Drucker's corundum treatments and testing workshop is a great example of this. The workshops also enlarged the scope of my understanding. The workshop taking the more experienced professional back to basics was a brilliant opportunity to put down a foundation for me to build upon, and the diamond workshop, "What is Excellent" was a brilliant opportunity to see the level of expertise I can gain with hard work and practise.

"My overall experience of my first Conference was a wonderful one. It was a fully rewarding and enriching experience. Both practically, professionally and personally building on and expanding my knowledge and confidence. I must also thank everyone who was so kind and welcoming, with particular thanks to Louise Butterworth for being so generous with her time and company. I hope to see everyone again next year!"



Ellen Bishop (right) with Sandra Page, the Conference Organiser (left) and Louise Butterworth MIRV.



Shirley Mitchell FIRV (with her back to the camera) chats with MIRVs David Dupuy (centre) and Adrian Smith.



Delegates who picked up their FIRV certificates with Jonathan Lambert (centre): Alan Johns, Lesley Skinner, Georgina Deer, Melanie Chater, Sandra Barron, Sue Pennington, Ewen Taylor and Nick Bailey.



Delegates Georgina Deer FIRV and Padraic Lavin.



Alan Clark and Claire Mitchell from the Gem-A.



Richard Drucker chats with delegates Rebecca Cox and Shaun Ruston.



MIRV delegates (left to right): Martin Watt, Andrew Lamputt and Mark Smith.

## A Time to Get Together

SATURDAY EVENING'S **Welcome Reception** provided time for delegates to renew friendships and welcome into the fold individuals attending for the first time.

Following on from its introduction in 2009, in conjunction with **Bransom Retail Systems**, we offered a free place at the Conference for one lucky first-timer. All delegates attending their first Loughborough Conference had their names put in the proverbial hat from which one lucky delegate's name was drawn, **Tom French** of Tom French Jewellery Ltd, Ascot.

Following dinner Jonathan thanked everyone for attending the Conference and promised them two more days of worthwhile activities.

The evening continued with an informal **Presentation of Awards Ceremony** to present certificates to those IRVs attending who had achieved FIRV status. The recipients were: **Sandra Barron, Nick Bailey, Melanie Chater, Georgina Deer, Alan Johns, Susan Pennington, Lesley Skinner** and **Ewen Taylor**.

Jonathan then called upon **Margaret Wilkins** to present the **David Wilkins Award** to this year's winner, namely **Michael Inkpen FIRV**, a popular winner with all those present.

Delegates brought their day to a close by visiting the trade stands next to the bar where **Alan Clark** from the **Gem-A** sold books and instruments and representatives from the **Bransom Retail Systems** (**Daren Daniels**), **Gemworld Inc** (**Richard Drucker**) and **SafeGuard/AnchorCert** (**Carla Goodfellow** and **Penny Parkes**) were also present.

## Michael Inkpen wins the 2011 David Wilkins Award

Michael said, "I am absolutely thrilled to have been awarded this title. I have been nominated several times over the years but still cannot believe I am now holding the trophy. I feel extremely proud and very privileged to be honoured and you can be sure I will continue to uphold the principles of good valuation practice the Institute has done so much to promote.

"I was lucky enough to attend a Norman/Wilkins road show many years ago and later on speak to David Wilkins at a point when I needed support in my effort to become an independent jewellery valuer. I remember how very kind and supportive he was. To now be the recipient of this award in his name has special meaning for me."

In addition to Michael, **Eric Emms, Peter Hering, David John Harrold, Jonathan Lambert** and **Geoff Whitefield** were nominated for the Award.



Margaret Wilkins presenting her late husband's Award to Michael Inkpen. Michael is congratulated by IRV Chairman, Jonathan Lambert.

## A Full Day's Programme

SUNDAY'S PROGRAMME started promptly at 9.00am with a brief introduction from new IRV Forum member **Shirley Mitchell FIRV**. She said she was honoured to be a member of the IRV Forum and hoped to contribute to the great things that the Institute has achieved for valuers. She called upon fellow IRVs to give the Institute, particularly those Members and Fellows who give their time freely to make it what it is, their full support. She emphasised once again that she was delighted to join the IRV Forum but was disappointed that more IRVs had not put their names forward – she urged them to do so next year.

### The Monitoring Results

Next **David Callaghan** gave a report on the **2011 IRV Monitoring Exercise**. As reported in the Delegate's Folder, David said, "This year's monitoring has now been completed and we have seen the work of 45 MIRVs. This includes one or two 're-sits' – so to speak – by valuers who had failed provisionally with earlier work. We are very pleased to report that this year's programme has resulted in 11 MIRVs being recommended to be invited to 'upgrade' to the FIRV status. In fact, there were 12 valuers who achieved the FIRV grade but one of these is already an FIRV.

"The statistics reveal the following results:

- A grade 12 (including one FIRV who retains that status)
- B grade 18
- C+ grade 10
- C grade 5
- D grade 3

"The grade D valuers are those whose work is so far below the accepted standard that we are recommending that their MIRV status be withdrawn. Lest anyone thinks we are being too harsh, it is worth recalling that their membership goes as far back as 1987, 1988 and 2000 so it is clear that none of them has progressed with the times and with the ever increasingly high standard we expect to see.

"Let me now highlight areas that commonly lead to lost marks:

- **Description:**  
In general terms these fail to "paint a picture" of what the valuer is actually seeing. The quality of the photography these days is almost to the standard of a "still" produced by a film/TV studio and this is to be commended. However, without these high quality images the description would be almost useless.
- **Factual data (Section 2):**  
Many valuers fail to "assess" the colour/clarity of diamonds. These elements are often stated as fact albeit there is no laboratory certificate/report to evidence the statement. Also some valuers are still failing to record the date of a report and most fail to make a photocopy for their records. Worse than this some valuers, when attempting to describe the colour or shape of a coloured stone – for example – use such unprofessional terms as "mid blue", "potato shaped", "dark red" et al. Other terms such as "good quality", "nice shape" are not professional and are merely an opinion.



David Callaghan

Once again hallmarks are not always recorded yet the description states a quality. We have to accept that the date letter is now not obligatory but it is not good enough to state simply – "hallmarked".

- **Working notes (Section 3):**  
It is the poor quality of the work covered by this section that causes most MIRVs to fail. Surprisingly many valuers rely on only one price source: this may be a supplier but, sometimes, it is restricted to the stock of the firm they represent in the valuation.
- There are some computer programs that make it difficult to select more than one supplier but most of these programs can be over-ridden. Sadly a number of the valuers using these systems seem happy to "sit-back" and rely on the computer to do all the work. The N.A.G. does not favour one computer program over another, and some valuers do not use a commercially produced software program. However, it is obvious that in time to come most valuers will be using computers and the only point we wish to make is that anyone using particular software should take every opportunity of updating their system.
- Many valuers, who are obviously competent, fail to give a 'Condition Statement' when valuing items on the ARV/SHRV basis and lose marks as a result. It is very important – now mandatory as far as the Institute is concerned – to give a 'Condition Statement' for such items.
- **Mark-ups:**  
This is another area where many valuers rely entirely on the computer to calculate the mark-up and this leads to apparent over valuing in our opinion. Again most computer systems allow for an over-ride but this seems to be used seldom.

- We have noticed an unwelcome – and in our opinion – unwise tendency for some valuers to put the signature on a page separate from the rest of the valuation. We have seen this on a single page/single item valuation and, worse still, at the end of a long valuation comprising several pages. These pages are seldom numbered and this can mean that the signature page could fail to appear anywhere. It is our belief that every valuation should have numbered pages and enumerated as “Page 1 of 2”, “Page 2 of 3” etc. If the valuation is perfect bound, or in a folder that cannot be opened it is possible to “get away with” this practice, but in a loose leaf system it is silly. This could open the door for a signature to be transferred or some other deceitful practice.
- Finally some valuers simply do not realise that their valuations will be the subject of scrutiny in the event of loss, particularly a loss of significant value. There are valuers who still do not keep working notes using such reasons as “I have my stock records”. Some valuers also do not record images of the items valued giving their reason as “my customers won’t pay for photographs”. Frankly neither reason is good enough and working notes must be kept and even if the valuer does not issue a photograph to the client it is silly not to retain some form of recorded image for their own records.

“Next year we are asking valuers to submit some SHRV/ARV items amongst those valued and a probate valuation. It is not sufficient to say “I haven’t done any probate valuations this year” or some such reason. Other valuation organisations require the valuer to carry out a valuation on the same item “theoretically” for three purposes, say – insurance; probate; family division – thus testing the valuer’s overall competence. So from next year we shall require all valuers whose work is being monitored to supply a probate valuation even it is for an item already valued for Insurance.

“Probate valuations are a very important element of the valuer’s skill yet most of the valuations we have seen can be said to favour HMRC rather than the estate. Most are far too high and many are based on a retail value which is then “discounted” for probate. This methodology is fundamentally wrong and this is a matter which is being covered in great detail in the replacement training programme for the previous valuation course. Peter Buckie will be lecturing at this year’s Loughborough Conference on this aspect of valuation work.

“However, all in all, as a result of this year’s monitoring programme there is good reason to believe that the Institute is at last “getting somewhere” with its message. It is true to say that most of the valuers we have monitored this year are amongst the more recent members, but not exclusively. However you view this year’s results it is relatively good news. We look forward to next year’s programme when we hope to see even more steady improvement.”

### A Chance to Air Your Views

Then, as a change to the usual programme, delegates were asked if they had “Any Questions?” for the Valuations Committee, IRV Forum or fellow delegates. Jonathan was delighted that no questions had been put forward for discussion by delegates on their Conference booking forms which he took as an indication

that those attending were, on the whole, happy with what the Institute is trying to achieve.

He did, however, have a question for the delegates: he wanted to know what their views were on valuing ivory. The Institute itself does not have any guidelines so he welcomed the views of the delegates.

Some delegates had no problem in valuing ivory, nor for that matter did they have a problem with valuing coral. Others refused to value ivory regardless of its age (for ethical reasons), others followed the ruling followed by most auction houses, ie they only value ivory that was known to date from before 1947.

Delegate **Ruth Rees** warned delegates to be careful when using acids to test gold. She relayed to those present the unfortunate accident which had happened to a member of her staff who had received burns when she had not followed the health and safety guidelines in the use of acids. Fortunately she is recovering. Delegates shared information on how they use acids and various recommendations were made. Ruth said she would consider these for the future.

### Gemstone Nomenclature & The Valuer

The main guest speaker for the day was **Harry Levy**, a well-respected trader in diamonds and gemstones for over 45 years. He was Chairman of the BJA, President of the Diamonds, Gemstones & Laboratories Sections of CIBJO for many years and is currently President of the London Diamond Bourse.

His presentation, entitled “**Nomenclature, Treatments & Origins of Gemstones**” took a look at how these issues affect today’s valuer.

He started by saying, “I will say some obvious things, but I would like to tie in together the points in the title and give you an overall picture to show how they all are related to value.

“My valuations are based on prices from stone dealers for polished stones, so if I sell a diamond for £1,000 I know it will cost £250 to set it in a gold ring, but I have no idea how you as valuers will value it. I will, therefore, speak about the stones.

“The above are all parts of what we refer to as *disclosure*. To many this term will have different connotations. Many regard disclosure as being the unpleasant part of our business, like entering a confessional to tell of our sins, things we are all scared to tell, which may lose us our sale. This may be true in some cases, but disclosure simply means giving information about the stone we are selling, things such as weight, price, shape, type, dimensions and so on. There are many more things we can tell



Harry Levy with his wife Lotte



Delegates prepare for a main presentation



Richard Drucker with delegates Karen Yoxall MIRV, Ruth Rees and Adrian Smith MIRV



Richard Digby's workshop



Barry Sullivan FIRV and Adam Georgiou's workshop

about the stone, some of these others we are obliged to tell, through trade regulations, some we may omit. To me you must disclose things that have been done to improve its appearance. Basically, if a process has been applied to a stone that changes the value of the stone, then this process must be disclosed.”

### Basic Value

“How does the value of a stone come about? We can have two stones mined from a spot next to each other; one may be worth a few dollars, the other many of thousands of dollars. I regard a stone to have two aspects to its value. The first I call the *labour charge*, this is the cost in mining, cutting and polishing and the costs of bringing it to market, such as running an office, travel and all the other charges in the business. Thus for our two hypothetical stones, this cost is the same. The other is what I call the *aesthetic value*; this is the beauty we see in the stone. This depends on the appearance of the stone, rarity, and desirability of how many people want it. The more plentiful the stone the

cheaper it tends to be and the labour charge becomes significant, relatively easy to price. The rarer the stone then the aesthetic value becomes dominant. As we go up the scale in such stones the more difficult it is to value them. Also the value depends on the market in which they are sold.”

He continued, “Valuing better quality stones is easy for diamonds with grading and price lists such as Rapaport, but very difficult for ruby, sapphire and emerald. The semi precious stones such as aquamarine and tourmaline seem to have an upper limit, but these are rapidly changing due to demands from China. Germans are selling them there, and then expect to get these prices in their traditional markets. When valuing these stones beware not to value too low.”

Harry touched on diamond grading and diamond price lists. He said he had just returned from a meeting in New York where the World Federation of Diamond Bourses is backing a new list based on retail prices.

## Origins

Harry asked the delegates what they thought the term meant. He said, "I have problems when filling in a Custom's form. I buy a stone in New York; the dealer may have bought it in Jaipur, Bangkok, Israel or Germany. They in turn bought the rough in Burma." He also warned that rough is moved around to fool cutters, for example, it has been known for rough originating from Sri Lanka to be sold as from Kashmir.

"Origin matters when we price better quality stones. A Burma ruby is worth more than a similar looking stone from Vietnam or Africa. Trade legislators have been fighting for years against giving origins when selling stones. The trade, especially auction houses, makes origin an important selling factor and this means people like you need to know the origin to determine the value.

"Traditionally stones from certain origins fetch better prices, thus Kashmir sapphires, Burma rubies, Columbian emeralds, even by mines, eg Muzo mine for emeralds." He went on to explain that this can have bad effects upon the value of stones from other areas, eg Siam rubies, African rubies, which some may not regard as 'real' rubies.

## Nomenclature

Harry continued, "It is important to call stones what they are to avoid confusion. It is very important to differentiate between natural and synthetic stones. Then there are problems with pearls – natural, cultured or imitation. Whilst I was in Hong Kong last week there was a debate as to whether cultured pearls should be called pearls, after all South Sea pearls are never described as cultured." He went on to discuss the implications this might have with regards to other synthetic stones, particularly diamonds.

## Treatments

Harry said that this was a very big subject and covers colour change (via heat, irradiation) and clarity change through heat, infilling with oils, resins, glass, etc. Many different terms are used such as treated, enhanced, improved, processed, refined, modified and purified. All affect the value of the stone and sometimes these treatments are difficult to determine. For example, he mentioned Opticon filled emeralds with a hardener which is Superglue. Contraction produces colour flashes, the surface hardener produces vacuums and thus shatters the stones. Then there's diffusion and padparacha sapphire (orange colour). He explained the history of beryllium treated stones and how once there were few but now there are many because of mass diffusion: something that the trade does not accept.

He concluded, "I find the work you do very difficult. We in the trade value a piece of jewellery as the sum of its parts. We give no value to make, provenance, historical value: we are real philistines."

After lunch, delegates attended two further workshop sessions before finishing the day at 6.00pm.

## A Night of Raffles

DINNER THAT evening was relaxed and informal. During the evening a raffle took place for a one-year free subscription to 'The GemGuide' very generously donated by **Richard Drucker**. Richard was so impressed with the generosity of the delegates (who raised £500 for the N.A.G. Centenary Trust) that he actually gave away three one-year subscriptions. The lucky recipients were **Robin Newing**, **Graham Wakefield MIRV** and **Andrew Lamputt MIRV**.

In addition to this raffle, **Gillian O'Brien MIRV** brought along a quantity of **Dominic Mok's Jade Wheel**. Dominic runs the Asian Gemmological Institute and Laboratory in Kowloon, Hong Kong and he was a guest speaker at the Scottish Gemmological Association's Conference in Perth in May. He generously donated the wheels for Loughborough Conference delegates so delegates' names were put into a hat and as one person's name was drawn they were asked to draw the name of the next winner. A total of nearly 50 wheels were taken home by these lucky delegates.



*Richard Drucker – if we'd known about the hat we would have used it for the raffles!*



*SafeGuard AnchorCert representatives: MIRVs Joanne White and Phil Withington, Carla Goodfellow, Lynn Jordan MIRV, Craig O'Donnell and David Byrne MIRV.*

## The Final Day

MONDAY'S PROGRAMME included the fifth and final workshop session and main presentations from **Steve Bennett**, the Managing Director of Gems TV and **Hazel Forsyth**, the Senior Curator, Post-Medieval, Department of Archaeological Collections and Archive at the Museum of London.

### Selling Jewellery the Bennett Way

**Steve Bennett** started his presentation, entitled "A Day at Gems TV", by explaining to delegates how he got into the jewellery trade. He actually started out in the world of computers which resulted in him creating his own website selling electrical items such as TVs, etc which was bought out by Argos in 2000. In 2002 he bought a television studio and the following year started his reverse auction programme 'Snatch It' selling everything from pots and pans to gemstones. His passion for gemstones grew and he decided to concentrate on jewellery and in 2004 'Gems TV' was first broadcast.

Since then a lot has happened to the company. In 2004 Gems TV merged with Thaingems and the company was incredibly profitable. Steve decided to leave the company in 2006. Also in 2006 Gems TV was floated on the stock market and they opened up in the USA, Japan and China.

Still passionate about jewellery and gemstones Steve started up another company, Coloured Rocks in 2007. The following year Gem TV's sales started to decline following a change of

management and in 2010 the company went into Chapter 11 in the USA (bankruptcy). Steve decided to buy back the UK company with his family and managed to put the company back into profit by the start of 2011. In 2010 Steve also launched his company Jewellery Maker which has a very successful website. Steve said that Gems TV is not as successful on the website as he would like, but he's working on it.

Gems TV not only sells the finished item (via television and the internet); the company sources the gemstones, designs the pieces they sell in the UK (Steve's wife Sarah is heavily involved in this side of the business), which they then have produced in India before being sold back here in the UK.

Steve actively visits mines all over the world to source the materials he sells and he is heavily involved in ensuring that the miners themselves benefit them the environments in which they work. He created the Colourful Life Foundation through which Gems TV funds projects linked to the mines. He highlighted work the Foundation has done in Zambia and Tanzania which includes building schools, extending clinics, helping with farming projects, etc. Steve brings this information to the attention of his customers through footage aired on the television shopping channel and on the website.

The Institute had asked Steve to share some 'figures' with the delegates. He started by reporting that Gems TV has a huge gemstone inventory which includes over 90 different gems and 540 varieties sourced from over 60 countries worldwide. He also revealed a few statistics to the delegates which included:

- the number of Bennetts working in the company – 9;
- the number of UK employees – 315;
- the number of flights he has made so far this year – 64;
- the number of countries he has visited – 17;
- the number of nights he has spent away from his family – 87;
- the number of hours he and his wife have presented on the shopping channel so far this year – 474;
- Steve has run two marathons;
- he has six children, the oldest is 20, the youngest is three;
- the record number of items shipped out to customers in one day – 16,232.

His stock equates to £1.6m of rough, £3.7m of loose cut gemstones, work in process amounts to £3.3m and he aims for 25 turn-arounds of items on Gems TV (£1.8m) and six turn-arounds on Jewellery Maker (£2m).

In addition to Gems TV and Jewellery Maker Steve also has a website called Gem Collector which sells loose gemstones.

Steve told the delegates that he was well aware of some hostility towards his company and the way he sells jewellery, but he assured those present that Gems TV will only ever represent a small percentage of the potential coloured gemstone market in the UK. He urged everyone to work together: he is able to supply finished jewellery set with rare and exotic gems, he can supply loose gemstones, and he also sells components/findings. He urged the delegates to help his customers by offering them valuations and resizing of rings. He would like to recommend IRVs and N.A.G. members to his customers who want custom-made pieces. He said, "Together we can educate the public."

Steve closed his presentation with some more figures. He told delegates that his motto is "Our Customer is King" – it is not through advertising that his business has grown but by word of mouth. Each customer is sent a Customer Satisfaction Survey to



complete and over 24,000 completed forms were returned in 2010 of which:

- over 72% of customers said their orders arrived *earlier* than expected;
- over 51% said the quality of the product *surpassed* their expectations; and
- over 98% said they would recommend Gems TV to a friend.

Steve invited delegates to ask questions and delegates raised the question of disclosure of treatments. He stated that on the television programme a message is displayed at the bottom of the screen which tells viewers that many of the gemstones sold are treated and invites them to find out more on the website. With regards to the 'reverse auction' format he pointed out that the starting price is no longer continually displayed on the screen. He also answered questions regarding replacement of items, say, through an insurance claim, and said that on the whole once stock has been sold that is the end of the line for that particular piece.

The Institute was delighted that Steve had accepted its invitation to take part in the Conference and felt sure that his candor in revealing information on his companies to the delegates was much appreciated by all who attended.

### A Unique Collection

The last main presentation was from **Hazel Forsyth**. Her illustrated presentation, entitled "**The Cheapside Hoard: A World Encompassed**" took a look at the famous Cheapside Hoard of the Museum of London which will be displayed in its entirety in a special exhibition at the Museum in 2013. The aim of her presentation was to provide an international context to the Cheapside Hoard: how the gems were mined and traded, and to identify to whom they belonged. She also explained why the Hoard was buried and when, mentioned what it comprises and explained what it tells us about early modern goldsmiths/jewellers.

Hazel informed delegates of what the jewellery trade was like, particularly in London, from the late sixteenth/early seventeenth century and showed delegates how goods were traded nationally and internationally. The Cheapside Hoard itself is the largest hoard of Elizabethan and Jacobean jewellery in the world.

The Hoard was found by workmen in the cellar of a house being demolished on London's Cheapside in 1912. It contained about 500 items, many set with gems from all over the world: Colombian emeralds, spinel, iolite, and chrysoberyl from modern-day Sri Lanka, rubies from India, Afghani lapis lazuli, Persian turquoise, Red Sea peridot, and Bohemian and Hungarian amethysts, opals and garnets. The Hoard includes 25 chains of various lengths. Some consist of dainty knots, stars, scrolls and foliate and floral links with the detail accentuated with coloured enamels. Others include cabochon or faceted gemstones or pearls. Some of the designs are repeated, but each chain is unique with different colour combinations of enamel or gemstones. These chains were very popular in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period and Hazel told delegates they would recognise them depicted in portraits of the time. The Hoard is believed to be the stock of a goldsmith/jeweller but it is not known why the Hoard was hidden under the floorboards of the house although many explanations have been suggested.



Hazel explained that when the Hoard was found the house itself belonged to the Goldsmiths' Company and the builder was required to report and give any finds to the Company, however, it was a Mr George F Lawrence, an antiquary, collector and dealer in antiquities who acquired the Hoard for the Museum (at that time it was the Guildhall Museum and London Museum, the predecessors of today's Museum of London) whilst employed by them to find antiquities for their collection. Early in his career as a pawnbroker he purchased items from navvies who brought objects they had found on building sites along to sell at the pawnbrokers. He was well known in London by these workmen.

### Thanks to All

BEFORE THE final workshop of the Conference Jonathan Lambert brought the Conference to a close by thanking everyone for attending and for their continuing support. He thanked all the guest speakers:

- **Steve Bennett,**
- **Peter Buckie FIRV,**
- **David Callaghan,**
- **Rosamond Clayton FIRV,**
- **Steve Collins,**
- **Richard Digby,**
- **Richard Drucker,**
- **Hazel Forsyth,**
- **Doug Garrod and Claire Mitchell,**
- **Kerry Gregory,**
- **Peter Hering FIRV,**
- **Harry Levy,**
- **Heather McPherson FIRV,**
- **Shirley Mitchell FIRV,**



Daren Daniels of Bransom Retail Systems (left) with delegate Tom French. Tom's name was drawn to attend his first Conference as the guest of Bransoms.



Institute Chairman  
Jonathan Lambert

- Craig O'Donnell,
- Chris Simpson and Alice Keverne,
- Barry Sullivan FIRV, Adam Georgiou and Maria Gkolfinopoulou,
- Geoff Whitefield MIRV,
- Stephen Whittaker.

He also thanked David Baker MIRV, Geoff Whitefield MIRV, Naomi Wilson, Conrad Cunningham, Pravin Pattni, Ian Dunbar and Euro Findings for the price guides/data sheets contained in the Delegate's Folder, and Daren Daniels for taking photographs.

Finally, he thanked the members of the Valuations Committee: Avril Plant FIRV, Peter Hering FIRV, Pravin Pattni and Jon Tabard, and IRV Forum members: Rosamond Clayton FIRV,

Alan Hayes MIRV (for his past contribution), Peter Buckie FIRV, Geoff Whitefield FIRV, David Callaghan and Michael Ferraro for their support throughout the year, and welcomed Shirley Mitchell FIRV to the Forum. He also expressed his grateful thanks to Sandra Page for all her Conference skills and dedication.

He announced that 2012 will be the year of the Institute's Silver Jubilee and that plans are already in hand for a special Conference to celebrate this achievement. The dates will be Saturday 22 to Monday 24 September.

We would also like to thank delegates Ellen Bishop, Roger Mitchell MIRV, Avril Plant FIRV, Jackie Sanders FIRV, Alistir Tait MIRV and Ewen Taylor FIRV for their contributions to this report (CPD points for all IRVs!).

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