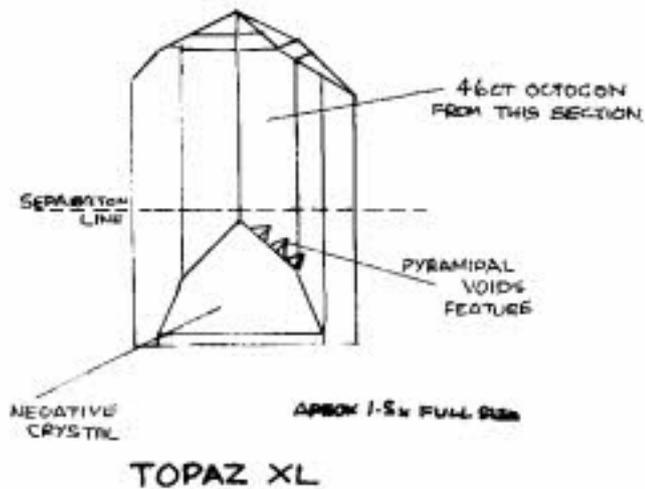


TOPAZ CANYON

By Dennis Durham June 2007

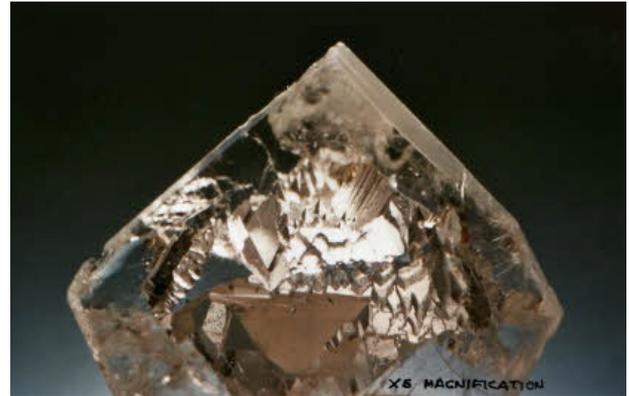
This article is about a tale of pursuit, you know. Starting a project that ends up in a direction you would never have contemplated in the first place.

A few years ago at one of the London Gem Shows while I was looking for faceting rough, I spotted a peachy coloured topaz crystal about 36 mm in length and just over 25 mm across. The crystal form was good but included a large negative crystal occupying the lower portion of the crystal.



crystal, the internal features were far from perfect but many unseen and interesting features were observed this time. One side of the internal apex of this negative crystal showed what appeared to be a very small flat area bounded by tapering sides, the floor of which were several pyramids, these were in fact voids - negative crystals (Photo Number 1) visible in the centre of the photo.

Absolutely intriguing I thought.



The whole area was only about 7 x 5 mm inclined a 30° to the normal and lying deep within the negative crystal. How on earth am I going to get a photo of that?

I bought it knowing that I could only use the top section to cut a large flawless octagon stone. On my return from the show I marked the crystal where I would do the cleaving to separate the good from the bad, and put it down for a few days until my faceting machine became vacant.

Only a couple of weeks later I picked it up again only to discover that the whole crystal had lost all of its colour. Bleached by daylight in such a short time I had no redress from the Pakistani gentleman from whom I had bought it -- you know the feeling?

A small saw cut parallel to the cleavage plane and a light tap with the cleaving blade and it was in two portions as clean as a whistle. The lower half of the crystal including a negative crystal was dispatched to the scrap box as unworthy of further attention. I did enjoy cutting the clean half of the crystal delivering a 46 carat totally clean octagon stone, although thinking back on it, not really a financial success.

A couple of years ago I decided to enter the annual GEM "A" photographic competition, providing I could find a subject different from the usual entries, and find the material which could provide some inspiration. I do not know how many places nor the time I spent looking for that something different! I turned to my scrap box and came across the discarded topaz crystal

I was becoming excited so I needed to calm down. Which camera, roll of film, digital, or microscope should I use and how to set up the image? I tried all these and took more than sixty images using various lighting arrangements. I thought this has to be a specialist job of work, but who would have the interest that I had?

Forget it! The competition rules state that it has to be my own image.

Depth of field and resolution were the real obstacles to a good result but surely there must be a couple of photos from the many already taken that must have a chance? I chose one from a couple of 10 x 8 inch enlargements (PhotoNo. 2), this was duly sent with my entry form to the GEM "A" for judging.



Previously printed in Faceters Stonechat Issue 75 page 8