

SARDEGNA, May-June 2007

by *Michael Skebo*

From May 24 to June 8, 2007, GOM members Germano Fretti, Mariella and Elvio Esposti, Claudio Seghezzi, Sandra and Beppe Rainieri and Mike Skebo, traveled to and collected at various mines and quarries in Sardegna. Note only did the group collect minerals but we also spent part of the time enjoying the sights and culinary delights of the island.

I had already spent five days in Rome collecting and touring with my friend, Roberto Allori. Then I flew to **Olbia**, in Sardegna from Fiumicino (Rome) while the remainder of the group took the overnight ferry from **Livorno**. Sandra and Beppe did not join us until the second week.

I met Claudio, Germano, Elvio and Mariella at my hotel in Olbia. Claudio and Germano had already decided that we would collect one day and see the sights the following day. We set out on the major highway for our hotel in the southeastern portion of the island. We enjoyed a leisurely ride through the predominantly sedimentary carbonaceous rock. Over time, weathering has carved the carbonates into hill and valley topography. The hills were covered with evergreen vegetation and 'daisy-like' fields of yellow and white Cisto. The island was not crowded with houses, highways and cars, instead the only thing crowding the island were goats. It truly is a beautiful and somewhat naturally wild island .

For this research trip I purchased a good map at the airport and followed our progress using a highlighter.

We made our way to the town of **Lanusei**. After a lunch of typical Sardinian delicacies we retraced our steps to the home of two Sardinia collectors, **Antonio and Raymond Manca**. Their collection is primarily from the southeast part of the island with particular emphasis on the Baccu Locci Mine.



We were given minerals from several mines of the area and then departed for our hotel in **Muravera**, a short distance away.

Our first collecting site near Muravera was **Masaloni** in the 'mountains'. Germano said the mine was 'just up the hill', an uphill climb of about 500m. Here we found the mine dumps with **ullmanite, calcite, chalcopyrite and pyrite** in crystal form.

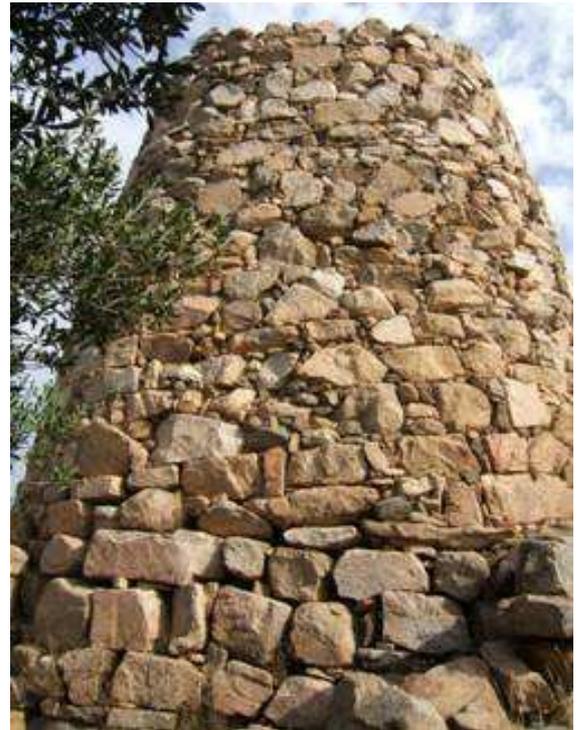


Masaloni

Nuraghe Asoru

On the return trip we saw a nuraghe (Nuraghe Asoru). The Nuraghe are Bronze Age (1800-1500 BC) stone towers which probably played a military role. They marked tribal territory, frontiers and were used as watchtowers. As the Nuraghe civilization progressed, the towers became more prolific and exotic. We were to see quite a few of these towers on the trip around Sardinia.

The next day we drove north to meet the Manca brothers and drove over very rough 'strada bianca' until we came to **Baccu Locci**. We had to cross a military base to arrive at the mine. There were many pits, dumps and also old underground workings. **Linarite** was the most visibly dominant mineral. It looked like a sea of blue on the tailings of the mine. There were plenty of minerals such as **arsenic, hornblende, sulphur, brochantite, cerussite, hemimorphite, malachite, linarite, and calcite**. Germano went into one of the mine adits with Antonio and Raymond. He emerged from the adit with a rather large sample of a mineral, the name of which I am unable to remember, as well as two crystals of **chalcomenite** for me. This was a lucrative collecting site and I am sure that there are many more species to be found in the dumps. It would certainly be worth a second visit to the area.



We were invited to the brothers' home on the coast. On the way we saw many goats and cattle on the road. A beep of the car's horn sent the goats scattering but the cattle were more stubborn. A few decided not to move and we had to give in and drive around them.



view from the mine.



Baccu Locci

We enjoyed the hospitality of the brothers at their home and watched as Claudio tried to knock down a wall when he put his SUV in reverse. We retired to the local bar in Marina di Gairo for refreshments with Raymond and Antonio, proud Sardinians.

After a day of local sightseeing, we headed for the west coast of Sardinia and the village of **Nebida**. En route, we passed through Cagliari and stopped to visit the old town and take plenty of photos.

As we drove north from Fontanamare along the coast road, the views were spectacular. Before reaching the former mining town of Nebida, there were beaches, three beautiful sea stacks and the famous 133m high **Scoglio Pan di Zucchero** islet that came into view against "a majestic backdrop of sheer, rugged cliffs."



Nebida stretches along the highway for a kilometer or more along the winding coast road. Visible from the road is the old "**laveria Lamarmora**", ruins formerly used for washing and separating minerals.

Our hotel in the village was clean and cosy, with excellent food and stunning views of the coast from the dining room.



The following day we headed for Domusnovas and the **Sa Duchesa Mine**. When we arrived, Germano announced that we only had to walk about 200m. but it turned out to be closer to 500m. We teased Germano a lot about his ability to judge distance but he claimed that Beppe told him the distance.

We did find the lengthy dumps from this famous mine. There was a tremendous amount of material to look at and one day just didn't do it justice. I found both blue and clear **hemimorphite**, as well as **agardite**, **brochantite**, **fluorite**, **philipsburgite**, **malachite** and **vesuvianite**. The philipsburgite was a particularly excellent sample: tiny blue spheres on blue coated clear crystals. This would be a site well worth visiting again. Because everyone found crystals, it was a good collecting day. We celebrated with a picnic lunch, followed by the Sardinian liqueur, Mirto, courtesy of the Manca Bros.



***Pan di
Zucchero***



Sa Duchessa mine



part of Alex Manunta's collection



Crastu Muradu quarry



Collection of Egidio Cocco

The next day we headed for the countryside north of Nebida and paid a visit to **Egidio Cocco**. He is primarily a micro mineral collector living in Guspini. We saw his rather large collection and received samples of **enargite** from the **Furtei Mine** and **antimony** from **Conti Rosas**. We picked up a package for Egidio's friend Enrico Bonacina to photograph. Hunger beckoned us to the "agriturismo *Lo Scigno*" just outside the city of Arabus.

After lunch we stopped at a Carthaginian temple "**Tempio di Anatas**", to view the ruins. How did they build such a structure such a long time ago?
 Later we stopped at the **San Benedetto Mine**, on the advice of Mr. Cocco, to collect hemimorphite.

In Nebida, the owner of our hotel, **Alex Manunta**, invited us to his home, across the highway from the hotel, to see his mineral collection. It occupied the entire top floor of the home. The mines of **Iglesias** were featured in his collection as well as other mines from Sardinia around the world. We spent over an hour there and we really appreciated the opportunity to see the collection. He also provided us with a large box of rocks from the now closed **Monteponi Mine**. **Anglesite** was the main mineral in the rocks.

We headed to the northwest of Sardinia to the Platamona Lido area to meet Sandra and Beppe who were to collect with us for the next five days.

Our first site with the Rainieri's was to **Crastu Muradu Quarry** just below the hilltop village of **Osilo**. There are three sections to this quarry and the collecting was easy and good.

At Crastu Muradu we found **calcite**, **barite**, **gonnardite**, **laumantite** and **quartz (var. amethyst)**. We left the quarry after filling our collecting bags and drove up the hill to Osilio. We had intended to collect at another mine but a large rain and thunderstorm put an end to that. I was accused of bringing the rain from Canada, but I'm sure the farmers in Sardinia were quite happy with me. As we sat in the car, the windows fogged up and Germano helpfully cleaned them with Claudio's hat.

The next day, Sunday, we drove to **Castelsardo** to see the town and attend Mass. Later we drove to **Alghero** on the west coast of the island to see both the old and the new town. The Catalan influence was obvious here. We stopped to allow me to purchase a birthday present for my wife. As I was buying the gifts, Germano was speaking to the owner and came away with a nice piece of red coral on a dark matrix. What a pipe-smoking “smoothie”.

Another collecting day and we were off to an old Pb mine near **Ozieri** called **Su Elzu**. Beppe and Sandra had been with us on every trip in the last week including this one and identified a lot of minerals for us. Beppe loves to sing when he digs. We found samples of **hemimorphite, tsumebite, quartz, calcite, melanotekite** as well as others that are still making their way to Canada.

It was a lovely warm day with the usual Sardinian breeze. We enjoyed our picnic lunch and did some more collecting in the afternoon before returning to our hotel, “Villaggio La Plata”. This was a beautiful place to spend 5 days. The beach was about 80m from our rooms.



Today was a tour day, so off we went to **Isola Maddalena** and the home of **Antonio Gamboni**. We took a short ferry boat ride to the island and drove across a causeway to **Isola Caprera**.

There we toured a geological museum with a splendid array of minerals and mining artifacts spread out in two rooms. We spoke to the lady in charge and found out it was Antonio’s wife. Talk about a coincidence.

Lunch was on the main island and then we set out to walk to Antonio’s flat and view his collection.

Below, is a sample of one of Antonio’s specimens from Osilo. We enjoyed our visit with Antonio and his family. His collection, like all of the others, was excellent.





Antonio drove us to "**Cala Francese**", an abandoned quarry, to see the old 'workings' as well as the beauty of the Sardinia coast and the geology of the local area. We tried to collect, but no one had any hammers so we only picked up a few pieces of vein material. We left Antonio at the ferry site and headed back to our hotel.

Our last collecting site was at **Capurru Quarry**, just outside of the village of **Osilo**. The main mineral that we collected was **amethyst** from 5mm to 1.8cm in size in matrix. It was very sunny and hot that day and Sandra brought her collecting-cum-beach umbrella. It certainly came in handy. We returned to our hotel with sacks full of amethyst. Next came a swim in the Tyrrhenian Sea. Brrrr, but it was just the initial plunge into the water and then it was beautiful.

Our second last day was a free day to sit on the beach and soak up the Sardinian sunshine. We finished some macedonia that Mariella was kind enough to make the previous day and spiced it with a little Grand Marnier. Later in the afternoon we rejoined Sandra (now quite sunburned) and Beppe to visit the widow of Mario Gelosa and see his collection. Another phenomenal display of minerals. We also saw a number of articles that were written by Mario in Rivista Mineralogica Italiana. We went for dinner then said our good byes and thanks to Sandra and Beppe for the great collecting trip and their fine companionship.

For me, the trip was very rewarding both from a collecting and tourist point of view. The ability to meet local collectors and view their fine collections was something I will never forget. Special thanks to Claudio Seghezzi and Germano Fretti who had to listen to my awful attempts to say the odd phrase or two in Italian. Elvio, Mariella, Sandra and Beppe just completed the special trip for me.

A special thanks also to Enrico Bonacina for sending me two CD's of Sardinia mineral photos and geological views of the island before I left Canada. Thanks to GOM and its members in Bergamo, and to the people whom we met in Sardinia, for a great experience. Mille grazie.