

National Jeweler^{1/1}

→ Blu Starr

831165

Vol. 43 • No. 1 • January 1, 1999

www.national-jeweler.com

Gemstone News

BY CHERYL FENELLE

Anglo Swiss Discovers Iolite

Vancouver, British Columbia— Iolite, a bluish-violet stone, was recently discovered on Anglo Swiss Resources' Blu Starr Property in British Columbia's Slokan Valley.

The 13,000-acre area is a fertile source of star cabochon sapphire, garnet, aquamarine, beryl, tourmaline, titanite, moonstone, smoky rose and star quartz mines.

The company is sorting facet grade material for shipping to its Sri Lanka cutting facility. More than 50,000 carats of iolite crystals have already been obtained.

If the material is found to be of good quality, this find may

make an impact on the market, according to James Alger of James Alger Co., Manchester, N.H., a gemstone supplier. The size of the faceted gems would also be a factor—iolite rarely occurs in large sizes, and especially in a frost-prone area like British Columbia, where crystals are often broken.

Although there doesn't seem to be a shortage of commercial material, fine-quality iolite is more difficult to obtain. Iolite is most often mined in India, though

Iolite, popular for its blue-purple color, was the latest discovery on Anglo Swiss property.

some gems come from Tanzania. Top quality stones account for only 10% to 20% of iolite that is cut, Alger estimated.

"A problem with iolite is that the color is often not saturated enough,"

he said. "Most customers are looking for blue material, and there is a great market for beautiful stones. I found very little quality iolite in Hong Kong last year." ■



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