

GEMSTONES IN TASMANIA

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Though Tasmania possesses valuable deposits of metallic and non-metallic minerals it is generally lacking in deposits of precious gemstones. It does however contain stones such as topaz and zircon which are possibly of potential value.

Diamond (Crystallised carbon).

Only 16 to 18 diamonds have been found in Tasmania. These have all been obtained from the Corinna district between the Savage and the Donaldson Rivers. The diamonds had weights ranging from one eighth to one third of a carat.

For further information see attached Mines Circular No. 4.

Sapphire (Al₂O₃ - Oxide of aluminium)

The sapphire is a variety of corundum which crystallises in the hexagonal system. Its colour is typically blue, but green, yellow, white or colourless varieties occur and are distinguished by their colour e.g. yellow sapphire.

Quite a number of sapphires of more or less importance have been obtained in the sluicing of the tin deposits of the north-eastern districts. There is no regular output of these gems, but they are either sold privately or cut for personal use by the owners. The largest one obtained was from the Weld River and weighed 264 carats. Smaller stones weigh from 4 to 12 carats and are often of very good colour.

Further information is obtainable under "Corundum" in Petterd's Catalogue of the Minerals of Tasmania.

Topaz (Fluo-silicate of aluminium - Al (O₁F₂) Al SiO₄)

Topaz is a clear glassy mineral with a vitreous lustre and with colours ranging from white through yellow to grey, green, blue and red. The colours are generally not bright, but convey light tints to the mineral. The Tasmania stones are generally white and blue. It has a hardness of 8 and a specific gravity of 3.4 to 3.65.

Topaz is most plentiful and occurs in pieces of the largest size on Flinders Island and the north-eastern tin fields. Killiecrankie Bay on the west side of the above island is the best known locality and topaz up to pebbles 8 inches long were obtainable on the beach. The topaz from this place are often called "Killiecrankie diamonds." The Tasmanian topaz when appropriately cut and polished have a very fine appearance.

More complete information is given in Petterd's Catalogue of the Minerals of Tasmania.

Zircon (Silicate of Zirconium ZrO₂ SiO₂). Zircon has an adamantine lustre and its colour ranges from colourless through yellow, brown to red. It crystallises in the tetragonal system, has a hardness of 7.5 and a specific gravity of 4.68 to 4.70.

Zircons occur abundantly in the tin deposits of north-eastern Tasmania. They range in size up to half an inch, but the colour is generally a light yellow to brownish red. Another well known locality is that at Sisters Creek in the north western part of the State. The stones are not quite so large, but have much better colours, some of the red colours being exceptionally good. Samples of these are occasionally requested by jewellers but no market exists at present. The zircons occur in the recent alluvial deposits along the small creeks. A description of these deposits is given in the late W.H. Twelvetrees Report on the North west coast Mineral Deposits, 1905, Page 17.

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