How bizarre do you want them…?

Henk Smeets

Readers may remember David Roe going into rhapsodies about Ullie Wagner's images of cassiterites from Genna Zinc Smelter at the 2023 BMS Symposium and a subsequent brief article in BMS NL 121. Now Henk waxes lyrical too!

The Genna Zinc Smelter near Letmathe/Iserlohn in the Sauerland region of Germany was built around 1859, to process mainly zinc and copper ores from the region and beyond. The smelter itself was active from 1866 until 1925. The dumps were still accessible until the late 1980's. Nowadays the site has been completely cleared and turned into a nature landscape. The dumps however produced a large number of slag minerals: Mindat lists 176 valid minerals, but in their book "Genna/Iserlohn" (2020) Ulrich Wagner and Bernd Döhnel describe 168 different species.

I never visited the site – it was already gone before I even started collecting minerals - but in the course of years I managed to obtain quite some fine specimens from old collections. I have become more and more fascinated by the site and its minerals especially after I received the book as a gift from the authors.

And very recently I acquired a large collection directly from one of the authors. In due time I will write an extensive article on the site and its minerals, but for now I present to you some of the minerals that the slags produced which are in my view both remarkable and extremely attractive.

In the photos you see blue/grey needle like crystals in all kinds of bizarre shapes and forms which have been known for a long time to be cassiterite. In many cases they are partially covered by yellow crystallizations, these are varlamoffite – which makes sense because varlamoffite is a secondary tin oxide. Sometimes you see orange crystals*, which are oxyplumboroméite (formerly called bindheimite) and occasionally white crystals, that can be either crusts of hydrozincite or zincaluminite as tiny hexagonal platelets.

The field of view of all the photos ranges from 0,5 to 2 mm. Of course all photos are by myself, they can also be seen on my website at **www.tomeikminerals.com.**

* A memorable Martin F. Gale photograph of an orange bindheimite from Lemathe was the front page of BMS NL 99 as the winner of the 2016 BMS Photographic competition – for those of you who have well curated back copies of the newsletter - particularly if augmented by Trevor Devon's comprehensive BMS Newsletter Index.