

SUCCESS!



As I start writing this, in longhand, St. Michael's church clock is striking the quarter-hour. I am sitting in our holiday cottage at Alnwick, Northumberland on a warm Autumn evening feeling well pleased with myself. This is not for any earth-shattering reason but simply grinning to myself as I have just proved a point.

But let me start at the beginning. Betty and I have visited this county on several occasions and each time I have tried to prove something I had read, without success. Books I have tell me that agates formed in the Cheviot Hills find their way down local streams and rivers and can be found on shingle bars and on beaches in the area.

On earlier trips I have visited beaches such as those on Holy Island and Alnmouth (both sides - as directed). I have also tracked Coquetdale up to the

head of the river via Alwinton and Harbottle. All this without success except finding jasper (a good indicator) on Holy Island.

This time I tried to the north of the Cheviots and **eureka** I proved them right! My find was only a thumb-nail size one but definitely an agate, mostly of carnelian.

We visited Coldstream (where the Guards Regiment originated) just, and only just, in Scotland. My photograph (above) is taken from a park in the village and shows the River Tweed and bridge - the river is the border here.

The photo also shows the beginning of a shingle bar on the English side of the river. The bar is much, much longer than shown here. To reach it you must start on the English side of the bridge and take the track on the left of the bridge, as you approach from the south. Leave your car in the lay-by at the side of the road. As

the track reaches the river a sign advises that this is a private road and I assumed that it is for anglers and that a club have the fishing rights here.

I left Betty with the car as she didn't fancy the walk and promised a half-hour return, unfortunately. The track was rough underfoot but wide enough for a car. At one point I hear a large "plop" in the river behind me - something was jumping and I soon found out what.

It took me ten minutes, at my slow pace, to reach the shingle bar and there met two anglers. One showed me his catch - a 30" salmon -hence the plop! They were not bothered that I was there as I was



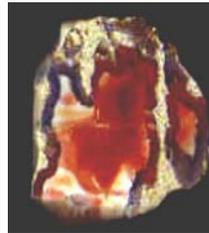
My agate and a larger piece of jasper.
Photo taken with specimens under water.

obviously not going to fish.

After a little bit of "help" I was on my own. The shingle was bone dry and the stones at the water's edge had a scum on them - pity I could have done with a little rain. Never-the-less I found quite a bit of hard jasper and, praise be, a small carnelian/agate. I only had ten minutes and with all the different stones to look at, only walked fifty yards. What would I have found if I had got my 'eye in' on that long bank? But that didn't matter I now have my very first Cheviot agate!



I leave you with a picture of Coquet Valley and a one showing what a prize specimen of Cheviot agate looks like.



Oh! If you are ever in the area, be sure to visit Barter Books in the old Victorian railway station at Alnwick. It's one of the largest second-hand bookshops in Britain and has a 'mining' section.

Colin