

The 17th FEEG Symposium

Charles Evans FGA DGA reports on the FEEG Symposium, held in Brussels in January.

Régine de Kerchove, President of the Société Belge de Gemmologie (SBG), addressing delegates.



In 1995 a circle of dedicated gemmology educators, representing a number of European countries that were fortunate enough to have respected and well-established national-level gemmological education resources, were able to realize a dream.

For a number of years they had met and discussed the possibility of creating and supporting some of the smaller European national gemmological bodies. The idea was to create a gemmological qualification that was recognized throughout Europe. The standard would be high, so that it would never be seen as 'lesser' than any of the existing qualifications. The qualification would be studied for in English, as it was acknowledged by all present that, worldwide, English was ultimately the language in which any serious academic discussion on gemmology would be conducted. So it was that the Federation for European Educators in Gemmology (FEEG) was born — with the general consensus being that the acronym is pronounced as a word and with a hard 'G'.

On the very weekend that the Eurostar service chose to misbehave, Amandine Rongy FGA GG and Charles Evans headed to Brussels to attend the 19th General Assembly of FEEG. It was hosted by the Société Belge de Gemmologie (SBG) — the Belgian Gemmological Society — at the Royal Windsor Hotel and at its teaching premises a short cab ride away. The SBG is a non-profit organization established in 1961 to advance the study of gemmology in French-speaking Belgium and has been a member of FEEG since 1999.

As one of the founding gemmological associations, Gem-A is proud to play host to the 18th FEEG Symposium and Graduation Ceremony on 21-22 November 2015, which has been timed to coincide with our Gem-A Conference. The usual date of the FEEG Symposium (January) has thus been brought forward by two months, and we are grateful to FEEG for allowing us this opportunity (the final re-writes of FEEG exams are in mid-October and there is very little time for marking and appeals before attendees will need to book their tickets and accommodation in London.)

Gem-A is excited to be hosting the 18th Symposium; not only will it give our conference a new and interesting twist, it will also open the doors to gemmology in Britain for FEEG graduates.

Ms Régine de Kerchove, in her role as president of the SBG and ably supported by her staff and enthusiastic volunteers, put together a wonderful Symposium on the Saturday with a sparkling list of guest speakers, who all provided the new crop of FEEG graduates with a reason to be proud of their field of study as well as their achievement in completing the course. In the spirit of FEEG, the event provided all attendees — professional, amateur or aspiring — with a base for stimulating exchange and discussion. The Friday was taken up by meetings of the Examinations Committee, followed by the AGM.

Points of discussion were the proposed website and branding of FEEG, in which Gem-A's own Miles Hoare has invested much creative and technical expertise. Loredana Prospero was reinstated as president of FEEG, by popular demand. Amandine Rongy was instated as the new secretary, with Waultraud Winkler from Austria standing down after a number of years of sterling service. Graduate numbers were down for 2014, from 73 in 2013 to 55, but this was not seen as problematic, with steady numbers being the long-term trend and 2013 simply being an exceptionally good year. Finances were healthy enough to approve the purchase of a preferred domain. In all, it was with a warm and contented sense of achievement that we all sat to enjoy a fine meal, courtesy of our hosts, in one of Brussels' better restaurants.



The Saturday symposium kicked off with Hanco Zwaan giving an appropriate and inspirational message for all the new graduates on just how wide a world of gemmology could be. Talks followed the theme of technical study and work in the field of gemmology with Pierre Lefevre, Emmanuel Fritsch, Wolf Kuehn, Stefanos Karampelos, Olivier Segura, and Eddy Fleesdrager all delivering most interesting and thought-provoking presentations. Francesco Mazzero was the last speaker with a fascinating collection of photographs that documented his travels and experiences around the world. The day finished with the proud new graduates being presented with their awards, ably supported by excited family members.

Of course, there had to be a hitch somewhere... the Eurostar, having just recovered from a Friday fire in one of the tunnels, then had to cancel a number of services on the Sunday and ours was one of them. There are worse places in the world to be stuck than Brussels. They have the finest of chocolate, beer, art and architecture. How could it not be a 'fun' delay?! ■