

Vulcan Manassas Quarry July 2014 Field Trip Report

by Dave Lines

Photos by Sheryl Simms (Northern Virginia Club)



We (Jim W., Dave, Rich, John P. and Ron T. from So. Md Club and 7 from Northern Virginia) met at 7:00 a.m. in the Office parking lot ---- and were immediately impressed by the many dump trucks going back and forth getting rock --- crushed rock and fill dirt/rock. A continual stream of large noisy trucks went by us. Probably a 100 or more while we waited to begin the trip. Business was really hopping --- super busy --- especially since it was a Saturday morning! So it was with high expectations of much new material to be found that we waited because lots of trucks might mean lots of recent shots.

First, the Safety briefs --- two of them --- the first by our Trip Leader and sponsor Ted Carver of Northern Virginia Mineral Club. Ted ran through the list of do's and don'ts --- liberally embellished with several horror stories. The message was be safe, stay safe and keep the quarry open to rockhounds. Second the quarry rep "TJ" gave us another rundown on safety rules relating to this particular operation and pointed out where we could and could not go, to drive on the left side, stay away from the high walls, be careful of all the truck traffic and to be out of the quarry by 11:45 a.m..



After a group picture, we entered the quarry a little past 8:00 a.m. and noticed a drill in operation preparing for a new shot. But then we realized that only a minimum amount of activity had occurred in the pit. We stopped at the first bench past the little picnic/memorial garden area down in the pit and quickly saw the road was blocked by boulders and a recent rain washed gully.

After surveying the situation, we decided as a group to spend some time to move the boulders and level the bumps and gully's enough for about 50 yards to get through to the rest of the quarry. Ted was particularly helpful with his unusual strength and ability to move heavy objects. After half an hour or so of effort, we had collectively cleared the road and caravanned past the obstructions to benches below.





But alas --- the pickings were slim as absolutely zero activity had taken place and the lower quarry was much the same as it had been for several years. None the less, we spread out and found bits and pieces in various locations on several benches all the way to the bottom. I saw decent specimens of prehnite, stilbite, calcite and chalcopyrite. Although most of the specimens were found as float, we did find a couple of areas where there was a concentration of collectible material --- particularly one near the bench near the final turn toward the bottom where we found lots of colorful chalcopyrite.

At about 11:00 a.m., since I was riding with Rich, we decided to return to the area just above the 40 foot bench and try to find the boulder where Jim had found some interesting 1/8 inch round balls of what we assumed were calcite. Well, no calcite, but we did find some nice dodecahedral crystals of pyrite (or maybe very shiny chalcopyrite) embedded in a 1/2 inch seam of calcite. Nice.

All in all the weather was gorgeous --- in 70's and low 80's and partly cloudy. And we all stayed safe. Thanks Vulcan for another chance to find some great specimens and save them from the crusher.

