



# The Journal of Gemmology

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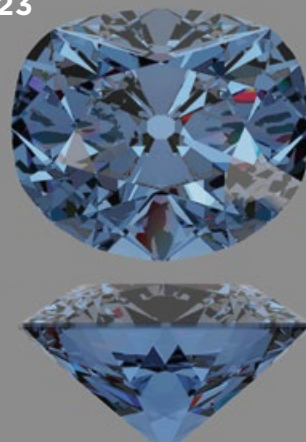
Photo by Bilal Mahmood, AGL

**Cover photo:** Rhodochrosite is prized as both mineral specimens and faceted stones, which are represented here by 'The Snail' (5.5 × 8.6 cm, from N'Chwaning, South Africa) and a 40.14 ct square-cut gemstone from the Sweet Home mine, Colorado, USA. For more on rhodochrosite, see the article on pp. 332–345 of this issue. Specimens courtesy of Bill Larson (Pala International/The Collector, Fallbrook, California, USA); photo by Ben DeCamp.

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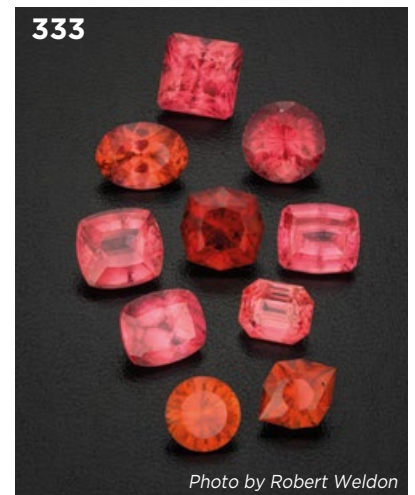


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**Figure 1:** A modern photograph illustrates the 45.52 ct Hope diamond as it is now in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC, USA. Photo by Chip Clark, Smithsonian Institution; catalogue no. NMNH G3551, photo no. 2003-37145.

# Out of the Blue: The Hope Diamond in London

Jack M. Ogden

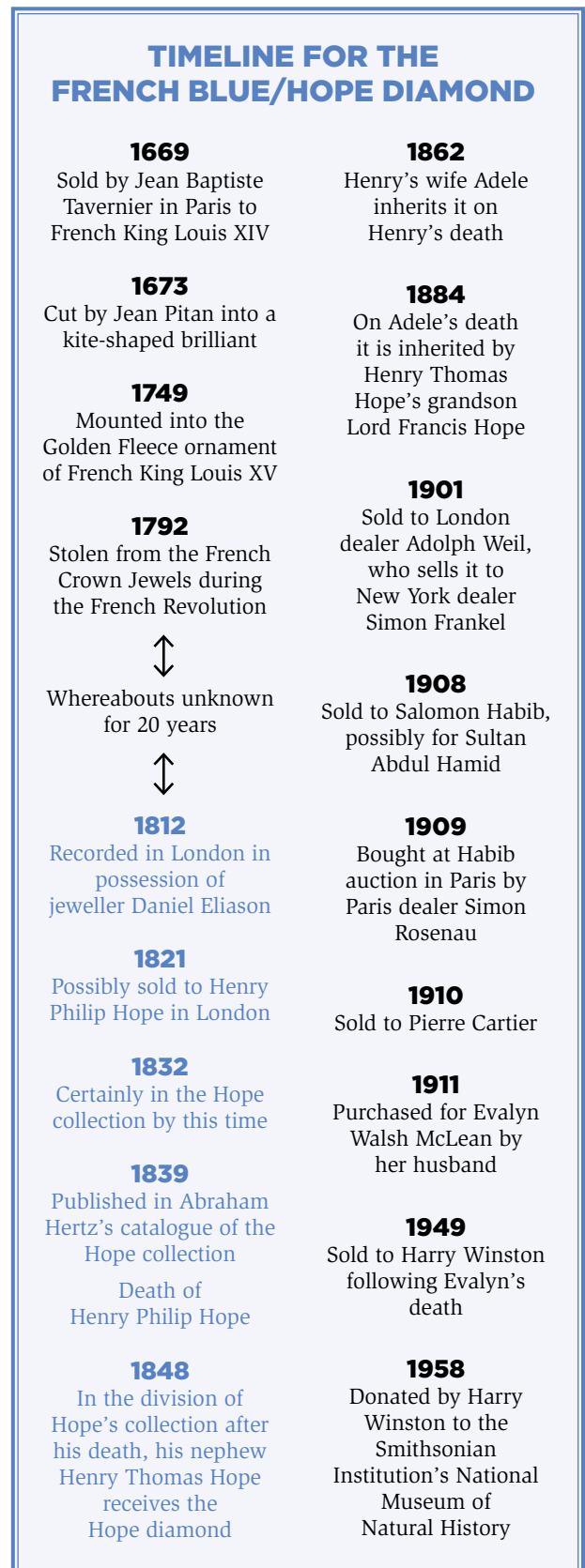
**ABSTRACT:** Our knowledge of the history of the French Blue/Hope diamond between the time of its theft from the French Crown Jewels in 1792 and its publication as part of the collection of Henry Philip Hope in 1839 has many tantalising gaps. Based on new research, this article covers what we now know of this diamond after its reappearance in London in 1812. A painting of the diamond by the mineralogist James Sowerby has been located, along with Sowerby's notes. These formed the basis for an advertising pamphlet for the gem produced by London jeweller Daniel Eliason, published in English and French versions, which can now be dated to 1813. We also learn that Eliason and Sowerby exhibited, or at least planned to exhibit, a blue glass model of the diamond at the Linnean Society in London. Several sources point to 1821 as being the year Henry Philip Hope purchased the diamond in London. The testimonies in the 1840s court cases surrounding the ownership of Hope's gem collection following his death in 1839 provide useful background information and, remarkably, suggest that in 1838 there was an attempt to sell the diamond back to the French Crown.

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The history of the famous Hope blue diamond (Figure 1)—its journey from the East to the French King Louis XIV in the 17th century, its theft during the French Revolution, its pride of place in the Hope collection in London, and then its eventual arrival in the gem and mineral collection at the National Museum of Natural History in USA—is one of the best-known stories in the history of diamonds (Figure 2). The research presented here aims to fill some gaps in our knowledge of this extraordinary gem and of those who were involved when it reappeared, seemingly out of the blue, in London in 1812. Previously unpublished archival material provides a new witness to its appearance in London—the mineralogist James Sowerby, who painted it, as well as the court testimony of diamond dealer Abraham Hertz, author of the catalogue of the Hope Collection of Gems—which throws further light on various aspects of the Hope, including an attempt to sell it back to the French Crown.

## OUT OF THE EAST TO FRANCE

In 1663, the French Huguenot gem dealer, Jean Baptiste Tavernier, set off on what was to be his sixth and final trip to Persia and India (Tavernier, 1676). He took with him jewellery and precious objects worth 400,000 livres (~US\$10 million in modern terms), which belonged to several notable French jewellers, to offer for sale (Ogden, 2017). His aim was to sell these pieces to the Persian Shah in Isfahan (in what is now Iran), and to the Mughal Emperor in India, and then invest the proceeds in diamonds from India. One diamond generally assumed to be brought back to France from that successful trip was a large blue one weighing  $112\frac{3}{16}$  old carats (or 115.28 metric carats; see Ogden, 2017). Tavernier gave no information as to where he purchased it, and there is one hint that he may have bought it in Iran during his somewhat trying overland journey home (Ogden, 2017). Once back in Paris in 1669, Tavernier sold this large blue stone, along with other diamonds, to the French King Louis XIV. In 1673, it was cut by Jean Pitan into a kite-shaped brilliant of  $67\frac{1}{8}$  old carats (Bapst, 1889; equivalent to 68.9 metric carats). Decades later it was set in the Order of the Golden Fleece in the French Crown Jewels for Louis XV (Figure 3). The gem, described then as ‘the blue diamond of the crown’ (Bapst, 1889, p. 267), is now usually referred to as the ‘French Blue’. Little more than a century after the royal purchase of the gem, it was confiscated during the French Revolution, only to be stolen from the poorly guarded Royal Repository in Paris in mid-September 1792 (Bapst, 1889, pp. 447–452. Uncertainty surrounds what happened next.

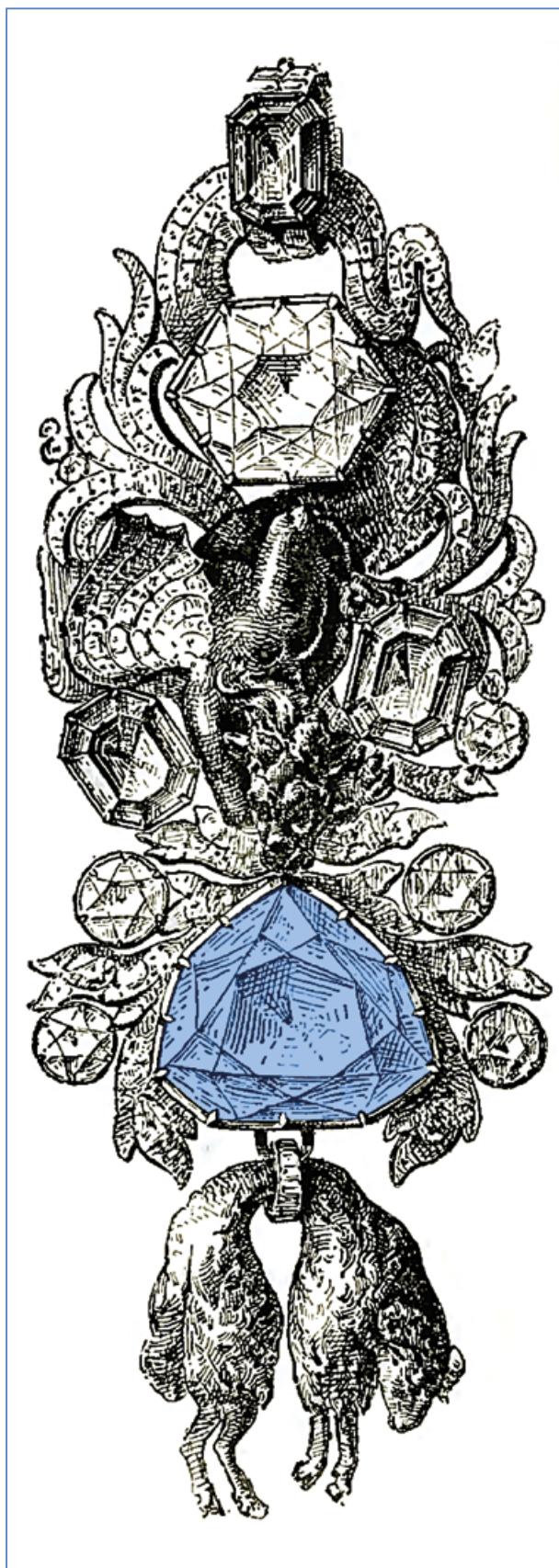


**Figure 2:** This timeline shows the whereabouts of the French Blue/Hope diamond from 1669 until 1958, when the stone was donated to the National Museum of Natural History, where it presently resides. The blue font indicates the portion chronicled by the present article.

## REAPPEARANCE IN LONDON

According to the French historian Germain Bapst, son of the last Crown Jeweller of France, in his exhaustive study of the French Crown Jewels written at the end of the 19th century, following its theft the large blue diamond was taken to London by a man he named as Cadet Guillot, where it was cleaved into two pieces to disguise it (Bapst, 1889, pp. 270–271). This seems to be the earliest mention of Guillot and his involvement, but the basis for Bapst's assertion is unclear. An alternative story is that the theft of the French Crown Jewels was an inside job by revolutionaries, and the blue diamond was used to bribe the Duke of Brunswick, who was threatening to attack France to restore the monarchy (Bapst, 1889, p. 448). This ties in with a rumour reported in the British press shortly after the theft that the revolutionaries had taken the Crown Jewels themselves and that 'their endeavours to discover the robbers are only a mere deception to deceive the public' (e.g. *Kentish Gazette*, 5 October 1792, p. 3). A further version of the tale links the French Blue with the large blue gem worn by Queen María Luisa, wife of Charles IV of Spain, in a 1799 painting by Francisco Goya (now in the Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA), although the gem in the painting is a very different shape (Tillander, 1975). Yet another story—with a series of manifestations of its supposed curse—has the blue gem reaching Wilhelm Fals, a diamond cutter in Amsterdam. The diamond was then supposedly stolen from him by his sons and given to Francis Beaulieu of Marseille, France, who brought it to London and eventually sold it to the London diamond dealer Daniel Eliason (see the section on Eliason below).<sup>1</sup>

As we will see, the French Blue was in London by September 1812, with Eliason, by then cut as an oval brilliant weighing 177 grains or 44¼ pre-metric carats. The 19th-century British carat is usually stated to be around 0.2053–0.2054 grams. That would put the weight of the blue diamond as it was in London in 1812 at between approximately 45.42 and 45.44 metric carats. However, the present weight of the Hope diamond is 45.52 metric carats, and it must have lost at least a little of its weight when slight repolishing, including of the girdle, was done while it was owned by



**Figure 3:** The ~69 ct French Blue diamond was set in the Golden Fleece ornament of Louis XV, which was designed by court jeweller Andre Jacquemin in 1749. From Bapst, 1889, p. 268.

<sup>1</sup> So far the present author has found no mention of a Francis (or François) Beaulieu in connection with the French Blue before this version of the theft was widely reported in the world press in 1909 (e.g. *The Times*, 25 June 1909, p. 5). The origin of this story seems unknown.



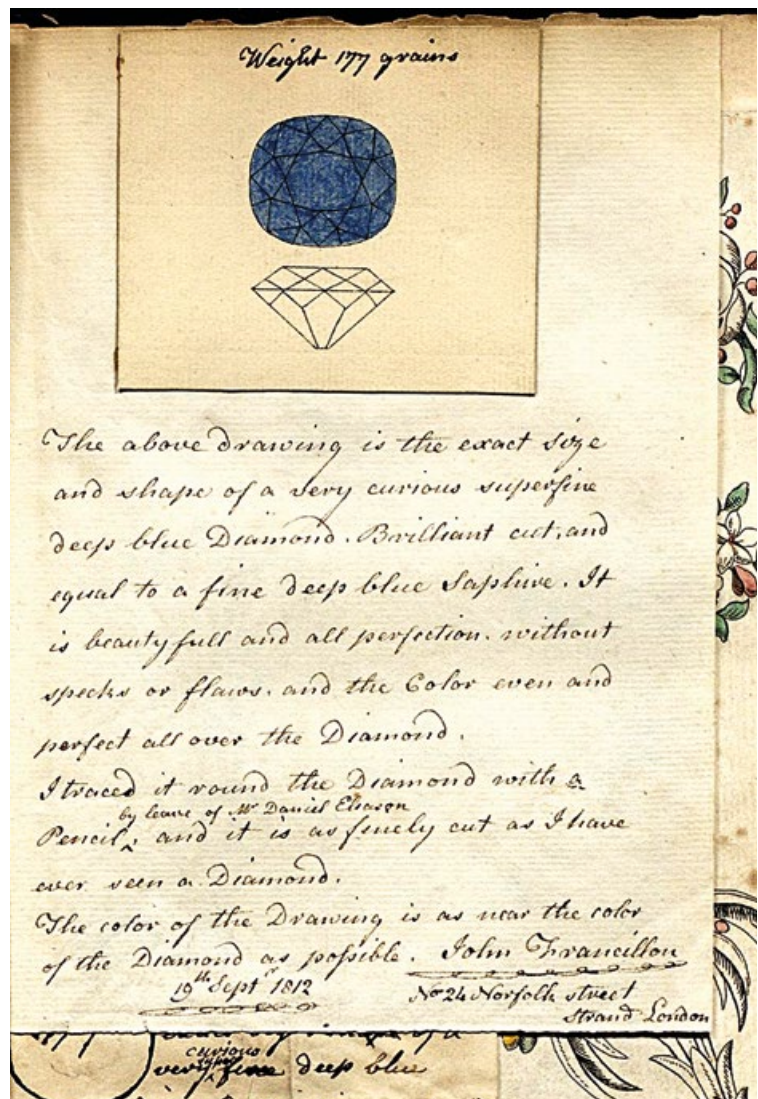
**Figure 4:** The business card of Cripps & Francillon names them as jewellers to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (the future King George IV), and also to the Duke and Duchess of Württemberg. © Bodleian Library, Oxford, John Johnson Collection.

Harry Winston in the 1950s. This means that the carat weight used by Eliason (and later by Hertz) must have been nearer to 0.206 grams or more. This seemingly would fit with an 1811 explanation (Kelly, 1811, p. 258) that there were 150 carats to 1 troy ounce, giving a carat then of just over 0.207 g.

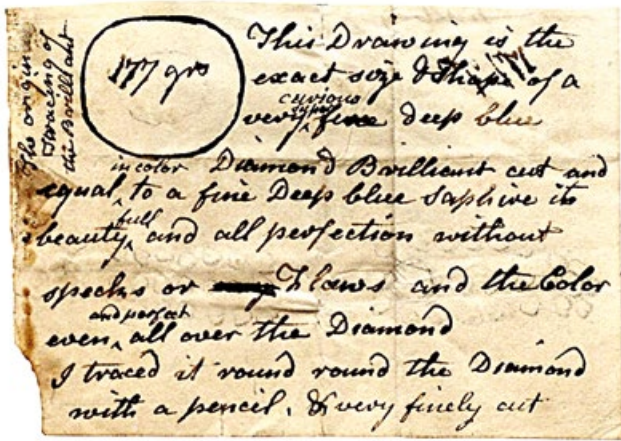
The blue diamond later found its way to the collection of gems belonging to Henry Philip Hope and then, through various owners, to Washington DC in the USA as the Hope diamond. Research based on a surviving lead model of the gem as cut by Pitan along with computer modelling has established that the Smithsonian's Hope diamond is indeed the recut French Blue (Farges et al., 2009).

## EARLY SIGHTINGS IN LONDON

London jeweller John Francillon (1743–1816), a doctor by training, was of Huguenot descent and had joined London goldsmith and watchmaker John Cripps to form the firm of Cripps & Francillon (Figure 4) no later than 1769. In September 1812, he recorded in his so-called Francillon Memo (Figure 5) a blue diamond in London weighing 177 grains (44¼ pre-metric carats) and provided a coloured drawing, having traced round it 'by leave of Mr Daniel Eliason'. He stated that 'it is beautyfull and all perfection, without specks or flaws, and the Color even and perfect all over the Diamond'. The Francillon Memo,



**Figure 5:** The so-called Francillon Memo describing the blue diamond, written in London in 1812, was found tucked within a copy of Pouget's 1762 *Traité des Pierres Précieuses*, which was once owned by George F. Kunz and perhaps by Francillon himself. Francillon's drawing of the blue diamond was attached to the Memo. Courtesy of the United States Geological Survey Library.



**Figure 6:** This rough draft of the Francillon Memo in Figure 5 was found in the same volume of Pouget’s *Traité*. Courtesy of the United States Geological Survey Library.

and an earlier draft of it (Figure 6), were found tucked into a copy of the 1762 *Traité des Pierres Précieuses* by Jean Henri Prosper Pouget that was later purchased by the gem and jewellery expert George F. Kunz.<sup>2</sup>

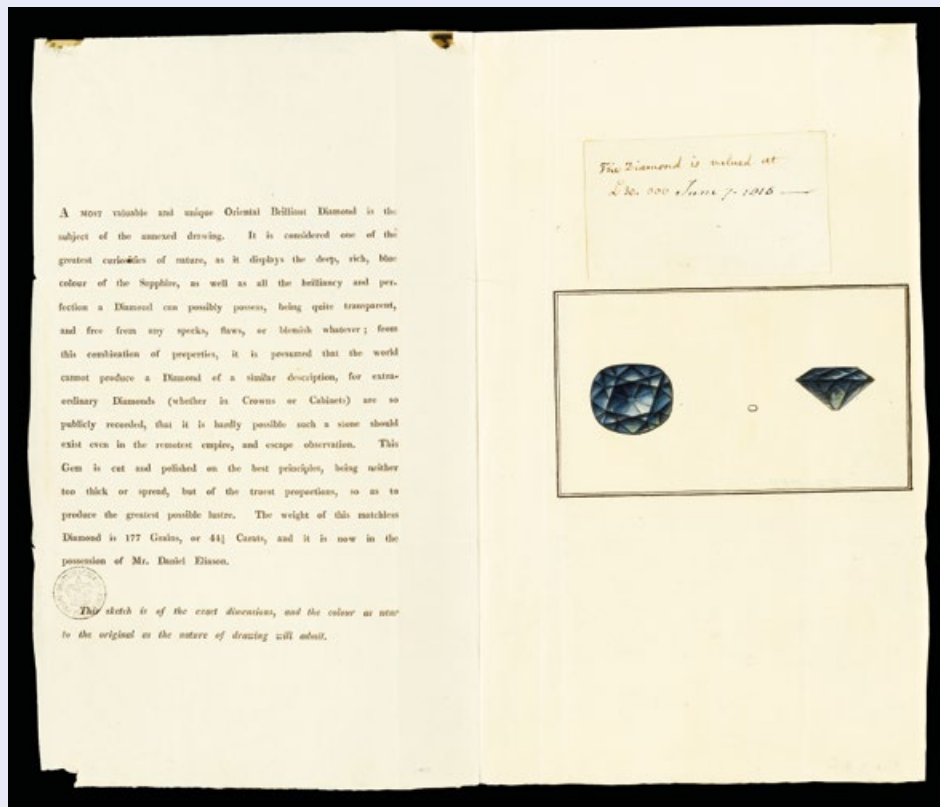
Francillon’s 1812 drawing and handwritten note were not published, and the diamond was not announced to the wider world until the following year, of which we have evidence of two mentions. The first is a footnote in John Mawe’s 1813 *Treatise on Diamonds and Precious Stones* in which he notes the presence of ‘a superlatively fine blue

diamond’ in London, weighing over 44 carats, but without indicating its ownership (Mawe, 1813, pp. 16–17+). Relegating the mention of this extraordinary diamond to a footnote rather than incorporating it into the text (something remedied in his second edition: Mawe, 1823) might suggest that he only saw or heard of the gem after the book was essentially complete, around spring 1813.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that Mawe had not seen the stone himself in 1813, but learned of it from a two-page printed pamphlet that described the diamond, with a hand-coloured illustration of it, which we can now also date to that year. The present author knows of three surviving versions of this pamphlet. Two are in French: one was bound into the same copy of Pouget’s *Traité* as the Francillon Memo, and the other is in the manuscript collection of the Natural History Museum, London (Sowerby Coll. MSS B127/1). The third version, now in the British Museum (inv. no. D,2.1787), has the same text in English (Figure 7):

<sup>2</sup> This and other inserts in Kunz’s copy of Pouget’s 1762 *Traité* seem to be in the same handwriting as text annotations, which suggest that Francillon may have been the original owner of this book, as noted by Kunz (1897).

<sup>3</sup> Mawe’s *Treatise* was described as ‘nearly ready for publication’ in the *Morning Post* of 23 April 1813 (p. 3) and was published the following August (*Morning Post*, 2 August 1813, p. 2).

**Figure 7:** An English edition of a pamphlet, believed to have been written by James Sowerby, describes the blue diamond that was in the possession of Daniel Eliason, along with a hand-coloured etching showing two views of the stone and an attached note on its value. © Trustees of the British Museum, inv. no. D,2.1787.



A most valuable and unique Oriental Brilliant Diamond is the subject of the annexed drawing. It is considered one of the greatest curiosities of nature, as it displays the deep, rich, blue colour of the Sapphire, as well as all the brilliancy and perfection a Diamond can possibly possess, being quite transparent, and free from any specks, flaws, or blemish whatever; from this combination of properties, it is presumed that the world cannot produce a Diamond of a similar description, for extraordinary Diamonds (whether in Crowns or Cabinets) are so publicly recorded, that it is hardly possible such a stone should exist even in the remotest empire, and escape observation. This Gem is cut and polished on the best principles, being neither too thick or spread, but of the truest proportions, so as to produce the greatest possible lustre. The weight of this matchless Diamond is 177 Grains, or 44¼ Carats, and it is now in the possession of Mr. Daniel Eliason.

The British Museum pamphlet in Figure 7 has glued to it a piece of paper with the handwritten note ‘The Diamond is valued at £30,000 June 7, 1816’. This suggests that the stone was still in Eliason’s hands and for sale in 1816. Neither the French nor the English version of this pamphlet bears the artist’s name or the date when it was printed, but these can be learnt from the 1840 catalogue of London bookseller John Bohn (p. 647), in which one item is:

7048 Sowerby’s Drawing of a most valuable and unique Oriental Brilliant Diamond, weighing 177 grains, or 44¼ Carats, and of the colour of the Sapphire, in the possession of Mr. Daniel Eliason; with description; 2 leaves, 4to. PRIVATELY PRINTED, 5s. 1813.

This catalogue entry helps us to attribute the pamphlet text and drawing to the well-known English naturalist and illustrator James Sowerby (1757–1822), aptly the son of a lapidary.<sup>4</sup> The second French version of the pamphlet is in the Sowerby Archives in the library of the Natural History Museum, London, along with a hand-coloured proof printing of the illustration (as shown in the pamphlet) and Sowerby’s original watercolour illustration of the gem (as reproduced in the pamphlet; Figure 8), plus his hand-written note (Figure 9; Sowerby Coll. MSS B127/2):

The drawing which accompanies this is an humble representation of the most extraordinary Diamond

in the world, and as it may not, possibly, remain in England I was desirous that the Linnean Society should have information. The Gentleman who possesses it is so kind as to further my desires by bringing a model of it to show its size, but as it could not be equalled in colour, the model as well as the drawing is much too dull, but may assist the mind with the help of description as the Gem itself is too valuable to be carried about.

Its weight is 177 Grains or 44¼ Carats. It is perfectly clear and transparent and of a fine steel blue colour and lustre. It is ~~cut into~~ a perfect brilliant and has been most scientifically managed in the cutting and polishing and is now the property of D Ellison [sic] Esq. Merchant, London.

James Sowerby

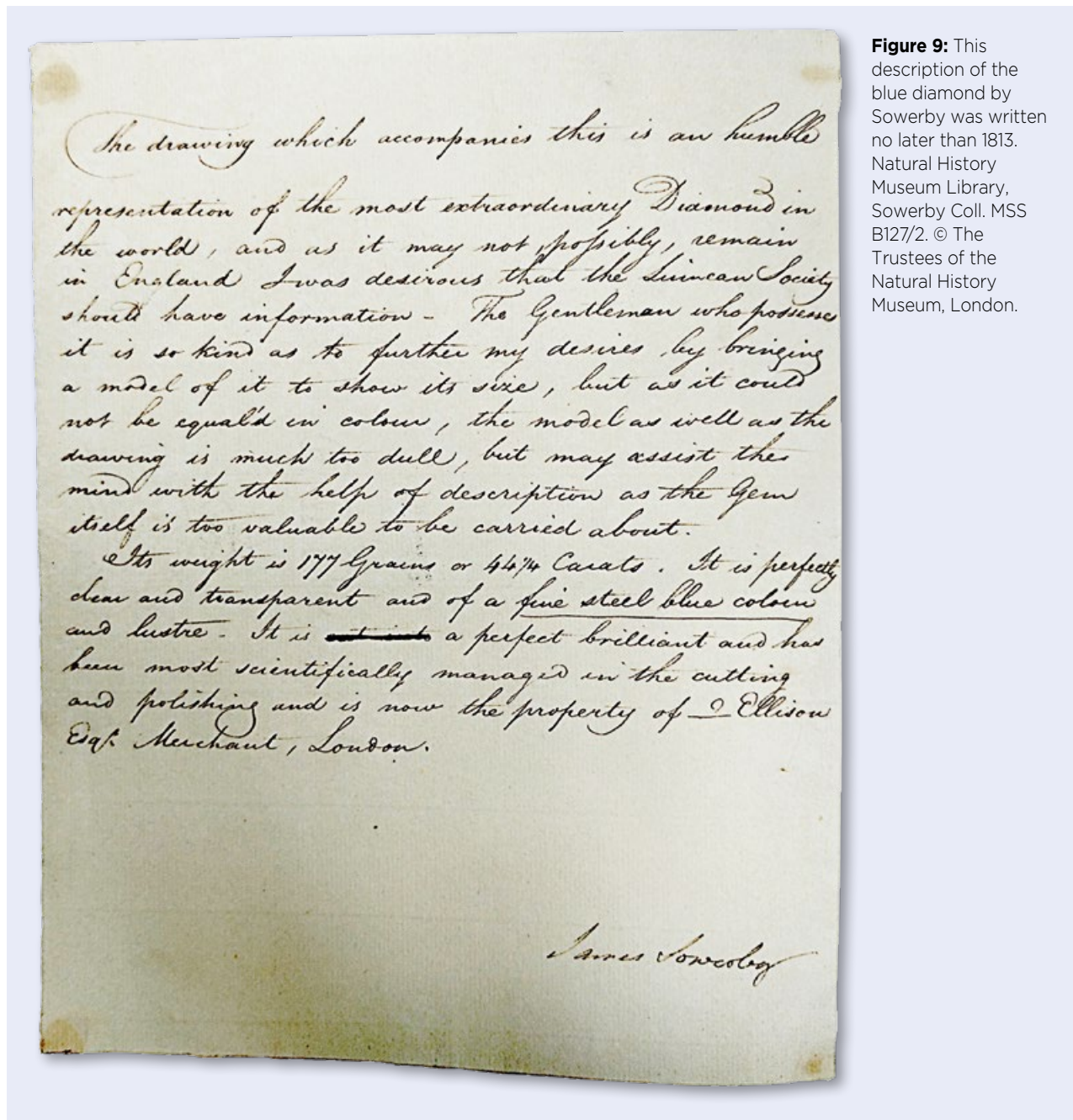
This note does not bear a date, but it and the drawing must predate the printed pamphlet of 1813. The Linnean Society, focusing on natural history, was founded in 1788, and both Sowerby and Francillon were members.



**Figure 8:** James Sowerby’s original painting of the blue diamond dates to no later than 1813. © The Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London.

<sup>4</sup> It has been suggested by Paul Henderson (pers. comm., 26 June 2017)—Sowerby specialist and the author of Henderson (2015)—that there is a possibility that some of the Sowerby drawings, including those for Mawe’s book, and thus perhaps the blue diamond, were actually by Sowerby’s son, James de Carle Sowerby (1787–1871), who continued his father’s work. However, the Sowerby who described the blue diamond in 1813 was a member of the Linnaean Society (see text) for which James junior, then about 25 years old, was probably too young. Besides, Eliason was more likely to have known James senior, who was close to his own age.





**Figure 9:** This description of the blue diamond by Sowerby was written no later than 1813. Natural History Museum Library, Sowerby Coll. MSS B127/2. © The Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London.

The model would most likely have been of glass.<sup>5</sup> When Sowerby referred later to this diamond in his 1817 *Exotic Mineralogy*, he noted that ‘Daniel Eliason, Esq. has in London a nearly perfect blue Brilliant, of 44½ carats, that is superior to any other coloured diamond known’, and he added a footnote that this diamond was ‘Remarkable for so little of the purple, that paste [i.e. glass] which is liable to that tinge, cannot be found to imitate it’ (Sowerby, 1817, p. 40, text accompanying plates 118 and 119).

In 1812, John Francillon noted that his drawing was made by tracing round the stone. Indeed, the diamond’s outline on the draft (Figure 6), like Sowerby’s beautifully

rendered representation (Figure 8), depicts the familiar slightly lop-sided oval shape, but Francillon’s coloured ‘fine copy’ in Figure 5 shows a more regular oval cushion shape. The facet pattern of Sowerby’s painting is essentially identical to that in the 1839 catalogue of the Henry Philip Hope collection (Hertz, 1839, pl. 5, no. 1). Figure 10 shows a computer-generated image of the blue diamond as it was around 1812–1813.

<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, despite the kind efforts of Dr Isabelle Charmantier and her colleagues at the Linnean Society, London, nothing has been located in their archives to shed any further light on if and when the drawing and model were displayed at a meeting there.

## DANIEL ELIASON

The possessor of the blue diamond around 1812–1813 was diamond merchant Daniel Eliason, otherwise known as Tanhum ben Elijah Neumegen, who was born in Amsterdam and moved to London. He was in business as a jeweller by at least 1782. We have various insights into Eliason's diamond business and know of at least two other major stones he handled. Another insert in Pouget's *Traité*, also possibly in Francillon's hand, reveals that in 1802 Eliason purchased a 'most superb Brilliant of fine Water, correct proportions, & noble shape' weighing 37.5 Dutch carats (about 38.6 metric carats) for £4,500 at auction from W. Sharp, Son and Kirkup, diamond and pearl brokers and auctioneers. The advertisement for the auction called this gem 'one of the finest diamonds now on sale in Europe' (*Morning Chronicle*, 15 February 1802, p. 4). Eliason also supposedly sold a 34 ct diamond to Napoleon for £8,000 that he wore at his wedding to Josephine in 1796, but 'It was not a fine and faultless gem' (*The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 1847, p. 571).

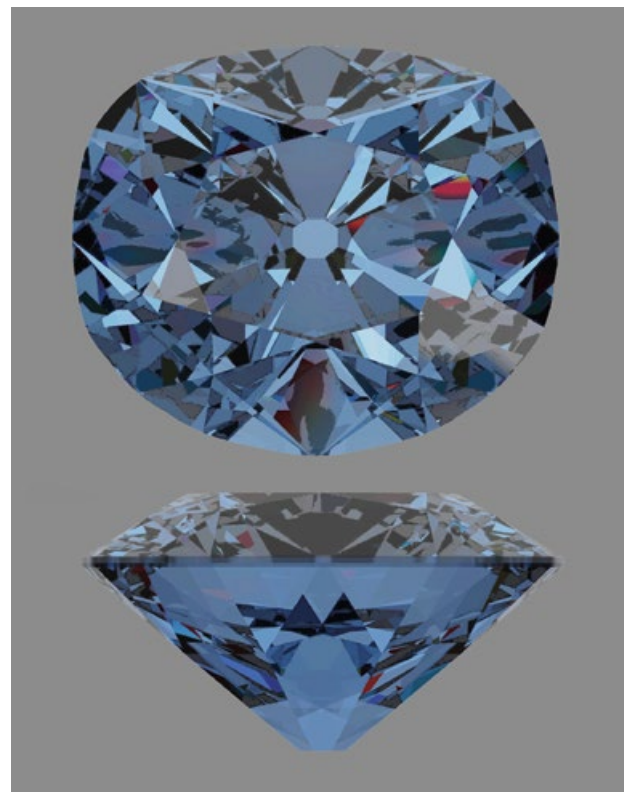
Eliason was also implicated in a notorious diamond scandal and trial that, according to some observers at the time, was one of the sparks that ignited the French Revolution. Jeanne de Valois-Saint-Rémy, also known as Countess de La Motte, was guilty of (or framed for) stealing an extravagantly magnificent diamond necklace believed to have been purchased by Marie Antoinette. The various official records and depositions relating to the Countess' trial reveal the different sides to the story (see La Motte, 1789; Funck-Brentano, 1911). The Countess, an intimate of the Queen, claimed that the Queen had given her part of the necklace as a gift, and that her husband had taken these diamonds to London to sell. He took them first to Nathaniel Jefferys in Piccadilly, who made an offer but could only pay in instalments, not cash. The Count then took them to Bond Street jeweller William Gray in Piccadilly, who brought in diamond dealer Eliason. Eliason had already been shown the gems by Jefferys—diamond dealing was a small world then, as now—but a deal was struck, and Gray and Eliason bought the diamonds. Back in Paris the Countess was found guilty, and a few years later the British press reported a duel between Count de La Motte and jeweller William Gray in Brussels in August 1791 (*Oxford Journal*, 27 August 1791, p. 1). Count de La Motte won, although reports that Gray had died were later said to be erroneous. This duel took place just a day or two after the Countess died and according to some press reports was 'supposed to have related to the sale of some jewels, a few years since, taken

from the Queen of France, and tendered by the Count as his own' (*Cumberland Pacquet, and Ware's Whitehaven Advertiser*, 30 August 1791, p. 2).

Anyone in possession of the stolen French Blue diamond in the years following its theft and reading Countess de La Motte's detailed and highly popular 1789 account—published in both French and English—would have Eliason's name high on the list of potential 'no-questions-asked' purchasers of major diamonds.

## WHY LONDON IN 1812?

The earliest record of the blue diamond in London is of it being in Eliason's hands in 1812. An ingenious explanation for its appearance that year was provided by Winters and White (1991, 1992): This was exactly 20 years after its theft during the French Revolution and thus the time when the 20-year statute of limitations for theft at a time of war in France would have expired. However, this might not be correct: the Napoleonic law code of 1804 superseded earlier French law and clearly defined the statute of limitations for theft in civil law as just three years (§ 227). If this applied to the French Blue, it would have been available for sale after 1804; however, it is



**Figure 10:** This computer-generated rendering of the ~44 ct blue diamond as it was in 1812–1813 is based on Sowerby's painting in Figure 8 and a later drawing in the Hope collection catalogue (Hertz, 1839, pl. 5, no. 1). Computer rendering by J. Ogden.

possible that neither civil nor martial law is applicable here. Furthermore, the French Blue diamond—as the property of the French Crown—automatically became State property when confiscated during the Revolution. For the theft of French State property, no statutes of limitation apply. Of course, the possessor of the diamond in the years leading up to 1812 may well have believed there to be such a statute. Certainly, the seeming reappearance of the diamond in London exactly 20 years after its theft in Paris seems more than a coincidence.

Another possible argument against the explanation provided by Winters and White is that it seems overly cautious to decrease the value of the French Blue by recutting it to a fraction of its former size—so that it could not be recognised—but still wait until it was deemed safe to sell because of a statute of limitations. Winters and White suggested that Mawe may have known that the stolen French Blue and Eliason's diamond were one and the same and, in Lord Balfour's words, he was 'endeavouring to lay a smokescreen so as to facilitate the eventual sale of the 44-carat gem' (Balfour, 2009, p. 133). If so, Mawe kept to his pretence with remarkable determination. The 1823 second edition of his *Treatise* includes a drawing of the blue diamond that Eliason had owned, and describes both this stone, which he says was sold by Eliason, and the French Blue, which he still stated to be part of the French Crown Jewels (Mawe, 1823, pp. 44 and 46). It leads to the question: was Sowerby, someone particularly well acquainted with Eliason's gem, also in on the deceit? In his 1817 *Exotic Mineralogy*, Sowerby notes Eliason's blue gem and adds that 'the most curious [diamond] is a sky-blue one, among the crown jewels of France, weighing 67 carats and two-sixteenths' (Sowerby, 1817, p. 40). On balance, it seems highly unlikely that Mawe and Sowerby suspected that the two diamonds were the same.

If Winters and White's statute-of-limitation explanation is not relevant, the diamond's 'appearance' could relate in some way to 1812 being a traumatic year for Eliason and his business partners, with perhaps an urgent need to raise money. In 1810, Abraham Goldsmid, Eliason's son-in-law and a business partner, killed himself after having got into huge debt through the sale of Exchequer Bills for the government. In June 1812 an Act of Parliament was passed 'to provide for the more complete and effectual Liquidation of this debt from the late Abraham Goldsmid, Merchant and his surviving Partners' (*Crown Debt of Abraham Goldsmid*, 52 George III. c.75). There were also other changes. Eliason had quit his partnership with George Goldsmid and George's son in effect from 1 January 1812 (Hackney Archives Department M1481).

## GEORGE IV DIAMOND

It is almost certain that Eliason had sold the blue diamond before his death at the age of 91 on 17 November 1824, as there is no mention of the diamond in his will (PROB 11/1693/189) or in the catalogue of March 1825 when Christies auctioned 'A small but highly valuable and particularly select assemblage of set and loose brilliants, including several of considerable magnitude and unparalleled beauty, being the remaining stock of the late Partnership of Messrs. Daniel Eliason and Nephews' (*Morning Chronicle*, 17 February 1825, p. 4). The largest diamonds on offer weighed 18 and 15.3 ct.

In 1822, mineralogist Delvalle Lowry (later Delvalle Varley) mentioned the blue diamond in her book on mineralogy, presented as a series of conversations between her and two other women, 'Frances' and 'Mary' (Varley, 1822, p. 288). When asked if she owned a blue diamond, she replied that she had one with a faint tinge, and then mentioned 'the large one in the possession of Mr Eliason, which you have probably heard of'. Mary replied that she had heard it was worth £30,000. By early 1822 it was being widely reported in the British press that 'a violet-coloured diamond has lately been purchased by his Majesty for 20,000L [£20,000], and that Mr. ELIASON, of Hatton-garden, is setting it'. This referred to King George IV, who was crowned in July 1821, and the assumption has been that this was the diamond we now know as the Hope. An early statement of Royal ownership is in the *Leicester Chronicle* on 16 February 1822 (p. 3), seemingly quoting a report in the *Morning Chronicle* from a few days earlier, but not located by the present author. The following year, Mawe noted that Eliason's large blue diamond was said to be owned by the King (Mawe, 1823, p. 44). In 1831, in his *A Memoir on the Diamond*, John Murray mentioned 'the so-called George IV diamond', said to weigh 29½ ct, and 'of a rich and splendid blue colour' sold to the King by Eliason for £22,000 and worn in his coronation crown. It quotes Mawe on the 44 ct blue diamond that belonged to Eliason and was reported as having been sold by Eliason to the King of Holland (Murray, 1831, p. 41). He illustrates the George IV diamond along with other important diamonds in plate 1 of his book, based on 'correct and beautiful models' in his possession. It is not the lop-sided oval of the Hope but bears similarities to Francillon's representation of Eliason's stone. The weight discrepancy between the King's supposed 29½ ct blue diamond, as quoted by Murray, and the 44¼ ct Hope was presumably an error—unless there were two large blue diamonds. An error seems more likely. In his 1839

second edition, Murray gives the weight of George IV's blue diamond as 44¼ ct, with the same drawing forming his plate (Murray, 1839, pp. 49–50).

By the mid-1840s, it appears that the George IV diamond was assumed to be the same as the large blue diamond published in the 1839 catalogue of the Hope Collection, even though the author of the latter, Bram Hertz, does not mention any royal connection. For example, *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* in 1847 (Vol. 70, No. 1, p. 568) noted that the George IV diamond had been sold by Eliason to Hope for £13,000. This assumption has continued to the present time.

It is not impossible, of course, that George IV had owned the diamond, possibly while he was still Prince of Wales. He may have sold it to Eliason sometime prior to 1812, but then wanted to borrow it back for his coronation in 1821. There is no real evidence for this, and it seems doubtful. It was noted above that one theory regarding the French Blue's theft at the time of the Revolution in 1792 was that revolutionaries used it to bribe Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick, to give up on his attempt to restore the French monarchy by force.<sup>6</sup> Three years later, the Duke of Brunswick's daughter Caroline married George, Prince of Wales. Although this is an intriguing coincidence, there is no evidence for the 'bribery' theory or that the Duke had possessed the diamond. The Duke's grandson, Charles II, Duke of Brunswick, was a famous diamond collector and owned a small blue diamond that several have suggested was fashioned from the smaller section cut off the French Blue, but the recent computer modelling of the French Blue strongly suggests that it cannot have been. This intriguing but almost certainly erroneous Brunswick link across the three generations was seemingly first suggested in Charles Dickens' magazine *All Year Round* in 1894 (Vol. 12, No. 293, Third Series, 11 August, pp. 126–132).

It has been speculated that George IV had owned the Hope based on a portrait in the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art in Kentucky, USA: 'it was obvious from across the room that the blue ovoid stone in it, near the bottom of the Golden Fleece worn by King George IV of England, was the same stone we know as the Hope Diamond' (Winters and White, 1992, p. 49).<sup>7</sup> The difficulty with this theory, apart from the chronology, is that the Golden Fleece ornament shown on the Owensboro portrait is remarkably close to one still in the Royal Collection (Figure 11), which is set with a fine cushion-shaped blue sapphire (Royal Collection RCIN 441169). The King appears to have owned at least three ornaments of this type, and one may have once been set with the large blue diamond. Equally the sapphire could be a later



**Figure 11:** The 'Order of the Golden Fleece; Badge of Prince Albert' is set with a large sapphire. It may have belonged to George IV ca 1820. Royal Collection RCIN 441169, 9 × 6 cm. Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> The Duke's 'Brunswick Proclamation' of 25 July 1792 had threatened war with France unless the French King Louis was restored to the throne.

<sup>7</sup> This painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769–1830) is one of numerous portraits of the King by this painter or his studio. The earliest seemingly is from 1818 and is now in the Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin (Garlick, 1964, pp. 86–88).

replacement for a blue diamond, but without further documentary evidence the portraits cannot support that the Hope diamond was once owned by King George.<sup>8</sup> The origin for the various mentions of the King purchasing the diamond from early 1822 onwards, including Mawe's clear statement, is puzzling but may just be erroneous. Nevertheless, as we will see, the sale of the diamond may well have taken place in 1821, but to Henry Philip Hope.

## HENRY PHILIP HOPE

By 1832, the blue diamond had entered the collection of Henry Philip Hope in London (Figure 12; 1774–1839), the youngest son of Jan (or John) Hope, a Dutch banker. At his death in 1839, there was no mention of his gem collection in his will, and his executors thus assumed the stones should be distributed between the three



**Figure 12:** This portrait of Henry Philip Hope (1774–1839) was painted in enamel by Henry Bone in 1802. Courtesy of Cognacq-Jay Museum, Paris, France; inv. no. J786.



**Figure 13:** This business card of Abraham Hertz dates to ca 1840, after he had moved to Great Marlborough Street. © Bodleian Library, Oxford, John Johnson Collection.

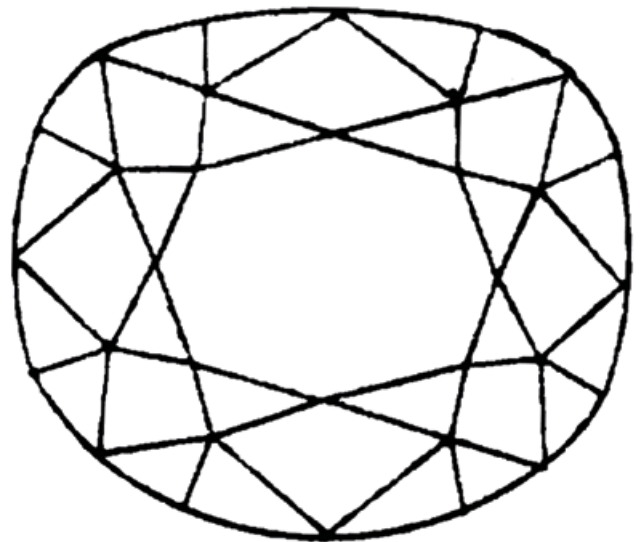
nephews—Henry Thomas Hope, Adrian John Hope and Alexander Beresford Hope—as part of the residual estate. It was not to be so simple. Alexander claimed that the gem collection had been gifted to him in deeds dated 1832 and 1838, while Henry Thomas Hope claimed that the gems belonged to him under the terms of another deed from 1821. This was all played out in court in a series of cases debating the veracity of the deeds through the 1840s. Ultimately, in 1848, Henry Thomas Hope received a selection of the gems, including the large blue diamond. The court cases are of particular interest because of the specific light they throw on the diamond.<sup>9</sup>

One witness in the 1840s court proceedings, Abraham Hertz, a gem dealer and diamond expert, had learned his trade working for the London diamond dealer Levi Barent Cohen. Cohen was the cousin of the wife of George Goldsmid, one of Eliason's business partners, and became a successful diamond dealer in his own right (Kaplan, 2006, pp. 7–8; Ogden, forthcoming). His business card is shown in Figure 13. Hertz said he was shown Hope's gems in 1832, when he argued that the gems could not properly be called a collection until they had been scientifically classified. In late 1832 or early 1833, Hertz began working with Hope part time to organise the collection, modestly enlarge it to fill gaps, and advise on the recutting and setting of some of the stones. His masterful catalogue of the collection was published in August 1839 (Hertz, 1839) and included a simple drawing of the large blue diamond (Figure 14).

In Hertz's court testimony, he said that when he first saw the Hope collection in 1832, 'a blue diamond of great value' was already part of it and that 'Mr. Hope paid for the blue diamond £13,000' (*The Standard*, 3 December 1844, p. 4). This price is far lower than the earlier asking price of £30,000 in 1816, as noted on

the slip of paper glued onto the pamphlet in Figure 7. According to press reports at the time of the 1851 Great Exhibition, Hope had managed to purchase the blue diamond for this low price because 'the diamond-merchant in whose possession it was being in want of money, and finding some difficulty in meeting with a customer for so valuable a gem' (*The Standard*, 17 June 1851, p. 3). The Scottish scientist David Brewster also noted that although it sold for £13,000, the diamond had earlier been pledged for sums of £15,000 and £16,000 (Brewster, 1852, p. 221). Brewster based his information about the price paid on a currently untraceable account from mineralogist James Tennant. Tennant had been an assistant to Mawe, who became acquainted with the blue diamond when it was still in Eliason's hands.

The date of Henry Philip Hope's purchase of the large blue diamond is unclear, but it was certainly prior to 1832 when Hertz saw the stone in Hope's collection, and there is evidence that it may have been considerably earlier. Henry Thomas Hope took possession of the large blue diamond in the agreement reached by the three nephews following the 1840s court cases. This suggests that it had been purchased by his uncle no later than 1821, when the deed in his favour had been drawn up. Perhaps the



**Figure 14:** This drawing from the Hope collection catalogue shows the Hope diamond as it was in 1839. From Hertz (1839, pl. 5).

<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, there is one large blue diamond that was in a Golden Fleece ornament at around this time—the Wittelsbach, which had been mounted in the Bavarian Elector's Golden Fleece in 1745, then remounted in a crown in 1806.

<sup>9</sup> The details here and following are from the abundant press reports of the 1840s court cases.

addition of the rare and valuable blue diamond to the collection prompted Henry Philip Hope to consider the collection's long-term future, hence the deed.

We find corroboration for an 1821 purchase date, albeit of uncertain veracity, in the 1845 *Memoirs* of the manufacturer and inventor Sir Edward Thomason. He recalled that in 1816 he gave a lecture on diamonds to the Birmingham Philosophical Society, his fifth presentation to them on the topic of minerals. He described this lecture and expanded on it in his *Memoirs*, which include a description of the 25 most important diamonds in the world. One was what he calls 'The Blue Hope'. He recounted the following (Thomason, 1845, pp. 134–136):

Mr. Elliason [*sic*], the great diamond merchant, residing in London, in 1821 (the year of the coronation of George IV.), was possessed of a very fine oval diamond of a sky blue, and of intense brilliancy. It was cut and polished as a brilliant, and its play of colour was matchless. In spread it was two-thirds the size of the Piggot diamond, being a little thinner, which the colour made up for; and it was of the same oval form. Report said that Mr. Elliason had visited the different courts in Europe, first asking £30,000, although it weighed only 27½ [*sic*] carats, and of course, if it had been white, the usual colour of the diamond would only be valued at £6,050. Before he left the continent he came down to £20,000, but could not find a purchaser. George the IVth was desirous to have this diamond to ornament the belt of his plume of feathers at his coronation, on the 19th of July, 1821; a treaty was commenced to have the loan of this stone for three days. Mr. Elliason was very adverse to lend any of his diamonds; the King's private exchequer or privy purse was too low to make the purchase, and an offer was made to Mr. Elliason of 1,000 guineas for the use of it for the day. Mr. Elliason required to have some days to consider it, when, in the meantime, Mr. Hope called upon Mr. Elliason about it, as he had frequently done in admiration of this beautiful gem; but Mr. Elliason always demanded too much. Hearing, however, that it was likely to be hired out for the occasion of the coronation, which circumstance of making it thus public would, in his feelings, much reduce its value, he observed to Mr. Elliason that he called upon him once more respecting the sky blue diamond; and after having stated that he found the King would not purchase it even for the approaching coronation, another opportunity might not occur for years, and he would make him a last offer, conducted, as report says, as follows:—Mr. Hope called for pen

and ink, and filled up a cheque for 13,000 guineas, placed his watch upon the table, and said he would give Mr. Elliason, five minutes only, to determine to make up his mind, whether to take up the cheque or the diamond. When the time arrived within a few seconds of the five minutes, Mr. Elliason pocketed the cheque, with much grumbling, declaring it more than "dog cheap." Mr. Hope placed the diamond in his splendid collection of minerals among the order of combustibles.

If essentially accurate, Thomason's account would place Hope's purchase of the blue diamond to sometime just prior to mid-July 1821 and supports the other accounts of the price paid. The guinea was £1.1s (£1.05) making the price mentioned by Thomason £13,650. The detail he gives does have the ring of truth about it, such as the attempts to sell it in Europe (recalling the French version of Sowerby's pamphlet and Eliason's wish to bring the stone to the attention of the Linnean Society because it might leave England) and the Prince of Wales' wish to rent it for three days for his coronation. The noted original asking price of £30,000 also matches that given elsewhere. Furthermore, according to this account, Hope was already acquainted with the blue diamond, having seen it several times with Eliason. It is unfortunate that the nature of the 'report' on which Thomason's account was based is unknown.

A more melodramatic story of the purchase appeared a few years after Thomason's memoirs, at the time of the Great Exhibition in 1851, in the *Illustrated London News* (Vol. 18, 7 June 1851, p. 516). Here Eliason has three rather than five minutes to make up his mind and looks aghast at Hope's 'cool, and calm, and determined' face as the watch ticks, culminating in the less respectful final statement: 'You've got it cheap—dog—dirt cheap'. Whether the *Illustrated London News* drew its account from Thomason or they both derived from the same untraced 'report' is so far unknown.

In his catalogue of the collection, Hertz noted that the large blue diamond 'on account of its mounting, could not be placed in the drawer with the diamonds, but is kept in Drawer 16, together with the other extraordinary specimens of this collection' (Hertz, 1839, p. 25). He describes the mount as having 'a border *en arabesque* of small rose diamonds, surrounded by 20 brilliants of equal size, shape, and cutting, and of the finest water, and averaging four grains [1 ct] each'. This was almost certainly the setting in which Henry Thomas Hope displayed the diamond at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London (Figure 15, based on Ellis, 1851, p. 682). James

Tennant's description of the diamond on show in 1851 (Tennant, 1853, p. 86) is almost identical to Hertz's 1839 catalogue entry. Hertz oversaw some simple setting and resetting of some of Hope's gems, so as to best show off the stones, but it seems unlikely that he would be a proponent of mounting the rare blue diamond in such an elaborate form (*Evening Mail*, 4 December 1844, p. 3). The suspicion must be that the mount dates back at least as far as Henry Philip Hope's purchase of the diamond. The style of the mount would certainly allow for a date around 1820.<sup>10</sup>

From the Hope family the large blue diamond made its way through various hands until it reached the National Museum of Natural History, part of the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington DC in 1958 (Figure 1), nearly three centuries after Jean-Baptiste Tavernier had purchased the gem.

## THE EQUATION OF THE HOPE AND THE FRENCH BLUE

There is another interesting revelation in Hertz's court testimony. He said that in 1838 he was negotiating the sale of Hope's large blue diamond, 'the only one of value in the world', to the 'King of France'. The gem was worth £30,000 and Hope 'did not wish to have such a valuable one in his collection'. This raises the question as to whether Hope and Hertz were unaware of the origin of the diamond, or were they knowingly negotiating to repatriate it?

In his 1839 catalogue of the Hope gems, Hertz says of the blue diamond (Hertz, 1839, p. 25):

...we may presume that there exists no cabinet, nor any collection of crown jewels in the world, which can boast of the possession of so curious and fine a gem as the one we are now describing; and we expect to be borne out in our opinion by our readers, since there are extant historical records and treatises on the precious gems, which give us descriptions of all the extraordinary diamonds in the possession of all the crowned heads of Europe, as well as of the princes of Eastern countries. But in vain do we search for any record of a gem which can, in point of curiosity, beauty, and perfection, be compared with this blue brilliant.

We might assume that a diamond expert such as Hertz, acquainted with 'extant historical records and treatises on the precious gems', would have read of Tavernier's large blue gem and known of the famous French Blue, if only from Mawe's mention of it. This is not the first time that Hertz's apparent ignorance of the French Blue has been pointed out. In 1890, Adela Orpen commented that 'Mr. Hertz was no doubt a good jeweller and a clever expert, but he was not very learned in the history of precious stones or he could never have made this astonishing claim' (Orpen, 1890, p. 128). With the benefit of hindsight, it is tempting to see in Hertz's statements that he knew or suspected something of the Hope diamond's history. If Hertz knew Hope's blue diamond to be the stolen French Blue, one would indeed have searched in vain among the crown jewels of Europe for another such stone.

Suspicious that Hope's diamond was the French



**Figure 15:** The drawing on the left illustrates the Hope diamond as it was displayed at the Great Exhibition in 1851, and as described in Hertz (1839), and thus probably as it was when first purchased by Hope. On the right is a computer-generated rendering based on the drawing and description, allowing for the asymmetrical shape of the diamond. Computer rendering by J. Ogden.

<sup>10</sup> Edwin Streeter in the 4th edition of his *Precious Stones and Gems* (1884, facing p. 21) shows the Hope diamond in a pendant mount, superficially similar to that in Figure 15, but certainly not the same.



Blue only appear publicly nearly two decades after the publication of Hertz's Hope catalogue. Charles Barbot, a jeweller, voiced in 1856 'We suspect it, because of its rare perfection, to be the reduction of the blue diamond of France' (Barbot, 1858, p. 269). Barbot may have seen the Hope the previous year when it had been in Paris at the 1855 Exhibition, by then set in a girdle ornament made by the jewellers Hancock of Bruton Street, London (Figure 16). The centre section had the 'celebrated blue Hope diamond, and on each side two very rich rubies'.

Nevertheless, the equation of the Hope with the French Blue had been made prior to 1855 by someone. A lead model of the gem prior to recutting had been donated to the Museum of Natural History in Paris by Mr Achard, a Parisian lapidary who died in 1832 (Farges et al., 2009, p. 11; and F. Farges, pers. comm., 27 October 2018). The museum catalogue entry for 1850 described the blue diamond as remarkable for its clarity and belonging to Mr 'Hoppe' of London (Farges et al., 2009, p. 8). This model played a leading role in the recent recreation of the size and exact cut of the French Blue, and its equation with the Hope, but it has raised as many questions as it has answered. The lead model is a cast made before re-cutting the diamond as the oval brilliant. In theory, it could have been made any time from the late 1600s onwards, but such casts were most typically made when recutting was being planned. One explanation is that Achard recut the French Blue, or it had passed through his hands when its re-cutting was being considered.<sup>11</sup> The mention of 'Hoppe'—presumably Hope—is particularly intriguing, because it shows that Achard knew that the French Blue was now the Hope, but possibly Achard only became aware of its ownership when he recognised it in Hope's collection.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present article fills in some of the missing history of the Hope diamond and offers some new discoveries. Sowerby's painting and comments on it when it was first in London have now been identified, and press accounts and court proceedings have shed further light on Henry Philip Hope's purchase of the gem and mention an 1830s attempt to sell it back to French royalty. Future researchers will no doubt gradually complete more of the history and, hopefully, find out where it was between its theft in 1792 and its reappearance in London in 1812. Until then, as the saying almost goes, it can be as satisfying to travel with the Hope as to arrive.

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**Figure 16:** This drawing of the girdle ornament exhibited by Hancock's of London at the 1855 Paris Exhibition shows the Hope diamond (centre) flanked by two large rubies. From the *Illustrated London News* (Vol. 27, No. 752, 14 July 1855, pp. 51–52).

<sup>11</sup> The use of lead casts of diamonds to plan cutting or recutting is well attested as far back as the Renaissance (Ogden, 2018, pp. 211–212).