

Natural Spinel

Storied Black Prince's Ruby actually top quality spinel

One of the most famous of England's Crown Jewels is the Black Prince's Ruby which we know today is actually spinel! The fascinating history of this stone is chronicled over 27 pages in *Stories About Famous Precious Stones* by Orpen published in 1890. The gem first appears in the fourteenth century in the hands of the Moorish Prince of Granada. Prince Mohammed was fleeing for his life after being dethroned by his brother-in-law and sought refuge from Pedro the Cruel in Seville. The usurper, Abu Said decided it was best to arrange peace with his neighbor and was received in Seville with his numerous attendants (probably not his best decision). The next day, Pedro had them all killed and walked away with the crown jewels including a monstrous 170 carat "ruby"!

When Don Pedro needed help fending off his brother, he enlisted the aid of the Black Prince of Wales with promise of treasures. After defeating Don Pedro's brother, the prince was given the red spinel as a reward and told more would follow (which of course never occurred).

The next time we encounter the famous spinel is on the field of battle at Agincourt in 1415. King Henry V of England is 25 years old

and meeting the French in battle. Following the fashion of the time, Henry adorned his helmet with jewels including the Black Prince's Ruby as a focal piece. During the fight, the Duc d'Alencon struck Henry's helmet a heavy blow with his battle-axe, but the jewel-encrusted crown did its job and Henry continued the fight until support arrived.

Today the Black Prince's Ruby is prominently featured in the

Imperial State Crown, traditionally worn at the conclusion of each coronation ceremony.

Now history is being made again in East Africa. Miners prospecting a farmer's field in Mahenge, Tanzania in 2007 unearthed an enormous red spinel crystal. Weighing in at over 52 kilograms it may be the largest red spinel ever found!

Loosely organized syndicates of small miners funded by local entrepreneurs conduct mining in the alluvial deposits found there. The pyramid shaped rough was discovered by a group of miners at a depth of ten meters. The discovery nearly sparked a riot as hundreds of other diggers moved in for a chance to get rich. Miners who unearth a valuable crystal like this one need to be strong and fast since everybody wants to claim

it. I keep picturing a NFL pile-up on a fumbled football! After escaping into the bush on a motorcycle, the miner and the motorcycle driver were forced to lay low without food and water for several days before making their way on to Morogoro. From there, they traveled on to Arusha to show their rock. The buyer who wishes to remain anonymous said

"when the stone finally arrived, the miner's legs were bloodied from holding the heavy sharp-edged rock on the motorcycle".

The impressive crystal was a vibrant orangey pinkish red color that is considered one of the top colors for spinel. Although most of the crystal was included, it was obvious that significant chunks of clean gem material could be cobbled from it. Even though the yield was low, the sheer size of the rough still translated into several thousand carats of gems.

We have five spinels cut from this massive crystal available for sale now through the end of July. These beautiful gems are truly unusual due to their size and color. Sizes range from four carats to over ten carats and prices range from \$1200 to \$2600 per carat.



Red Spinel in Rose Gold \$835

Red Spinel in 22KT Gold \$765

Purple Spinel and Diamonds in 14KT Gold Pendant \$1200

Red Spinel in 14KT Gold Ring \$490

2.94ct Red Spinel in Yellow, Rose and White gold Mokume Ring \$3400

