

The story of the GOLD 100 medallion

by GRAHAM PINGRAM* and JOHN AUSTIN†

The idea of GOLD 100, an international conference on gold, was first conceived by Mr Les Haughton of Mintek in mid 1984. By the beginning of 1985, plans were well advanced to hold what was to be the most comprehensive conference on gold ever organized. Appropriately, GOLD 100 was timed to coincide with the celebration of Johannesburg's centenary.

The Gift

While the various committees set about their tasks, it fell to the Publicity Committee, chaired by Nigel Desebrock of Intergold, to select a suitable gift or memento that would be given to the delegates as a reminder of the event. Suggestions ranged from briefcases to 'gold nuggets' made of brass. At Nigel's suggestion, the South African Mint was approached about the possibility of minting a gold-plated medallion and, with the support of the Planning and Organizing Committees, the medallion was accepted as being the most suitable object to serve as a gift.

The 'bullion bar' logo for GOLD 100, conceived by Mintek's Graphic Artist, Janina Pechova, was the obvious choice for one side of the coin. A mine headgear was to feature on the obverse of the coin but, at the prompting of Leslie Anne van Niftrik, who later became GOLD 100's public-relations consultant, The Gold Miners were chosen as a more fitting image for a memento of such an important and historic event. The Gold Miners, a statue by David McGregor, stands at the top of Johannesburg's Rissik Street close to the Civic Centre. The statue was presented to the city by the Chamber of Mines of South Africa in 1964, and the three figures with a rock drill held shoulder high dramatically depict the determination and teamwork that have gone towards making the South African gold-mining industry the largest producer of gold in the world.

With this choice of themes, the medallion die was cast. Graham Pingram, the Conference Manager, commissioned a graphic artist to produce an impression of the medallion that could be used on the covers of the 30 000 final circulars and the bound volumes of the proceedings. These circulars and other literature would eventually be sent all over the world.

As the pace of the preparations speeded up, Nigel worked with the Director of the South African Mint, Mr Neels Dannhauser, to finalize the details and costs of the gold-plated medallions. The Mint's artists and die-makers, working from photographs and sketches, set about the exacting and time-consuming task of producing the hardened-steel dies that would be used to strike the gold-plated medallions.

Few realize the precision required and the time-consuming nature of die-making. Copy cutting of the metal

die from a hand-sculpted profile takes 5 days per side, and then these dies have to be hardened before they can be used. A single flaw or machine malfunction can ruin the die, and the whole process must be started again.

The Gold Medallion

In mid July 1986, with preparations approaching their climax, it was clear that the costs of GOLD 100, even with the anticipated attendance, were going to exceed the revenue by a substantial amount. While thoughts turned to the cutting of costs, which at this stage looked almost impossible, John Austin of The South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy had other ideas. Although John was principally involved in producing the bound volumes of the proceedings, he had lent his expertise to many other areas of the Conference. As fund-raising proposals were made, two suggestions made by John stood out as most promising: the minting of a fine-gold medallion, and the sale of covers bearing Johannesburg centenary stamps.



Nigel Desebrock agreed to look at the possibility of minting a fine-gold medallion for sale to collectors and to produce a plan for their marketing. From then on, things moved quickly, and approval for the plan to mint a one-ounce 9999 gold medallion using the same design as the delegates' gift medallion was given by the GOLD 100 Planning Committee.

Time being short, many of the events that led up to the minting of the first gold medallion by the Mint at Gold Reef City on 3rd September, 1986, were unrecorded in the official GOLD 100 minutes. The first major decision was to limit the minting to a maximum of 2500 medallions, and to advertise directly to collectors and

* Formerly of Mintek.

† The South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, P.O. Box 61019, Marshalltown, 2107 Transvaal.

dealers already known to be interested in the Mint's issues. The Department of Customs and Excise was approached to waive the 35 per cent duty commonly applied to non-currency gold items. It was a tense moment because, if duty was applicable, the project would have been uneconomic and it would have been called off. When the certificate of exemption was delivered, the production of the advertising leaflet swung into full gear. Nigel Desebrock emphasized that the distribution of the leaflet must begin no later than 1st September.

Working overnight, the advertising agency produced the copy and the colour impressions of the medallion for the leaflet. In record time, some 35 000 leaflets were printed and on their way to the Mint for distribution. At the request of the Conference Manager, the Mint struck a lead medallion to be used for photographic purposes. This lead medallion was subsequently presented to the SAIMM. It was reassuring for all to see that the 'artist's impressions' of the medallion were accurate.

Negotiations with the Rand Refinery for the 'loan' of 4000 ounces of 9999 gold blanks were successfully concluded by Tom Main, Assistant General Manager of the Chamber of Mines of South Africa. The resources of the Assistant Director of the Mint, Mr E. Labuschagne, and his staff were greatly stretched to ensure that the planned first minting at the Gold Reef City Mint could go

ahead. A special set of dies to fit the machine at Gold Reef City were made for the event.

Not entirely trusting the yet untried dies, the Mint produced a single medallion at its headquarters in Pretoria, which was to be substituted should something go wrong at Gold Reef City. A fine wooden case was also made in which the first medallion struck was presented to the Minister of Finance. With representatives of the press in attendance, all went well, and the GOLD 100 medallion was truly launched. However, the medallion struck at Gold Reef City was not perfect, and that struck in Pretoria was substituted for it. The Gold Reef City medallion was purchased by the SAIMM.

The opening of GOLD 100 on 15th September, 1986, was exactly 100 years to the day from the proclamation of the Witwatersrand goldfields. Since that day, the industry has grown to be the largest producer of gold in the world. It was fitting that the GOLD 100 medallion should depict miners and bullion bars, and that the only gold medallion struck at Gold Reef City should have been minted on the press imported by President Kruger in 1880.

The SAIMM's collection of valuables contains a gift medallion, the lead medallion, and the gold medallion struck at Gold Reef City.

Leaching

The South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy will hold a two-day colloquium on the topic of leaching on 8th and 9th November, 1988, with the objective of bringing the latest developments in leaching technology to the attention of the mineral-processing industry. The Colloquium will be of interest to all metallurgists associated with the industry, including consultants, metallurgical managers, and production, design, and research metallurgists. The Colloquium will be held at Mintek in Randburg.

The programme will comprise the following papers plus two plenary addresses by world authorities in pressure leaching and agitation:

Biological pre-treatment for gold recovery from slimes dams, by E.N. Lawson

Modelling of the bio-oxidation of an arsenopyrite/pyrite concentrate, by D.M. Miller

Pilot-plant bacterial oxidation of an arsenopyrite/pyrite concentrate, by C.M. Olen

Kamyr tower gold-extraction process, by R.H. Murray

The Kamyr carbon-in-leach with oxygen, by M.A. de Ruijter

Heap leaching of a highly oxidized copper orebody, by B.D.A. Paddon

Modelling leaching kinetics, with special reference to varying rate constants, by D.M. Fraser

Galvanic influences during the leaching of gold in cyanide and thiourea solutions, by M.A. Reuter

Alternative oxidizing agents in the leaching of refractory pyrite ores, by D.M. Fraser

The removal of phosphates from fluorspar by acid leaching at Okorusu Fluorspar, Otjiwarongo, SWA/Namibia, by R. Matzapoulos

The mechanical agitation of gold leaching vessels, by W. Baguley

In-stope leaching at Rand Leases No. 6 Shaft using thiourea as lixiviant, by P.J. van Staden

Economic leaching at Rössing Uranium, by C.C. Johnson.

A novel process for the recovery of gold from a dump with a high carbonaceous-material content, by M.W. Johns

The chemistry of the nickel-copper matte leaching process at Rustenburg Refiners, by Z. Hofirek

The oxygenation of pulp streams at the Crown Mines plant of RM3, by T. Stephens

A dynamic uranium leaching model for process control studies, by I.J. Barker

Enquiries should be directed to

Pamela Binstead
SAIMM

P.O. Box 61019
Marshalltown 2107.

Tel. (011) 832-2177. Telex 4-86431.