

GEMMOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA  
GRADUATE PROFILES

*Chris Holdsworth, owner of three retail jewellery shops in Melbourne loves the detective work and excitement of identifying unknown stones.*

**Name:** Chris Holdsworth

**Current job:** Owner of three retail jewellery shops in Melbourne.

**Any other interesting gem jobs before this one?** I've always worked in the family business. I've had enough 'interesting gem jobs' in that role already to last a lifetime.

**GAA study:** Diploma of Gemmology/Certificate IV in Gemmological Studies (1999), Diploma of Diamond Technology (1999), National Council of Jewellery Valuers' Valuers Course, (2001), Synthetic and Gemmology (2004), Advanced Pearl (2004) and Advanced Diamond Grading (2005).

**Any other area of study?** Bachelor of Commerce (1998), Fellow of the Gemmological Association UK (2000), Bachelor of Science, current.

**Why did you choose to study gemmology?** I always thought that I would end up in the family business. It was an easy place to fall into as I had worked there since I was fourteen in one capacity or another. Gemmology was a natural progression and necessary to ensure you knew what you were buying (and selling). There are lots of lesser-known gemstones that you discover are beautiful and knowing about them provides a commercial advantage.

Gemmology is typically about discovery, every day you are given an unknown stone that you need to identify. It can be like detective work using various tests to eliminate possibilities to uncover a stone's true identity. It's precise work and as there is only ever one answer you have to be either right or wrong.

**What do you enjoy most about working in the gem or jewellery industry?** I like to think I'm good at what I do, and I gain a lot of satisfaction from providing an exceptional customer experience over and over again. I enjoy the challenge of ensuring that our staff are well educated and can demonstrate that to potential customers, and I enjoy the challenge of ensuring they are supported by beautiful and high quality jewellery.

**How did the GAA help you in your career?** I think the GAA is a terrific organisation, and one which I am quite involved in as a customer and as a volunteer. Obviously the education side has been of huge benefit, but the greatest help has been in meeting the people. The type of person that becomes involved with the GAA is always someone you want to know. Apart from being very personable they are all experts in their own area and knowing them means there is always someone you can turn to for advice on anything.

**What do you like most about your job?** Spending money. I'm hopeless. I see, I like, I buy. It's probably a dream job for lots of people, a critical part of owning a shop is the selection and purchase of jewellery and gemstones to be sold.

**Any interesting story about a gem or piece of jewellery?** Recently a customer came into the Eastland shop with a half carat diamond solitaire she said we sold her. The diamond was fractured right through the middle and quite understandably she was pretty upset. I was quite concerned and while chatting to her and frantically thinking about what to do in my head I discovered she wanted it replaced free of charge. The request was not out of the question but the ring was in an old style mount that I didn't recognise so I asked if she had a receipt. She did, and we definitely sold it to her at the Eastland shop... in 1981. This diamond wasn't quite forever.

**Career highlight:** There are two achievements of which I am particularly proud, the first was winning the Australia Prize for the best all round Gemmology graduate in 1999, largely because it was in the area closest to my father's heart. The second was the first anniversary of my mother's retirement from the business in which she had handed on the family company to my brother and I, we hadn't sent it broke and had actually opened an additional shop.

**Favourite gem?** I don't have a favourite perse. Gems have so many different properties and I admire these qualities individually. Diamonds cut can be very beautiful and symmetrical, the star effect in some sapphire, the electric blue colour of Pariba tourmaline, the colour flash and patterns in opal.

**Dream job?** I would love to be one of the guys on Mythbusters. Not only do you get to be on telly each week, but you get to do it conducting all kinds of science experiments that usually end up with a large explosion.