

## A A THORNTON

Over the past months I have written about important aspects of Diamonds commonly known as the 4 Cs. I have looked at Colour, Cut and Clarity so this month I am going to talk about Carat. Carat, or more accurately Carat Weight, is the unit of measurement of the size or weight of the stone.

Historically early traders used the seeds of the Carob or Locust tree as a standard unit of weight, as these seeds were both light and had a reputation for having a uniform weight. The word Carat has therefore evolved from the word Carob Seed. It would come as no surprise that for centuries carat weights differed slightly from market to market. So to overcome this, in 1913 the United States adopted the metric carat of 200 milligrams (0.2 grams), a standard that was subsequently followed by the principle countries of the world. The weight of any loose diamond is comparatively easy to obtain by



weighing it on a very accurate set of scales, but the weight of a diamond that is set into a piece of jewellery can only

be estimated by the use of specialist gauges.

Most diamonds are smaller than one carat so the measurement is divided into 100 points, a point being about the weight of three fine breadcrumbs. I don't think a breadcrumb has ever been used as a standard of measurement, but what this illustrates is that diamonds must be weighed very carefully as even a breath of air can tip the sensitive scale. More importantly if you therefore hear of a diamond being described as 50 points it is ½ a Carat Weight.

This is indeed quite relevant as it is interesting to note that only twenty per cent of the total world rough gems are capable of being cut into gem production, and the majority of diamonds mined are under a quarter of a carat (25 points). Furthermore out of an annual production of more than 100 million carats world wide, only 1% of all finished diamonds are actually over one carat in weight.

Clearly exceptionally big stones are indeed very rare. The Cullinan Diamond, part of the British Crown Jewels, was the largest gem quality rough diamond ever found at 3,106.75 carats. One of the diamonds cut from it in 1985 was the Golden Jubilee, a 545.67 carat yellow brown diamond.

More recent news is the reported discovery on August 28th 2007, of a giant gem, 7,000 carat, which makes it more than twice the size of the Cullinan Diamond and about the size of a coconut. The reported find by a

small South African mining company has, I understand, yet to be confirmed but it still makes exciting reading!

Returning to diamonds that you and I may wear, these are usually priced on a per carat basis, accordingly to its size and quality. As already mentioned Diamonds of a larger size are not often found which this makes them rarer and therefore more valuable. The value per carat tends to rise with the carat weight so a 2 carat diamond would be worth more than twice that of a 1 carat stone of the same quality.

I hope that these few words have in a light hearted way thrown a little light on the concept of the 4th C, Carat Weight. But before I finish of I would like to quickly consider where over the past few months Cut, Clarity, Colour and Carat has led us to. Buying diamonds is always an exciting event and often a very emotional one. The significance of diamonds in our society is that of a powerful symbol of



love and of a promise that means forever. Diamonds can also be a status symbol or a fashion statement, but whatever your motivation to buy, you need to feel the piece of diamond jewellery you

choose fulfils all your desires. Cut, Clarity, Colour and Carat as we have seen bring with them a bewildering range of nature's variables. Bringing all these together requires a 5th C, Confidence. Confidence is not something that you find in a shop window but is unique to the group of people who are helping you find the Diamond Jewellery that you will treasure. It has always been my aim that we at AA Thornton can give you that confidence.

"He who purchases a diamond purchases a fragment of eternity. She who adorns herself with a diamond adorns herself with the pure rays of creation's dawn." Ancient Hindu writing

If you have found this series of articles has wetted your appetite to find out more about diamonds we have our own 10 page booklet "A Guide to Diamonds". You are more than welcome to a copy so please call in to see us in the High Street, Kettering. We have also just revamped our website [www.aathorntonjeweller.com](http://www.aathorntonjeweller.com) where you will find this series of articles together with those on other gemstones and much more so please do take a look.

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