



# SYDNEY SHELLER

Newsletter of the Shell Club of Sydney  
NSW Branch, The Malacological Society of Australasia Limited ACN 067 894 848

## Next Meetings:

**24<sup>th</sup> March 2007**  
(1.30pm for 2pm – 4pm)

**28<sup>th</sup> April 2007**  
(1.30pm for 2pm – 4pm)  
**Ron Moylan - Paris Shell Show**  
**Ken Graham - Introduction**

(normally 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday)

**Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club**  
117 Ryedale Rd, West Ryde, Sydney

View old shell newsletters on line  
[www.sydneyshellclub.net](http://www.sydneyshellclub.net)

## Submit articles or ads:

**Steve Dean**  
PO Box 316, Mona Vale, NSW 1660  
Text by disk or email only. Photos, and  
disks by mail, or preferably by email to  
[steve@dean.as](mailto:steve@dean.as)

## Club Executive:

### Office bearers:

President: John Franklin  
Vice Pres: Maureen Anderson  
Treasurer: Peter Pienaar  
Secretary: Kim Bishop  
Raffles: Kim Bishop  
Sheller Editor: Steve Dean  
Librarian: Steve Dean  
Annual Shell Show Mgr: Steve Dean  
Special Projects Mgr: John Dunkerley

## Shell Club of Sydney Mission Statement:

To appreciate, understand and  
preserve shells and their environment  
and to share this with others.

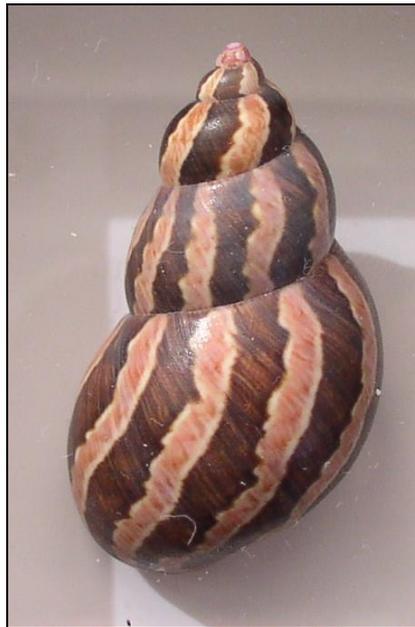


## More of the October 2006 “Shell of the Show” Exhibits:



*Cypraea hartsmithi*  
Schilder, 1967

A rare species with few known specimens. Near Green Point, NSW.  
12m on kelp covered rocks. A Hawke 2006



*Phasianella ventricosa*  
Swainson, 1822

Toowoan Bay, NSW. Intertidal amongst rocks

## Some of the topics inside:

- Annual Shell Show 2006 (Cover photo)
- Minutes
- 2006 Shell Show Pictures and Results
- Shell Money



Zoning Plan Submissions



VISITING – PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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## Meeting Minutes - 25th November 2006.

**Meeting opened:** 2pm

**Finance:** The Treasurer reported on the clubs' finances and the current financial membership.

**26th Annual Shell Show:** The shell show manager reported on the high quality of exhibits produced by members at the show. For the first time the COA Award sponsored by COA, USA and this first Award was won by Maureen Anderson. Trevor Appleton was a close second.

**7th National Shell Show:** It was noted that the next National Shell Show will be held at Newmarket, Brisbane in March 2008.

**New Zealand Shell Show:** Members noted that the New Zealand Shell Show will be held in late January 2007 and it was noted that both Ron and Peter will be attending.

**Christmas Party:** There was discussion concerning whether or not a Christmas Party should be held this year and it was resolved that a party should be held.

**Guest Speaker:** Mr. Phil. Colman was the invited guest speaker and he discussed his excursions to many parts of Australia and overseas on behalf of the Australian Museum, in addition Phil spoke about his involvement with the Long Reef Reserve area and at the conclusion of his talk members expressed their appreciation for his fine efforts in presenting the talk.

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## Meeting Minutes - 27th January 2007

**Meeting Opened:** 2pm by Maureen Anderson

**Apologies:** Ron Moylan, Peter Pienaar, Bob Snedic, John Franklin and Andrea Ruhl

**Finance:** No report – our treasurer is at the NZ shell show

**Field Trips:** Kim reported on shell observations he, Steve and Rob had done along Sydney's Northern Beaches a week ago, plus snorkelling over weed beds in Pittwater, and wading through Mangroves at Careel Bay. Not too many shells observed. (*Cypraea caputserpentis*, *Cypraea erosa*, *Phalium labiatum* (live and dead), *Mitra carbonara* and of course many *Turbo militaris*, *Turbo torquatus*, *Turbo undulatus*, *Australium tentiformis*, *Cabestana spengleri*, *Ranella Australasia* and *Thyas orbata*, and from the mangroves the tree climbing *Littoraria luteola*). One interesting find was murex *Phyllocoma speciosa* with striking colour patters.

**Librarian:** No new books. However all books are in order and available for member borrowing. We do get new shell newsletters from all shelling bodies around Australia and NZ. Steve recommended members borrow back issues of newsletters of other shell clubs from our library as they are interesting and informative. Several recent issues were tabled and immediately borrowed.

**New Shells Acquisitions:** None

**General Business:** It was suggested that our club become a member of the COA and get its quarterly publication as well – since it is not expensive. The meeting approved this suggestion.

### Members Talks:

**Ashley Miskelly** brought in a large box of unusual urchins and shells dived from Botany Bay including *Tylospira scutulata* and *Amoria undulata*. One of the interesting overseas urchins Ashley showed us was a "soft shelled urchin" with a test that goes flat once dead.

**Chris Barnes** (and family) reported on a holiday in Northern NSW. Their finds included *Conus chaldaeus* and *Conus textile*. In fact a fisherman with local knowledge told them of a spot where there was a colony of Textile cones. Chris did not believe it, but at this location Chris observed large numbers of mature *Conus textile* all over the rock platform and adjacent sand areas at night. The cones were hunting, making it very unsafe to walk on the platform without thick boots. Fishermen beware. Chris had a large selection of other interesting tropical shells that had been living 'south of the border'. He found a murex *Maculotriton serriale* almost double the size of ones normally seen along the NSW coast.

**Guest Speaker:** Sandra Montague gave a very interesting talk on the history of money including, but not limited to, the use of shells as money. (See article in this Sheller). Members found it most interesting that leather was also used as money, and that the Chinese were so far ahead of Europeans.

**Meeting Closed:** 4.00pm



## Meeting Minutes - 24th February 2007

**Meeting Opened:** 2pm

**Finance:** The Treasurer reported on the current status of membership.

**Field Trips:** The President reported on his recent trip to the Cook Islands. It was reported that contrary belief there are in excess of 500 shells spread throughout the vast area which comprises the Group of 13 islands. Both Ron and Peter reported on their visits to Wellington New Zealand for the N.Z. National Shell Show which took place on 27th -28th January 2007. Our relatively new members Kim and Bob reported on their diving trip to Bungan Head.

**General Business:** The President reported that he had received a letter from the RELC advising that renovations will shortly take place within the Club premises and further that the costs of tea and coffee will in future slightly increase.

**27th Annual Shell Show:** The general format of the next Shell show was discussed.

5. Trevor Appleton attended the meeting and reported on the forthcoming 7th National Shell Show in Brisbane on 7-9 March 2008. Trevor distributed programs to members.

6. Steve Dean presented a very interesting talk on the family Turbinidae and at the conclusion of the talk members thanked Steve for a much appreciated discussion on a rather complex family.

**Meeting Closed:** 4.00pm

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## Zoning Plans: Port Stephens and Bateman's Bay:

The Club recently discussed the intended Zoning Plans for Port Stephens and Bateman's Bay and subsequently our President wrote submissions on behalf of the Club to both Authorities dealing with the Plans. Full credit to Jack Hannon who initially prepared the submissions which were sent off with only minor amendments.

Following receipt of the Port Stephens submission, Mr Max Haste the co-ordinator telephoned our President to advise that our submission has been accepted in relation to the number of live specimens taken i.e. up to five, which will now conform to the requirements existing for the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

However final approval had to be obtained before there can be any certainty. It is anticipated that the Zoning Regulations will be available within the next six weeks and at that time we shall further advise members.

Our Presidents submission appears below:

"The planning Officer,  
Bateman Marine Park  
P O Box 341  
Narooma NSW. 2546  
22<sup>nd</sup> September 2006

Dear Mr Haste,

On behalf of members of the New South Wales Branch, of the Malacological Society of Australasia I wish to express our views with respect to the Draft Zoning in so far as it relates to the recreational collection of Molluscs.

Marine Parks in NSW have to date failed to recognize shell collecting as an activity.

In most cases, any recreational collection for live molluscs in Habitat Protection Zones has been restricted to a list of "bait and food" species. While less restrictive rules may have applied in General Use Zones, these zones have almost invariably been far removed from the areas (generally rocky reef) that provide the best shell collecting.

Another major problem is that "bait and food" lists have invariably excluded those mollusc families of most interest to recreational shell collectors, such as families containing cypraeidae, conidae, volutidae and muricidae etc.

Furthermore the seemingly ridiculous situation exists of the requirement that a permit is required to collect dead (empty) molluscs. It is submitted that there is no scientific evidence to suggest that the taking of dead (empty) shells harms the habitat or environment. Given the length of the New South Wales coastline and the minute loss of calcium carbonate, it is our view that this restrictive policy should be amended to allow unrestricted collecting of dead (empty) shells in any area along the coastline.



When examining the situation elsewhere a direct conflict arises if a comparison of policies/legislation as they exist in this state is made with say the Great Marine Reef Marine Park,, where live molluscs of almost all types may be collected within the same zones where angling and spear fishing are allowed. The conflict is that up to five specimens of each species can be taken. Only a select group of threatened/vulnerable species are excluded e.g. Giant clams, trumpet shells and giant helmet shells.

In order to assist I make the following submissions.

1. That the recreational collection of live molluscs should be allowed within Habitat Protection Zones and General use Zones on the following basis:

- a. Other than those species on a "bait and food" list, up to two specimens of any species may be taken-which is much less than existing limits under Fisheries legislation;
- b. That the only exceptions should be for species officially listed as threatened by the scientific committee charged with considering nominations for such listings; and
- c. That only recreational collecting methods, as permitted under Fisheries legislation, are allowed-with use of any additional methods requiring a permit from the Marine Parks Authority.

In support of the abovementioned submissions on behalf of our members I say:

Many of the considerable variety of collectable molluscs occurring in the Park, e.g. cowries have a wide tropical distribution that provides resilience against any local collection or environmental perturbations, such species simply recruit from unaffected areas via the plankton. Even those species that lack such dispersive larval stages e.g. Volutes tend to occur over vast areas of deep sandy habitat - meaning that any collecting effort can really only "touch the edges" of their populations.

In all cases, "collectable" molluscs are cryptic by nature (either hiding amongst rocks or burying in the sand) and it would be almost impossible to greatly reduce their populations by recreational collecting methods under the above suggested guidelines.

2. Collection of dead shells Submission;

That the collection of dead (empty) shells should be allowed in Habitat Protection and General Use Zones without a permit.

On behalf of members I say that the collection of dead shells, particularly from beaches, is a common family activity that simply does not need to be regulated in this way.

It is recognized that some empty shells provide habitat for hermit crabs, algae and other marine life. We are of the view that those collecting dead shells do not significantly impinge on the pool of habitat-available dead shells in the environment.

The collectors of dead shells fall into two categories:

- a. Those who pick up dead shells off a beach-mostly families. And,
- b. Serious collectors who are lucky enough to find (say) an empty cowrie or volute in good condition.

As to (a) collectors in this category are taking shells that have by and large been removed from the stable marine environment-having been tossed up on beaches and subjected to heavy sand and wave action. Very few of these shells would under natural conditions become available for growing algae or wandering hermit crabs.

As to (b) Collectors look for shells in good condition-realistically only a tiny fraction of the total number of dead shells that might be available in the area. Once found and removed from the environment, there would be still be plenty of others available for the biota.

Kindly acknowledge receipt and advise.

Yours faithfully  
JOHN FRANKLIN  
President."

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## Pictures from our October 2006 Shell Show

The following pages show some of the exhibits from our annual show:

Note pictures of the winning COA entry, and the shell of the show winner, appeared in the previous Sheller issue.



# The Sydney Sheller



# The Sydney Sheller



# The Sydney Sheller



# The Sydney Sheller



## Twenty Sixth NSW Shell Show 2006 – Results

| No. | Category                            | 1st Place            | 2nd Place        | 3rd Place     |
|-----|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1   | Shell of Show                       | Debra Phillis        | Angus Hawke      | Angus Hawke   |
| 3   | Conidae                             | Ron Moylan           | John Franklin    | Peter Pienaar |
| 4   | Cypraeidae                          | Ron Moylan           | Chris Barnes     | John Franklin |
| 5   | Muricidae                           | Ron Moylan           |                  |               |
| 6   | Volutidae                           | Ron Moylan           | Trevor Appleton  | Peter Pienaar |
| 7   | Zoila                               | Ron Moylan           |                  |               |
| 8   | Harpidae (Morums optional)          | Steve Dean           | Maureen Anderson |               |
| 9   | Mitridae & Costellariidae           | Steve Dean           | Ron Moylan       |               |
| 10  | Olividae                            | Chris Barnes         |                  |               |
| 11  | Strombidae                          | Maureen Anderson     | Steve Dean       |               |
| 12  | Bivalva                             | Steve Dean           |                  |               |
| 13  | Shells 5 species - 4 of each        | Kim Bishop           |                  |               |
| 15  | Junior Miscellaneous (to age 15)    | Ambrose Taut-Phillis |                  |               |
| 16  | Shells from Sydney Region any depth | Kim Bishop           | Chris Barnes     | Jack Hannan   |
| 17  | Conchologists of America Award      | Maureen Anderson     | Trevor Appleton  |               |



## Shell Money – and Assorted Trivia (Talk given at our January Meeting)

### Sandra Montague

Barter is defined as the exchange of goods and services for mutual advantage, and may date back to the beginning of humankind.

9,000-6,000BC – the currency of barter was mainly cattle, sheep, and camels. Gradually grains were grown and came to hold a place in trade as well.

1,200BC heralds the first known use of Cowries (*Cypraea moneta*) as trade money. From the shallow Pacific and Indian Oceans, cowries were brought to China for barter. Shells would be either collected loosely, or in strands. Cowries have been found in Stone Age sites throughout China. Mother of pearl and tortoiseshell, were also popular in China.

1,000BC saw the introduction of Bronze and copper cowrie imitations, made in China (naturally) at the end of the Stone Age. These metal “cowries” were some of the earliest forms of metal coins. Gradually the coins were formed into round shapes, then with holes in the centre, they could be strung together on a chain.

500BC saw the first coins outside China made out of lumps of silver.

118BC saw China lead the way again with leather money (one foot square pieces of white deerskin with colourful borders). These were the precursors of banknotes!

Australian aboriginal tribes were more individualistic in their choice of shells for barter, and many a tribe would not accept shells from another group as being of any value.

South Pacific and African cowrie shells were used as money throughout the centuries.

In Santa Cruz, in the Solomon Islands, the feathers of hundreds of honey eater birds were attached to short sticks to make red feather stick money. New Guinea used dog teeth, whilst in the Marshall Islands fish hooks were commonly used for trade.

Ancient China also compressed tea leaves into “bricks” whilst the Russians used compressed cheese as their early currency.

The influence of cowrie money was such that the first oval metal coin minted in the Greek colony of Lydia around 670BC was modelled after the *Cypraea*.

The Egyptians considered the cowrie to be magical; they also used the cowrie for foreign exchange. Archaeologists have excavated millions of them in tombs of the Pharaohs.

In the thirteenth century, cowrie shells were brought to Africa from the Maldives by Arab traders. The shells were used for trade, payment for fines, divination, funerals, initiation rituals, decorations and to enhance furniture.

The slave trade was the impetus for almost universal use of the cowrie as coinage. Cowries from the Maldives, Ceylon, Borneo and other East Indian islands, were sold in Africa for huge profits – sometimes the mark-up was as much as 500%. Slaves were being bought and sold throughout the Moslem world – and later, with the discovery of the New World, shipped out to America as well.

*Cypraea* currency, by the mid nineteenth century, was to be found from Timbuktu to the east coast of Africa. Huge shipments of the shell were sent to England and the Continent, for the ship owners and traders to export back to Africa for purchase of “black gold” – slaves.





In Bengal, almost four thousand cowries equalled one rupee. By the middle of the eighteenth century approximately 400 million cowries were being traded per year, mostly for the purchase of, and shipment of slaves. Inflation hit, as it usually does – so that one hundred years later, it could take up to 100,000 cowries to buy one young wife in Africa. Trouble also arose with the devaluation of the cowrie currency by the flooding of the market with inferior cowrie supplied by Moslem traders from Zanzibar. Thousands of tons of poorer quality cowrie heralded the decline of cowrie currency.

In some remote African villages, it was still in use, though, as late as 1960, as the accepted currency of the locality.

In the Colonial age, hemp, corn, gunpowder, musket balls and tobacco were also used as a major source of trade money. In America, from 1535 wampum, a string of beads made from clam shells, was in use as coinage by the North American Indians. Between 1637 and 1661, the early American colonists had been expected by the British Crown to trade cut timber and tobacco in exchange for their food and other necessities with merchants. Metal coinage was in short supply – and there was not enough cash to export to the colonies. The settlers fell to using wampum as their own trade money. Wampum was even accepted by a British merchant bank during this period for payment! It was not until 1661 that improved minting of coinage permitted shipping of currency in sufficient quantities to the New World.

Wampum was different things to different tribes. Some favoured the use of Dentalia; or thick-shelled clams; and whelks; to make wampum. Broken pieces were strung into lengths for trade.

Similar examples of money strands are the diwara in New Guinea, rongo in the Melanesian Islands, and sapisapi in Africa.

The Aztecs paid shell tributes to the Emperor Montezuma.

Ancient Phoenician coins, found throughout the Mediterranean world, were sculptured in the likeness of the scallop, murex, and triton shell.

Curiously, in the 1770's, the Governor of the territory of Tennessee was paid a salary of 1,000 deerskins per annum; his secretary received 500 raccoon skins.

In Yap, shell money was one of their five currencies. Its value was determined by the difficulty of acquisition; availability; and desirability.

In the Solomon Islands, shell and feather money is still widely employed as a means of barter or exchange. Shell beads are made from red-lipped spondylus, small white mussels (kakadu), and black-lip pearl shells (kurila). The shell discs are pierced and strung in descending values of colour – red, orange, brown, black and white. The smaller beads, being the most difficult to make, are the more prized.

As the twentieth century ends, in New Britain they are phasing in the first Tolai shell money exchange. This first legal Tolai money exchange or bank was launched in Rabaul. The government now recognizes a dual currency in the area – and will convert shell money into PNG currency, or vice versa. Under the exchange, the rate of one fathom (approximately an arm length) will be equivalent to Kina 4. Tabu strings (Tolai shell money) play a part in family life and ceremonies in New Britain.

So the days of shell money are not gone – the heritage lingers. The Gold Standard only lasted from 1816 to 1930 – who knows how long shell currency will continue!