August 2008 - September 2008

SYDNEY SHELLER

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

Next Meetings:

Oct 08 Shell Show

Nov 08 Unusual Sydney Shells – Chris Barnes
(1.30pm for 2pm – 4pm)

Followed by:
Annual Club Dinner
(normally 4th Saturday)

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

View old shell newsletters on line
www.sydneyshellclub.net

Submit articles or ads:

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Text by disk or email only. Photos, and disks by mail, or preferably by email to
steve@dean.as

Club Executive:

Office bearers:

President: Steve Dean
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: Vacant
MSA Delegate: Chris Barnes

Shell Club of Sydney Mission Statement:

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

Amalda venedei herlaari trawled in 300m Sahul Shelf, Arafura Sea, Northern Territory. Donated to the club meeting by John Oakman

Trigonostoma milleri Panama 25m in mud
Winner most impressive Cancellariidae
Steve Dean

Some of the topics inside:

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Campbelltown, NSW
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Note: The Sydney Shell Club is a branch of the Malacological Society of Australasia (MSA) It is preferred that you are also a member of the MSA. MSA membership can be organised through Des Beechey
desbee@optushome.com.au
26 Malga Ave, Roseville Chase NSW 2069

Shells on Stamps – shell meeting talk

Peter Pienaar

I first started collecting shells on stamps when I bought a collection of stamps at a shell show. I thought stamps would be a logical supplement to my hobby which is conchology. The stamps turned out to be mostly useless as they were faded from exposure to sunlight and that only became apparent to me when I started to collect new stamps.

The first shell on a postage stamp was in 1859, when the Bahamas issued a stamp featuring a stylised drawing of the Queen conch (***Strombus gigas***) on it. This stamp in good condition is worth in the region of $10,000 at the moment and is most certainly missing from my collection! The stamps up to 1950 all featured crude drawings of shells, mostly the Queen conch, when Ryukyu, a chain of islands between Japan & Taiwan (Okinawa is one of them) issued the first stamp with detailed shells on it. The 5 yen stamp featured a spider conch, a stromb and a pecten. ***(Strombus luhuanus, Lambis lambis*** and ***Decatopecten radula***)

The most featured shell on stamps remains the Queen conch followed by the sinistral form of the Indian Chank (***Turbinella pyrum***). Popular families are cone shells, cowries and land snails. There are roughly 5500 stamps which have a mollusc connection of some sort on them.

What constitutes a shell on a stamp? Well, it should really say Molluscs on stamps. Molluscs on stamps consist of the following main groups:

Gastropods, which are snails, both marine and land.
Bivalves such as Scallops, Clams, oysters.
Cephalapods, which include octopus and squid, (eg pearly nautilus and paper nautilus).
Nudibranchs and sea slugs that have internal shells, if any.

The stamps themselves may have only a single shell on them or a number of shells such as the Cook Islands 1972 $4.00 stamp. The shell may be a drawing a representation or a photograph. In many instances, shells are only incidental to the stamp for example the 1981 Royal Wedding Omnibus series where a scallop appears in the border. Another example is the 1969 Dubai fish stamps issue which has shells as a border. An extreme example is the 1972 Australian Country Womans Association stamp which shows a cameo. The shell connection is that the cameo comes from the Bull Mouth Helmet (***Cypreacassis rufa***)! Fossils also feature, mainly ammonites.

Shells on stamps from Australia are rather disappointing. The earliest stamp issued was in 1936 which featured Amphitrite* standing on a scallop. This stamp commemorates the laying of a submarine cable to Tasmania. The most recent stamp issued was in 2006 showing an octopus (***Hapalochaena lunulata***) and is part of the Dangerous Australians issue. No more than 30 stamps with shells have been issued by Australia. One wonders why Australia does not issue stamps featuring our unique Volutes, Zoila and Umbilia cowries. There are however many issues of shells on stamps from the Australian dependencies such as Cocos Keeling islands and Christmas Island, but they feature common Indo Pacific species. Small countries such as the Maldives Islands, Solomon Islands and many African countries issue tons of topical stamps, the sale of which forms an important part of their GDP.

Most stamps are inexpensive, easy to obtain and can be sourced from stamp dealers, auction houses and internet sites such as EBay and Delcampe.

There is not a lot of reference material available. The "Bible" would be the Stanley Gibbons "Collect Shells on Stamps" which catalogues stamps up to 1995. After that, information may be gleaned from Guido Poppe's website and a CD ROM which may be obtained from Tom Walker (The author of the Stanley Gibbons publication) at a cost of US40.00. This CD ROM goes up to 2007.

There are no dedicated Shells on Stamp Clubs that I know of, but there is the Thematic Society of Australia in Epping in Sydney where you can meet other topical stamp collectors.

** Amphitrite is the Greek mythological Queen of the Sea. She was the daughter of Nereus, and a wife of Poseidon, and Mother of Triton. Thank you Google!*

Editor: During his talk Peter showed us albums containing over 50% of all the stamps from all countries that have had shells on them. He only started seriously collecting shell stamps three months ago, clearly showing that with effort it is indeed easy to gain an extensive specialist stamp collection.

Meeting Minutes – 26th July 08

Meeting Opened by Steve Dean at 2.14pm

Apologies: Kim Bishop

Finance: Account balance tabled

President: Nothing to report since the AGM report

Sheller: 3/4 Sheller issues completed and issued to members. Members will also receive PDF copies of recent Sheller's and will be asked if they can forgo the printed copies. Hopefully around 50% of members will no longer require printed copies. Future Shellers will be printed on Inkjet printer rather than laser. This will produce higher quality images but will double or triple production costs, so hopefully having to print and post less copies will keep total production costs about where they are now.

Library: No new books.

Upcoming events; New Publications; Other Reports: None

Field Trips:

- Ron reported on Keppel Bay Shell Show.
- Jack reported on the Townsville shell show – exhibits excellent quality
- Jack reported on his trip from Mackay to Townsville with his son from USA joining the trip.

  Dingo Beach: ***Strombus aratrum, Strombus campbelli, Strombus canarium. Strombus luhuanus,*** Live ***Cypraea walkeri, Conus textile, Voluta melo melo,*** and three species of sand dollars

  Magnetic Island: Recommend West side of Island. ***Cypraea tigris, Cypraea lynx, Cypraea mappa***, assorted other Cypraea, ***Angaria delphinus, Oliva oliva, Oliva annulata, Terebra subulata*** At Horseshoe Bay, Murex ***Chicoreus microphyllus*** (got to collecting location by surf ski), assorted bivalves & Cypraea.
- Ashley reported on a research trip to Ningaloo Reef WA. Researchers doing a species survey update around Australia. (Researchers from various museums around Australia, including Malacologists – Ashley's job is to catalogue the ecinoderms.) They had 2 charter boats, and had 2 dives per day. Permits were from the QLD museum. Ashley sowed photos of the various urchins. He also observed lots of ***Cypraea helvolva*** living in clusters, ***Cypraea caputserpentis*** and many other common Cypraea species, ***Amoria turneri***, ***Voluta nivosa, Syrinx aruanus*** (not huge), ***Melo amphora*** and numerous hear urchin and sand dollar species.

New Acquisitions: Ron showed a ***Zoila friendii thalamega*** with a very unusual colour form. Ashley showed a ***Cyrtulus serotinus*** from the Marquesas Is (Only living species in the Genus) Ashley tabled a very large shell of ***Umbraculum sp***. along with photo of the live specimen. Neither the shell nor the picture of the live animal appeared to by the same as ***Umbraculum umbraculum*** from NSW.

General Business: Jack raised the possibility of acquiring a shell dredge for the NSW branch. It was decided to start the process by investigating licence requirements, and what sort of research we may need to engage in.

Meeting Closed at 3.45pm Followed by afternoon tea and presentation.

Member presentation on Cypraeidae, led by Bob Snedic.

Meeting Minutes – 23rd August 2008

The President, Steve Dean, opened the meeting at 2.15pm.

Attendance Steve Dean, Maureen Anderson**,** Peter Pienaar, Ron Moylan, Keith Dean, Steve Jones, John Oakman (from Darwin) and Kim Bishop.

Visitors Sandra Lauer and Graham Rigg.

Apologies were received from Sandra Montague, Jack Hannan, John Franklin, Chris Barnes, Bob Snedic and Michael Heigh.

Correspondence
A letter was tabled from Catherine McCamley, wife of life member Frank McCamley.
Correspondence was received from Michael Heigh advising that he hoped to be able to attend regular meetings again shortly.
An email was tabled from a resident of Cairns and the enquiry will be referred to Barbara Collins in Cairns.
A letter from Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club was tabled regarding a room being made available for the October Shell Show.
An invoice dated 26 July 2008 from Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club for provision of tea and coffee for the 26 July 2008 meeting was tabled. A receipt is held by the Treasurer for this payment. After a discussion it was agreed that the Treasurer would make arrangements with the Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club to pay for tea and coffee annually rather than monthly.

Finance
Bank account balance currently $2,986.48 reported by Treasurer, Peter Pienaar. Only 12 members have so far paid their June 08 annual membership (for July 08 to June 09)

President's Report Nil .

Sydney Sheller
Steve Dean reported that he had replaced the printer with a new ink jet printer and is able to economically purchase ink refills from the US and will be able to print on a higher grade of paper. Submissions for the next issue due for publication in the next one to two months are welcome.

Library
As discussed in our June 2008 meeting the new book Encylopedia of Marine Gastropods by Alain Robin has been ordered and will be a valuable addition to our library shortly. Our library does not have a reference set of old Sydney Shellers (first issue in June/July 1979 through to June 1998 issue) Donations welcome from anyone with spares.

Coming Events
Maureen and Noel Anderson leave for an around the world trip tomorrow, visiting Hawaii and the UK among other places. We wish them a safe trip and look forward to Maureen's report upon their return.

Other Reports Nil.

Field Trips, Shows and Club Visits
Ron Moylan advised of his intention to take a diving trip to the Coral Sea in September.

Acquisitions
Steve Dean reported that he had recently acquired a number of new Cancellariidae.

John Oakman showed a number of deep water olives ***Amalda venedei herlaari*** trawled in 300m Sahul Shelf, Arafura Sea, Northern Territory. He then passed them around so members could each have a couple - free.

General Business
Steve Dean reported the following:
- That he had received an email from Jack Hannan advising that he was investigating the possibility of obtaining approval for dredging off the NSW coast under a Section 37 Miscellaneous Collection Permit issued by the NSW Department of Primary Industries.
- Renewal reminders for membership will be sent with the next issue of Sydney Sheller.
- That the shell collection being offered recently by the Deniliquin Council has been sold for $500 to an unknown party.
- That Lithgow Council is seeking advice about how to clean and value shells as they had recently been given a large collection that they want to add to their museum.

Visiting member John Oakman from Darwin provided an insight into collecting shells in and around Darwin. John displayed a number of interesting shells from Northern Territory including some newly named shells from Indonesia.

Visitor, Graham Rigg, a retired merchant seaman who worked on the Jabiru Oil Field on drill ship the M.V. Geodrill spoke about his experience and displayed a number of sub-fossil shells found in drilling samples from 100m beneath the sea floor in the Gulf of Carpentaria 1984.

Raffle
First Prize: Keith Dean, Second Prize: Peter Pienaar and Third Prize: Kim Bishop.

The meeting closed at 3.30pm, followed by.

Presentation
An interesting presentation followed by Steve Dean on the Cancellariidae family.

Winner of Largest Cancellariidae ***C. Cooperi***, and ***C solida*** John Oakman

Winner of Smallest Cancellariidae ***C clavatula*** Steve Dean

Winner most impressive ***Trigonostoma milleri*** Steve Dean (front cover)

Shell collecting boot camp – Queensland Style

Jack Hannan

With my son coming over for a holiday from America, the question turned to “what would we do?” Given the choice of going skiing, exploring Northern NSW, or going up to Queensland a few days ahead of a planned family trip for some “serious shell collecting”, my son Stephen a bit surprisingly chose the last option. Sure he’d been collecting before up near Cairns with some success, but this would be different: 3 days, 3 very low tides and both Dingo Beach and Magnetic Island to explore.

With almost military precision it was off the plane and into the rental car at Proserpine (Whitsunday Coast) for the half hour drive out to Dingo Beach. I remembered what my NSW Fisheries boss once said when it came to sampling on the tides: “better to be an hour early than a minute late” – which is even truer when it comes to finding shells out on the vast flats off Dingo Beach. Once at the beach, I gratefully recalled the local advice of Glenda from the Townsville Shell Club and the tips from Ron Moylan and others: “head right”; “go out as far as you can” and “investigate any bumps or cracks in the sand”. My main quarry was the beautiful ***Strombus aratrum***, but I was well aware that all sorts of other interesting species might be found.

With a great deal of excitement I strode out onto the flats with Stephen close behind. I quickly realised that this wasn’t going to be easy, with an almost infinite number of bumps and cracks to potentially investigate and a range of microhabitats with combinations of standing water, sand, mud, weed and rubble to consider. Keen as my eyesight may be, for quite a while I could only find old crabbed ***Strombus luhuanus***, a few bivalves and lots of lovely sand dollars. But we pressed on, noticing some people in the distance who looked like they were collecting. Presently, I began to notice a greater variety of crabbed molluscs, and then a small piece of what I recognised to be the inner coils of a ***Strombus aratrum*** – and

then another, and then a worn whole specimen…. we were getting close. We caught up with the people and quickly discovered that they were local collectors and doing quite well – and much to my envy one of them already had a lovely live ***S. aratrum***, a couple of nice ***Terebra subulata*** and numerous other species. Frustration was beginning to creep in as I noticed the locals efficiently check and prod likely bumps and cracks using long metal probes. However, this was somewhat alleviated by my finding a couple of quite reasonable crabbed ***S. aratrum*** and an excellent baler shell ***Melo amphora***

"A good sized crabbed specimen of ***S. aratrum*** found at Dingo Beach"

"An excellent baler shell (***Melo amphora***) found exposed at low tide -
while still quite common, these large molluscs should only be collected very selectively"

The next day we came back, first going around to nearby Hideaway Bay. The habitat here was very different, with lots of clean coral reef. There were quite a few of the more common cowry species and lots of interesting critters to observe, but it wasn't long before we decided to head back to Dingo Beach. But not so fast! – just as we were packing up, a Queensland Parks Ranger pulled us up and carefully examined our collection, in case we had more than 10 of any species (between the two of us) or any protected species. We had to go through the whole drill, including a taped interview and half hour delay, even though by the Ranger's own admission, he didn't think we had broken any laws. We got to keep our shells and told the Ranger he should come around to Dingo Beach too (as he was obviously in need of some records in his little work book). Nevertheless we took this experience as a warning, and took the opportunity to carefully re-check our collection from the day before (particularly the numerous long-dead sand dollars) to make sure we were absolutely within limits. We were very mindful of his advice that even dead empty material counts towards the "5 specimens per species per day" personal limit within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Back at Dingo Beach we raced out to just get the tide's turn, and thinking that I was looking at yet another crack in the sand caused by a (very) spiky heart urchin, I was delighted when I noticed a hint of orange – the hallmark of my first live ***Strombus aratrum***. I was relieved as much as anything else.

Over the two days I also found a few other interesting species, including a delightful little crabbed ***S. canarium***, several ***S. campbelli*** and a live ***Cypraea walkeri*** amongst a small amount of seaweed sitting on the sand in shallow water. We left Dingo Beach quite satisfied with our efforts – and it was back to the car for a three hour drive north to Townsville for the second phase of 'shell collecting boot camp'.

Once settled on the island after a well deserved sleep in, it was back to it, with both snorkelling at kayaking scheduled for the first day. We found a quite coral bay and worked the sand patches with our fins. Very quickly I found some ***Oliva annulata*** and ***O.mustellina***, ***Conus arenatus*** and a lovely ***Terebra subulata*** buried down very deep. Many of these shells left trails on the

surface, making their detection easier. It was then into the kayaks for a long paddle out to the point at Horseshoe Bay. The target was now the murex, ***Chicoreus torrefactus***, which we found amongst large boulders out near the point at extreme low tide level. This proved a tough challenge for Stephen, not helped by the slippery muddy reef that had to be negotiated and the strong smell of exposed live coral. We also had to contend with a mad ranting local hermit who refused to let us bring our kayak in at the only easy beach landing in the whole area. Little wonder Stephen said he'd had enough when we returned to the kayaks.

The following day was the final day of the 'boot camp' and I suggested to Stephen we explore the vast coral and seagrass flats lying to the west of the Island. We walked for about one kilometre from Picnic Bay along some dirt roads before moving out past some red mangroves to the coral and seagrass. Our main find here was a couple of ***Cypraea lynx***, the larger of which was found by Stephen who, up to that point, had found the cryptic nature of many of the local molluscs quite a challenge. We also picked up a large ***Lambis lambis*** to give to my wife's teenage son – noticing that it had nice long spines, presumably as a result of it gaining plenty of protection amongst the seagrass. On the way back we picked our bag limit of the very common ***Telescopium telescopium*** – but much to my surprise these were not out on the wet mud flats or near the seagrass, instead being found well towards the mid tide level on relatively clean firm sand near the red mangroves.

We rounded off the 'boot camp' with a night snorkel, hoping to snare a crayfish or two. While we had caught one on a previous visit to the island, we lucked out this time. Turning over a number of large dead coral slabs in 2 or 3 metres of water I noticed that the relatively large cowry, ***C. eglantina*****,** was quite common and found another ***C. lynx*****.** On returning to our holiday unit, Stephen certainly agreed that he had been to 'boot camp' – and who knows where our next adventure might be.

In summary, I believe that the areas with the best collecting potential were Dingo Beach and the vast reefs and flats along the western side of Magnetic Island. While the latter probably don't have the diversity of many other locations, their sheer extent means that a well-planned expedition could probably access areas of intertidal habitat very rarely visited. Any of the fringing reefs around Magnetic Island seem to host at least a few common cowries, with the largest species likely to be encountered being ***C. eglantina*****.** Horseshoe bay, while having some interesting small shells on the high tide line, is a difficult collecting location and one where the exposed coral reef is very muddy and slippery, and without much that can be turned over easily.

Cancellariidae – shell meeting talk

Steve Dean

As a youngster I used to do most of my collecting on rock platforms. Cancellariidae were one of the first families I collected from surf beaches. Specifically when swimming at Manly, Sydney, I used to feel for crabbed ***Cancellaria undulata*** (along with crabbed ***Tylospira scutulata***)

- Commonly called nutmeg shells.
- Worldwide (polar, temperate and tropical)
- All marine, subtidal, some in shallow water, but most species in deeper water near or below the continental shelf.
- Most have a lattice like sculpture (axial and radial grooves and ridges) hence the family name from the descriptive word "cancellate" meaning "having a lattice like structure pierced with holes or windows"
- Aperture usually lirate, with dentate lip
- Shells are medium to small, and solid/heavy
- Several hundred species
- Most live in sand or mud

I was wondering how they got the common name "nutmeg shells". It turns out that nutmeg seeds when freshly husked have a very unusual outer layer over them that has "windows" in it to the nut. The nuts are about the same size as most of the common Cancellariidae. So perhaps the combination of these features led to the common name?

Where they fit in:

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Mollusca
Class:	Gastropoda
Subclass:	Orthogastropoda
Superorder:	Caenogastropoda
Order:	Sorbeoconcha
Suborder:	Hypsogastropoda
Infraorder:	Neogastropoda
Superfamily:	Cancellarioidea
Family:	Cancellariidae Forbes & Hanley, 1853

- Cancellariidae are such a unique group that they have their own Superfamily (only one family in the Superfamily)
- The different shell characteristics are divided into four sub families.
- The sub family Pleisotritoninae has only recently been added, so in most literature many of its species appear in Buccinidae (Whelks), Fasciolariidae (Spindles), Ranellidae (Tritons) or other Families.

Subfamilies and their differences:
Cancellariinae: heavy shell, cancellate sculpture, three columella plaits, umbilicus closed.
Admetinae: Small, thin shell, umbilicus closed, no columella plaits
Trigonostominae: High, strongly shouldered shell, umbilicus open, two or three columella plaits
Pleisotritoninae: Very high spired shell with varices

So this is saying Cancellariidae are with or without columella plaits, open or closed umbilicus, high or low spired, heavy or thin shell, cancellate or smooth, rounded or sharp shouldered. Have the classifiers gone crazy and thrown a bit of everything in – no.

How do researchers tell if a shell belongs to Cancellariidae?

- By the “teeth” of course. (radula)
- Cancellariidae are “suctorial feeders” meaning they suck their food, primarily semi-liquids.
- Cancellariidae have an unusual radula with just a single row of long ribbon like teeth, and some don’t even have a radula at all.
- The radual is in a long proboscis leading to an alimentary system designed for sucking.
- On Des’ NSW web site he refers to a Californian species that comes up under electric rays asleep on the sand at night, makes cuts in their underside and then sucks their blood. They obviously don’t disturb the rays or they wouldn’t live long.

How do you tell a shell is a Cancellariinae or Trigonostominae rather than one of the many Nassarius species that are similar size, heavy, outer lip dentate, interior lirate, and the outside of the shell cancellate?
Nassarius do not have distinct columella plaits instead may be dentate or lirate. Nassarius have a raised columella callous. The Nassarius anal canal is well formed and distinctly tube like, while it is more open in Cancellariidae. Both live in sand or mud, but Nassarius are in general shallower water or intertidal.

Some of the Genera and subgenera in the family Cancellariidae:
Admete Krøyer, 1842
Admetula Cossmann, 1889
Africotriton Beu & Maxwell, 1987
Agatrix R. Petit, 1967
Anapepta Finlay, 1930
Aphera Adams, H. & A. Adams, 1854
Axelella Petit, 1988
Bonellitia Jousseaume, 1887
Brocchinia Jousseaume, 1887
Cancellaria Lamarck, 1799
Cancellaphera Iredale, 1930
Dellina Beu, 1970
Delphinula
Fusiaphera Habe, 1961
Gerdiella Olsson and Bayer, 1972
Gergovia Cossmann, 1899
Inglisella Finlay, 1924
Iphinopsis Dall, 1924
Merica H & A Adams, 1854
Mericella Thiele, 1929

Microsveltia Iredale, 1925
Mirandaphera Bouchet, Ph. & R.E. Petit, 2002
Narona Adams, H. & A. Adams, 1854
Neadmete Habe, 1961
Nevia Jousseaume, 1887
Nipponaphera Habe, 1961
Nothoadmete
Oamaruia Finlay, 1924
Pepta Iredale, 1925
Perplicaria Dall, W.H, 1890
Pissanella von Koenen, 1865
Plesiotriton Fischer, 1884
Scalptia Jousseaume, 1887
Solatia Jousseaume, 1887
Solutosveltia Habe, 1961
Sveltia Jousseaume, 1887
Sydaphera Iredale, 1929
Tribia Jousseaume, 1887
Trigonostoma Blainville, 1827
Tritonoharpa Dall, 1908
Vercomaris Garrard, 1975
Waipaoa Marwick, 1931
Zeadmete Finlay, 1926

Examples of Families and Species that resemble Cancellariidae – but aren't:

Cantharus spiralis; Babylonia spirita; Nassarius olivaceus
Bullia undulate; Dorsanum monoliferum; Iphinoe unicarinata
Also the local species *Zemira Australis*