

THE CONCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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AUGUST 1963

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(Re-printed 1978)

Edited by Leila Kerr

MEETING

The next meeting will be on Thursday 22nd August at 8.15 p.m. in the Lecture Room of the S.A. Museum. Please note change of date. This is to avoid clashing with a series of lectures at the U.C.T. Mr John Grindley will give us a talk on mid-water trawling. The shells for display will be those found by members on their recent holidays, or any new acquisitions to their collections. The Reference Collection will be there too, to help you in identifying your shells. We hope to show a film.

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MEETING AT THE S.A. MUSEUM. 23.7.1963

The Lecture Room was packed to hear Mr Colin Taylor's talk about Dolphins. This proved very interesting indeed, especially the slides and tape recording of "Dolphin" speech. Our members had put on a beautiful display of shells in the main building of the Museum and these were much admired by our visitors.

As there were two other societies present, no C.S.S.A. business was done. However, at a Council meeting on the 25th, the following were elected as members of the Society, subject to confirmation at the August meeting:-

Miss M. Lord 4 Dawson Road, Selbourne East London
Mr K. McNamara 7 Philmar Court Grant Street Kenilworth C.P.
Mr A Ribbink 5 Arundel Road Rondebosch
Mr D. Wolmarans 1 St Rollox 6 Norden Street Quigney East London

The following were proposed as new members:-

Mr John Kernan proposed by D.H. Kennelly seconded by L. Kerr
Mr N. Douglas " " M. Kempthorne " " "
Mr A hadar " " Dr M. Cohen " " "

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IN MEMORIAM

It is with regret that we record the sudden death in July of our member, Dr. Morris J. Cohen, of Durban. Dr. Cohen was on his way to Cape Town from East London to hand over to the Society the rest of his conchological library. He became ill at Plettenberg Bay and returned to Port Elizabeth, where he died. Dr Cohen was world-renowned for his shell figurines, which he made as a hobby. He had been extremely generous in presenting the Society with books for our library on two other occasions. We extend our sympathy to his two sons.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Treasurer requests that Postal Orders should not be crossed, otherwise they have to go through her private banking account before being paid in to the Natal Building Society, thus causing delay and extra expense. There is a Post Office at Kenilworth, Cape. Members in America should buy Rands, obtained at any bank. Australian members please add on extra for exchange.

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The following members have regretfully resigned as they are going overseas:-

Mr F. Hulme, Mrs R. Moore and Dr Y. Petrie.

We are sorry to lose them and wish them Bon Voyage.

Miss A. Peiser and Mr D. Groeff have also resigned.

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EXCHANGE WANTED.../

EXCHANGE WANTED

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Mrs T. Haywood 155 Renall Street Masterton New Zealand
Mr E.D. Willis 460 Queen Street Auckland G1 New Zealand
Mrs G.C. Nelson 328 SO "O" Street Lake Worth Florida U.S.A.

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GENERAL NOTES

Mikimoto

by Joan Weakley

This article is being contributed as a result of an S.O.S. from our secretary. As I have sub-let my flat and have locked away all shell material and books, I am resorting to notes jotted down years ago on Mikimoto. As I found them very interesting, maybe others will, too.

By the time Mikimoto, the Pearl King, son of a poor noodlemaker, died in 1954 at the age of 96, his oyster farms were cultivating 1½ billion oysters with an annual production of 10,000,000 pearls.

So important had the pearl industry become to Japan that part of the schooling for diplomats was to send them to Toba Bay, the centre of the industry, before they went abroad. They had to be able to discuss it along with foreign policy.

But it was a long and up-hill road the poor noodle-maker had to climb before he became Pearl King, with a bowler hat for a crown and a bamboo staff, given him by the Empress of Japan, for his sceptre; before he became "Provender of Pearls and Jewels to the Imperial Household"; before he was elected to the House of Peers in Parliament; before he at last produced a round pearl. The latter took 15 years.

How do pearls get there? This was a thought that always intrigued him. It was during a visit to a marine research station that he learnt that it was the presence of a foreign body in the shell that caused the pearl. The foreign body is painstakingly, over a period of 4-5 years, given a nacreous covering.

Starting an oyster farm, he tried experiment after experiment, inserting various things of varying ages into oysters of various ages, to eventually discover that kernels from the Mississippi River mussels were the best of all.

But where to inset the kernels? Inserting between oyster and shell caused pearls that were flat on one side; inserting in the mantle caused oysters to die. There was failure after failure before he discovered that the kernel must be seeded in living tissue close to the hinge joining the two valves.

His discovery that he had at last succeeded, is dramatic. His chief enemy was the Red Tide, minute marine creatures that destroy all shell life. It was after one such attack that, to ward off despair, he busied himself opening dead oysters. At last! A round pearl! The baskets with the varying seedings had all been carefully marked. Every oyster in this group had a round pearl.

Then followed the battle to convince dealers and public that "cultured" pearls are not counterfeit pearls, and the battle against dishonest dealers who exported imitation pearls as cultured pearls, often with the Mikimoto label. On one occasion he bought up all he could and in the presence of a big crowd flung them into the fire, that day destroying an estimated 750,000 pearls.

Cultured pearls differ from the natural ones only in the very centre, where an X-ray machine can detect the grain of substance deliberately forced into the 3-year old oyster.

The final disaster to his industry was the Second World War. But for the New York World Fair of 1939 Mikimoto had made a pearl-studded copy of the Liberty Bell. It was made to a 1/3 scale and contained 12,250 pearls and 366 diamonds. The famed crack was reproduced with black pearls. At Mikimoto's funeral Japan's last pre-war Ambassador to the U.S.A. said that when he was appointed, Mikimoto came to him, offering the Liberty Bell if it could be used to avert war. But nothing could, and the Liberty Bell was later used in the post-war period to help him re-establish his industry.

My books being inaccessible, the usual posem does not follow! But I have some good ones! If I remember aright, the book, whence my facts, is called The Pearl King and is by Funsen.

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Beware of *Conus natalis*.

by C.M. Connolly

Conus natalis is fairly common along the East London coast. I found them living in groups at Queensberry Bay in "homes" under large rocks under dirty sand just below low tide. As they feed on living molluscs no other shells share their "home". I did not see young cones nor eggcases during the three weeks I spent at Queensberry Bay. Densely patterned shells were more common but the *gilchristi* shells were living with the *natalis*. The later name of *natalensis* is now dropped. One thing I did notice is that the *gilchristi* remained quiet after capture - but *natalis* immediately looked out. Of all the South African cones I have taken alive this tent-patterned cone is one I do not handle. Please do not hold it even in your fingers as this mollusc is extremely quick. He has thin long stalk-eyes. His open mouth protrudes and at once a halfinch long yellow tongue darts out to left and right and he feels almost to the back of his shell.

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THE CONCHOLOGIST'S ALPHABET.

by D.H. Kennelly

A for the Argonaut we all hope to find,
 B for the Bullia, known to be blind.
 C for Cypraea, with beautiful shell,
 D is the Donax, that anglers know well.
 E is the Euse, when we walk a hard beach,
 F for the Fusus, found just within reach.
 G for the Grit, making holes in your socks,
 H -----Haliotis, stuck fast on the rocks.
 I is the Imp, who found a large Conus,
 J is the Jam tart, he got as a bonus.
 K for the Kitchen, with shells in the sink,
 L for the longing, to dodge all the stink.
 M for the Mactra, who lives in wet sand,
 N is the Nassa, found just by your hand.
 O is the Oyster, who never does sing,
 P for the Pinnae, all tied up with string.
 Q for the questions, asked by us all,
 R is the Racket, raised when we fall.
 S for the Solen, in mud it does sink,
 T for Tellina, coloured quite pink.
 U for the Urchin, with spines coloured red,
 V for Volute, which we always find dead.
 W is Water, very salt we know well,
 X is the Ecstasy, when we find a new shell.
 Y for the Yawn, seen when we retire,
 And Z is the Zany, threading shells on a wire.

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Shelling and Adventure.

by Hazel Jeffries

Before describing our trip to Haga-Haga shelly beach, I would like to mention our very successful "Get Together" at Bonza Bay on the 6th, 7th and 8th July, and to express special thanks to Mr D.H. Kennelly for organising it all. Also a special "Thank You" to Mrs Connolly for showing us live specimens and her Reference Collection.

A few days after the Bonza Bay trip, Mr and Mrs Cock of Manaba Beach, South Coast, who were staying at Morgan Bay, Mr and Mrs Reuben Hall and daughter, from Welkom O.F.S., who were holidaying at Kei Mouth and I set off to visit Haga-Haga shelly beach. We took the main road from Kei Mouth to Haga-Haga, then a few miles from there we turned off along a farm road, (a Short Cut????) and duly arrived at the beach. The weather looked threatening, so we had all fortunately taken macintoshes. It started to drizzle, and by 2 p.m. it was raining steadily. We were all too engrossed in shelling to realize what was happening to the Farm Road.

We collected some good beach specimens of *Cyp. capensis*, *Triviella ovulata*, *Conus natalensis*, *Conus aurora*, *Marginella keeni*, and many damaged *Voluta africana*.

We got back...../

We got back into the two cars and set off for home, but after many abortive attempts on the now very wet and very sticky road, we had to abandon the cars and walk, in the teeming rain, through the Haga)Haga river to the Haga-Haga Hotel. By this time we were very wet despite the mackintoshes and were grateful for a cup of hot tea. One of our ladies was so wet and muddy that the Hotel Proprietress lent her a bath-towel, which she wore sarong-wise in lieu of a skirt.

On leaving the cars it was suggested that all the lunch baskets and shell bags should be left in the cars. I decided, without mentioning it, that I was not leaving my shell basket; there was much mirth on arriving at the Hotel, when we found we had all had the same idea. We telephoned Kei Mouth and Morgan Bay for cars to come to our rescue and we arrived all safe and sound, but WHAT sights. The cars were retrieved three days later with the aid of a tractor.

This week Mr and Mrs Hall, their two daughters and I went to the Double Mouth shelly beach, which is between Morgan Bay and Haga-Haga. Nothing short of a helicopter will get me there again. Walking down from the car was comparatively easy, but climbing up a very steep hill to get back to the car was definitely an endurance test. However, as always, there were the "Prises." I was particularly pleased with a specimen of Colubraria affredensis and other species.

The two beaches mentioned in the above are particularly good shelling spots. At the end of last year Mrs Nuttall-Smith's grandson was fortunate enough to collect three very good live specimens of Cypraea vitellus at Haga-Haga.

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Border Notes

by D.H. Kennelly

Towards the latter end of July, our Bonza Bay member, Mrs L.M. Rix, paid a visit to Coffee Bay and collected a fine lot of shells, including many excellent specimens of various Cowries.

One specimen of Cypraea helvola found by Mrs Rix exhibits a most unusual abnormality. The shell, which is 23 m.m. in length and in very good condition, has a lump - or hump - just about the centre of the outer edge of the aperture on the columellar side. The lump is 10 m.m. long and rises 5 m.m., extending up towards the dorsal side of the shell. It is coloured the same dark orange tint as the aperture and the whole shell is highly polished. The teeth on the columellar side are normal. C. helvola is very common and the writer has seen hundreds, but never before has helvola, or any other species been seen with such a peculiar malformation.

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Cape Notes

by L. Kerr

Muizenberg is becoming interesting again with the return of the bad weather. Hundreds of "rolls" of redbait have littered the beach and these are worth investigating. The writer found a Cymatium africanum, 12 cm. long attached to redbait, also many Fusus verruculatus. The Cassis are rolling in too. Mr Jack Walker also found a large Cymatium africanum and a black mussel about a foot long. The Tonna which Mrs Connolly found alive at Queensberry Bay and exhibited at our last meeting, has been identified by Dr. Barnard as Tonna dunkeri.

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Find at Muizenberg

by C.M. Connolly

After finding a huge Cymatium africanum froming the lower half of a piece of red-bait, I began to pick up every piece. On a very fresh piece I noticed two Pyrene albuginosa. As I lifted one I saw three small cases just freshly laid and each with about 30 eggs. Very carefully I lifted the second "mother" and was pleased to see three cases also freshly laid. There are in the tank as I hope to time development and also to see if they are veligers or crawlers. "Mothers" sit over the cases while they cover them with mucus which forms a protective barrier to the sea. Feeding predators sit behind the case and the proboscis can be seen feeding through a small hole. It is usually only Thais castaneus that is seen doing this in our local waters.

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