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X THE CONCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA X
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CIRCULAR NO 62.

MARCH, 1965

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Edited by Leila Kerr.

MEETING.

The next meeting of the Society will be held on Tuesday, March 23rd at 8.p.m. in the Lecture Hall of the S.A.Museum. The shells for display will be Spondylus of which there are many beautiful foreign ones. We are hoping to show some films.

Prior to the ordinary meeting, there will be an Extraordinary General Meeting as advertised in the last circular. Please note starting time, make an effort to attend and bring a pen with you.

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At the monthly meeting of the Society of February 16th, certain members present considered that the method of voting by ballot paper from all members of the Society was un-constitutional under Rule 20. Therefore to avoid any controversy on the matter, the proposed amendment to Rule 8 will be decided only by those members present at the March meeting in Cape Town.

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MINUTES OF MEETING HELD IN THE S.A.MUSEUM. 16.2.1965

Mr.Elston in the Chair, welcomed members and friends. Apologies were received from Mrs.Bodinnar, Miss Kempthorne, Mr.Freeman, Mr.Grindley and Mr.Pickstone.

The minutes of the December meeting were taken as read and adopted. Mr.Elston informed the meeting that the Library cupboard would soon be ready to be installed at the Museum.

Master P.Jurgens, P.O.Box 26, Richmond, Natal was elected as a member of the Society.

The following were proposed as new members:-

Master A.Berruti	proposed by	D.H.Kennelly,	seconded by	B.L.Cock.
Mr.G.de Gersigny	"	" M.Adams	"	" L.Kerr.
Miss J.Kitchener	"	" D.H.Kennelly	"	" P.Elston.
Mrs.A.Miller	"	" L.Kerr	"	" P.Elston.
Master R.Relph	"	" M.Adams	"	" L.Kerr.

A Field Day was discussed but as no suitable date could be found, the matter was postponed.

Mrs Kerr informed the meeting of the death of Mrs.Hilda Searle of Great Brak River, well loved by all who knew her. A letter of condolence would be sent to her daughters.

Mr. Swaneveld proposed that the Council reconsider the method of voting to be adopted in amending the Constitution to Rule 8. (See elsewhere.)

Mr.Swaneveld proposed, seconded by Mr.Pollard, that the Council consider buying the copy of Sowerby offered for sale by Mr.P.Elston for the Library.

Mr.Elston showed his slides of Natal shells, etc. After tea, slides owned by the Society were shown.

Many fond farewells were said to Mrs.Pinkham and Padre who are moving to Wolseley where he will be Rector. We are all very sorry to lose them and hope they will still keep up their interest in the Society.

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EXCHANGE WANTED.

Hanning Lundmark, 23 Ogden Ave., White Plains, New York. U.S.A.
 Mrs. Edna Jameison, P.O.Box 1880, Wellington, New Zealand.
 Mrs. Zoe Hart, 223 Howick Road, Blenheim, New Zealand.
 Mrs. Pat H. Norwood, 905 N. Austin Street, San Marcos, Texas, U.S.A.
 Major B. Kinloch, C/o Secretary, British Field Sports Society, 137 Victoria Street, London S.W.1.

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GENERAL NOTES.

(1) NOTES ON SOUTH AFRICAN MARINE SHELLS. By D.H. Kennelly

Oxystele sinensis Gmelin 1791.

The following notes have been prompted by queries from our members - Mr. Jack Walker - when he visited the writer during the Xmas holidays.

The abovementioned shell has for years been listed as Oxystele merula Lamarck, 1822, but Tomlin (1931) stated the correct name to be Oxystele sinensis Gmelin 1791, and the latter is now accepted.

Oxystele tigrina Chemnitz. This is a well known common shell usually with smooth whorls. Turton (1932) obtained this at Port Alfred, together with O. tigrina vascoi Fischer. This variety is described as having a more acute spire, cords on the body whorl, and the whorls more convex. Turton further stated that the variety grades in with O. tigrina. Specimens in the East London Museum confirm Turton's remark regarding the intergrading.

It appears that the variety is the effect of ecological conditions from Port Alfred to Natal. The writer is of opinion that Mr. Walker's shells ex the Natal Coast are Oxystele tigrina vascoi Fischer.

Volva volva Linn. on the South African Coast.

According to available literature, this shell has hitherto been regarded as living in the Pacific Ocean. Dr. Barnard (Annals S.Af. Museum Vol XLVII, Part 1, Page 56), records V. volva as occurring off the Natal coast, and off Cape Morgan (Morgan Bay), which is regarded as being noteworthy.

Just recently further records have come to light. Miss J.D. Kitchener of Kimberley, found a specimen at Qora Mouth, Willowvale Dist. Transkei. Mrs. Rene Cock of Natal obtained a specimen at Morgan Bay. Mrs. Hulley of East London found another shell at Gonubie, while Mrs. M.A. Rix of Bonza Bay, records three shells from that locality.

All the specimens mentioned above are from beaches in good condition.

In view of Dr. Barnard's report for Cape Morgan, it appears feasible to assume that V. volva actually occurs on our coast on a wider range than hitherto known.

It is pleasing to record that the six specimens mentioned, were all collected by members of our Society.

This is a case where the services of skin divers, who are also shell collectors, would be welcome. They could endeavour to obtain living specimens to prove beyond doubt the actual range of this well known shell on our coast.

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(2) Molluscs in Medical Research. by Les Cock

Molluscs like many other animals are playing their part today in medicine and recently there was an interesting summary, published in "Shells and their Neighbours" by J.L. Abramson M.D. noting the accidental discovery that mice fed on canned "Abalone" juice were more resistant to experimental polio than those given any other diet. This has stimulated the search for antibiotics in the "Abalone" species, and studies have shown that it contains anti-bacterial as well as anti-viral properties.

Another report published in "Hawaiian Shell News" gives details of a very interesting experiment to be tried out shortly. An attempt is to be made to try and isolate and work out the chemical structure of the venom of the Conus family. Collectors have been asked to co-operate by collecting and keeping alive in tanks certain species of Cones, so that there will be a sufficient supply of venom for the research chemists to work on.

The findings of this experiment will be looked forward to with interest.

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(3) THE SHELL CABINET by Joan Weakley.

Spare not your gold - 'twere well exchang'd
 For cabinet of shells arranged
 With conchological skill,
 Not to one lovely feature blind;
 In every touch and tint you find,
 To please the scientific mind,
 New traits of beauty still.

Amusement innocent and pure,
 Which may from folly's path allure,
 And check the vagrant will;
 And may you midst this fair display,
 Should disappointment cloud your way,
 Should friends deceive, and foes dismay,
 Find peace and pleasure still.

Sarah Hoare

So, spare not your gold. It is well exchanged for a Cabinet of shells. Moreover, we are in good company. We are told that in the 18th century "rich bankers, well-bred ladies, peers of the realm, literary celebrities" went shell-mad.

Auction sales were held and high prices bid for rare specimens. The Paper Nautilus (*Argonauta argo* - Linna) fetched 15 guineas, which must easily have been the equivalent of 60 guineas of our deteriorating money of today.

And here is an extract from an article in "Country Life" that shows that the collectors had every bit as much fun as we have: "Shell enthusiasts were in constant touch with 'pebble merchants' or with Thames-side sea captains who brought over large cargoes of shells from the West Indies and beyond".

Writes one collector enthusiastically: "I have a new cabinet with whole glass doors and glass on the sides and shelves within of whimsical shapes". Indeed, it seems to me that our arrangements are quite too prosaic. An Elector of Saxony had his shells in his Dresden home arranged among "what looked like branches of pine formed by crystals of silver from Peru." And if you can picture that display, your powers of imagination are greater than mine. I can picture the display of the Duc de Bourbon, who lined his shell drawers at Chantilly with green taffeta.

How Louis XV of France arranged his collection I do not know. But I am sure this hobby of his must have contributed to a neglect of his real duties, a normal result of the absorbing fascination of shells. Shell-collection may thus have been an indirect contributory cause of the French Revolution which broke out during the very next reign! In his case his Shell Cabinet unfortunately did not "from folly's path allure", for he unfairly kept both shells and Madame de Pompadour.

I do know something of how the Duchess of Portland arranged her shells. She had the largest collection in Europe, visited by the famous Linnaeus. It was her friend who had the whimsically-shaped shelves in her cabinet, and the Duchess of Portland had the cabinet copied! I presume, shelves and all. We copy one another's ideas, too, but would we be magnanimous enough to allow anything so original as "Whimsical shapes" to be copied?

We are actually told that the clergy in France at one stage led the shell-collecting world. This rather substantiates my theory that Conchology was partly responsible for the French Revolution, for the people rose against both Sovereign and Church!

We conclude with the name of Sir Hans Sloane, because his collection became the nucleus of the present collection in the British Museum.

These are but a few of our illustrious fellow-collectors. But I believe that in no country had the mania for shell-collecting reached the height it did in Holland at the time of her supremacy as a sea-power. This is the land of birth of Mr. C. Swenowald and I suggest he write and tell us something about this.

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(4) Shell Collecting on the Natal South Coast.

Rene & Les Cock.

Not being one of those fortunates who can don the goggles and flippers and get down under to collect the treasure available in those regions --- we have to be content with what can be found on the beaches and rocks.

Full use, has therefore to be made of low Spring tides, and we try to get at least an hours shelling before the turn of the tide.

If either of the Park Rynie beaches or Kelso is our collecting spot, and they are all certainly very interesting and rewarding hunting grounds, it is a 50 mile drive before we get there. This means an early start from home as the tide is generally on the early side.

Our other favourite shelling spot is Palm Beach, near Port Edward, but here it is mostly beach material, but varied, and there is always the hope of adding something new to the collection. It was on this beach that we found a perfect specimen of Haliotis queketti, also juvenile Astraea andersoni, Lippistes cornu, Colubraria alfredensis, Col. nitidula, and many others.

Manaba Beach just below our flat can also be interesting enough to take a walk along the tide-line, and here we picked up specimens of Cheilea equestris and Cheilea circatricosa as well as a couple of Recluzia jehennei among others.

There are many other spots along the Coast which we have explored, such as Ramsgate where an Argonauta bottgeri was found, but there are many more to be done, Durban and the North Coast included, which we hope to have a look at sometime.

More lists of molluscs from this coast previously noted, have been those by skindivers, but the following were all taken at Spring tides from rocky beaches, so take heart you non divers, the goods are there if you look carefully for them.

This is by no means a full range, but just a few of the more interesting ones, all live taken at Park Rynie or Kelso.

Cypraea arabica immanis, C. vitellus, C. isabella, C. carneola, C. felina, C. chinensis, C. teres, C. erosa, C. helvola argella & meridionalis, C. citrina, Mitra litterata, M. limbifera, Latirus turritus, Umbrella indica, Scutus unguis, Cerithium obeliscus, Thais echinulata, Peristernia nasitula, Bursa pusilla, Pyrene turturina, Amplustre amplustre, Drupa muticum, Crupa uva, Crupa ricinus, Conus rattus, Conus ebraeus, Conus ebraeus vermiculatus, Conus miliaria, Conus ceylonensis, C. nemocenus, C. lividus, C. piperatus, C. sponsalus, C. aurora.

Among good beach specimens obtained at Kelso and Park Rynie were:- Cypraea clandestina, C. limocea, C. marginalis, all fresh dead, Phalium areola, Vasum truncatum, Ranella crumena, Strombus mutabilis, Colubraria obscura, Bursa bufonia, Cymatium aquatilis, C. pileare, C. vespaceum, C. labiosum, C. ruberculum, C. durbanensis, Engina mendacaria, Thiara vouamica.

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(5) CAPE NOTES.

by P.Elston.

Recently, the writer has received some interesting shells from Angra Juntas and Chamais Bay, S.W.A. Amongst them was a very good Marginella musica Hinds, Thais cingulata Linn. that seems slightly different to the False Bay specimens and some sub-fossil Clavatula, Conus, Argobuccinum and a few Volutocorbis lutosa Koch. These will be shown at the March meeting.

Also in February, a member brought the writer some Bullia to identify. These included some of the delightful vari-coloured Bullia digitalis Mäuschen from the False Bay area. The colours were uniform cream, fawn, (achatina) some had a livery tinge, (sulcata) violaceous, and some were cream with a peripheral series of orange brown spots and axial streaks and flames (semi-flamma).

This species, in colour and pattern is so interesting that we hope

members will bring along their varieties to the March meeting.

Also just received a new cowry, Cypraea dayritiana cate 1963 and at long last, the third of the three varieties of Conus princeps var. apogrammatus Dall from Panama. Both will be exhibited.

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FAMILY CHITONIEAE BINOPLAX GIGAS GMELIN

"Coat of Mail Shells" or "Armadillo"
by D.H.Kennelly.

As all shell collectors know, the usual number of plates are 8 for specimens of this genus. Cotton & Godfrey report that the South Australian Museum possesses abnormal examples with fewer and more than the usual 8 plates. Also that examples from all over the world have been listed with such irregularities.

Regarding South African representatives of the family, it appears, from the writer's investigations that Binoplax Gigas Gmelin is - so far - the only species collected with the abnormal number of 7 plates.

The S.A.Museum has one from Still Bay and a second from Cape Hangklip collected by Mrs.Connolly. The Queenstown and Frontier Museum has one specimen ex Port Alfred, collected by the late Rev.C.K.Hodges. In addition there are 3 more examples in the East London Museum, one marked East London Coast, and two from Gonubie Springs recently collected by Miss A.Lawford.

These six specimens, here recorded, appear to be all that have been collected over a period of some 40 years, and examples are certainly rare.

References:-

- Dr.K.H.Bernard, Beginner's Guide to S.A.Shells.
- Joyce Allan, Australian Shells, 1950 (Page 240)
- Cotton & Godfrey, Molluscs of S.Australia, Part two 1940.

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