

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

If your subscription, R1, is up-to-date and you only owe for the coming period to June 1964, you will find no pencilled reminder on this circular. On the other hand, those whose subs are outstanding will find the amount due on page 1. As June is the end of our financial year, the Treasurer hopes you will oblige.

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BIRTHDAY GIFT TO ALL MEMBERS.

To mark our fifth birthday, the Society is forwarding our third Special Publication to all members. This is, "A Key to South African Chitons" by Prof. J.H. Day, and will be of value to all conchologists. We thank Prof. Day very sincerely for his hard work in compiling this Key and for making it available to the Society.

We are hoping to have the copies ready to include with this circular, but if not, they will be sent later. Extra copies may be had at 50 cents each.

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FIELD DAY.

There will be a Field Day at St. James on Sunday, 23rd June. Low tide is at 10.38 a.m., so be early to take full advantage of it. There is very good shelling at St. James, and as it will be the beginning of the school holidays we hope the Juniors will turn up. After shelling, meet at the pool about midday to examine the 'treasures' ! Friends are very welcome. There will be no further notification, so mark your calendar or diary.

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A NEW SHELL LIST.

Mr. D.H. Kennelly, Conchologist at the East London Museum, and our very good friend, has compiled a Preliminary List of S.A. Marine Shells from False Bay to the Pondoland/Natal Border. Shells, some 300 species, likely to be obtained by the average collector are mentioned and this list should prove useful to members. Local members may order their copy from the Secretary, price 25 cents, others should write direct to Mr. Kennelly, c/o East London Museum, East London, enclosing 25 cents. Our congratulations to Mr. Kennelly.

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SHELLS WANTED.

St. Andrews College, Grahamstown is starting a shell collection in their museum and would be very grateful for donations of shells, named, from any country. One of our Junior Members, Bobby Wakeham, is a pupil there and has infected the Natural History Club with the "shell bug". Will you help please? Send to:- The Natural History Club, St. Andrews College, Grahamstown.

The following/..

The following would like to exchange shells:-

1. Mr. Ray Godfrey, 461 Adams Street, Eugene, Oregon, U.S.A.
2. Mrs. Fern Anderson, 6234 Flora, Bell., California. U.S.A.

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GENERAL NOTES.

HOUSE-MATES OR FORCIBLE EVICTION ? by K.H. Barnard.

In 1961 at Knysna Mrs. Kerr found a shell of Bullia annulata inhabited simultaneously by the mollusc and a Hermit Crab. As preserved, the foot of the mollusc is partially expanded, and the tentacles, proboscis (with radula protruding) and siphon are extended; the mollusc is still attached to the column of its shell. The crab is inserted between the mollusc and the outer lip of the shell.

The association, however, was not quite such a friendly one as appeared at first sight. The back of the mollusc's head and parts of the digestive organs, lying immediately below the crab's mouth, had been eaten away.

The question arises: how did the crab obtain a "footing" (more accurately a "tail-hold") in the shell? Did it gently insert its tail between the living mollusc and the shell, and then proceed to chew up its victim; or did it pounce on the distended mollusc, forcibly preventing it from contracting into its shell, and then disable it by chewing away the head and nerve centres ?

The usual procedure when a Hermit-crab out-grows its house is for it to find a larger empty house, sidle up close to it, and very quickly transfer its soft and vulnerable abdomen from the old to the new house.

The crab in the present little drama is Diogenes brevirostris Stimpson.

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HAPPY VISIT TO STIL BAAI. By C.M. Connolly.

The main reason for this trip was the interest aroused by the many records of shells found in this bay, and my ambition to obtain at least some of them as living specimens. I also wanted to add some bivalves to my reference collection. Some time back Miss Wapenaar had exhibited quite a few from Stil Baai.

Our experienced member, Mrs. Weakley, arranged accomodation for four nights, and with Mrs. Kerr for good company, we set off on the long trip to Still Bay. Four very exhausting days were spent trying to cover the field over a five mile seafront. Also some exciting moonlight shel-ling up and down the river banks. With Mrs. Weakley in the lead we travelled the sandspits but only one Cassis popped out for us. My most unpleasant experience was collecting Bursatella in a stagnant, smelly pool with soft mud. These slugs are quite beautiful - emerald green with pink streaky projections. These were given to the University of Cape Town. The whole river seemed full of Natica but we did not get living bivalves. Hermit crabs and river crabs were just everywhere. On the reeds we saw large Littorina.

During/.....

THE "DYE" SHELLS - Murex trunculus and Murex brandaris. by Joan Weakley.

How true it is that the presence of the purple fluid in the inhabitants of these shells was discovered accidentally when a shepherd's dog stained his mouth a gorgeous purple by breaking open one of them, I am not prepared to say!

Nor have I been able to verify the accuracy of the following conversation in "Queen in Waiting" by Norah Lofts, to which my attention was drawn some years ago:

"It's as though we had netted a rainbow - that purple!" (this from the lady examining the wares of a pedlar).

"That ... is the genuine Tyrian purple, the royal colour, the one the Gospels speak of, purple and fine linen ... taken all in all, two men have to die to produce an ounce of the stuff" - this from the pedlar.)

"Why" ?

"It's obtained from some snail ... slaves dredge the creatures up and it is a dangerous business ... so they are staked out and only taken in when they've filled"

"How revolting ... you may put this back into the bundle, my good man."

The "snail" referred to is of course the above two species from the Mediterranean, which secrete the purple fluid from which the ancient Tyrian purple was obtained - Tyrian, because Tyre was the centre of the industry. Excavations have brought to light many mounds of these shells, archaeologists claiming that some date back to about 1600 B.C.

If it is correct that it takes about 12,000 shells to produce 1/20 ounce of pure dye, then inevitably Tyrian purple would have become a colour exclusive to wealth and royalty. Around Sidon mostly Murex brandaris seems to have been used, and around Tyre Murex trunculus.

These "dye" shells have always interested me for the wealth of fascinating references to their products. For instance, Homer refers to their great antiquity and quality. Both Pliny and Aristotle give accounts of how the dye is extracted, details about e.g. the pounding of the shells in a mortar, the addition of salt, the dilution with water and so on. Plutarch, in his Life of Alexander the Great, relates that the Greeks found in the treasury of the Persian king a great quantity of purple, still beautiful after 190 years.

Then there are the numerous references to laws passed, such as, that the purple was to be a distinct mark of imperial dignity, also a symbol of inauguration. And so, to assume the purple was to assume the throne, and death was the penalty for wearing the purple, even when hidden beneath garments of other colours! Specially famous was the purple of the Laconian waters, the isles of Elishah of Ezekiel 27 (the lamentation for fallen Tyre).

There are many other shells of course that secrete this purple fluid. There is an interesting reference by the Venerable Bede - 8th century, Britain - to the purple or dog Periwinkle (Nuculla lapillus, I think), from which he says dye was extracted for staining parchment or vellum, with the idea of setting off the gold and silver lettering.

And this dyeing of parchment and vellum with the fluid from these "Purples" opens up another intensely interesting study. In Churches, in princely Libraries, there came to be stored precious Biblical manuscripts in letters of gold and silver "upon leaves of parchment purpled in the

ground"/....

ground", often the life-time work of the artist. Imagine the orders given: "Send me the epistle of St. Peter in letters of gold upon purple vellum that by exhibiting them, in preaching to the carnal, I may procure the greater honour and veneration for the Holy Scriptures".

I conclude with an extract from a little poem, with no apology for my tendency to quote poetry! I have what I am sure is a unique collection of Shell Poetry, some sent to me by Conchologists of note who have been quoted in these very journals of ours for their scientific knowledge.

"Unconscious has it swelled the pride
Of many a pageant, prince, and bride,
And ah! perchance, His vesture dyed,
Who bled on Calvary." (Sarah Hoare)

It so happens that I am writing this article on the evening of Good Friday.

Further notes, by Leila.

The dye of the murex shell is secreted in the inner wall of the mantle. It is milky-white, changing to yellow, pale green, blue-ish and red-purple when exposed to the sun. The search for new beds of murex in the Mediterranean led to the discovery and colonization of Malta, Sicily, etc. by the Phoenicians. The dye was a source of great wealth to them until the Emperors of Rome decreed that they alone were privileged to wear the rich colour. The dye was fadeless, but smelt, which may be the reason why royalty in those days, wore so much perfume!

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ARCHAEOGASTROPODA. By D.H. Kennelly.

In Circular No. 40, Pages 2 and 3, my very good friend Percy Elston, contributed an interesting article under this heading, and also detailed an opinion received from Mr. R.R. Talmadge on the subject.

As a matter of interest the writer wishes to point out that in the List of Mollusca occurring at Inhaca Island, P.E. Africa, Macnae & Kalk included the undermentioned species of the South African Patellidae:-

Patella barbara, Linn. and Cellana capensis, Gmelin.

It seems possible that Mr. Talmadge has not seen the work by Macnae & Kalk, which was published as recently as 1950.

The writer has no information of any other species occurring as far north as Inhaca Island.

References:- Review of the South African Patellidae. (Annals Natal Museum Vol.XI 1949). H.J. Koch.
A Natural History of Inhaca Island, P.E. Africa.
Macnae & Kalk, 1958.

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MOLLUSCS/.....

