
It is now six months since the club was launched - an appropriate time to issue our first newsletter and to take stock. On the credit side, some of our aims have already been achieved. Collectors have been put in touch with each other; friendships have sprung up by letter writing, telephone calls and the occasional meeting; and we already have the nucleus (3) of a local branch here in the Medway Towns. On the other hand, the number of members still leaves much to be desired. An up-to-date list is attached, and the original "magnificent seven" founder members will note that we have more than doubled our size - but that is not saying very much. Somewhere in this country is a vast untapped army of conchologists, and we must find them. Once again I call upon you all to help in this respect, please, by various propaganda methods such as :-

- a) Word of mouth persuasion of anyone interested in shells.
- b) Posters or notices in your local library or Town Hall.
- c) Insert slips of paper in every book on shells in your library.
- d) Any other means you can think of.

I shall soon be inserting another advertisement in "Exchange & Mart" which might bring a few results. I would like to thank here Mr.Cox and Mr.Sadler for all their efforts so far in the advertising field.

Shell dealers. For the benefit of those members who may not know of them all, here is a list of the major shell dealers in this country, all of whom carry out a mail order service:-

Eaton's Shell Shop: Marquette Street, Soho, London, W.1.

Afrasian Imports: 2 Kneesworth Street, Royston, Herts

Turkwise Mail Order Supplies: Shell Shop, 7 Totnes Road, Paignton, Devon.
(The management has recently changed hands and they now cater more for collectors).

Kollecta-Shell: Melrose Avenue, Bristol, BS8 2NG

"Nature of the World": 33 Lodge Close, Fetcham, Leatherhead, Surrey
(They have a special line in British shells, as well as tropical).

Book list. Not everyone wants or can afford many of the various books on shell collecting which are available, especially as most libraries offer a fairly good choice. However, the following is a short basic list which may be of help to some newer collectors.

- a) "Seashells of the World" by R. Tucker Abbott, Golden Press, New York. This is an American paperback which sells for about 55p here. In my opinion this is the best ever value for money. It offers 790 colour illustrations and is most useful for beginners and experts alike.
- b) "Seashells" by S. Peter Dance, Hamlyn Paperbacks (40p). The written material is very interesting but the illustrations, though excellent, are not all that helpful with identification of the popular families.
- c) "Seashells of the World, with Values" by A. G. Melvin, Charles Tuttle Co, Rutland, USA (about £3.75). Profuse photo illustrations, half of them in colour. Particularly good on cowries and cones.
- d) For anyone interested in shells of this country, the definitive work is "British Shells" by Norah F. McMillan, Frederick Warne & Co. (£2.50).
- e) A must for every serious collector is "Van Nostrand's Standard Catalog of Shells" (1967 edition), but this costs nearly £4. The illustrations are practically non-existent, and my advice would be not to buy it unless you have to. Many good reference libraries have it in stock. Many other books are either very expensive and/or strictly for specialists only. (Foyles is the main stockist for this type).

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Fun in the sun. Messrs Gregory, Eaglesham and Tickner have lined up a fortnight's collecting expedition to Gan, in the Maldiv Islands, in January. The rest of us will have to shiver it out here, I'm afraid - the trip is strictly for Ministry of Defence personnel only. We wish them good luck and look forward to hearing all about it next year.

No admittance. Mr. Cox thought that he would like to visit the Natural History Museum, to be shown round their vast collection of shells behind the scenes. He made a proper appointment by telephone three weeks beforehand and promptly confirmed it by letter. He arrived with his wife at the museum at the correct time (when I met him), and we duly presented ourselves at the reception desk. During a long telephone conversation, Mr. Cox was told by a nameless, faceless scientist that it was "not convenient" for us to be shown round, and that in any case it was not normal to admit anyone who was not a member of the Conchological Society. Was this a case of an absent-minded professor or just sheer ***** rudeness? I leave you to draw your own conclusions. But anyone who wants to visit the museum should seriously ask themselves whether they are prepared to waste a whole day's holiday and 5 hours of travelling. (I always thought that Sir Hans Sloane bequeathed his collection for the benefit of the nation - not just a select handful!)

The following piece was contributed by Michael Brisco, from Northern Ireland. He is 12 years old, and I think you will all agree that he has written a most interesting article, showing a knowledge and sense of observation far beyond his years. He has all the makings of a first class conchologist! In later newsletters I hope to bring you articles on shell collecting in Samoa, Ireland, Mauritius and (later, we hope) Gan.

The Shells of Normandy and Brittany
by Michael Brisco

This article is about some of the beaches I visited, and some of the shells I found at them on a recent holiday in France. The first beach we visited was the one at Carteret. This was sandy, with a rocky point. "Shell sand" may be found here and so are ormers (*haliotis tuberculata*), scallops and venus clams (*Veneridae*). Both species of cowrie (*Trivia monacha* and *T. arctica*) are found in abundance. The best collecting-ground is about one third of a mile to the right of the pier. I am at the moment analysing a sample of "shell sand" which I brought home. It is proving to be a rather complex job.

Our next port of call was a beach near St. Martin, which is south of Carteret. Following a sign which said "Plage" ("beach"), we ended up at a sandy river estuary where we decided to have lunch. The shells which may be found here are mainly bivalves: oysters, venus shells, clams, etc. and also tusk shells. (Unfortunately, I was not able to completely identify my finds as my reference book, though covering all of Britain, does not include France. Wading about in the river were some two dozen Frenchmen with rakes. They were presumably raking up burrowing bivalves to be eaten. The best collecting ground is on the banks of the river and in the shell-beds, which are above the river and 50-100 yards to the left of the opening of the road.

Mont St. Michel proved fruitless as far as shells were concerned, but next night, at Etables-Sur-Mer, the shell scene livened up again. The beach there is sandy with rocks further on. Chinaman's Hat limpets (*Calyptraea chinensis*) are evident here, and so are carpet shells, venus clams, dogwhelks, saddle oysters (*Anomiidae*) and limpets. I also found one shell which I couldn't quite place. It was a long bivalve (the valve I found had a toothed socket) and had a very thick shell, which was purple. Perhaps a later visitor to Etables-Sur-Mer, if he finds one, will be able to make a positive identification. The best collecting-ground is on the shell beds which run the whole length of the beach and are about 50 yards out from the sea wall.

Quite a few French shops seem to stock a small selection of tropical shells, and this was the case at Morgat, our next stop. The beach here was sandy, with a rocky point at the East end. All sorts of shells could be found here: sunset shells (*Gari depressa* and *G. fervensis*), banded venus shells (*Venus striatula*), banded wedge shells (*Donax vittatus*), Pandora shells (*Pandora albida*), ribbed tusk shells, wentletraps, Queen scallops, enormous cochles (about 3" long) and many shells.

The best collecting ground is on the rocks which are at the east end of the beach - that is, looking out to sea to the left of Morgat. Lifting my head for a minute, I saw a man walking along the beach, at the edge of the sea, with a knife. Each time a spurt of water came up from the sand, he plunged his knife down to the spot where it came from. Eventually, I discovered that he was "hunting" razors. Razor shells are bivalves which can burrow very quickly indeed! This man (who was probably working for a gourmet) was stabbing the razors, so that they could not burrow away, and then he pulled them up. Digging would have been hopeless, because by the time he had got his spade out the razor would have escaped.

I spent a rather interesting half-hour by the low-tide mark, digging up banded wedge shells and watching them burrow into the sand. They were to be found in abundance at a depth of about three inches below the sand's surface. I wondered how many of the shells that I had dug up would be dug up again and be slipped quickly into the cooking-pot.

From Morgat, we went to Carnac, passing through Concarneau, a town famous for its oyster beds. The beach at Carnac was composed of coarse sand with a spit of boulders jutting out into the sea. The beach was bare, except for a few shells and some seaweed. The only shells that I found were a carpet shell and a thick-shelled bivalve which was rather like a trough shell. It was impossible to say which was the best collecting ground as there wasn't one! But on the sandy peninsula which led to Quiberon, it was quite a different story. There were shells all over the place. Slipper limpets (*Crepidula fornicata*) were abundant, as were periwinkles, needle shells, top shells, cockles, venus clams and dog-whelks. The beach was sandy and had a reef of rocks exposed at low-tide.

Next day, after a visit to Les Alignments we went to Quiberon itself. Lunch was eaten in a harbour, a rather muddy place and then we went on to La Cote Sauvage - the savage coast. The coast well deserves its name because it is very rocky. We stopped in a car park and I scrambled down onto the rocks. There were plenty of rock-pools about, and fishing about in one produced another ormer. Stripping the rocks of their mussels and dog-whelks were some Frenchmen who were looking forward to boiled mussels for supper.

That, unfortunately, was our last fruitful beach in Brittany. We then went inland to Normandy and travelled up the coast there. The Normandy Landing Beaches were bare of shells, but nice and sandy. We left France on the Townsend ferry from Cherbourg. I was sad to leave, but happy in the knowledge that I had fifty more shell specimens to add to my collection.

I would be willing to swop some of the shells that I found in France with other club members. -----

"Buy, Sell or Exchange". If there is a demand, I will print small ads. under this title free of charge to all members, so start sending them in, please. I suggest you confine the requests to species which are not easily available through the dealers. -----

Future Material. It is now hoped to bring out a newsletter regularly. Remember - it is a magazine for you, by you, so would you please help by letting me have contributions for future editions. It doesn't matter whether they are full-length articles or just short "space-fillers" giving titbits of information. They will all be welcome. -----

Note for volute collectors. Have you a specimen of *Aulicina sophiae*? Many conchologists now firmly conclude that this is one and the same as *Cymbiola cymbiola*, which had always been regarded as very rare (valued in excess of \$100). It was first thought that *A. sophiae* was confined to N.W. Australia: but apparently it is now being found all over the Pacific and

parts of the Indian Ocean (Mine came from Taiwan). I strongly suspect the price of "C.cymbiola" will drop drastically, so I hope no member had acquired one as an investment.
