

VIC. BR. BULL. NO. 305

JUNE - AUGUST 2021

NOTICE OF MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 19th of October at the Melbourne Camera Club Building, cnr. Dorcas & Ferrars Sts South Melbourne at 8pm.

Due to COVID restrictions hopefully this will be the first meeting since February. At this stage it will be a members night.

Proposed meeting dates for the rest of the year.

October 19th

November 16th

Currently Branch Bulletin issues from VBB169- 288 can be accessed via the Society's website which includes an index 1-276 . <u>http://www.malsocaus.org/?page_id=91</u>

Bulletins prior to 169 and after 289 can be obtained from the editors in PDF form on request.

The cold weather that seems to have been with us all too often recently, caused me to do some processing of old beach drift that has been sitting on the shelf gathering dust. It was collected in November 2007, before the major sand shifts covered the rocky area along the foreshore between the Inverloch township and Abbott St to the west. It is a time consuming activity due to the number of micro species that are hidden within. Trying to identify them all is even more time consuming.

Anabathron lene Hedley, 1918 and Anabathron contabulatum Frauenfeld, 1867.

Anabathron lene is a common species along the coastal fringe of Bass Coast Shire. When living it appears as a tiny red species. The animal is a cream colour. It is very common in shell sand from the area with fresh dead shells still showing red colouring while old eroded specimens are whitish.

Anabathron contabulatum is a very uncommon species. Shells with living animals have been found on seaweed on 2 or 3 occasions. They are a yellowish-tinged colour with the animal of a creamy colour similar to *A. lene*. Like *A. lene*, they fade to white when dead.

There have been suggestions over the years that the 2 species may be the same thing but the 2 shells show some consistent differences as in the accompanying photograph. The protoconch is a little larger and more protrusive



in *A. contabulatum*. The encircling ribs are different and give *A. contabulatum* a more turreted appearance.

Microdryas janjucensis (Gatliff & Gabriel, 1913)



Another micro-shell that was named from a Victorian locality. The weakly convex, adult whorls give the shell a rather erect appearance. The aperture is about one-third of the shell length which is approximately 1.5mm. Another specimen is more yellowish in colour than the

photographed specimen.

All specimens found so far have been from shell drift at Inverloch. Many of these micro-shells live on seaweed with various species having been investigated in recent years. Some are very common to abundant.

As this species has not been found perhaps they are not seaweed dwellers or alternatively, this shell may be a species from the subtidal depths.

Habitat of living specimens, yet to be found.

2.

Onoba (Ovirissoa) tiara (May, 1915)

An unusual species and so far, the only specimen found. Monger (2009), gives details of May's original description. The apex of the shell is "much expanded and flattened, giving the appearance of being crowned by a turban." The aperture is oval, and entire with the lip being "expanded particularly over the front of the columella". This shell seems to be a good fit for that description. The type locality is Thouin Bay, Tasmania. Museums Victoria has a specimen that was found at Merimbula. The shell appears to be very uncommon although the locations of the 3 specimens recorded on the Atlas of Living Australia, being Tasmania and New South Wales and now this Victorian specimen, suggests it may be widely distributed. About 1.5mm high.

Powellisetia simillina May, 1915

of the Tasmanian species named by May which was from the cont

Another of the Tasmanian species named by May which was from the continental shelf. This specimen has brown shading on the columella which is reminiscent of Lucidestia species but the shape is more squat with translucent axial bands not shared by any Victorian Lucidestia known to the author. Once again, this is the only specimen located to date.

References :

Monger, A.E. 2009. "Wee Little Shells". The "Rissoas" of Victoria and South-Eastern Australia. Privately Published.

<u>Atlas of Living Australia – (ala.org.au)</u>

T.Joan Hales (May, 2021)







Birth of Victorian Branch Bulletin : a little note

For some 50 years, a small piece of folded green paper has been a bookmark in a much-used volume that sits prominently on my library shelves – a copy of Brown's *Composition of Scientific Words* (1956 revised edition) obtained at the time of dispersal of Fay Murray's molluscan library and collection after her death in 1970. Referring to this book some weeks ago (March 2021), I thought to unfold this bookmark and discovered the following birth notice.

Dear Robert, Herewith copy of the Bulletin .. it could have been a great deal better but I just haven't felt fit enough to cope with all I had planned ... maybe next time ! 2 electronic stencils @ \$2.50 Cost: = \$5.00 100 sheets x 5 of paper 1.50 2 wax stencils et al 0.50 \$7.00 This comes out at &x&X 7 cents a copy for 100 copies. Loved seeing you all , • • • • • F.V.M.

Upon transfer of the MSA council to Sydney in late 1964, Fay took it upon herself in early 1965 to organize Victorian members into the Victorian Branch of the Society. Among many achievements, Fay started a Branch Bulletin with Jean Dyke as editor, in order to disseminate Branch news of meetings and excursions dates and reports, official Society news, and members' information and requests. A brilliant idea, as the latest issue of the Bulletin is No. 304 dated April/May 2021, with many thanks due to the dedication of long-time editors Don and Val Cram.

Fay's little note accompanied a copy of Victorian Branch Bulletin No 1 August 1968 mailed to me in Geelong. It was written not long after we, as a family, had visited her and sister Margery, and Stephen the cat, at their home in Gaynor Court, East Malvern. Or did they visit us in Geelong? 53 years later, it is hard to remember, but both Fay and Margery are remembered with much affection.

Robert Burn

Polycera capensis (Quoy & Gaimard, 1824) : an Australian history

Following the two new reports of this species in Victorian waters (Burn, 2019), all literature available to me was searched and an Australian history assembled, with some thoughts along the way.

Polycera capemsis was first observed within the confines of Sydney Harbour in 1927. Joyce Allan thought it to be an unnamed species, so described it (Allan, 1932 as *P. conspicua*, an appropriate name for such a conspicuous and strikingly beautiful animal. In her description, she noted that eight specimens were available to her, and commented upon its similarity to *C.capensis* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1824) from South Africa. In an exchange of papers in the early 1930s, Swedish malacologist Nils Odhner suggested to her the *P. conspicua* was in fact *P. capensis*. Allen did not pursue this matter further, but did keep it in mind as a possibility (Allan, 1959: 223). The species name *conspicua* remained in use when referring to the nudibranch fauna of New South Wales for many years (Dakin, Bennett & Pope, 1952 and subsequent revisions and editions to 1976: Iredale & McMichael, 1962). Only in 1979 did *capensis* under that name appear in Isobel Bennett's metricated of Australian revision of *Australian Seashores* (Dakin, Bennett & Pope, 1980).

The first instance in Australian literature of change of species name to the older *capensis* of which I am aware, is the caption to a black and white photograph of a live specimen taken by Neville Coleman in "20ft of water at Port Hacking" (Coleman, 1971). Neville and I had great interchange of correspondence, slides and specimens as I tried to help him with names and identifications of "opisthobranchs" in those early days. Being aware of the *conspicua /capensis* conundrum and the priority of the latter, I am happy to shoulder the blame for suggesting to him that *capensis* was the appropriate name to use. I responded to the publication of Neville's photograph with a short note on the eight *Polycera* species then known to me for the whole coast of Australia (Burn, 1972): now from Victoria and the Bass Strait area alone, I know of 14 species, many unnamed (Burn, 2006, 2015).

4.

Questions remain about the occurrence of *P. capensis* in Australia. Firstly however, it needs to be resolved which of the South African forms labeled *P. capensis* is really that species (Rudman, 1998-2007; Debelius, 1996; Debelius & Kuiter, 2007; Zsilavecz, 2007). Australian specimens are virtually identical to those illustrated under this name by Gosliner (1987) and Zsilavecz, (2007), but Allan (1931) in her description of *P. conspicua* stated that one of her specimens from Sydney Harbour had two extra branchial appendages each side of the gills as occurs in some South African specimens now thought to perhaps represent a different species.

If Australian material is really *P.capensis*, how and when did it cross the huge Indian and Southern Ocean gap between South Africa and Sydney Harbour? Prior to the Suez Canal opening, early shipping from Europe to Australia rounded the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, often stopping to replenish fuel and supplies before the long haul across the southern Indian Ocean. Or was it later World War 1 hitch-hiker on shipping returning, via a stop at the Cape, from Europe and the Middle East to Australia to take on a new batch of "waters: (ie horses) for the Australian Light –horse Brigade then fighting overseas. Departing Australia, these ships stopped at Albany to refuel and top up with hay for the horses. The return by passed Albany for a quicker passage to Sydney, thus my thought that *P.capensis* made its way to Australia during the 1914-1918 War.

Why has it taken nearly 100 years for the Australian distribution of *p.capensis* to expand beyond Sydney Harbour? According to Nimbs & Smith (2016), the species is restricted to the southern two-thirds of the coastline of New South Wales, plus we know of three very tentative incursions into eastern and central Victoria (Burn 2008, 2015, 2019). How much further can it go and how long will it take?

*P, ca*pensis can be exceedingly common. Dakin, Bennett & Pope (1952) wrote of one occasion (1 July 1947 Sydney Harbour) when they saw "forty or fifty specimens browsing on each square foot of *Bugula* growth, which formed a thick 'brush' over the bottom of an extremely fouled launch. There must have been over three thousand on the bottom of that small craft alone."

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Zsilavecz, G. 2007. Nudibranchs of the Cape Peninsula and False Bay. S.U.R.G. : Cape Town.



Polycara capensis: Port Hacking, NSW, Neville Coleman photo.

Where it all began

On the 16th of March this year, we made a nostalgic trip to Mushroom Reef at Flinders Victoria, the reef where we found our first live cowries, (four *Notocypraea comptonii*), on the 29th of October 1969. It was actually our two boys David and Rodney (then aged 11 and 9), that raced ahead and found them before we reached the reef. They were found under stones about half way out on the right hand side.

This is what prompted a now 50 year study of the genus *Notocypraea* that has been well documented and there is more to come. We have a large collection of shells and radular slides that will be preserved in a museum for their scientific and historical value. The importance of keeping accurate data that is credible cannot be more emphasized, as this is the key to future researchers that access them.

Illustrated are the four specimens that have faded over time, with their original MSA Victorian Branch green label.



Mushroom Reef is where R.J.Griffiths found the holotype of *Notocypraea wilkinsi* on the 2nd of March, 1958.

My first radular slides were made from specimens collected at this reef in the early 1970's.

This area for some time has been a Marine Sanctuary and shell collecting is no longer permitted.



Family	Cypraeiaae	
Genus	Notocypraea,	
Species	Comptone Gray 184	.7
Locality	Flinders Low tide unce	er
Date 2	tones near weed	
Coll David	26/10/69 4 shills	

Don Cram