



<http://www.natsca.org>

Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: The Mollusca Collections

Author(s): Ross, H. C. G.

Source: Ross, H. C. G. (1981). The Mollusca Collections. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter*, Vol 3 No 1, 28 - 29.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/1859>

NatSCA supports open access publication as part of its mission is to promote and support natural science collections. NatSCA uses the Creative Commons Attribution License (CCAL) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/> for all works we publish. Under CCAL authors retain ownership of the copyright for their article, but authors allow anyone to download, reuse, reprint, modify, distribute, and/or copy articles in NatSCA publications, so long as the original authors and source are cited.

THE MOLLUSCA COLLECTIONS

All British Isles and foreign marine and non-marine Mollusca except material collected by the museum diving team (preserved as wet material) is curated by the Terrestrial Invertebrate section. The bulk of the collections of Mollusca date from the years 1830-1930 with only a small amount of material having been added in the years up to 1970 when there was an increase in specialist staff numbers after national museum status was assigned to the former Belfast Museum. Mention has already been made of the general history of the zoological material in the collections and the various societies and institutions which contributed to the present collections during the past 150 years.

The collections are split into British Isles collections and foreign collections of marine and non-marine Mollusca.

1. BRITISH ISLES

The marine and non-marine Mollusca collections are maintained as British Isles collections as, although they contain mainly Irish material, a significant proportion is from elsewhere in the British Isles. Recent efforts have been directed towards building up a good collection of spirit material since the Mollusca collections up to 1940 consist almost totally of dry material. The marine and non-marine collections are housed separately.

The British Isles land and freshwater Mollusca collection has been completely indexed, overhauled and rehoused in the last few years and a comprehensive catalogue has been prepared and is awaiting publication. Type, figured, cited and historically important material has been identified and placed in red boxes, for all type material of whatever sort, and green boxes for the other important material. The remainder is housed in white boxes. Much valuable historical background information to the collection and work and workers on Mollusca in Ireland has accrued in the process, through the assimilation of data from manuscripts, notebooks, record books, museum reports and original labels with the material.

The British Isles collections of particular significance are:-

THOMPSON, WILLIAM (1805-1852) MARINE and NON-MARINE

Historically important collections (1830-1850) amassed by one of the fore-most Irish naturalists whose interests covered the whole field of zoology. Much is cited in Thompson, W. 1856 Natural History of Ireland 4 : 1841 Catalogue of the land and freshwater Mollusca of Ireland Ann.Mag.nat. Hist. 6 16-34, 109-126, 194-208 and Reports to the British Association 1843, 1853.

HYNDMAN, GEORGE CRAWFORD (1796-1867) MARINE and NON-MARINE

Important collections contemporary with the Thompson collections.

Both these collections contain material sent from naturalists such as J.E. Gray, L. Jenyns, W. Yarrell, R. Tate and W.H. Harvey. Many of the records were published in Thompson (q.v.) and British Association Dredging Reports 1842, 1851, 1858, 1859.

WELCH, ROBERT JOHN (1859-1936) MAINLY NON-MARINE

An extremely well documented and meticulous collection dating from 1894-1936 which includes material from many well-known English

conchologists such as A.M. Norman, J.B. Tomlin, C. Oldham, J.W. Jackson, E. Collier, A.G. Stubbs and A.S. Kennard as well as Irish conchologists such as R.A. Phillips, A.W. Stelfox and R.F. Scharff. It has a large amount of associated manuscripts and notebooks. Many references in Journal of Conchology, Irish Naturalist and Irish Naturalists Journal.

GRIERSON, PHILIP HENRY (1859-1952) IRISH NON-MARINE

A collection linked to the useful Irish county lists which Grierson published in Irish Naturalist between 1901-1906.

GREEN, WILLIAM A. (1884?-1961) IRISH NON-MARINE

Collection made by a former photographic pupil of R.J. Welch between 1900 and 1910.

EARLE, Major P.K. MARINE

A fine collection of 127 species of British marine bivalves, part ex Salisbury collection (which contained Tomlin, Lyons, Hargreaves and Jeffrey material).

2. FOREIGN NON-MARINE

The bulk of this collection is as yet unsorted. The earliest specimens date from 1835 and it appears to have some interesting material from various sources. Welch, Collier and Standen added to it. Palaeartic Mollusca are well represented. A collection of 144 species of North American Unionidae obtained by William Thompson from Lea, Say and others donated by BNHPS and revised by T.H. Platt in 1915 is separately housed and accessioned.

MARINE - REFERENCE COLLECTION

The basis of the foreign marine collection is material collected by Richard Davison M.P. a Belfast-man who shared a keen interest in systematic conchology with George Hyndman. He had many contacts abroad who sent him material. Davison's collection passed to George Horner who later donated the material to Belfast Museum. However the scientific value of the collection was greatly reduced when many of the specimens were separated from their data when the individual foreign marine collections were formed into a single collection in a curatorial exercise a number of years ago. Original labels were also in many cases not kept.

The bulk of George Hyndman's foreign marine collection which contains material collected by friends and acquaintances as well as some purchased from Damon and Humphreys was sold by his executors to Lurgan Mechanics Institute. In 1976 Lurgan Technical College donated the collection to the Ulster Museum. The value of the collection has been reduced through dissociation of labels from specimens.

Recently, purchases have been made to supplement material in the poorly represented superfamilies in the foreign marine collection. Apart from this the only recent addition of note is a collection made by Dr. D. Roberts of Queen's University, Belfast during an expedition to N.W. Java. This duplicates a collection in the Indonesian Institute of Oceanology and contains material linked to a published catalogue.