

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONCHOLOGICAL CLUB OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA:**

As presented to membership present on 5 May, 2002, the centennial meeting of the organization by CCSC President Lindsey T. Groves.

In April of 1902, Mrs H.A. Zech of Los Angeles and her daughter Miss Lillian Zech invited several other women interested in shells to be their guests for an afternoon and proposed forming a small club to “meet regularly to discuss, study, and exchange notes on our collections.” They all accepted and in May of 1902 the ladies met at the Long Beach home of Mrs. M.C.W. Merrihew and an informal club to meet on a monthly basis was formed. Those present were:

Mrs Daisy Raine  
Mrs. Carpenter  
Mrs. Maria Baldrige  
Mrs. Ida S. Oldroyd  
Miss Lillian Zech

Miss Margaret Wood  
Mrs. W.F. Ball  
Mrs. E. Gaylord  
Mrs. H.A. Zech  
Mrs. M.C.W. Merrihew

They decided that there would be no name, no officers, and no written bylaws until the club had existed for a year. The club met regularly throughout the year at homes of the members and each took turns of at leading “the lesson” for an afternoon. For the trivia buffs, there was no lesson at the first meeting, but at the second meeting in June 1902 at the home of Mrs. Ball, Mrs Gaylord was leader of the first lesson (unfortunately the topic is unknown). At the end of a year the club was organized with a constitution and a president, Mrs Maria Baldrige and Miss Lillian Zech as secretary/treasurer. Soon thereafter Mrs. Carpenter withdrew from membership and Mrs. Mary D. Zucker of Los Angeles joined *The Tuesday Shell Club* as they had been meeting on Tuesday afternoons. There were no regular dues, but an occasional small assessment for expenses such as stamps and stationary was necessary. At this time membership was limited to women only and

other early members included Mrs. Cummley, Mrs. Eshnaur, and Mrs. Gage. Several years later the name was changed to the *Conchological Study Club of Southern California* and briefly as *Conchological Club of Los Angeles*. As members left the group the compliment of twelve was maintained, by invitation only. Again for trivia buffs, the size of the group was limited due to the size of the average living room at the time and possibly they must have taken into account the bulk of the long skirts and bustles. The earliest reference to a club logo was in June of 1907 as members proposed a club pin to have a pecten [*sic*] shape. In 1915 Dr. Hector Alliot, head of the Southwest Museum, urged the group to meet in its two story building in downtown Los Angeles. However, as the museum was open to both men AND women a rather radical change occurred “which was not accepted until after considerable debate and without some misgivings.” So for the first time masculine members were admitted, which also required that meetings be scheduled in the evenings to accommodate work schedules. A drawback was the fact that the building was entirely without heat in the winter so warm clothing was required. Another name change occurred as well and the group became the *Conchological Club of the Southwest Museum* (CCSW) with Mrs. Baldrige as President, Mrs. Ball, Mrs. Drain, Mrs. Golisch, Mrs. Lawrence, Mrs. Johnston, Mrs. Elsie Chace, Mrs. Zech, and Miss Lillian Zech as members and Mr. Allyn G. Smith as the first male member of the club. Mr. Emory Chace, William H. Golisch, and Tom Oldroyd became members shortly thereafter. After Dr. Alliot’s death, the Southwest museum moved to South Pasadena and decided to restrict itself to archaeology and the club resolved to withdraw its affiliation with the museum as of February 1925 and began meeting in the Stock Exchange building, room 1022, 639 So. Spring St, downtown Los Angeles. In April of 1925 the name *Conchological Club of Southern California* was officially adopted. In November of 1926 the CCSC began meeting in the Seminar room of the old LA Public Library. Notable new

members in the 1920's included A.M. Strong, George Willett, Herbert N. Lowe, Wendell Gregg, Walter Eyerdam, Julia Rogers, and Howard Hill. In August of 1930, U.S. Grant IV of the southern branch of the University of California (now = UCLA) gave a presentation on Pliocene mollusks of downtown LA and became a member. In July of 1936 the club moved its meeting site to the Banker's building at 639 So. Spring St. one floor below where it had met after leaving the SW museum and in October 1936 met in the Directors Room of the Los Angeles Museum of Arts and Sciences (which eventually became the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History and finally and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County) where it has been meeting ever since. Notable new members in the 1930's included Faye Howard, John Q. Burch, Rose Burch, Tom Burch, George Kanakoff, Mackenzie Gordon, Jr., and Earl Huffman. In April of 1939 member Mrs. James C. Marsh began publishing the minutes of the CCSC and other club news as *Conchological Notes For 1939* which lasted until June of 1941. Subsequently the famous *Minutes of the Conchological Club of Southern California* series was begun in 1941 with John Q. Burch as editor. It was noted shortly thereafter that Myra Keen was appointed an associate member in 1941. In December 1941 a Beatrice E. LaRue signed in as CCSC member who became Mrs. Thomas Burch by the April 1942 meeting. Other notable CCSC members who joined in the 1940's included Gilbert Grau, Dwight Taylor, William Emerson, and Irene McCulloch. Throughout the 1950's publication of *The Minutes* continued under the editorship of the Burches. Cypraeid specialist Crawford Cate and his wife Jean, a mitrid specialist, joined in 1953. Other notable members who joined in the 1950's included Rae Baxter, John Fitch, Jean Wilkins, Gale Sphon, Roy and Forrest Poorman, Don Shasky, Bert and Lucinda Draper, Helen and Joe DuShane, and Bruce Campbell. Twila and Ford Bratcher became members in February of 1960 and Gene Coan joined in March of 1960. After John Q. Burch retired in 1960

publication of the *Minutes* ceased. However, in late 1960 CCSC news was included in a new effort edited by Reudi Stohler called *News of the Associated Shell Clubs of California* (which became the *News of the Western Association of Shell Clubs of California* in April of 1962), which also included news from the Pacific Shell Club, the Northern California Malacozoological Club, and finally the San Diego Shell Club. Publication ceased in October, 1969. Other notables who joined in the 1960's include Pat La Follette, Bob Howley, and Gerry Bakus. Prominent honorary members included Myra Keen, Leo Hertlein, and Reudi Stohler. 1964 was a significant year for the CCSC as on 3 February a Mr. James McLean gave a program titled *Sub-littoral fauna of the Monterey Bay area* who later became curator of Invertebrate Zoology of the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. He completed his PhD. dissertation in 1966 soon became CCSC sponsor ... a title that he holds to this date. Also in the 1960's Bert Draper took on the task of maintaining *The Lost Operculum Club: List of Champions*, which lists world record sizes of eastern Pacific mollusks, the last version was issued in 1987. It was business as usual in the 1970's for the CCSC and notable members included Edith Abbott, Yvonne Albi, Joan Demond, Ralph Ferguson, Jody Woolsey, and Bernadine Hughes, the last CCSC historian. Unfortunately, much archival material relating to the late 1960's and early 1970's is missing. Notable members joining in the 1980's include Kirstie Kaiser, LouElla Saul, Clif Coney, Richard Squires, Elizabeth Veal, and yours truly first as a visitor on 7 October, 1985 and then as a member on 5 May, 1986 (exactly 16 years ago today). The 1990's were pretty much the same as earlier decades. Unfortunately over the past 20 years many of the prominent members and honorary members have left this world including the Chaces, Crawford Cate, Reudi Stohler, Roy Poorman, Bert Draper, Don Shasky, and Bernadine Hughes and many others. After the turn of a new the century it is hoped that a new the new arrangement of joint meetings of the CCSC and

the Pacific Shell Club will eventually result in one strong club with a long and colorful history.

The most notable recent change has been the changing of the guard in LACM malacology as

Ángel Valdés has succeeded Jim McLean as curator and will be a notable member as well.

Obviously the CCSC and its members of the past, present, and future are indeed a veritable

Whos who of Eastern Pacific Malacology and Paleontology. So many thanks to the scores of amateurs and professional who contributed to the success and longevity of this club.