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# The Marine Mollusc Collection at the Natural History Museum, London



**Andreia Salvador**

Curator of Marine Mollusca, Department of Life Sciences, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD UK  
E-mail: [a.salvador@nhm.ac.uk](mailto:a.salvador@nhm.ac.uk)

The Natural History Museum, London has one of the largest, one of the oldest and one the most scientific important collections of molluscs in the world.

Dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century this comprehensive collection holds an estimate 5 million specimens.

The marine collection includes around 40,000 type lots, from the collections of Hugh Cuming, Alcide Dessalines d'Orbigny, Thomas Lombe Taylor, and Philip Pearson Carpenter, to name a few. There is also important material collected during voyages and expeditions like the *Endeavour*, *Lightning*, *Porcupine*, *Rattlesnake*, *Investigator*, *Challenger*, *Discovery*, and *Samarang*.

As well as the scientific importance of the collections, a wealth of material originating from Sir Hans Sloane, Mordaunt Cracherode, Sir Joseph Banks, Charles Darwin and Charles Lyell, gives an unparalleled historic dimension to our holdings.

## Timeline of important acquisitions

|   |             |   |
|---|-------------|---|
|   | <b>1753</b> | Sir Hans <b>Sloane</b> (1660-1753) collection is bequeathed to the nation   |
|    | <b>1799</b> | Rev. Clayton Mordaunt <b>Cracherode</b> (1730-1799) collection  |
|  | <b>1827</b> | Donation of specimens collected by Sir Joseph <b>Banks</b> (1743-1820) during his time with Captain <b>Cook</b> on board of the <i>Endeavour</i>  |
|    | <b>1837</b> | William John <b>Broderip</b> (1789-1859) collection   |
|  | <b>1842</b> | Collection by Richard Brinsley <b>Hinds</b> (1811-1846) during the voyage of the <i>Sulphur</i> (1836-1842), from West Coast of Central America, California, New Guinea, Fiji, Tahiti, etc. |
|    | <b>1842</b> | Hugh <b>Cuming</b> (1791-1865) collection (" <b>Mus. Cuming</b> "), mainly from the Pacific coast of South America, South Pacific, and the Philippines (also in 1866)                       |
|    | <b>1851</b> | Large collection made by John <b>Macgillivray</b> (1821-1867) during the voyage of the <i>Rattlesnake</i> (1846-1850), from Australia and adjacent islands to the North and North East      |
|    | <b>1854</b> | Alcide Dessalines <b>d'Orbigny</b> (1802-1857) collections from South America, Cuba and Canary Islands  |
|  | <b>1857</b> | Philip Pearsall <b>Carpenter</b> (1819-1877) collection of Mazatlan molluscs formed by Frederick <b>Reigen</b>  |
|    | <b>1858</b> | Joshua <b>Alder</b> (1792-1867) collection  |
|  | <b>1870</b> | George French <b>Angas</b> (1822-1866) collection, mostly from Australia  |
|    | <b>1871</b> | William Harper <b>Pease</b> (1824-1871) collection from the Hawaiian Islands and other islands in the Pacific   |
|     | <b>1874</b> | Shells bequeathed by John Gwyn <b>Jeffreys</b> (1809-1885), containing material from the <i>Lightning</i> , <i>Porcupine</i> , <i>Knight-Errant</i> , and <i>Shearwater</i> Expeditions     |
|  | <b>1874</b> | Rev. Thomas <b>Lombe Taylor</b> (1802-1874) collection (also in 1879)   |
|  | <b>1874</b> | John Edward <b>Gray</b> (1800-1875) collection  |
|  | <b>1874</b> | John Edward <b>Gray</b> (1800-1875) collection  |
|    | <b>1887</b> | Marine shells collected during the <i>Challenger</i> Expedition (1873-76)   |
|    | <b>1889</b> | William <b>Turton</b> (1762-1835) collection from St. Helena  |
|    | <b>1898</b> | John Henry <b>Ponsonby</b> (1848-1916) collection of marine shells from South Africa  |
|  | <b>1908</b> | Rev. Canon Alfred Merle <b>Norman</b> (1831-1918) collection, known as the " <b>Museum Normanianum</b> ", from the North Sea  |
|    | <b>1913</b> | Thomas <b>Pennant</b> (1726-1798) British shell collection  |
|    | <b>1948</b> | Frederick W. <b>Townsend</b> collection from Gulf of Oman, Persian Gulf and North Arabian Sea   |
|    | <b>1951</b> | Ronald <b>Winckworth</b> (1884-1950) collection from the Indian Ocean   |
|  | <b>1976</b> | Charles <b>Lyell</b> (1797-1875) collection, containing specimens collected by Charles <b>Darwin</b> (1809-1882) during the <i>Beagle</i> voyage (1831-1836)                                |

Our dedicated library of over 6,000 bound volumes and 30,000 reprints on molluscs, dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, provides a source of information to support collections, curation and research.

Specimens are stored in a number of ways; dry shells, whole animals in spirit, frozen tissue and microscope slides. It is used extensively by researchers, during study visits, by means of loans and increasingly with digital photographs.

There is a large amount of unidentified material which is likely to contain species possibly new to science. If you would like to study any of the specimens and help us identify them, please contact Andreia Salvador ([a.salvador@nhm.ac.uk](mailto:a.salvador@nhm.ac.uk)).