



# AGM 2017

## President's Report

Dear shell friends,

My first tenure as President of the newly-formed Shell Collectors of South Africa (previously known as the Conchological Society of Southern Africa – and for the remainder of this Report, simply “the Society”) was filled with fun and adventure, and also with all the other not-so-fun aspects a Society has to deal with. Fortunately, I can report that the former handsomely outstripped the latter, and I think we can be proud of a very successful and productive first voting cycle.

Of course, the achievements within the Society cannot be ascribed to a single individual. I am a firm believer in the saying: any Organisation is only as strong and as the people within. I had a great, hard-working and motivated team backing me all the way, without which we would probably be putting the proverbial covers on the future of our once-prestigious Society. I say “once-prestigious”, because I think we still have much work to do and a long way to go to see it return to the former glory of the Society in the 1970s to 1990s, but with dedication and enthusiasm, we will see this happen!

My team of hard-working Committee Members backing me the past year was as follows:

- Mr Roy Aiken – Vice President and Scientific Officer
- Mr Maurice Evans – Treasurer
- Mr Anton Groenewald – Secretary
- Mr Ken Brown – Editor (supported in great measure by Mr Alwyn Marais as Co-Editor)
- Mrs Christelle Deysel – Additional Member



*Roy*



*Maurice*



*Anton*



*Ken*



*Christelle*

Many of these members served on past Committees, and I drew heavily on their expertise during my first tenure – and will be doing do so for the second half as well. I applaud their hard work, dedication and continued support for our Committee's second stint.

### **The First Tenure**

The success of an Organisation is not merely based on witnessed, visible output (“achievements”), but the Society did achieve quite a bit over the course of the past year. The following serves to highlight the most notable of these achievements:

#### *New Society Website*

The Society launched its new Website end of January 2017. The Website was totally redesigned and reflects the new, fresh approach and image of the newly-named Shell Collectors SA. It is modern enough to hopefully attract younger collectors – or anyone potentially interested in shells – and serves as a first step towards seeing some growth within the Society.

#### *New Facebook Page*

The Society launched the modernised Facebook Page in May 2017. Modernisations include the new logo and title, and updated contact information. Facebook is the current stalwart of electronic one-on-one communication, and still the No 1 Social Media platform out there, and is a critical element in promoting the ideals, passions and joys of the Society. It is also a powerful medium to try and attract the youth and hopefully see some growth within the Society.

#### *Written Communications*

One of our immediate aims as a new Committee was to do as much as possible to improve communications with our Members. The redesigned Website and Facebook Page were two improvements in this area, but our first tenure as a Committee also saw the release of Sea Bones 8 and two editions of The Strandloper. The Sea Bones was selected as the official Newsletter of the Society; we will be issuing many more in future. The Strandloper – our official Society Journal – has seen some revival, following a slight lull, with the issuing of two editions within our first tenure as a new Committee. This success was undoubtedly due to the drive, tenacity and persistence of our new Editor, Mr Ken Brown, who received heaps of expert support in the development and formatting department from our former Editor and new Co-Editor, Mr Alwyn Marais. The Committee aims to keep up the pace, and we will hopefully increase the number of editions within the second tenure.

#### *President’s Correspondence*

As part of our efforts to improve communications with our Members, I have strived to keep everyone updated with important news, events and other interesting developments on a regular basis. While some of the communication has been via email messages, most has been via formal Letters, Notes and Memorandums. I will endeavour to keep this up in the second cycle, and always try to answer all emails within a reasonable timeframe. I also intend making many more personal visits, because I would love to get to know the people behind the messages.

#### *Standardisation*

As part of our Society’s translation into the SCSA, we are in the process of adopting a new look and also creating new standards. So far, we have standardised by adopting a new logo and a number of templates for written correspondence. These include templates for formal Society Letters, Notes,

Memorandums, Meeting Agendas and Meeting Minutes. We will be expanding this into other forms of written communication, as the need arises.

#### *Updated Society Constitution*

Our Editor (and former lawyer), Mr Ken Brown, took the initiative to work through and update the very aged 1999 Society Constitution. The Constitution was tabled for approval at the 2017 AGM, and will form the backbone of operations within the Society for many years to come.

#### *The M.L. Du Preez Collection*

The Society was honoured to receive, as a donation, the complete shell and shell book collection formerly belonging to Mrs Margaret Lorene du Preez. The collection, which spans almost a decade of collecting (between Mrs Du Preez and her mother) was bequeathed to the Society by her next of kin. The entire collection has since been moved to a temporary location where it will be sorted, catalogued and organised for posterity within the Society. The task to move the shells was a mammoth one in itself – requiring a full day to accomplish – but the next one is even more of a challenge, albeit one which will be enjoyed by all who participate!

#### *Lifetime Achievement Awards*

The Society bestowed Lifetime Achievement Awards on Mrs Barbara Fouche on 06 April 2017, as well as on Mr Roy Aiken on 3 June 2017, as appreciation for their hard work and contributions to the Society. The awards, in the form of a framed certificate and an accompanying letter of appreciation, were presented to Mrs Fouche in person by the Society VP, Mr Roy Aiken, on 6 April 2017, and to Mr Aiken by myself on 3 June 2017. The next Sea Bones (no 9) will contain a short information piece on the handover of the awards.

More such recognitions will surely be awarded to other deserving Society Members as time progresses.

#### *Overseas Shell Show Participation*

Messrs Roy Aiken and Alan Seccombe attended the 2017 Paris Shell Show, as well as the 2017 Belgian Shell Show, not only as visitors (read, “shoppers”), but also as dealers and overall ambassadors for the local conchological scene. As the only two South African exhibitors at these two prestigious shell events, the two gents did us proud by flying the South African conchological flag, promoting our local shell species, rubbing shoulders with old friends, and making new ones.

It is hoped that more Members of the Society will be able to attend future international shell shows. Attendance of such events provides great perspective on what goes on in other countries regarding our hobby, and also opens doors through collaboration – while creating a place where likeminded individuals can meet, make new friendships and share a common joy.

### *International Publications*

Mr Roy Aiken also extended the ambassadorship by publishing an interesting article on the description of two previously unidentified *Cypraeovula* in the December 2016 edition of *Beautiful Cowries* (BC no 8).

### *Pretoria Shell Club Meetings*

The Pretoria Shell Club continues to hold monthly Monday-night meetings at the Pretoria North Bridge Club. We have had an interesting year so far, where a longstanding wish of club members was realised through the attentiveness of the Pretoria Club Chairman, Mr Maurice Evans: Club Members were given the opportunity to provide topics for talks. This has resulted in a very interesting and diverse (and often very practical) set of topics, which will continue on into November.

### *2017 AGM*

And last, but not least, we have concluded another interesting and successful Annual General Meeting. The highlight for me was, as usual, the AGM Auction – a great deal of gratitude to all the shell donors for making this a possibility!

### **In Closing**

It should be evident from the above that it has, indeed, been a very busy, yet productive, year for the Society and the new Committee. We are still far from achieving all our goals. Some of these goals include the following:

- Meeting you, our Members, and taking time to get to know you;
- Further improving our Correspondence and Communications;
- Networking with schools;
- Attracting new Members;
- Reviving the KZN and Western Cape regional Shell Clubs;
- Finding a permanent “home” for the Society;
- Setting up a Society Reference Collection.

With continued support from both the Committee, *as well as all our Members*, this will be achievable.

I would like to thank the 2016/17 Committee for their hard work, dedication and passion, while inviting our Members to assist us in making the Society and its core ideal – the joy of shells – a prestigious, lucrative place to be for many future and current collectors.

### **On a Final Note**

On a final note, when I started off on this journey, I addressed the new Committee and undertook not to dig up any “old cows” – to lay aside any politics and mud-slinging from the past – and encourage everyone else to follow suit. We need to continue with this into the next tenure, not only the Committee, but everyone part of this Society. We need to understand that there will always be

opinions, and we need to respect the opinions of our fellow collectors and those more scientifically-inclined, without belittling any such opinions.

Our hobby is intrinsically based on identification and appreciation of species through observation of external characters – shape, size, features, patterns, colours – many of which are highly variable, even within certain species. Differences in opinion as a result of studies have, in the past, unfortunately often led to many heated discussions and irreconcilable clashes – something our small Society cannot entertain or afford. We need to strive to put such differences aside, by creating a place where differences in opinions can be *accepted and respected*, without having to end up in personal attacks and dissention amongst our Members. We will never see growth if this cannot be embraced. We need to understand that we can all learn from each other, and our differences in opinion should be welcomed as a learning experience, rather than creating rifts.

I plan on doing as much as I can to see such differences and dissentions disappear, during my second tenure as President. I need your help to see this through to fruition!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Andre Meredith', is written over the blue sky background.

*Andre Meredith*  
President, SCSA

*03 June 2017*

