Obituary

Richard Kenneth (‘Dick’) Dell, 1920–2002: obituary, bibliography and a list of his taxa

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Dr ‘Dick’ Dell was the last of the immediate past generation of ‘giants’ of New Zealand malacology. He was born in Auckland on 11 July 1920 and died on 6 March 2002, after a long illness, surrounded by his family, at the Mary Potter Hospice, Wellington. He is survived by his wife, Dame Miriam (née Matthews), whom he married in 1946, and four daughters. He left a legacy of a major museum collection at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (formerly the National Museum of New Zealand, the Dominion Museum, and originally the Colonial Museum). He published several major monographs and more than 150 papers on Mollusca, more than 300 new species, and several popular books on shells and crabs. We list here his publications and new taxa, following a brief biography.

As a 12-year-old, Dick started collecting shells from the shores of Waitemata Harbour. With a friend, he started a museum in the back yard of his home. He was one of the early members of Baden Powell’s ‘boys’ club’ at the Auckland Museum, later to become the large, still strong Auckland shell club (formally, the Malacology Section, Auckland Institute and Museum). There he met and became life-long friends with that other ‘giant’ of New Zealand natural history, Charles Fleming. He also worked for Powell in the school holidays, helping curate the Auckland Museum shell collection. He was educated at Mount Albert Grammar School, Auckland University College and Auckland Teachers College, and he would have been a teacher if the war had not intervened. With the war, Dick joined the New Zealand Artillery and served in, among other places, Nissan Island in the Solomon Islands, where he was able to collect (and he later published several papers on the land snails he collected there). He also served in the Middle East and Italy.

After the war, Dick was about to take up teaching when he was offered a job as ‘conchologist’ at the Dominion Museum, replacing Marjorie Mestayer. He jumped at the offer and went on to a career in malacology. He inherited a relatively small, chaotic, quaintly stored collection of a mere 5000 registered lots, mostly dating from Colonial Museum times. He standardised museum cabinets, tubes and trays, and built the collection up to more than 30 000 lots by the time Winston Ponder replaced him as malacologist in 1967. He thus laid a firm foundation for the future development of this now globally significant collection. Dick was one of the many who returned from the war to a civil life where the struggle to earn a part-time degree was combined with holding down a full-time job and raising a family. He completed an MSc at Victoria University (Wellington) on New Zealand
octopus and squid (published as *Dominion Museum Bulletin 16*, 1952), a pioneering effort at a time when few taxa had been collected around New Zealand. Probably Dick’s major contribution to knowledge of the New Zealand molluscan fauna was the results of the Chatham Islands 1954 Expedition, the first major oceanographic expedition beyond the shelf edge around New Zealand. This was published in 1956 as ‘The archibenthal Mollusca of New Zealand’ (Dell 1956c). In this major monograph, Dick provided evidence to explain the long-mysterious depositional environments of New Zealand’s richly diverse Cainozoic fossil molluscan fauna: many faunas lived beyond the shelf edge, at 300–400 m depth and more. Here, such treasures as *Parvamussium*, *Euciroa*, *Otukaia*, *Falsilunatia*, *Galeodea*, *Sassia kampyla*, large turrids, and *Scaphander* were discovered for the first time living around New Zealand, and several of the species collected by HMS ‘Challenger’ were recollected for the first time. This was a great revelation to palaeontologists and we young students alike! It has led on to the detailed knowledge of and huge collections from the bathyal zone of the New Zealand region, held at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research. This publication also served to earn Dick a DSc, awarded in 1956.

Not long afterwards, Dick started to work on the Oceanographic Institute’s Antarctic collections, and both Winston Ponder and Alan Beu well remember highly enjoyable school vacations being paid (!) to sort shells from those samples, mainly from the Ross Sea. Dick worked also on other Antarctic collections and, in 1964, published a major monograph of the Antarctic bivalves, chitons and scaphopods collected by the ‘Discovery’ Expedition (A. W. B. Powell having revised the gastropods). In 1961, he became Assistant Director (to Dr Robert Falla) and, in 1966, Director of the then Dominion Museum and had little time...
to work on molluscs. However, after his retirement in 1980, he again set to work to write up the Ross Sea molluscs. This study was eventually published as a book, ‘Antarctic Mollusca, with Special Reference to the Fauna of the Ross Sea’ (Dell 1990c), and is one of only a few synoptic treatments of the Antarctic Mollusca. Along the way, Dick published more than 150 other papers on marine, terrestrial and freshwater molluscs (including fossils), crabs, birds and other groups, as well as several contributions to Antarctic biogeography.

We remember Dick as a very kind, patient man, very helpful and encouraging to everyone. He would go out of his way to identify that one last little snail that defied the literature, providing much satisfaction to the collector and the inspiration for a life of research. In this vein, one of his major contributions to New Zealand malacology was his founding of the Wellington Shell Club in 1955. Early members included schoolboys Winston Ponder and Alan Beu, with Frank Climo and Bruce Marshall joining later. Early meetings were held in Dick’s office, with only six to eight people present, but the club soon had to move to the boardroom and continues in strength today. Dick also had a passion to conserve the rich New Zealand fauna and flora and anyone who collected with him will always remember his loud cry of ‘Turn the boulder [or log] back over!’.

Dick served an astonishing variety of societies and committees that keep science active and organised in New Zealand. Among others, these included the Historic Places Trust, the Ross Dependency Research Committee, the National Parks and Reserves Authority (his work in which was of particular significance), the NZ Ecological Society, the NZ Marine Sciences Society (President 1963–65), the Art Galleries and Museums Association of NZ (President 1958–59), the Scientific Subcommission of UNESCO, and the Royal Society of New Zealand (including Editor of The Transactions, 1964–69, and President, 1977–81). He was awarded a Nuffield Travelling Fellowship in 1959–61 to work on New Zealand molluscs at the British Museum (Natural History). He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand in 1961 and won the Society’s Hamilton Prize in 1955, and the Hector Medal of the Society in 1965. He was also awarded a Galathea Medal by Denmark, a Queen’s Service Order in 1981, a Queen’s Silver Jubilee Medal, and a New Zealand 1990 Commemoration Medal. We are particularly sad to see him go, as he was a mentor and friend to all three authors, and the last of his great generation of New Zealand biologists and taxonomists, who brought these sciences to the established position they have today. He will long be remembered for this legacy.

Bibliography


New taxa

MOLLUSCA

abernethyi, Xenophilatum (Xenogalea). Dell, 1956c: 87.
alacerrima, Herpetopoma larochei. Dell, 1956a: 34.
alacris, Uberella. Dell, 1956c: 77.
alertae, 'Balcis'. Dell, 1956c: 81.
alertae, Fax. Dell, 1956c: 92.

Alertalex. Dell, 1956c: 46; type species (OD) Alertalex blacki Dell, 1956 (Trochidae).
alanea, Obamella. Dell, 1952d: 89.
altocanalis, Coluzea. Dell, 1956a: 50.
altocanalis, Ringicula. Dell, 1952c: 82.
anarenis, Solariella. Dell, 1972b: 3.
antarctica, Brookula (s. l.). Dell, 1990a: 102.
antarctica, Calliotropis (Solaricida). Dell, 1990a: 86.

Antarctodomus. Dell, 1972c: 5; type species (OD) Bathysdomus thielei Powell, 1958 (Buccinidae).
aoteana, Antizafra. Dell, 1956c: 111.
archibenthicola, Micrelenchus caelatus. Dell, 1956c: 44.
attenuata, Mysella. Dell, 1956a: 33.
aucklandica, Closeia?. Dell, 1950b: 36.
banksi, Proximitra. Dell, 1951d: 54.
benthicola, Buccinulum (Evarnula). Dell, 1951d: 56.
benthicola, Astrosarepta. Dell, 1956c: 15.
benthicola, Brookula. Dell, 1956c: 49.
benthicola, Fenestrosyrinx. Dell, 1956c: 141.
benthicola, Liraculae odhneri. Dell, 1956c: 140.
benthicola, Penion. Dell, 1956c: 96.
benthicola, Splendrilla. Dell, 1956c: 133.
benthicola, Terelimella. Dell, 1956c: 156.
benthicola, Venustas. Dell, 1950c: 47.
benthicolas, Bulbus. Dell, 1990a: 158.

blacki, Alertalex. Dell, 1956c: 46.
bollonsi, Crosseola. Dell, 1956a: 36.
bruuni, Cardiomya. Dell, 1956a: 34.
bulloidea, Cylichna. Dell, 1956c: 144.
canturiensis, Fax mirabilis. Dell, 1951d: 56.
canyonesis, Antimelatoma. Dell, 1956c: 142.

Cavellioropa. Dell, 1952d: 93; type species (OD) Diplomphalus subantialba Suter, 1890 (Charopidae).
charhamensis, Leporemax. Dell, 1956c: 120.
charhamensis, Venustas tigris. Dell, 1956c: 43.

Chathamidia. Dell, 1956c: 118; type species (OD) Chathamidia expeditionis Dell, 1956 (Turbinellidae).
chorista, Cominella (Cominista). Dell, 1952c: 77.
cookiana, Crosseola. Dell, 1952a: 415.
cookiana, Geminoropa (Cavellioropa). Dell, 1952d: 93.
cookiana, Lissotesta. Dell, 1956a: 36.
cookiana, Monodilepas. Dell, 1953a: 149.
coronata, Comptella. Dell, 1956c: 117.
cracens, Marginella (Glabella). Dell, 1956c: 128.
crassilabrum, Cyamiocardium. Dell, 1964h: 204.
cryptocarinata, Pleia. Dell, 1956c: 89.
deflectable, Euciroa. Dell, 1956c: 42.
delicatula, Bathymbix Dell, 1990a: 88.
efani, Calliotropis (Calliotropis). Dell, 1990a: 85.
ergastula, Marginella (Glabella). Dell, 1953d: 45.
expeditious, Asperaphne. Dell, 1956c: 137.
explorata, Notoacmea. Dell, 1953d: 42.
falklandicum, Siphonodentalium (Fusillochus). Dell, 1964h: 131.
Falsitromina. Dell, 1990a: 175; type species (OD) Tromina bella Powell, 1951 (Turridae).
fiordlandica, Maoricorocha. Dell, 1952b: 64.
Flammoconcha. Dell, 1952b: 65; type species (OD) Helicarion (Peloparion) cumberi Powell, 1941
(Charopidae).


tromina, Buccinulum (Evarnula). Dell, 1956c: 102.

torresi, Cirrotrema (Tioria). Dell, 1956a: 40.


foheauxana, Venustas. Dell, 1950c: 45.

foeformis, Antiguralea. Dell, 1956c: 140.

foeuloides, Marginella (Hovarianella). Dell, 1956c: 128.


galatheae, Questimya. Dell, 1956a: 33.


geargiana, Macoma (Psammacoma). Dell, 1964h: 220.


hardingae, Marginella (Kogomea). Dell, 1956c: 126.

haauakensis, Alcithoe (Leporemax sasus. Dell, 1956a: 54.


hedleyi, Pontiothauma. Dell, 1990a: 244.


hermata, Splendrillia. Dell, 1956c: 134.
inexpectata, Neactaeomina. Dell, 1956c: 147.  
investigator, Thestyleda. Dell, 1952e: 100.  
isolata, Linatilida. Dell, 1956c: 111.  
jacula, Splendrillia. Dell, 1956c: 134.  
judithae, Marginella (Glabella). Dell, 1956c: 127.  
knoxi, Teremelon. Dell, 1956c: 121.  
kogua, Poirieria. Dell, 1956c: 114.  
lachlani, Mysella. Dell, 1952a: 413.  
latalamina, Notoplax. Dell, 1956e: 57.  
lateumbilicata, Calliotropis (Solaricida). Dell, 1990a: 86.  
lawsi, Planpyrgiscus. Dell, 1956c: 156.  
mairi, Iridoteuthis. Dell, 1959b: 3.  
Mauricrater. Dell, 1956c: 57; type species (OD) Notocacme explorata Dell, 1953 (Lepetidae).  
Mauriscaphander. Dell, 1950b: 36; type species (OD) Mauriscaphander maoricae Dell, 1950 (Cylichnidae).  
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morioria, Saccella hedleyi. Dell, 1956c: 12.
multispiratus, Antiguraleus. Dell, 1956c: 139.
neozelanica, Ectorisma. Dell, 1956c: 43.
neozelanica, Stilifer. Dell, 1956c: 82.
nicklesi, Cadulus (s. l.). Dell, 1964b: 129.
nissani, Orpiella (Owaraha). Dell, 1955c: 326.
nucleoproducta, Mendax. Dell, 1956c: 68.
nuptialis, Fox mirabilis. Dell, 1953d: 44.
oconnori, Euspincassia. Dell, 1952c: 75.
orientalis, Maoritomella. Dell, 1956a: 57.
orientalis, Nobolina. Dell, 1956c: 64.
otagoensis, Lissotesta. Dell, 1956c: 52.
otagoensis, Marginella (Glabella). Dell, 1956c: 127.
otagoensis, Scaphander. Dell, 1956c: 143.
paregonius, Micantapex. Dell, 1956c: 129.
periwonensis, Papuina (Pinnadena). Dell, 1955c: 327.
platyplagia, Architectonica (Discotectonica). Dell, 1952c: 73.
powellii, Nepotilla. Dell, 1956c: 141.
powellii, Paracomitas augusta. Dell, 1956a: 56.
powellii, Pseudoinquisitor. Dell, 1950b: 34.
profunda, Rochefortula. Dell, 1952e: 104.
profunda, Thoristella chathamensis. Dell, 1956c: 44.
propelaxa, Cirsonella. Dell, 1956c: 54.
Pseudegestula. Dell, 1954a: 144; type species (OD) Endodonta (Charopa) transenna Suter, 1904 (Charopidae).

puhana, ‚Balcis‘. Dell, 1956c: 81.
raiku, Phrixgnathus. Dell, 1954a: 149.
Rhizoridae. Dell, 1956c: 145. Inadvertently introduced family name (unavailable – no diagnosis) (Opisthobranchia).


Rissopssetia. Dell, 1956a: 37; type species (OD) Rissopssetia maoria Dell, 1956 (Pyramidellidae).
roseacincta, Splendrilla. Dell, 1956c: 134.
rossiana, Calliotropis (Calliotropsis). Dell, 1990a: 84.

runcinata, Splendrilla. Dell, 1956c: 133.
scothius, Bulbus. Dell, 1990a: 156.
smithae, Charopa (Pseudegestula). Dell, 1954a: 146.
solitaria, Austrofusus (s. str.). Dell, 1950b: 34.
spirulata, Fenestrosyrinx. Dell, 1962c: 73.
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subquadra, Perrierina. Dell, 1952a: 412.

Tasmalita. Dell, 1956a: 38; type species (OD) Tasmalita wellingtonensis Dell, 1956 (Cerithiopsidae).
tasmani, Plectunculina. Dell, 1956a: 32.

Tasmocrossea. Dell, 1952d: 105; type species (OD) Tasmocrossea benthicola Dell, 1952 (Skeneidae).

Tecticrater. Dell, 1956c: 59; type species (OD) Cocculina compressa Suter, 1908 (Lepetellidae).
triganceae, Galesdeau. Dell, 1953e: 51.
truncata, Volvulella. Dell, 1956c: 146.
veridicum, Columbarium. Dell, 1963c: 211.
vidae, Marginella (Microvulina). Dell, 1956c: 126.
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