

Notes on shells of the Bute shore

Peter Youngson

During the summer of 2000 I visited most of the beaches of Bute, and this article summarises my findings. An early impression that many species were missing from the shoreline proved to be ill-founded. It was based on my familiarity with the west coast, in particular the shores of Islay and Jura. The fauna of the continental shelf is distinct from that of the Clyde sea area, and I was expecting many things, such as *Glycymeris* (Dog Cockle) which are scarce here. I was not helped by my equal familiarity with the east coast, where the species list is very different.

There are comparatively few species in the Clyde list which I have not so far encountered. Many of these may simply turn up with more extensive searching, for example *Calliostoma zizyphinum* (Painted Top) really must be present, as must Saddle Oysters.

I have made no attempt to sieve seaweed samples and scrapings from rock pools and from below stones on the low shore, and a 'proper' conchologist would be scornful of my 'mere beachcombing'. However, I think the very small species found in this way are a bit specialised for most folk.

List of shore sites visited in Bute

Site 1 Bogany Point NS103655 18/5/2000

A varied shoreline, with all the species noted to W. of the actual point. Point itself visited 10/6/2000: rocky, no shells.

Site 2 St. Ninian's Bay NS042618 18/5/2000

A shell beach composed of vast numbers of Cockles, with Mussels and a few Trough shells. Only occasional traces of the other species recorded.

Site 3 Ettrick Bay NS035663 19/5/2000

Long sandy beach dominated by *Spisula subtruncata* (thought possibly *solida* - but no big specimens, and *solida* given as rare). Only a small number of species, but Otters are here, and one *Donax* and one Smooth Cockle.

Site 4 Mid Ascog Shore NS107623 21/5/2000

A small beach with Cockles and Mussels, but found a Cowrie.

Site 5 Kerrycroy Bay NS536614 22/5/2000

An interesting beach, rich in Tellins, and not dominated by Cockles or Troughs. Found *Natica* and *Colus*.

Site 6 Ascog Bay NS107634 23/5/2000

A small beach, less varied than Kerrycroy, but with big concentrations of Razor shells. Tortoiseshell Limpets present in good numbers.

Site 7 Kames Bay NS066677 24/5/2000

Another large beach dominated by Cockles and Mussels, with a scattering of other shells. In the mid bay *Mya arenaria* suddenly appears and is common (the only site so far). *Natica* occurs among the Winkles.

Site 8 A variety of locations were visited from the south end of Kames Bay round to Ardbeg, including the whole Port Bannatyne shore. NS074674 to NS085665 27/5/2000

The entire coast was dominated by Cockles & Mussels, with huge assemblages of Winkle shells, and many Whelks. Horse Mussels and Carpets were plentiful, and Tortoiseshell Limpets were sifted from the sand at Ardbeg. All other species were in very small numbers.

Site 9 Scalpsie Bay NS055584 29/5/2000

A large, sandy, and popular beach. For once Cockles and Mussels do not dominate here, although present in small numbers. Numerically the dominant shell is *Spisula solida*, but there are many *Tellina tenuis*, and *Phacoides borealis*. On the low tide shore *Donax vittatus* is common. The beach provided more Smooth Cockles, and one rather small *Tellina squalida* (the first in Bute so far). Also the first sign of *Gibbula magus*. At the east corner NS060582 there is a dramatic change, with accumulations of small gastropods and bivalves. A community of *Thyasira flexuosa* lives here, and there are traces of *Abra*, also *Thracia phaseolina*.

Site 10 Rothesay Bay west, from Sailing Club to Harbour NS086649 31/5/2000

Visited at low spring tide. Whole stretch of coast one single extensive Mussel bed, no doubt fed by run-off water and effluent. Some Cockles, Venuses and Carpets with the usual gastropods near the harbour, a single Queenie, and the first *Gibbula umbilicalis*

Site 11 Kilchattan Bay NS100555 1/6/2000

Low spring tides. Upper shore dominated by Cockles, Troughs, Mussels, *Lucina*, Venuses, Carpets, with the usual rock gastropods. Large Mussel beds on lower shore. Baltic *Macoma* plentiful on upper shore; towards south *Cyprina* and *Mya arenaria* abundant. Low shore has Chitons.

Site 12 Beach below Mecknoch NS041591 2/5/2000

Disappointing beach with sand on high shore, but mussel beds as usual lower down. Cockles, Carpets, Gapers, gastropods. Nothing unusual.

Site 13 Kilchattan Bay revisited to search northern half of bay.

Once more huge accumulations of Cockles on high shore, with Trough shells and many Tellins. Mussel beds on lower shore. Northern bay began to produce many huge Otter shells. A few of several other species and the usual gastropods, but the beach also produced a *Natica catena*, and a *Nassarius pygmaea*, each my first for Bute.

Site 14 Kerrylamont Bay NS587579 6/6/2000

An attractive small sandy beach on the east coast. The usual mussel beds on the low shore. Nothing unusual about the shells, except the presence of Otters, both Gapers, and *Cyprina*. Also one Oval Piddock. Visited at low springs.

Site 15 Rothesay Bay, east side: Bogany Road end to Harbour NS095693 7/6/2000

Low springs. Shingle foreshore, with Mussel beds all along lower shore. Huge accumulations of Mussel shells on upper shore. Nothing else unusual or of interest.

Site 16 Stravanan Bay NS078561 10/6/2000

Big sandy bay, very low springs. Most of previous species abundant, esp. *Spisula*. New shells: *Venus fasciata* and *Cardium echinatum*. Worth another visit.

Site 17 East Kyle Shore NS067700 to NS027743 11/6/2000

The shoreline was visited at low tide, with periodic excursions to the low water mark at intervals from just N. of Ardmaleish Point to Rhubodach Ferry. The shore grades shallowly into the water, the profile of the low centre of a glacial valley, which it presumably is. The shingle is sharp and angular, of schist with very little sand. There are Mussel beds on the low shore. The shell fauna was extremely disappointing and uniform all along the coast, similar species to Kames Bay but a poorer picture. One rather tired old *Turritella* by the ferry at Rhubodach, my only specimen so far on Bute.

Site 18 Balnakailly Bay NS023745 11/6/2000 Low tide.

A big expanse of flat muddy & stony bay, dominated by Mussels, with some Razors. All the usual shells, but nothing at all unusual. Very disappointing.

Site 19 Scalpsie Bay 21/6/2000

Revisited east corner, at *Thyasira* community, and took samples of small shells to analyse. Identified *Rissoa membranacea* J Adams and *Rissoa parva* da Costa, as well as *Lacuna vineta* Montagu (small brown specimen) and *Hydrobia ventrosa* Montagu. *Abra alba* also present.

Site 20 Shore west of St. Ninian's Point NS035615 29/6/2000

Mussels and Cockles, with a surprising number of Rayed Artemis, and many excellent Smooth Cockles. Remarkable for many good *Gibbula magus*, Large, or Painted Top shells, and the first *Venus casina*, also Spiny Cockle and *Colus gracilis*. Puzzling part shell identified as Pelican's Foot.

Site 21 Shore south of St. Ninian's Bay NS042605 11/7/2000

Hoped for similar fauna to above, but found bleak coast, dominated by Cockles and Mussel beds. A few Oysters about.

Site 22 Dunagoil Bay NS085535 15/7/2000 & 22/7/2000

Similar to other west facing beaches. Cockles & mussels with *Spisula* again dominant. All the usual gastropods & bivalves, no surprises.

Revisits: (later in 2000)

Ettrick Bay in July - strandings of jellyfish including some big Lions Manes. Many *Echinocardium cordatum*, Sand Urchin or Sea Potato, cast up fresh with spines still in place.

Shore north of Ascog: - One specimen of *Hiattella arctica* - Northern Rock Borer.

Shore beside Rhubodach - at low springs: - many Chitons, starfish and brittle stars, also long Bootlace worms and many small Urchins.

The table printed overleaf summarises the author's findings at sites 1-21 above.

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		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
<i>Lepidochitona cinereus</i> L.	Citon										X							X				
<i>Patella vulgata</i> L.	Common Limpet	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Patina pellucida</i> L.	Blue-rayed Limpet																X					
<i>Patelloida tessulata</i> Mull.	Tortiseshell Limpet	X						X	X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X		X	
<i>Gibbula magus</i> L.	Painted Top								X								X				X	
<i>Gibbula cineraria</i> L.	Grey Tommie	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Gibbula umbilicalis</i> da Costa	Flat Top-shell									X												
<i>Littorina littorea</i> L.	Common Periwinkle	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Littorina saxatilis</i> Olivi	Rough Periwinkle	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Littorina neritoides</i> L.	Small Periwinkle	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Littorina littoralis</i> L.	Flat Periwinkle				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
<i>Turritella communis</i> Risso	Turret (or Auger) Shell																	X				
<i>Aphorais pes-pellicani</i> L.	Pelican's Foot																				X	
<i>Natica poliana</i> Chiaje	Small Necklace-shell					X		X														
<i>Natica catena</i> (L.) da Costa	Large Necklace-shell													X								X
<i>Trivia monacha</i> da Costa	Cowrie				X				X													
<i>Nucella lapillus</i> L.	Dog Whelk	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Ocenebra erinacea</i> L.	Sting Winkle																			X		
<i>Colus gracilis</i> da Costa	Spindle-shell					X		X													X	
<i>Neptunea antiqua</i> L.	Buckie	X	X			X		X						X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
<i>Buccinum undatum</i> L.	Whelk	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Nassarius reticulatus</i> L.	Netted Dog-whelk	X				X		X						X			X	X	X		X	X
<i>Nassarius incrassatus</i> Strom	Thick-lipped Dog-whelk														X							
<i>Ostrea edulis</i> L.																					X	
<i>Mytilus edulis</i> L.	Common Mussel	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Modiolus modiolus</i> L.	Horse Mussel	X				X		X	X					X		X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Pecten maximus</i> L.	Great Scallop	X	X				X						X				X				X	