

Algal Advocacy

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Algae – why important, especially those of southern Australia?

Algal studies in southern Australia: where they have come from, where they are now, and, have they a future? with an emphasis on the future and the relevance to NRM

- The exploration era, Terra Australis and competition between the French and English (1791-1850). See: Womersley H.B.S. (1984) *The marine benthic flora of southern Australia*. Part I. Adelaide, Government Printer
- The founding of European Australia with interest in the west and east, but, sadly, South Australia is passed over

- The coming of W. H. Harvey the Dublin Doctor and a swell of interest in natural history
- Local amateurs and the Scandinavian connection – Jessie Hussey, Reinbold, and a Geelong Grammar School Head; a period of fascination with natural diversity
- A lull of 50 years, then the S A handbook era with Mrs. Florence Perrin and A.H.S. Lucas largely transcribing De Toni's lists and descriptions
- The golden age, with Adelaide University an international algal centre, headed by H.B.S. Womersley, and the advent of entrepreneurial SCUBA divers
- A period of consolidation with the writing of the 6 volumes of the marine benthic flora, the description of marine bioregions and applying terrestrial notions of ecology to marine ecosystems
- The contraction of government interest in pure research and pre-eminence of commercial priorities; molecular techniques for analysing diversity and the decrease in specialists on algal morphology; conversion of archival information using computer technology; regulations that inhibit fieldwork.

So what is the future of algal studies and in particular, the algal side of the State Herbarium?

- The public still has an interest in marine life including algae. How can this be fostered? Some website attempts are already available
- Marine biosecurity crises are likely to increase. These require access to validated specimens for identification if suitable responses are to be implemented.
- Ecological studies need validation of species if they are not to be criticised as subjective and "un-scientific".

Abstracts

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