



*THE
CARNIVAL GLASS
SOCIETY*



NAUTILUS OR ARGONAUT?

*From The Carnival Glass and the Oceans Series
By the Oceanographer*

NEWSLETTER 169 EXTRACT

CARNIVAL GLASS AND THE OCEANS

By the Oceanographer



Having spent much of my life as a Royal Navy Meteorologist and Oceanographer, this is the second edition of my story of carnival glass items that have names, shapes or patterns which relate them to the oceans. In this edition we will focus on the beautiful Nautilus shell.

NAUTILUS - THE OCEANOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

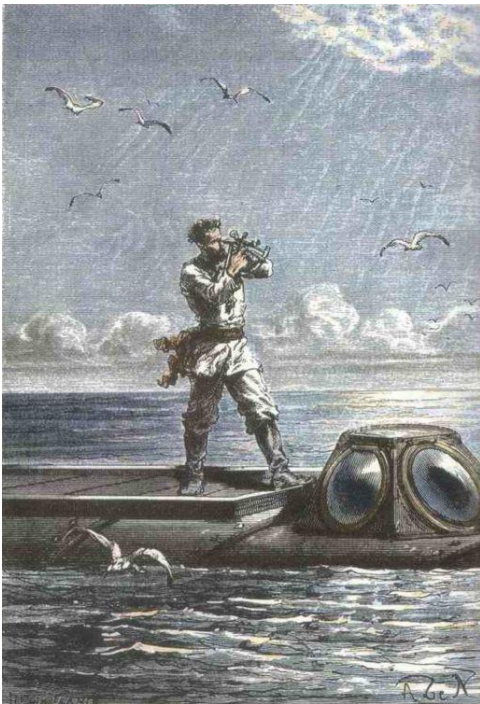
The Nautilus (from the Greek meaning sailor) is a marine mollusc than can be found in the Indo-Pacific region. There are 6 species which range in size from 4.5" up to 10". They usually inhabit the deep slopes of coral reefs at depths of several hundred metres but around Vanuatu and New Caledonia they can be found in much shallower water at around 5 metres.



Left: Nautilus mollusc, Manuae [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)]. Right: Nautilus mollusc shell By Chris 73 [CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19711>]

Throughout the world, Nautilus are collected or fished for sale as live animals or to carve the shells for souvenirs. These species are vulnerable to over-exploitation and demand for the ornamental shell is causing population declines. This has led to a call for increased protection and in 2016 all species were added to CITES Appendix II regulating international trade.

Nautilus, Captain Nemo's fictional submarine in Jules Verne's science fiction novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, inspired the US Navy to name the world's first operational nuclear-powered submarine, *USS Nautilus*. This was the first submarine to complete a submerged transit of the North Pole and is now a museum in Groton, Connecticut.



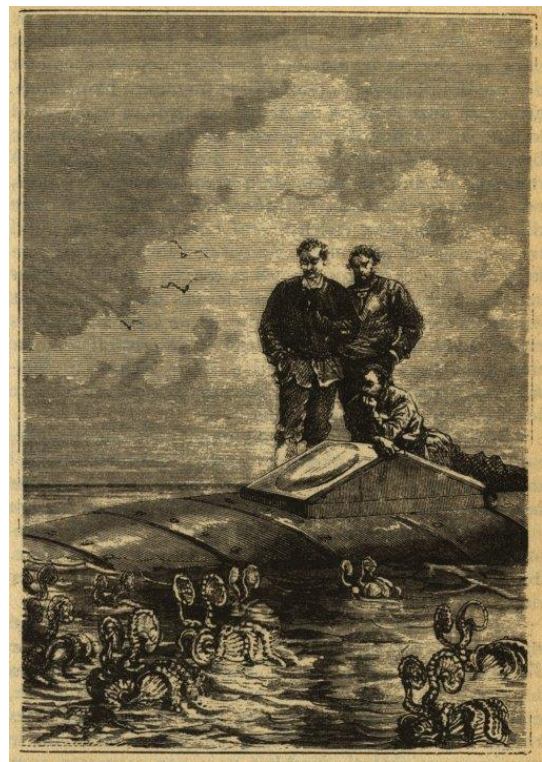
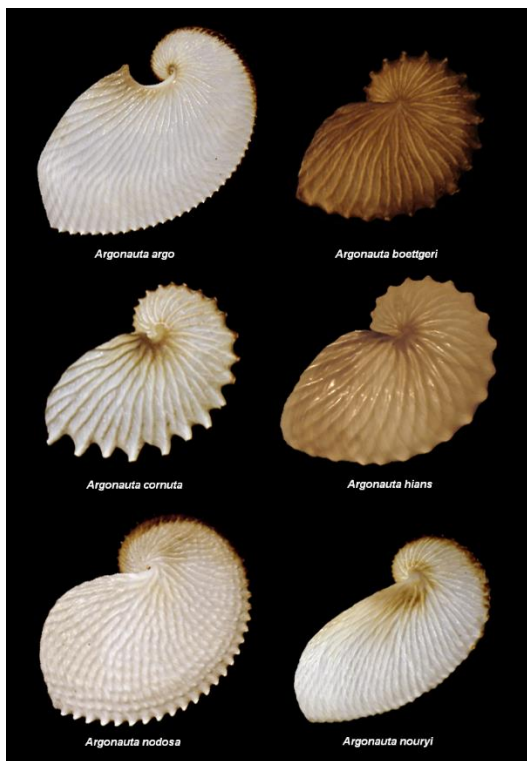
Captain Nemo and Nautilus by Henri Hildibrand. USS Nautilus by Victor-ny (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)

There is another marine animal which can also be referred to as nautilus – that is the Paper Nautilus or Argonaut. These octopuses are found in the tropical and subtropical open ocean worldwide. They have a rounded body, eight arms and no fins. However, unlike most octopuses, Argonauts live close to the sea surface rather than on the seabed. They are also called Paper Nautiluses in view of the paper-thin egg case that females secrete. Argonauts are dimorphic with females growing to about a foot in length which is about 12 times the size of males.

The Seamstress and the Argonaut. A great deal of knowledge about these fascinating animals was discovered by Jeanne Villepreux-Power (1819 -1899) in the 19th Century. She was an amazing woman in a time when marine biology was dominated by men. A seamstress of little education, living in Paris, she moved to Messina in Sicily where she began observing Argonauts.

She did not want to study them as “shells washed up on a beach”; she wanted to observe the living animal. So, she set up special observation cages in the harbour and watched. It was during one of these sessions she observed a female Argonaut repairing her egg case by “spinning” calcite secreted from her arms, debunking the idea held by some that the Argonaut found the shell of other animals to live in, rather like the Hermit Crab. For her pioneering work she is often called “The Mother of Aquariums”. She is acknowledged as one of the first female marine biologists and, unusually for the time, was given credit for her work and supported by her male counterparts (*according to 'The Seamstress and the Secrets of the Argonaut Shell' by Lauren Young*).





The photograph left (courtesy Mgiganteus 1, Wikipedia) shows the egg cases of six different Argonauts and you can see they all have a ribbed surface. Interestingly Argonauts and the Nautilus meet in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, as can be seen in this photograph where this intriguing species of octopus surround the Nautilus submarine (*Public Domain*).

NAUTILUS – THE CARNIVAL GLASS PERSPECTIVE

Although Nautilus is a beautiful Dugan carnival glass pattern, it was first introduced by Harry Northwood in non-iridised custard and opalescent colours in the late 1890s during his time with the National Glass Company.



Left: Courtesy James Measell (from his article in NL158). He notes the design of Northwood's Nautilus spoonholder (left) and covered sugar (right) was based upon a china vase made in Worcester (centre) circa 1880 to 1890 (Courtesy of Oglebay Institute). Photograph right: Northwood creamer in opalescent glass, Courtesy Dave Richards.

James Measell notes in NL158 that Northwood sometimes sought inspiration from products made in England. A Worcester ceramic vase made circa 1880 to 1890 led to Northwood's Nautilus range in decorated custard (ivory) glass which began manufacture at the Indiana plant in early 1899.

When Northwood left the Indiana, Pennsylvania, factory to move on to Wheeling, West Virginia, the moulds were left behind. So, when Thomas Dugan purchased the Indiana, Pennsylvania, plant he acquired them. This helps to explain why some Nautilus carnival glass items carry the Northwood script signature. These are probably the earliest of pieces in carnival glass before Dugan removed the script from the mould (Dugan and Diamond Carnival Glass, Carl O. Burns).



Nautilus items were among the very first carnival glass pieces produced by Dugan in around 1909 to 1910. They were probably intended to be candy dishes and can be found with various shapings – sides up and down – which sometimes are called creamers, spooners, sugars or gravy boats. Colours known are marigold, amethyst and peach opalescent. We acquired one for our collection back in 2002, as one of our first eBay purchases, which has one side turned up.



It can be seen from the photographs on the previous page that the detail of the pattern closely mirrors that of the Worcester porcelain vase from which Northwood took his inspiration. In the carnival glass version, the mould is in four parts and the base on which the shell stands exhibits

shell and seaweed motifs around its rim. On the narrower part there are shells that look like whelks as well as barnacles. Above is a piece of seaweed or perhaps coral that flows up each side of the shell. I wonder how many of us who own one have noticed these details – I only did when I came to write this article! The shell itself has a rough, textured finish on the outside.

There are also carnival glass swung vases in the Nautilus pattern, a master berry bowl and some 'modern' carnival glass toothpick holders.

The Dugan vases are swung from the Nautilus tumbler mould, although it is hard to recognise the pattern as it stretches out across the vase (photograph right courtesy Dave Doty). Although the original Northwood tumbler appears often in opalescent glass, as shown below, as far as I know, a carnival glass Nautilus tumbler has not yet been found.

Modern carnival glass 'Nautilus' toothpick holders started to be pressed and iridised in the 1970s by Joe St Clair, followed by Summit which acquired that mould and then by Fenton for LG Wright. These are all modelled on the toothpick holder design that Northwood made in custard glass around 1899. Since Dugan never made this shape in carnival glass it is easy to confirm that if you find an iridised toothpick holder then it will have been made using one of these later moulds.



L to R: Nautilus Toothpick Holder (Courtesy Eagle Ridge Collectibles), Nautilus Opalescent Tumbler (Courtesy Soulis Auctions), Nautilus Toothpick Holder, Fenton for LG Wright, (Courtesy Samantha Prince, carnivalglass.com)

What's in a name? Looking back, the Royal Worcester china vase that was made in the 1880s was called Nautilus. This was also the name given to Northwood's and Dugan's range of glass items in this pattern which gives a certain historical logic to the continuation of the Nautilus name.

However, as time moved on, the name started to change. The toothpick holders that were pressed and iridised by St Clair then Summit in the 1970s and 1980s were known at the time as 'Argonaut Shell'. LG Wright's toothpick holders were called Argonaut. Carl O. Burns notes in his book *Dugan Diamond 1909 – 1931*, published in 1999, that collectors of custard glass and opalescent glass call the pattern Argonaut Shell and it's noticeable when searching the internet today that some collectors, sellers and websites now hedge their bets by using both names.

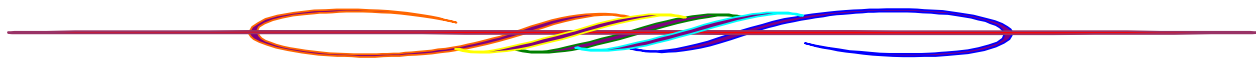
So which name best describes this pattern? As a scientist I believe in going back to the basics and looking at the two different species so, for me, the answer rests with the texture of the shell/egg case. A Nautilus is a mollusc that has a smooth shell surface whereas the egg case of the Argonaut octopus has a ribbed textured surface and it seems clear that this is what the carnival glass pattern is trying to represent. So, I would make a case for renaming the pattern either Paper Nautilus or Argonaut as it certainly does not match the texture of a Nautilus shell.

It may seem, perhaps, that I am “trying to push back the waves of history” because Nautilus was the original name given in the late 1800s and early 1900s; and it has been used for so long in the carnival glass collecting world that I suspect the appetite for change may be small. However, I believe either ‘Argonaut’ or ‘Paper Nautilus’ provides a more accurate description for all of the ceramic and glass items made in this delightful pattern. Anyway, let’s not worry about the name, let’s enjoy the glass and the fascinating story behind it!!



Left to Right: Argonaut shells also known as Paper Nautilus, Northwood’s ‘Nautilus’, a true Nautilus shell

I hope you have enjoyed this second edition of the ‘Oceanographer’ and many thanks to those who have contributed it. Don’t forget to write in and let me know if there are other carnival glass ‘ocean’ events that you would like me to cover and I shall do my best to provide an interesting mix of glass and oceanographic information.



This article is Copyright Stephen Auty 2020 and was first written for Carnival Glass Society Newsletter 169, published in March 2020. It is part of his ‘Carnival Glass and the Oceans’ series which follows his successful ‘Carnival Glass and the Weather’ series which appeared in earlier CGS newsletters. It is shown courtesy of Steve Auty and the Carnival Glass Society UK.

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