

1819

## A capacious bowl or cup

Thomas Hardwicke names the first animal from Singapore

“... the S[p]onge plant, obtained on the coast of the newly acquired island of Singapore. Colonel Hardwicke ... has favoured the Society with a description of it. ... In its form it resembles that kind of drinking-cup called a goblet, with a well[-]defined base or root, a cylindrical stem, and a capacious bowl or cup ... and a more appropriate specific distinction may perhaps be given to this, in denominating it *Spongia patera*, the goblet sponge.” — **Thomas Hardwicke**

1819.1



1819.2



1819.3



Thomas Hardwicke (1756–1835) rises to the rank of major-general in the East India Company's army. This sponge that he names is the first known animal from Singapore described according to European scientific convention. The sponge is collected on the same trip with Raffles where a Dugong is caught and eaten 1820. The sponge is soon highly sought after by museums and collectors and the population declines. It is presumed extinct until its rediscovery almost two centuries later 2011. Now known as *Cliona patera*, Hardwicke first describes this species as *Spongia patera* at a meeting of the Asiatic Society that takes place on the evening of 13 November 1819.

1840

1860

1880

1900

1920

1940

1960

1980

2000

1819.4



1819.1

This is the first known depiction of the Neptune's Cup. It accompanies Thomas Hardwicke's paper in the 'Asiatick Researches'. Unlike Farquhar's 1909, Hardwicke's paper appears in 1822, within three years of the November 1819 meeting. Furthermore, as the minutes of the meeting are published in two other monthly publications, the description and the scientific name are already known by 1820. The whereabouts of the actual specimen that is depicted here are not known

1819.2

This name plate accompanies a Neptune's Cup specimen at the old Raffles Museum at Stamford Road (now the National Museum 1960). The specimen does not appear to be extant

1819.3

Thomas Hardwicke (1756–1835), a major-general in the East India Company's army. In addition to the Neptune's Cup, Hardwicke also obtains a specimen of a Shore Pit Viper and other animals from Singapore 1832

1819.4

A specimen of a Neptune's Cup mounted on a wooden plinth. The geographical origin of this specimen is no longer known

2011

## Never-say-die

### (Re)discovery of the Neptune's Cup

“Singapore’s coastal environment is simply amazing. Despite the immense changes in the last century which have transformed and expanded the southern coastline and southern islands, the inter-tidal and sub-tidal habitats are incredibly resilient. Pockets of high diversity continue to thrive in many areas. This ‘never-say-die’ characteristic of our natural heritage is exemplified by the Neptune’s Cup sponge. Scientifically known as *Cliona patera*, the Neptune’s Cup sponge was first seen in Singapore waters in 1822.”

— Karenne Tun and Eugene Goh

2011.1



Karenne Tun and Eugene Goh are two marine biologists conducting surveys in the Singapore Strait. They make an amazing (re)discovery. It is Singapore's 'first' animal, the Neptune's Cup sponge 🍄1819. In the years following its discovery in 1819, the Neptune's Cup becomes highly sought after by collectors and museums. It is thought to be extinct globally until specimens are found in Australia (in 1990) and Thailand (in 2000). This first specimen from the Singapore Straits is joined by another specimen that is found just 50 metres away. This is the first time in over a century that this species is found in Singapore waters. Singapore's sponge specialist, Lim Swee Cheng is quoted in the 'Straits Times' as saying that "[i]t was indescribable". Both specimens provide scientists with invaluable information as this is the first time that this species is studied alive in its natural habitat, and all previous information comes from museum specimens. The two Neptune's Cups are discovered just 50 metres from each other in March and August 2011



#### 2011.1

These two photographs show one of the two living specimens of the Neptune's Cup sponge that are found in Singapore waters in 2011. This is the first time in over a century that this species is found in the island's waters. The diver closest to the sponge is sponge specialist, Lim Swee Cheng, who describes the (re)discovery as "indescribable"

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