



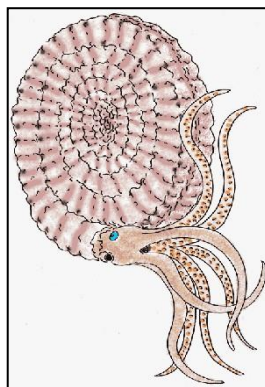
WEST BERKSHIRE
MUSEUM

Fun facts about fossils

A fossil is the preserved remains or traces of an animal or plant that lived a long time ago. At West Berkshire Museum we have some fossils of sea creatures that would have lived in the warm sea that once covered part of this area, at a time when the dinosaurs walked the earth. We're going to find out about two of these fossils.

Ammonite

An ammonite is part of a group of sea creatures that do not have a backbone. Ammonites are now extinct (dead), although they are related to the present-day Pearly Nautilus. An ammonite's shell would have been occupied by a squid-like creature (pictured below, right). It did not use fins for swimming. Instead it pumped water like a kind of jet propulsion. This method is still used by sea creatures such as the cuttlefish and squid today. Ammonite fossils are flat spirals and are found in rocks formed 245 to 65 million years ago.



Picture, right and below (right): Courtesy of Junior Geologist.

Belemnite

A belemnite was called a 'thunder stick' because people once believed that it was made by lightning striking the ground. This sea creature is related to the present-day squid. The fossil is the only hard part of the belemnite, and is called the guard. This is a large example so the creature would have been quite fierce looking! Like the ammonites, they move through the water by jet propulsion and may also have been able to squirt 'ink' as a form of defence like a modern squid.

