Nature on your doorstep

AMGUEDDFA CYMRU

Guide to Fossil Groups

Fossils can be formed when a plant or animal is buried for millions of years and becomes replaced by minerals. Use this guide to find out more about each type of animal: when it lived, what it ate, and which major group (or Phylum) it belonged to.

Find more nature guides or get in touch with our museum scientists for help with identification: museum.wales/collections/on-your-doorstep

005a

Trilobites

Extinct

Phylum: Arthropoda (Trilobita)
Habitat: Marine
Date: 520 - 250 million years ago.

Trilobites were a major part of early marine life. They have a flattened segmented body like a woodlouse. Some were predators, others scavenged, or fed on debris. They were free swimming animals. Size between 3 mm and 70 cm.

Ammonites

Extinct

Phylum: Mollusca (Cephalopoda)
Habitat: Marine
Date: 200 - 66 million years ago

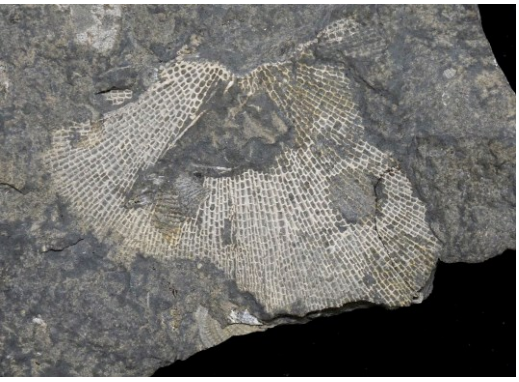
Ammonite shells are usually coiled in a flattened spiral. The animal inside had tentacles like a squid. They were related to nautilus and squid. They were free swimming predators. Size from 3 mm to 1.8 m across.

Graptolites

Extinct

Phylum: Graptolithina
Habitat: Marine
Date: 500 - 350 million years ago

These were colonial animals that floated in deep oceans, and fed on tiny particles filtered out of the sea-water. Each serration on the branches contained a microscopic animal, or zooid. Colonies were usually less than 10 cm across.



Bryozoans

Phylum: Bryozoa
Habitat: Mostly marine
Date: 500 million years ago to the present day.

These are tiny filter-feeding animals which are linked together into larger colonies (similar to corals). Individual animals, or zooids, are less than 1 mm, but colonies may be up to several metres across.

Bivalves

Phylum: Mollusca (Bivalvia)
Habitat: Marine + Freshwater
Date: 500 million years ago to the present day.

Bivalves have two asymmetrical shells attached by a hinge joint. Some bivalves burrow in the sea-bed, others are attached to rocks, or may be free-swimming. They are mostly filter-feeders. Size from a few mm up to 1.3 m

Brachiopods

Phylum: Brachiopoda
Habitat: Marine
Date: 540 million years ago to the present day.

Brachiopods (unlike bivalves) have two shells of different shapes which are symmetrical. They are also completely different to bivalves internally. They are filter-feeders, either burrowing or attached to the sea floor. Size from 1 mm to 35 cm.