

Ammonites

Ammonites are a diverse group of extinct molluscs, related to squid and octopus. They arose within the Jurassic and persisted for 170 million years, until the end Cretaceous mass extinction that wiped out the non-avian dinosaurs. These two fossils are positioned as they would have been in life - The animal's body would be in the last and largest of the chambers that make up the shell, with the arms and head held externally (as shown in the model above), allowing the animal to see, catch prey, and detect predators.

***Titanites*; Swindon, UK** (Left-hand specimen)

As its name suggests, this Late Jurassic ammonite grew to gigantic proportions compared to other ammonite species. *Titanites* could reach 1.5 metres across, which makes this huge 12 kg fossil a mere juvenile. This particular specimen was found in a quarry in Swindon and is around 150 million years old.

***Parkinsonia*; Dorset, UK** (Right-hand specimen)

The polished surface of this ammonite reveals intricate leaf shapes, these are the edges of the internal walls that divide the shell into chambers. The benefit of a meandering wall over a straight one is a greater resistance to buckling under pressure, such as in deep water or the jaws of a predator. This *Parkinsonia* is around 170 million years old.