
Museum object: ammonite, Item Number - GLAHM: 138366



1. What do you think this object is?

This is a fossilised ammonite. An ammonite is a sea mollusc, which is an animal that doesn't have any bones but does have a hard outer shell made of calcium (which is what your teeth are made of so you can imagine how hard the shells would be). An example of a mollusc that you would see a lot is a snail.

Ammonites were fast moving predators and they ate other sea creatures who were slow.

2. How old do you think this is?

This is from the Jurassic period, which was about 146 to 208 million years ago. These were quite common creatures all around the world, and because of this, fossils of them are also quite common. Because they evolved really quickly, geologists are able to make up a timeline for working out when rocks and creatures were about by using these fossils to date it.

3. Something that is quite surprising about these creatures is the size range. How long do you think they were?

This ammonite is about 15cm at its longest point, is fairly small. They can be up to 3m in diameter (about 9 feet). They can also be really tiny – some around 2mm have been found, but it is thought they may not have been fully grown.

4. Do you know any legends about them?

Ammonites were named after the Egyptian god Ammon, who has curly ram horns which look like the coiled-up shape in an ammonite.



Partial ceramic slab with a relief of Jupiter Ammon. 1st century AD. Barracco Museum, Rome. Inv. No. MB 199.

Many ammonites are found in Scotland, and there was a myth in the Isle of Skye where people thought it would cure stomach problems for cows, so they boiled them in water for cows to drink.

In Ireland, there was a legend about how ammonites were snakes that had been turned to stone.

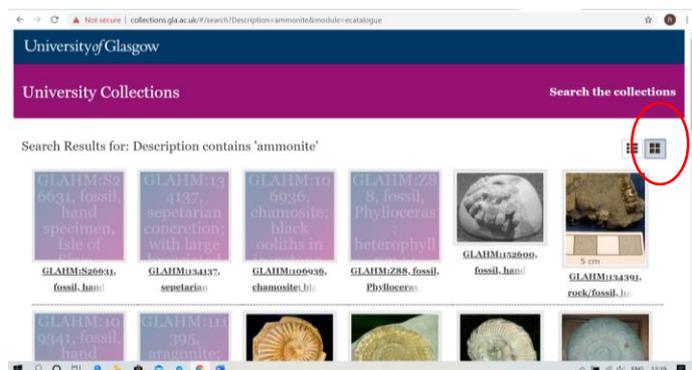
Challenge:

Try looking up the object on our online database at <http://collections.gla.ac.uk/>, using the item number **GLAHM: 138366**.

As an additional challenge, can you find how many ammonites are listed on our online collections? Enter the word **Ammonite** into the **Description** box.

Learners may find it easier to view the results, by choosing See All Objects (at bottom of search result list), and the grid view button (see screen image below)

Note: not all the object have images.





The Hunterian, Collections Outreach Programme, 2020
Compiled by Rachel Moir, University of Glasgow History of
Art student on work placement



University
of Glasgow

www.hunterian.gla.ac.uk