



AMMONITES

Ammonites are the fossilised, usually flat-coiled shells of extinct marine, swimming animals related to squids. The live ammonite, like the similar modern nautilus occupied only the last of a series of chambers inside the shell and the empty chambers gave buoyancy during swimming. A great variety of shapes and sizes of ammonites (from 5 mm to 1.7 metres in diameter) swam the seas while dinosaurs ruled the land during the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods.

Dinosaurs and ammonites all became inexplicably extinct 65 million years ago. Ammonites and their relatives and ancestors of the zoological subclass ammonoidea which existed from the early Devonian period, 400 million years ago are placed in the zoological order cephalopoda ("head foot"). Modern cephalopods include the octopus, squid, cuttlefish and nautilus.

The corrugated flat-coiled ammonite resembles a ram's horn and hence the fossils were so named after the ram-headed ancient Egyptian God Ammon. ●

PALEONTOLOGIESAAL VORDER

Mnr. Bruce Rubidge, paleontoloog by die Nasionale Museum, sit hier by 'n veselglasafgietsel van die skelet van 'n Kannemeyeria wat deel gaan uitmaak van die nuwe paleontologiesaal by die museum wat nou voorberei word. Die oorspronklike versteende beendere is in 1938 by Tarkastad gevind, en word in die museum te Oos-Londen uitgestal. Kannemeyeria, 'n soogdieragtige reptiel, het sowat 220 miljoen jaar gelede geleef.

