



Horn Park Quarry NNR
Between Beaminster and Broadwindsor.

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Horn Park Quarry was opened in 1781 for the rebuilding of Beaminster after it had been destroyed by fire for the third time.

All that remains of the quarry today is a small area which has been fenced-off for its protection and secured under lock and key held by Beaminster Museum. The rest of the quarry has been covered by an Industrial Estate.

Horn Park Quarry National Nature Reserve is the countries smallest National Nature Reserve. Baring the fossilized remains of sea-life that lived during the middle Jurassic period 170 million years ago.



Visiting the quarry in August, Gilly and I were met by Bid and Alistair Weaver of Beaminster Museum at the gates to the Industrial Park. Before beginning our tour, Bid showed us a few samples of ammonites taken from the quarry.



Unlocking a second gate, Alistair led us across a bed of limestone that was rich with the imprints of ammonites and belemnites...

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... a matrix of fossils, preserved 170 million years ago during the middle Jurassic. A mass of Ammonites and Belemnites, possibly from a breeding ground, compacted in silt and preserved to this day.

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The Fossil Box is a small, protected area of the reserve, approximately 3x2 meters in size, containing several fine examples of ammonites.

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Ammonites died out at the same time as dinosaurs about 65 million years ago.
Exposing this one to the light of day after all this time felt rather special.

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Alistair explained that the 4 metre expanse of beds seen in this photograph of the quarry face is merely a few inches thick where it appears 9 miles south on the cliffs at Burton Bradstock.

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Ammonites belong to the same family as octopus and squid.

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The ammonites found in the quarry form almost a complete record of part of the Jurassic Period.

Special thanks to Bid and Alistair Weaver of Beaminster Museum for a fascinating tour.

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