



Geology Sheet 18 Fossils in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark



The surface of the Burren limestone appears grey and lifeless but the lichen that covers the rock hides a wealth of fossils which make up most of the limestone.

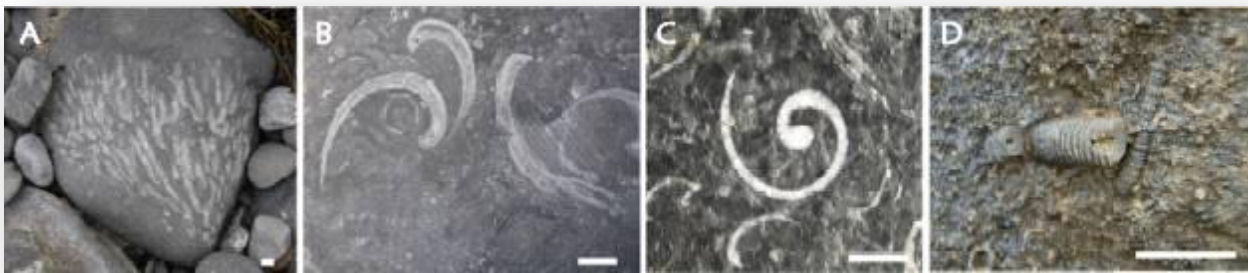


Fig. 1. A: Colonial coral B: brachiopods C: Snails D: crinoids

The most common fossils you are likely to see in the Burren are corals (A), brachiopods (B), snails (C) and crinoids (D). All of these animals had hard skeletons made of calcium carbonate which is the part that gets fossilised; the soft tissues are not preserved in the Burren. There are many more fossils in the rock but they are very small and a microscope is needed to identify them. All the fossils in the limestone are marine creatures suggesting that land was some distance away.

Different fossils are found in the shale including; bivalves (Fig. 2) and plants (fig 3). A rare fossil insect has even been found here (Fig. 4) which is now in the Natural History Museum, Dublin. The fossils in the shale are a mixture of marine and land organisms which indicates that land was much closer when the shale was being formed.



Fig. 2. Fossil bivalve.



Fig.3. Fossil plant.



Fig. 4. Fossil insect. (Image Natural History Museum, Ireland)