

Clam Burrows

Specimen: DR

Name: *Penitella* clams in burrows and empty burrows in shale

Age: Recent

Source:

Location: Pacific Coast of the U.S.



This specimen is not a fossil, although such fossils have been found. It is a rock that has been bored into by a clam called *Penitella*. These clams are also called piddock clams.

Piddock clams live along the northern Pacific Ocean from Alaska to California. Their shell contains a rough surface (rasping teeth) that the animal uses to grind its way into solid rock.

Paddock clams can even burrow into concrete! Some piddocks can grind into rock as far as 11 centimeters (4 inches).

The action of clams like these causes rock to be broken and eroded along the coast. They also destroy man-made concrete structures.





LEFT: Shells of a *Penitella turnerae* from near Lincoln City, Oregon. Shells are about 5.5 cm (2.2 in) long and 2.6 cm (1.0 in) wide. The anterior (front) is to the right. The triangular shaped rough surfaces near the anterior are the rasping teeth used to grind into rock or cement. **RIGHT:** Anterior view of a *Penitella turnerae* showing the circular shape of the shell and the rasping teeth in position for grinding. From www.wallawalla.edu. Photos by Dave Cowles.