

Mary Anning

1799 – 1847

What did she discover?

Mary was a fossil collector and palaeontologist born in England, 1799. She discovered many Jurassic period fossils on the coast of Lyme Regis (now nicknamed 'The Jurassic Coast' for this reason). In 1811 she was the first to find a complete skeleton of an Ichthyosaurus (a large marine reptile over 5 metres in length!)

In 1823 Mary found the Plesiosaurus, her most notable discovery. She found many other Jurassic fossils, including the remains of a pterosaur (later known as the Pterodactyl).

Her discoveries have contributed to our understanding of Jurassic animals and aided scientists in understanding the concept of extinction.

As a woman in Georgian times, Mary had little formal education, yet she still taught herself many subjects including geology and anatomy. Her discoveries were first met with scepticism and even after her fellow male scientists concluded that her discoveries were real, she was not credited for her work. Despite this, Mary didn't let misogynistic behaviour and lack of recognition stop her and carried on fossil hunting. She is now finally recognised for her incredible discoveries.

Something to think about...

What is the difference between a marine reptile and a dinosaur?