

• MARY ANNING •

PALEONTOLOGIST

In a tiny, cramped home on the southern coast of England, there lived a girl named Mary. Her house was so close to the sea that sometimes the storms would flood it.

The winds and storms that swept the coast often revealed fossils in the cliffs along the shoreline. Fossils are the remains of prehistoric plants and animals that died long ago.

Like most girls at the time, Mary did not go to regular school, but she still learned to read and write. She studied geology to learn more about rocks, and studied anatomy to learn more about the skeletons of the prehistoric animals she found.

One day, she and her brother saw a strange shape jutting out of a rock. Mary took out her special little hammer and carefully chipped away at the rock. Bit by bit, she uncovered a 5-metre-long skeleton. It had a beak, but it wasn't a bird. Rows of sharp teeth, but it wasn't a shark. Flippers, but it wasn't a fish. And a long, thin tail! It was one of the first discoveries of that kind of fossil, and scientists named it ichthyosaur, meaning "fish-lizard".

At the time, people believed that Earth was only a few thousand years old. Mary's fossils helped prove that there had been life on our planet for hundreds of millions of years.

Scientists from all over the world came to see Mary, the self-taught scientist who loved walking by the sea.

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"I AM WELL KNOWN THROUGH
THE WHOLE OF EUROPE."
– MARY ANNING