

Mary Anning GeoLino translation:

Mary and the Prehistoric Monster

Pg 22 Image caption: *Sensation or fake? On the coast of southern England, Mary Anning exposes the remains of a strange creature in 1823. But the experts doubt that it is real*

Mary Anning is outraged! Hour after hour she has sturled in the dirt on the coast of England to get the petrified skeleton out of the

To free stone. She chiseled and hammered until her fingers were stiff. Her back crooked, her clothes wet from the spray of the waves. She has captured every detail in drawings. And now the scholars accuse her of having forged the find - above all Georges Cuvier, one of the most important naturalists of his time!

Admittedly, it is already a very peculiar fossil that Mary dug up in 1823. The creature measures a good three meters with the tiny head, the long neck and the clumsy body. Its limbs look like paddles. And Mary, just 24 years old, has never studied - because she comes from a poor background and is also a woman. At that time, only men were allowed to visit a university. So there are more than enough reasons to doubt their find for the scholars. Mary has been collecting and selling fossils for as long as she can remember.

DIFFICULT START

The Anning family lived in the small town of Lyme Regis in southern England, where Mary was born in 1799. Her father is a carpenter, and the little money he earns is enough to hardly survive. That's why he and his children look for fossils on the coast and sell them to tourists.

When he died in 1810, he left his family a lot of debt - and the small fossil shop. Now it was up to eleven-year-old Mary and her brother Joseph to continue the business and keep the family afloat.

A few months after the death of the father, the two siblings make a great discovery: the skeleton of an Ichthyosaurus, a "fish lizard". It took Mary months to uncover the animal. Meanwhile, she has become a small celebrity in the area. Mary finally sells the approximately five-meter-long fossil to a nobleman who has it exhibited in a museum in London.

Mary's spirit of discovery is now finally awakened. She reads whatever she gets her hands on about geology and anatomy. In this way, she teaches herself to document and draw her findings neatly.

Her achievements are not officially recognized. Researchers publish Mary's finds in scientific articles without mentioning her contribution. Nevertheless, some of them are in close contact with Mary. Many even come to Lyme Regis from far away to talk to her.

TOO WEIRD TO BE TRUE

The drawings of the strange animal that Mary digs out in 1823 also make the rounds. And cause a stir: Could Mary have discovered a previously unknown species that has long since become extinct? That would be a sensation! For a long time, scholars assumed that species are unchangeable, do not develop and, above all, do not become extinct. Around the same time, a naturalist comes up with the theory that there must have been disasters in the course of the earth's history, which have caused many species to disappear from the scene. The name of the scholar: Georges Cuvier - exactly the one who now doubts Mary's discovery. He bases his theory on fossils of animals that do not fit any species that are still alive today.

Actually, Mary's finds would play into his cards. But this mixture of sea monster and lizard, these size ratios he simply considers impossible. Georges Cuvier is therefore sure: Mary must have assembled the monster from several animals.

For Mary, it would be a disaster if such a suspicion spread and was not clarified. Who would buy fossils from her? And even worse: her reputation as a fossil expert would be ruined!

On the 20th In February 1824, scientists scheduled a meeting in London to take a close look at the petrified animal. Mary herself is not invited. After much debate, the scholars finally come to the conclusion: The fossil is real - and it is the first complete skeleton of a plesiosaurus, which means "almost a lizard". Georges Cuvier must also admit his mistake.

Mary's Reputation is saved!

Dino Coast: *The town of Lyme's Regis, where Mary Anning made her spectacular finds, is located on the now world-famous Jurassic Coast. It extends over a length of a good 150 kilometers in the south of England and today attracts fossil fans from all over the world. Because the steep cliffs are formed by rock layers from the Triass, the Jurassic and the Cretaceous period, around 185 million years of earth history are recorded in them as in a time capsule. Because the*

rocks are brittle, wind and waves constantly release new treasures: In addition to huge dinosaur skeletons, many small prehistoric creatures crumble from the cliffs, for example Ammonites, squid-like animals with a spiral shell.

Caption pg 25: *In her shop, Mary Anning sells the fossils of ammonites and belemnites, head-foot. However, it does not make her very rich; the money is just enough to survive*

LATE HONOR

Mary Anning makes other major discoveries in the course of her life, including the skeleton of a Pterodactylus, a pterosaur.

With her finds, she ensures that more and more scholars are interested in fossils and investigate them. In doing so, she brings dinosaur research decisively forward!

When she falls ill with breast cancer, the scientists of the London Society of Geology collect money for her. However, she is never accepted into society because it still does not accept women. Mary Anning died in March 1847. Only modern research recognizes her contribution to the realization that species can actually become extinct. And recognizes that she has decisively shaped our image of the dinosaur era. In Lyme Regis today there is a statue of Mary Anning - the view directed at the sea, in her hand a small fossil.

Pg 26 caption: *Not a fake! Mary finally has it in black and white: Her find is a sensation - the first complete skeleton of a Plesiosaurus. This is what scientists from the prestigious Geological Society in London have noted.*