

Mary Anning

Mary Anning, born in 1799 on the Jurassic Coast, just south of Axminster, was a pioneering palaeontologist and fossil collector. Like many women and girls in Britain at the time, Mary had little formal education. She was able to read, however, and taught herself geology and anatomy.

Around 1811 she found a strange-looking fossilised skull. The mysterious specimen was studied and debated for years and was eventually named Ichthyosaurus. In 1823 Mary was the first to discover the complete skeleton of a Plesiosaurus and despite her growing reputation for finding and identifying fossils, the scientific community was hesitant to recognise her work due to her gender. She was persistent and tenacious in her quest for scientific truth and made tremendous contributions to our understanding of dinosaurs and ancient life on Earth.



Adapted from the Biography from the Natural History Museum

Thomas Coram



Born in 1668 close to Axminster, Coram was a self-made businessman who turned his life to philanthropy, with a reputation for radical thinking. Coram was born in Britain but spent his formative years in the American colonies, where he made his fortune as a shipbuilder and naval captain. Coram brought the lessons learned in America back with him to London, where he founded the first charity for children, The Foundling Hospital. Unusually for the period, both boys and girls were taught to read and write. Coram remained a passionate advocate for girls' education until late in life.

Coram embodies our key value of kindness. He championed social mobility and the rights of children, particularly those who were illegitimate and abandoned by wider society. Coram set about changing Britain's attitude towards its most vulnerable members of society.

Adapted Biography from Time Magazine

Mary Chudleigh

The Lady Mary Chudleigh, born Mary Lee in August 1656 near to Exeter, was a poet whose strong views on the emancipation of women were well ahead of their time. She wrote a number of poems and essays on the relationships between men and women and maintained a strong feminist stance in much of her work including *To the Ladies*, a witty but forceful poem, encouraging her sisters not to fear their husbands "as a God".

Wife and servant are the same,
But only differ in the name :
For when that fatal knot is ty'd,
Which nothing, nothing can divide :
When she the word obey has said,
And man by law supreme has made,
Then all that's kind is laid aside,
And nothing left but state and pride :
Fierce as an eastern prince he grows,
And all his innate rigour shows :
Then but to look, to laugh, or speak,
Will the nuptial contract break.
Like mutes, she signs alone must make,
And never any freedom take :
But still be govern'd by a nod,
And fear her husband as a God :
Him still must serve, him still obey,
And nothing act, and nothing say,
But what her haughty lord thinks fit,
Who with the power, has all the wit.
Then shun, oh ! shun that wretched state,
And all the fawning flatt'ers hate :
Value yourselves, and men despise :
You must be proud, if you'll be wise.



Lady Mary's collections of poetry and essays were mostly written on feminist themes. She believed forcefully in education for women and in reform to the marriage traditions. She had the integrity to see far beyond the unacceptable status quo and could envision a future of equality between women and men.

Adapted from the Biography on the 'My Poetic Side' website