By Anja Phoenix

## The Secret of the Sea



the young at heart for children and

the Irish Sea trail through Ynote ylimst A

Missing links We have an opportunity to turn

the future for the Irish Sea around. Slowly the

UK is getting a network of Marine Protected

Areas to save our precious marine life. But

one of the big 'missing links' is the Irish Sea.

Four important muddy areas, Mud Hole, Slieve

Na Griddle, South Rigg and West of Walnev

2012. However, to date only W.O.W has been

designated. Without these missing links we will

be unable to complete the network of protected

areas and safeguard our marine wildlife for

Get involved So why not spread the love of

mud and tell your friends about the variety of

Go mad and get muddy – support our

getting muddy – **#MarineMudness** 

· Become a Friend of muddy Marine

muddyMCZfriends

Fairbairn

see its wildlife protected.

marine life hidden in the depths of the Irish Sea

campaign by tweeting us @LivingSeasNW

with pictures of you and your friends/family

Conservation Zones via www.irishsea.org/

• Write to your local MP telling them how much

you love the Irish Sea and how you want to

**Take care** This map is a fictional

representation of the Irish Sea and

its surrounding coasts. This is NOT a

real walk and is NOT to scale. When

exploring coastal areas please take

care to stick to designated footpaths.

and mud and unstable cliffs.

Be aware of fast-rising tides, quicksand

the future.

(W.O.W) were proposed for protection in

### The bit for grown ups...

This Tale Trail explores the secrets of the Irish Sea. Out there... somewhere below the surface of the sea... lies a whole host of weird and wonderful wildlife and landscapes. Use the map to guide you through the story around the Irish Sea and spot the characters and different locations along the way.

Marvellous mud Our seascape may appear to be a blank vista – broken only by towering wind turbines and passing ships – but beneath the waves, vast muddy landscapes stretch out across the Irish Sea. Deep muddy plains are rich in nutrients, supporting an array of creatures from angular crabs to delicate burrowing anemones and strange spoon worms. On or above the mud are fish like plaice, sole, cod and whiting, which support seabirds, whales, dolphins and sharks: the circle of life in full spin.

The trouble with mud Our Irish Sea mud acts as a valuable fishing ground for Dublin Bay prawns (aka scampi or langoustine). Trawling is causing habitat damage to sensitive muddy habitats – deep scars are left in the mud. Recovery could take decades. This is not only bad news for our marine wildlife, but also the future of our coastal heritage and fishing communities. Scientific studies around the world show that protecting sensitive marine areas actually benefits fisheries, marine habitats and wildlife.



Find out more at: www.taletrails.co.uk www.irishsea.org

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## The Secret of the Sea

I heard an old sailor once say that "every ocean has a secret and every sea has a story"... well, the Irish Sea holds many, as do the creatures that live there and here Mylo LOVES mudlarking around! is the tale of one...

Mylo LOVES mud, The gloopy, sticky kind, The splashy, sandy kind, The slosh it at your friends kind, The smear it on your cheeks kind,

#### Mylo is a sea pen!

His friend Brit, however, is a little more refined. Being a very cosmopolitan, leggy, delicate kind of sea creature she prefers a more sandy seabed (but occasionally uses the gloopy kind for her beautifying face packs).

#### Brit is a brittle star!

"Morning, Brit!" Mylo shouted across the sea bed to Brit, who was relaxing under the shade of a skate. "Fancy an adventure today?"

Brit calmly removed her sunglasses and looked out across the silky sands of W.O.W. "Why on earth would I want to leave W.O.W., Mylo? It's so beautiful here... vast sandy plains, a whole city of brittle stars, ahhhh it's perfect. Anyway I would miss the sea urchins and grey seals and their funny tales. Probably a bit muddy and scary out there too if you ask me!"



stands for West of Walney. It's an area of sandy seabed and marine mud off the coast of Cumbria. It's near the wind turbines on your map; sea pens are very rare now in this area and need protection.

With that Manannán mac Lir vanished and once more Mylo and Brit were alone in the vast sea. Above them, the water's surface was turning a fiery orange colour which meant that

the day was coming to an end. They travelled

further west towards the setting sun and soon

came across a slowly moving creature with huge jaws and a wide-open mouth coming

"At 10 metres long and a mere 7 tonnes, You can't call me puny,

"My mouth is a whopping great 1 metre wide, But my teeth are quite tiny, just look right inside.

just look at my guns!

tiny spines.

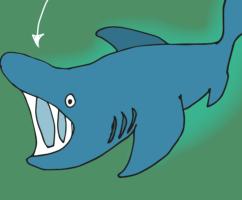
"I'm a gentle giant – just look within. My secret's out... I filter plankton!"

"Phew!" shouted Brit. "We weren't ready to become shark bait! Can you tell us where we can find Liban the mermaid? We are on our way to discover the Secret of the Sea."

The beautiful, bold basking shark pointed his fin towards the deep trench that dropped away to their left, opened his enormous jaws and carried on filtering for plankton in the pearly blue waters.



Not big scary teeth, these are my gills!



Mylo and Brit could see the bottom of the trench was at least 150 metres deep and seemed very dark, but Mylo had his torch to light the way down through the rocky reefs. Sitting amongst a forest of pink and orange colours, amongst delicate sea pens, sponges and urchins was a beautiful mermaid.

"I am Liban, an Irish sea maid, Give me your jewels and with

"To me and the sea you must swear your devotion And in exchange I will give you a potion.

"When you drink this brew you will suddenly find, You can talk with the wise and wonderful kind.

"Search though South Rigg's nooks and crannies, And there you will find quahog grandpas and grannies.

"These ancient clams have a secret to tell, So give me your gem stones and drink from this shell."

Mylo looked thoughtful... "But Brit, mud is AMAZING and anyway didn't you always say you wanted to know the Secret of the Sea? I bet the wise old quahogs of South Rigg know

Brit looked astounded. "Mylo, South Rigg is over 100 miles from here, that's too far."

"But Brit, do you remember what Old Nana Pen used to say... 'There's a whole ocean of secrets out there – you just need to go and discover them.' Well if I tell you my secret will you come with me? Just to the edge of

"It's a deal!" said Brit.

Mylo took a deep breath and blurted out his secret. "I can glow bright, luminous green if you stroke me, and I'm a jellyfish cousin, which means I could give you a little sting if I wanted!" "Wow," said Brit. "I'd better stay on the right side of you then!"

"Do you have a secret, Brit?" asked Mylo curiously. Brit paused and looked a bit embarrassed. "Well... truth be told, I can push my stomach out of my mouth when I need to and I can drop an arm too, but don't you DARE tell anyone." Then she covered her blushing face with her handbag. "Yuk!" said Mylo. "That's cooooool."

At the edge of W.O.W. Mylo and Brit spotted a strange green sausage-shaped creature lying in the silty mud. She was anchored in place

Yes it's true;

brittle stars can perform these

Mylo and Brit sipped the potion

and floated down further into

the rocky reefs of South Rigg.

As they moved through rocky

crevices between the reefs,

particles of marine mud and

sand glistened brightly in the

waters behind them. They could

hear whispers and watery words

stopped, the muddy sand settled

and the waters cleared, revealing

a large and ancient quahog clam

nestled into the seabed.

from all around and when they

two gruesome deeds! Can you work

and had a strange spoon-like tongue and didn't look like she was going anywhere fast. "Excuse me," asked Mylo. "We want to discover the Secret of the Sea and wondered which way to go next?" The strange creature slowly opened her mouth and a tongue as long as her body

"I may look like a sausage but I'm a spoon worm you see, Now come closer, my friends, and listen to me.

"Go north past the mountains to a cave near St Bees, At a place called 'Mud Hole' seek a burrowing anemone

"Her spindly tentacles will point the way, To the prawns they call 'scampi' of Dublin Bay."

Mylo and Brit held tentacles and bravely headed north.

"My name is Canute, a wise old clam of the sea,

The seabed you see, precious to the beholder,

Is this you discover as you get gradually older.

A precious manuscript that can only last If we

And don't take too much and don't over trawl!

"A seabed holds fragments of memories and tales,

Bygone shipwrecks, secrets and the whispers of whales.

"Commotion in the ocean as you realise your surprise,

The truth behind your secret is right before your eyes!

So please spread your story and share this news,

As the future you see lies in everyone's shoes."

protect it and cherish it, creatures and all,

Stories, rare creatures and all things good

Lie deep in the heart of this glorious mud.

"Tis the sea bed itself that holds secrets of past,

And this secret you seek... well, you hold the key.

Mud Hole was a deeper and darker place than W.O.W. but Milo was a clever sea pen as he had remeberd to bring his torch to light the way The seabed was covered with tiny little volcano domes of mud, moulded into shape by hundreds of worms; what a strange and magical place this was! Soon they spotted two little pink claws and a pair of beautiful ebony eyes poking out of the "For this part of your journey you must be brave, Collect a shiny gem stone from St Bega's sea cave.

Legend says that Manannán mac Lir

rotected the Isle of Man with a magical cloak

of invisibility, conjuring up mists and illusions of warriors to warn off Viking invaders.

('son of the sea') was an Irish sea god

"The stone will protect you as you cross Solway Firth, Past the great Solway worm and its gigantic girth.

A little fish told me you've been

"Welcome to Mud Hole.

I'm a Dublin Bay prawn,

walking since dawn.

"Dolphins and turtles will guide the way, To Manannán mac Lir through his cloak of grey."

Brit wriggled and jiggled and Mylo fanned his way west across the open sea, both clutching their shiny gem stones for protection. The clicks of the dolphins and porpoises helped guide them westwards and the flippers and fins of the leatherback turtles and sunfish pointed the way to the Isle of Man through Manannán mac Lir's cloak of grey.

### Dublin Bay prawns...

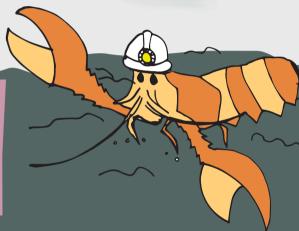
emerge at night to feast on little fish an worms. These muddy places and all the creatures found there are under the creatures found there are under threa from intensive trawling and dredging.

"Who are these creatures who come to my land? Through my cloak of grey you have found my hand.

"Prove to me now you are brave as can be, Venture forth to the basking shark alone in the sea.

"Only he knows the way to Liban the sea born, A mermaid of wisdom to the oceans sworn.

"Pass the Mull of Galloway and its lighthouse tall, To a deep sea trench and 82-fathom fall."



Heart urchins are sometimes called sea potatoes. Can you guess why?

As dawn broke, shafts of sunlight filtered through the reefs and corals, revealing an aquatic wonderland. A small, round creature covered in fine yellow hairs spoke softly to them.

"I'm a humble heart urchin, my name is Spud, I can see you're good souls and both truly love mud.

"Please follow me now past the giant McCool, To Slieve Na Griddle and the Pisces Reef pool."

The humble heart urchin guided Mylo and Brit through the deep labyrinth of lava-cooled reefs and hidden crevices of Slieve Na Griddle and the Pisces Reef. Ancient rocky towers soared above them, full of mysterious creatures: colonies of sea squirts in squishy tunics above and hundreds of brittle stars 'mud-bathing' below!

The Secrets of the Sea were all around them but they hoped the Irish giant McCool was not!

As they reached the edge of Slieve Na Griddle the humble heart urchin waved Mylo and Brit goodbye and sunk gently back into the sea bed. They knew that W.O.W. lay east of here across the open sea.

Listening to the cries of gannets and gulls and the barks of seals that ushered them home, they made their journey past wave-battered cliffs and sunken shipwrecks. Looking skyward through the white crests of the waves Mylo wondered whether the creatures who lived above the surface of the sea knew of its secrets too. "Maybe one day they will," he thought.

two friends held tentacles and



That night, as they snuggled down into the soft, homely, muddy plains of W.O.W. the dreamt of the true wonder that was all around them and hopefully always would be... the great Secret of the Sea.



## the quahog.

Curious quahogs feed using a siphon-like tongue and can live for an astounding 500 years!



of brachiopod

The beautiful shell of

Lamp shells are a type

(from Ancient Greek words meaning "arm" and "foot"). They are called 'lamp shells' because they look a bit like Roman oil lamps.

# The Secret of the Sea

