

Charles Darwin

Early life

Charles was born on 12th February 1809 in Shrewsbury, England. His father, Robert, was a doctor and his mother, Susannah, was a Wedgwood and her father made splendid porcelain plates.

Charles went to school in Shrewsbury but didn't pay much attention in class. He was more interested in collecting beetles. He had lots of summer holidays on the beach in Wales.



He went to university in Edinburgh when he was 16 to study to become a doctor, but he hated the sight of blood. He left Edinburgh to go to Cambridge and started to study geology (the science of how the earth was formed). He still liked beetles so one of his friends drew him riding one.

Voyage of the Beagle

Charles had just finished at university and went on a field trip to Wales with one of his teachers to record the geology of the area. He was then nominated to be the companion of Captain FitzRoy on the HMS Beagle which was going to sail around the world.

They left from Portsmouth on 27th December 1831 and didn't return to England until 2nd October 1836. Along the way they visited South America, the Galapagos Islands, New Zealand and Australia.



Down House, Kent

When he got back from the voyage, he married his cousin Emma and bought a house in a village in Kent. They had ten children together, but two of them died when they were little.



Charles did lots of experiments, observing and thinking at Down House. He set up a thinking path that he could walk around if he was trying hard to work out the answer to a question.

He looked at the natural world around him, the orchids in the grasslands and woods, the fly-eating plants in the boggy areas, the worms as they tunneled through the earth and the bees as they visited flowers for nectar.

He also grew vegetables in his garden and grew climbing plants in his greenhouse. He kept fancy pigeons in a little house in the grounds. He spent eight years studying barnacles in his study.

Books

He published lots of books about his voyage on the Beagle, on barnacles, climbing plants, earthworms, and on how humans and other living things evolved.

He was worried about publishing a book on evolution because he thought lots of people wouldn't believe him. He wrote it but didn't publish it for fifteen years.

When another scientist called Alfred Russell Wallace sent him a letter saying he'd thought up a theory of evolution, it forced Charles to finally publish his book.

