

Who Was Charles Darwin

Charles Galton Darwin

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Sir Charles Galton Darwin (19 December 1887 – 31 December 1962) was an English physicist who served as director of the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) during the Second World War. He was a son of the mathematician George Darwin and a grandson of Charles Darwin.

Charles Darwin

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Charles Robert Darwin (DAR-win; 12 February 1809 – 19 April 1882) was an English naturalist, geologist, and biologist, widely known for his contributions to evolutionary biology. His proposition that all species of life have descended from a common ancestor is now generally accepted and considered a fundamental scientific concept. In a joint presentation with Alfred Russel Wallace, he introduced his scientific theory that this branching pattern of evolution resulted from a process he called natural selection, in which the struggle for existence has a similar effect to the artificial selection involved in selective breeding. Darwin has been described as one of the most influential figures in human history and was honoured by burial in Westminster Abbey.

Darwin's early interest in nature led him to neglect his medical education at the University of Edinburgh; instead, he helped to investigate marine invertebrates. His studies at the University of Cambridge's Christ's College from 1828 to 1831 encouraged his passion for natural science. However, it was his five-year voyage on HMS Beagle from 1831 to 1836 that truly established Darwin as an eminent geologist. The observations and theories he developed during his voyage supported Charles Lyell's concept of gradual geological change. Publication of his journal of the voyage made Darwin famous as a popular author.

Puzzled by the geographical distribution of wildlife and fossils he collected on the voyage, Darwin began detailed investigations and, in 1838, devised his theory of natural selection. Although he discussed his ideas with several naturalists, he needed time for extensive research, and his geological work had priority. He was writing up his theory in 1858 when Alfred Russel Wallace sent him an essay that described the same idea, prompting the immediate joint submission of both their theories to the Linnean Society of London. Darwin's work established evolutionary descent with modification as the dominant scientific explanation of natural diversification. In 1871, he examined human evolution and sexual selection in *The Descent of Man*, and *Selection in Relation to Sex*, followed by *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). His research on plants was published in a series of books, and in his final book, *The Formation of Vegetable Mould, through the Actions of Worms* (1881), he examined earthworms and their effect on soil.

Darwin published his theory of evolution with compelling evidence in his 1859 book *On the Origin of Species*. By the 1870s, the scientific community and a majority of the educated public had accepted evolution as a fact. However, many initially favoured competing explanations that gave only a minor role to natural selection, and it was not until the emergence of the modern evolutionary synthesis from the 1930s to the 1950s that a broad consensus developed in which natural selection was the basic mechanism of evolution. Darwin's scientific discovery is the unifying theory of the life sciences, explaining the diversity of life.

The Autobiography of Charles Darwin

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Darwin wrote the text, which he entitled Recollections of the Development of my Mind and Character, for his family. He states that he started writing it on about May 28, 1876 and had finished it by August 3.

The text was published in 1887 (five years after Darwin's death) by John Murray as part of The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, including an autobiographical chapter. The text printed in Life and Letters was edited by Darwin's son Francis Darwin, who removed several passages about Darwin's critical views of God and Christianity.

The omitted passages were later restored by Darwin's granddaughter Nora Barlow in a 1958 edition to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the publication of The Origin of Species. This edition was published in London by Collins under the title of The Autobiography of Charles Darwin 1809-1882. With the original omissions restored. Edited and with appendix and notes by his granddaughter Nora Barlow.

Darwin–Wedgwood family

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The Darwin–Wedgwood family are members of two connected families, each noted for particular prominent 18th-century figures: Erasmus Darwin FRS, a physician and natural philosopher, and Josiah Wedgwood FRS, a noted potter and founder of the eponymous Josiah Wedgwood & Sons pottery company. The Darwin and Wedgwood families were on friendly terms for much of their history and members intermarried, notably Charles Darwin, who married Emma Wedgwood.

The most notable member of the family was Charles Darwin, a grandson of both Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood. The family also included at least ten Fellows of the Royal Society, and several artists and poets (among whom was the 20th-century composer Ralph Vaughan Williams). Presented below are brief biographical descriptions and genealogical information, and mentions of some notable descendants. (The individuals are listed by year of birth and grouped into generations.) The relationship to Francis Galton, and to his immediate ancestors, is also given. (Note, however, that the data tree below is not intended to include all descendants, nor is it intended to include all prominent descendants. Also note that Ursula Wood died in 2007, Richard Darwin Keynes died in 2010, and Horace Basil Barlow died in 2020.)

Robert Darwin

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Robert Waring Darwin (30 May 1766 – 13 November 1848) was an English medical doctor who is today best known as the father of naturalist Charles Darwin. He was a member of the influential Darwin–Wedgwood family.

Emma Darwin

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Emma Darwin (née Wedgwood; 2 May 1808 – 2 October 1896) was an English woman who was the wife and first cousin of Charles Darwin. They were married on 29 January 1839 and were the parents of ten

children, seven of whom survived to adulthood.

Religious views of Charles Darwin

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Charles Darwin's views on religion have been the subject of much interest and dispute. His pivotal work in the development of modern biology and evolution theory played a prominent part in debates about religion and science at the time. In the early 20th century his contributions became a focus of the creation–evolution controversy in the United States.

While Darwin came heavily to dispute the dogmatic prescriptions of the Anglican Church and Christianity in general, later in life he clarified his position as an agnostic in response to a letter from John Fordyce, a Christian missionary:

"In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God.— I think that generally (& more and more so as I grow older) but not always, that an agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind."

Darwin had a non-conformist Unitarian background, but attended an Anglican school. With the aim of becoming a clergyman, he went to the University of Cambridge for the required Bachelor of Arts degree, which included studies of Anglican theology. He took great interest in natural history and became filled with zeal for science as defined by John Herschel, based on the natural theology of William Paley which presented the argument from divine design in nature to explain adaptation as God acting through laws of nature. On the voyage of the Beagle he remained orthodox and looked for "centres of creation" to explain distribution, but towards the end of the voyage began to doubt that species were fixed. By this time he was critical of the Bible as history, and wondered why all religions should not be equally valid. Following his return in October 1836, he developed his novel ideas of geology while speculating about transmutation of species and thinking about religion.

Following Darwin's marriage to Emma Wedgwood in January 1839, they shared discussions about Christianity for several years, Emma's views being Unitarian like much of her family. The theodicy of Paley and Thomas Robert Malthus vindicated evils such as starvation as a result of a benevolent creator's laws which had an overall good effect. To Darwin, natural selection produced the good of adaptation but removed the need for design, and he could not see the work of an omnipotent deity in all the pain and suffering such as the ichneumon wasp paralysing caterpillars as live food for its eggs. Until 1844 he followed Paley in viewing organisms as perfectly adapted with only a few imperfections, and only partly modified that view by 1859. On the Origin of Species reflects theological views. Though he thought of religion as a tribal survival strategy, Darwin still believed that God was the ultimate lawgiver, and later recollected that at the time he was convinced of the existence of God as a First Cause and deserved to be called a theist. This view subsequently fluctuated, and he continued to explore conscientious doubts, without forming fixed opinions on certain religious matters.

Darwin continued to play a leading part in the parish work of the local church, but from around 1849 would go for a walk on Sundays while his family attended church. Though reticent about his religious views, in 1879 he responded that he had never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a god, and that generally "an Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind." He further stated that "Science has nothing to do with Christ, except insofar as the habit of scientific research makes a man cautious in admitting evidence. For myself, I do not believe that there ever has been any revelation. As for a future life, every man must judge for himself between conflicting vague probabilities."

Anne Darwin

Anne Elizabeth Darwin (2 March 1841 – 23 April 1851) was the second child and eldest daughter of Charles and Emma Darwin. Darwin scholar E. Janet Browne

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Charles Darwin bibliography

This is a list of the writings of Charles Darwin. 1829–1832. [Records of captured insects, in] Stephens, J. F., Illustrations of British entomology 1835:

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Health of Charles Darwin

For much of his adult life, Charles Darwin's health was repeatedly compromised by an uncommon combination of symptoms, leaving him severely debilitated

For much of his adult life, Charles Darwin's health was repeatedly compromised by an uncommon combination of symptoms, leaving him severely debilitated for long periods of time. However, Darwin himself suggested that, in some ways, this may have helped his work: "Even ill-health, though it has annihilated several years of my life, has saved me from the distractions of society and amusement."

Darwin consulted numerous doctors, but, with the medical science of the time, the cause remained undiagnosed. He tried all available treatments, but these had at best only temporary success. More recently, there has been much speculation as to the nature of his illness.

It has been suggested that exhuming Darwin's remains could clarify the nature of his health issues.

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