

Mill Road History Society



Darwin family members on a chilly picnic at Byron's Pool (Gwen Raverat, *née* Darwin, from *Period Piece*, 1952).

The Darwin Family in Cambridge

A Special City Trail for Mill Road History Society

The story of **Charles Darwin's family**, from his paternal grandfather to his children and grandchildren, runs through the City of Cambridge like the river Granta-Cam itself. This specially-planned '**Darwin Family Trail**' introduces you to a fascinating family history, while helping you to enjoy a scientific adventure, taking in cemeteries, colleges, plaques, museums, libraries, the Botanic Garden, and other famous locations. It may be completed in a single 'study day', or followed piecemeal on different days, as time and inclination allow. *Online material is also suggested.* In the spirit of sustainability, tips are given on how to achieve the **Trail** using public transport. I very much hope that this **Darwin** experience may enhance your love of our renowned city.

Emeritus Professor Philip Stott,
June, 2024

The Trail, as laid out below, goes from north Cambridge (Huntingdon Road), *via* the city centre and Mill Road, to south Cambridge (Trumpington/Addenbrooke's). However, it may be followed **in any order that suits you**, especially if you are completing it bit-by-bit on different days.

We shall start at **The Ascension Parish Burial Ground**, formerly the burial ground of The Parish of St Giles' and St Peter's, the cemetery located off the Huntingdon Road, famous for >2,500 burials, including those of Ludwig Wittgenstein and three Nobel prize winners.

The Darwin Family Trail

1. The Ascension Burial Ground

All Souls Lane; entrance between 145-147, Huntingdon Road. *No vehicular access.*

Buses Citi 5 & 6 run frequently from the centre to and from Huntingdon Road.



The burials of two of **Charles Darwin's** distinguished sons, **Francis** and **Horace**:



1. **Sir Francis ('Frank') Darwin** FLS FRS FRSE (1848-1925): 3rd son, 7th child; Trinity College, Cambridge, graduating 1870. Botanist & compiler of *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (1887; 1905); honorary doctorate (D.Sc.) 1909. Father

of **Frances**, cousin/friend of **Gwen Darwin**, & wife of poet, **Francis Cornford**, Their son was the Marxist poet, **John Cornford**, killed in Spain, aged 21. **Frances** is buried with her father. They lived at '**Wychfield**', now a campus site of **Trinity Hall** [Trail 2 below].

2. **Sir Horace Darwin** KBE FRS (1851-1928): 5th son, 9th child; Trinity College, Cambridge, B.A. in 1874; engineer - co-founded the **Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company**; Fellow of Trinity College; **Mayor of Cambridge** between 1896-1897. Lived at 17, St Botolph's Lane; then at 66, Hills Road; and finally at '**The Orchard**', now **Murray Edwards College** (formerly **New Hall**) [Trail 4 below]. His wife was **Ida, Lady Darwin** (1854-1946), who is buried with him. She was a strong supporter of **Newnham College**, &, with **Florence Ada Keynes**, founded, in 1909, the Cambridge Association for the Care of the Feeble-Minded, precursor of the charity Mind. **The Ida Darwin Hospital**, Fulbourn, was named in her honour.

WALK TO

2. Trinity Hall, Wychfield Site

Storey's Way, CB3 0DZ: '**Wychfield**', former home of **Sir Francis Darwin** & his family. The house and grounds were purchased in 1948. *For a map and description of these beautiful gardens:* <https://www.trinhall.cam.ac.uk/about/gardens/wychfield/>

WALK TO.....

3. Fitzwilliam College

Storey's Way, CB3 0DG: '**The Grove**', former home from 1883-1896 of **Charles Darwin's** widow, **Emma**. The college is open to visitors.

Today, '**The Grove**' is a central feature of **Fitzwilliam College** where it provides common-room and other facilities. Built in 1813, it is a splendid gault clay, yellow-grey brick Regency house. **Gwen Darwin (Raverat)** records that: 'It was a lovely place, where the children and Grandmamma's cows and carriage-horses, and Francis's donkeys all wandered about under the trees.'

WALK TO.....

4. Murray Edwards College

Huntingdon Road, CB3 0DF: <https://www.murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk/contact/find-us>. The College grounds are open to the public from 10-6; please report to the Porters' Lodge before beginning your tour.

Founded as the **New Hall**, a first year of just 16 students moved into buildings on Silver Street in 1954. The College was able to relocate to Huntingdon Road when, in 1962, members of the **Darwin family** donated their home, '**The Orchard**', to the College. It was a large house, part-owned by **Emma Nora Barlow, Lady Barlow, Horace Darwin's daughter**, a distinguished botanist and geneticist. Her first book (as editor) was a new edition of *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1933), and she published an unexpurgated version of *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin*. *Aquilegia* 'Nora Barlow' is named for her. By the time the house was given to the College, the garden was rather overgrown, though noted for its fine beeches, fruit trees, and choice shrubs, some of which remain. *See for more information:* <https://www.murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk/>

TAKE **Citi 5 or Citi 6 Bus** TO CITY CENTRE.....

5. St John's College

CB2 1TP

*Begin your walk through the city centre at **St John's College**, which **Erasmus Darwin** (1731-1802), **Charles'** paternal grandfather, attended. In 1750, aged 18, **Erasmus** was awarded a Lord Exeter Scholarship to **St. John's**, with one year in Edinburgh. He returned to Cambridge, and took his M.B. in 1755. The College holds copies he made as an undergraduate from works by William Heberden, Fellow of the College (1710-1801). **Erasmus** was a founding member of the famous **Lunar Society of Birmingham**, and became a noted physician and natural philosopher. He is called 'The English Lamarck' because he was a key proponent of 'transmutation', a precursor to evolution, along with the French naturalist, **Jean-Baptiste Lamarck** (1744-1829). [See also: **Trail Number 11**].*

WALK SOUTH ALONG BRIDGE STREET & SIDNEY STREET TO.....

6. The Boots' Plaque

65-67, Sidney Street, CB2 3ND

On 26 January, 1828, aged 18, following his elder brother, **Erasmus Alvey** (1804-81; entered 1822), **Charles Darwin** entered **Christ's College**. He joined late, and had to live out in lodgings above a tobacconist on Sidney Street, across the road from The Lady Margaret Beaufort's Gatehouse. This is celebrated by a small plaque on the Sidney Street frontage of **Boots the Chemist**. **Charles**, a smoker, was much lampooned for this by his fellow students.



WALK SOUTH TO ST ANDREW'S STREET.....

7. Christ's College

St Andrew's Street, CB2 3BU

'Oh Lord what a jolly place Cambridge is...'

On 15 October, 1828, **Charles** finally moved into College proper, to rooms today known as G4, a comfortable set on the south side of **1st Court** - rent £4 per quarter. His interests? Riding, shooting, racing (Newmarket); coffee, drinking, smoking; but also, natural history, music at **King's**, and art, especially engravings in the **Fitzwilliam Museum. The Old Library's** collections hold priceless material relating to **Darwin**, including letters exchanged between **Charles** and his cousin, **William Darwin Fox**. These letters present a vivid portrait of just how much the pair avoided lectures and chapel in favour of riding on the Fens, playing cards, and catching beetles. Until he met his influential mentor, **John Stevens Henslow**, he was a bit of a 'Hooray Henry'! In **New Court**, you may admire the delightful **Bicentenary Statue** (as aged 22, May 1831, his final year at **Christ's** before he set sail on H.M.S. *Beagle*). **Anthony Smith** spent a year crafting the bronze, which was unveiled by H.R.H. Duke of Edinburgh on 12 February, 2009. Plants in the garden are chosen to represent **Darwin's** voyages around the world (e.g. *Berberis darwinii*). A bust of **Darwin** sits in the Portico, behind **3rd Court**, over the waterway leading into the Master's Garden.



WALK SOUTH TO DOWNING STREET.....

8. Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences

Downing Place, CB2 3EQ; **free entry** (Monday-Friday 10-5; Saturday 10-4; Sunday closed), with no booking required

Visit the **Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences** to study its fascinating **Darwin** exhibits, which have a wonderfully old-fashioned air about them. The 'Beagle Collection' comprises approximately 2000 rocks and a few fossils collected by **Darwin** during his voyage on H.M.S. *Beagle* between 1831-1836. '**Darwin the Geologist**' takes you back to his early life and career as a geologist. See how he developed his ideas during the voyage, the significance geology had in his scientific studies, and how his geological work has influenced current scientists. A reconstruction of **Darwin's Beagle cabin** displays the rocks he collected on one day at Wollaston Island (south of Chile), and the notebooks and instruments he used to record and analyse them.

A DIVERSION TO MILL ROAD/GWYDIR STREET.....

9. The Bath House

In 1927, a Bath House for Cambridge residents was finally opened by the corner of 99 Mill Road and 57 Gwydir Street. The building of such a facility had originally been vigorously opposed by Charles and Emma's second son, **George Darwin** [see: **Trail Number 11**], who, following his purchase of **Newnham Grange** in 1885, wrote to complain about the Corporation's original plans to commemorate the



'A Darwin Family' Cambridge City Trail

Queen's jubilee in 1887 by erecting public bath-houses on Laundress Green, right opposite where he lived. His letter began: 'Gentlemen, I believe that one of the plans which has been suggested for the Queen's Jubilee is the erection of public baths. I wish to call your attention to serious objections to one of the sites which have been proposed, namely on the small piece of common adjoining the King's Mill. If you contemplate adopting this plan you will no doubt be advised as to any legal difficulties which may attend the enclosure of a portion of common land ...'

Interestingly, **George** had quite a propensity for complaining about all manner of developments in the City centre, especially roads. Also, for example, in 1890, he wrote to moan about the 'almost incessant whistling of the shunting engines in the goods yards - especially at night'. The Midland Railway responded by noting that they didn't 'keep any shunting engines at Cambridge', but, nevertheless, they still cautioned their men on regular trains to avoid whistling at Cambridge as far as was practicable.

In the end, it appears that the Bath House ended up in Mill Road, an unconscionable long wait, one would think, for the City to get this hygienic facility.

NOW TRAVEL BACK TO FITZWILLIAM STREET (via TENNIS COURT ROAD).....

10. The Darwin Memorial Brick

See the **Memorial Brick** on the house at **22, Fitzwilliam Street**, CB2 1QH, where **Charles Darwin** lived on his return to Cambridge in 1836 following his voyage on H.M.S. *Beagle*.



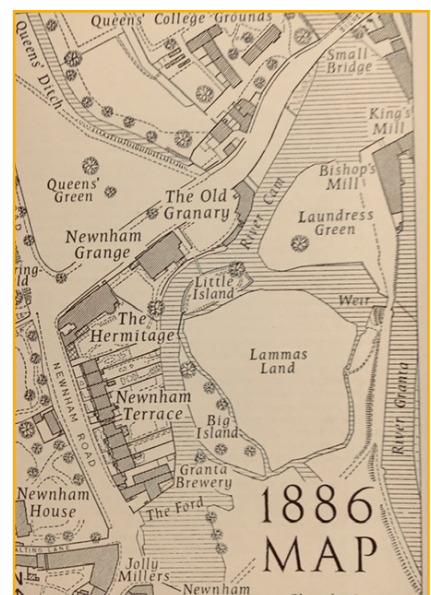
*NOW TREAT YOURSELF TO A WELL-DESERVED COFFEE & CAKE BREAK AT **Fitzbillies**, 51-52, Trumpington Street, CB2 1RG.....*

FULLY REFRESHED, TURN RIGHT INTO TRUMPINGTON STREET & THEN LEFT INTO SILVER STREET, AND WALK TO.....

11. Darwin College

Darwin College, Silver Street, CB3 9EU

In 1885, **George Darwin** & his American socialite wife, '**Maud**' du Puy, bought **Newnham Grange** for £4,600. Their daughter, **Gwen Darwin (Raverat)**, made the house famous in her engaging *Period Piece: A Cambridge Childhood* (1952), dedicated to her cousin, **Frances Darwin (Cornford)**. In June 1963, it was announced that a new graduate college would be founded; this would be named **Darwin College**, and it would occupy **Newnham Grange & The Old Granary**.



Sir George Howard Darwin KCB FRS FRSE (1845-1912) was the 2nd son & 5th child of **Charles Darwin**. He entered **St John's College** in 1863, but moved to **Trinity College**, and was second wrangler in 1868. In 1883, he became **Plumian Professor of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy**; the 'Darwin Crater' on Mars is named after him.

Look out for the **Blue Plaque** to **Gwen Raverat**, one of our finest woodcut engravers, who lived and died at **Newnham Grange**. Her younger sister, **Margaret**, married the eminent surgeon, **Sir Geoffrey Langdon Keynes**. Since its foundation, **Darwin College** has been the custodian of some **Darwin family** portraits and objects, including the portrait of **Darwin's grandfather, Erasmus Darwin**, by Joseph Wright of Derby, painted around 1770, a masterpiece of enlightenment portraiture [*see also: Trail Number 5*].

12. Two Detours to Enhance Your Darwin Trail Experience

1. **12a. Darwin Correspondence Project:** explore the collection of Charles Darwin's papers *virtually* via the Cambridge University Library. Have access to >15,000 letters he wrote and received during his lifetime, the majority of which are housed at the Library itself as part of the largest archive of Darwin-related material in the world. Go to: a. <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/> and b. <https://www.cam.ac.uk/stories/DarwinExhibition>
2. **12b. Visit Cambridge University Botanic Garden:** a Grade II* historic landscape, the 'child' of **Darwin's** mentor and friend, **Professor John Stevens Henslow** (1796-1861), who personally recommended **Darwin** for the *Beagle* voyage. See the **Blue Plaque** to **Henslow** at the Trumpington Road Entrance, and stroll down **Henslow Way**. **Then enjoy afternoon tea at the café**, while contemplating the fact that Cambridge has two world-famous herbaria: **Cambridge University Herbarium** (CGE) with an estimated 1.1 million specimens (nearly 1,000 collected by **Darwin** on the *Beagle* voyage), and **Cambridge University Botanic Garden Herbarium** (CGG), with c.14,000 specimens, mainly focusing on plants grown in the Garden.

WALK to EITHER JOHN LEWIS OR BATEMAN STREET BUS STOP AND TAKE **P&R 3 BUS TO ANSTEY WAY (MARIS LANE), TRUMPINGTON.....**

13. Trumpington Parish Extension Cemetery

Walk south from Anstey Way to Shelford Road, and cross over to the lych gate into Trumpington Parish Extension Cemetery (St Mary's and St Michael's New Churchyard), CB2 9LZ

In this lovely, quiet, cemetery squeezed in between two busy roads, you will find the shared grave of **Sir George Howard Darwin** [*see: Trail Number 11* for full details], of his American wife, '**Maud**' du **Puy**, and of their famous artist daughter, **Gwen**



Raverat. Although the long flat memorial stone is now difficult to read because of weathering, you can still just make out the beautiful passage from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* which was added after **Gwen** was finally interred there: 'Fear no more the heat of the sun/Nor the furious winter's rages/Thou thy worldly task has done/Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.' This is indeed a place to pay homage to, and to meditate on, the extraordinary lives of the **Darwin family**.

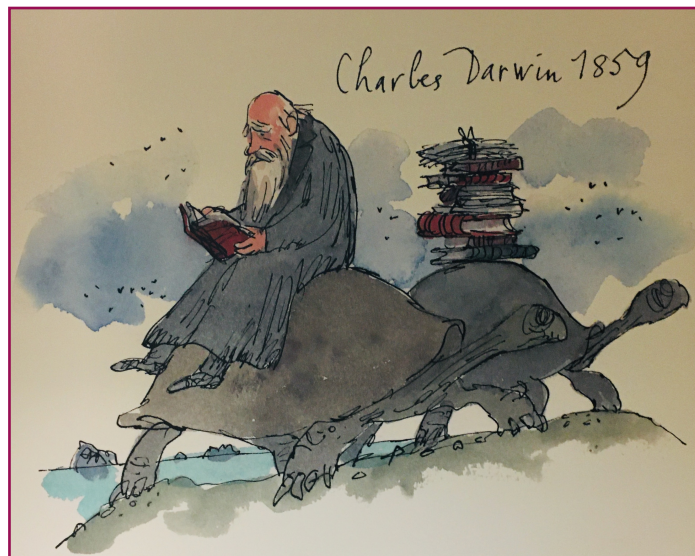
[**14.** If you have time and the inclination (and a picnic ready to hand!), you might now like TO WALK TO **TRUMPINGTON MEADOWS NATURE RESERVE**, CB2 9LH, and to **BYRON'S POOL LOCAL NATURE RESERVE**, CB2 9LJ, on the river Granta, and re-enact **the Darwin family's** own summer jaunts there - **see illustration on p.1**]

WALK TO THE TRUMPINGTON 'PARK & RIDE', AND TAKE GUIDED BUS A or R TO OUTPATIENTS, ADDENBROOKE'S HOSPITAL

15. Quentin Blake's Mural at Addenbrooke's Hospital

Wall of the long corridor linking Outpatients to the main hospital

This famous mural has its permanent home in the corridors of Addenbrooke's Hospital, where it continues to delight staff, patients, and visitors alike. At the heart of the 2009 70ft mural is a perfect end point for our **Darwin Trail**: Blake's glorious depiction of **Charles Darwin** himself sitting atop a giant Galápagos tortoise! Enjoy!



You can now return home easily using one of the many buses from the Addenbrooke's Bus Station Hub.

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