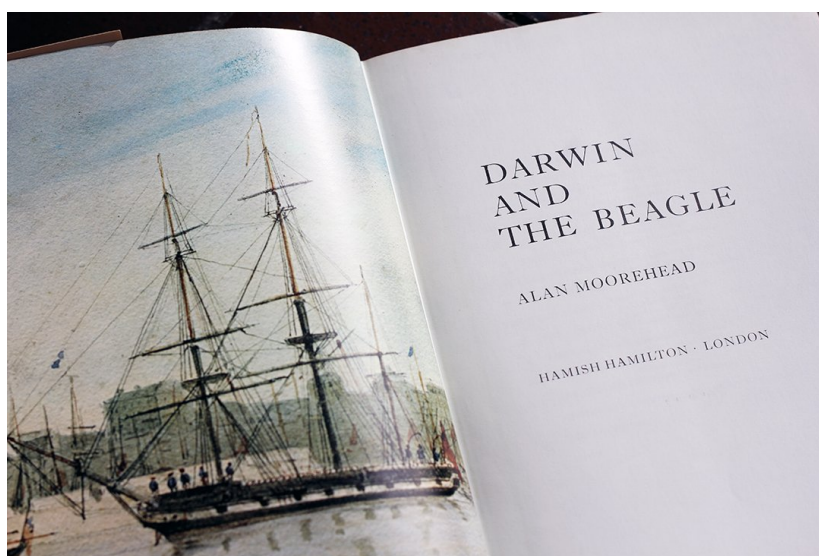


As today (20th August) is the anniversary of Charles Darwin's publication in 1858 of his theory of evolution in *The Journal of the Proceedings of the Linnean Society of London*, it seems a good opportunity to review the two books which the Library possesses on the subject. Not that they are exactly on the subject, since one, by Darwin himself, is *The Voyage of the Beagle*, first published in 1845, and the other is Alan Moorehead's *Darwin and the Beagle*, a retelling of the voyage from the subject's journals, generously illustrated with contemporary drawings, paintings and prints.

Darwin was only 23, the well-off son of a professional family, flirting with entering the Church (although doubting his vocation), when he was given the extraordinary opportunity of travelling on the Beagle, on an expedition got up at the behest of the Admiralty, under the captaincy of Robert Fitzroy, who was equally young, much more aristocratic, and extremely religious.



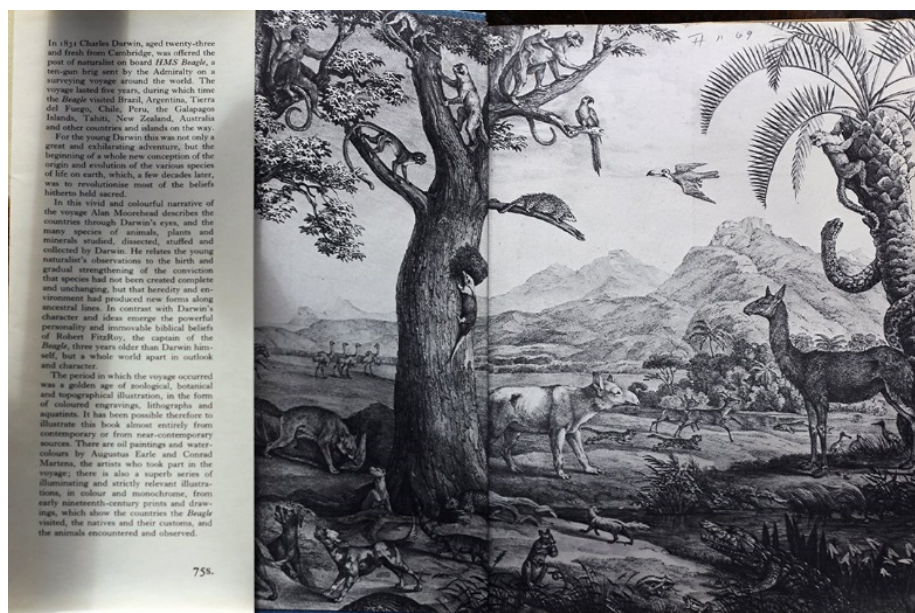
His father was against the scheme, but fortunately his uncle, the potter Josiah Wedgwood, persuaded Dr Darwin to let his son go, and four months later, at the end of 1831, they were off.

Darwin suffered horribly from sea-sickness all the way to the Canaries, where he fell in love with geology, and dissected a sea slug.



Augustus Earle, *Midshipman's quarters on board a ship of war* (not the Beagle)

He got on particularly well with the expedition's artist, Augustus Earle, who had already travelled to South America and Australia, and was able to work in any genre or medium. It took them 63 days to reach San Salvador, which Darwin compared to 'a view in the Arabian Nights'; they continued to Rio de Janeiro, where he embarked on his first inland expedition, filling his notebooks and collecting jars, and writing ecstatic letters to his family and his tutor. He was less ecstatic on arriving at the plantation with whose Irish owner he had been travelling; the slaves he saw were completely at the mercy of their owner's whims (the Wedgwoods had campaigned against slavery).



He spent some time in a cottage in Rio de Janeiro with Earle, the artist, collecting specimens to send home to his tutor, while the latter painted the scenery. Later on Earle painted *Divine Service on*

Board a British Frigate as they sailed south; he was to exhibit this at the Royal Academy. Darwin took an assistant from amongst the crew, teaching him to skin and stuff the birds and mammals he collected. They arrived in Patagonia, where Darwin found the fossilized bones of dinosaurs; later on they were able to shoot deer, ostrich and a puma, all of which they ate.

In Buenos Aires he came down with malaria, and was nearly unable to meet up again with the *Beagle*, up in Montevideo where Fitzroy had been working on a surveying project. They rounded the Cape, past the Falklands, and sailed up the west coast of Chile to Valparaiso, which reignited his passion for geology. Finally they came to the Galapagos Islands ('A shore fit for pandemonium... The Infernal Regions', as Fitzroy remarked), but where Darwin first saw the result of species adapting to varied conditions.



Darwin finally got home to England in 1836, never to leave it again, and with his classification of species, marriage, and production of *On the Origin of Species*... before him.



Conrad Martens, *HMS Beagle at Tierra del Fuego*, 1832

This is a fascinating canter through Darwin's voyage and its' fruits and consequences; it gains immeasurably from the clarity of the writing, the numerous quotes and extracts from Darwin's diaries, and from the illustrations, which bring the period, places, people, plants and animals to vivid life. And, if you're really enthusiastic, you also have the prospect of Darwin's own *The Voyage of the Beagle* to read...

