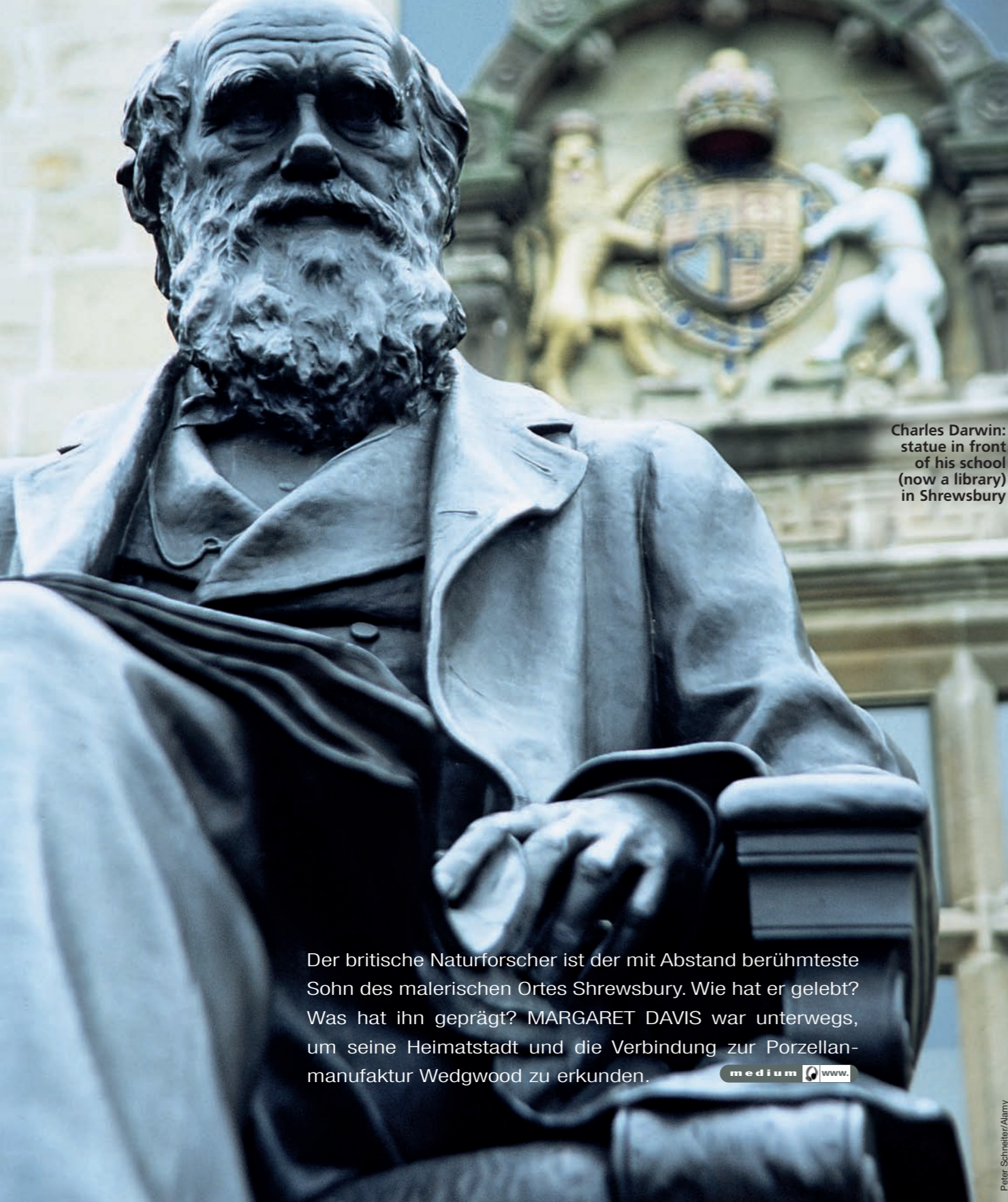


In the footsteps of Charles Darwin



Charles Darwin: statue in front of his school (now a library) in Shrewsbury

Der britische Naturforscher ist der mit Abstand berühmteste Sohn des malerischen Ortes Shrewsbury. Wie hat er gelebt? Was hat ihn geprägt? MARGARET DAVIS war unterwegs, um seine Heimatstadt und die Verbindung zur Porzellanmanufaktur Wedgwood zu erkunden.

medium www.

Peter Scheller/Alamy

Charles Darwin slept here — or maybe he didn't. The Lion Hotel is a **landmark** in the pretty market town of **Shrewsbury**, Darwin's birthplace in the English Midlands. A historic **coaching inn** that dates back to the 1600s, The Lion has seen many famous visitors, including writer Charles Dickens and legendary violinist Niccolò Paganini.

Whether Charles Darwin was an overnight guest is uncertain, but it does seem that he caught a **coach** from the hotel on his journey to London and Plymouth, where he joined the expedition of the **HMS Beagle** in 1831. The ship's crew was on a mission to **map** the South American **coastline**. Darwin was allowed to go on land, where he collected fossils and observed living animals. His observations led him on the path to his theories of **natural selection** and evolution (see *Spotlight* 10/06).

Two hundred years ago this month, on 12 February 1809, Charles Darwin was born at The Mount, the Darwin family home in Shrewsbury. His father, Robert Waring Darwin (1766–1848), was a wealthy doctor and financier. His mother, Susannah, was the daughter of Josiah Wedgwood, the **founder** of the famous **pottery firm** that still bears his name. Dr Darwin made certain that his children were **baptized** into the Church of England at St Chad's Church. Young Charles, however, attended the Unitarian Church with his mother, and some observers believe the church's liberal views may have influenced his ideas.

Sadly, Susannah Darwin died when Charles was only eight, and he later wrote that he could remember very little about her. His older sister Caroline cared for him after their mother's death.

Young Charles was a lively, friendly boy. Far from being an intellectual, he was more interested in horses, dogs and hunting than in his school books. From an early age, he was fascinated by nature, particularly birds and insects, and in collecting eggs, **beetles** and stones. According to one story, finding three new beetles for his collection and hav-

ing only two hands, he kept the third in his mouth till he managed to get his treasures home.

Situated on a hill above the River Severn, The Mount had large, well-kept gardens and, as teenagers, Charles and his older brother Erasmus set up their own chemistry laboratory there. Both Robert and Susannah Darwin kept detailed **diaries** about the plants that grew there. Charles would later follow their good example with **extensive** scientific journals.

Robert Darwin sent Charles to Edinburgh University to study medicine at the age of 16. The boy hated it. The sight and smell of dead bodies in anatomy classes made him ill, as did watching an operation on a child — probably an amputation. For the rest of his life, he felt sick at the sight of blood. Clearly, he was not meant to be a doctor, although strangely enough, he took up shooting — birds, rabbits and rats. When he finally **worked up the courage** to tell his father he could not continue with his medical studies, Robert Darwin exploded: “You care for nothing but shooting, dogs and rat-catching, and you will be a **disgrace** to yourself and all your family.”

After he got over his **fury**, Robert Darwin decided to send his son to Cambridge to prepare him for a career as a **clergyman**. Charles agreed to the plan, although his heart was elsewhere. Most of his time at Cambridge was spent in activities not connected with the **clerical** life — deepening his knowledge of botany and geology, for example.

During summer holidays, Charles frequently visited his cousins in the charming village of Maer in Staffordshire, where Josiah Wedgwood II had a large **estate**, Maer Hall. A **passionate** hunter, “Uncle Jos” especially enjoyed the visits, as his own four sons were not interested in hunting. ▶

Darwin dates

1809 12 February Charles Robert Darwin is born in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England.

1817 15 July Darwin's mother, Susannah, dies.

1831 December to October 1836 Darwin serves as companion and naturalist on the *HMS Beagle*.

1839 29 January Darwin marries Emma Wedgwood (1808–96).

1839 August Darwin's book about the voyage of the *Beagle* is published.

1839 27 December Birth of the Darwins' first child, William Erasmus. The couple were to have ten children, seven of whom lived to **adulthood**.

1859 *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* is published.

1871 *The Descent of Man* (in which the human race is related to the **ancestors of apes**) is published.

1872–81 Publication of various works on biology and botany, including *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*.

1882 19 April Darwin dies, aged 73. He is buried seven days later in Westminster Abbey, London.

adulthood [ˈædʌlθʊd]	Erwachsenenalter
ancestor [ˈænsɪstə]	Vorfahr
ape [eɪp]	Menschenaffe
baptize sb. [bæpˈtaɪz]	jmdn. taufen
beetle [ˈbi:təl]	Käfer
clergyman [ˈklɜːdʒɪmən]	Geistlicher
clerical [ˈklɛrɪkəl]	geistlich
coach [kəʊtʃ]	Kutsche
coaching inn [ˈkəʊtʃɪŋ ɪn]	historische Herberge mit Poststation
coastline [ˈkəʊstlaɪn]	Küstenverlauf
diary [ˈdaɪəri]	Tagebuch
disgrace [dɪsˈɡreɪs]	Schande
estate [ɪˈsteɪt]	Anwesen, Ländereien
extensive [ɪkˈstɛnsɪv]	ausführlich
founder [ˈfaʊndə]	(Be)Gründer(in)
fury [ˈfjʊəri]	Wut
HMS = Her/His Majesty's Ship	Titel, den alle Schiffe der britischen Marine tragen
landmark [ˈlændmɑːk]	Wahrzeichen
map [mæp]	kartografisch erfassen
natural selection [ˌnætʃərəl ˈsələkʃən]	natürliche Auslese
passionate [ˈpæʃənət]	leidenschaftlich
pottery firm [ˈpɒtəri fɜːm]	hier: Porzellanmanufaktur
Shrewsbury [ˈʃrəʊzbəri]	
work up the courage	den Mut aufbringen
[ˌwɜːk ˌʌp ðə ˈkʌrɪdʒ]	