

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Sedgwick Museum
of Earth Sciences

Discussing Darwin on BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time*

Melvyn Bragg, Steve Jones (Professor of Genetics, University College London) and Jim Moore (Professor of the History of Science, Open University and Darwin biographer) came to Cambridge in November 2008 to record interviews for a series of four programmes on the life of Charles Darwin for Bragg's *In Our Time* series.

They spent time in the collections at the Sedgwick Museum looking at the rocks Darwin collected while on the voyage of the *Beagle* (1831-1836) and learning about Darwin's early life and enthusiasm for geology; this had been dampened by his time at Edinburgh, but was evidently rekindled by Adam Sedgwick's exciting lectures as well as John Henslow's sage advice.

In doing so they interviewed the Director of the Museum - David Norman - about Darwin and his interest and training in geology (including this fieldtrip to North Wale with Adam Sedgwick), as well as his expeditionary work on his extraordinary Voyage of the *Beagle*.

David Norman said:

"Darwin's bicentenary this year will attract huge interest and it has been marvelous to start the year with the series *In Our Time* on BBC Radio devoted to an appreciation of the life and enthusiasms of the young Charles Darwin. It is so easily forgotten, given the almost iconic image of him as an old, heavily-bearded man, that Darwin was, during his time at Cambridge and on the *Beagle*, young, fit, endlessly enthusiastic and inquisitive (in many ways a typical student). The interviews and themes discussed in this series very nicely explain who Darwin was, what he did and why his later work has become so important to our general understanding of life and the very earth upon which we stand."

The *In Our Time* featured several other Darwin-related venues in Cambridge, including Darwin's student room in Christ's College and the University Museum of Zoology's exhibition *Darwin: Beetles, Finches, Barnacles*.

The Sedgwick Museum's current Darwin exhibition is *Charles Darwin - Becoming a Geologist* which tells the story of Darwin's early life, his interest in the natural world and his development as a geologist at home in Shrewsbury, at the University of Edinburgh and at Cambridge. This exhibition was funded by a grant from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

To take the story beyond Darwin's early training as a geologist, a major, new exhibition of the geological specimens collected by Darwin during the voyage of the HMS *Beagle* will open in July 2009.

Darwin the Geologist will feature a biography of this important collection of rocks and fossils that was cherished by Darwin at Down House during his lifetime and donated to the Sedgwick Museum after his death. This exhibition is funded by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Foundation.

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Note to Editors

1. The Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences is the oldest established Museum at the University of Cambridge (having been founded in 1728). Its collections of over 1.5 million specimens have received the accolades of Designation and Accreditation because of their national and international importance. Since the mid 1990s it has been undergoing a period of renovation and refurbishment.