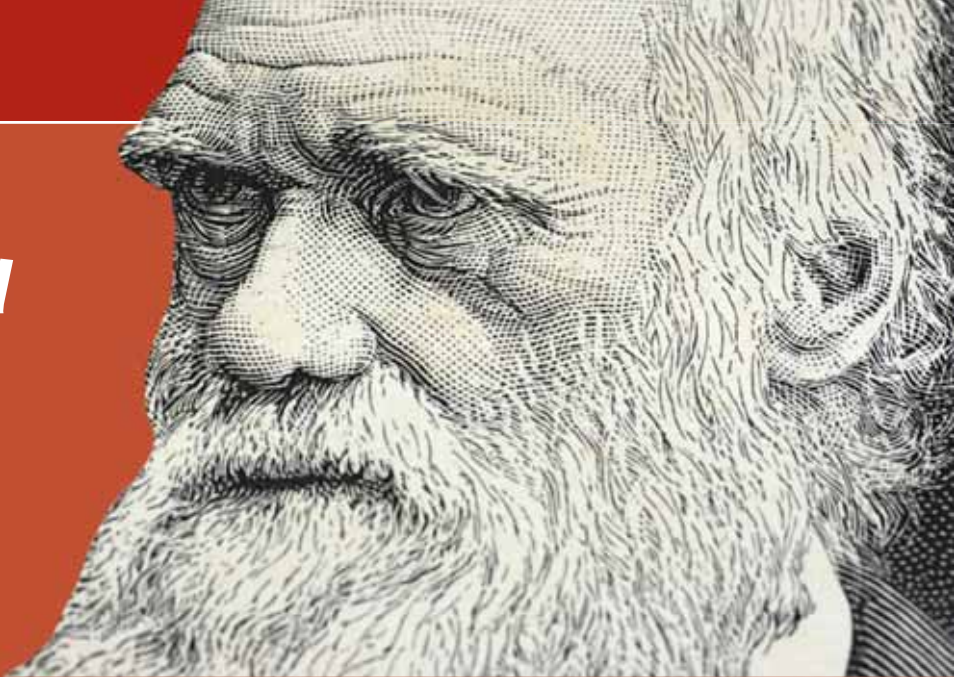


The man behind the scientist

It's a landmark year for eminent naturalist and father of modern day evolutionary theory Charles Darwin.



text

Row Booker

photograph

Courtesy Tim Berra

above

Professor Tim Berra, planning to put a human face to Charles Darwin.

Not only is 2009 the 200th anniversary of his birth, but it is also 150 years since his revolutionary work "On the Origin of Species" was published.

And it is this contentious publication that will form the basis of the Charles Darwin Symposium, "Charles Darwin: Shaping our Science, Society and Future" which will take place at the Darwin Convention Centre from 22 – 24 September 2009.

Delivering the key note speech at the symposium will be world-renowned Darwin specialist Tim Berra, an Emeritus Professor of Evolution, Ecology and Organismal Biology at the Ohio State University.

Professor Berra's 90-minute opening lecture will recount the fascinating story of the person and the idea that changed how we view the world. The lecture is based on his recently published book and has the same title, "Charles Darwin: The Concise Story of an Extraordinary Man".

"My lecture covers Darwin's revolutionary scientific work, its impact on modern-day biological science, and the influence of Darwin's evolutionary theory on Western thought," Professor Berra said.

The presentation will dig even more deeply, however, to reveal the great scientist as a husband, father and friend ultimately aiming to "put a human face on Darwin".

Through a collection of anecdotes, Professor Berra will emphasise the human side of Darwin by dealing with his family relationships and interactions with his closest advisors.

"In the presentation I talk about his happy marriage to his first cousin, Emma Wedgwood, with whom he had 10 children. I show how he was an openly devoted and affectionate father with each and every one of his children. How he grieved terribly for the loss of his eldest daughter, Annie, who was just 10 years old when she died of consumption – a death which led him to abandon Christianity altogether, stating that he simply could no longer imagine a just and merciful God would allow such suffering of innocent children.

"I discuss his work and, in particular, how he anticipated the public's reaction to an account of a godless origin of the species and how he therefore was always searching to develop more evidence.

"The presentation ends with an account of Darwin's death on 19 April 1882 aged 73, brought on by a heart attack.

"Despite his beloved and devoted wife Emma's request for a simple funeral, Charles – at the request of 20 members of parliament – was instead laid to rest with much pomp and ceremony at Westminster Abbey. His grave now lies in the nave, a few feet from that of Isaac Newton and Charles Lyell. The funeral was attended by Darwin's surviving children, representatives from the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Russia and by those of universities and every scientific society within Great Britain as well as a large number of personal friends and distinguished men. However, his wife Emma did not attend the funeral to preserve her privacy," Professor Berra said.

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For more information on Professor Berra's presentation and the Charles Darwin Symposium, visit [W: cdu.edu.au/cdss2009](http://W.cdu.edu.au/cdss2009).

