

**Visit to Charles Darwin's Home & Gardens, Down House, Downe, Orpington BR67JT  
Thursday 16 June 2011**

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This meeting has been organised by Geoff Cockett

A few years after returning from his epic voyage on the Beagle, Darwin decided to settle down as a family man in a quiet rural setting. Originally an 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse lying on the edge of a Kent village 15 miles from London, Down Houses became his family home, laboratory and field trial site for forty years. Today it stands as a testimony to a man who shocked and subsequently revolutionized the Victorian world.

After his death, the house became a small Museum with a few rooms containing Darwin memorabilia. In 1996, the house and contents were nearly sold off by public auction but fortunately English Heritage aided by others, was able to acquire Down House and its grounds for the nation. The house had to undergo extensive major repairs (£2M) and was redeveloped as a much larger museum. The exterior, gardens and the interior decoration of the ground floor rooms now look very much as they did in the late 1870's. The award winning exhibition on the first floor was introduced in 2009 to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Darwin's birth. It follows his unpromising start as a scholar, through his adventures on the Beagle and then to the controversial publication of his radical ideas. All his original note books and principal papers including *On the Origin of Species* can be seen on interactive PC displays. Exhibits also illustrate his extensive correspondence with fellow scientists, and his meticulous record keeping.

The ground floor rooms are essentially domestic and help to bring out his way of life, evoking his taste, his interests and personality as context for the evolution of his theories. Visiting these rooms is enhanced by the new personal video guided tour, narrated by David Attenborough. The study was the centre of Charles's life, for writing his famous papers, meeting fellow scientists, and one of many areas for his experiments; it contains hundreds of objects connected with his work. The family gathered in the drawing room in the evening, sometimes around the Broadwood piano played by his wife Emma. The dining room is laid out for dinner with the original Wedgewood Water Lily china.

{ [www.english-heritage.org.uk/.../home-of-charles-darwin-down-house/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/.../home-of-charles-darwin-down-house/) - }

Outside you can walk in Darwin's footsteps, along the "sandwalk" where he pondered his most difficult problems, and visit his restored greenhouses of experimental plants. Apart from the standard self guided tour available on public days, the visit includes an exclusive garden tour by the Head Gardener, Rowan Blaike.

## Programme

Time	Details
10:40 – 11:10	Arrive Down House for coffee etc. in Tea Room: Gardens open at 10.00
11:10 – 12:40	Divide into two groups. 1 <sup>st</sup> group Video Guided Tour of Ground Floor, then self-guided tour of first floor. 2 <sup>nd</sup> group : reverse of 1 <sup>st</sup> group
12:40 – 13:50	Light lunch in Tea Room
14:00 – 15:00	Garden tour led by Head Gardener Rowan Blaike, Longer if necessary
15:10 onwards	Refreshments available in Tea Room, further visits to exhibition as required, then disperse.
17:00	House closes, Gardens & shop open till 18.00

## Directions:

1. **CAR:** Exit J4 M25 via the turning signposted London (SE), Bromley. In about a mile, take the 3<sup>rd</sup> exit signposted A21 Bromley. In 2.9 miles at the 3rd roundabout take the 1<sup>st</sup> exit B2158 signposted Farnborough, Downe. In 50m, turn Left signed Down House, Downe. After 0.6 miles turn Left into High Elms Rd, signed Down House. After 1.6 miles at the T junction turn Right and almost immediately turn Left into Luxted Rd, signed for Down House, 0.3 miles ahead.
2. **PUBLIC TRANSPORT:** Train from Victoria to Bromley South; London Transport 146 bus service at xx.36 from bus stop X to Downe village, 19 minutes. Then 0.3 miles walk along Luxted Rd, signposted Down House.  
Train from Victoria or Charing X to Orpington; from adjoining bus station take the infrequent R8 bus service to Biggin Hill and which passes Down House .Timetables should be checked in early June.

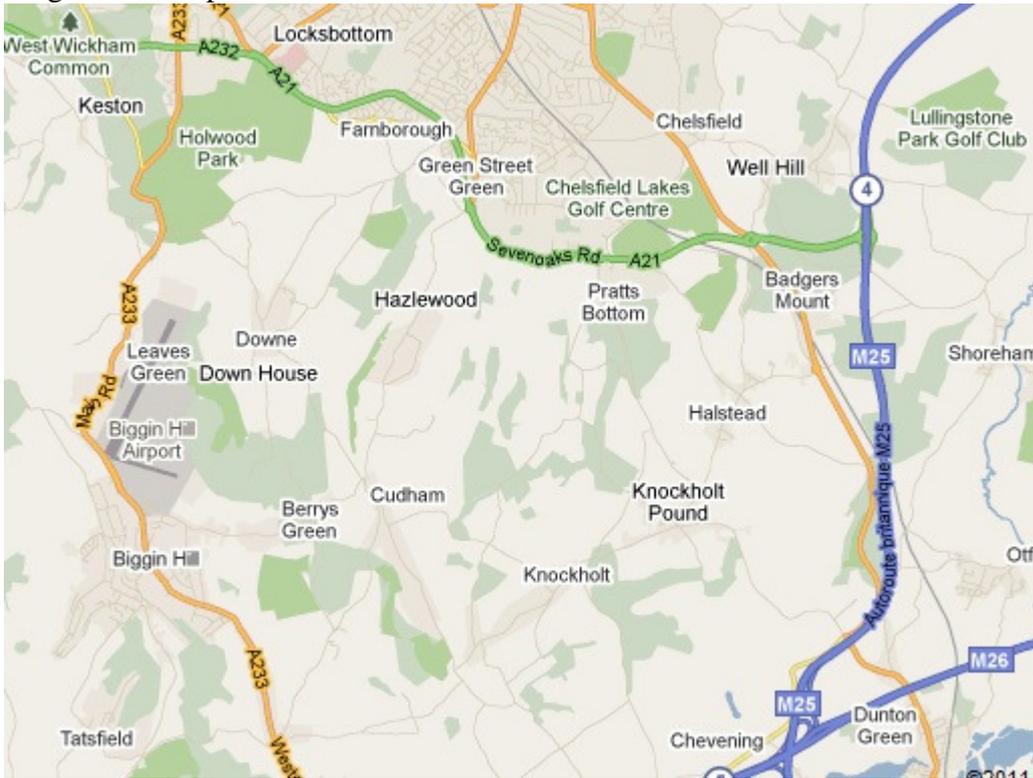
## Costs & Numbers

House & garden fees plus REMS admin charge: Non-members, £14pp. English Heritage members on production of their membership cards £6pp. Numbers 20 Maximum.

Lunch: Experience shows that to keep to a programme timetable it is better to take lunch in the Tea Room rather than run the risk of a 50 minute delay in the local pubs. Freshly prepared food is provided. For example, sandwiches with a choice of fillings and side salad; or soup and roll; either choice with tea or coffee £5.75. To assist catering supplies, please indicate your intention on the booking form. Wine, beer, soft drink cakes etc are also available Pay on the day. Sorry no picnics allowed in house or grounds.

Contacts: Before 16/6/2011 John Belling: 07986 379935  
On the day. Geoff Cockett: 07882 207047

Large Scale Map



Medium Scale Map



# Small Scale Map

