

MAP

DARWIN STORIES

Crossing
the
Equator

EXECUTED
by
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HMS Beagle in Sydney Harbor, Australia in 1841, five years after Darwin's voyage.

Entries from Charles Darwin's diary aboard HMS *Beagle* in February 1832 in the Atlantic Ocean off the northeast coast of South America.

14th Every body is alive with the anticipation about Neptunes appearance, & I hear of nothing but razors sharpened with a file & a lather made of paint & tar, to be used by the gentlest valet de chambre.

16th In the evening the ceremonies for crossing the line commenced: The officer on watch reported a boat ahead. – The Captain turned "hands up, shorten sail", and we heaved to in order to converse with Mr Neptune. The Captain held a conversation with

him through a speaking trumpet, the result of which was that he would in the morning pay us a visit. —

17th We have crossed the Equator, & I have undergone the disagreeable operation of being shaved. About 9 o'clock this morning we poor "griffins", two & thirty in number, were put altogether on the lower deck. — The hatchways were battened down, so we were in the dark & very hot. — Presently four of Neptune's constables came to us, & one by one led us up on deck. — I was the first & escaped easily: I nevertheless found this watery ordeal sufficiently disagreeable. — Before coming up, the constable blindfolded me & thus lead along, buckets of water were thundered all around; I was then placed on a plank, which could be easily tilted up into a large bath of water. — They then lathered my face & mouth with pitch and paint, & scraped some of it off with a piece of roughened iron hoop. — a signal being

Celebrations on board of the *Beagle* after crossing the Southern hemisphere; a sailor dressed as Neptune seated on a gun carriage in foreground at right; a man standing at center, reading from a book; two men dancing with a blindfolded man at left; two half-naked men, wearing skirts, shaving a blindfolded man in background; proof illustration to 'Narrative of the surveying voyages of HMS *Adventure* and *Beagle*' (1839, Vol II); after Augustus Earle; proof before letters. c 1839



A. Earle

Crossing the Line

J. Landman.



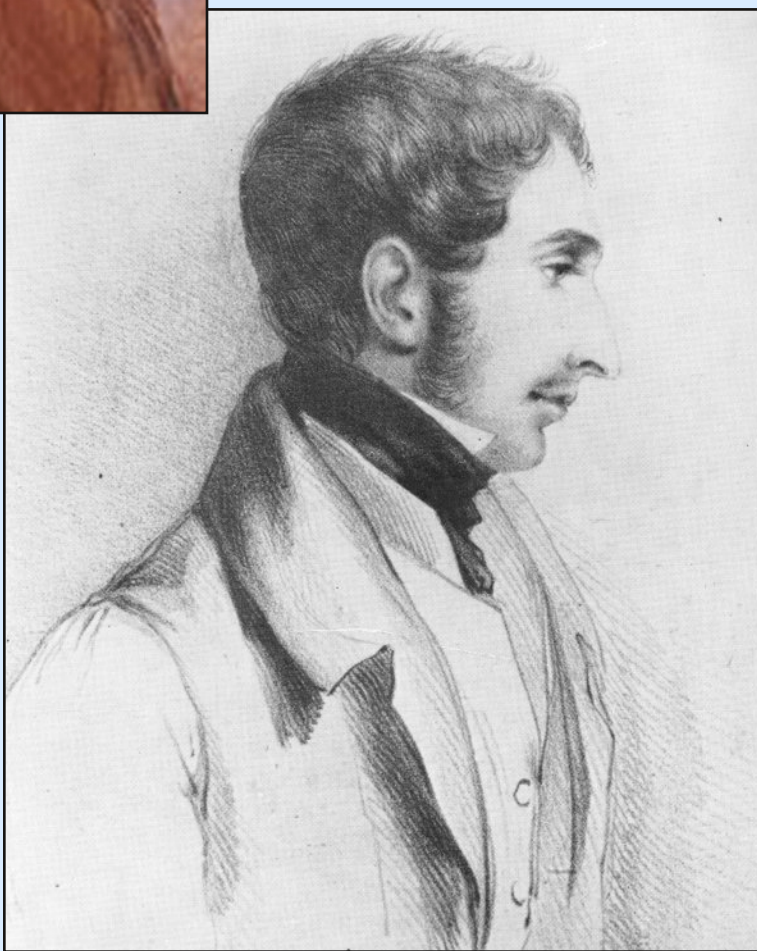
Charles Darwin, age 31, four years after the voyage.

given I was tilted head over heels into the water, where two men received me & ducked me. —at last, glad enough, I escaped. — most of the others were treated much worse, dirty mixtures being put in their mouths & rubbed on their faces. — The whole ship was a shower bath: & water was flying about in every direction: of course not one person, even the Captain, got clear of being wet through.

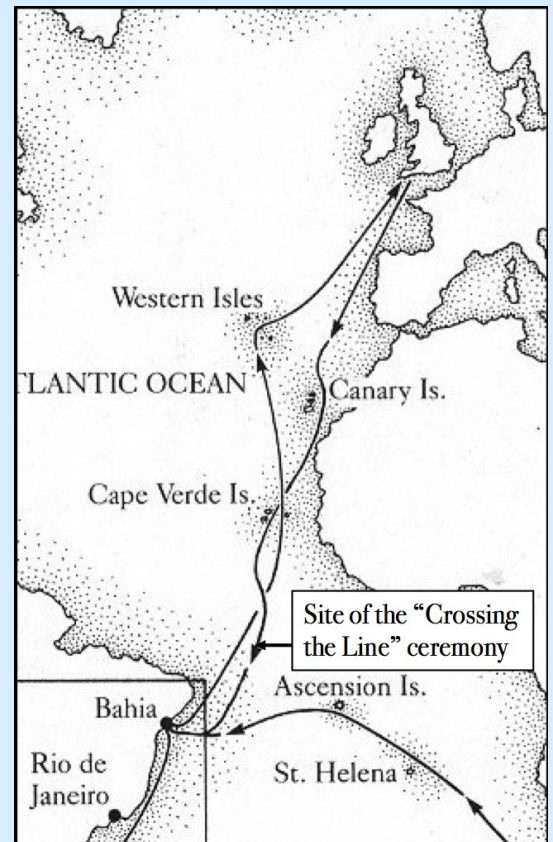
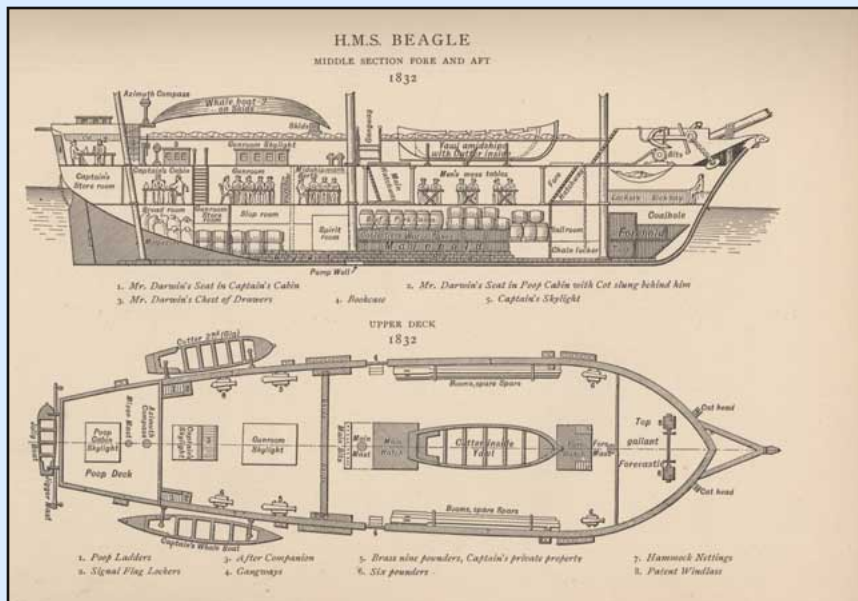
18th At last I certainly am in the Southern hemisphere, & whilst enjoying the cool air of the evening, I can gaze at the Southern Cross, Magellans cloud & the great crown of the

South. — In August quietly wandering about Wales, in February in a different hemisphere; nothing ever in this life ought to surprise me.

Captain Robert FitzRoy wrote in his 1839 book about the voyage: "The disagreeable practice alluded to has been permitted in most ships, because sanctioned by time; and though many condemn it as an absurd and dangerous piece of folly, it has also many advocates. Perhaps it is one of those amusements, of which the omission might be regretted. Its effects on the minds of those engaged in preparing for its mummeries, who enjoy it at the time, and talk of it long afterwards, cannot easily be judged of without being an eye-witness."



Captain Robert FitzRoy, age 31, at the end of the voyage.



Route of the *Beagle* from England to South America at the beginning of the voyage from Jan.- Feb. 1832.

The HMS *Beagle* was a 10-gun brig that was extensively modified before FitzRoy's second voyage to S. America in Dec. 1831. On that voyage a total of 10 officers, 4 midshipmen and volunteers, 38 seamen and boys, 8 marines, and 8 supernumeraries (including Darwin) were aboard when it sailed from Plymouth harbor.

Credits:

Cover, world map

<https://www.davidrumsey.com/blog/2010/1/7/19th-century-maps-by-children>

Beagle in Australia

<https://www.austliangeographic.com.au/blogs/on-this-day/2014/03/on-this-day-charles-darwin-departs-australia/>

Crossing the Line

https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3404495&partId=1&people=126264&peoA=126264-2-23&sortBy=producerSort&page=1

Charles Darwin

<https://www.wired.com/2009/04/darwinmarried/>

Captain Robert FitzRoy

<http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?pageseq=72&itemID=F1598&viewtype=side>

Darwin's text from Keynes, R. D. ed. 2001. Charles Darwin's *Beagle* diary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

FitzRoy text from FitzRoy, R. 1839. Narrative of the surveying voyages of His Majesty's Ships *Adventure* and *Beagle* between the years 1826 and 1836, describing their examination of the southern shores of South America, and the *Beagle's* circumnavigation of the globe. Proceedings of the second expedition, 1831-36, under the command of Captain Robert Fitz-Roy, R.N. London: Henry Colburn.