

# The Narrative of the Beagle Voyage, 1831–1836

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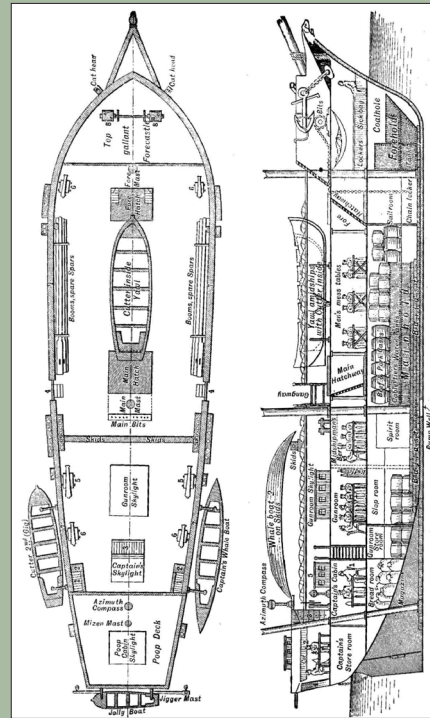
*The Pickering Masters*

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HMS *Beagle* has entered the collective imagination as the ship that carried Charles Darwin to the Galapagos, triggering his later work on the theory of natural selection. However, the *Beagle* also played a vital role in the development of modern hydrography, cartography and meteorology in both the voyage of 1831–36 and an earlier one of 1826–30. The work of the *Beagle* under her captain, Robert FitzRoy, was to chart South American coastlines, many of which had not previously been mapped, and to build a global chain of meridian distances. On this voyage, FitzRoy also pioneered the use of Francis Beaufort's new system for identifying wind force, the basis of the modern Beaufort scale. FitzRoy's unofficial goal on this voyage was to return three Fuegians to their native shores and establish a Protestant mission in the desolate, southern fringes of the continent. It was a pivotal experience of civilization and savagery for both Darwin and FitzRoy.

Darwin and FitzRoy's separate accounts of the voyage were published in the four-volume *Narrative of the Surveying Voyage of His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle Between the Years 1826 and 1836* (1839). Darwin's version has never been out of print. In contrast, this set presents the first critical edition of the remaining texts from 1839: FitzRoy's account of the second voyage, his detailed appendices and the account of the 1826–30 voyage by Phillip Parker King, captain of HMS *Adventure*. Together they give an unparalleled example of British scientific exploration. This edition will generate new scholarly approaches to the *Beagle* voyage and be crucial for those interested in Darwin, Maritime Studies, History of Science and Empire.



HMS *Beagle*

Image from: DARWIN, Charles, *A Naturalist's Voyage Round the World*, John Murray, 1901  
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- A fascinating alternative account of Darwin's *Beagle* voyage
- New editorial material contextualizes the voyages with general introduction, headnotes and endnotes
- Includes a separate introduction to the Appendices
- Consolidated index in the final volume

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## Sample Pages

### *NARRATIVE OF THE BEAGLE*

#### Vol 1, ch 4

After a tedious and difficult passage through the Gabriel Channel, we anchored in a snug harbour within the entrance of Magdalen Channel, on the west side, under a peaked hill called by Sarmiento 'El Vernal,' – in our plan, the 'Sugar-loaf.'<sup>1</sup> The entrance is about a quarter of a mile wide; but after a few hundred yards the harbour opens, extending in for nearly a mile. It is of easy depth; seven fathoms in the entrance, and four, five, and six fathoms within; so that it is very convenient for a small vessel: to us, indeed, it was a most welcome discovery. The land rises, around this cove, to the height of two or three thousand feet. It is covered with Beech, and Winter's-bark, and near the water is adorned with large groves of Fuchsia, Berberis, and the common shrubs of Port Famine,<sup>2</sup> growing so thickly as to form an almost impenetrable jungle; but, notwithstanding the picturesque character of its scenery, the towering height of the hills, which exclude the sun's rays for the whole day, during the greater portion of the year, renders it a gloomy and melancholy spot.\*

We found a family of Fuegians in the inner harbour. Three canoes were hauled up on the beach, but their owners were not at first visible. At last, after our repeatedly calling out 'Ho-say, ho-say,'<sup>4</sup> they appeared, and, rather reluctantly, invited us, by signs, to land. There seemed to be fourteen or fifteen people, and seven or eight dogs. Mr. Wickham<sup>5</sup> and Mr. Tarn<sup>6</sup> went on shore to these natives, who exhibited some timidity, until a hideous old woman began to chatter, and soon made them understand that the young men (Lā-ā-pas) were absent on a hunting excursion, but were every moment expected to return. There were only three men with the women and children. To inspire them with confidence in our good intentions, Mr. Wickham gave each man a red cap,<sup>7</sup> and some other trifles. One of them complained of being sick, but I rather imagine his illness was feigned, and the others did not at all seem to like our visit. By degrees their fears subsided, and, restraint being laid aside, an active trade began; in which several otter skins, shell-necklaces, spears, and other trifles, were obtained from them

\* sub rupe cavatâ Arboribus clausam circum atque horrentibus umbris.<sup>3</sup>

in exchange for beads, buttons, medals, &c. The otters are caught by the help of dogs, on which account, principally, the latter are so valuable.

These people were slightly clothed with skins of the seal and otter, but some had pieces of guanaco mantles over their shoulders, whence we supposed that they were either of the same tribe, or at peace, with the Indians of Admiralty Sound:<sup>8</sup> unless, indeed, they trade with the Patagonia Indians; but such is the poverty of the Fuegians, they can scarcely possess any thing of value sufficient to exchange with the good of their northern neighbours, unless it be iron pyrites, which I think is not found in the open country inhabited by the Patagonian Indians, and, from the facility with which it yields sparks of fire, must be an object of importance.

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1. Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa (1532–592), Spanish explorer and cartographer of the Strait of Magellan, who surveyed the area in 1578–79.
  2. All significant plants to the British mariners: fuchsia indicated a sheltered location; beriberis (elsewhere identified as *beriberis ilicifolia*) was considered an antiscorbutic; winter's bark tree (*Drimys winteri*) was used as a stimulant and an antiscorbutic. The latter was named for Captain John Winter, of the *Elizabeth*, who navigated through the Strait with Sir Francis Drake in 1578.
  3. Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book 1, lines 310–12: the lines occur as the shipwrecked Aeneas determines to explore the wild and mountainous harbour into which the gods' storm has driven his fleet.
  4. King and his officers used this phrase to mean "come, come" but it is unclear whether he thought it part of the local language, or simply an expression the natives understood that had come from another source; it is not part of FitzRoy's list of Fuegian vocabulary in appendix to Vol. II.
  5. John Clements Wickham (1798–1864), mate of *Adventure* during the first voyage under Capt. Phillip Parker King; became Captain FitzRoy's lieutenant on *Beagle* during the second voyage; made captain in 1837 and surveyed parts of the Australian coast in the *Beagle* the following year.
  6. John Tarn (1793–1877), surgeon of *Adventure*.
  7. FitzRoy later recorded that red was a colour of peace for the Fuegians. Cf. Vol II, ch 9.
  8. A small tribe to the north hunted guanaco and a species of deer known as huemul; the comment is typical of the efforts of the British to make sense of the various peoples of the regions, who were very different in appearance and culture. FitzRoy considered this tribe a kind of intermediary between the Patagonians (or Tehuel-het, a horse tribe, with no traditions of fishing and watercraft) and the other Fuegian tribes (a people of canoes and the sea), an example of his speculations about geographical influence.

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