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DARWIN'S ABOMINABLE MYSTERY

A brief history of the research from Darwin to today to explain the sudden appearance of flowering plants in the Cretaceous period.

Professor Richard Buggs

MA (Cantab) DPhil (Oxon) FLS, FRSB, FHEA, CBiol
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew,
Queen Mary University of London

8:00 pm on Tuesday, 8th March 2022

In the Studio Theatre of the LichfieldGarrick

In 1879 in a private letter to Joseph Hooker, the Director of Kew Gardens, Charles Darwin grumbled: "The rapid development as far as we can judge of all the higher plants within recent geological times is an abominable mystery." Three years earlier, William Carruthers, the Keeper of Botany at the Natural History Museum, had publicly cited the plant fossil record as key evidence against evolution. Ever since this time, sustained effort has been made to solve the "abominable mystery". This lecture will survey the plethora of approaches that have been tried. It will assess where we stand today on this issue, relative to how the problem appeared in Darwin's time.

Richard Buggs is Senior Research Leader in Plant Health and Adaptation at Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, and Professor of Evolutionary Genomics at Queen Mary University of London. He has appeared many times on BBC television and radio speaking about his research. The birch tree species *Betula buggsii* is named after him. He tweets regularly about science with the handle @RJABuggs.

For further information, please see our website at www.LSES.org.uk
Students and Members Free.

Visitors £7.00. Tickets are not issued in advance, please pay at the door.

Members must sign in. Those signing in before 7:50 pm will have precedence over all visitors.

This lecture is expected to finish by 10.00 pm.