

Survival of the fittest in Wilhemshaven - Paul Levitt

Freshly back from the overhaul and complete recharge in Plymouth, I awoke to two items dominating this morning's Breakfast TV news: bullying at school (in connection with mobile phones) and Charles Darwin. Seeing as there were no bullies at PRS (although some methods used to extract contributions for 'The Book' do make me wonder), it left me thinking about evolution and in which house Darwin would have been had he been at PRS.

In Plymouth, there was some public ribbing on the subject of inter-house rivalry involving former Howe and Rodney lads over generously bidding for farmer's breakfast (proceeds to charity incidentally). Then the 'auctioneer' mentioned the name of a certain red house and a roar went up from the floor. It would seem that more attendees were from Collingwood than from other houses, or were they? Maybe they just had louder voices.

Two girls at our table were former 'reds' (heads of house, no less), but were outnumbered by inmates from other houses. Drake had the most representatives, nevertheless, it seemed there was consensus on which house had been 'the best' during our time at PRS. Although we hate to admit it, we secretly knew it wasn't Drake, as confirmed by a 1960-vintage edition of Cavalier casually produced from under the table.

It seems that on Speech Day 44 years ago (July 16, 1960 to be exact), the reds chalked up wins in just about every honour up for grabs. They could run and think the fastest, jump the highest and longest, throw the furthest, row, hit and kick the hardest, ... to name a few. Cups were presented to them for exploits in athletics, gymnastics, cross-country running, football, tennis, netball, rounders, even writing (senior prize) and exams (presumably a cup for the most pupils passing the most exams?).

But there were a few crumbs thrown to houses with mere mortals as inmates. Howe won the basketball and hockey, and shared the prize for cricket with Rodney, who managed to win the boxing. And Howe boys and girls who might still be feeling a bit miffed after the public leg pulling over the farmer's breakfast auction, can take solace from the way they, thanks to the efforts of one outstanding athlete (nice seeing you again John) forced the reds to share the Henderson Victor Ludorum prize that year.

As for Drake, apart from predictably winning the Nags Head Trophy for equestrian sport (good on you Sarah), we also rocked the sporting world by snatching the prize for table tennis. What does all of this prove? Based on an evolutionary theory, it helps to explain why more reds should not only have passed on their genes successfully, but should have survived to become the most prevalent group of individuals at school reunions. Ban 'em, I say (only kidding Babs).

Paul Levitt