



Primate Society of Great Britain

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Abstract for the Free Public Lecture on the 16th April 2009

Darwin with a smile

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Prof van Hooff imitating one of many primate facial expressions of emotion (note the primate in the background) during one of his international presentations.

This year we commemorate the genius who gave us an explanatory model for the phenomenon of evolution. He was also one of the first to make scientifically reliable observations about animal behaviour; see his third famous book: "The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals". Darwin regarded, contrary to what many were willing to accept, also the mind as a product of evolution. And yes, he found evidence that there is evolutionary continuity in the behavioural expression of mental states, especially in primate facial expressions. A century later new approaches have revived the interest in our expressive behaviour. They even reveal the evolutionary origins of such "unique" human attributes as our 'laughter' and 'sense of humour'. A good reason to look at this with a smile