

A Cautionary Tale

It was a sunny, if windy morning and it was playtime on a school playground in Newcastle. Miroslav saw his friend Robert.



"Hallo Robert"

"Oh hi", Robert mumbled in return.

"Is everything O.K.?"

"What's it got to do with you?"

"I was only asking"

"Yeah well.....I'm sick of you..."

"Why what have I done? I only said hello".

"You shouldn't be here. I'm a proper Geordie, born here, with a Geordie name!"

Not knowing what to say, Miroslav walked away shrugging his shoulders.

The playtime soon ended and the teacher on duty blew the familiar whistle. The next lesson, that between break and lunch, went reasonably quickly. In

one classroom, the class sat waiting quietly for their teacher to speak at the end of the lesson about what their homework would be.



"Right children, we are going to some work on our family trees, finding out who is in our families. I want you all to go home and ask your mum and dad what their mum and dad was called. Do you all understand?"

"Yes, Miss", the children replied in unison.

That evening Robert Armstrong was at home.

"Have you any homework, Robert?", asked Robert's mum.

"Er.....",replied Robert.

"Can I have a look in your planner?"

Robert dutifully handed over his planner.



"Come on, Robert. All you have to do is ask me about our family. That's not hard, is it?"

"No....", Robert agreed.

"Well, I'll tell you....As you know your dad's surname is Armstrong and so was his dad's. Your dad's mum was called O' Brien. My surname, before I married your dad was MacDonald - that was my dad's surname and my mum's surname was Trevithick."

"What?", asked Robert.

"Trevithick - I'll write it down for you...I'll write all our family names down for you"

"Thanks", replied Robert quietly.

In the classroom the next day, the class were gathered round on the floor, waiting patiently for the teacher to start the lesson.



"Well, class, I hope you all did your homework.

"Yes, Miss", replied the class in unison.

"So.....who wants to tell us about their families? Robert - let's start with you"

"My name is Armstrong and my dad's mum was called O'Brien. My mum's name before she married was Macdonald and her mum was called Trevithick", said Robert proudly.

"What?", said the class.

"Trevithick - I'll write it down for you", replied Robert.

"That's all very interesting, Robert. Do you know where your family came from?", asked the teacher.

"Well, they're all Geordies, aren't they?"

"Well, not originally, no", the teacher asserted.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, Armstrong is a Geordie name, certainly....."

"See", said Robert.

"But", the teacher continued, ".....O'Brien is an Irish name, Macdonald is Scottish and Trevithick is from way down in Cornwall. Your family, like many Geordie families, came from all over."



"Oh,,,,", said Robert quietly.

More children told the teacher and the others in the class, what their family names were and soon it was playtime again. Back on the school playground, Miroslav and Robert meet again.

"Hello", said Robert tentatively.

"Hello Robert", Miroslav replied.

"Listen, I'm sorry about what I said the other day", ventured Robert.

"It's alright", replied Miroslav. "Let's be friends again".

"Yes, let's", said Robert quietly.



A Living Tradition