

When we think of Neanderthals we tend to think of primitive "cavemen". A bunch of stupid, much hairier, humans who lived a long time ago and probably waved spears around or rode on the backs of dinosaurs. Well, they *were* pretty hairy. But not all of that is true.

Neanderthals first popped up around 200,000 years ago, when the dinosaurs had already long died out. And they were not really *humans*. Certainly not like you and me. Or Mark.

Mark is a homo sapien. Shanidar is a Neanderthal. As you can see, they have a lot in common: They both love and care for their families; they both enjoy painting; and they both like to cook.

Mark and Shanidar could walk past each other on the street and not realise they belonged to two different species. However, if they stopped to chat, the differences would become obvious.

Shanidar hasn't got the equipment in his throat or his brain to be able to speak with words and sentences like Mark. Shanidar's huge brain is able to memorise the entire landscape like a map, whereas Mark often forgets where he put his house keys [short pause] (in a pretend whisper) they're in your back pocket, Mark.

There's also the fact that Shanidar died at about 35-45 years old, whereas Mark is already 50 and hasn't even got his pension yet.

Life was a lot tougher about 40,000 years ago when Shanidar was actually alive, his wide body and big nose were perfect for keeping him warm and surviving the colder temperatures.

If Mark took a time machine to Shanidar's time, he's probably keel over and die at 35, too.

Thankfully, time machines don't exist.

What neither of them know, is that they could actually be related. Mark could be Shanidar's great great great great

greatgreatgreatgreat GREAT grandson. Because Mark's great great great great greatgreatgreatgreat GREAT grandma could have been one of the first homo sapiens to bump into the Neanderthals and fall head over heels in love. The rest, as they say, is history.