

The wonders of modern science

By [Robbie Dale](#)

Tuesday 8 March 2005

There are a lot of rubbish things in the world: The way useless shopping web-sites are taking over Google, Scottish football teams of course and that's not to mention the horror of ITV sit-coms.

These are three guilty parties however that do not come close to the particular gripe I wish to vent today. While browsing the internet recently (picking my way through [shopfinder.com](#) and [pricebuster.fck/of](#)) I stumbled upon a story that I had first noticed in the summer of 2004. I was then working in Edinburgh (at a little festival they hold each August) when I opened up the newspaper to be met with a report that read "Women to Run faster than Men by 2156". The gist of the article was that by the Olympics in 2156, possibly far enough in the future for London to get their act in gear, the woman who wins the 100m will finish the race in a quicker time than the winner of the men's race.

Now I must admit, that when I first read this, I laughed. Out loud. Bits of cereal shot from my nose. This article was suggesting quite brazenly, that based on recent trends in the Olympic Games, women will one day be physically more powerful than men. Right. Let's rewind that a bit... "based on recent trends". The research (incidentally undertaken by researchers at the Universities of Southampton and Oxford) showed that the difference between the winning times of men and women in the 1928 Olympics held in Amsterdam was 1.4 seconds. When this was compared with the results from the Sydney Olympics however, in the year 2000, the gap had shortened to under a second.

This ladies and gentlemen, was positive proof that women will one day run faster than men. You can see it yourself, if you plot the data on a graph and extend the lines you will notice that in the future the women's line will rise higher than that of the men, and the dawn of an age will come when little boys fear kiss chase more than ever.

Now, forgive me for being more than a little sceptical here, but isn't this just bollocks? It might be worth taking into account that the data only starts in 1928 because that was the first Olympics in which women were allowed to compete, thus providing an obvious problem before we begin. It might further be worth noting that at the Athens Olympics, the gap widened to 1.08 seconds. It might, for all its worth, be an idea to have a look at 150,000 years of homo-sapiens history. Just a suggestion...

What's most scary about this whole issue however, is the idea that at the top academic institutions this country has to offer; well trained scientists are spending money and time doing things that are not only useless, but quite obviously based on complete fallacies. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant one stated in his works on Genius, that only the artist and never the scientist can be considered a genius. He obviously had close acquaintances in research departments.

It reminds me of a story I once saw on The Big Breakfast (oh how we hark for your days of morning joy!) concerning scientists testing the optimum amount of time one should leave cornflakes to stand in milk before their quality degenerates. Now, while this story may forge a vaguely amusing five minutes in which Chris Evans can squawk manically, it must strike even the sleepest of breakfast viewer as a sickening waste of time. I'm all for the pursuit of knowledge in every sphere than anyone wishes to

investigate, I'm just not entirely sure that cornflakes, or indeed the relative speeds of future athletes, are much to worry about at the moment. How about working on projects that increase the Governments ability to provide healthcare, or prevent the need for innocent citizens to be caught up in war. I'm not suggesting of course, that I have any idea how either of these causes could be sorted (if I did, I wouldn't be struggling through my degree...), just that I'm pretty sure cornflakes have very little to do with it.

If in the future however, these scientific theories do turn out to be true - what other ground-breaking changes could we be facing? Maybe someone will unearth dolphins tested in 1896 that showed less intellectual ability than others tested in 1978, and we will surmise that the first dolphin will join MENSA in 2386... Or will Gareth Keenan be celebrating the proof of a boy that can swim faster than a shark. Hold that thought, I've got to check on my cornflakes...



Most Read Discussed

1. [What is the difference between tax evasion and tax avoidance?](#)
2. [Review: Little Mix - LM5](#)
3. [Opinion: Weighing up King of the North](#)
4. [Penalty for submitting work up to an hour late halved](#)
5. [How to depose a Conservative leader](#)
6. [Led Astray - The Case Against Greta Van Fleet](#)

More in Columns

[Saskia Starritt thanks the ghosts of Nouse past](#)

[Andrew Young introduces his embarrassing self](#)

[Your Third Year Google Search History](#)

[Findings of a Fresher 30/10/18](#)

[A note from the Editor ... 02 October 2018](#)

[Izzy Moore tries optimism for the first time](#)

[About Nouse](#)
[Who's Nouse](#)
[Website Credits](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Archives](#)
[Student Discounts](#)
[Print Editions](#)
[Mini-Sites](#)

[Nouse on Twitter](#)
[Nouse on Facebook](#)
[Nouse on Google+](#)

© 1964-2018 Nouse

[Policies](#) |

