The proliferation of beards continues apace. My guess is that Movember got the ball rolling by making facial hair acceptable to the common man, after which it was just a matter of time. Most of us chaps like to experiment with a bit of chin carpet every now and then, but seem to need an excuse. Well now that everyone is doing it guys feel they have permission. Before you know it every other bloke looks like Grizzly Adams.

Not so much on the football pitch though. We’ve always had a fair share of stubble – it makes you look a bit hard and manly which is an advantage in the battle of the minds that goes on in the centre of midfield. Maybe a full on Rasputin look would slow you down or get you overheated. I have a 1980 Figurine Panini Football League sticker book and if I ever get sad I get it out and turn to the back pages to browse through the Scottish teams. Always cheers me up seeing the rugged-looking nutters from Hibernian with mad hair and extreme facial hair, but you never saw any of that South of the border where they had to run faster and win.

You’ll be glad to know that football stickers are still going strong (in case you weren’t aware). They combine the two potent attractions of supporting your team and collecting stuff, all packaged in an easy to carry formula that can be conveniently stuffed into your school trouser pocket at a moment’s notice. It’s a potent formula for success that has never died. In school teacher’s desks all over the country can be found confiscated football cards, and ebay is full of offers and requests for individual cards to complete the sets of children and grown men who should know better.

You don’t get the same thing happening with the female half of the population do you? In the same way you don’t get (hardly any) female professional snooker players. Have you ever wondered why not? It isn’t about strength, and presumably women are just as skilful as men, so what’s stopping a woman being World Snooker Champion? One theory is that it is a male characteristic to obsess about a single thing at the exclusion of all others, whilst the female psyche is more balanced and less focussed on one thing in particular. So men can obsess and practice with incredible focus for months and months whilst women don’t share that level or sustained intensity needed. I’m on dodgy ground here, both in terms of pop psychology and gender equality, so I’ll stop there and leave that little theory with you.

I do believe that boys and girls, men and women are fundamentally different, and the world is a better place as a result. Some call this the nature versus nurture debate, but for me it isn’t nature versus nurture, but both nature and nurture. Our environment and upbringing conditions us lots as well. In my church we don’t believe that women should stay quiet and restrict themselves to making tea – we try to honour women, celebrate everyone’s identity and gifting, and work hard to try and undo the inbuilt prejudice against women that still exists in society and, I’m sorry to say, particularly in church culture. Women bishops? Bring it on and about time too!

And something that makes me very sad is seeing the world redress the gender imbalance by putting men down so as to achieve equality. I hate hearing people put men down and criticise their masculinity just as I hate jokes that put women down. In church I am trying to establish a culture of honour where women are treated well and are free to express their femininity, whilst at the same time men are respected and honoured. It’s great that we are different, and good at different things. Grow your beard, collect your stickers, play your snooker and honour your women!