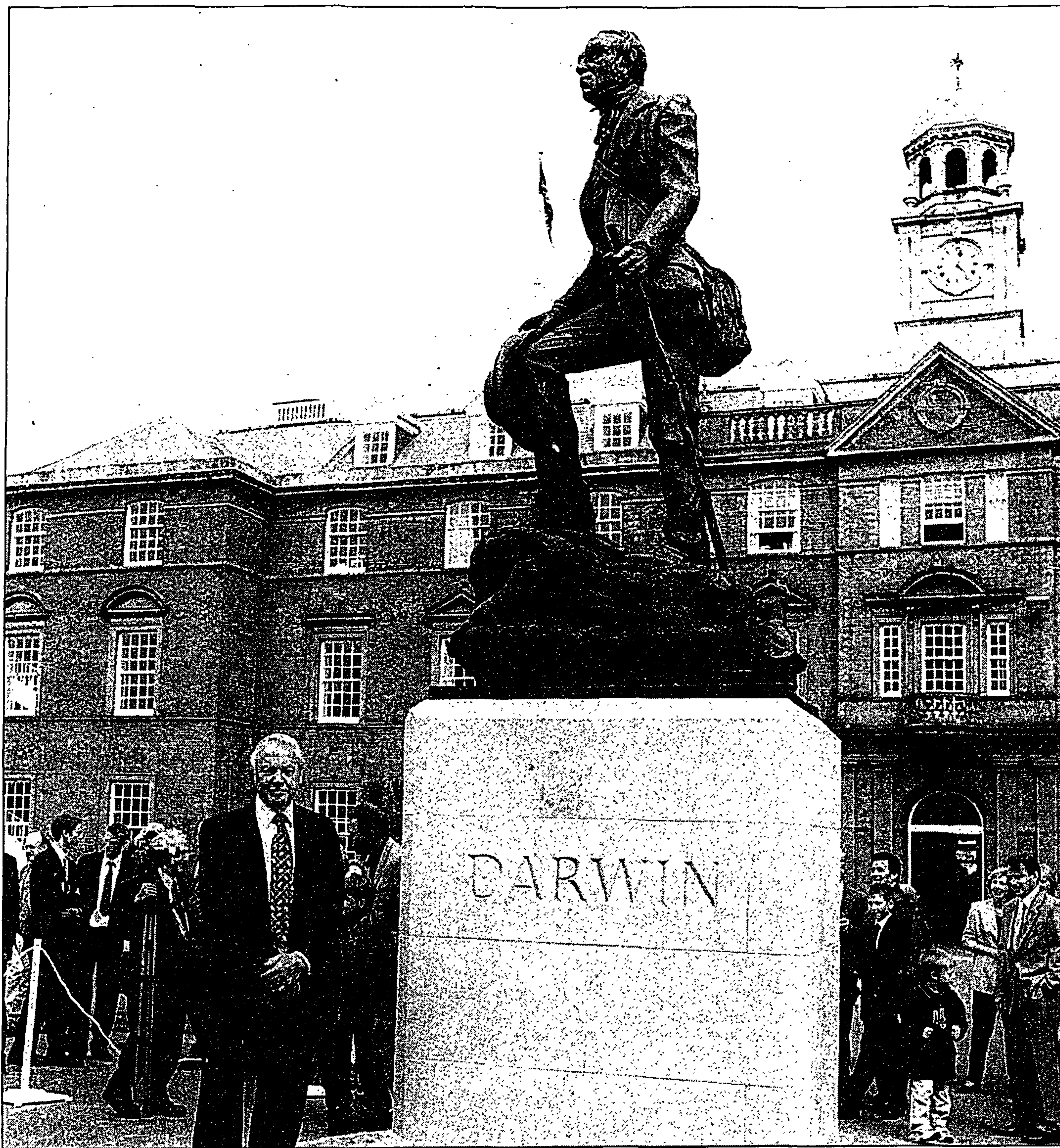


# Shrewsbury honours a great observer



Sir David Attenborough at the unveiling of the new statue of Charles Darwin at Shrewsbury School

"You don't require enormous apparatus to be a great zoologist," said Sir David Attenborough as he unveiled a new statue of Charles Darwin at Shrewsbury School, where Darwin was a pupil. "Darwin's observations are almost comical when you read them.

"At the end of his life he became fascinated by earthworms, and he did the simplest of experiments, to determine whether they can hear. He kept a pot of earthworms

and put it on the piano and played different pieces to see if they would react; he chewed tobacco for them to see if they had the capacity to smell.

"He decided, perhaps a little more experimentally, to see if they could detect differences of shape, so he cut triangles of paper, left them on the ground and observed — key word, observed — that the worms were able to detect which was the narrowest angle of the triangles, to take them by this

corner and pull them into their holes. So if anybody wants to know what the foundation of natural history is, and if anybody has any doubt that it can lead to great truths, what he did shows the value of observation.

"Jemma Pearson's statue shows Darwin standing on the Galapagos — you can tell it's the Galapagos because at the bottom is a marine iguana, which only occurs there — and it was while he was there that

he had the seed of the idea of evolution by natural selection.

"He was a very very modest man, and I am sure that he would regard the science laboratories at Shrewsbury as the best monument there could be to his memory. But it is only proper that this statue should be here too, for surely there is no school in this country, in Europe, or, I would suggest, the world, which has had a more distinguished pupil."