



c/o Scientific Generics Limited

Harston Mill

Harston

Cambridge CB2 5GG

Telephone: +44 (0) 1223 875200

Facsimile: +44 (0) 1223 875201

(Organising Secretary's Home Number: 01799 525 948)

email: richard.freeman@genericsgroup.com

CAMBRIDGE SOCIETY FOR THE APPLICATION OF
RESEARCH

'Darwin's Long Path'

Is the watchmaker blind, or is he only wearing sunglasses?

Professor Simon CONWAY MORRIS, FRS

Professor of Evolutionary Palaeobiology, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge

Monday, 19th January, 2004 **7.30 p.m. - 9.00 p.m.**

The Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Churchill College, Cambridge

Chair: Dr Adrian Friday, *Curator of Vertebrates*

Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge

Vote of Thanks: to be confirmed (see below)

Professor Conway Morris writes:

If biologists are sure about anything, they are sure about evolution. If they are almost certain about anything else, it is that evolution has no direction, and definitely no end-point. Stephen Jay Gould put this succinctly by claiming that were we to re-run the tape of life then the likelihood of anything like a human evolving was vanishingly small. Human intelligence, therefore is a fortuitous by-product, a colossal evolutionary accident. Fine for algebra and composing Tallis' 'Spem in alium', but also just a bit of a liability

Maybe, however, that view needs re-thinking, possibly evolution is much more constrained than is popularly thought. The reason for thinking so revolves around the unappreciated importance of evolutionary convergence. A famous example is the striking similarity between our eyes and those of a squid or octopus. When we realise that everything you need to make a human – warm-bloodedness, sophisticated vocalisation, tool-making, culture and sociality - have all evolved multiple times, then the suspicion grows that underlying the apparent hurly-burly of evolution there is a much deeper pattern, potentially of universal significance.

References:

S. Conway Morris, "Evolution: Bringing molecules into the fold" Cell 100, 1-11 (2000).

S. Conway Morris, "We were meant to be" New Scientist 176 (2369; 16 November 2002), 34-37 (2002).

COUNCIL

Prof. Sir Sam Edwards FRS *President*
(Dept. of Physics, Cavendish Laboratory)

Dr. Richard Jennings *Vice President*
(Central Research Services)
Mr. Robin Bligh FCA *Corporate Secretary*

Dr. Richard Freeman FRSA FIFST
Organising Secretary
(Scientific Generics)

Prof. Haroon Ahmed FREng
(Dept. of Physics, Cavendish Laboratory)
Prof. Derek Burke CBE, DL
(former VC of the University of East Anglia)
Mr. Brian Ford
(Author and Broadcaster; Fellow of the University of Cardiff)

Dr. David Fyfe
(Cambridge Display Technology)
Dr. Elisabeth Hall
(Institute of Biotechnology)
Prof. Laurie Hall FRS(Can), FRSC (Herchel Smith Laboratory for Medicinal Chemistry)

Prof. Anthony Kelly CBE FREng FRS
(Materials Science & Metallurgy Dept)
Mr. Ian Kent
(BioFocus; British Biotech; AdProtech);
Mr. Chris Smart
(IDG Ventures Europe)

Italics denote an affiliation other than the University of Cambridge.

The CSAR Council is chosen to represent leading scientists and technologies from academe and industry

S. Conway Morris, "Life's Solution: inevitable humans in a lonely universe". Cambridge University Press (2003).

About the speaker:

Professor Conway Morris holds the Chair in Evolutionary Palaeobiology in the Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge. He launched his academic career with a first in geology at Bristol (hence, I suppose, his affiliation with the University's Department of Earth Sciences), and has spent much of his academic life in Cambridge.

He is an expert on the Burgess Shale fauna, and their meaning in evolutionary biology. This has led to numerous publications, including a couple of popular books

The Crucible of Creation; the Burgess Shale and the Rise of Animals now published by Oxford University Press

and

Life's Solution: Inevitable humans in a Lonely Universe, 2003; Cambridge University Press.

Organising Secretary's Notes:

If you read the reviews in Amazon, it is clear that Professor Conway Morris's writings are not exactly conventional. Apparently, neither are his lectures.....

But then, we never have 'conventional' lectures at the CSAR, do we?

The Chair will be Dr Adrian Friday, who is the Curator of Vertebrates at that wonderful museum in Downing Street (the one with a whale outside.....).

I am sure he will keep us on the straight and narrow!

Vote of Thanks

Following on from the success of our last lecture, I am once again inviting members to come forward to make the Vote of Thanks for Professor Conway Morris's lecture.

Perhaps some of you are *evolutionistas*? In which case, would give you the opportunity to spend more time with the lecturer. We dine beforehand, so you get a free (and generally rather good) meal with the speaker and the Vote of Thanks (that's the good news) and myself (that's the bad news).

We dine at 6.00pm in Churchill

If you are interested in proposing the Vote of Thanks, please contact me, either at home over a weekend or evening(01799 525 948) or at Generics (01223 875 200), or of course by email (richard.freeman@genericsgroup.com)

Dr Richard Freeman FRSA
CSAR Organising Secretary