THE FLOATING SCHOOL THAT TAUGHT CARDIFF STREET CHILDREN

Feb 21 2009 by Our Correspondent, South Wales Echo

A FLOATING school for street children used to be moored at Cardiff Docks.
In the late 19th century, the HMS Havannah industrial school was a training ship giving the young homeless a practical education.
The school intended to educate the youngsters in maritime skills, enabling them to join the merchant navy.
The Cardiff Story's exhibitions officer Victoria Rogers said: "The idea was to feed the boys properly, keep them out of mischief and give them practical training.
"Their education had a nautical flavour so they would learn things like elementary sea cooking to help them get jobs in the merchant navy."
In fact, many of the boys were not considered worthy candidates by the merchant navy and instead went on to become porters at Cardiff Market or work in domestic service.
After the ship was broken up in 1905, two of its cannons were placed in Roath Park but were later melted down to make tanks during World War I.

History of the HMS Havannah

HMS Havannah was a Royal Navy fifth rate frigate, built in Liverpool in 1811.
Havannah's first captain was George Cadogan, who commissioned her into the Channel Fleet where Havannah was rapidly involved in operations against French coastal shipping off the Channel Islands. In 1812, Cadogan took Havannah to join the squadron operating in the Adriatic from the island of Lissa. In early 1813, Havannah was detached against the Northern Italian coast and conducted a five month campaign on the shipping and shore facilities of Vasto and its environs. In numerous actions, Havannah seized dozens of ships and destroyed coastal batteries. For instance, 22 Mar 1813 the ship's boats captured one trabaccolo and destroyed another, under the town of Vasto.
In November 1813, Havannah was attached to Thomas Fremantle's squadron that blockaded and besieged Trieste and detached against the port of Zara. Cadogan attacked the city and captured it with the aid of some Austrian troops to whom he was later instructed to hand over all prizes and spoils of war. In April 1814, days before the end of the war, Havannah captured a French privateer off Corfu.

In 1815 Havannah sailed for North America and in 1816 to the Cape of Good Hope.
By 1818 Havannah was laid up at Sheerness, later re-entering service as a training ship in 1860.

HMS Trincomalee the same class as the Havannah

NELSON'S MEN REMAINS FIND

Apr 14 2005 By Mark Ellis, Foreign Editor, The Times

THE remains of 30 British troops dating back as far as a decisive naval battle of 1798 have been found on an island off Egypt's north coast, the British Embassy in Cairo said yesterday.
Italian archaeologist Paolo Gallo was working in Abu Qir bay, east of Alexandria where Admiral Horatio Nelson defeated Napoleon Bonaparte's French fleet in the Battle of the Nile.
Britain lost 218 men but no vessels while the French lost 1,400 men and most of their ships.
Gallo had been excavating for Greek-Roman artefacts when he discovered the graves of the sailors and soldiers, some dating to the 1798 battle and others to a campaign of 1801.
Only the body of British Navy Commander James Russell could be identified as he was the sole casualty to be buried in full uniform.
He and the other bodies will be reburied in a ceremony at a British Commonwealth military cemetery in Alexandria on Monday.
A descendant of Russell and the commanding officer of warship HMS Chatham will attend.

Jack Tar: Life in Nelson's Navy

by Roy and Lesley Adkins

The stories of ordinary mariners reveal that partial burial for scurvy and perilous rigging were just some of the challenges facing the 18th-century navy

David Mills the Times

It wasn't easy being a sailor in Nelson's navy. They may have been defending much celebrated British freedoms against French tyranny, but they were themselves little more than legalised slaves. Ships' crews spent years at sea, rarely being allowed on shore for fear they would desert. Many were there against their will. Press gangs, only supposed to take seamen, weren't over-discriminating or inclined to be swayed by hard-luck stories. Visiting Americans were picked up in Liverpool; men returning from long voyages on merchant ships found themselves on men-of-war without stepping foot on land. In 1798, after four years as a prisoner of war, George Mackay managed to escape from France. After travelling through Switzerland and Germany, he reached Yarmouth and, after having his first "draught of good English porter", looked forward to being reunited with his father and sister. Instead, he was picked up by a press gang, put in a frigate and sent off to the West Indies.

There were volunteers, drawn by the promise of regular meals, accommodation, alcohol, tobacco and medical care, as well as the hope of prize money. But they were treated as badly as the pressed men. "We were ordered down into the hold," wrote one in 1805, "and the gratings put over us; as well as a guard of marines placed round the hatchway, with their muskets loaded and fixed bayonets, as though we had been culprits of the first degree or capital convicts."

Although Nelson's navy is one of history's most written-about subjects, these men's voices have been relatively neglected in the past. They have been drowned out by the wealth of material readily available in the logbooks, journals and memoirs of the officers. The historians Roy and Lesley Adkins have gone back to unpublished diaries, letters and other manuscripts to redress the balance and produce a full account of life on the lower decks in the late 18th- and early 19th-century navy.

Daily life was unforgiving. The diet was a monotonous round of hard sea biscuit, fresh beef in port, salt beef and salt pork at sea, plus pea soup and burgoo (boiled oatmeal). Flour and raisins were issued once a week for duff pudding; butter and cheese usually spoilt. One sailor wrote that their butter was more like oil and full of small hairs "until we got to the bottom, where was found a mouse with all its hairs off". The drinking water, stored in wooden casks, quickly became stagnant and slimy, so each man was issued with two pints of grog a day: one part rum to four parts water with lemon juice, to prevent scurvy, and sugar. Other methods of treating scurvy were practised: bizarrely, partial burial was thought effective. Midshipman Frederick Hoffman recorded in St Domingo in 1794: "Twenty men who looked like bloated monsters, were removed on shore, and buried them [stet] up to their chins. Some boys were sent with the sufferers to keep flies and insects away from their faces." After two hours they were dug out and four days later had recovered. The oranges they were given may also, of course, have helped.

Sanitation was an endless problem. The British proudly kept their ships cleaner than other nations did, but no purpose-built washing facilities were provided for the men, and lavatories amounted to seats with holes over a clear drop to the sea. Even these were not abundant: HMS Victory had only six for the more than 800 men aboard. Added to that, the daily work was hard and dangerous. Apart from the obvious risks of struggling aloft in all weathers into a high, uncertain network of slippery, swaying ropes, the labour on deck took its toll in strained muscles, torn ligaments and hernias, even before accidents. On HMS Janus in 1781, six men died of exhaustion on the pumps. To crews, the weather was more dangerous than enemy ships. In 1782, a storm off the Newfoundland Grand Banks wrecked three Royal Navy ships and caused the deaths of more than 1,000 men. (Compare that to the battle of Trafalgar, where the British lost only 449 men and no ships.) Of the 92,386 British sailors lost during the Napoleonic wars, only 6,663 were killed by the enemy. All the others (93%) died through disease, shipwreck or accident.

Jack Tar: Life in Nelson's Navy *continued*

When the men were confined to ship in port, wives and prostitutes were allowed on board to avoid sexual frustration leading to “unclean acts” of homosexuality. “I have seen above four hundred of these ladies on board at one time, and they are not very particular about the convenience of sleeping private, as that is impossible to find among so many men,” wrote a seaman on HMS Alfred in Portsmouth in 1809. Often there would be more visiting women than crew: “The tendency of this practice is to render a ship of war, while in port, a continual scene of riot and disorder, of obscenity, blasphemy, of drunkenness, lewdness, and debauchery,” Captain Edward Hawker complained in 1821.

Although never quite official, a number of women managed to sail with their husbands, sometimes taking their children with them, or giving birth as Mary Buek did on HMS Ardent during the battle of Copenhagen in 1801, the noise and stress apparently inducing labour. In 1812, as the sloop Swallow went into action against two French ships, Joseph Phelan’s wife, assisting the surgeon below, heard that her husband had been hurt. “She rushed instantly on deck, and received the wounded tar in her arms; he faintly raised his head to kiss her — she burst into a flood of tears and told him to take courage, ‘all would yet be well’, but had scarcely pronounced the last syllable, when an ill-directed shot took her head off. The poor tar, who was closely wrapt in her arms, opened his eyes once more — then shut them for ever.”

Spending so long at sea did mean that the British handled their ships and guns better than their opponents did, and always sailed into battle cheerfully confident. Indeed, cheering as they went into action was a feature of Royal Navy crews. “It encourages us and disheartens the enemy,” wrote one midshipman. Another reported during the battle of Trafalgar that one man was carried off to the surgeon “with all his bowels hanging out, encouraging his gunmates, and huzzaing along the decks as he passed below”.

It is thanks to such men that, for the century after Trafalgar, the Royal Navy never lost a battle and came to dominate the world’s oceans. Roy and Lesley Adkins bring their world alive. There is perhaps a lack of analysis and wider context. There is no response, for instance, to those historians who play down the press gangs or who argue that the naval diet was far better than they might have had on land; but the material is so rich that this is still a fascinating, even occasionally humbling study.

A thousand of the best

Of all the punishments at a captain’s disposal, flogging was by far the most commonly used.

In theory, only a dozen lashes could be inflicted without a court martial being convened, but, until 1811, when officers had to send quarterly returns of punishments to the Admiralty, this limit was frequently ignored. Two dozen lashes, a common enough penalty for drunkenness, could give a sailor’s back the look of ‘roasted meat burnt nearly black before a scorching fire’. Far worse, though, could be expected if a sailor was ‘flogged through the fleet’. Rowed from warship to warship, the rating could expect to receive anywhere between 150 and 1,000 lashes, with the punishment being continued another day if the man was unable to endure his full ration.

Drunken Sailors?

A scene showing the Chinese Court of Justice held at the British factory of Canton, 8 March 1807. The court was convened after a Chinese man was killed by rioting sailors from the East Indiaman 'Neptune'. While on shore leave at Canton, sailors from the ship became involved in a disturbance resulting in the death of one and the wounding of several Chinese. Trade by English ships was stopped and an investigation was held. In the presence of the British authorities there was an inquiry into a charge of homicide laid against a seaman from the 'Neptune'. The Chinese magistrate found one seaman guilty of accidental homicide and ordered that he be detained in the English factory. The rest of the 52 men were acquitted. Trade was resumed after two months' stoppage. In the next year the seaman was released on payment of about £4, the penalty prescribed by Chinese law for accidental killing.

Arab News - Jeddah,Saudi Arabia

British Muslims — thriving against all odds

Shabana Syed | Arab News

As the debate continues within the British government on how to win the hearts and minds of Muslims and why, according to them, Muslims have problems integrating, the facts on the ground point to a very different reality.
According to recent estimates Muslim contribution to the British economy is over £31 billion and there are over 10,000 Muslim millionaires in the country.
As the British media continue to misunderstand and misrepresent Islam, an interesting paradox appears to have emerged: Islam is the fastest growing faith in the United Kingdom and Muslims may now number as many as 2 million.
The last published official estimate of the size of the Muslim community in Britain was 1.6 million, based on the findings of the 2001 census. Recent Whitehall estimates confirm the position of Islam as the second largest faith group after Christianity. The increase in the size of the community demonstrates its position as the fastest growing faith in Britain, also reflecting the age structure with more than one-third under the age of 16 at the time of the 2001 census.
There has been a Muslim presence in Britain for at least 300 years. The East India Company recruited seamen from Assam, Gujarat, Bengal and Yemen, a number of these created settlements in port towns and cities around the country. It was only a matter of time that a house proved too small a place to accommodate the ever-increasing number of Muslims. One of the earliest mosques was established in Woking, Surrey in 1889 and was funded by Sultan Shahjahan Begum, the ruler of Bhopal, India. It soon became a center for the Muslims in the UK and a number of prominent notables contributed to the popularity of the mosque: Among them was the Cambridge educated Peer Lord Al-Farooq Headley; the author of the “meaning of the glorious Qur’an” Marmaduke Pickhall and Lady Evelyn Zaineb Cobbold, one of the first women to go to Makkah for a pilgrimage in 1934.

Britain’s Muslim population after 1950s, 60s, and 70s was mainly comprised of immigrants from the Subcontinent. During the first quarter of the 20th century it was estimated that there were around 10,000 Muslims in Britain; now there are about two million (about 4 percent of the population), and over half of them were born in Britain.
The age profile of Muslims in Britain is different from that of the majority population. A higher proportion is under 25 and a lower proportion is under sixty. Because of these demographic facts, the community is set to increase in size over the next twenty years. In fact, the Muslim population in the European Union is set to double by 2015 from 15 million people in 2003.

Muslim presence in Britain over many decades demonstrates that there is no contradiction between being a Muslim and living in the West.

Their contribution to many aspects of British society has ranged from being involved in the manufacturing and textile industry to driving buses and trains, from being domestic workers, to nurses and doctors in the NHS and of course running the local corner shops, the cornerstone of every high street and the only shops prepared to be open seven days a week through very late hours.

The former British Home Secretary Jacqui Smith on her last trip to Pakistan also highlighted the valuable contributions of the two million British Muslims to every aspect of life.
“Muslims play a full and active part in British society, in politics from Parliament to local government, in the armed forces, policing, the professions the arts and the sports and of course business,” she said.
She also pointed out that there are two Muslim ministers in the government, 220 local councilors and a growing number of lawmakers.

An ICM/Guardian poll last year revealed that 91 percent of British Muslims are loyal to Britain and 80 percent wanted to live and accept western society. After the 7/7 London subway attack, British Muslims came under increasing pressure, however their resilience has not faded and they continued to focus on the positive.

The British Muslim Cont.

In 2007 the Islamic Bank of Britain in association with Carter Anderson a PR Company decided to fight this negativity by highlighting the success of the community. They organized 'The Muslim Power 100' a remarkable event held at the Hilton Hotel, Park Lane, involving a galaxy of Muslim dignitaries who were recognized for their valuable contribution to social, cultural, educational and economic well being of Britain.

The list included a variety of people from all walks of life ranging from lords to lawyers, from authors to sporting icons, pre-eminent academics to giants of industry.

On the list were cricketer turned politician Imran Khan, Labour peer Lord Patel of Blackburn, Lord Nazir Ahmed and actor Art Malik, Lawyer Imran Khan, boxer Amir Khan singer Yusuf Islam, formerly Cat Stevens, and Harrods boss Mohamed Al-Fayed.

Excellence awards were also given to nine guests, including Dr. Hany El Banna, founder of Islamic Relief, and Haifa Fahoum Al-Kaylani, chair of the Arab International Women's Forum.

A spokesman for the Islamic Bank of Britain, Sultan Choudhury, said the event was the culmination of nine months' preparation and voting. "We wanted to highlight the positive contributions made by British Muslims to society-contributions that are in complete contrast with media connotations that somehow Muslims are linked to terrorism, are not as educated, or are segregating themselves," said the spokesman.
"The opposite is true-we are integrating and contributing across a wide range of fields."

A modern day Pirates view of life

Why we became pirates, by the nomad jailed for life
By Daniel Howden & Andrew Lascaris in Berbera, Somaliland
Tuesday, 16 June

Farrah Ismail: 'I came here to kidnap commercial ships from the waters off Berbera'
"In our culture we were nomads and we believed it was our right to take sheep, to take cattle.
That is how we see the ships. They are our sheep and we will take them."

The ships that Farrah Ismail speaks of are those plying the sea lanes off the Horn of Africa. And the culture he refers to is that of the Somali nomads who have been raiding rival tribes or clans for centuries.
The story of how this inherently nomadic view of the world was brought to bear on one of the industrial world's most valuable trading routes is the story of Ismail's life.

The 38 year old is now languishing hundreds of miles from the sea in one of the driest places imaginable, the desert prison of Mandera in Somaliland.
One of only a handful of self confessed pirates, he has been sentenced to life in this sand-blasted colonial fort built by the British to house an earlier generation of dissenters, rebels and common criminals.
Caught red handed as he prepared to launch attacks into the Gulf of Aden from the port of Berbera he is devoid of the usual need for evasion. His account of how and why he came to the northern breakaway state is startlingly direct.
"I came here from a village called Eyl," the port at the heart of the piracy surge off Somalia. "I came here to kidnap commercial ships from the waters off Berbera.
Sitting in a room crowded with uniformed prison guards and dressed in a stained grey sweatshirt with the letters

Pirates View continued

U.S.A written in faded yellow, red and green, he continues: “I decided to come here since it's nearer to the ships. There were no pirates I would come here to be successful.”

Typically lean but not as tall as some of his compatriots, Ismail speaks in halting but unbroken English only pausing to drag hard and often on the luxury of free cigarettes.

He did not begin life, as so many Somali pirates have claimed, as a fishermen on the immense coastline that stretches around the Horn. Ismail grew up in Mogadishu, the capital of newly independent Somalia, relinquished by Italy after its defeat in World War II.

“I became a mechanic, I could fix anything,” he says in a matter of fact tone.

He came to the coast as a young man and ran his own workshop in Bossasso, the centre of Puntland, another breakaway province in a fractured country.

Once there he spied an opportunity that many other young Somalis were just waking up to. The mainstay of the Somali economy had long been the rearing of cattle for export across the Gulf to arid Saudi Arabia, much of it to feed the annual Haj pilgrims. Fishing to get money rather than food was comparatively new and as Ismail discovered a good earner.

From owning one boat and a single engine in 1993 he quickly grew a small business harvesting lobsters and shark and making $500 per month. He got married.

“I had agents in Dubai, I was buying shark nets for $108 per piece.”

Somalia boasts some of the richest fishing grounds in the world, a fact that was not lost on foreign predators in the wake of the collapse of central government in 1991. Somali fishermen were already selling to the Gulf States and to Italian companies and the marine bounty was known.

Fishing vessels started to appear from nearby Kenya and Egypt but also from as far afield as China.

“The first point that compelled us to be sea pirates was the fishermen. These boats that came, trawlers came and destroyed everything even the small fish from our area.”

Ismail lost his shark nets in clashes with trawlers, others lost boats or lives.

The operations of the foreign ships were felt in three ways according to Ismail: “Big fishing trawlers entered our waters, destroyed our facilites, collided with our boats and even killed people.

“Some dumped toxic waste in our waters.”

And finally: “big cruise ships and tankers started to appear.”

Everything changed in 1997, he believes when Somali fishermen attacked a Kenyan fishing trawler.

“They had our lobster and fish on board. We showed the world community what they had taken.”

What Ismail insists began as a policing operation quickly shifted.

“At first it was about the hostility between us, it was about taking revenge. But when they paid ransoms we decided to take more ships to get more ransoms.”

The former mechanic took longer to step off the sidelines, eventually joining the growing bands of pirates operating from Eyl in northeastern Somalia.

“Using my own fishing boat, we got everything: sat phone, weapons... We went out to the ocean. Unfortunately we could not reach them because of the speed. They were moving faster than us.”

Talking faster now he recounts another failed attempt where a larger engine landed him alongside a container ship but his ladder couldn't reach the deck.

Far from comic, these failed attempts underline the extraordinary adaptability of his countrymen, most with little experience of the sea who have transformed themselves into hardened pirates capable of stopping supertankers and fending off a multinational fleet of warships.

Ismail's third attempt involved transporting his ship overland and restocking his armoury. “I got seven weapons, a bazooka, AK 47s, one pistol, a thuraya (satellite phone). We were using uniforms from the Puntland coastguard.”

He believes it would have worked if an informant hadn't given the gang away to authorities keen to demonstrate that they were fighting piracy.

Pirates view continued

The same communications networks that have existed for generations that have enabled the cattle traders to cross the Gulf to Yemen and Saudi Arabia; the same traffickers of weapons and people have been adapted to exploit a new economic opportunity – hijack and ransom.

There is no sympathy for the merchant seamen he has pursued who Ismail sees as representatives of a world that stood by while Somalia was exploited.

"I don't give a shit about them," he says with a rare flash of anger. "They are like cattle to me, these ships are mine."

"Why don't you give consideration about the destruction they did to us?"

"This time our problem has touched the outside world. Finally the rest of the world knows that hijacking ships was a punishment from us."

Piracy off the Horn has always had seasons. When the sea is calm the mother ships and their skiffs go out. When it is rough they retreat to Somalia's cliffs and bays.

And as another of these seasons draws to a close the predictable claims are being made that the military solution is working.

So far the multinational fleet has had less impact than the weather. Nato and other international missions have congratulated themselves on reducing the threat.

Ismail has a different view.

"These navies can think what they want. We have shown we will defend ourselves, we will change tactics."

Despite his own life sentence, the father of two becomes animated about possible solutions.

"We need to understand this solution. We need people to listen to us, to create employment for these fishing communities. To bring facilities that is the way we can stop these problems."

The backwash from the recent killing of at least six pirates first by the French, then by US naval forces has been felt even inside the high walls of Mandera.

"I am very sorry about French and America fighting pirates. "I didn't go to France or to USA, we took these ships in our own waters.

"If they continue we will start to destroy ships and kill people. Then there will be serious and heavy consequences."

Farewell to photographer who captured North
Jul 14 2009 by Tony Henderson, The Journal Newcastle

JIMMY Forsyth, who wandered the streets of Newcastle for almost 50 years taking pictures, has died a few weeks short of his 96th birthday.

Children in Leazes Park, April 1957

He began taking photographs around his home in Scotswood Road in 1954, recording life in the West End of the city.

Farewell to photographer continued

He documented a world which was to soon disappear, and he also recorded the demolition of many buildings and landmarks like the Scotswood Road and Redheugh bridges.

Jimmy's camera also captured new buildings which were changing the face of the city. In later life he lived in The Cedars high rise flats in Cruddas Park but had been in Elswick Hall care home for around the last 18 months, where he died on Saturday.

Only last month Tyne Bridge Publishing produced a new book of Jimmy's photographs, taken in the 1950s and 60s.

This replaced a previous book, Out of One Eye, which had been published in 2002 and is now out of print. The title refers to the fact that Jimmy was left blind in his right eye as a result of an accident four days after he started work as a fitter at an ICI works in Prudhoe, Northumberland.

Jimmy was born in Barry, South Wales, and served in the merchant navy before training as a fitter. He came to Tyneside, aged 30, in 1943 to help with war work at ICI and in 1952 was living in a flat on Scotswood Road.

For years he was a familiar figure on the city's streets, continually taking pictures.

Then in 1974 he contacted West End librarian Des Walton and handed over albums of negatives because he feared they would be lost if something happened to him. Mr Walton staged exhibitions of the photographs and that was the start of the "discovery" of Jimmy Forsyth.

In 1981 Jimmy's pictures went on show in the Side Gallery in Newcastle and five years later Bloodaxe Books published Scotswood Road, a volume which showcased his work.

In 1987 Jimmy received the Halina Award for Photography.

Thousands of Jimmy's images, many in tartan albums, are now with Tyne Wear Archives in Blandford House, Newcastle, where they will take years to be sorted and catalogued. Chief archivist Liz Rees said: "In historical terms they are immensely valuable. I am not aware of anyone else who took photographs as systematically as Jimmy did. He was the only person documenting the changes in this way in Newcastle, recording a way of life in a community of which he was part and which was to vanish quite quickly."

Jimmy Forsyth's funeral will be on Thursday at West Road Crematorium at 2pm.

For Dog Lovers who wonder why it is so

From The Times July 16, 2009 Mark Henderson, Science Editor

Scientists discover secret of why dachshunds have short legs

The evolutionary secret of how the dachshund got its short legs has been uncovered by scientists with the discovery of a gene that explains the diminutive stature of at least 19 breeds.

Dachshunds, corgis, basset hounds and Pekingese are among the common breeds that owe their short legs to the mutation of a single gene that occurred several thousand years ago.

The discovery offers insight into the way genetic mutations drive evolution and may have implications for understanding dwarfism in humans.

In the study, a team from the American National Human Genome Research Institute, in Bethesda, Maryland, examined DNA samples from 835 dogs from 76 breeds, including 95 animals with short legs.

The scientists found that dogs from all the short-legged breeds had an extra copy of a gene that produces a growth protein called FGF4, which is known to be implicated in dwarfism in humans. The extra gene is a mutant of a type known as a retrogene, which lacks parts of the normal DNA code.

The extra retrogene leads to an overproduction of the FGF4 protein, which in turn appears to alter the times at which bones grow in embryonic development. This, the scientists believe, causes the legs of small dogs to remain short and out of proportion to their bodies. Details of the research is published in the journal Science.

As the same gene is shared between all the short-legged breeds of dog studied, the mutation is likely to have emerged early in the evolution of dogs. Fossil evidence suggests that dogs were first domesticated from wolves at least 14,000 years ago, and genetic evidence suggests the evolutionary split may have happened earlier than that.

Eric Green, scientific director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, said that the research shows how genetic information can help understand the course of evolution.

“Every species, including canine and human, carries an amazing record of evolution scripted in its genome that can teach us about the mechanisms at work in biology, as well as about human health and disease,” he said. “This work provides surprising evidence of a new way in which genome evolution may serve to generate diversity within a species.”

The research is particularly interesting because of the role it ascribes to a retrogene — a particular kind of genetic mutation that may have played a more important part in evolution than had been assumed.

When genes are active, they are copied into a signalling chemical called messenger RNA (mRNA), which is then translated into a protein in cells. When mRNA encounters a type of virus called a retrovirus, however, it can be copied back into DNA, producing a “retrogene” that can be written back into the genome.

Heidi Parker, a leader of the research, said: “Our findings suggest that retrogenes may play a larger role in evolution than has been previously thought, especially as a source of diversity within species.

“We were surprised to find that just one retrogene inserted at one point during the evolution of a species could yield such a dramatic physical trait that has been conserved over time.”

The research could also be significant for studies of human health. People with a growth disorder called hypochondroplasia have symptoms that mimic the processes involved in the evolution of small dogs, with limbs that are abnormally short.

While about two thirds of cases of this disease are already known to be caused by a different genetic mutation, the new research suggests that FGF4 and similar genes are worth studying as potential causes of the remaining cases.

Elaine Ostrander, the senior author of the study, said: “This study points to a new gene that should be investigated for its possible role in human hypochondroplasia. Our findings may prove valuable to scientists studying other aspects of human growth and development. The work also underscores the value of canine studies for uncovering new biological mechanisms that are likely relevant to human disease.”

Britain, From Parliament to Police State

From the desk of Fjordman www.brussels journal on Thu, 2009-06-18

I am aware of the fact that some British people speak of Europe as "somewhere else," to which they do not belong. In my opinion, Britain is very much a part of European civilization whether they want to admit so or not, but I am willing to grant them a special place within the European tradition. There is a reason why English became the first global lingua franca. While I focus mainly on the history of science in my essays these days, let us have a brief look at some of the political ideas and concepts championed by the British in the modern era.

The famous English legal charter known as the Magna Carta, issued in the year 1215 and written in Latin, limited kingly power in England and had major long-term political consequences when combined with later events. King John (1166-1216) had signed the Magna Carta unwillingly, and the heavy spending and foreign advisers of his son and successor Henry III (1207-1272) upset the nobles, who once again acted as a class under the leadership of the nobleman Simon de Montfort (1208-1265), Earl of Leicester. In 1258 they took over the government and elected a council of nobles which was called parliament or parlement, a French word meaning a "discussion meeting."

This "parliament" took control of the treasury and forced Henry to get rid of his foreign advisers. Henry died in 1272 and his son Edward I (1239-1307) took the throne. He brought together the first real parliament. Simon de Montfort's council included only nobles and had been able to make statues, written laws, and make political decisions, but the lords were less able to provide the king with money. Several kings had made arrangements for taxation before but, as David McDowall writes in An Illustrated History of Britain:
"Edward I was the first to create a 'representative institution' which could provide the money he needed. This institution became the House of Commons. Unlike the House of Lords it contained a mixture of 'gentry' (knights and other wealthy freemen from the shires) and merchants from the towns. These were the two broad classes of people who produced and controlled England's wealth. In 1275 Edward I commanded each shire and each town (or borough) to send two representatives to his parliament. These 'commoners' would have stayed away if they could, to avoid giving Edward money. But few dared risk Edward's anger. They became unwilling representatives of their local community. This, rather than Magna Carta, was the beginning of the idea that there should be 'no taxation without representation', later claimed by the American colonists of the eighteenth century. In other parts of Europe, similar 'parliaments' kept all the gentry separate from the commoners. England was special because the House of Commons contained a mixture of gentry belonging to the feudal ruling class and merchants and freemen who did not. The co-operation of these groups, through the House of Commons, became important to Britain's later political and social development."
Merchants and country gentlemen were anxious to influence the king's policies, as they wanted to protect their interests. When France threatened the important wool trade with Flanders they supported Edward III (1312-1377) in his war. During Edward III's reign Parliament became organized in two parts: the Lords and the Commons, which represented the middle class; the really poor had no voice of their own in Parliament until the middle of the nineteenth century. Many European countries had similar kinds of parliaments in medieval times, but in most cases these institutions disappeared when feudalism died out. In England, however, the death of feudalism helped strengthen the House of Commons in Parliament.

Like the Civil War of 1642, the Glorious Revolution, as the political results of the events of 1688 were called, was completely unplanned. It was more a coup d'etat by the ruling elites than a revolution as such, but the fact that Parliament made William king, not by inheritance but by their choice, was indeed revolutionary. Parliament was clearly more powerful than the king and would remain so in the future. Its power over the monarch was written into the Bill of Rights in 1689. The king was from now on unable to raise taxes or keep an army without the agreement of Parliament, or to act against any MP for what he said in Parliament.

England was by the seventeenth century emerging as a great power whose influence increasingly stretched far beyond Europe. It was also one of the most intellectually creative regions in the world. After Isaac Newton had published his Principia in 1687, probably the single most influential text in the history of science, the English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704), a friend of Newton, in 1690 published his An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, proclaiming the doctrine eventually known as the tabula rasa, where humans come into the world as blank slates.

Britain, From Parliament to Police State continued

This was perfect for a world in which reason ruled and everything was possible. Human nature itself could be improved by applying reason, and history could take the direction of eternal progress. Locke published his Second Treatise of Government, stating that government is the servant of men, not the other way around, and that men possess natural rights, expanding on Thomas Hobbes' concept of the social contract.

In the early 1700s, England's combination of economic prosperity, social stability and civil liberties had no equivalent anywhere in Continental Europe, at least not among the larger states; smaller states such as Switzerland is a different matter. The French philosopher Voltaire (1694-1778) lived in England for several years in the 1720s and knew the English language well. He preferred British constitutional monarchy to French absolute monarchy. Voltaire praised England's virtues in Letters on the English from 1734 when he returned to Paris. This caused great excitement among French intellectuals for the ideas of Newton and Locke and the plays of Shakespeare, but their own philosophies went in a different direction.

That an important European city such as Paris was the home of a major intellectual movement is not too strange. It is more surprising that the smaller city of Edinburgh was so as well during the second half of the eighteenth century. What came to be known as the Scottish Enlightenment, whose effects were felt far beyond Scotland or Britain, produced a series of prominent intellectuals and scholars, including the pioneering modern geologist James Hutton (1726-1797), the philosopher David Hume (1711-1776), the brilliant, but famously eccentric economist Adam Smith (1723-1790) and the historian Adam Ferguson (1723-1816).

Adam Smith from the University of Glasgow in 1776 -- at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, although he did not realize this at the time -- published his Wealth of Nations, widely considered the first modern work of economics. Smith stressed meritocracy and introduced the principle of competitive advantage and the metaphor of the Invisible Hand. Above all he championed the idea that trade is not a zero-sum game but a win-win situation; he challenged the ancient assumption that wealth is a pie of fixed size over which everybody has to fight to get their share by showing that the size of the pie itself can grow through trade.

Scotland at this time had a good education system and very high literacy rates, as did the emerging Scandinavian nations. The American polymath Benjamin Franklin, who visited Edinburgh in 1759, remembered his stay as "the densest happiness" he had ever experienced. By 1762 Voltaire was writing, with a touch of malice, that "today it is from Scotland that we get rules of taste in all the arts, from epic poetry to gardening." In England and the Netherlands, where political power was already in the hands of the merchant middle class, intellectual activity was directed toward analyzing the practical significance of this change.

In contrast, according to scholar Bruce G. Trigger, "The continuing political weakness of the French middle class in the face of Bourbon autocracy stimulated French intellectuals to use the idea of progress to reify change as a basis for challenging the legitimacy of an absolute monarch, who claimed to rule by divine will and protected the feudal economic privileges enjoyed by a politically moribund nobility. By proclaiming change to be both desirable and inevitable, Enlightenment philosophers called into question the legitimacy of the existing political and religious order. Beginning as an intellectual expression of discontent, the French Enlightenment gradually developed into a movement with revolutionary potential….The Scottish interest in Enlightenment philosophy reflected the close cultural ties between Scotland and France but also was stimulated by the unprecedented power and prosperity acquired to the Scottish urban middle class as a result of Scotland's union with England in 1707. Southern Scotland was experiencing rapid development but the highland areas to the north remained politically, economically, and culturally underdeveloped. This contrast aroused the interest of Scottish intellectuals in questions relating to the origin, development, and modernization of institutions."

Scottish intellectuals made very important contributions to science and to our understanding of the modern world, but it was the more revolutionary version of Enlightenment philosophy which developed in France that would become popular among the middle classes seeking more political power for themselves in Europe and in North America.

Britain, From Parliament to Police State continued

The sad part when writing this is that while Britain was once admired for its political system and was rightfully hailed as a beacon of liberty, today Britain is one of the most politically repressive countries in the Western world, which is saying a lot given how bad Politically Correct censorship is in the entire Western world these days. Britain today is a Multicultural police state where sharia, Islamic law, is quite literally treated as the law of the land. I suppose there is a strange sort of symmetry in this: Britain was one of the first countries in the West to embrace political liberty and is now among the first to leave political liberty behind.

from www.brussels journal

Top job at Sea Today

Submarine cooks earn far more than the SAS

Ian McPhederan June 08, 2009 the Daily Telgraph

THE highest paid non-officer in the military is not an SAS sergeant fluent in three languages taking out Taliban bombmakers in Afghanistan - it's the guy cooking food on a submarine.

A senior sub-sea chef with more than six years experience under his belt earns up to $200,000 a year, the same money as a junior admiral.

The cooks receive a base pay of just $58,806 a year but when all the submarine and critical trades allowances are tallied up, the figure jumps to almost $200,000.

Such is the reluctance of qualified cooks to live and work in a steel pressure tube deep under the sea, preparing three hearty "comfort" meals a day for up to 58 people, that even $4000 a week can't attract enough starters.

Like many of the "submarine critical trades", the ranks of cooks dwindled during a mining boom that offered similar pay, a solid dose of sunshine every day and more regular family time.

The only daylight submariners see during lengthy underwater exercises is if the skipper decides the ocean's surface is calm enough and free from the "enemy" for a deck barbecue.

Submarine cooks are employed in a category known as "individuals critical to the navy" so they attract a bonus of $50,000 a year just for turning up.

An experienced cook also gets a capability bonus of $40,000, a seagoing allowance of $22,254 and submarine service allowance of $26,703.

Three cooks - one a leading seaman and two able seamen - work the subs' cramped galleys and are usually the most popular people on-board a Collins Class submarine.

During one six-month deployment on board HMAS Rankin, the cooks prepared 22,000 meals in their small, steamy galleys.

A submariner pay scale provided to The Daily Telegraph explains just why "cash" did not show up in exit surveys as a key reason for leaving the submarine service.

The commanding officer of a sub at the rank of lieutenant commander with more than six years experience would earn close to $250,000 a year after allowances.

The salaries make submariners the elites of the Australian Defence Force, paid even more than highly trained SAS soldiers operating deep behind enemy lines in Afghanistan.

The three-star Navy chief Vice-Admiral Russ Crane gets a base salary of $242,000 a year while a navy captain with six years experience gets just $139,000 - or $60,000 less than the cook on a sub.

And finally ;-

A place I must remember to visit on my next UK visit.

Sent by Don Crellin of Liverpool (the Scouse) Liverpool not the Sydney one.

Don is secretary of the Liverpool Vindi Boys association.