



The Origins of the British: The New Prehistory of Britain

By Stephen Oppenheimer

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Stephen Oppenheimer's extraordinary scientific detective story combining genetics, linguistics, archaeology and historical record shatters the myths we have come to live by. It demonstrates that the Anglo-Saxon invasions contributed just a tiny fraction (5%) to the English gene pool. Two thirds of the English people reveal an unbroken line of genetic descent from south-western Europeans arriving long before the first farmers. The bulk of the remaining third arrived between 7,000 and 3,000 years ago as part of long-term north-west European trade and immigration, especially from Scandinavia - and may have brought with them the earliest forms of English language. As for the Celts - the Irish, Scots and Welsh - history has traditionally placed their origins in Iron Age Central Europe. Oppenheimer's genetic synthesis shows them to have arrived via the Atlantic coastal route from Ice Age refuges including the Basque country; with the modern languages we call Celtic arriving later. There is indeed a deep divide between the English and the rest of the British. But as this book reveals the division is many thousands of years older than previously thought.

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Editorial Review

Review

Be prepared to have all your cherished notions of English history and Britishness swept away. Clive Gamble The historians' account is wrong in almost every detail. In Dr Oppenheimer's reconstruction of events, the principal ancestors of today's British and Irish populations arrived from Spain about 16,000 years ago. New York Times He upends some of the most deeply rooted notions of where the British people come from, and does so in a clear, painstaking and detailed way. The result is both fascinating and unexpected. Geographical Particularly illuminating ... The author carefully lays out the genetic data that show how three-quarters of Britishness dates to the repopulation after the northern ice sheets last retreated, and takes us through a fascinating investigation of what this means for some cherished notions of Britishness. Nature

About the Author

Stephen Oppenheimer of the University of Oxford is a leading expert in the use of DNA to track migrations and his previous book Out of Eden: The Peopling of the World rewrote the prehistory of man's early colonization of the world. He is also the author of Eden in the East: The Drowned Continent of Southeast Asia, which challenged the orthodox view of the origins of Polynesians as rice farmers from Taiwan.

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