SETTLERS

Genetics, geography and the peopling of Britain

WHERE DO WE COME FROM?

PROGRESS

Museum of
**Natural
History**
University of Oxford

9 February – 16 September 2018

An exhibition to tell the dynamic story of Britain's ever-changing population through patterns revealed by genetics, archaeology and demography

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From the arrival of the earliest modern humans over 40,000 years ago to the population of the present day, the story of the people of Britain is one of ongoing movement, migration and settlement. The Settlers exhibition asked where we came from, and presented surprising answers through archaeological evidence, genetic analysis, and interactive data.

As part of the Museum's ongoing Contemporary Science and Society series of exhibitions and event programming, Settlers tackled questions of migration against a politically sensitive backdrop by offering interdisciplinary research and a long view – from the end of the last Ice Age to the present day.

The exhibition brought together objects from the Museum's collections with archaeological loans from the Ashmolean Museum, and worked with over 20 researchers from the University of Oxford's School of Geography and the Environment, the School of Archaeology, and the Wellcome Centre for Human Genetics. A partnership with the Museum of Oxford also brought its Journeys to Oxford oral histories into the exhibtion.

Canadian visual artist Ian Kirkpatrick created his own response to the themes of movement, migration and settlement, after being commissioned by the Museum through an open call to artists. His artwork, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*, was displayed as an architectural intervention in the main court of the Museum for the seven-month duration of the Settlers exhibition.

Settlers attracted 132,000 visitors and its accompanying public programme of events reached 9,000 people. The exhibition's online version received almost 30,000 views by early 2019 and remains as a digital legacy to the project.

Drawing on the techniques used in the ground-breaking *People of the British Isles* study, Settlers presented a combination of archaeological and genetic evidence for the movements of people through western Europe and into Britain over the centuries.

At the Illuminating Movement late night special event, visual artist Ian Kirkpatrick talked about the ideas in his graphic installation – *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* – which is visible in the background.

Digital installations helped visitors to navigate complex data and concepts, including genetic inheritance and statsitical migration trends. The digital interactives had been used over 130,000 times as of early 2019.

EVENTS

Trails, late nights, teacher training, debates

Programming in the Contemporary Science and Society series allows the Museum to extend and develop the themes of an exhibition to reach different audiences in different ways. The Settlers programme reached almost 9,000 people, including a late night special – Illuminating Movement – which attracted 1,200 visitors. Here is a small selection of events from that programme.

Professor Danny Dorling addressed the political dimension of migration in a talk discussing the role of the British Empire in shaping today's map of ethnic identity in Britain, as well as contemporary attitudes to immigration, emigration and Brexit.

A highlight specimen in the exhibition was the 'Red Lady' of Paviland – the 33,000-year-old remains from the oldest known ceremonial burial in Western Europe. In a public talk, Professor Tom Higham revealed new insights about the 'Red Lady'.

Visual artist Ian Kirkpatrick hosted an art teachers training event and designed a special Settlers family trail, based on his installation for the exhibition.

Around 1,000 people took part in the Stones and Bones sessions run by the Museum's Front of House, Public Engagement and Community Engagement teams. The object handling sessions gave visitors the chance to discover the changing climates, peoples and animals of British pre-history.

Reading Between the Lines Theatre Company and University of Oxford researchers tackled the debate on the use of genome information for personalised medicine in Our Genomic Future. Using a participatory digital voting system, the audience was able to steer the focus of the debate during the event.

Background image: The 'Red Lady' of Paviland

DIGITAL

Visualising data, capturing stories, illuminating concepts

Settlers used digital installations to allow visitors to navigate complex data and concepts, and to participate by recording their own family's pattern of migration. Combined, the three exhibition interactives have been used 131,000 times as of early 2019.

Central to the exhibition was a genetic map of Britain created by the ground-breaking People of the British Isles research project at the University of Oxford. To help visitors interpret this important map, the 17 genetic clusters identified by the study were revealed one by one in an interactive showing how each emerged from finer stages of genetic analysis. It also explained how the distinct geographical groups of genetic clusters could be attributed to historical events, backed up by archaeological evidence on display in the gallery.

Correspondence with similar genetic clusters found in regions of westerrn Europe was illustrated in an infographic video created by the University Public Affairs video team and projected in the gallery. The concept of shared ancestral DNA was presented in *DNA: A Rich Tapestry*, an animation commissioned from Oxford Sparks.

Inheritance Lottery simplified the process of DNA inheritance from mother and father, with a visual representation of how detectable 'blocks' of DNA are passed down a family tree from generation to generation, or lost along the way.

In the Where Are You From? interactive, visitors were invited to enter the birthplace and most recent place of residence for themselves, their parents and their grandparents. More than 10,000 people entered these 'migration journeys' for over 40,000 individuals. The data has been passed to the University of Oxford's School of Geography and the Environment for further analysis.

Background image: A genetic map of Britain produced by the *People of the British Isles* study

RECEPTION

Press, social media, visitors, surveys

As part of the Museum's Contemporary Science and Society series, Settlers aimed to present a range of research from the University of Oxford's academic divisions in an accessible and balanced public exhibition. It also aimed to increase awareness of some of the current areas of study in genetics and human geography.

Visitor surveys showed that around three quarters of people found that the combination of evidence from genetics, archaeology and human geography was effective in presenting the long story of migration and settlement in Britain.

Over 95% of visitors found the exhibition to be visually appealing and more than 75% agreed or strongly agreed that the digital interactives were engaging. No-one surveyed found the text or explanations confusing, and everyone felt that the objects on display helped to tell the exhibition's story.

In gallery observations, almost a third of visitors stopped to explain or discuss parts of the exhibition with those around them, and over half used at least one of the interactives.
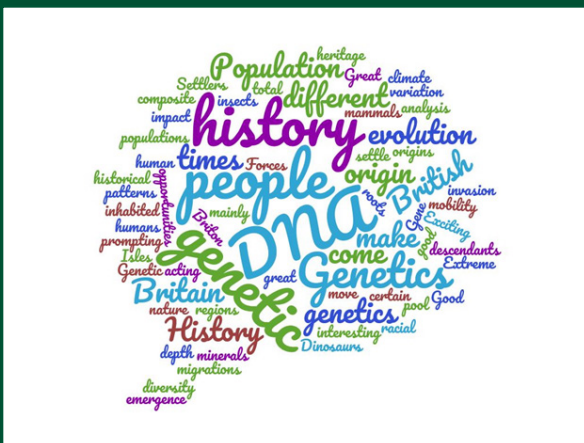
Above: Wordcloud based on survey respondents' summaries of the exhibition

SETTLERS
in numbers

131,976
Exhibition visitors

8,790
Event participants

23
Events

28,175
Website views

131,000
Interactive uses

Where Are You From? - Gallery Interactive

10,000
Family journeys entered

40,000
People's journeys

12,000
Places

23
Researchers collaborated on exhibition

59
Researchers took part in events

1,000
Stones & Bones object handling session participants

62p
Cost per visitor

£83,000
Exhibition cost

17
Genetic clusters

1st
Genetic map of Britain

www.oum.ox.ac.uk/settlers

Museum of
Natural
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