



The Diaspora Effect and how it may have affected your family's history

A **Diaspora** is a scattered population whose origin lies in a separate geographic locale. Historically, the word diaspora was used to refer to the involuntary mass dispersion of a population from its indigenous territories, in particular the dispersion of Jews. However, recently scholars have distinguished between different kinds of diaspora, based on its causes such as imperialism, trade or labour migrations, or by the kind of social coherence within the diaspora community and its ties to the ancestral lands. In all cases, the term *diaspora* carries a sense of displacement. The population so described finds itself for whatever reason separated from its national territory, and usually its people have a hope, or at least a desire, to return to their homeland at some point, if the “homeland” still exists in any meaningful sense.¹

With ‘**genetic genealogy research**’ you need to have an understanding and be aware of the many diaspora that may have affected your family's history, especially when you see the **ethnicity** results from your DNA test.

SAXONS, DANES, VIKINGS AND NORMAN Invasions

Saxons c 410-460 from Saxony in north-west Germany settled in southern England. The Angles, originally located in Angeln in southern Denmark, between Saxony and Jutland, took over East Anglia, as well as the Midlands, which became Mercia, and Northumbria in the north-east, the neat division between Saxons, Angles and Jutes and their various destinations in England almost certainly applies only to the leaders, not the mass of settlers²

Danes & Vikings c 790-865; the Scandinavian raids, invasions and warfare by the mixed hordes of Vikings and Danes. The Vikings paid most attention to the north of Britain and to Ireland. In 835 there was a large raid in Kent, then annually after that until, in 865, there was a full-scale invasion and the Danish Great Army landed in East Anglia. The next century saw endless wars between Saxon and Danes, and King Aethelred ordered a massacre of all Danes in England in 1002 – an impossible task. The attempted ethnic cleansing forced Sweyn, the king of Denmark, to intervene, which he did on two unsuccessful campaigns until, in 1013, he launched a full-scale invasion. Aethelred fled to Normandy and thus began the fateful alliance that was to lead directly to the Norman Conquest²

On the morning of 14th October 1066 the battle forces lined up in Hastings, Harold's Saxon army faced by William, Duke of Normandy heavy cavalry and the rest is history. In the 954 years since the Norman Conquest many have tried to invade our Isles, but none has succeeded ²

HUGUENOT Emigration and Diaspora c 1550-1700 – Huguenots were French Protestants who held to the Reformed, or Calvinist, tradition of Protestantism and as they gained influence and more openly displayed their faith, Catholic hostility grew. A series of religious conflicts followed, known as the French Wars of Religion, fought intermittently from 1562 to 1598 and the Huguenots were forced to either convert to Catholicism or flee as refugees. Between 24th August to 3rd October 1572, Catholics killed thousands of Huguenots in Paris, and in the main provincial towns and cities, in what became known as the 'St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre' and over 1.5 million fled in exodus, to avoid forced conversion to Roman Catholicism. The bulk of Huguenot émigrés relocated to Protestant states such as the Dutch Republic, England and Wales, Protestant-controlled Ireland, the Channel Islands and Scotland, and the Huguenot diaspora in England still retain their beliefs and identity ³

SCOTTISH Diaspora (HIGHLAND CLEARANCE) c 1750-1860 – the mass eviction of tenants from the Scottish Highlands by land owners, forced significant numbers of crofters to move to the Scottish Lowlands c 1760-1830 and the north of England, and further afield to Canada (Nova Scotia) and North America, as well as the Scottish Lowlanders, becoming the Ulster Scots in Ireland and the Scotch-Irish in America ¹

IRISH (Catholic) Emigration and Diaspora c 1841-1851 – the Irish left Ireland during and after the Irish Famine, mainly to England and North America, and between the 1930s to 1960s because of the poor economic conditions but many returned during the period of rapid real economic growth "Celtic Tiger" 1994-2007 ¹

CORNISH Diaspora c 1861-1901 – an estimated 250,000 migrated all over the world due to the decline of tin and copper mining with many Cornish families moving to South America ¹

JEWISH Immigration and Diaspora c 1880-1900s – Britain saw swathes of Jewish refugees escaping the Pogroms of Eastern Europe. During this period approximately 140,000 Ashkenazi Jews settled in Britain, and most lived in major cities, such as London, Manchester and Leeds. Such a rapid influx of migrants was not welcome by many, and the 1905 Aliens Act introduced immigration controls for the first time. Many more Jews also came to Britain before and during WW2, to escape the Nazi persecution in Germany, Poland, and Hungary ⁴

Welsh Emigration – During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a small wave of contract coal miners from Wales moved to Northern France; the centres of Welsh-French population are in many coal mining towns. The Ukrainian city of Donetsk was founded in 1869 by a Welsh businessman, John Hughes (an engineer from Merthyr Tydfil) who constructed a steel plant and several coal mines in the region.

Internationally Welsh people have emigrated, however in relatively small numbers (in proportion to population, Irish emigration to the USA may have been 26 times greater than Welsh emigration). In Malad City in Idaho, which began as a Welsh Mormon settlement, lays claim to a greater proportion of inhabitants of Welsh descent than anywhere outside Wales itself, and its estimated 5 million people of Welsh ancestry live globally in areas formally the British Empire and around 1.75 million Americans claim to have Welsh ancestry, as did 458,705 Canadians in the 2011 Canada Census ¹

Italian Immigration c 1915-1918 – During World War 1 about 20,000 Italians moved to the UK and again after World War 2 since 1945; some 50,000 Italians moved to London, 25,000 to Manchester and 20,000 to Bedfordshire ¹

Asian Diasporas – The largest Asian diaspora in the world is the **Indian diaspora** to many regions in the world, and on every continent. The partition of India c 1947 saw many migrate after the uprising, which displaced between 10 – 12 million people along religious lines. Similarly, the **Romani**, numbering roughly 12 million across Europe, can trace their migration and their origins to the Indian subcontinent, and even their presence in Europe is first attested to in the Middle Ages ¹

Caribbean Diaspora (the “Windrush generation”) – After World War 2, many African-Caribbean people migrated to North America and Europe, especially the UK. As a result of the losses during the war, the British government began to encourage mass immigration from the countries of the British Empire and Commonwealth to fill shortages in the labour market. The ship HMT *Empire Windrush* brought a group of 802 migrants to London, on 22nd June 1948, and the image of West Indians filing off the ship’s gangplank has come to symbolise the beginning of modern British multicultural society. In 1962, the UK enacted the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, thus restricting the entry of immigrants, effectively stemming most Caribbean immigration. Despite the restrictive measures, an entire generation of Britons with African-Caribbean heritage now exists, contributing to British society in virtually every field ¹

And now, the **CELTS** – a brand which is supported by the cultural glue of the Gaelic language, which binds the west of Scotland with Ireland and, in a slightly different form, with the Welsh, Cornish, Breton, Irish and Scots Gaelic and the ancient languages of Gaul. Even though ‘*Celtishness*’ is today mainly expressed in language, music, sport and other cultural pursuits, there lurks beneath it an unspoken belief in some form of ancient Celtic race whose descendants live on today. It’s suggested that, first of all, Irish Britons moved to the Western Isles, but were pushed into Scotland and northern Britain by a second wave of Gaul’s from France, who then occupied Wales and the south and west of England.

Estimates vary, but one set of figures has it that there are 28 million people of Scottish and 16 million Irish descents spread throughout the world. Even if these figures are way off the mark, and they are conservative estimates, there are now far more Celts living overseas than in the Isles. Most made their homes in the New World, mainly the USA and Canada, but emigration to Australia, New Zealand and to a lesser extent South Africa added millions to this list. In some places, like the southern part of South Island, New Zealand, the Scots practically took over the whole country; and the town of Dunedin has the Gaelic name for Edinburgh ²

Citations:

¹ **WIKIPEDIA** <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diaspora>

² Sykes, Brian. **SAXONS, VIKINGS, and CELTS** the Genetic Roots of Britain and Ireland. 2006. Published by W.W.Norton, New York & London

³ Chater, Kathy. **Tracing Your Huguenot Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians** 2012. Published by Pen and Sword, Barnsley

⁴ Jolly, Emma. **THE DNA OF THE DIASPORA** 2019.
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