

**Tuesday 14th August 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE USE**

**‘ALL SCOTS WERE BRIEFLY ENGLISH’
SAYS MOFFAT AT BOOK FESTIVAL**

Alistair Moffat, author of *The Scots: A Genetic Journey*, revealed that “all Scots were briefly English”, and that the reason for Scotland’s huge growth in population was the humble food; porridge.

Speaking today in an event, sponsored by The Open University, at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, Moffat explained how migration from Central Africa had meant that all Scots had, at one time, been English, having travelled northwards through Europe and then Great Britain.

“Scotland is one of the most diverse nations on earth, with about 100 different lineages of DNA”, said Moffat, arguing that, contrary to popular belief, the majority of Scots do not share DNA patterns with Celts, Vikings and Picts, but have a much more international heritage. “Scotland is at the edge of beyond, you can’t get further north-west on the Eurasian land mass, and consequently we have collected everybody,” said Moffat.

Moffat also explained how porridge was the reason for the huge increase in Scotland’s population. “Around 3,000 BC, farming techniques were brought to Scotland which allowed, for the first time, the production of cereals,” explained Moffat. These cereals could then be charred or dried and then mixed with milk to create porridge, which was fed to babies at around two years of age.

Prior to this mothers would breastfeed babies until the age of five, making most women infertile during this period. As mothers stopped breastfeeding children earlier and feeding them porridge, this dramatically reduced the interval rate between births, from around five years to about two and a half, thus increasing the population.

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THE WORLD, IN WORDS

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The Edinburgh International Book Festival runs until Monday 27th August and will feature a host of talks on genetics, including 'The Epigenetic Evolution' on Saturday 18th August, which analyses how our physical and social environment actually influences the way that our genetic inheritance is realised, sponsored by The ESRC Genomics Policy and Research Forum.

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