

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
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WHERE DO COSMONAUTS COME FROM?

Abstract

The Cosmonauts exhibition in the Science Museum, London, United Kingdom brought a large amount of space history to audiences in the United Kingdom just as their first European Space Agency astronaut was embarking on his six-month mission. Major Tim Peake was variously described as the "Britain's first official astronaut" and "Britain's first astronaut" on the grounds that the first Briton in space, Helen Sharman, was a cosmonaut, and was not funded by the British taxpayer. However, Dr Sharman's mission takes pride of place in the exhibition as do other instances of UK-Soviet Union or UK-Russia cooperation. Meanwhile, Major Peake appeared wearing an England rugby jersey on the International Space Station - representative of only one of the four nations of the United Kingdom. This paper examines national identity depicted in the Cosmonauts exhibition, in the broader cultural context of Major Peake's mission, and British-Russian and British-European relations in the same period.