

THE Y-DNA PROJECT

January 2009

Quarterly report from Elizabeth O'Donoghue, the Society's Group Administrator

Happy New Year to everyone! With the New Year, Family Tree has just upgraded the construction of its website, so project participants will see a new format when next they visit their personal page. There have been some 'bugs' that are being addressed, so if something isn't working correctly, be patient and try again in a day or two.

There is an RTE program, 'Blood of the Irish', with the first of two parts just aired that discusses the origins of the Irish peoples and uses yDNA testing as part of their research. They refer to the lineage of Niall of the Nine Hostages with a surety that I do not share, as I've mentioned in the past, but so far in part one, there has been nothing profound shared about the Irish genetic heritage. They are pursuing the idea that the Celts came from Spain – referring to the Milesian myth and their origins in Spain. One of the most interesting items discussed was the remains of a bear found in a cave in Leitrim that is thousands of years old, but more recent than scientists thought they had existed. (I didn't even know there had been bears over here!) The most surprising thing about the discovery is that they were able to recover DNA and found that their nearest bear relatives were found in Spain. We will see what the second program brings.

Very recently, finally, a new SNP has been identified that separates out a large contingent of the subclade R1b1b2, to which the majority of the participants in our project belong. This has created a bit of excitement in the genetic genealogy community, and over the last few months, a number of people in surname project members at Family Tree have ordered a test for this SNP. The results are beginning to pour in, and an "R-L21Plus" Group Project has already been formed with 93 members across numerous surnames, which can be found at <http://www.familytreedna.com/public/R-L21/default.aspx>. While L21 is being found on the continent in significant numbers, it appears that the majority of people with roots in Ireland are L21+. A Google map of the distribution on the Y results page of the website indicates where the participants originated. One significant anomaly, however, is that while the sample is small from Spain so far, only a very small proportion is being found L21+ there. There are some listers on the Rootsweb Genealogy-DNA forum that adamantly deny any validity of the Milesian myth, and they are pointing to this relative absence of L21 in Spain as support of their view. It will be interesting to see as more results come in how this might affect the notion of Spanish origins of the Gaels.

The portion of the Google map that shows Ireland has no hits in the southwest yet, which may only mean that no one from that area of origin has gotten results yet. The one negative Irish result for L21 that I am aware of is with someone who has the Southern Irish modal haplotype, which matches closely to the Glens ancestral haplotype. The obvious question is whether all Southern Irish modal haplotypes are also negative.

At this point, we have ordered the test for one member of the O'Donoghue of the Glens tribe and one from the Mór tribe. By the next report, the results should be in. If anyone is interested in testing themselves for this SNP, let me know and we can discuss the possibility. It would be helpful to see what result there would be for other clusters besides the Kerry Eoghanacht. Requesting this single SNP for testing only costs \$39 at the moment.

Very few people responded to my appeal last quarter to participants who have not responded to me regarding their family history and location in Ireland (or elsewhere) of their ancestors, even if it is just to tell me they don't know, in order for me to update my records. Here's another chance – elizabethod@eircom.net .