

THE Y-DNA PROJECT

July 2016

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

We've had a bit of activity over this last quarter, with folks taking advantage of Family Tree sales and getting upgrades as well as more SNP testing to help zero in on the relationships between those in the tribal groupings. There are four STR upgrades in The Glens tribe, two new members in the Mór Group C group, and a BIG Y test coming back for the Group B group in the Mór group as well. There is an STR upgrade in the Unaffiliated R1b1a2 group, along with an SNP result in that group also.

The SNP testing, through individual SNP tests, SNP Packs and the BIG Y clarify to which subclade the participants belong. The STR upgrades help provide a more precise estimation of how closely the men in those same subclades are connected.

So what does all this tell us? We must remember that there are over a dozen different septs of the surname, all unrelated. We have been able to clearly identify some, have a possibility of several more (listed with a '?' in the designation in the spreadsheet), plus we have a number of clusters of unidentified septs and some so-far unaffiliated gents. Most of the time, there is a consistency in the ancestral locations of those in a group, which is itself interesting, indicating how families didn't necessarily move very far from their original homes.

There was a time initially, before extensive SNP testing, that we were able to group haplotypes that were relatively close in genetic distance (GD) and believe that they were related to a common ancestor, perhaps not in a genealogical time frame (up to about 600 years) but in a tribal sense. However, the more we SNP tested, the greater a disparity became evident, even though the GD would suggest that there was a common ancestor within all those in the different groups we categorized. This, of course, created mixed emotions - delight for those who proved to be truly closely related within the same SNP branch, but a certain level of disappointment (perhaps not even consciously acknowledged) for those who found they weren't as close as they thought they were to the others in their 'sept'. DNA doesn't lie, but it doesn't tell the whole story either.

I have often pointed out that a tribe within a territory would contain some families who were related to the acknowledged chief through a female line rather than the male line. In the 'old days' that wasn't much of a concern, beyond the limitation of eligibility for the chiefship being restricted to the deirbhfhine, which would exclude those males related through a female relative of the chief. There would also be a certain number of 'freemen' who owned land within the chiefly territory who did not necessarily have the same level of allegiance to the chief, though I expect under most circumstances they would unite with the chief against any external threat to the territory. And there would have been a number of serfs/slaves bound to the chief. It's likely that all those people (bar the freemen) would have taken the name of the chief when surnames were adopted. And all of those would rightly consider themselves to be part of the tribe.

Early on, we grouped all those having the Irish Type II haplotype (before SNP testing) in the Glens tribe, since Geoffrey, The O'Donoghue of the Glens has that haplotype. For those who knew where their family originated, the majority were from Kerry or nearby Cork, which supported that decision. By now, we know that the Irish Type II haplotype is defined by the SNP of CTS4466; and we see that there is a group in the Glens tribe who share the same terminal SNP downstream of CTS4466 in the haplotree with The Glens himself. There are others who have tested who are quite nearby on the CTS4466 tree, but there are some who are on a different branch altogether. So even though they are all CTS4466+, they aren't all actually related to the Chief of the Glens tribe except in the most distant sense - beyond the parameters of descendancy from a historical ancestor to a common ancestor to the whole branch which could have been 2,000 years ago. But I repeat, all of those would rightly consider themselves to be part of the tribe.

The Mór tribe, with members who have roots mainly in Kerry, looked reasonably close as well when comparing STR haplotypes, using Tighe O'Donoghue/Ross's haplotype as the benchmark for the Mór lineage. However, with SNP testing, it became apparent that there was a similar disparity, and clusters within the group have been tested to different branches of the haplotree as well. Again, all of those in the grouping would rightly consider themselves to be part of the tribe.

The Cavan/Breifne group of Donohues has an even greater number of different haplotypes/haplogroups - six different groups in our project and even more in the Breifne Clans project (which by the way, if any of you reading this report are in that group but not the Society group - or vice versa - you should join the group you are not yet in). However, every group has at least some folks from Cavan, confirming the territorial proximity of them all, even if they don't all share the same haplotype/haplogroup.

While I believe that the old adage - 'Ignorance is bliss' - can have its value, I also believe that the facts are worth knowing. The O'Donoghue Society Y-DNA project is an exercise in discovery. By its nature, discovery can sometimes give us surprises, and I expect we will have more surprises along the way as we continue our journey in finding out more about ourselves.

Thank you to all of you who are participating in the project, often following my advice and suggestions on what to test. I hope more of you will join us to find out as much as we can about our O'Donoghue heritage. Please feel free to ask advice on what testing you might order to best fit your needs.

O'Donoghue Abu!

*A reminder - if anyone sees mistakes or omissions in the Society spreadsheet or any of the text we have about the project, please let me know. Suggestions are always welcome. Rod will post when the updated spreadsheet is online.