

THE Y-DNA PROJECT

July 2020

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

At the moment, we have 333 participants in The O'Donoghue Society DNA Project. Managing such a growing project has become more difficult, and I'm delighted to report that in response to my latest appeal for help, Michael Donahue and Philip O'Donoghue have joined the team with Rod and me to administer the project. We hope to update the website pages, both on The Society website as well as the Family Tree website. If any of you have any suggestions for things you would like to see more of or changes/improvements, please feel free to contact us. With more 'hands on deck' we hope to accomplish more for all of you.

We regularly have new members joining the project, and we hope to be able to expand our knowledge of all existing tribes we have identified as well as discover further clusters. Family Tree has sales on and off throughout the year, so if you have a potential relative found by other means, having their Y-DNA tested is the best way to find out if they are indeed related. Or if there is a cousin you would like to see join you to expand your current position on the Results spreadsheet you might encourage him to test.

(<https://www.familytreedna.com/public/ODonoghue?iframe=yresults>)

We have a few more Big Y's expected, which are quite useful in confirming/establishing a true relationship between gents with similar haplotypes who are unaware of a common ancestor. In the early days, when we only had STR (Short Tandem Repeat) markers for comparison, we assumed any O'Donoghue matching the South Irish Type II modal was related to The Glens tribe since Geoffrey, their Chief, carried that haplotype. Family Tree's TiP calculators (the little orange icon for it found beneath the names of the matches on the Y-DNA Matches page of a kit's account) were programmed to compare the number of matching marker values to determine how closely related two people are likely to be. Most Irish Type II haplotypes appeared to be related within a century or so. However, as testing expanded and became more advanced, a different element of the Y chromosome - SNPs (Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms) – began to be tested, giving us a more complex level of relatedness.

For instance, the SNP of CTS4466 was found to identify anyone matching the Irish Type II modal. When those gents started SNP testing, through individual tests, SNP Packs or the Big Y, we discovered that the CTS4466+ gents were not all as closely related as we thought. The Glens direct line was first identified to be A914. Initially, several others also tested positive for A914. Unfortunately, as testing progressed, the reliability of positive results for A914 came into question, and different types of SNP tests produced contradictory results. Family Tree reassessed how they reported A914 results, and it is unfortunately no longer being recorded.

A gentleman whose family pedigree traced back to a brother of The Glens in the 17th century SNP tested the Big Y, which is the most comprehensive SNP test, where new SNPs/branches are discovered. The results for this Glens cousin confirmed the relationship, identifying a further branch below A914 for these two gentlemen, and The Glens direct line was identified to be BY121634. Meanwhile, other Irish Type II kits tested and were found to belong to different branches of the CTS4466 tree, such as BY3531, FGC29067 and BY2881, some closer to The Glens line than others.

This is not a surprise. We've pointed out before that when most surnames were adopted in the early 11th century, all those living under the protection of a local chieftain generally adopted the surname associated with that chieftain. It would be unrealistic to believe that all men living within the territory of that chieftain were literally related through the male line. There would be relatedness through female lines as well as others not related at all but living amidst the chieftain's territory. As it happens, almost all the O'Donoghues in the project who match the Irish Type II modal and know where their family originated did indeed come from the area of Glenflesk or nearby. This supports our decision to include all of them as Eóganacht Cashel. Those most closely related to The Glens line are included in the A1 group. The others are in A2 (see the spreadsheet from the link above).

I hope all of you are safe and looking forward to a greater return to normalcy. We will let you know as we work towards improving the project further. Feel free to contact us with any questions.