

Celtic Connections Conference 2020

Saturday, August 15th, 2020

Question & Answer Log: Chat with Maurice Gleeson: DNA

QUESTION: As a female, I had my male cousin tested at FTDNA for Y-DNA12 several years ago. We learned our haplogroup is I1 and he has tons of matches. If we upgraded his test to Y-DNA37, would that give us any more info? Would an upgrade weed out some matches?

ANSWER:

- Yes, it would weed out a lot of matches.
- But why do it? What do you want to find out?
- Could identify which country your surname comes from (e.g. Ireland vs Scotland).
- What part of the country (e.g. Tipperary).
- Named ancestor (by linking to a match with an extensive pedigree).
- Where you sit on the Tree of Mankind (academic interest) but could help identify any Clan affiliation.

QUESTION: My brother's DNA test at 37 markers with Family Tree DNA show just one match with a genetic distance of 1 and other matches with a distance of 2 and 3. But none of the matches at 37, 25 or 12 markers show our surname, Murray. So, am I correct in that upgrading to 67 markers will not help me?

ANSWER:

- Upgrading to 67 markers may help identify Murray matches that are "hidden" at 37 markers, but they will not be close matches (minimum 5/67)
- There is a Murray project at FTDNA (Google: FTDNA Murray) – 1247 members with 570 Y-DNA-tested ... so you would think you would match one of them. The fact you don't suggests an NPE / SDS

QUESTION: I have DNA samples from two siblings, five cousins, and an uncle. We know genetically we have the same grandfather and genealogically that we have the same great grandfather. How can I use our DNA to help connect farther back?

ANSWER:

- Firstly, make sure you are on all the available databases – if you tested on Ancestry or 23andMe, transfer all your DNA data to MyHeritage, FTDNA, & GEDmatch

- Cluster your DNA matches into groups of “Shared Matches” – the idea here is that each of the clusters shares a common ancestor (or common ancestral couple). Work with the people in each cluster to figure out how you are connected and build your family tree back that way.
- Repeat the exercise for all of your relatives (but especially your uncle and cousins).
- Use ThruLines on Ancestry – link your DNA to yourself in your family tree, wait 24 hours, Ancestry generates POSSIBLE connections that help you build your tree further back (each ThruLines needs to be evaluated for validity)
- Also check out the Theory of Family Relativity on MyHeritage (which does the same thing as ThruLines)

QUESTION: Did the naming convention extend to immigrants born in the states and other countries? Do you have an idea of if or when traditional naming started being mixed in with other names?

ANSWER:

- Yes, it did extend to immigrants, but it varied considerably from family to family, and from place to place, even in Ireland. Some people never used it at all. It started to peter out in the early 1900s.
- There is an excellent article about it on the Ireland Reaching Out website <https://irelandxo.com/ireland-xo/news/irelandxo-insight-irish-naming-and-baptism-traditions>

QUESTION: In the USA, I was told that we are descendants of the black Irish kings and queens (no doubt folklore). However, who are these Black Irish? Could they be from the Iberian Peninsula? Do the DNA studies reflect much DNA from the Iberian Peninsula?

ANSWER:

- The Black Irish is a term rarely used in Ireland and is largely of American origin. There is an interesting article about it on the Irish Central website (which should be read with a pinch of salt) ... <https://www.irishcentral.com/roots/history/who-were-the-black-irish>
- The term is commonly used to describe people of Irish origin who have dark features, black hair, a dark complexion, and dark eyes.
- Could this have come from Spain?
 - There were few survivors from the Spanish Armada.
 - But there was widespread trade with Spain, esp. out of Galway on the West coast. And Spanish trader’s daughters may have been married off to wealthy Irish clients, so DNA could have entered that way.

- Also, the Haplogroups found in Spain are also found in Ireland so it is difficult to identify “Spanish DNA” ...
https://www.eupedia.com/europe/european_y-dna_haplogroups.shtml
- Could it have been African?
 - The Spanish were Moors, and the Moors were a mixed ethnic group of white Berber, Arab, & sub-Saharan African ... so it is possible.
 - There is some African Y-DNA among people in the Ireland Y-DNA Project but where origins are recorded, it is the US and not Ireland. So it is not clear if the African DNA was introduced in Ireland or in the US (as a result of slavery).

QUESTION: My brother provided DNA for a Y-DNA test. Is it overkill to have my nephew (son of another brother) provide Y-DNA to try to research the origin on my family name?

ANSWER:

- Yes ... join the relevant surname and haplogroup projects with what you already have. Consider upgrading your brother to 67 or 111 markers or the Big Y but only after having consulted with the relevant project administrators. And be very clear about your objective: what exactly do you want to find out?

QUESTION: I am interested in a DNA project with our family name, but I have not found any names similar to ours; furthermore, the name has changed many times for a variety of unknown reasons. How much do I need to know to start a surname DNA project and assuming I can do it, what surname do I use -- can I use a variety of spellings? The name is Hageneay and Heagney and Hagney.

ANSWER:

- You don't need to know anything to start a project. Simply fill out the form at <https://www.familytreedna.com/project-application.aspx>
- You should start by searching for your surname at FTDNA here ...
<https://www.familytreedna.com/group-project-search?sType=sx&search=Hagney>
- Use the “sounds like” option to include all the different possible variants. I found no Hagney or Hageneay, 7 Heagney, and 1 Heagany ...
- You definitely should include as many variants as possible in your study.

QUESTION: I completed a mitochondrial DNA test and was hoping to learn more about my mother's line and so on. You indicated that this test is not useful for genealogical purposes. Did I waste my money, or shouldn't it be helpful for me to find relatives from my mother's line (and her mother's, etc.)?