Manx Y-DNA Study – Five year report – December 2015

Key Findings

New insights have been gained from the study which are able to provide more information on the early population of the Isle of Man during the period 1000-1500AD.

1. **Scandinavian Influence**: From investigating the male population of the Isle of Man in the period just after the end of Scandinavian rule we can identify a part of the legacy of their occupation of the Island immediately after the end of Scandinavian rule. Based on the sample of men tested in the study, **approximately a quarter of the men of this early population of the Isle of Man, with male descendants surviving today, had male ancestors who previously came from Scandinavia and Northern Europe**. The remainder came from neighbouring areas, mainly Ireland, Scotland and early Britain. The proportion of Scandinavian genes in the male population of the Isle of Man today will have been reduced however since then, as a result of the influx of population into the Island in the 19th and 20th centuries.

2. **Shared Male line Ancestry:** The main, unexpected, finding to emerge out of this study is the extent to which the male lines of Manx families with entirely different names are connected to each other genetically. This means that they have been found to share a common male ancestor in a relatively recent time period before names became hereditary. **Or, expressed in a different way, the number of different genetic male lines is less than the number of surviving family names.** This characteristic is more prevalent in men of Scandinavian origin, but is still true to a lesser extent for the Celts.

   The phenomenon that must have occurred is that individual men had sons, who themselves reproduced to create separate lines of new generations of male descendants. These descendant family lines lived separately from each other, but at that period of time[1] when patronymic family names started to become hereditary, each family adopted a different name from each other, depending on their father's name, where they lived, the occupation or appearance of the father etc. So genetically all these men were related, but they adopted different family names for their descendants. In hindsight this can be seen as an inevitable consequence of a changeover from a patronymic naming system to a hereditary one.

3. **Early Family Origins Identified:** The unique Y-DNA signatures of more than 70 Manx family lines (out of 125) have been identified so far and new insights gained into their early origins before they arrived on the Isle of Man. More than 320 men with Manx ancestry have been tested from some 100 families and research continues to test and analyse fully those remaining family names.

4. **Unique Manx Family Names**: **Those familiar family names (e.g. Curphey, Bridson, Kennaugh etc) which we consider to be typical of and unique to the Isle of Man are shown to be indeed so.** Y-DNA analysis indicates that they were not connected to any similar names existing elsewhere and thus have had to have been formed and created on the Island. This is equally true of all those Manx names of frequent Gaelic construction which occur and are also formed elsewhere (e.g. Kelly, Cowell, Cowley etc.). The Manx families bearing these names adopted such names on the Island and are found to have no genetic connection with other families originating elsewhere with the same name. **So "Kelly from the Isle of Man" is truly from the Isle of Man!**

5. **Manx Name Variants**: Where there are different variants of the same original Manx family name, which are popularly assumed to be equivalent, e.g. Gell, Gale and Gill, Collister and

[1] Approximately from 1050-1300AD

Callister, Cowell and Cowle, Carran and Karran etc, the genetic evidence has confirmed that they are indeed variants of each other.

6. **Most Families Show a Single Male Genetic Origin**: Most Manx family names are considered in genealogy terms as being low-frequency names, i.e. the number of name-bearers worldwide is low. Because of this fact and that their origins are all on a small island, we would expect that all these Manx families would all each be descended from one male patriarch, i.e. of single genetic origin. This has proved to be true in the large majority of cases tested, but with a few exceptions, surprisingly. Several families, each with the same name, but founded genealogically in different parishes on the island have turned out to possess different genetic origins. This provides new evidence regarding the way in which some of these early names might have been formed from their early Gaelic origins.

7. **Non-Paternal Event Incidence**: **One in eight men tested in the study did not show the Y-DNA profile which was typical of his family name**. This occurs as a result of a previously unknown and unrecorded break in the male genetic line for that man's family, at some time in the previous 28 generations during which the family name was in use. Whilst this might appear on the face of it to be a high figure, it only equates to a level of non-paternal event of 0.5% per generation, over the 28 generations or so on average that hereditary Manx family names have been in use.

8. **Exported Manx Names**: Three groups of men with Gaelic-sounding names, not found on the Isle of Man, have been found to be the descendants of several indigenous Manx families. In each case, a Manxman had left the Island in the 17-18th centuries and his name had evolved into a version of the name not found on the Isle of Man. Several of these groups of men believed they had Irish origins, but in fact were found to be Manx.

9. **Closeness of the Manx Community**: The study concentrated on the Y-DNA testing of men of Manx origins, as only analysis of the male Y-DNA is capable of providing the insights and understanding over the last 2000 years that we are researching. This analysis demonstrates that many of the present-day descendants of the families, bearing our unique Manx names, are in fact even more closely related to each other than they ever knew or suspected through the sharing of their male line ancestry. However, additional testing of the autosomal DNA of a random selection of both men and women with Manx ancestry has also been carried out within the study as a side activity and provides another anecdotal perspective on this characteristic. This autosomal analysis provides further evidence of the relatively close genetic relationships currently present within people of Manx descent, both men and women.

Overall, the findings from this study have given us new information on where the early population of the Isle of Man, at a family level, came from, and also provides insights into the process whereby our early Manx family names might have been formed.