

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Introduction

The history of the Isle of Man would indicate that the bulk of the male population is of old Irish genetic origin, with more recent traces of Scandinavian genes from the time of the Norse rule of the Island. Further genetic diversification then came from later incursions by neighbouring Scots and English.

A study was carried out in 2003<sup>1</sup> to investigate the genetic make-up of the whole of the British Isles which included testing 62 Manx men resident on the Isle of Man and possessing traditional Manx family names. This research was published at the time as part of the BBC series “Blood of the Vikings”. Amongst other findings, this study confirmed the existence in the male population of the British Isles of genetic traces of people of Scandinavian origin in places where Vikings were known to have settled, including the IOM. The broad inference drawn from these results was that approximately 29% of Manx males showed a possible Scandinavian genetic origin (Haplogroups R1a + I1) and the remaining 71% (Haplogroup R1b), a Celtic origin<sup>2</sup>.

The precision of these particular tests and analyses by today’s standards however is relatively crude and imprecise, as DNA testing and interpretation has progressed markedly since 2003. In August 2010, John Creer, a man of Manx descent living in Cheshire, started a new specific Manx Y-DNA project<sup>3</sup> to take advantage of these newer developments.

### 2.2 Study Objectives

The study was set a number of objectives, namely:

- a) Through Y-DNA testing, to identify and evaluate the different genetic origins of the male lines of the surviving indigenous Manx families.
- b) To assess approximately how long these male genetic lines had lived on the Island and, where possible, identify their origins prior to arrival on the Island through the identification of early genetic connections with neighbouring areas.
- c) To provide new information on the genetic origins of these families to be assessed against the published origins of these Gaelic names, according to the linguistic and historical research of the last century, (JJ Kneen, AW Moore et al.). Thus possibly enabling new research to take place examining how these names were originally formed.
- d) As a result of the above objectives – to provide unique and new insights into the early origins of the people of the Isle of Man, in a way that no one else has been able to do so far.

### 2.3 Manx History until 1400<sup>4</sup>

It is likely that the first Celts to inhabit the island were Brythonic tribes from mainland Britain. It has been speculated that the island may have become a haven for druids and other refugees from Anglesey after the sacking of that island in 60AD. There is little evidence to suggest that the Romans ever landed or had any influence on the island.

Irish migration to the island probably began in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. It is generally assumed that the Irish invasion or immigration formed the basis of the modern Manx language. This is evident in the change in language used in Ogham inscriptions. The transition between Manx Brythonic (like Welsh) and Manx Gaelic (a Goidelic language which remains closely related to Irish Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic) may have been gradual but by the 7<sup>th</sup> century the language was essentially identical to that of the Irish Gaelic indicating the then major influence of the Irish on the local population. Tradition

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<sup>1</sup> Capelli et al 2003

<sup>2</sup> Some 85% of the male population of the British Isles belongs to Haplogroup R1b and can be loosely classed as being of “Celtic” origin.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.manxdna.co.uk](http://www.manxdna.co.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Acknowledgments to Wikipedia

attributes the island's conversion to Christianity in around 500AD to St Maughold an Irish missionary who gives his name to the Manx parish of the same name.

From 800AD onwards the island became subject to Viking raids from the sea and within 100 years it was under the control of the Scandinavian Kings of Dublin and then from 990AD under the Norwegian Earls of Orkney. Various Scandinavian rulers continued to rule until King Magnus of Norway ceded the island to Scotland in 1266AD. The island then alternated between periods of Scottish and English rule until 1346AD, when the English finally took control permanently. At several times during this latter period the island was subject to sporadic influxes of foreign settlers. Following the battle of Clontarf in 1014 the Norse-Gael king of Dublin, Brian Boru, was killed and appreciable numbers of Norse-Gaels fled to the Isle of Man for sanctuary and possible settlement. There is also some evidence to suggest that there was a new influx into the island by Scottish members of Robert the Bruce's contingent after his invasion in 1313.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Incoming Settlement</b>	<b>Where from</b>
100AD	Brythonic Celts	Wales/Anglesey/England
400AD	Goedelic Celts	Ireland
800AD	Scandinavian	Norway, Denmark
1000AD	Norse-Gael	Ireland, Western Isles and Scandinavia
1300AD	Scottish	Scotland
1346AD	Anglo-Saxon	England

Thus, we can assume that there will be traces of these patterns of immigration within the genes of men of Manx origin that could be uncovered through Y-DNA testing today.