

Ewing Surname Y-DNA Project – Article 14

David N. Ewing (+1 505.764.8704, *DavidEwing93 at gmail dot com*)

This is the fourteenth in a series of articles about the Ewing Surname Y-DNA Project. The previous thirteen articles have appeared in the last thirteen issues of the *Journal of Clan Ewing*. They are also available online through links at the project's web site (www.ClanEwing.org/DNA_Project/index_Y-DNA.html). Extensively cross-linked results tables, project participant lineages, group relationship diagrams and network diagrams are also available on the project's web site.

Progress of the Project

Our 80th participant has joined the project! We have results on seventy-four participants, four participants have samples in the lab awaiting analysis, and two participants have recently been sent specimen collection kits they have not yet returned to the lab. You may recall that our goal when we started the project in October 2004 was to recruit 100 participants, because we thought that number would allow us to make some reasonably robust genealogical claims. We had seven participants join the project in 2004, sixteen in 2005, twenty-nine in 2006, twenty-one in 2007, and seven have joined so far in 2008. We are well on the way to achieving our goal. We would really like to have results on our first 100 participants analyzed and ready to present at the gathering in September, but we are not going to make it at the rate of two new participants each month. We encourage any of you who have been thinking about joining the project or recruiting a distant Ewing relative to join to act now. From the time a person signs up until we can analyze and assimilate the results takes a couple of months, so if we are going to have this done by September, we need participants to have signed up by the first of July or so. Information on how to join is at the end of this article.

The Project Web Site

William Riddle, the *Clan Ewing* Web Master, has pretty well completed overhauling the structure of the Ewing Surname Y-DNA Project web site, but there is still a lot of work to do on individual pages, and maintaining the site by keeping pages updated as the project grows will be a never-ending task. If you are interested in the project and have not visited the web site lately, please have a look. We would very much appreciate your comments and suggestions.

British Ewings Join the Project

In the last issue of the *Journal*, we reported on the results of Peter Anthony Ewing (PA) of Crieff, Perthshire, Scotland, who was a reasonably close match of project participants SL and ME, a pair of third cousins in Group 8, who do not know where their immigrant ancestor may have come from. Peter's ancestors lived in the vicinity of Glasgow, and since none of the project participants who trace their ancestry to Donegal have a similar pattern, we think probably the immigrant ancestor of SL and ME came to America directly from Scotland, rather than via Donegal, as for so many American Ewings.

We have now received results for Thor Ewing (JT) of Shropshire, England. He was born in England, but his father and grandfather were born in Belfast, and he believes his second great-grandfather is the William Ewing he found in Griffith's Valuation of Ireland from the mid-19th century, who was living at that time in Tannaghmore South, Lurgan, Rogers Court, in the Parish of Shankill, County Armagh ... northern Ireland (which was not yet then Northern Ireland). So how about his results? Ewing Group 5,

wouldn't you know! He is only genetic distance 2 from the Group 5 modal, so is plainly related to the other participants in Group 5, but nothing in the results suggests a closer kinship with one of them than another. He appears not to be descended from William?, the progenitor of Group 5 - Part 1.

Differentiating Closely Related Families

In the last issue of the *Journal*, we introduced DYF399X, a group of three very rapidly mutating STR markers that we hope might help us genetically differentiate different branches of the large closely related group of Ewings. Family Tree DNA offers these markers as 'Advanced Tests' that are not included in the regular 37-marker or 67-marker panels. We now have DYF399X results on twenty participants in the group of closely related Ewings, with some representatives from Ewing Groups 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7. We will discuss these results here, but first, let us review the problem we are trying to solve.

When surnames began to be widely used in the Lowlands of Scotland something less than 1,000 years ago, everyone who adopted a given surname was not necessarily biologically related to the others. Clan membership did not depend strictly on biological relatedness. Furthermore, for many reasons extending up to the present day, surnames are sometimes used that do not reflect biological descent. An illegitimate son might use his mother's surname rather than his father's. An adopted son might take the name of his adoptive father. The husband of an heiress might take his wife's name in order to qualify them for an inheritance. Poor education and inconsistent orthography have often led to different names being spelled in the same way and the same name being spelled in different ways. As a result of factors like these, most Y-DNA surname projects like ours have found a fair amount of diversity in the Y-DNA of participants who share the same surname, and when successful, they identify several distinct DNA lines that identify different branches of what are essentially biologically unrelated families.

Perhaps the most striking finding of the Ewing Surname Y-DNA Project to date is that most of our participants are in fact closely related biologically. Roughly two-thirds of our participants have such similar Y-DNA that it is difficult to distinguish them from one another on the basis of their Y-DNA alone. We have conventional genealogy on all of our participants, in some cases with documented lineages going back 400 years. We have defined several Groups based on their conventional genealogies: Group 3 consists of the descendants of James Ewing of Inch; Group 4 consists of the descendants of John Ewing of Carnashannagh; Group 5 - Part 1 consists of the descendants of Nathaniel Ewing and his half-brothers, whose father is thought to have been named William Ewing; and Group 7 consists of the descendants of James Ewing born circa 1720/25, whose immigrant ancestor is unknown. We have identified a couple of sub-branches of these families that have distinctive marker patterns (for example, Group 5 - Part 1 and the sub-branch in Group 4 descended from Pocahontas James Ewing), but for the most part there is so much overlap in the Y-DNA results among the Groups defined by conventional lineages that we can not decide, based on Y-DNA alone, which branch a participant might belong to when his conventional lineage is not known.¹ Group 1 consists of participants who do not know their

¹ This is best seen on the network diagram available online at

www.clanewing.org/DNA_Project/DNA_ProjectResults/network/Y-DNA_Network_Detail.html

The two sub-branches for which we have distinctive marker patterns are Group 5 - Part 1, which appears as the light-green circles at the far right (TW2, WR, JN, DG and JW), and the descendants of Pocahontas James, which appear as the turquoise circles at bottom center (RD/RP, BE, FE, and WC). The four participants who match the modal value are shown in the large multi-color circle; the yellow circles represent the participants in Group 1.

conventional genealogic connection with the others, but whose Y-DNA is very similar to the large group of closely related Ewings constituting the majority of participants in the project.

We would like to be able to tell each participant in Group 1 which of the other Groups he should focus on in trying to get over the genealogical brick wall at which he has found himself stuck. Using the 37-markers for which most of our participants have been tested, we cannot do that. Consider that four participants exactly match the Ewing modal and have identical Y-DNA results; one of them is in Group 3, two are in Group 4 and one is in Group 7. Within genetic distance 1 of the modal there are three more participants in Group 3, four more in Group 4, two in Group 5 and five in Group 1. You can see why we do not know what to say to the participants in Group 1 about which of the other Groups may include their closest relatives. This is the problem we are trying to solve with DYF399X.

DYF399X

DYF399X consists of three very rapidly mutating markers that we hope will help us distinguish these branches genetically. The DYF399X markers are so unstable that most genetic genealogists consider them too unreliable to pay much attention to. Anthropological geneticists, who are interested in deep ancestry, not only ignore DYF399X, but usually also ignore all of the multi-copy markers, such as CDYa/b and DYS 464a-d, because their relatively rapid mutation rates result in confusing back mutations and parallel mutations.² We think that this very instability may give us just the tool we need to distinguish closely related branches, but we expect (indeed, we have found) some confusing and difficult-to-interpret results, as well.

So far, we have DYF399X results on twenty participants in the large group of closely related Ewings, including six in Group 1, four in Group 3, three in Group 4, five in Group 5 - Part 2, and two in Group 7.³ I do not want to repeat here the lengthy and somewhat technical results discussion that is available on the web site, but the short story is that two of the three markers have clear modals for the Ewings tested so far, but the middle marker is more diverse. This means that two of the DYF399X markers have no value for distinguishing branches (though eventually they may emerge as important in distinguishing sub-branches), but that the third has potential.

All of the participants in Groups 4 and 7 for whom we have DYF399X results have 25c at the middle marker. None of the participants in Group 3 and only one of the participants in Group 5 have this value at this marker. This is an especially interesting finding in view of the fact that some have argued for a connection between James Ewing born circa 1720/25 (the progenitor of Group 7) and the John Ewing of Carnashannagh family (Group 4) on independent grounds. Four of the five participants in Group 5 - Part 2 (we have no results on anyone in Group 5 - Part 1) have 26c at the middle marker⁴ as does one of the participants in Group 3. So how about the participants in Group 1?

² Not to mention the fact that they are subject to recLOH events, which introduces another layer of complexity, but is beyond the scope of this discussion.

³ A detailed DYF399X Report and a table of actual results is available on the project's web site at www.clanewing.org/DNA_Project/DNA_Articles/Document_DYF399XReport.html.

⁴ TG has 25c. A look at the network diagram cited above will show you why we think that is almost certainly a result of a parallel mutation, rather than because of any particularly close relationship with the men in Groups 4 or 7.

Remember, we are trying to find a way to make a recommendation to the participants in Group 1 about where to look for their ancestors. One of them (FI), has completely incomprehensible results—even the expert at FtDNA⁵ has been unable to figure out what happened with his results. One (WC3) has 25c at the middle marker, the others (DC2, JC, CA and MT) have 26c. Our preliminary suggestion is that WC3 should have a closer look at the descendants of John Ewing of Carnashannagh and/or James Ewing born circa 1720/25, because 25c could very well be a marker for these lines. We wish that we could say with some confidence that the others should have a look at Group 5, but remember that the participants in Group 5 - Part 2 also do not know their conventional genealogic connection with one another, and that they all differ from the participants in Group 1 at DYS 391 = 10, a rather slowly mutating marker. We suspect, but certainly do not know, that 26c is the ancestral value for the middle marker (that is, it is the value that the common ancestor of all of the Ewings in the closely related group had), and as such, does not distinguish a specific branch. Still, if the derived value (the mutation to 25c) occurred close to the time of John Ewing of Carnashannagh, this could be a very useful branch marker. It even appears that this marker could distinguish Group 4 from Group 3, because none of the four participants tested in Group 3 so far have 25c at this marker (SR has 27c, DN and GR have 24c, and HW has 26c), but the results within Group 3 are so diverse that we can have nothing to say about what to expect with respect to the DYF399X results of other descendants of James Ewing of Inch.

The DYF399X results are neither unequivocal nor conclusive (after all, these are Y-DNA tests), but they are promising enough that we are now recommending that all participants in the large group of closely related Ewings (the participants in Groups 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7) order this test. Adding this test costs approximately \$25 and does not require submitting a new DNA sample. Project participants who want to add this test can find instructions for doing so in the DYF399X Report posted on the project's web site. Remember, this test will probably *not* be useful for project participants in Groups 2, 6, 8 and 9.

'Unrelated' Families

Groups 6 and 9 consist of participants who are clearly related to one another, and are unrelated to the participants in the large closely related group of Ewings. Ewing Group 8 has a couple of pairs of participants who are known relatives of one another and one of these pairs has similar Y-DNA to our Scottish participant, but mostly the participants in Group 8 are not related to one another or to the others in the project. The two participants in Group 2 may be related, but one of them has only 12-marker results, so we cannot say much about that. We think DYF399X testing would not be useful for any of the participants in these Groups, until such time as questions arise about how to distinguish branches within these groups. Interestingly, the results we have gotten in these 'unrelated' Ewing families are actually more typical of what one would expect in a surname project in that they are more diverse than the results in the large group of closely related Ewings. Further, our growing impression is that most of the Ewings in the large closely related group trace their ancestry to Donegal, whereas most of the Ewings in these other Groups trace their ancestry to Scotland. This suggests that one or a few closely related Ewings immigrated to Donegal from Scotland, and that most of the American Ewings in our project have descended from them.

⁵ www.FamilyTreeDNA.com

To Join or Get More Information

If you are ready to join the project, go to www.familytreedna.com/surname_join.aspx?code=M44915. Participation by Ewing women is welcome; they can get valuable genealogic information by persuading a male relative to submit a specimen. For more information, visit the project's web site⁶ and the FtDNA web site.⁷ If you want to ask questions, call me at +1 505.764.8704 in the evening, or EMail me at [davidewing93 at gmail dot com](mailto:davidewing93@gmail.com).

David Neal Ewing has been a member of Clan Ewing in America since 1996 and has served as its Chancellor since 2006. He previously served as Chair of its Board of Directors from 2004 to 2006. He is also Administrator of the Ewing Surname Y-DNA Project, which he founded in 2004, and he is a regular contributor to the Journal of Clan Ewing. Dr. Ewing has a private practice in clinical geriatric neuropsychiatry in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He received his M.D. degree from the University of New Mexico and did his residency training at the University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁶ www.ClanEwing.org/DNA_Project/index_Y-DNA.html

⁷ www.FamilyTreeDNA.com/public/Ewing