

Ancient Irish Origins of Dorsey DNA Project Members

Some fanciful speculations about the origins of Edward Darcy/Dorsey and the D'Arcys of Galway in light of a few bits and pieces from mythology, history, genealogy and science.

Recently, a study from Trinity College in Dublin, published in *The Journal of Human Genetics* in February 2006, and the work of some amateur genetic genealogists have offered new approaches to interpreting historically reported origins of the Dorsey (Darcy/D'Arcy) surname in Ireland. My purpose here is to reexamine historical accounts of the origins of the Dorsey (Darcy/D'Arcy) surname in Ireland in light of biological inheritance and to speculate about geographical and surname origins and possibly even ancient clan affiliations of at least two of the lineages in the Dorsey DNA Project.

In spite of the many valiant (and sometimes fanciful) efforts to assign the American immigrant Edward Darcy/Dorsey to an English branch of the Anglo-Norman D'Arcy family,^{1,2,3,4,5} DNA results have shown conclusively that Edward Darcy/Dorsey's descendants do not share a Y chromosome signature with descendants of two sons of Sir William D'Arcy of Platten, County Meath in Ireland.⁶ These Irish D'Arcy descendants hold registered pedigrees⁷ that extend via direct male lines back to Sir John D'Arcy of Knayth a common ancestor of the Irish and English branches of the Anglo-Norman D'Arcy line. The uninterrupted male-line descent of John D'Arcy of Knayth from Sir Norman D'Arcy (purportedly a companion of William the Conqueror) is available in any number of Peerages published over the last two centuries.^{8,9,10}

This discovery, unfortunately, has left the descendants of Edward Darcy/Dorsey stranded in the middle of the seventeenth century in their quest for an ultimate ancestor or even a country of ancestral origin.

Almost since the beginning of the Dorsey DNA project, certain marker values¹¹ and partial matches with individuals of a variety of Irish surnames¹² have hinted that that the line of Edward Darcy/Dorsey should be looking toward Ireland rather than England for their pre-Colonial American roots.

Recently close matches between five proven descendants of Edward Darcy/Dorsey and other Dorsey DNA project members with proven Irish ancestors have further strengthened arguments for an Irish origin for this early American immigrant who is first recorded in Lower Norfolk County, Virginia in February 1642¹³ and in Maryland by 1650.¹⁴ Together these members make up a new group within the project designated as Lineage I. Members of Lineage I appear to share a common Irish ancestor but, so far, it has not been possible to locate or identify that ancestor.

Similarly, Y chromosome DNA of the project's one well documented descendant of the Irish D'Arcys of Kiltullagh does not match the Anglo-Norman line. However, this is not overly surprising as Irish historians have long debated the origin of the ancestor of that line, James Riveagh D'Arcy. This sole representative of the DNA of the D'Arcys of Kiltullagh (and thus the D'Arcy family that made up one of the tribes of Galway) also does not match the Lineage I DNA, nor, in fact, the DNA of any other Dorsey DNA Project member.¹⁵

Historical accounts of the origin of the Dorsey surname and its several variants

MacLysaght in his often quoted but rarely cited section on the O'Dorchaidhe clan in *Irish Families, Their Names, Arms, and Origins* says:

There is no justification for the Darcys of Munster and Connacht (with very few exceptions) using the form D'Arcy, because they were of native Irish stock and their name is a corruption of the Gaelic O'Dorchaidhe which was first anglicized as O'Dorcey. There were two minor septs so called: one in County Mayo was located around Partry near Lough Mask; the other in east Galway was a branch of the *Ui Maine*. In the "Annals of Loch Ce" the name MacDarcy appears as that of a Co. Leitrim chieftain

in the years 1384 and 1403. O'Donovan in his notes to the Four Masters under the date 1310 places the MacDarcy sept in the parish of Oughteragh, County Leitrim.¹⁶

This source alone suggests three possible origins of the Dorsey surname in Ireland— one in Galway, one in Mayo and one in Leitrim, all in the province of Connaught—though no one can say if they share unrecorded origins further back in time. In addition to these native Irish origins, there are, of course, the Anglo-Norman D'Arcys who descend from Sir John D'Arcy, Chief Justice of Ireland in the fourteenth century and whose descendants settled in the east of Ireland in County Meath in Leinster.

With such deep and diverse roots in Ireland, it is not surprising that we are finding a variety of DNA haplotypes (five family groupings and seven unmatched participants) among the members of this DNA Project.

The D'Arcys of Galway including the D'Arcys of Kiltullagh, Newforest, and Clifton

The D'Arcy's of Galway were one of the families who made up the fourteen "Tribes of Galway."¹⁷ James Riveagh D'Arcy was one prominent representative of the Galway D'Arcy family serving as mayor of Galway in 1602-1603.¹⁸ The D'Arcys of Kiltullagh Castle in Galway are said to descend from James Riveagh D'Arcy as do other D'Arcy lines, for example, the D'Arcy's of Newforest in the County of Galway and the D'Arcy's of Clifton.

There is much disagreement over the origins of James Riveagh D'Arcy. Burke's *Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry Including American Families with British Ancestry* attaches James Riveagh D'Arcy to the Anglo-Norman D'Arcys as a descendant of Nicholas D'Arcy, son of John D'Arcy de Knayth.¹⁹ Darcy Burke, himself a descendant of James Riveagh D'Arcy, heavily promoted (if not invented) this genealogy in his book, *The Genealogy of the Darcies of Clonuan, in the county Clare, and Kiltolla, in the county of Galway* written over what appears to have been a period of time between 1752 and 1796.²⁰

However, *Burke's Landed Gentry of Ireland*, published in 1958, notes that

. . . although according to a pedigree recorded at Ulster's Office in 1770, James D'Arcy of Kiltullagh was descended from the Anglo-Norman family of D'Arcy, the Irish genealogist MacFerbis maintained this James D'Arcy descended from Walter Riabbach O'Dorchaidhe, the first man of the family who came to Galway.²¹

John O'Hart presents an impressive pedigree for this O'Dorchaidhe line back to Fiachra, an elder brother of Niall of the Nine Hostages, the 126th Monarch of Ireland.^{22,23} The pedigree offered by O'Hart places Seamus (James) Riabbach Darcy as a fifth generation descendant of the early Galway settler Bhaitear²⁴ Riabbach O'Dorchaidhe, a tenth generation descendant of Fiachra, son of Eochy Moyvane, the 124th Monarch of Ireland (father of Niall of the Nine Hostages).

In *Tribes of Ui Fiachrach*, O'Donovan mentions the *Ui Dorchaide* as one of two ruling family of Partraighe.²⁵ O'Hart also mentions O'Dorchaidhe or O'Dorchy, as chiefs of Partraigh or Partry.²⁶

Contemporary DNA studies including some for Irish populations

Studies using DNA analysis to trace the migratory routes of early humans are flourishing²⁷ as are projects (such as the Dorsey DNA Project) that are using DNA to sort out the genealogies of families with the same or similar surnames.²⁸ However, the many waves of migration of early populations combined with the mobility of individuals in modern society make it nearly impossible to assign a geographical origin to most Y chromosome haplotypes based solely on marker values. In spite of this difficulty, there have been some successes in identifying a handful of marker patterns that appear to cluster in some populations or ethnic groups.

The first such set of marker patterns was an array of six Y chromosome marker values observed in 1997 by Dr. Karl Skorecki to be present in a high number of Jewish males with a family tradition of descent from the priestly line of the *Kohanim*.²⁹

In 2000, James Wilson, then at University College London, reported a six marker haplotype of the most common or modal values for those six markers in western European populations. Because of its pronounced concentration along the Atlantic coast of the European continent, it was called the Atlantic Modal Haplotype (AMH).³⁰

Using their access to large academic and commercial Y chromosome databases, Family Tree DNA has extended this haplotype definition to include 25 of the markers in its commercial offerings. For reasons unknown, this haplotype has come to be called the Western Atlantic Modal Haplotype (WAMH).³¹ FTDNA reported values for the Western Atlantic Haplotype can be found in line 1 of Table 1 below.

In 2003, Tatiana Zerjal and colleagues at the University of Oxford identified a Y-chromosomal haplotype that occurs in relatively high concentrations (~8%) in 16 different Asian populations. The authors proposed this haplotype represents a Mongol lineage—specifically that of Genghis Kahn, propagated by his many male line relatives and the dynasties they founded.³²

Recently, a study from Trinity College, published in *The Journal of Human Genetics* in February 2006, has identified a set of 17 marker values (a haplotype) that is found in nearly 1 of every 5 men in northwest Ireland.³³ Though this haplotype is also found in low frequencies outside of Ireland, it has been dubbed the Irish Modal Haplotype (IMH). These shared marker values point to a common (and prolific) male ancestral line for a significant segment of the Irish population.

There is no lack for powerful historic royal lineages in Irish history and mythology. One of the most remarkable and powerful of these lineages in medieval Gallic Ireland was the *Ui Niall*—descendants of the ancient Irish King, Niall of the Nine Hostages. Further testing of men with surnames historically associated with the *Ui Niall* lineage showed a predominant number of those men (as compared to the general population) carry this Irish Modal Haplotype. The authors propose that the IMH is the haplotype of Niall of the Nine Hostages. (Of course, all other lines from Niall's uncles, brothers and other male line relatives will also carry this signature or a slight variant caused by occasional mutations over the course of so many generations. The *Ui Friachrach*, descendants of the older brother of Niall and reported ancestor of James Riveagh D'Arcy, would logically be one such line.)

Coincidentally and concurrently with the Trinity College study, David Wilson, the project administrator for the Wilson Surname Project³⁴, began to notice certain similar patterns of STR haplotypes in data from various surname projects (including his own), a published population genetics study³⁵ and in online public databases at www.yhrd.org and www.ysearch.org. Specifically he noticed a cluster of haplotypes for which the values for markers DYS #'s 390/391/392 were 25/11/14 respectively. By querying these databases for these marker values, he discovered what he terms a “hotspot” or concentration of this haplotype in Ireland. By tediously querying the databases and recording each marker frequency for each entry, Wilson determined modal (most common) values of other markers associated with this 25/11/14 pattern. Wilson's modal haplotype for this cluster matches the IMH on all markers that he was able to search in common with the Trinity College study. In addition, Wilson derived modal values for the remainder or the markers in the extended haplotypes he examined from databases. Line 3 in Table 1 below shows the values that Wilson determined for this extended haplotype which is, not surprisingly, found to be concentrated in northwest Ireland.³⁶ Wilson has called this extended haplotype the North West (NW) Irish Variety.³⁷ Note that this haplotype is a close variant of the Western Atlantic Modal Haplotype with which it obviously shares a common ancestor. Marker values that distinguish the IMH and Wilson's Northwest Irish Haplotype from the AMH are highlighted in green in Table 1.

**Some Dorsey/Darsey /D'Arcy/Dorcey/Dossey DNA Project Results
Compared to some Haplotypes found concentrated in Scotland and Ireland**

	DYS Marker Numbers																								
	3 9 3	3 9 0	1 9	3 9 1	3 8 5 a	3 8 5 b	4 2 6	3 8 8	4 3 9	3 4 9 i	3 3 9 2	3 8 9 ii	4 5 8	4 5 9 a	4 5 9 b	4 5 5	4 4 7	4 4 3 7	4 4 4 8	4 4 4 9	4 6 4 a	4 6 4 b	4 6 4 c	4 6 4 d	
1) Western Atlantic Modal Haplotype ³⁸	13	24	14	11	11	14	12	12	12	13	13	29	17	9	10	11	11	25	15	19	29	15	15	17	17
2) Irish Modal Haplotype ³⁹ <i>Ui Neill Dynasty??</i>	13	25	14	11	--	--	--	12	12	13	14	29	--	--	--	--	--	15	--	--	--	--	--	--	
3) Wilson's Northwest Irish Haplotype ^{40,41}	13	25	14	11	11	13	12	12	12	13	14	29	17	9	10	11	11	25	15	18	30	15	16	16	17
4) Irish Lineage I Dorsey DNA Project	13	25	14	11	11	13	12	12	12	13	14	29	17	9	10	11	11	25	15	18	30	15	16	16	17
5) Edward Darcy-Dorsey Ancestral Haplotype	13	25	14	11	11	12	12	12	12	14	14	30	17	9	10	11	11	25	15	18	?	15	16	16	17
5) Proposed Colla Haplotype ⁴²	13	24	14	10	11	14	12	12	12	13	13	30	18	9	10	11	11	25	15	19	30	15	15	17	17
6) James D'Arcy (Kiltullagh)	13	24	14	10	11	14	12	12	12	13	13	30	18	9	9	11	11	25	15	19	28	15	16	17	17

Table 1

Line 1) Values for the father of all these haplotypes, the Western Atlantic Modal Haplotype (also found in high concentration in Ireland). Values in blue font in this line represent the markers making up Wilson's original Atlantic Modal Haplotype.

Line 2) The Y chromosome marker values of the proposed IMH or *Ui Niall* (only marker values used by Family Tree DNA are listed.)

Line 3) Wilson's 25 markers extended Northwest Irish Haplotype. Includes all of Family Tree DNA's 25 marker set. Note that Wilson's Northwest Irish Haplotype coincides with the IMH on all markers in common (in bold font). Marker differences between the two Irish Haplotypes and the AMH are highlighted in green.

Line 4) The modal haplotype for the Irish members of Lineage I in the Dorsey DNA Project. Note exact match to the IMH and to Wilson's NW Irish Haplotype.

Line 5) Edward Darcy-Dorsey Haplotype—a two step difference (highlighted in purple) from Wilson's NW Irish Variety.

Line 5) The Colla Haplotype. Differences from the WAMH are highlighted in blue.

Line 6) The haplotype of the Dorsey DNA Project descendant of the D'Arcys of Kiltullagh. Note the similarity to the *Colla* signature (marker differences are highlighted in yellow).

Sources: see endnotes

Date: 2000-2006

Another group of researchers (more genealogists than geneticists) propose they have identified a *Colla* Haplotype—primarily from DNA tests that are a part of the McDonald DNA Project which has historically considered itself as a branch of Clan Colla.⁴³ Clan Colla, in turn, is placed by Irish historians as a tribe of the *Ui Maine*. This proposed haplotype is still under some debate but is, nevertheless, interesting in light of MacLysaght's mention of an O'Dorchaidhe sept in the east of Galway that was a branch of the *Ui Maine*

Discussion

Based on O'Hart's pedigree linking the Galway D'Arcy's to Friachra and Burke's pedigree linking the Darcy's of Kiltullagh to the Galway D'Arcys, we would expect that the DNA of the D'Arcys of Kiltullagh will match the *Ui Niall* or Irish Modal Haplotype (as descendants of Friachra, brother to Niall of the Nine Hostages). So far, we have only one (very well documented) representative of the D'Arcys of Kiltullagh in the Dorsey DNA Project. As stated above, he does NOT match the Anglo-Norman D'Arcys. More surprisingly, he does not match the *Ui Niall* or Irish Modal Haplotype either. Instead our Kiltullagh D'Arcy haplotype is more similar to the *Colla* signature which may well be consistent with a *Ui Maine* lineage. Could the D'Arcys of Galway have been descendants of that small group in East Galway who are said by MacLysaght to be a branch of the *Ui Maine*? Clearly such a conclusion awaits testing of more documented D'Arcys of the Kiltullagh line and more work to define a signature for the *Ui Maine*. It is presented here only for purposes of discussion and, hopefully, to encourage more participants

from this interesting line of so many prominent Irish D'Arcys. Are they *Ui Maine* or *Ui Fiachra (Ui Niall)* or some other lineage whose haplotype is yet to be linked with a historical line?

The Dorsey Project does have a group of participants, some with identified roots in Clare and Limerick (near Tipperary), who match the *Ui Niall* (IMH) signature (if indeed that is what it is). Furthermore, this group not only matches the ten markers in common with the IMH but also perfectly matches Wilson's extended version of this haplotype on all 25 markers they have tested (Line 3, Table 1). It is tempting to imagine that these Dorseys and Darcys may find clues in this match that will help locate their male line to more specific geographical and even clan origins.

At this point our information about our Irish participants' origins does not extend back as far in time as reported surname origins. The project does not yet have any members with proven roots in Mayo or in Leitrim, the counties reported by early historians as sites of O'Dorhcaidhe origins. To test the hypothesis that these two groups from Mayo and Leitrim are *Ui Fiachra* and that the Galway D'Arcys may be of the *Ui Maine*, the project must recruit additional participants—specifically Darcys from around Patry in Mayo and Oughteragh in Leitrim, as well as additional representatives of the Galway D'Arcys to benchmark a DNA signature from each of these groups.

Endnotes

¹ Caroline Kemper Bulkley, "Identity of Edward Dorsey I, A New Approach to an Old Problem", *Maryland Genealogies*, Consolidation of Articles from the *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 2 volumes, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1980) 1: 377–405 originally published in *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 1938.

² Nellie Owings Chaney, "Edward Dorsey – A Review and Question", *Maryland Genealogical Society Bulletin* 38, No. 2 (Spring 1997): 210-214.

³ Harry Wright Newman, *To Maryland from Overseas*, (Annapolis: H.W. Newman, 1982).

⁴ Lois Collette Dorsey Bennington, *Grandparents are Great, The History and Genealogy of the Family, Vol I*, (? : Privately printed, 1982) 2.

⁵ Charles Frances Stein, *A History of Calvert County Maryland, Bicentennial Revised Edition*, (Baltimore: C.F. Stein, 1960), 467-468.

⁶ Nancy Custer, "Dorsey/D'Arcy/Darsey/Dorcey/Dossey DNA Project Results", 2004, Online at http://www.contexto.info/DorseyDNA/Dorsey_DNA_Project_Report.pdf

⁷ Registered Pedigree G.O.168 Vol.14, Genealogical Office, Dublin, Ireland

⁸ Charles Moseley, *Burke's Peerage & Baronetage*, 1: 760-761.

⁹ Sir Bernard Burke, *Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Ireland*, 4th Ed., L. G. Pine editor, (London: Burke's Peerage, Ltd., 1958.) 211.

¹⁰ Watson, G. W., *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom, Extant, Extinct, or Dormant*, Cokayne, Geroge Edward, editor New Edition, Revised and Much Enlarged, Edited by the Hon. Vicary Gibbs, with the assistance of H. Arthur Doubleday. Volume IV (London: The St. Catherine Press, 1916) 51.

¹¹ Patrick Guinness, "Re: Dorsey DNA Survey", email to Nancy Custer, July 12, 2003.

¹² Family Tree DNA Customer Database, September, 2004, This information has been confirmed through the Family Tree DNA database that performs matches among individuals that they have tested. Contact information: Family Tree DNA - Genealogy by Genetics, Ltd., World Headquarters, 1919 North Loop West, Suite 110 Houston, Texas 77008, USA , Phone: (713) 868-1438. info@FamilyTreeDNA.com

¹³ Minute Book A, f. 293, Lower Norfolk Co., Portsmouth, VA.

¹⁴ Maxwell J Dorsey, Jean Muir Dorsey, and Nannie Ball Nimmo, *The Dorsey Family : descendants of Edward Darcy-Dorsey of Virginia and Maryland for five generations and allied families* (Urbana, Ill.?: unknown, c1947) , 280 pgs. The authors offer a plethora of citations from colonial Virginia and Maryland records of Edward Darcy-Dorsey and the first five generations of his descendants.

¹⁵ Nancy Custer, "Dorsey/D'Arcy/Darsey/Dorcey/Dossey DNA Project Results"

¹⁶ Edward MacLysaght, *Irish Families Their Names, Arms and Origins*, (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, & Co. Ltd, 1957) 111.

¹⁷ The term tribes was an expression first invented by Cromwell's forces as a derogatory term for the natives of the town, for their friendship and attachment to each other during the time of troubles and persecution by the Cromwellians. Afterward, those natives adopted the term for themselves as an honorable mark of distinction between themselves and their oppressors.

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- ¹⁸ Ancestry.com. *Burke's Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland* [database online] Provo, UT: Ancestry.com, 2002. Original data: Burke, Bernard. *A genealogical and heraldic history of the landed gentry; or, Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland enjoying territorial possessions or high official rank: but uninvested with heritable honours*. London: Colburn, 1837-38
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- ²³ For a short biography of Niall see <http://www.irishclans.com/articles/famirish/niall9hostages.html>.
- ²⁴ While Burkes names this first Galway D'Arcy as Walter, O'Hart calls him Bhaiter with a notation that Bhaiter is the Irish word for water. Is the name Walter a corruption of Water?
- ²⁵ Reported by Dennis Walsh, "Dynasties & Territories Connacht Series", <http://www.rootsweb.com/~irlkik/ihm/connacht.htm> accessed January 20, 2006.
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- ²⁸ For a searchable database of some Surname DNA Projects, see <http://www.dnalist.net>
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- ³⁶ <http://home.earthlink.net/~wilsondna/DYS392=14%20Summary.htm>
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