



Tracing Your...

Co. Monaghan Ancestors

By James G. Ryan

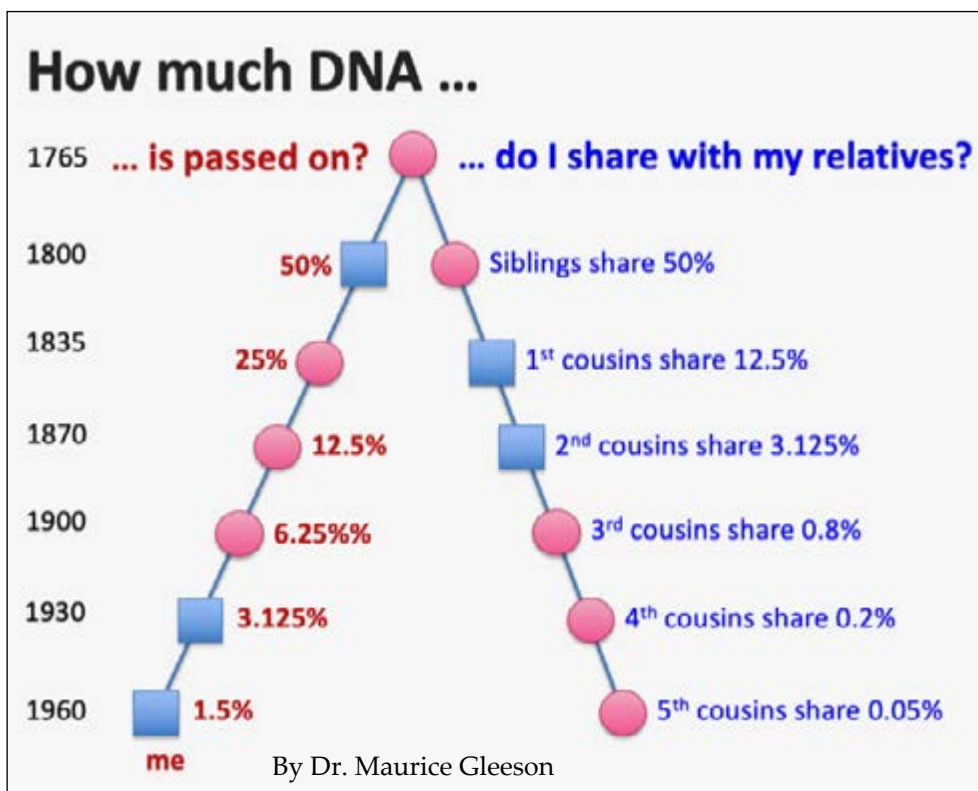
County Monaghan was historically the Gaelic Kingdom of Oriel, also known as McMahan's country after the local chieftains. The McMahons and their allies, the McKennas and O'Connollys maintained effective domination of Oriel even after the arrival of the Normans in the 12th century. The county boundaries were set down only in the 16th century. Unlike many other Ulster counties, Monaghan was not 'planted' after 1603. However, in 1641 the McMahons joined the failed rebellion of the Catholic Confederacy and some English and Scottish families were planted on confiscated land at this time. The 1663 Hearth Money rolls show that the most common names in the county were McMahan, McKenna, O'Duffy, O'Connolly, McCabe, McWard, McArdle, McIlmartin, O'Byrne and O'Callan. The major settler families were Scottish farmers from Strathclyde including the families of McAndrew, Mackay, Sinclair, Stewart, Buchanan, McKenzie and Davidson. During the 18th century there was significant repression of Catholics, and to a lesser extent Presbyterians, through a series of 'Penal Laws'. As a result, many Scottish settlers (commonly known as Scots-Irish) who were predominantly Presbyterian, left during the 1700s to settle in America.

The county was very badly affected by the Great Famine of 1845-47: in 1841 the population was 200,000 but by 1851 it had fallen by one-third to 142,000 through death and emigration. In 1922 the county became part of the Irish Free State, now the Republic of Ireland, and currently has a population of 61,000. The main towns are Monaghan town (7,600), Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Clones and Ballybay. It is mainly an agricultural county but has several significant industries.

Monaghan has a diverse set of genealogical records, including all of the major national records: *Civil records of birth, death and marriage* start in 1864 and most of these are now free on-line at www.irishgenealogy.ie. *Griffith's Valuation* (a major survey of land occupiers) was conducted from 1858-60 and is available on many websites; and the 1901 and 1911 *Census returns* are available on-line at www.nationalarchives.ie. A nuance to this search is described at <https://ancestornetwork.ie/census-returns-in-irishgaelic/>.

If you are beginning search and do not know where in Monaghan your family was located, these are useful starting points. *Griffith's Valuation*, for instance, may show where your family is located within the county (e.g. a civil parish). An easy way to do this search is through the excellent site <https://johngrenham.com/>. If you locate a possible ancestor, a search of church or civil records from that area may provide verification. The 1901 census, although compiled long after the major period of emigration, may also indicate local prevalence of a

When you first get your results, you will find a long list of DNA matches, often running into the thousands. But how do you know which side of the family any particular match belongs to? This is one of the most frequent questions I get from clients, and is quickly followed by: how do I separate my DNA matches into those that are related to me via my father's side of the family and those that are from my mother's side?



Separating Your DNA Matches Into Mom's Side & Dad's Side

Here are some tips for separating your matches into two groups - paternal matches on the one hand and maternal matches on the other.

Test A Relative

The easiest way to find out which of your matches are on your mother's side of the family (for example) is to test your mother. Any of your matches who match both you and your mother have got to be on your mother's side of the family. And as a corollary, anyone who does not match you and your mother, has to be on your father's side of the family. So, testing one parent allows you to split your matches into maternal and paternal. There are caveats - we will discuss them below.

If you don't have a parent to test, then test the closest living relative on the side of the family in question. My mother passed away before the advent of DNA testing, so I tested her sister (my maternal aunt) as the nearest closest maternal relative. Our shared matches are on my mother's side of the family.

You could also test 1st cousins or 2nd cousins as this will also help the separating process. Or even better, you may be lucky enough to find them already sitting amongst your list of matches. But be aware that this will only identify some of the relatives on that side of the family rather than all of them. The reason for this is that you

share progressively less DNA the more distant the relation. For example, we all share 50% of our DNA with each of our parents, and approximately 25% with an aunt or uncle, 12.5% with a maternal 1st cousin and so on. (See above image).

So, of the 50% of your DNA that comes from your mother, you would only share 12.5% with your maternal 1st cousin ... in other words, 37.5% of your maternal DNA would be "missing" in your cousin. Consequently, there may be some maternal relatives that show up in your list of matches but not in your cousin's list, and these would not be identified as Shared Matches and therefore would not be allocated to your maternal side. The comparison does not detect them.

So, we need to be careful when we are assessing the matches we share with our more distant relatives. In the example above, the Shared Matches with your 1st cousin can be assigned to the maternal side of the family but it does not follow that all the rest (the non-Shared Matches) belong to the other side (i.e. your paternal side) ... it could be that some maternal matches were not identified by the comparison with your 1st cousin and thus the non-Shared matches could be mainly paternal matches with a few (more distant?) maternal matches thrown in.

Nevertheless, testing a 1st cousin will help you detect the majority of the close matches on that particular side of the family and it is the close matches that we are primarily interested in.

There is an important caveat to this general rule. Namely, if there is any

endogamy or cousin intermarriage within your family (not uncommon in certain parts of Ireland) then you may have DNA matches that are related to you via both sides of your family. This can create a very confusing picture and it may not be possible to confidently separate paternal from maternal matches.

Look For Shared Matches

Let's say you have identified definite maternal matches using the method above. The next step is to find other maternal matches that you share in common with these definite maternal matches.

All of the main DNA websites allow you to assess each of your matches in turn to identify which of your other matches you share with them i.e. the same 'third party' shows up in your list of DNA matches and in their list of DNA matches. Ancestry and MyHeritage call these Shared Matches, 23andMe calls them Relatives in Common, and FamilyTreeDNA calls them In Common With matches. They are all the same thing. A and B have C in their respective list of matches. C is a "Shared Match" between A and B.

As an added bonus, 23andMe and MyHeritage tell you how much DNA is shared between your match (B) and your Shared Match (C) - this is really useful information for placing the Shared Match in the family tree you are conceptualizing for you (A) and your other two matches (B and C).

If you repeat this process for the rest of your definite maternal matches, you can

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