

Researchers find genetic signature of ancient MacDougall bloodline

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Genetic markers for the Clan MacDougall have been discovered by Genealogy researchers at the University of Strathclyde.

The clan line they have discovered descends from Dougall, King of the Isle of Man and founder of the ancient Scottish Kingdom of the Isles and Lorn. Dougall (c1140-c1207) was the eldest son of Somerled, the ancient warrior sea-king and progenitor of the MacDonald, MacAllister, and MacDougall clans.

Somerled expelled his Scoto-Norse rivals from Argyll, Kintyre and the Isles but was himself a Norseman paternally, having a genetic signature that is more common in Scandinavia than in Scotland.

The first genetic signature for Somerled was discovered and published in 2005 by researchers at the University of Oxford, and since then, the US-based Clan Donald DNA Project has enabled thousands of present-day MacDonalds around the world to trace their ancestry back to their Scottish roots.

Alasdair Macdonald, lead researcher for the MacDougall DNA Research Project and Teaching Fellow in Genealogy at Strathclyde's Center for Lifelong Learning, described the finding of the MacDougall DNA markers as truly significant and said that it had been made possible as a result of recent progress in commercial DNA tests.

He said: "We all learned in high school biology that only boys have a Y-chromosome that creates maleness. The direct paternal ancestors of a man pass down their Y chromosome from generation to generation and the code locked within their DNA is unique. With today's advanced DNA testing techniques, we are able to detect many more mutations in the DNA sequences of MacDougall men who are alive today. This has helped us identify ancient DNA mutations that are similar to but, importantly, different from those carried by men descended from Somerled's grandson, who was called Donald and was the progenitor of the MacDonald clan."

One participant in the study, Eddie Sweeney, was adopted and discovered the identity of his birth mother after receiving a copy of his original birth certificate; however, finding his biological father's identity proved more challenging. He worked with the nuns who managed his adoption and eventually found information that confirmed his father to have been a McDougall man.

In parallel, Mr Sweeney took a Y-DNA test and found that that his genetic marker matched that of Somerled, and that he matched many men with distant MacDonald ancestors. However, further analysis determined that he and another match, a MacDougall man, had a common DNA marker which ultimately proved to be the marker for the ancestral MacDougall line. This discovery inspired the researchers to test more MacDougall men and now more than a dozen men who are of the ancestral MacDougall bloodline have been discovered.

At one time, the MacDougalls were one of the most powerful and influential families in Western Scotland. However, their fate was to turn in the early 1300s when the fourth clan chief, Alexander MacDougall, allied the MacDougalls with John Bailliol, in his contest with Robert the Bruce, for the prize of the Scottish Crown. Much of this story was told in recent Bruce movies such as Outlaw King and The Return of the King.

Several generations later, under the clan leadership of Ewan Gallda MacDougall, much of the MacDougall lands and possessions, including Dunollie Castle near Oban, were restored to the clan. However, over the next few centuries this disruption caused a global dispersal of many MacDougall clansmen and a significant loss of power for the Clan.

More information: Men named MacDougall, or with names derived from MacDougall, who would like to participate in the study can go [online](#) to find more details about the project and an application form for a free test.

Provided by University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

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