

# Conner

## A Scottish Case Study

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[www.scottishorigenes.com](http://www.scottishorigenes.com)



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyrone Bowes'.

**Dr Tyrone Bowes**  
**4<sup>th</sup> August 2012**

### Introduction

A commercial 37 marker Y chromosome DNA test will potentially provide one with the names of many hundreds of individuals with whom one shares a common male ancestor, but what often perplexes people is how one can match many individuals with different surnames? The answer is quite simple. Roughly 1,000 years ago one's direct medieval male ancestor, the first for example to call himself 'Conner' was living in close proximity to others with whom he was related but who assumed other surnames like Harvey, Cooper, Cook, and Robertson. Given that 1,000 years have passed since surnames were adopted, there will be many descendants of these individuals some of whom today will undergo commercial ancestral DNA testing. Hence the surnames of one's medieval ancestor's neighbours will be reflected in today's DNA test results.

Early 19<sup>th</sup> century census data showed that Scottish surnames could still be found concentrated in the County from which they originated. In this manner one can examine surname distribution maps and pinpoint a '**Genetic Homeland.**' The Genetic Homeland is the small area where one's ancestors lived for hundreds if not thousands of years. It is the area where one's ancestors left their mark in the placenames of that area and in the DNA of its current inhabitants. Since modern science can pinpoint a Genetic Homeland it can also be used to confirm it by DNA testing individuals from the identified location. The Case Study below will detail how I made sense of Mr Conner's DNA test results and will provide a checklist on how to proceed in identifying your own Genetic Homeland.

### Notes of caution!

1. In Ireland each of the estimated 1,500 distinct Clans had a single founding ancestor, that's an estimated 1,500 Adam's from whom anyone with Irish ancestry can trace direct descent. But science has demonstrated that only 50% of individuals with a particular Irish surname will be related to the surnames founding ancestor, the other 50% of people will have an association that has arisen as a result of what are called 'non-paternal events' usually a result of adoptions or infidelity. Since Scotland adopted a similar Clan based society these scientific findings can be applied to Scotland and people with Scottish ancestry.
2. Often people are looking for their DNA results to trace back to a specific area. One must remember that the results reflect one's ancestor's neighbours from around 1,000 years ago. As a result, if your recent Scottish ancestor was originally an Anglo-Saxon settler, Viking raider, or 12<sup>th</sup> Century Norman your DNA results will reflect earlier English, Welsh and possibly Scandinavian origin. One must approach this process with an open mind!

## ‘Conner’ Case Study

### Introduction

To identify a Genetic Homeland one must first find the surnames that continually appear as genetic matches. These reoccurring surnames are less likely to be a result of non-paternal events (adoptions/infidelity) and reflect the surname of a medieval ancestors neighbour. Results for test subject ‘Conner’ are shown in **Table 1**.

**SURNAMES THAT REOCCUR AS A GENETIC MATCH TO TEST SUBJECT CONNER FROM 37 MARKER Y-CHROMOSOME DNA TESTING**

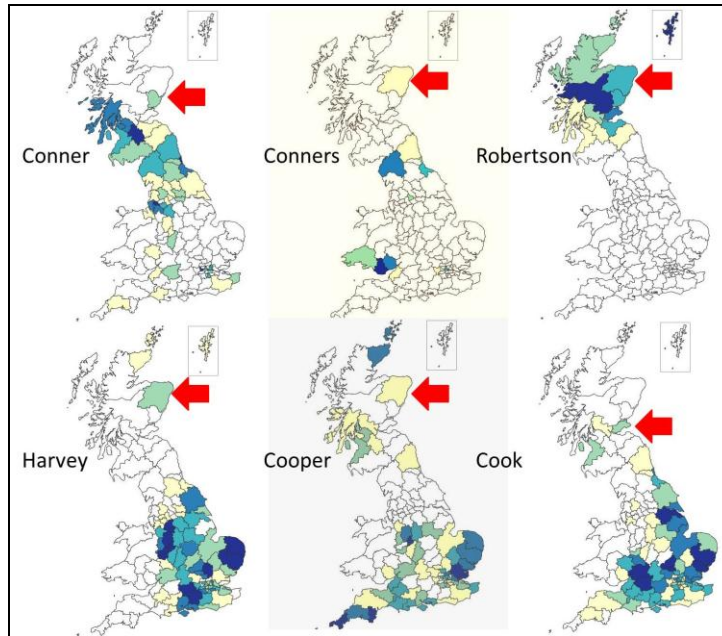
Test Subject	Markers			
	37	25	12	-1
	-3	-2	exact	-1
<b>Conner</b>	<b>Conner (x2)</b>	King (x2)? <b>Cooper (x3)</b> <b>Harvey (3)</b> <b>Robertson (x5)</b> Nelson (x2) McCauley/McAuley (x2) Smith (x2) <b>Cook (x3)</b>	Whan/McWhannell (x2) <b>Alexander (x8)</b> MacPherson (2) <b>Harvell/Harvill/Harwell (x10)</b> Chisholm (x2) <b>Davis (x4)</b> <b>Campbell (x4)</b> <b>Thompson(x4)</b> Kester/Kesterson (x3) Miller (x2) Dundas(s) (x2) MacDevitt (x2)	<b>McCowan (x9)</b> <b>McDoanid/Donald (x8)</b> Elder (x2) Kesterson (x2) <b>MacRae (x5)</b> Ross (3) Swaney/Sweeney (x2) Thompson (x2) <b>Buchanan (x6)</b> Gray (x2) Valentine (x2) Mitchell (x2) McCune..McCowan? (x3) Frashure/Frazier (x3) Anderson (x2) Clements (x2) Elder (x3) Forbes (x3) Templeton (x2) <b>McLain/McLean (x4)</b> Phillips (x2) McMunn/Munn/Minn (x3) Moore (x2) <b>Matheson (x5)</b> Foss (x2) <b>Davidson (x2)</b> Bradbury (x2) Clark (x2) Tate (x2) Stewart (x2)

**Table 1:** Reoccurring surname matches for test subject Conner. Surnames appear at the point at which they first occur as a genetic match e.g. the first match to another individual called Conner occurs at 34/37 markers although not all Conner’s may match at that level. Figures in brackets represent the number of individuals with a particular surname who occur as a genetic match. Coloured font denotes the ethnicity associated with each surname; **Scottish** and **Irish**. Black font indicates surnames with multiple ethnic origins. Surnames in bold are notable in that they occur greater than 3 times at the 37 and 25 marker level, or because they occur frequently at the 12 marker level.

The test subject Mr Conner matches other ‘Conner’s’ which demonstrates that after an estimated 1000 years he has retained the surname of his founding Ancestor (the Conner ‘Adam’ so to speak). However the surname Conner is usually considered as an Irish surname, the most common spelling of which is O’Connor. Yet Conner is the only reoccurring surname with any potential link with Ireland. Matters are complicated by the fact the surnames Cooper, Harvey, and Cook which reoccur as matches at the 25 marker level are associated with English ancestry, see **Figure 1**. However there is a big clue towards ethnicity with the reoccurring matches to Robertson which is associated exclusively with Scotland, see **Figure 1**.

## 'Conner' Case Study

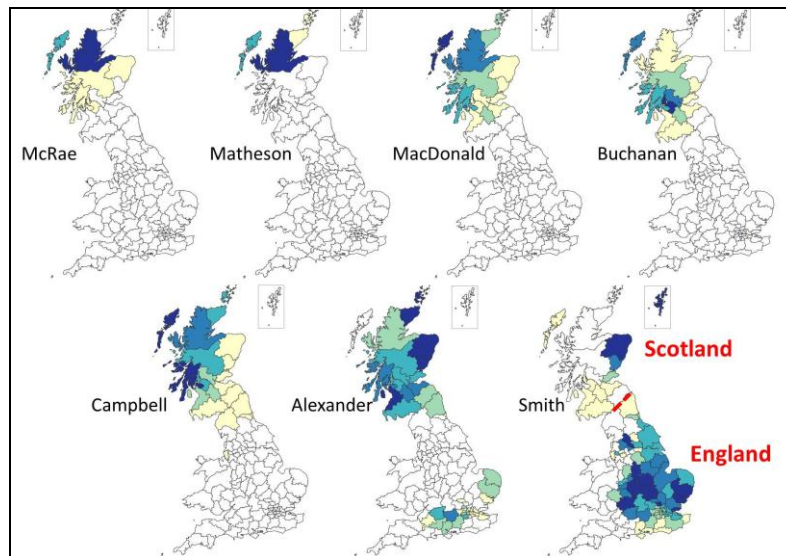
### WHERE DO THE SURNAMES THAT OCCUR AS THE CLOSEST GENETIC MATCHES ORIGINATE?



**Figure 1:** 1881 Surname distribution mapping of the reoccurring surnames as revealed by Mr Conner's ancestral DNA test. In 1881 Conner and Conners is found mainly in the industrial areas of the UK and is associated with Irish immigrants. Only the surname Robertson is associated with a single geographical location in Scotland. However closer inspection reveals that all of these surnames have an association with the Northeast of Scotland (red arrows).

To explore ethnicity further one can look at the reoccurring surnames at the 12 marker level which reveals an ancestral link that precedes the appearance of surnames. At the 12 marker level Mr Conner's reoccurring matches are to notable Scottish surnames found almost exclusively in Scotland, see **Figure 2**. The exception is the reoccurring matches to Smith, although the highest concentration of Smith's in the UK occurs in Aberdeenshire ([Click here for the origin of Scottish Smith's](#)). This indicates not only a long ancestral link to Scotland for Mr Conner's ancestors but also the possible presence of a Scottish 'Conner Clan,' a finding that to my knowledge has never previously been reported. This is not inconceivable as 'Conor' is a common Scottish personal name (think Connor MacLeod played by Christopher Lambert in the film Highlander) and many surnames in Scotland derive from personal names.

## 'Conner' Case Study



**Figure 2:** 1881 Surname distribution mapping of Mr Conner's distant Genetic Matches confirms the Scottish ancestral link. Surnames that reoccur greater than 5 times at the 12 marker DNA level are almost exclusively associated with Scotland. The only exception is Smith which in Scotland has been used extensively to anglicise many Scottish surnames including McCowan, Cowen, Gowen, Gow, and possibly McCune ([Click here for the origin of Scottish Smith's](#)).

### SCOTTISH CONNER?

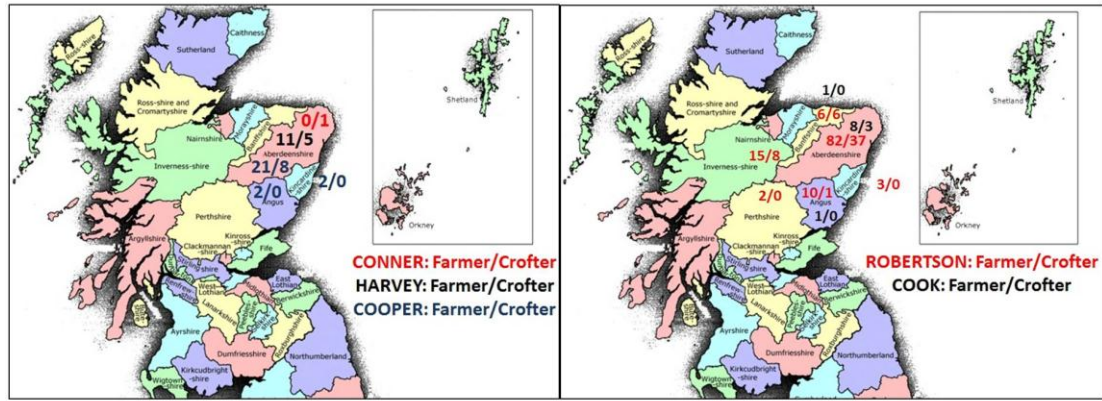
The method of using reoccurring surname matches as revealed by commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing to pinpoint a Genetic Homeland works by exploiting the link between the Y chromosome, surname, and land which are typically passed from father to son. In the absence of a link to the land the process will fail. Hence one must examine whether the Conner's had a link to the land. The earlier in time that a link can be established the better as over time (particularly in the UK due to the industrial revolution) the link with the land is lost.

An initial search for Conner farmers in 1841 did not reveal any farmers in the UK. However, in Scotland some farmers use the term 'crofter' to describe their occupation. Crofting is a form of land tenure and small-scale food production unique to the Scottish Highlands and Islands. A search for 'crofter's' with the surname Conner revealed a single 70 year old male and a small population of people with the surname Conner in Aberdeenshire. This 70 year old individual is unlikely to be of Irish 'O'Connor' origin as mass Irish migration to Scotland did not occur until the Irish Famine which began later in 1845.

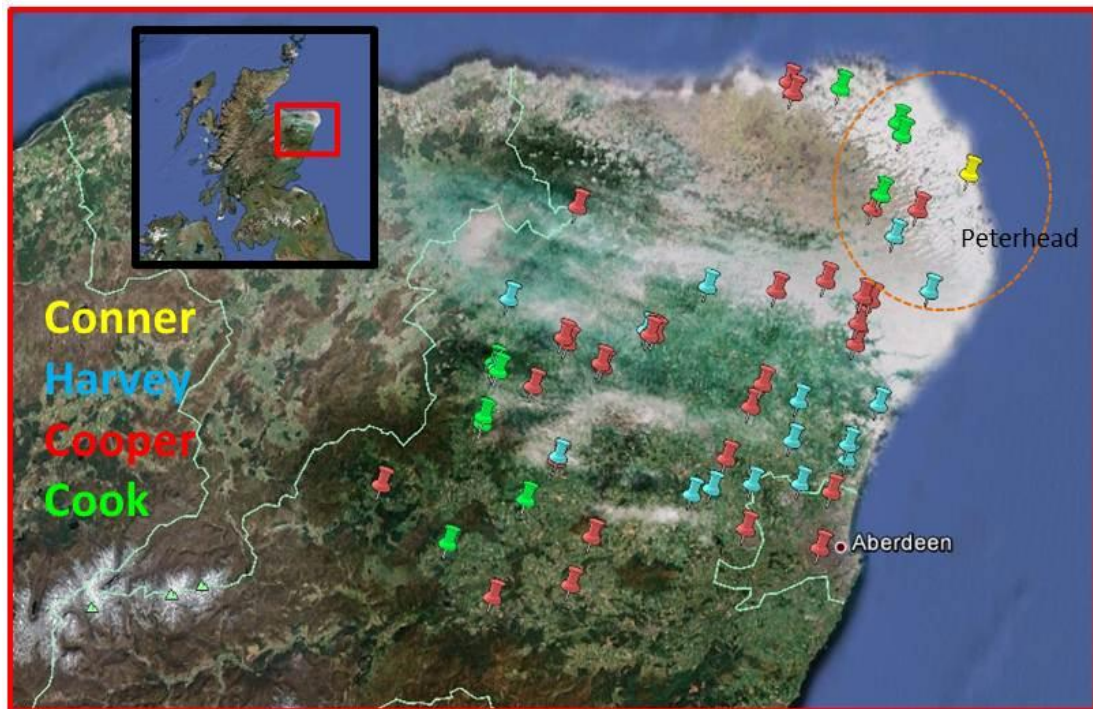
Similarly within Scotland the Robertson, Harvey, Cooper, and Cook farming (or crofting) community is found almost exclusively within Aberdeenshire in the Northeast, see **Figure 3**. A closer inspection of Aberdeenshire reveals that the Conner, Harvey, Cook, and Cooper farmers and crofters are particularly concentrated along the coast north of the city of Aberdeen, see **Figure 4**. It is within this area that the Scottish Conner 'Adam,' the first Scot as it were to use the Conner surname lived approximately 1000 years ago (when surnames became common) and it is there that Mr Conner's Genetic Homeland will be found.



## 'Conner' Case Study



**Figure 3:** The Scottish Conner, Harvey, Cooper, Robertson, and Cook Farming community in 1841. These maps show the number of Farmers and Crofter with the Conner, Harvey, Cooper, Robertson, and Cook surname in Aberdeenshire and surrounding Counties in 1841. These farming communities are found almost exclusively within Aberdeenshire.



**Figure 4:** The Scottish 1841 Conner, Harvey, Cooper, and Cook farming/crofter community in Aberdeenshire. Each pin represents an individual farmer or crofter in 1841. These farming communities are concentrated particularly along the coast north of Aberdeen and all 4 surnames overlap in the area around Peterhead (orange broken circle).

### The Scottish 'Conner' Genetic Homeland

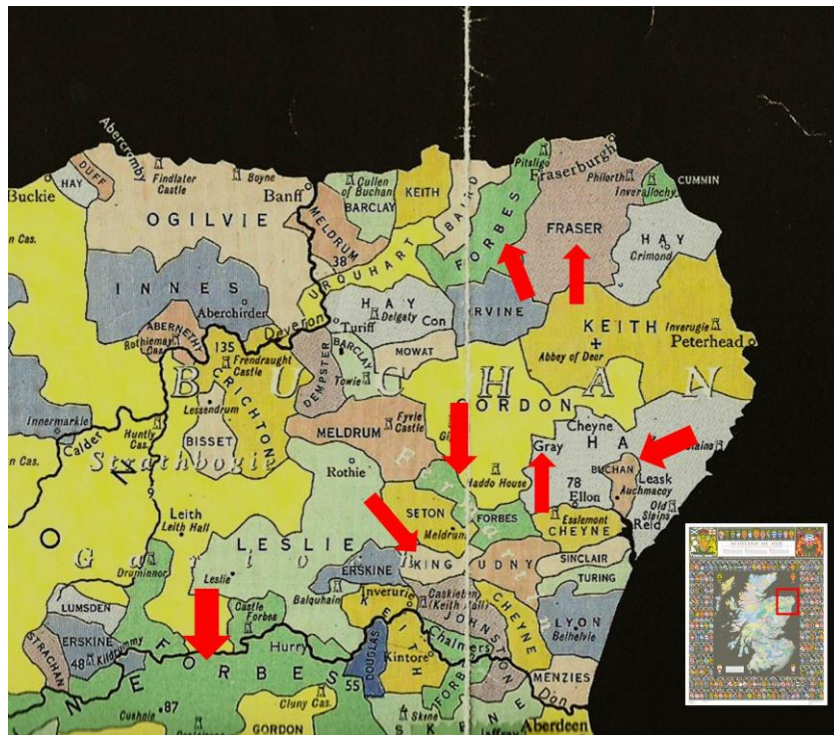
The Clan system in Scotland has been extensively recorded and documented and is beautifully illustrated in Bartholomew's Clan names map. This map features the lands, or the areas of influence of the most prominent Clans in Scotland from around 500 years ago. Almost everyone with Scottish ancestry will share ancestry with some of these prominent Clans and families.

## 'Conner' Case Study

When one examines the area between the Rivers Don and Deveron in northern Aberdeenshire where the Conner, Harvey, Cook, and Cooper farming communities overlap one sees surnames on this Clan map that also reoccur as a genetic matches to Mr Conner (see Table 1) including Forbes, Fraser, Gray, King, and Buchan (which may have changed to Buchanan over time), see **Figure 5**. This cluster of surnames does not occur in any other area and is further evidence for Mr Conner's Ancestor's long association with this area around Peterhead.

Evidence for one's ancestor's long association with an area can also be found in its placenames. An examination of the area between Kirktown, Peterhead, and Maud (where the Conner's are found in 1841) did not reveal any placenames associated with the Conner surname. However in the village of Longside in the centre of this area there is a reference to Mr Conner's genetic relatives the Cooper's and Smith's in 'Cooper's Brae' and 'Smithy's lane.'

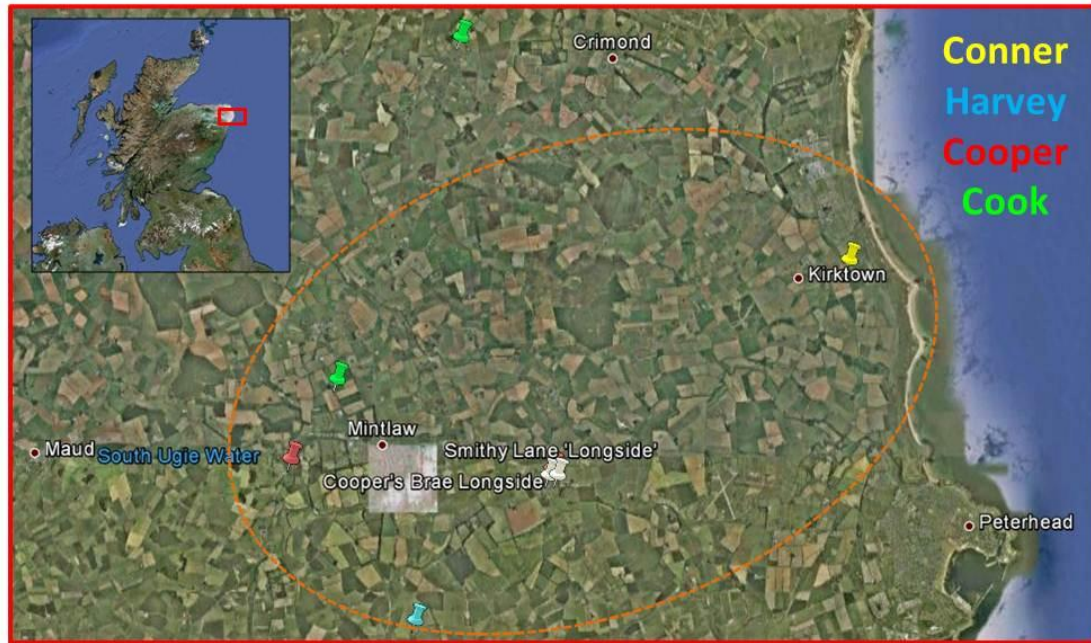
The area between Kirktown, Peterhead and Maud is Mr Conner's Genetic Homeland. It is here that the Scottish Conner 'Adam' lived when he first picked his surname surrounded by relatives who chose other surnames like Harvey, Cook, and Cooper. It is here that his ancestors lived for possibly 1000's of years, leaving their mark in the placenames and DNA of the current inhabitants, and it is where his distant ancestors still live even today.



**Figure 5:** 15<sup>th</sup> Century Clan map of Aberdeenshire in Scotland. There is no mention of Conner, Harvey, Cook, or Cooper in this beautifully illustrated Clan map. The Robertson's who were a powerful Clan at the time were situated in the Highlands southwest of Aberdeen (not shown). However between the Don and Deveron river and around Peterhead in particular, one finds numerous references to Clans (red arrows) that reoccur as surname matches at the 12 marker level in Table 1, including Fraser, Forbes, King, Gray and possibly Buchanan (Buchan).



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**Figure 6** The Scottish 'Conner' Genetic Homeland. In 1841 the Scottish Conner's were found between Kirktown, Peterhead and Maud (orange broken arrow). In the centre of this area in the town of Longside one finds placenames associated with Mr Conner's genetic matches including 'Coopers Brae'(Brae is an upland area) and 'Smithy's Lane.'

### How to confirm the Conner Genetic Homeland

Confirmation of the Genetic Homeland would usually require the DNA testing of farmers with the Conner surname currently living in the area between Peterhead, Kirktown, and Maud. However a Conner farming community may not exist today in this area given the time that has passed. It may be worthwhile recruiting Conner's from the surrounding towns and villages.

**HAVE YOU HAD A Y-DNA TEST? THEN ORDER YOUR OWN CASE STUDY BY CONTACTING ME DIRECTLY [tyronebowes@gmail.com](mailto:tyronebowes@gmail.com)**

**The consultation for your own Case Study is free. At present there is an 80% success rate. If in the unlikely event that I cannot pinpoint your Genetic Homeland I will explain why and I will not charge you.**

### CHECK LIST FOR DISCOVERING YOUR OWN GENETIC HOMELAND

1. First you must order a Y-DNA37 test from Family Tree DNA. To order follow the 'are you a warrior' link from the [Scottish Origenes homepage](#).
2. PublicProfiler World names database.
3. Census data (earlier the better).
4. Google Earth.
5. Scotland of Old, Clan Names Map.