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## **Case Study**

# **Pinpointing the Flaherty Irish Paternal Ancestral Genetic Homelands**

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### INTRODUCTION

A simple painless commercial ancestral 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 lots of individuals with many 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 'Flaherty' was living in close proximity to others with whom he was related but who inherited other surnames like O'Brien, Feeney and McDonagh. Given that 1,000 years have passed since paternally inherited surnames were first adopted, there will be many descendants of those individuals some of whom will today undergo commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing. Hence the surnames of one's medieval ancestor's neighbours will be revealed in today's Y-DNA test results.

Surnames in Ireland can still be found concentrated in the areas where they first appeared, or in the area where ones ancestors first settled. One can therefore use census data to determine the origin of the surnames that appear in one's Y-DNA results, identifying an area common to all, and reveal one's '**Paternal Ancestral Genetic Homeland.**' The paternal ancestral genetic homeland is the small area (usually within a 5 mile radius) where one's ancestors lived for hundreds if not thousands of years. It is the area where one's ancestor first inherited his surname, surrounded by relatives who inherited others. It is the area where ones ancestors left their mark in its placenames, its history, and in the DNA of its current inhabitants. Since modern science can pinpoint a paternal ancestral genetic homeland it can also be used to confirm it by DNA testing individuals from the pinpointed area.

#### **Notes of caution!**

1. In Ireland each of the estimated 1,500 distinct surnames had a single founding ancestor, that's an estimated 1,500 Adams 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 males will have an association that has arisen as a result of what are called 'non-paternal events,' usually a result of adoption or maternal transfer of the surname.
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 Irish ancestors were descended from 9<sup>th</sup> Century Viking raiders, 12<sup>th</sup> Century conquering Normans, or 16<sup>th</sup> Century Planters, your DNA results will reflect earlier English, Scottish, Welsh, and possibly Scandinavian origin. I have estimated that only 60% of those with Irish ancestry are related to the pre-Christian Celtic tribes of Ireland. One must approach this process with an open mind!

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### Interpreting the Y-DNA results

To pinpoint a paternal ancestral genetic homeland one must first identify the surnames that appear as one's closest genetic matches upon commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing. Those surnames, particularly one's that recur among one's closest Y-DNA results, will typically reflect the surnames of one's medieval ancestral neighbours. Mr Flaherty's closest genetic surname matches as revealed by commercial ancestral Y-DNA STR testing are revealed in **Figure 1**.

67 Marker Matches					
Genetic Distance	Last Name	Earliest Known Ancestor	Y-DNA Haplogroup	Terminal SNP	Match Date
6	O'Brien	Edward O'Brien, b. abt.1845 - d. 1922	R-A259	A259	8/9/2019
6	O'Flaherty	Timothy Flaherty, b. abt 1844	R-M269		5/24/2019
6	Flaherty		R-A10525	A10525	5/24/2019
6	Flaherty	Roger Ruairi Ó Fátharta Faherty, 1750-1829	R-M269		5/24/2019
37 Marker Matches					
Genetic Distance	Last Name	Earliest Known Ancestor	Y-DNA Haplogroup	Terminal SNP	Match Date
2	O'Flaherty	Timothy Flaherty, b. abt 1844	R-M269		5/24/2019
2	McNally		R-A10525	A10525	5/24/2019
2	Flaherty		R-A10525	A10525	5/24/2019
2	Flaherty	Roger Ruairi Ó Fátharta Faherty, 1750-1829	R-M269		5/24/2019
3	O'Brien	Edward O'Brien, b. abt.1845 - d. 1922	R-A259	A259	8/9/2019
3	O'Brien	Michael O'Brien Sr, b. 1848 (or 46) and d. 1917	R-M269		5/24/2019
4	Pigion		R-M269		5/24/2019
4	Burke	Edward Burke	R-M269		5/24/2019
4	Flaherty		R-BY18145	BY18145	5/24/2019
4	McDaniel		R-M222	M222	5/24/2019
4	Feeney		R-M269		5/24/2019
4	Flaherty	Galamh / Milesius (c.-1763 - c.-1699)	R-M269		5/24/2019
4	McDonough		R-M269		5/24/2019
4	Browne		R-M269		5/24/2019
4	Sanders	unknown unknown	R-M269		5/24/2019
4	McDaniel		R-FT15936	FT15936	5/24/2019

**Figure 1:** Snapshot of test subject Flaherty's closest genetic surname matches as revealed in the FTDNA Y-DNA STR database. The more Y-DNA markers two people share the more recent their shared paternal ancestor once lived. The test subject's closest genetic surname matches are **NOT RANDOM**; he matches others named Flaherty (red arrows) together with others with surnames like O'Brien (yellow arrows) that also recur among his Y-DNA results. The test subject's Y-DNA matches are dominated by individuals with Irish, Irish-associated or Norman-Irish surnames or with earliest recorded ancestral links with Ireland. Some of Mr Flaherty's closest genetic relatives also test positive for the R-M222 paternal genetic marker which first appeared in Ireland before spreading into Scotland.

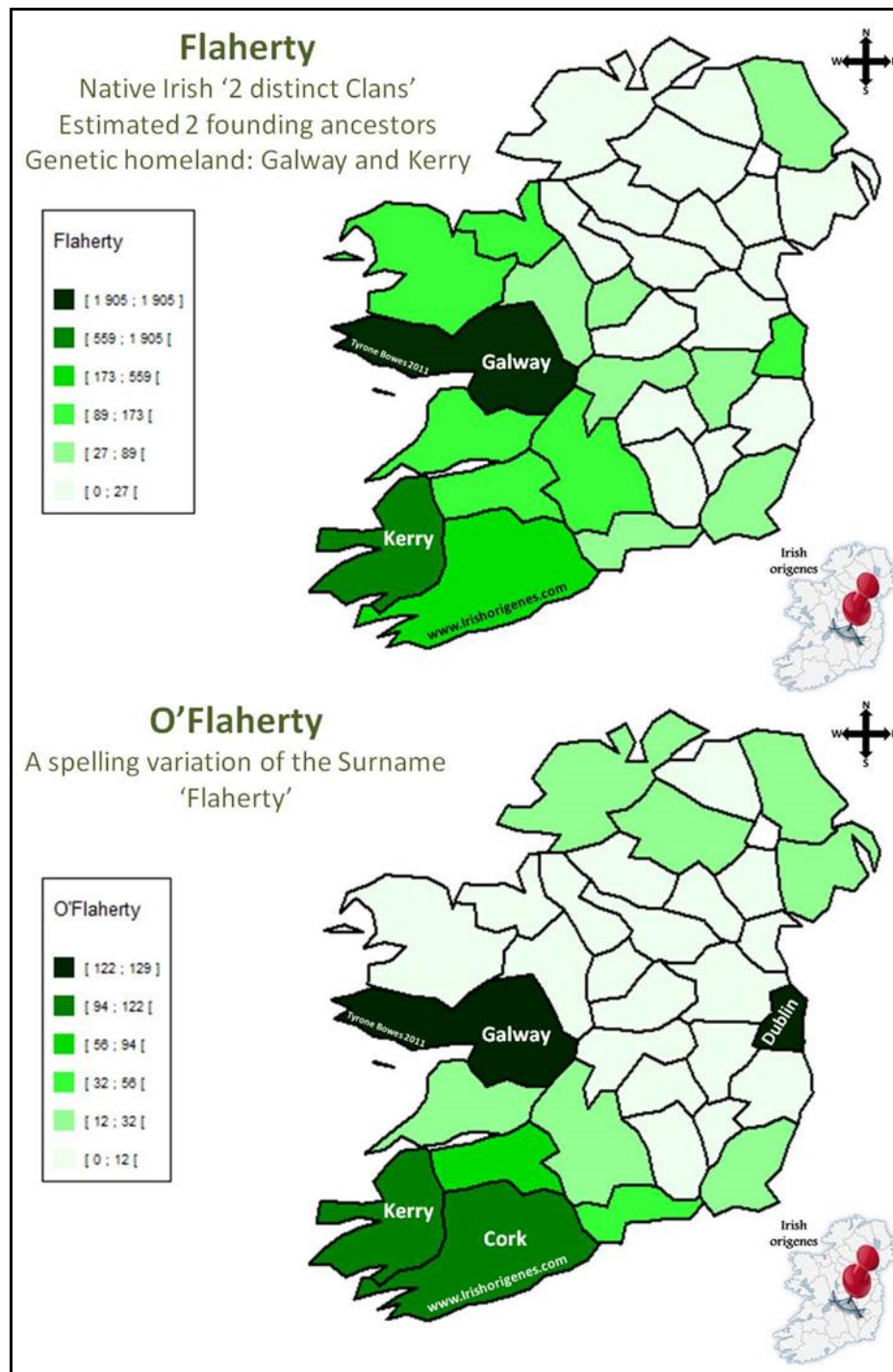
Upon Y-DNA testing the test subject matched others named 'Flaherty' who tested independently, see **Figure 1**. This indicates that the test subject is directly descended from a Flaherty-Adam; literally the first male (Adam) to take that surname who lived approximately 1,000 years ago. Flaherty is an exclusively Irish surname, and the dominance of Irish and Irish-associated surnames among the test subject's closest genetic matches are conclusive proof of a most recent paternal origin within Ireland, see **Figure 1**.

### The Flaherty Surname in Ireland

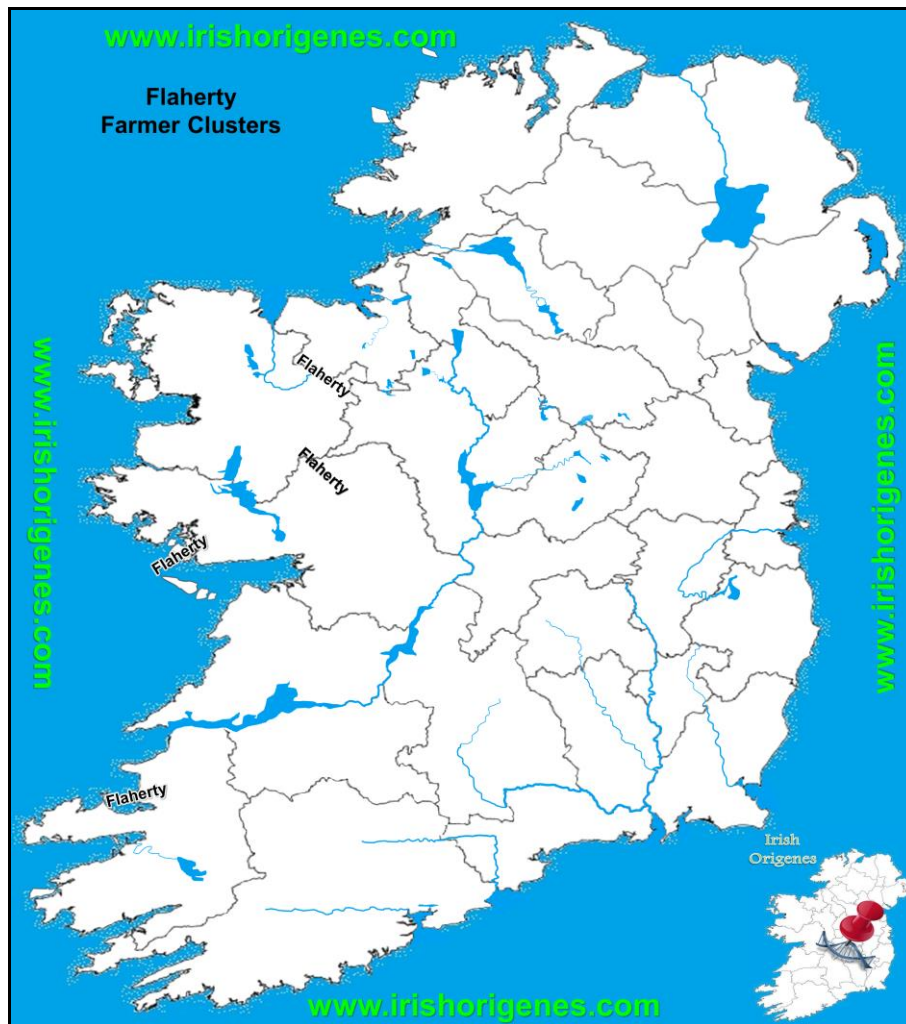
The 1911 census of Ireland revealed approximately 4,000 individuals named 'Flaherty' or 'O'Flaherty.' Those individuals were not scattered uniformly throughout Ireland but concentrated within specific counties, see **Figure 2**. Since surnames arose in an agricultural based society, farmers with each surname can still be found concentrated in the area where their surname first appeared, or in the areas where one's ancestors first settled. Distribution mapping of Irish farmers named Flaherty

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reveals them concentrated in four distinct locations scattered along the west of Ireland, see **Figure 3**. This indicates that there were 4 genetically and geographically distinct Clans within Ireland that gave rise to the test subject's 'Flaherty' surname. Since each Clan was potentially founded by a genetically distinct Flaherty-Adam; the test subject's paternal ancestry, as revealed by his Y-DNA results; is linked to 1 of these 4 Irish locations.



**Figure 2:** Distribution mapping of the Flaherty and O'Flaherty surnames in Ireland. An examination of the distribution of all individuals named Flaherty and O'Flaherty in 1911 reveals that they concentrate within specific Irish counties along Ireland's west coast.



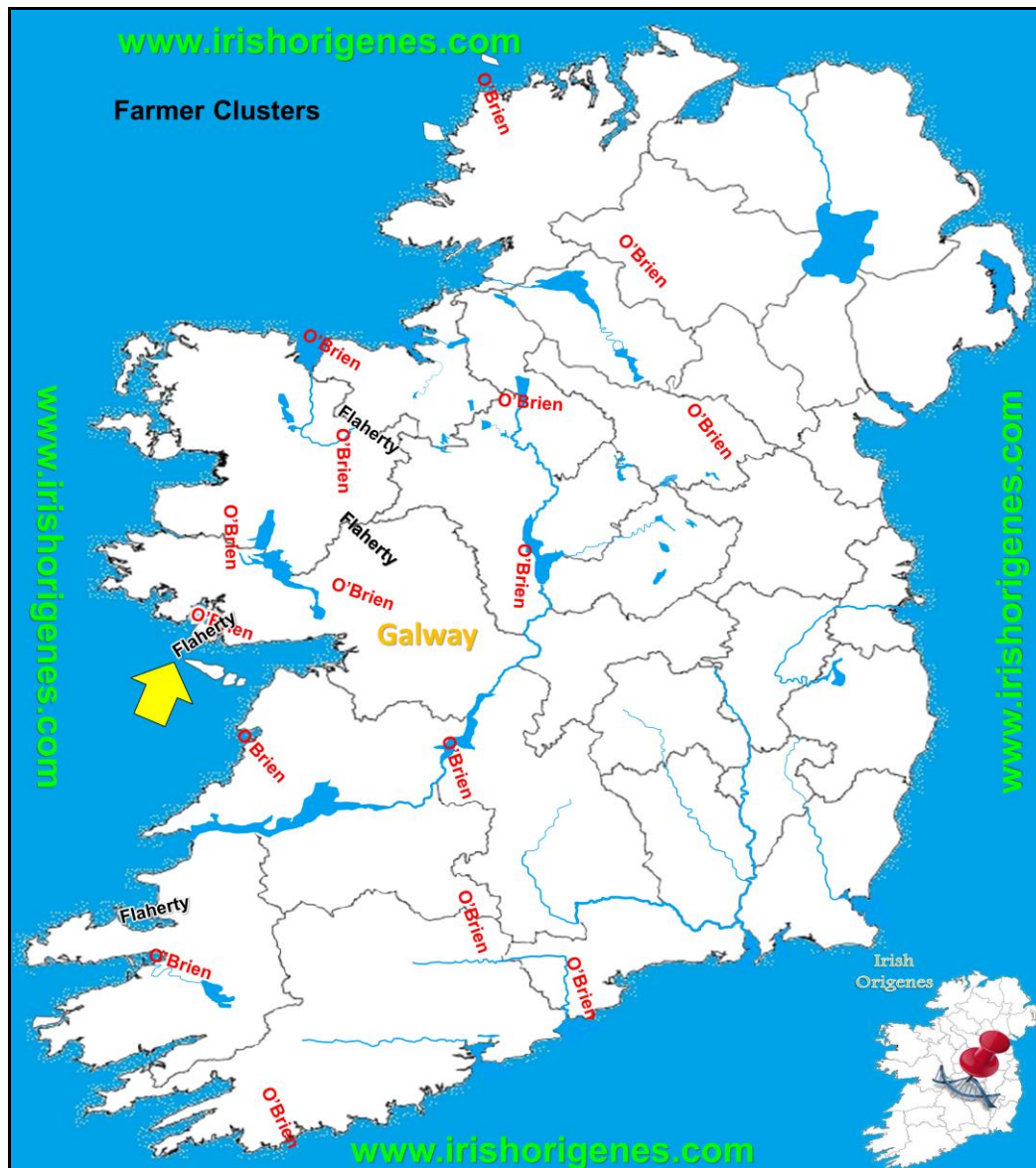
**Figure 3:** The Flaherty farming community. An examination of the distribution of Flaherty/O'Flaherty farmers reveals 4 geographically distinct groups. Each group represents a genetically distinct Gaelic Irish Clan. The test subject's Y-DNA results reveal that his paternal ancestry is linked to one of four Irish locations. Each surname is positioned in the location where farmers with that surname concentrated in early census data. The most common spelling is detailed in each location.

### **A most recent Paternal Ancestral link with County Galway**

The method of using genetic surname matches as revealed by commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing to pinpoint one's paternal ancestral genetic homeland works by exploiting the link between the Y chromosome, surname and land which are typically passed from father to son through the generations. In the absence of a link to the land the process becomes more challenging. The link with the land is greatest amongst the farming community, and since farmers in Ireland can still be found farming the lands where their ancestor lived when he first inherited his surname, or where one's ancestor first settled within Ireland, one can plot where farmers with the surnames that appear in one's Y-DNA results originate, and identify an area common to all. This means that upon Y-DNA testing a 'Flaherty' from County Kerry will be a Y-DNA genetic match to individuals named Sullivan, McCarthy and Donoghue; surnames associated with Southwest Ireland. In contrast, a Flaherty from Sligo will be a Y-DNA match to males named O'Hara, O'Gara and O'Connor; surnames associated with the Mayo and Sligo borderlands.

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An examination of the test subject's Y-DNA results reveals that the Flaherty and O'Brien surnames appear as his closest *recurring* Y-DNA matches, see **Figure 1**. By overlaying the location of Flaherty and O'Brien farming communities it reveals that they occur in closest proximity to one another within County Galway (*Galamh*) where one of the test subject's O'Flaherty genetic relatives records his earliest ancestor, see **Figures 1** and **4**. An examination of the surnames associated with Connemara in Galway as it appears on the Irish Origenes Surnames of Ireland map reveals the Flaherty surname together with many of the surnames that appear among the test subject's closest Y-DNA genetic surname matches, see **Figure 5**.



**Figure 4:** Overlay mapping reveals a paternal ancestral link with Galway. The Flaherty and O'Brien surnames appear as the test subject's closest recurring Y-DNA genetic matches. Those surnames arose among related males living in close proximity to one another. By overlaying mapping the Flaherty and O'Brien farmer communities within early Irish census data it reveals that they occur in closest proximity to one another within County Galway (**yellow arrow**). These genetically matching surnames arose among a tribal group of related males living in Galway in the west of Ireland an estimated 1,000 years ago. Each surname is positioned in the area where farmers with that surname concentrate in early census data. The most common spelling is detailed in each location.

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**Figure 5:** The Pre-Plantation surnames of Connemara. An examination of the surnames associated with Galway west (as it appears on the New 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Irish Origenes Surnames map) reveals the Flaherty surname (red arrow) surrounded by surnames that appear as either close recurring (orange arrows) or singular (yellow arrows) Y-DNA genetic matches to the test subject. The test subject's Y-DNA results reveal a most recent paternal ancestral link with Connemara in County Galway. Each surname is positioned in the location where farmers (Catholic/male/heads of household) concentrate in early census data. The most common spelling is detailed in each location.

### The Clan Territories of Connemara

By the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries Ireland was a patchwork of territories which were dominated by over 400 of the most notable Irish Clans and Norman families. The Irish Origenes Clan Territories of Ireland Map was reconstructed based on the location of castles and towerhouses and their known historical link to a particular Clan or Family. Research at Irish Origenes has discovered that modern commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing will often reveal one's shared paternal ancestry with one or more of the prominent Clans or Families that once ruled over one's paternal ancestral genetic homeland. An examination of Connemara as it appears on the Clan map reveals an area completely dominated by the test subject's O'Flaherty ancestors, see **Figure 6**. That map also reveals singular genetic matches to the Norman Burkes and Browns whose lands bordered those of the Gaelic O'Flahertys, see **Figures 1** and **6**. Both the Normans and the O'Flahertys employed the services of the Scottish McDonald Gallowglass; a surname often corrupted as 'McDaniel' which also appears among the test subject's Y-DNA results, see **Figures 1** and **6**.

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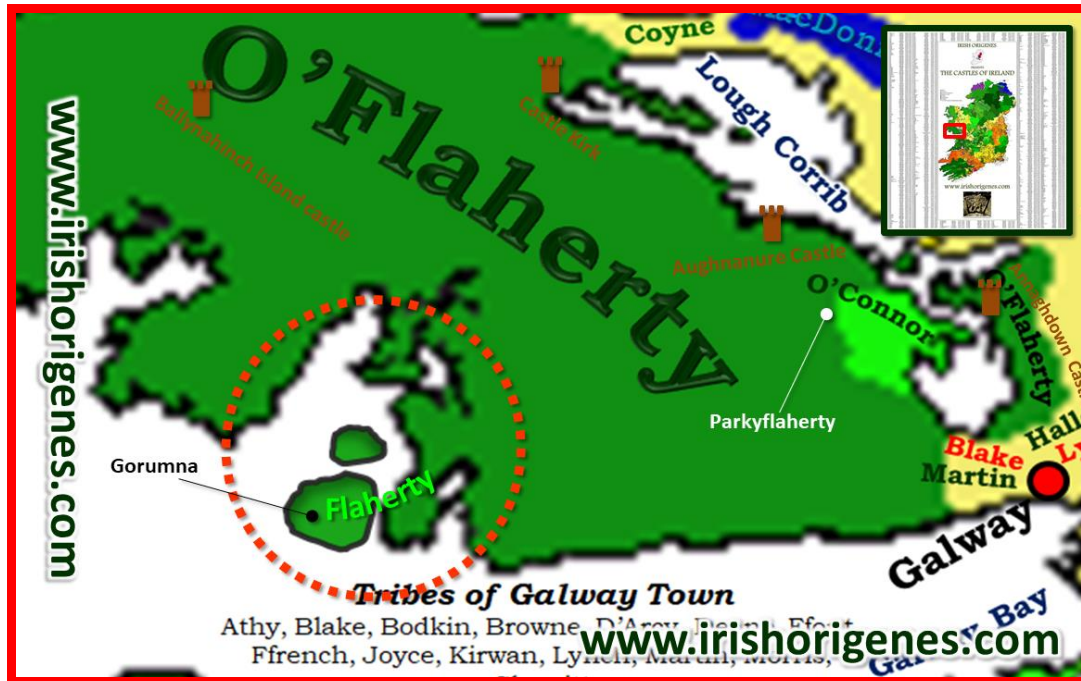
**Figure 6:** The Clan territories of Galway. The Clan map reveals that the test subject's O'Flaherty ancestors once ruled all of Connemara (red arrow). The test subject's Y-DNA results also reveal singular genetic matches to the Norman Burkes and Brown (yellow arrows) and Gallowglass McDonnell/McDaniels (orange arrow). The matches to Norman and Gallowglass surnames are the result of non-paternal event like adoptions or maternal transfer of the surname that have occurred between Gaels, Normans and Gallowglass who have been neighbours for many hundreds of years.

### Mr Flaherty's Most Recent Irish Paternal Ancestral Genetic Homeland

Census data reveals that the Flahertys of Connemara concentrate on the island of Gorumna, and it is there that the test subject's most recent Irish Paternal Ancestral Genetic Homeland is to be found, see **Figure 7**. It was there that the test subject's R-M222 founding paternal ancestor settled, and where his direct male ancestor first took the O'Flaherty surname. When one's ancestors and their genetic relatives have lived in an area for a long time, one will often find historical monuments, townlands or local placenames that are associated with them. The surrounding area is littered with the remains of O'Flaherty castles and at least one O'Flaherty Placename (Lough Parkyflaherty), see **Figures 7, 8 and 9**. The test subject's paternal ancestors will undoubtedly have left evidence of their ancestral links with this area in its history and in the DNA of the current inhabitants.



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**Figure 7:** Mr Flaherty's most recent Irish Paternal Ancestral Genetic Homeland. The test subject's most recent Irish paternal ancestral genetic homeland (**orange broken circle**) lies on the island of Gorumna in Connemara. It was there that his Gaelic Irish founding O'Flaherty-Adam lived. The O'Flahertys would proliferate and come to dominate surrounding Connemara; building their castles and giving their name to at least one Placename. The test subject's paternal ancestors will undoubtedly have left evidence of their ancestral links with this area in its history and in the DNA of its current inhabitants.



**Figure 8:** Aughnanure Castle.

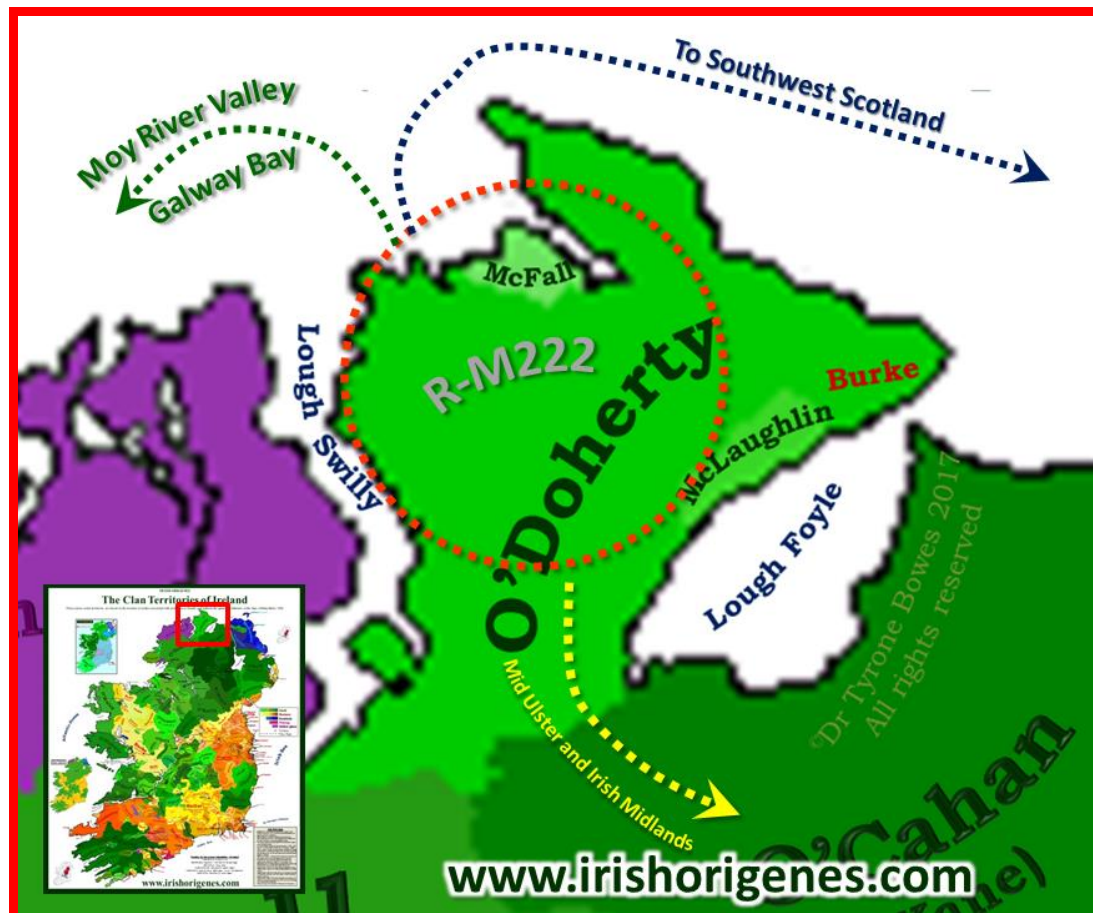


*Figure 9: View towards Lough Parkyflaherty.*

### The Expansion of R-M222<sup>+ve</sup> Inishowen Males throughout Ireland and Scotland

#### **‘Vikings,’ ‘Foreign Helpers’ and ‘Raiders from across the Sea’**

The test subject carries the ancient Irish R-M222 Y-DNA genetic marker which appeared in a single male who lived on Inishowen in the far northwest of Ireland approximately 1,500 years ago. This marker reveals that Mr Flaherty’s earliest Irish paternal ancestors lived on the Inishowen peninsula in the far Northwest of Ireland for many hundreds of years, see **Figure 10**. Commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing, and extensive Y-DNA Case Studies at Irish Origenes have revealed areas beyond Inishowen shores where R-M222<sup>+ve</sup> males predominate in the local population, particularly along Ireland’s west coast (Moy River valley and Galway Bay), Western Ulster and parts of the Irish Midlands, and Southwest Scotland (Galloway). Clues as to why these R-M222<sup>+ve</sup> Gaels began colonising throughout Ireland and Scotland can be found in their origin; Donegal (*Dún na nGall* ‘**base or fort of the Foreigner**’) and their descriptive surnames which they took with them like Gallagher (*Ó Gallchobhair* meaning ‘**Foreign helper**’) who upon settling along the west coast of Ireland acquired new surnames like Higgins (*O’hUigin* meaning ‘**Viking**’) and Halloran (*O’hAllmhurain* meaning ‘**Pirate or Stranger from overseas**’). Modern DNA science indicates that during Ireland’s Viking Age (800AD -1169AD), that the R-M222<sup>+ve</sup> Gaels of Inishowen had formed an alliance with Scandinavian ‘Vikings’ and that Christian-Gael and Heathen-Gall (*Gall* = *foreigner*) had together raided and colonised throughout Ireland and beyond. In support of this Viking-Inishowen connection, research at Irish Origenes has uncovered at least three individuals with recent Inishowen ancestry but with Scandinavian paternal Y-DNA; clear evidence of Scandinavian contact with Inishowen. The Inishowen Gaels that colonised Gorumna and the surrounding islands and mainland took their R-M222 genetic marker with them. However, in the areas where they settled permanently, they acquired new surnames like Flaherty, O’Brien, Higgins, Halloran, Feeney and McDonagh.



**Figure 10:** An earlier paternal ancestral origin within Inishowen in Northwest Ireland. The Dohertys that dominated Inishowen in Northwest Ireland also dominated the genetic matches of individuals that carry the R-M222 genetic marker. These results indicate that the test subject's paternal ancestors were living on the Inishowen peninsula (orange broken circle) prior to their migration to Galway.

### How to confirm a pinpointed 'Paternal Ancestral Genetic Homeland'

One must keep in mind that this is a scientific approach to identifying a paternal ancestral origin, and that the connection to an identified area can be confirmed by Y-DNA testing males with a particular surname from the identified area. Confirmation of the paternal ancestral link with the Flahertys of Galway will require the recruitment of farmers named Flaherty from Gorumna Island.

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