

The FERRIS Surname in Britain & Ireland

And the Possible Parent or Derivative Surnames:

**FAIRES, FAIRS, FARIES, FARIS, FARISH, FARRAS, FARRES, FARRIE, FARRIES
FARRIGH, FARRIS, FARRISH, FARRISS, FARRISSEY, FARRY, FEARIS, FERGUS,
FERGUSON, FERIS, FERRES, FERRIE, FERRIES & FERRISS**



This study was performed on behalf of the FARRIS Surname Group on Family Tree DNA (FTDNA)

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The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

INTRODUCTION

There are tens of thousands of surnames associated with Britain and Ireland. Those surnames can be of English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish origin, or they may have their roots in Europe. The number of people with each surname varies widely; some like Smith and Murphy are very common, while others like Coad and Durkin are rare. Typically each surname will evolve as one moves further from its place of origin, or as has happened in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, the surname is anglicised. Since paternally inherited surnames arose in an agricultural based society and since land is typically passed from father to son (or sons) through the generations, this means that one can examine early census data to reveal where farmers with each surname are found and reveal the areas where each surname originates. The earlier in time that this can be determined the better as over time particularly in Britain due to the early industrial revolution the link with the land is weakened. When surname distribution mapping is combined with modern commercial ancestral DNA testing it can potentially reveal where ones direct male ancestor lived when he first inherited his surname.

The Ferris Surname

Ireland was the first European Country to adopt paternally inherited surnames approximately 1000-1200 years ago, while in Britain patrilineal surnames were adopted after the arrival of the Normans in 1066AD. The Ferris surname can be of British or Irish origin. Within Britain there are a number of similar sounding surnames that may have evolved over both time and distance into Ferris, these include; Faires, Fairs, Faries, Faris, Farish, Farras, Farres, Farrie, Farries, Farrigh, Farris, Farrish, Farriss, Farrissey, Farry, Fearis, Fergus, Ferguson, Feris, Ferres, Ferrie, Ferris and Ferriss. Early census data reveals that Ferris is the most common form in Britain where it is almost exclusively associated with 2 distinct areas within Devon and Wiltshire in Southwest England, where it also appears that Farris and Faris arise as spelling variants in neighbouring Counties, see **Figure 1**. The surname Fearis which may have evolved into Ferris is a rare surname associated with Essex on England's east coast, see **Figure 1**. The most common Scottish surnames which may have given rise to Ferris are Ferris and Farish which are associated with 2 distinct locations situated within the Scottish southwest and northeast respectively, see **Figure 1**. Within Ireland the surname Ferris has reportedly been used to anglicise the Irish surname Fergus. However, this appears unlikely as surname distribution mapping reveals that Ferris is associated with the far southwest and the far northeast of Ireland, while Fergus is found mainly on Irelands west coast, see **Figure 2**. However, one cannot rule out the possibility that Fergus, together with other Irish surnames like Farrissey and Farry may have evolved beyond Irish shores into Ferris. These distinct (Ferris) groups are clearly illustrated when one plots the parish within England, Scotland and Wales or the townlands within Ireland where farmers with the various Ferris-related were recorded in 1841 and 1911 respectively, see

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

Figure 3. Each of these groups represent an area where a surname arose, which over time has evolved mostly into FERRIS.

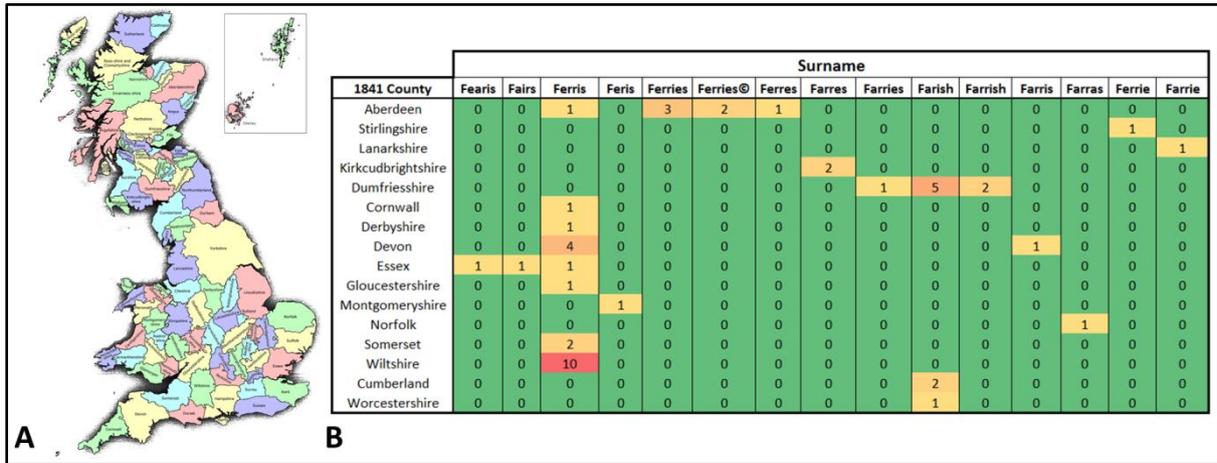


Figure 1: The 1841 distribution of farmers with surnames that may have evolved into Ferris. An examination of the location of farmers with surnames similar to Ferris throughout the 1841 Counties of Britain (panel A) reveals a number of distinct farming communities spread throughout the UK. The most notable include Ferris in Wiltshire and Devon, Ferries in Aberdeenshire and Farish in Dumfriesshire (panel B).

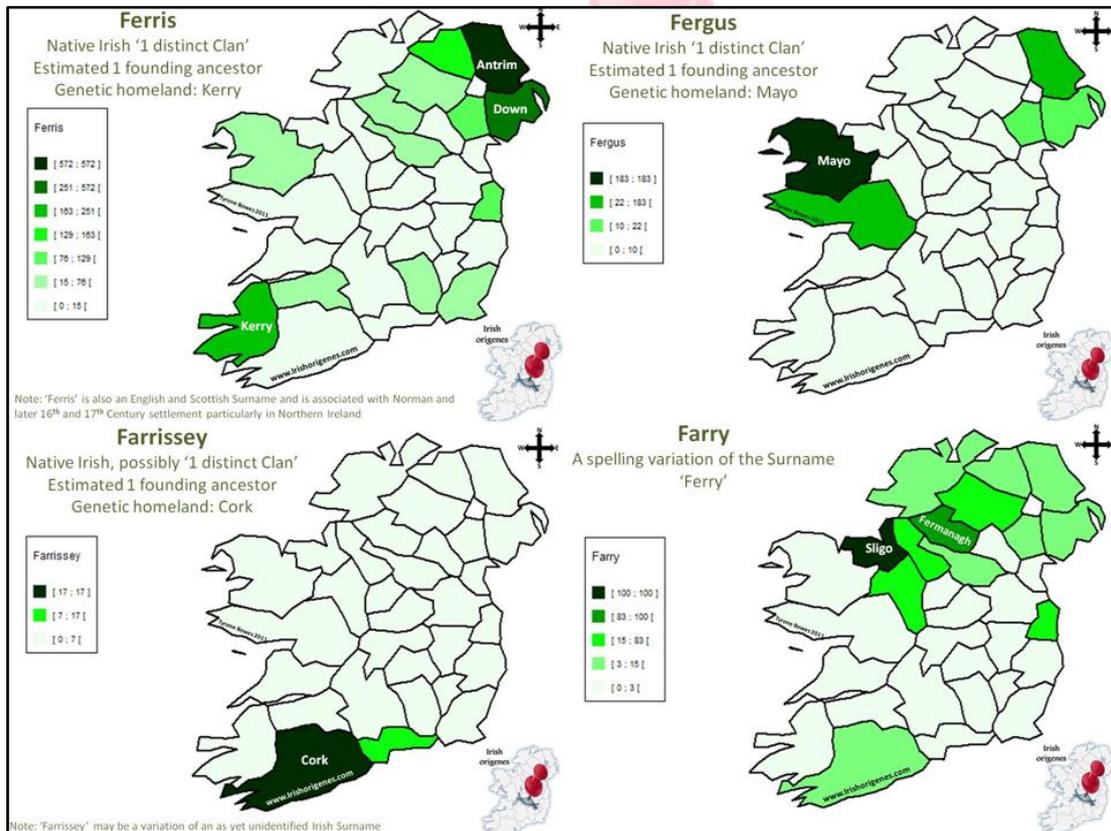


Figure 2: Distribution of the Ferris surname throughout Ireland. The Farris surname may be of Gaelic Irish or Norman origin when found in the far southwest of Ireland, while it associated with later plantation Scottish settlement when found in the northeast. However it has also reportedly been used to anglicise the Irish surnames Fergus, and potentially Farrissey, and Farry.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

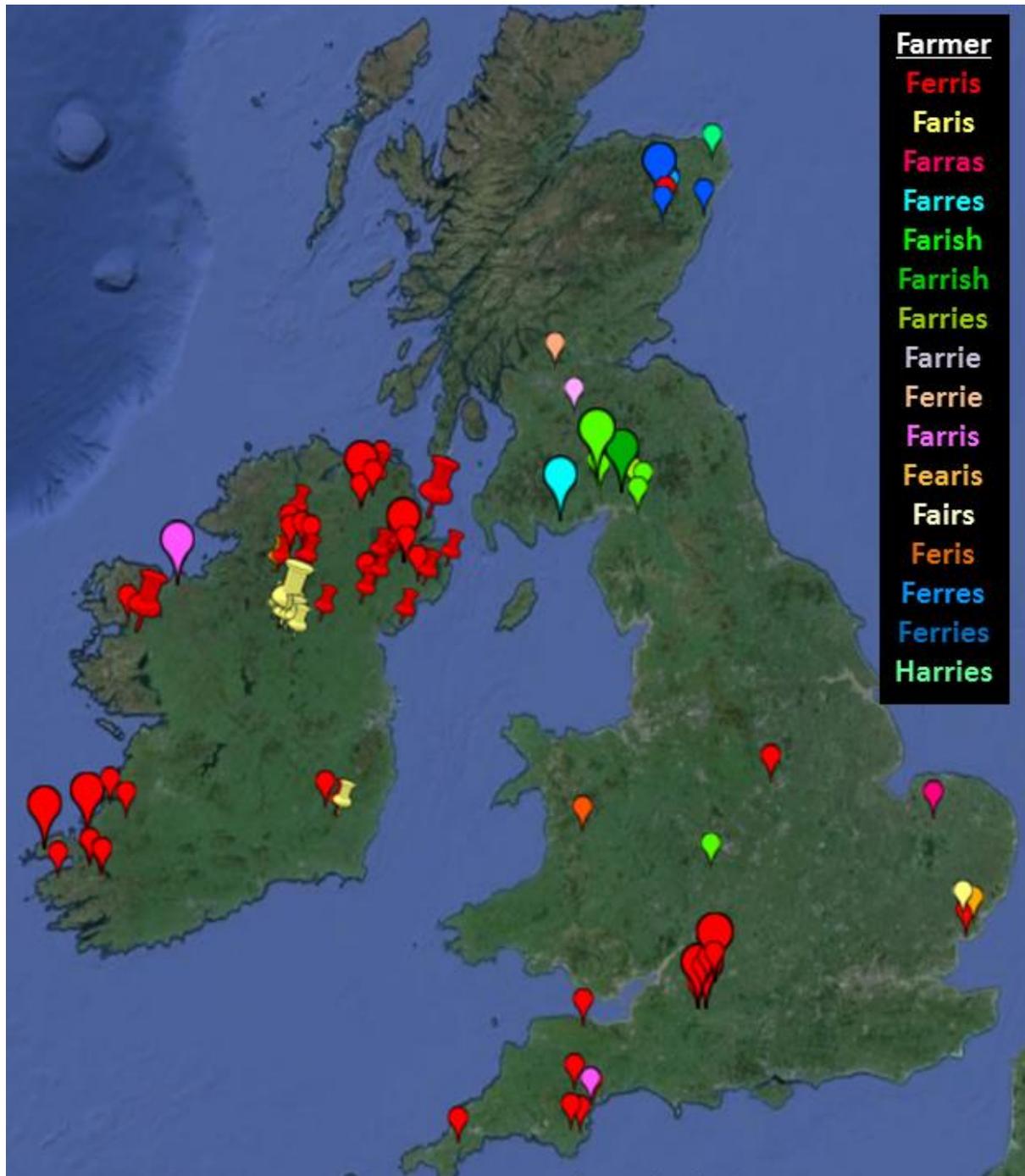


Figure 3: Distribution of farmers with the Ferris or similar sounding surnames throughout Britain and Ireland. Paternally inherited surnames arose about 1000 years ago in an agricultural based society. As a result one can examine early census data to reveal where farmers with the Ferris and similar sounding surnames were found. This reveals a number of distinct farmer clusters throughout Britain and Ireland. Mainland Britain and Ireland farmer locations are taken from the 1841 and 1911 census respectively. Pin size is indicative of frequency.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

ENGLISH FERRIS

The Ferris farming community in early UK census data is concentrated in the southwest. The largest number of Ferris farmers are found in Wiltshire where there appear to be potentially 2 distinct groups, see **Figure 4**. Ferris farmers were undoubtedly previously more widespread as an examination of the surrounding placenames reveals a 'Ferris Court farm' in neighbouring Gloucestershire, see **Figure 4** and **19**. There are also at least 2 groups of Ferris farmers found further south in County Devon, see **Figure 5**. The presence of a small scattering of singular farmers called Ferris in neighbouring Cornwall and Somerset, and the identification of a Ferris placename in Gloucestershire would indicate that there were potentially multiple founding 'Ferris-Adams' (the first to take that surname) living in the English southwest an estimated 1000 years ago.

An examination of the Essex coast reveals farmers called Ferris, Fearis, and Fairs all within a 5 mile radius and found exclusively on the Tendring peninsula between Colchester and Harwick, see **Figure 6**. This is a distinct Ferris group which given their distance from Devon and Cornwall are unrelated to the Ferris of the southwest. Further afield one finds singular Ferris, Feris, and Farras farmers occurring in Derbyshire, Wales, and Norfolk respectively, but they are far removed from the areas where the surname clusters and they may simply be variations of as yet unidentified surnames.

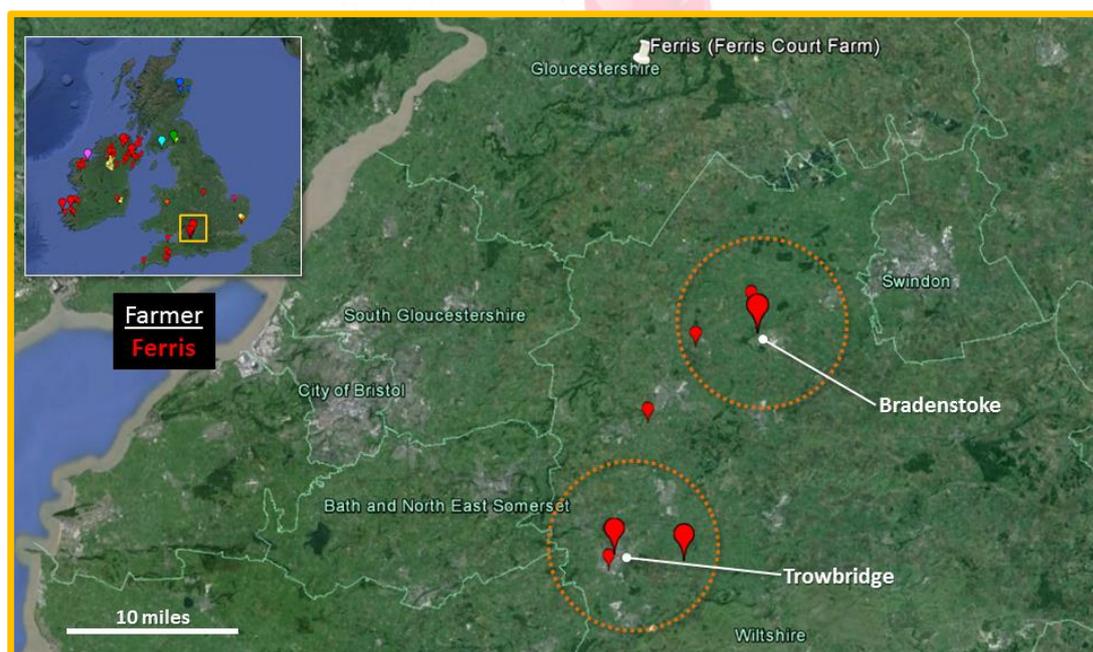


Figure 4: Wiltshire Ferris. The largest numbers of English Ferris farmers are recorded in North Wiltshire where they occur in 2 groups (orange broken circles). The identification of Ferris Court farm in neighbouring Gloucestershire would indicate that Ferris farmers were once more common throughout this area. Pin size is indicative of frequency.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland



Figure 5: Devon Ferris. The 1841 census revealed that there were potentially 2 groups of Ferris farmers (orange broken circles) found along Devon's south eastern coastline.

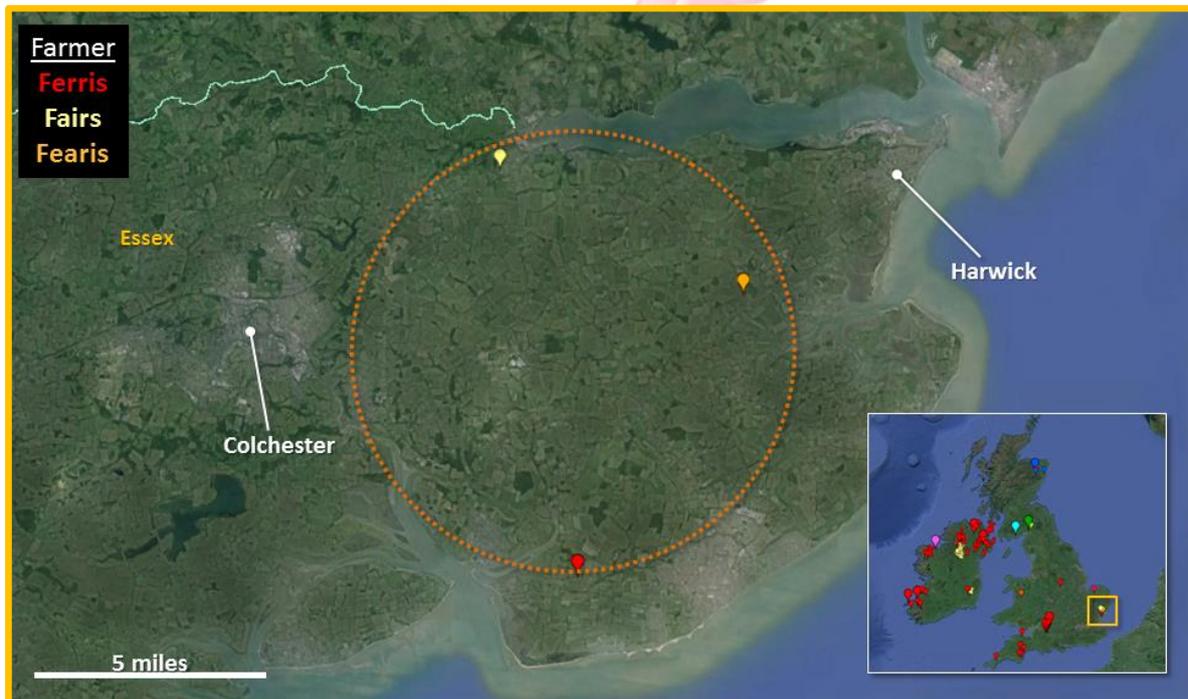


Figure 6: Essex Ferris. Farmers called Ferris, Fairs, and Fearis are all found on the Tendring peninsula in northeast Essex. This is a distinct Ferris population unrelated to the Ferris of the English southwest.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

SCOTTISH FERRIS

There are a number of Scottish surnames that may have evolved over time and distance in to the more common Ferris and these include Ferries, Farres, Farish, Farrish, Ferres, Ferrie, Farrie and Farries. Scottish Fergus has also reportedly been anglicised to Ferris but Fergus as a surname is relatively rare in Scotland. Fergus and Ferguson are of Gaelic Irish origin and farmers with these surnames are not found in the Counties where one finds Scottish farmers called Ferries, Farres, Farish, Farrish, Ferrie, Farrie and Farries.

SCOTTISH LOWLANDER FARISH AND FERRIE

For historical reasons many of the Lowlander Scottish surnames have disappeared from the areas where they first appeared in Scotland. This is in part a result of the early industrial revolution which resulted in an exodus from the land to the cities of Scotland's central belt, but also because of the earlier massive movement of Scots from the southwest to Northern Ireland during the Plantations of Ulster that occurred in the 16th and 17th Centuries. It is there that many Scottish surnames have evolved; where for example Scottish McCrindle becomes McReynolds (Reynolds being the Irish form of Ragnal from which both surnames are derived), and where Scottish Muir becomes Irish Moore. As a result there are relatively few farmers called Farres, Farish, Farrish, and Farries in Southern Scotland in 1841, see **Figure 7**. The Farish surname predominates and it concentrates just north of Dumfries town. This clustering in one location could indicate that the Lowlander Farish are a single distinct group. The 1841 census data for Scotland also reveals a single Farrie and Ferrie farmer in neighbouring Lanarkshire and Stirlingshire respectively, see **Figure 8**. An examination of the non-farming community reveals nearly 250 individuals with these surnames. The Ferrie surname predominates and it is found overwhelmingly within Lanarkshire.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

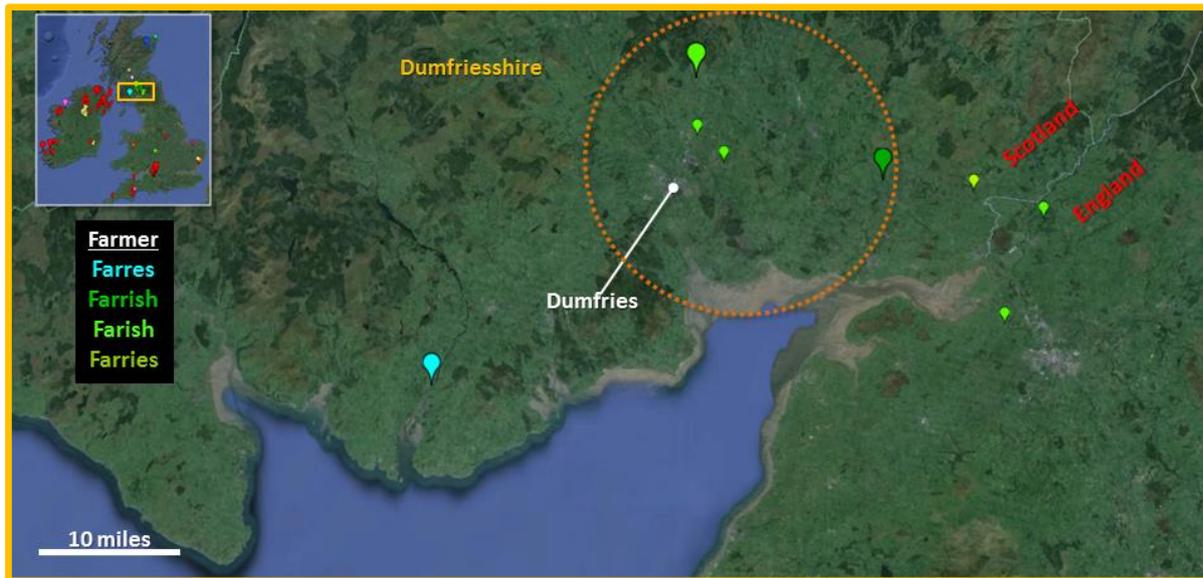


Figure 7: Lowlander Scottish Farish. The 1841 census reveals a single group (orange broken circle) of Farish farmers clustering close to Dumfries town. The variants Farres and Farries have arisen as ones ancestors move further from the place of origin.



Figure 8: Ferrie of Central Scotland. The 1841 census reveals a Ferrie and Farrie farmer in Stirlingshire and Lanarkshire respectively. A check of the non-farming community reveals over 200 individuals called Ferrie found mainly within Lanarkshire. Their location indicates another distinct group that may have evolved over time and distance into Ferris.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

SCOTTISH HIGHLANDER FERRIES

There is a solitary farmer called Ferris found in Aberdeenshire in 1841, see **Figure 9**. This Ferris, given his location is undoubtedly an early variant of Scottish 'Ferries' which is more common at that time and in that part of Scotland. However, the fact that Ferris has occurred as early as 1841 in Aberdeenshire is clear evidence that Ferris can evolve into the more common Ferris form. The clustering of Ferris in a small geographical area indicates the existence of a single Aberdeenshire 'Ferris' population, genetically unrelated to the Lowlander Farish and Ferrie groups.

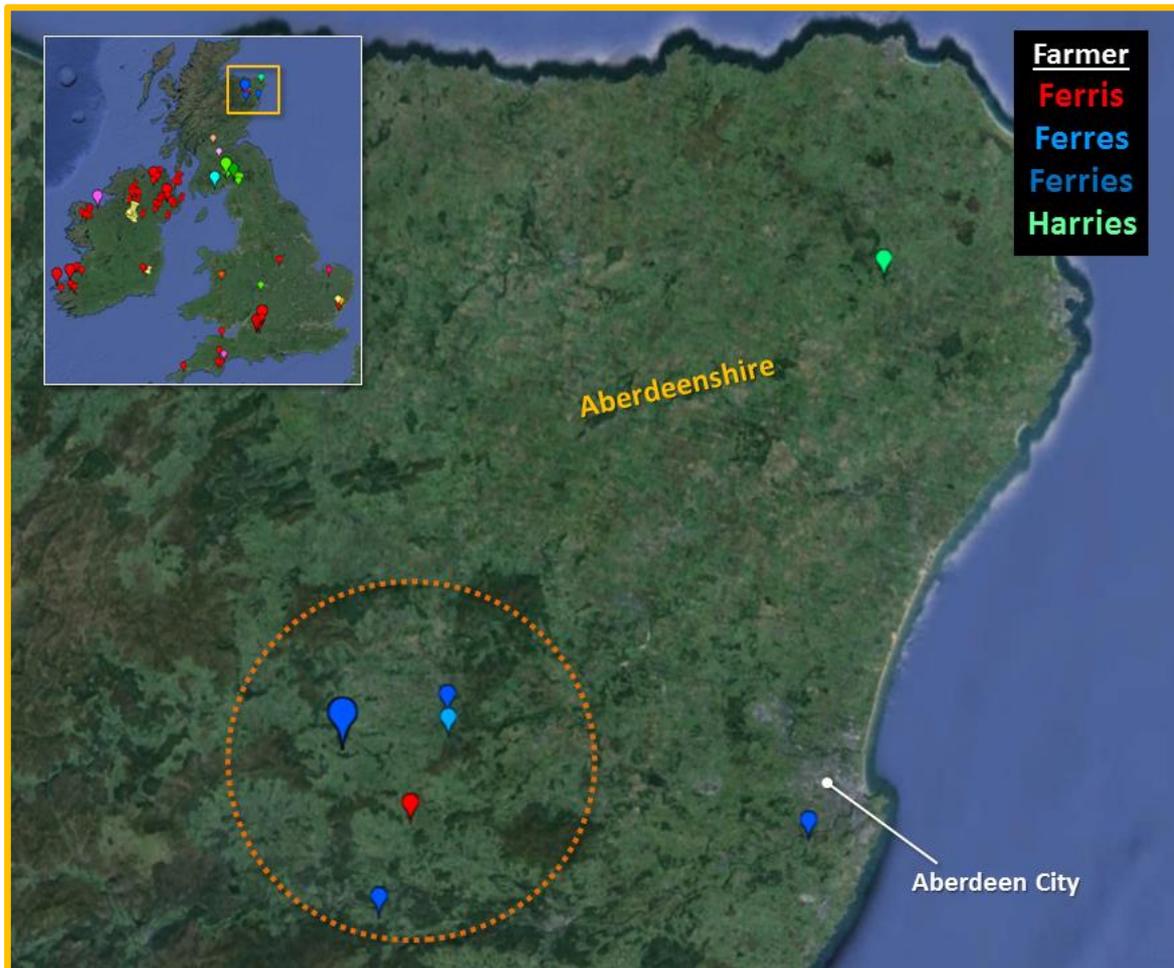


Figure 9: Aberdeenshire Ferris. A solitary 'Ferris' farmer is recorded in Aberdeenshire in 1841 but most farmers are recorded as Ferris. Most of these farmers are found within a 5 mile radius indicating the existence of a single Aberdeenshire Ferris group.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

IRISH FERRIS

Ferris in Ireland may have arisen as a result of the Anglicisation of Irish surnames including Fergus, Ferry, Farry, Farrissey, and McFiris. In addition Ferris may have arrived in Ireland from southern Britain during the Norman Conquest that began in 1169AD, or as a result of the later Plantation of Ulster that began in 1610AD when many Lowlander Scots settled in Northern Ireland.

NORMAN-IRISH FERRIS

The Normans arrived in County Wexford in 1169AD and it is not surprising that Wexford contains the highest proportion of people with Norman surnames among the 32 Counties of Ireland, see **Figure 10**. There are a small number of Ferris farmers recorded in the southeast of Ireland in 1911. Most of these Ferris farmers are Protestant and it is highly likely that they are of Norman or later Plantation origin rather than native Gaelic Irish (people with Irish surnames are overwhelmingly Catholic in 1911), see **Figure 11**. The Normans repeated a pattern of conquest and settlement across almost the entire island and the Ferris of the Irish southwest may also be of Norman-English origin, see **Figures 10**.

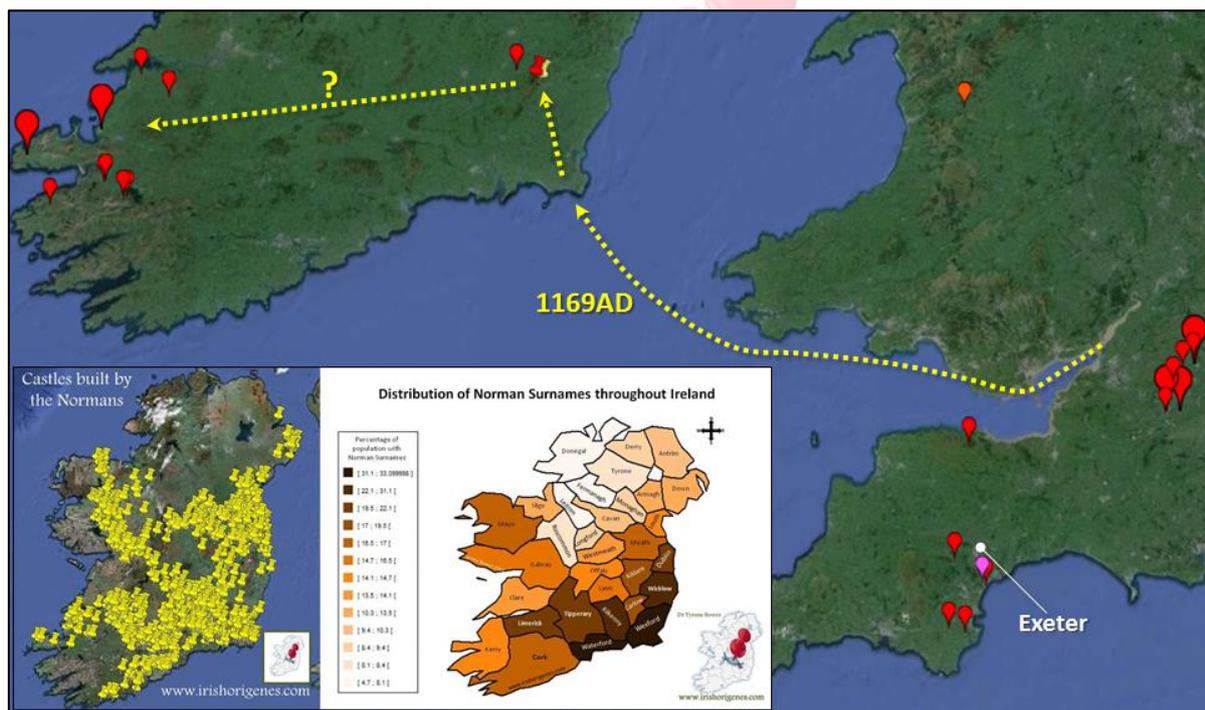


Figure 10: Norman-Irish Ferris. The Norman settlers in Ireland came from the southwest coast of England where Ferris is most common. A small number of Ferris farmers are recorded in the Irish southeast where Norman surnames are most prevalent and account for one third of the population (inset). Yellow broken line indicates the Norman Ferris migration route.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland



Figure 11: Norman-Irish Ferris in County Carlow. A small number of mainly Protestant Ferris/Faris farmers are found in the Irish southeast in an area heavily colonised by the Normans. This Ferris population are most likely the descendants of Ferris settlers from Gloucestershire and Cornwall.

FERRIS IN SOUTHWEST IRELAND

Farmers called Ferris are scattered throughout the Irish southwest which is a typical pattern of settlement observed with Norman surnames in Ireland, see **Figure 12**. In contrast many Gaelic Irish surnames arose within a specific area and cluster in that small area even after 1000 years. However, historically the Ferris of the Irish southwest are regarded as an anglicised version of O’Fergus; who were a branch of the Gaelic Irish Moriarty Clan. Both the Ferris and Moriarty Clans are historically associated with Ballymalis castle (see **Figure 19**) and therefore feature on the Irish Origenes Clan Territories of Ireland map which details the prominent Norman Families and Irish Clans that dominated medieval Ireland, see **Figure 13**. Interestingly, the Irish southwest was split between Irish Clans and Norman Families and it is quite possible that both Gaelic Irish O’Fergus and Norman Ferris lived side by side in Southwest Ireland and that over time Irish O’Fergus became Ferris and indistinguishable today from those Ferris of Norman origin. Or it may well be that the Norman Ferris family arrived in the southwest during the Norman Conquest and became ‘more Irish than the Irish.’ An examination of the Downs survey which details the lands held by Irish, Norman, and early 16th Century colonists reveals both Gaelic Irish and possible Norman Ferris, see **Figure 14**. It also reveals a putative Ferris placename in Gortaforia or GortnaFerry owned by John Farrigh, which translates as Farrigh’s land, see **Figure 14** and **19**.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland



Figure 12: Ferris in Southwest Ireland. There is a population of Catholic Ferris farmers in North Kerry in Southwest Ireland. Their distribution is scattered rather than concentrated in one area which would indicate that they are of Norman origin. However, historically the Ferris are regarded as a branch of the Gaelic Irish Moriarty Clan. Only Y-DNA analysis will determine the Norman or Gaelic Irish origin of this Ferris cluster. An examination of North Kerry reveals a Dunferris (Ferris fort) and Ballymalis castle which is historically associated with both the Moriarty and Ferris Clans.

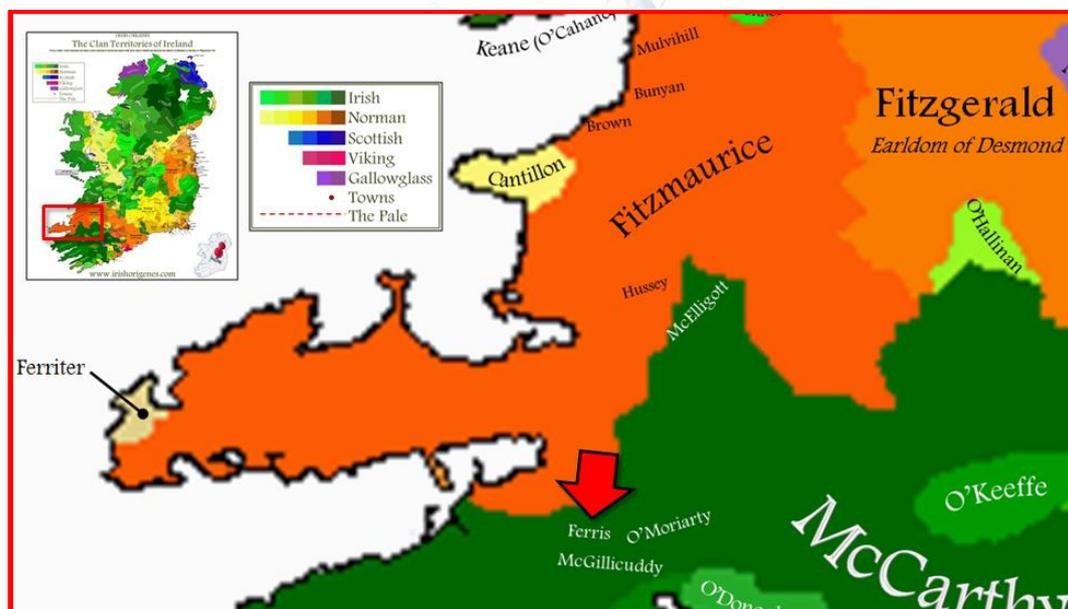


Figure 13: The Clan Territories of Southwest Ireland. The Irish southwest was divided between prominent Norman families in the north and Gaelic Irish Clans in the south. Ferris (red arrow) appears in a Gaelic Irish area of this Clan map where they are historically regarded as a branch of the Moriartys. Only commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing can determine whether these Ferris are of Gaelic-Irish or Norman origin.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

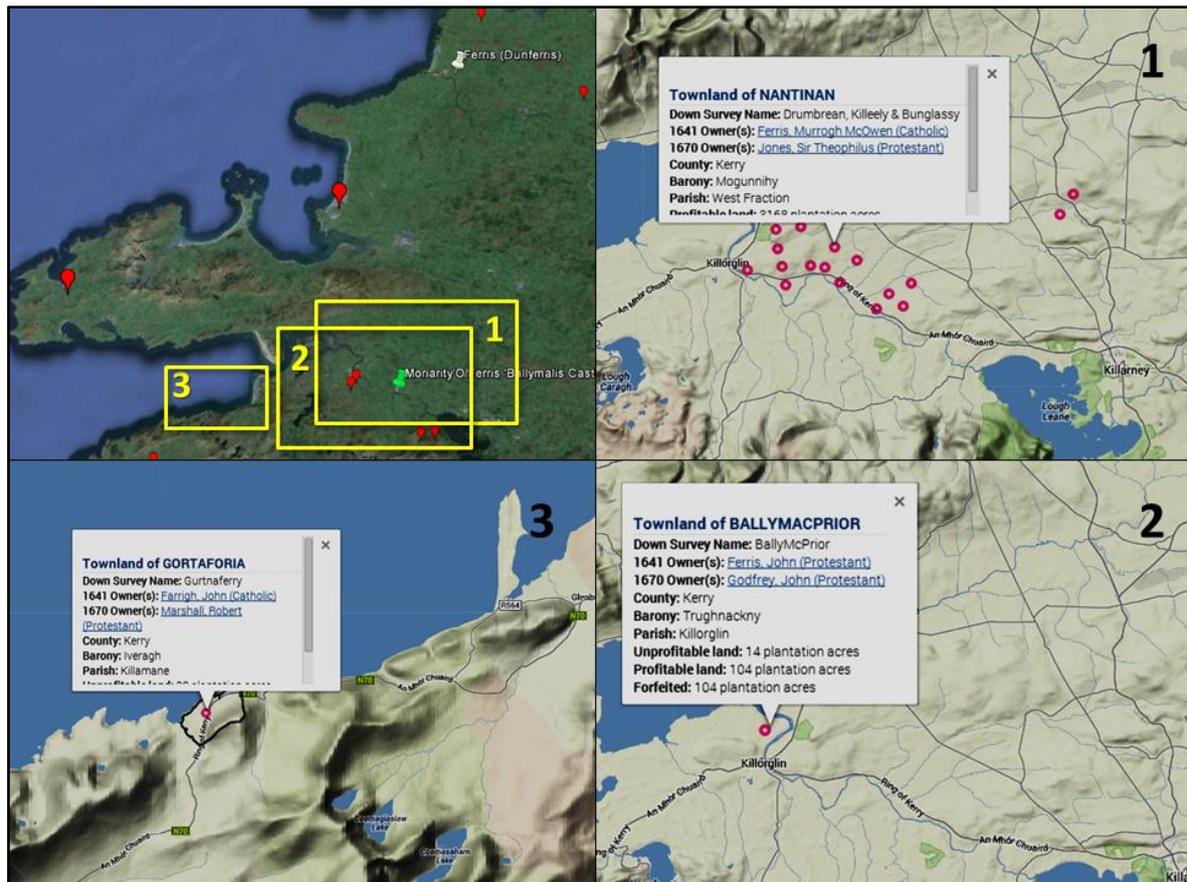


Figure 14: Historical evidence of Gaelic Irish and Norman Ferris in southwest Ireland. An examination of the Downs survey reveals Gaelic Irish land owners called Murrogh McOwen Ferris (**panel 1**) and John Farrigh (**panel 3**), but also a Protestant John Ferris who may be of Norman or later plantation origin (**panel 2**). Source: <http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/index.html>

FERRIS IN THE WEST OF IRELAND

There are 3 Ferris farmers found in County Mayo on Irelands west coast in 1911. These Ferris occur close to a cluster of Irish farmers called Fergus. And in this instance these Ferris farmers are most likely Gaelic Irish Fergus in disguise, see **Figure 15**. In the 18th Century the Catholic Irish were banned from inheriting land and many adopted the Protestant faith in order to retain their land. It is interesting to note that 2 of the 3 Ferris in Mayo are Protestant, typically as one changed faith one's surname was often anglicised; in this case from O'Fergus to Ferris?

A small number of 'Farris' farmers are found to the north in County Sligo, see **Figure 16**. This cluster is located close to the ruins of castle MacFirbis which is historically associated with the MacFirbis Clan. The MacFirbis surname has disappeared completely and it is possible that at least some MacFirbis became Farris. However, there are also Gaelic Irish (Catholic) farmers called Farry found in Sligo and they too may be the source of the Sligo Farris farming community.

Ireland is quite unique in that many of its placenames reflect the Clans and families that lived there. The Townland is the smallest unit of geographical land division in Ireland with

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

the entire country divided into an estimated 62,000 ancient Townlands with names that often predate the arrival of the Normans in Ireland in 1169AD. An examination of townlands that may relate to the Ferris surname reveal a 'Farranferris' or (O'Fergus territory) in what is today the heart of Cork City on Irelands southern coast, see **Figure 17**. This placename could indicate another distinct Ferris group with its origin in the area now consumed by Cork City.



Figure 15: Ferris in County Mayo. The 1911 Ferris farmers in Mayo in the west of Ireland are almost certainly the descendants of Gaelic Irish O'Fergus who anglicised their surname and adopted the Protestant faith sometime in the 17th or 18th Centuries.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

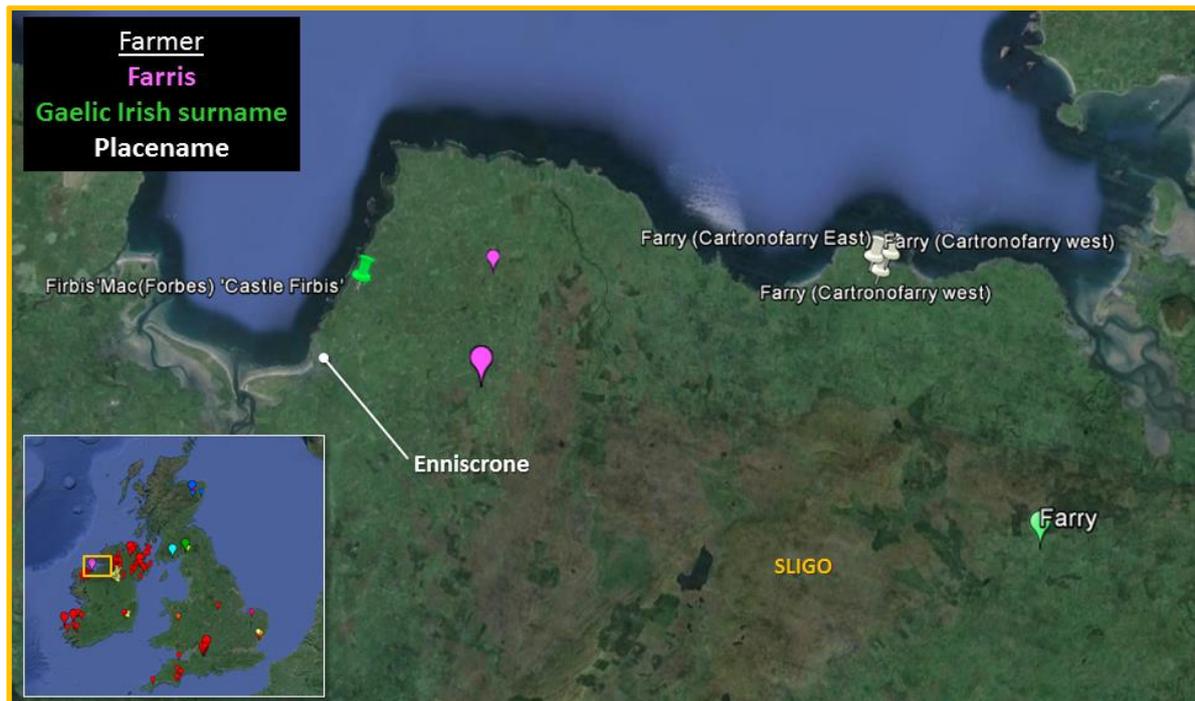


Figure 16: Farris in County Sligo. There are a small number of Farris farmers found in Northwest Sligo. Their location close to MacFirbis castle may be an indication that the Farris surname arose due to the Anglicisation of MacFirbis; a surname which is now extinct. They may also be Gaelic-Irish 'Farrys' in disguise.

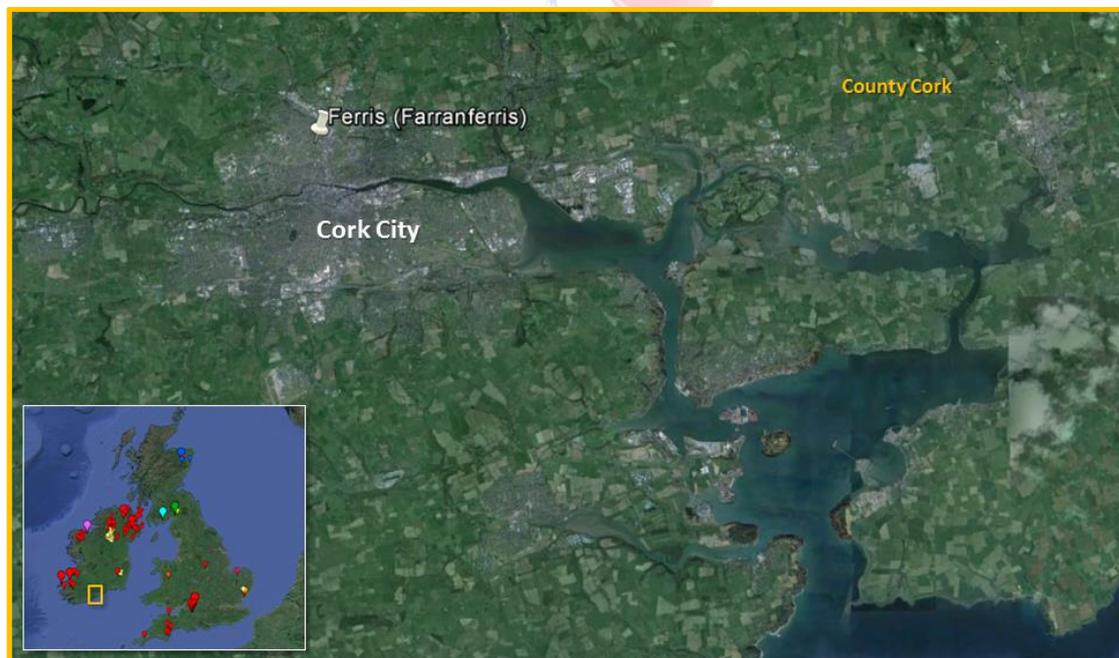


Figure 17: Evidence of a County Cork Ferris population. The identification of a townland called Farranferris (O'Fergus territory) within what is now the modern city of Cork may mean that some of today's Ferris may have ancestral origins in this area.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

ULSTER-SCOTS AND GAELIC IRISH FERRIS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Plantation of Northern Ireland began in earnest in about 1610AD and involved the settlement of large numbers of mainly Lowlander Scots and Northern English in lands forfeited by Anglo-Irish Norman lords and Gaelic Irish Cheiftains. An examination of the 1911 census data reveals Ferris, Faris, and Faeris farmers scattered throughout Northern Ireland. Their scattered distribution together with their Proestant religious faith indicates that they are the descendants of Lowlander Scottish Farish and Ferrie, see **Figure 18**. However, some of these Ferris farmers are Catholic and recorded in an area of County Fermanagh where one finds Gaelic Irish (Catholic) farmers called Farry, see **Figure 18**. Therefore at least some of those called Ferris today will be descended from the Gaelic Irish Farrys and potentially Ferrys who occur further north in County Donegal, see **Figure 18**.

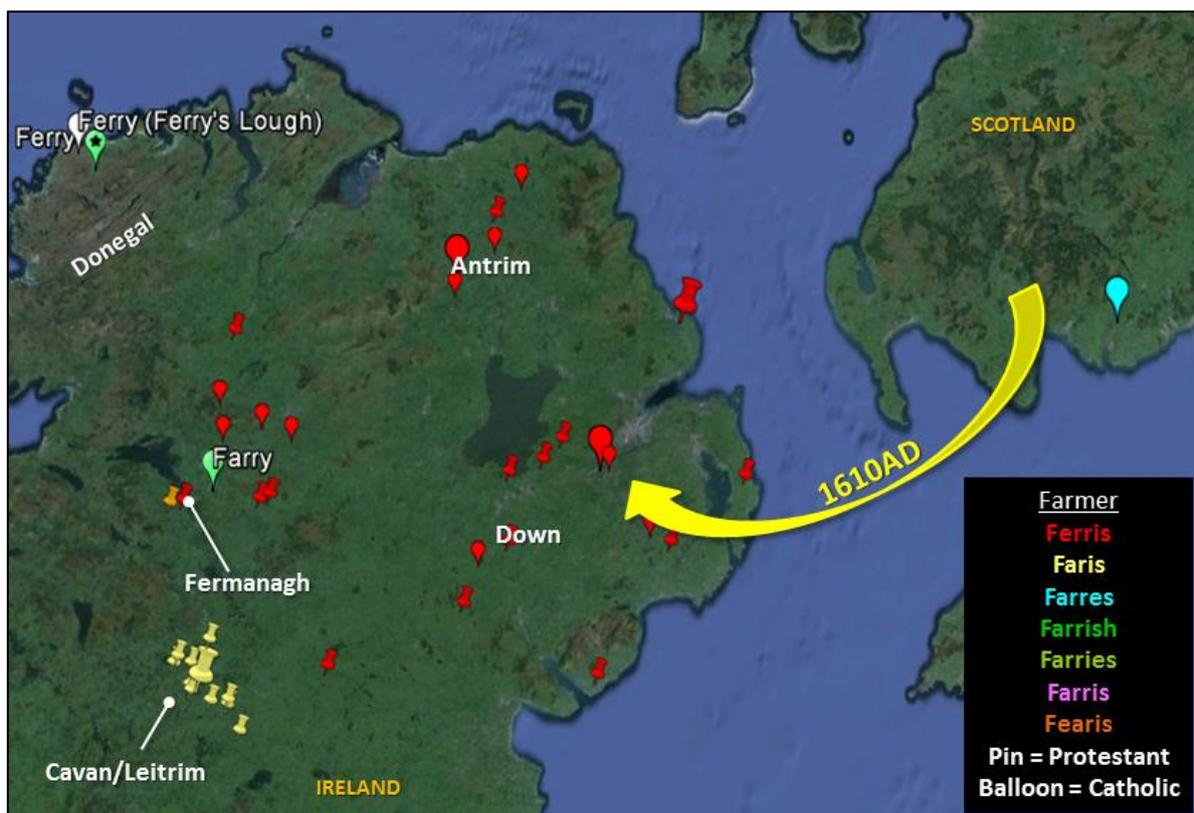


Figure 18: Ferris in Northern Ireland. The scattered distribution and the Protestant religious faith of the majority of Ferris, Faris, and Fearis found in the northern half of Ireland in 1911 reveals that they are the descendants of Lowlander Scottish Farish and Ferrie. Although there is also evidence that the anglicised Gaelic Irish surnames Farry and possibly Ferry have also evolved into Ferris.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland



Figure 19: Ferris Placenames in Britain and Ireland. The majority of placenames and historical monuments associated with surnames that may have become Ferris are found in Ireland and include Ballymalis Castle, Dunferris (Ferris hillfort), Cartronofarry (O’Fergus’s quarter of land), and Gortnaferry (Farrigh’s field). The remains of the original Ferris Court farm can be found near the village of Eastcombe in Gloucestershire in England.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FERRIS Y-DNA STUDY

Surname distribution mapping reveals the existence of potentially 5 English, 3 Scottish, and possibly 7 Irish groups that have given rise or contributed to the worldwide male Ferris population. Each of these 'Ferris' groups will have started with a single male who began the process of passing his Ferris surname (or a surname that has overtime evolved into Ferris) to his children. Each of the founding Ferris-Adams lived in a particular location, surrounded by male relatives with whom he shared common paternal ancestry but who *crucially* picked other surnames. Hence a small number of surnames will have arisen among a group of related males in each location. Some of those surnames will be unique to a location and they will often be revealed upon commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing. In this manner each Ferris who takes a commercial ancestral Y-DNA test can use the surnames of the people with whom he shares a common male ancestor (as revealed in the Y-DNA test results) to place his Ferris ancestors in one of the 15 identified Ferris ancestral geographical origins. For example if your Ferris ancestor originated in Devon in Southwest England then you will have genetic matches to people with surnames associated with Devon, and some like the surname Coad will be associated exclusively with Devon. While if one has Scottish Lowlander Farish ancestry then the Y-DNA results will reveal genetic matches to people with surname like Maxwell and Elliott; surnames associated with Dumfriesshire. Or if ones ancestors were Gaelic Irish O'Fergus, who over time became Ferris then the Y-DNA results will reveal matches to surnames like McManamon and Ludden which originate in County Mayo in Ireland. There is plenty of evidence to show that people called Ferris migrated from Britain to Ireland during both the Norman invasion and the later Plantations. These migrations can also be tracked using the surnames revealed by one's commercial ancestral Y-DNA test results. For those Ferris whose ancestors migrated in 1169AD to Southern Ireland they can expect to see close genetic matches to Irish surnames in their Y-DNA results (which reflect non-paternal events between Gaelic Irish and Normans living in the same location). While those with Ulster-Scots ancestry may see the occasional close singular genetic match to Gaelic Irish surnames associated with Northern Ireland like O'Neill and O'Kane.

FERRIS NON-PATERNAL ASSOCIATIONS

It is important to keep in mind that an estimated 50% of males called Ferris will have an association with their surname which is the result of non-paternal events like adoptions, infidelity, or the maternal transmission of the Ferris surname that have occurred since this surname first appeared an estimated 1000 years ago (MacEvoy and Bradley, Human Genetics 2006). Regardless of how ones ancestors acquired the Ferris surname, ones genetically recurring surname matches can still be used to pinpoint a geographical origin.

The Ferris Surname in Britain and Ireland

ANALYSING THE FERRIS Y-DNA GROUPS

As more and more Ferris males participate in commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing it should reveal an estimated dozen or so different Ferris Y-DNA groups each originating in one of the locations identified in this report. To tie each group to its geographical origin will require the successful analysis of the genetically recurring surname matches from a test subject in each Ferris DNA group. An alternative strategy is to target Ferris males from each of the geographical locations identified in this report for commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing.

NOTE: Consultations done on individual Y-DNA results at Irish, Scottish, and English Origenes are free.

