

Case Study

Pinpointing the Coughlan Irish Paternal Ancestral Genetic Homeland

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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. Approximately 1,000 years ago, one's direct medieval male ancestor, the first for example to name himself 'Mac Colgan' was living near others with whom he was related but who inherited other surnames like Mac Conmhaoil and Mac Fhíodhbhuidhe. Given that hundreds of 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 one's 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 one's 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. Each of the estimated 1,500 unique Irish surnames had a single founding ancestor, which is an estimated 1,500 'Adams' from whom anyone with Irish paternal ancestry (and with one of those unique surnames) can trace direct descent. But science has demonstrated that only 50% of individuals with a unique Irish surname will be related to their surnames founding ancestor (*the surname-Adam*), the other 50% of males will have an association that has arisen due to 'non-paternal events,' usually a result of adoptions 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 typically reflect one's ancestor's neighbours from around 1,000 years ago. As a result, if one's Irish paternal ancestor was descended from a Viking raider, Norman, or Plantation settler, then one's Y-DNA results may reflect earlier English, Welsh, French, and possibly Scandinavian origin. One must approach this process with an open mind!

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Interpreting the Y-DNA test results

To pinpoint a paternal ancestral genetic homeland, one must first use commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing to identify the surnames that appear as one's closest genetic matches or reveal one's terminal Y-DNA SNP mutation. Mr Coughlan's closest genetic surname matches as revealed by commercial ancestral Y-DNA STR and SNP testing are detailed in **Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

111 Y-DNA STR Marker Matches							
Surname	Match Date	Markers Tested	Genetic Distance	Big Y STR Differences	Y-DNA Haplogroup	Paternal Country of Origin	Earliest Known Ancestor
McCavour	April 06 2021	1 to 111	8 Steps	Not Available	I-Y4751	Italy	CAVOUR
Hillen	February 16 2023	1 to 700	9 Steps	11 of 639	I-FTD55149	Northern Ireland	James Hillen b. 1790
Ervin	June 23 2024	1 to 700	9 Steps	12 of 641	I-BY3809	Ireland	Thomas Arvin Sr, b. 1713 and d. 1801
Parker	April 06 2021	1 to 111	9 Steps	Not Available	I-Y4142	England	Eldridge Jackson Parker b 1677
Manson	June 11 2024	1 to 700	10 Steps	10 of 626	I-BY63950	Ireland	Thomas Charles Manson b. 1828 and d. 10 Jun 1888
Hillen	December 23 2022	1 to 700	10 Steps	12 of 631	I-FTD55149	Ireland	Hillen
Lowery	December 08 2021	1 to 12	10 Steps	Not Available	I-M223	Scotland	John Lowery b. 1811 South Carolina
Conville	April 06 2021	1 to 111	10 Steps	Not Available	I-Y4751	Unknown Origin	
McCormick	April 06 2021	1 to 111	10 Steps	Not Available	I-Y4751	Unknown Origin	

67 Y-DNA STR Marker Matches							
Surname	Match Date	Markers Tested	Genetic Distance	Big Y STR Differences	Y-DNA Haplogroup	Paternal Country of Origin	Earliest Known Ancestor
McVey	April 06 2021	1 to 700	4 Steps	12 of 634	I-FT337663	Ireland	James McVey b. 1787 NC and d. 1856 OH
Robertshaw	April 06 2021	1 to 67	4 Steps	Not Available	I-M223	Unknown Origin	
Strange	April 06 2021	1 to 67	4 Steps	Not Available	I-M223	Unknown Origin	
Manson	June 11 2024	1 to 700	5 Steps	10 of 626	I-BY63950	Ireland	Thomas Charles Manson b. 1828 and d. 10 Jun 1888
McEvoy	April 06 2021	1 to 67	5 Steps	Not Available	I-Y4751	Ireland	Owen McEvoy, 1821-1865
McGinnis	April 06 2021	1 to 67	5 Steps	Not Available	I-L137	Ireland	Joseph McGinnis born circa 1827 Ireland
McGinnis	April 06 2021	1 to 67	5 Steps	Not Available	I-M223	Ireland	John McGinnis, Lancaster County, PA
McCourtly	April 06 2021	1 to 67	5 Steps	Not Available	I-Y4751	Unknown Origin	
Morris	April 06 2021	1 to 67	5 Steps	Not Available	I-Y4142	Unknown Origin	
Parker	April 06 2021	1 to 67	5 Steps	Not Available	I-Y4142	England	
Strange	April 06 2021	1 to 67	5 Steps	Not Available	I-Y4751	Unknown Origin	
Durfee	April 06 2021	1 to 111	5 Steps	Not Available	I-M223	Ireland	John Durfee, b. 1793 Ireland
McCavour	April 06 2021	1 to 111	5 Steps	Not Available	I-Y4751	Italy	CAVOUR
McCormick	April 06 2021	1 to 111	5 Steps	Not Available	I-M223	Unknown Origin	
Parker	April 06 2021	1 to 111	5 Steps	Not Available	I-Y4142	England	Eldridge Jackson Parker b 1677

Figure 1: A snapshot of Mr Coughlan's closest Y-DNA STR genetic surname matches reveals an Irish paternal origin. The more Y-DNA STR markers two males share the more recent their shared paternal ancestor once lived. The test subject's Y-DNA revealed surname matches are **NOT RANDOM**, some surnames (coloured arrows) recur among his Y-DNA results. In addition, the test subject's Y-DNA revealed surname matches are dominated by Irish-associated surnames together with males with recorded ancestral links with Ireland which indicates a paternal origin within Ireland. Highlighted font indicates each surnames associated ethnicity or location of an earliest paternal ancestor; Irish/Ireland, Scottish/Scotland, English/England, Irish-associated, Mainland European.

Test Subject	Haplogroup	Closest Recurring Y-DNA STR Marker Matches					
		111 Markers		67 Markers			37 Markers
		Genetic Distance		Genetic Distance			Genetic Distance
		9	10	4	5	7	0 - 4
Coughlan	I-M223	Ervin/Irvin (x3) Parker (x11)	Conville/McConville (x4)	McEvoy/McVey/ MacAvoy/McAvoy (x10)	McGuinness/McGuinness/ McGinnis/McGinnis (x11)	Durfee (x4) ¹ Hanna/Hannev (x8) McCracken (x3)	Carson (x6) Carswell (x4) MacNeil/McNeil/McNeill (x3) McWhorter/McWherter (x3) Paden (x5) Wadkins/Watkins (x6)

Figure 2: Mr Coughlan's closest recurring Y-DNA STR revealed surname matches confirm a most recent paternal origin within Ireland. Each surname appears at the point it first appears as a Y-DNA match, figures in brackets represent the number of males with each surname who appear as a paternal genetic relative at the 111, 67, and 37-marker levels. For example, the first male named 'McEvoy' to appear as a genetic relative shared 63 of 67 Y-DNA STR markers although not all 10 males named McEvoy/McVey/MacEvoy/McAvoy may match at that level. The test subject's closest recurring Y-DNA STR matches are dominated by Irish-associated surnames confirming a most recent paternal link with Ireland. Highlighted font indicates each surnames associated ethnicity; Irish, Irish-associated, Scottish.

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Y-DNA SNP Matches					
Surname	Match Date	Haplogroup	Non Matching Known SNPs	Big Y STR Difference	Paternal Ancestor
Hillen	3/20/2023 12:16:08 PM	I-FTD55149	A45247, 5429789, 5547858, 5964631, 6	11 of 639	James Hillen b. 1790
Hillen	01/10/2023 13:07	I-FTD55149	45247, 5429789, 5547858, 5964631, 65	12 of 631	Hillen
O'Neill	06/10/2021 10:21	I-FT435332	32, 6664769, 12575694, 13235069, 153	13 of 609	Bryan O'Neill, 1860-1921
Allen	06/10/2021 10:21	I-Y92243	T146469, FT175249, 3406581, 3683063,	14 of 590	
Barnes	06/10/2021 10:21	I-Y100052	104810, Y110555, Y100052, 12855502, 8	10 of 491	Joshua D. Barnes b.1801 Harrison,KY d.1850 Colo.
McPike	06/10/2021 10:21	I-Y92243	85, 12855502, BY26364, BY26365, BY26	12 of 562	John Elmer Henretta, b. 1872 and d. 1935
Agnew	06/10/2021 10:21	I-Y67976	2, BY26321, FGC28437, BY26322, BY263	5 of 412	Agnew Samuel
Watson	06/10/2021 10:21	I-BY136377	, Y84689, 12855502, BY26955, BY27102	18 of 585	John Samuel Watson, born 15 Dec 1826, Memphis, TN
Forgey	06/10/2021 10:21	I-BY19896	6424, Y84689, 12855502, BY26364, BY2	12 of 518	Andrew Forgey, 1732-1809
Compton	01/06/2023 11:01	I-FTD5098	1, 6516541, 7813874, 8033510, 854929	13 of 633	John Charles Cumpston, b. 1817 and d. 1900 - 1919
Hunter	8/16/2023 9:25:19 AM	I-Y130736	, FT28718, M4122, FT73996, FT74070, F	13 of 640	
Hunt	06/10/2021 10:21	I-Y39421	5502, BY26985, BY26986, BY26321, FGD	13 of 567	William Hunt, 1693 - 1746, New Jersey
McKenzie	06/10/2021 10:21	I-A7395	3, Y106424, Y84689, 12855502, BY26365	10 of 562	Geo Alex McKenzie b1808 Dunfermline, Fife SCT BIGY
Thompson	06/10/2021 10:21	I-BY37530	615, BY37530, BY37531, BY37533, BY37	14 of 541	
Faumuina	10/12/2021 14:09	I-FTB43268	9505, FT28718, M4122, FT146469, FT17	13 of 634	Tui Pulotu McCarthy, abt 1865
Thompson	06/08/2025 00:08	I-BY63950	140, BY227725, M4122, FT146469, FT1	9 of 623	Abraham Maginnis, b. 1786 and d. 1850

Figure 3: Snapshot of Mr Coughlan's closest Y-DNA SNP genetic surname matches reveal an Irish paternal origin. The more Y-DNA SNP mutations two males share the more recent their shared paternal ancestor once lived. The test subject's Y-DNA SNP revealed surname matches are NOT RANDOM, they are dominated by Irish-associated surnames some of which recur among his results (coloured arrows) together with males with recorded ancestral links with Ireland which indicates a paternal origin within Ireland. Highlighted font indicates each surnames associated ethnicity or location of an earliest paternal ancestor; Irish/Ireland, Scottish/Scotland, Irish-associated, Mainland European.

Upon commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing the test subject did not match others named Coughlan, see **Figures 1 and 3**. This indicates that the test subject may not be directly descended from his surnames founding ancestor, a Coughlan-Adam, the first male to take the Coughlan surname when surnames became common approximately 1,000 years ago. However, Coughlan is a common surname which indicates that there were potentially many unrelated clans that adopted the Coughlan surname, each founded by an unrelated Coughlan-Adam, and it may simply be that others with whom the test subject shares a common founding Coughlan-Adam have simply yet to Y-DNA test. Coughlan is an Irish surname, and the Y-DNA matches to others with Irish-associated surnames together with earliest recorded paternal ancestral links with Ireland confirms an Irish paternal ancestral origin, see **Figures 1, 2, and 3**. The STRs markers examined in the 111 Y-DNA test are prone to replication or deletion with each generation while SNPs are far more permanent mutations. As a result, SNP testing offers a far more accurate glimpse of the precise chronological development of surnames among related males. Block display of the test subject's Y-DNA SNP results reveal that the Coughlan, Hillen, McConville, McEvoy, and O'Neill surnames arose among a tribal group of Gaelic males living in a specific part of Ireland, see **Figure 4**. Block display reveals that these Gaelic Irish males share the I-BY48168 Y-DNA SNP mutation which lies on a branch of the prominent Irish-associated I-M223 Haplogroup tree, see **Figure 4**.

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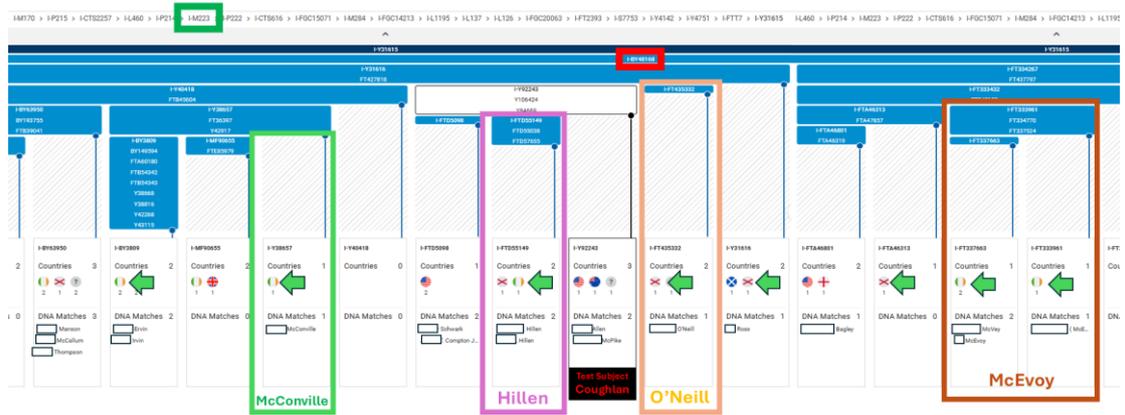


Figure 4: Block display of Mr Coughlan’s closest Y-DNA SNP revealed matches. While the STRs examined in the Y-DNA111 test are prone to replication or deletion with each generation, SNPs are far more permanent mutations. SNP testing offers a far more accurate glimpse of the precise chronological development of surnames among a group of related males. Block display illustrates that the Coughlan, O’Neill (yellow block), Hillen (violet block), McEvoy (brown block), and McConville (green block) surnames arose among Gaelic males living in Ireland (green arrow) who carried the I-BY48168 mutation (red box) which lies on a branch of the prominent Irish-associated I-M223 Haplogroup tree (green box).

The Coughlan Surname in Ireland

All Irish surnames have been extensively anglicised with the 1911 census of Ireland revealing the similar Coughlan, Coughlin, Colgan, and McColgan surnames. An examination of the distribution of individuals named Coughlan, Coughlin, Colgan, and McColgan reveals that they were not scattered uniformly throughout Ireland but concentrated within specific counties, see **Figure 5**. Irish surnames arose in an agricultural society, and as a result, farmers in early census data still concentrated in the area where their surname first appeared or in an area where one’s ancestors first settled. An examination of the distribution of Irish farmers named Coughlan, Coughlin, Colgan, and McColgan reveals at least 12 distinct groups spread throughout Ireland, see **Figure 6**. Since the test subject’s bears the Coughlan surname and has a Y-DNA revealed Irish paternal origin, his paternal ancestry may be linked with 1 of 12 locations within Ireland.

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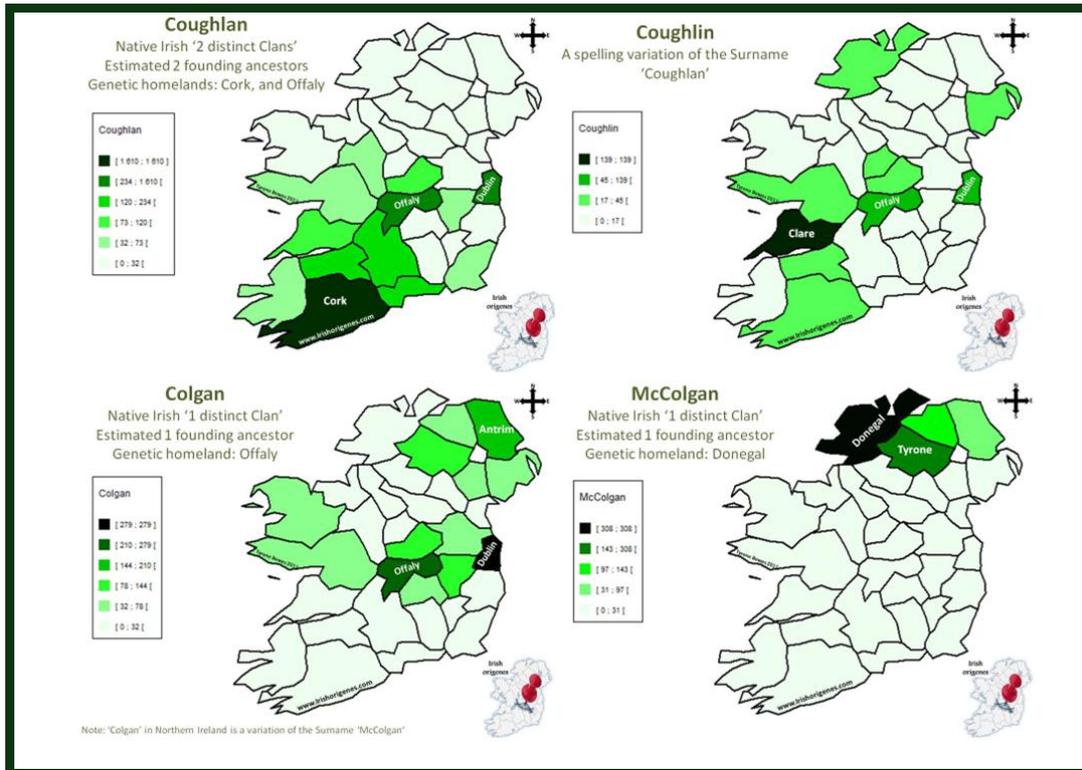


Figure 5: Distribution mapping of the Coughlan, Coughlin, Colgan, and McColgan surnames in Ireland. Distribution mapping reveals that the Coughlan/Coughlin/Colgan/McColgan surname is not distributed evenly throughout Ireland but concentrated in specific Irish counties. Image taken from the Irish Origenes Surname distribution map database.

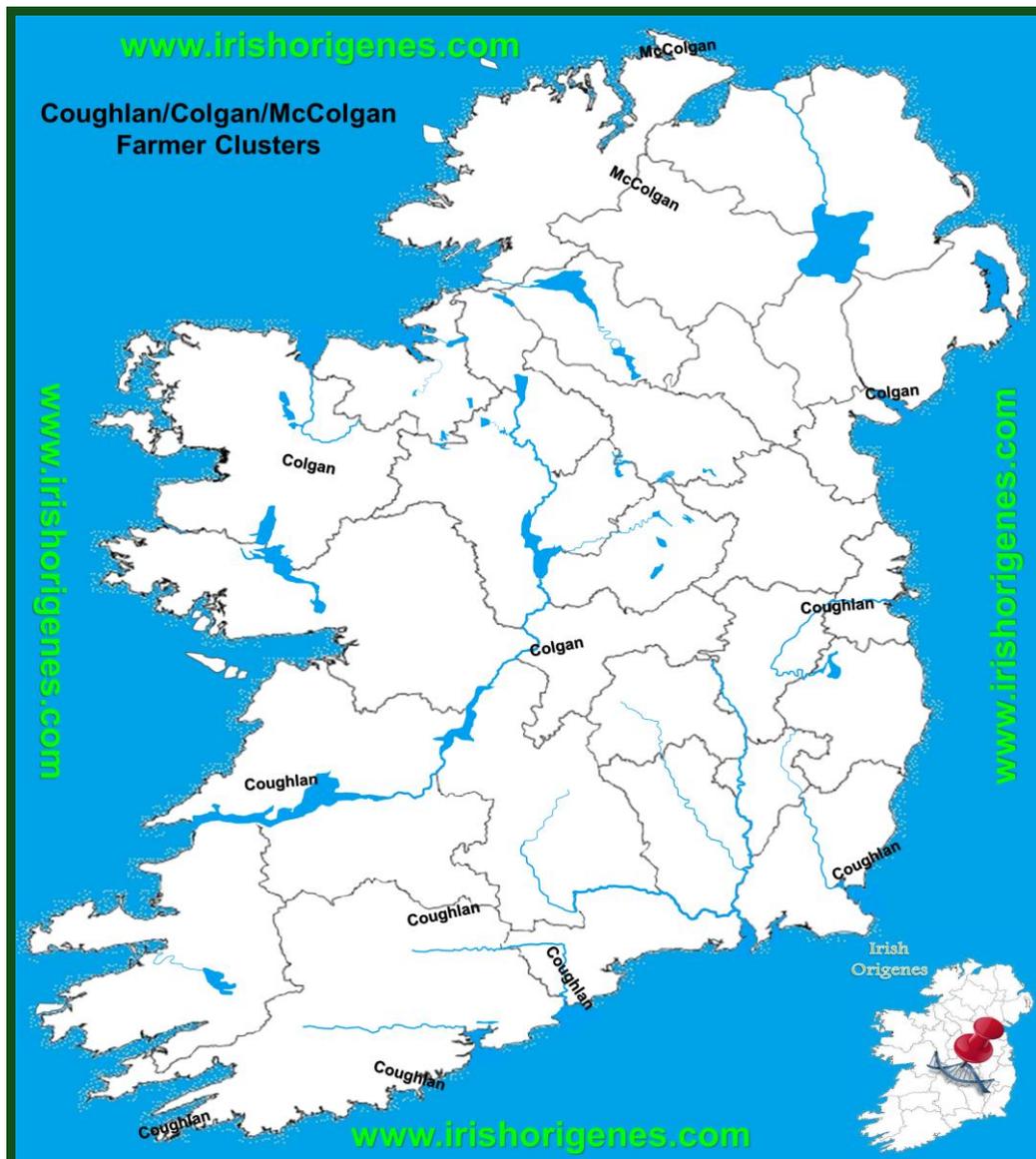


Figure 6: The Coughlan, Colgan, and McColgan farming community in Ireland. Census data reveals that individuals with Gaelic Irish, Norman, or Scottish Gallowglass surnames were overwhelmingly Catholic, while those with 16th and 17th Century Plantation Scottish or English surnames were overwhelmingly Protestant. An analysis of the distribution of Irish farmers named Coughlan, Coughlin, Colgan, and McColgan in 1901 reveals 12 geographically distinct groups indicating the existence of potentially 12 genetically distinct clans, one of whom the test subject may be genetically related to. Each surname is positioned in the location where farmers (Catholic, male, heads of household) with that surname concentrated in early census data. The most common spelling is detailed in each location. Surnames are positioned as they appear on the Irish Origenes Surname maps, free to view online www.origenesmaps.com a surname search function is available at <https://analysis.irishorigenes.com/surnames>

A Paternal Ancestral Origin within Southeast Ulster

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

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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 a Coughlan male from County Mayo will upon Y-DNA testing be a match to individuals with surnames like Sharkey, Mulrenan and Morrisroe, surnames associated with the west of Ireland. In contrast, a Coughlan from County Cork will be a Y-DNA match to males with surnames like O'Sullivan, McCarthy, and Donovan, surnames associated with Southwest Ireland.

Commercial ancestral Y-DNA SNP testing reveals that the Coughlan, Hillen, McConville, McEvoy, and O'Neill surnames arose among a group of Gaelic Irish males living in a specific part of Ireland, see **Figure 4**. Overlay mapping of the Coughlan, Hillen, McConville, McEvoy, and O'Neill farming communities reveals that they **ONLY** occur together within Southeast Ulster, see **Figure 7**. An examination of the surnames associated with the Southeast Ulster reveals the Colgan surname near Carlingford Lough and surrounded by almost all the Irish-associated surnames that dominate the test subject's Y-DNA matches, see **Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, and 9**.

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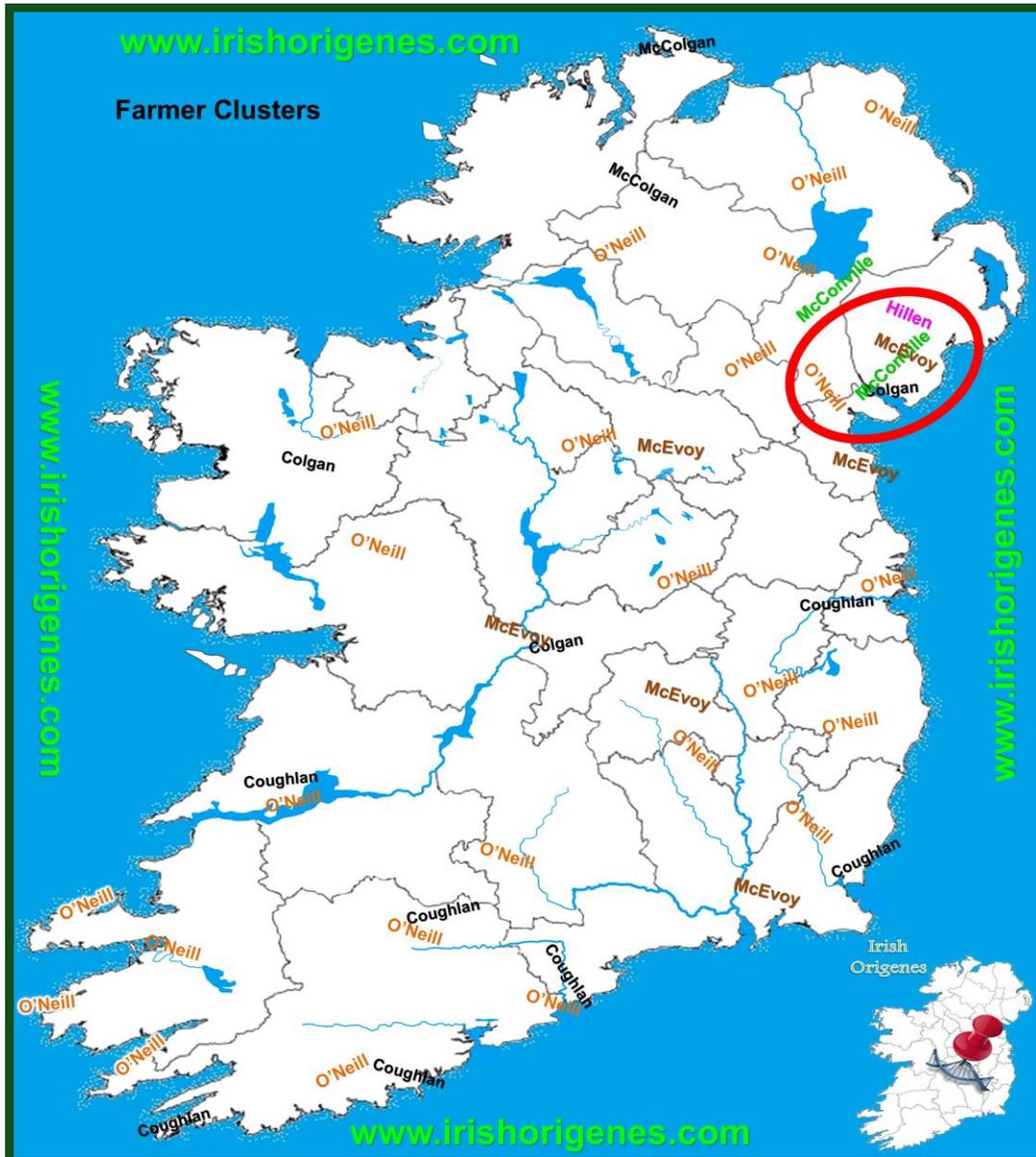


Figure 7: Overlay mapping reveals a paternal ancestral origin within Southeast Ulster. Y-DNA SNP testing reveals that the Coughlan, Hillen, McConville, McEvoy, and O'Neill surnames arose among related I-M223^{+ve} Gaelic Irish males. Overlaying mapping reveals that those surnames only occur together in the farming community of Southeast Ulster (red circle). Each surname is positioned in the area where farmers (Catholic, male, heads of household) with that surname concentrate in early census data. The most common spelling is detailed in each location. Surnames are positioned as they appear on the New Updated Irish Origenes Medieval Surnames map a digital copy of which is free to explore online at www.origenesmaps.com. A surname search function is available at <https://analysis.irishorigenes.com/surnames>

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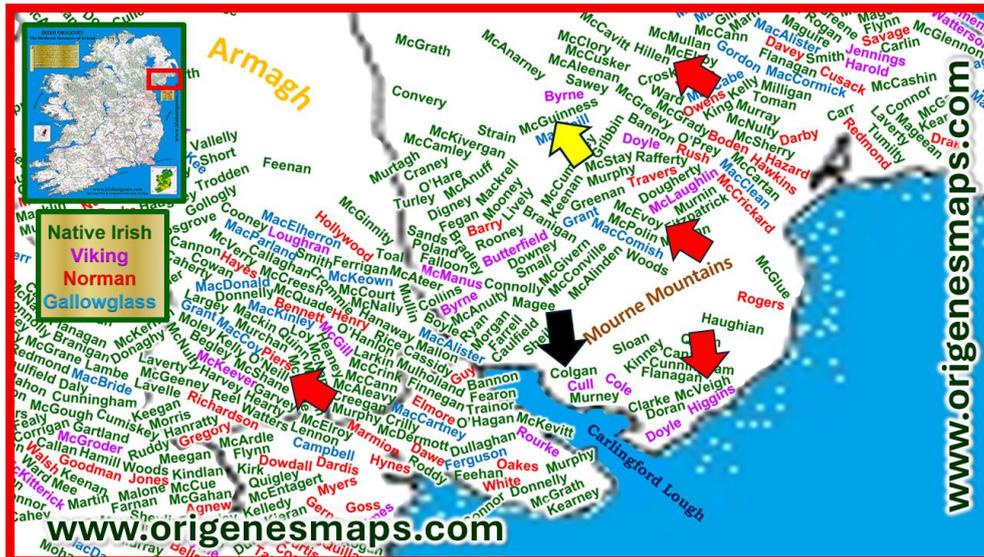


Figure 8: The Medieval (Pre-Plantation) Surnames of Southeast Ulster. Irish farmers still concentrate in the area where their surnames first appeared (Gaelic Irish) or in the area where one's ancestors first settled (Viking/Norman/Planter). An examination of Southeast Ulster as it appears on the Irish Origenes Medieval Surnames of Ireland map reveals the Colgans (Coughlans/**black arrow**) concentrated near Carlingford Lough and surrounded by surnames that appear among the test subject's closest Y-DNA SNP (**red arrows**) or STR (**yellow arrows**) revealed matches. Each surname is positioned in the location where farmers (**Catholic/male/heads of household**) with each surname concentrated in early census data. The most common spelling is detailed in each location. Detail taken from the Irish Origenes Medieval Surnames map a digital copy of which is free to explore online at www.origenesmaps.com. A surname search function is available at <https://analysis.irishorigenes.com/surnames>



Figure 9: The Plantation Surnames of Southeast Ulster. The descendants of early 17th Century Scots and English settlers in Ulster still concentrate in the area where their ancestors first settled and an examination of Southeast Ulster as it appears on the Irish Origenes Plantation Surnames of Ireland map reveals several surnames that appear as close SNP (**red arrows**) or STR (**yellow arrows**) revealed surname matches to Mr Coughlan. Each surname is positioned in the location where farmers (**Protestant/male/heads of household**) with each surname concentrated in early census data. The most common spelling is detailed in each location. Detail taken from the Irish Origenes Plantation Surnames map, a digital copy of which is free to explore online at www.origenesmaps.com. A surname search function is available at <https://analysis.irishorigenes.com/surnames>

The Clan Territories of Southeast Ulster

By the 14th and 15th 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. Commercial ancestral Y-DNA testing and research at Irish Origenes has revealed that one will often exhibit 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 Southeast Ulster as it appears on the clan map, reveals an area dominated by Irish clans in Ulster that bordered lands of the Normans of Leinster, see **Figure 10**. The map reveals that the test subject's Colgans lived in lands dominated by his McGuinness paternal genetic relatives, see **Figures 1, 2, and 10**.



Figure 10: The Clan territories of Southeast Ulster. An examination of Southeast Ulster as revealed by the Irish Origenes Clan Territories map reveals an area dominated by Gaelic Irish clans in Ulster and Norman families in Leinster. The map reveals that the test subject's Coughlan ancestors lived in lands dominated by his McGuinness (red arrow) paternal genetic relatives. The O'Neills (yellow arrow) who appear as a close singular match to the test subject ruled lands in neighbouring County Armagh. Image taken from the Irish Origenes Clan Territories of Ireland Map a digital copy of which is free to explore online at www.origenesmaps.com A surname search function is available at <https://analysis.irishorigenes.com/surnames>

Mr Coughlan's Irish Paternal Ancestral Genetic Homeland

Early census data reveals that the Colgans/Coughlans concentrated in the farmland that surrounds Carlingford Lough in Southeast Ulster, and it is there that the test subject's Irish Paternal Ancestral Genetic Homeland is to be found, see **Figure 11**. It was there that the test subject's direct male ancestor first took the 'Mac Colgan' (son of the Sword) surname surrounded by paternal genetic relatives who took other surnames like Mac Conmhaoil (McConville), Mac Fhíodhbuidhe (McEvoy), and Mag Aonghusa (McGuinness), see **Figures 11, 12, and 13**. With the arrival of 17th Century settlers some paternal genetic relatives would acquire new Scottish or English surnames like Allen, Ross, and Thompson, see **Figures 1,2, 3, 4, and 9**. When one's paternal ancestors have lived in an area for a long time, they will often leave evidence of their links with that area in its surrounding placenames and monuments.

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Although an examination of the surrounding area failed to reveal any placenames that are associated with the test subject's Mac Colgan ancestors, one does find castles and towerhouses associated with his McGuinness paternal genetic relatives, see Figure 11. The test subject's paternal ancestors will however have left evidence of their links with this area in its history, and in the DNA of the current inhabitants.

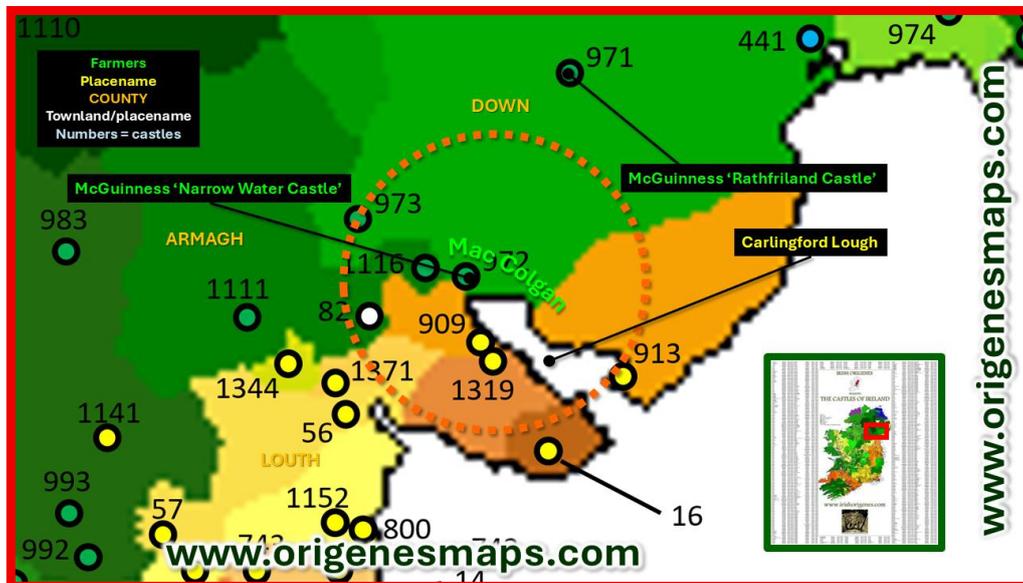


Figure 11: Mr Coughlan's Irish Paternal Ancestral Genetic Homeland. Research at Irish Origenes reveals that the test subject's 'Mac Colgan' paternal ancestors originated in the farmland that surrounds Carlingford Lough in Southeast Ulster, and it is there that the test subject's Irish paternal ancestral genetic homeland is to be found (**orange broken circle**). It was there that his paternal ancestor lived when he first took the 'Mac Colgan' surname approximately 1,000 years ago. His paternal ancestors will have left evidence of their links with this area in its history, and in the DNA of the current inhabitants. Image taken from the Irish Origenes Castles of Ireland Map, a digital copy of which is free to explore online at www.origenesmaps.com A surname search function is available at <https://analysis.irishorigenes.com/surnames>



Figure 12: The Gaelic Surnames of Southeast Ulster. Research at Irish Origenes has facilitated the reconstruction of the Pre-Plantation Gaelic surnames of Ireland. An examination of Southeast Ulster as it appears on the NEW Irish Origenes Gaelic Ireland map reveals that the test subject's 'Mac Colgan' ancestors (**black arrow**). Detail taken from the Irish Origenes 'Gaelic Irish Surnames map,' a digital copy of which is free to explore online at www.origenesmaps.com A surname search function is available at <https://analysis.irishorigenes.com/surnames>

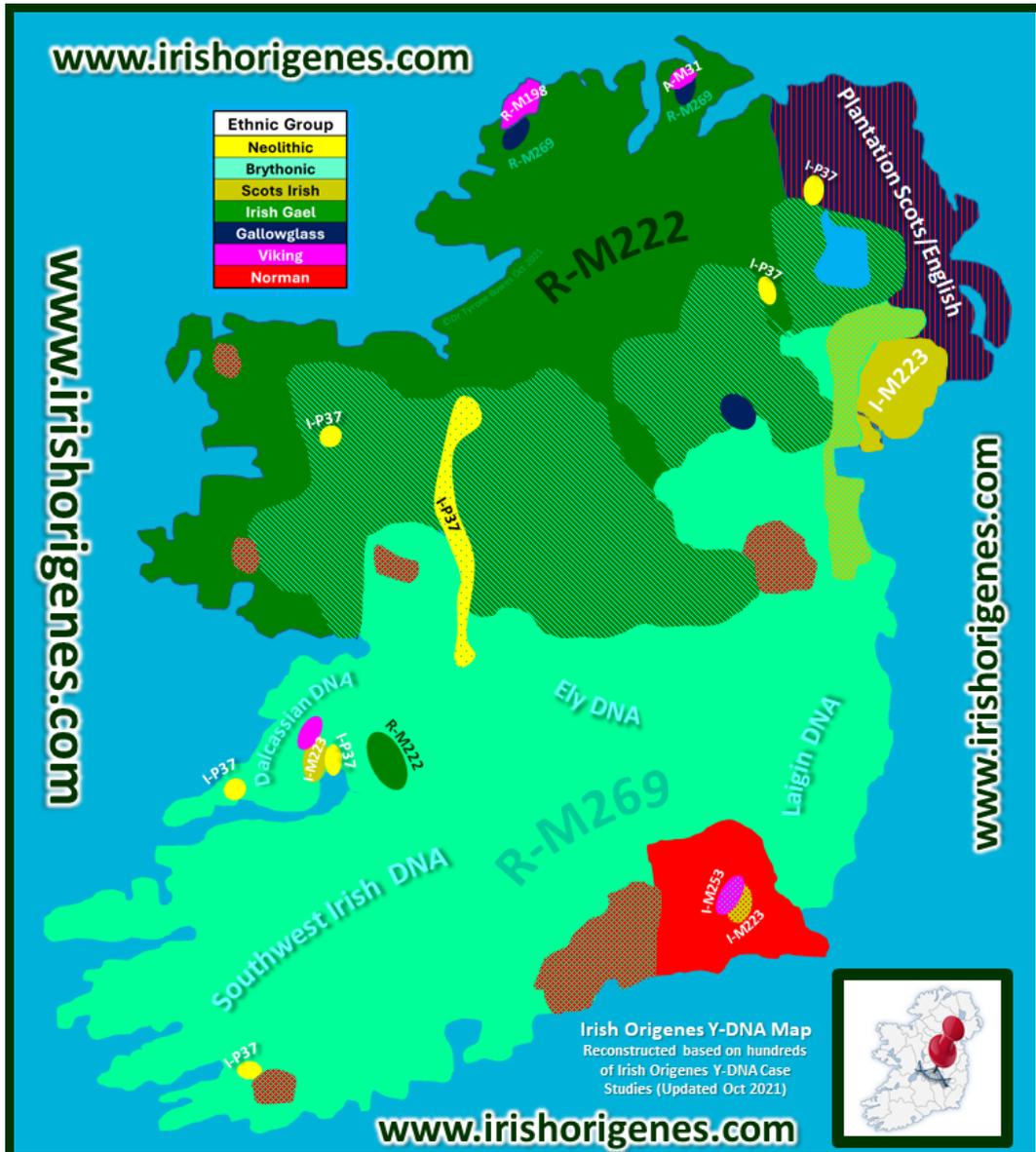


Figure 14: The Irish Origenes Y-DNA Map of Ireland. Y-DNA Case Studies at Irish Origenes reveals an ethnicity map of Ireland. The test subject's paternal ancestors were descended from I-M223 Gaels whose Y-DNA signature dominates Southeast Ulster.

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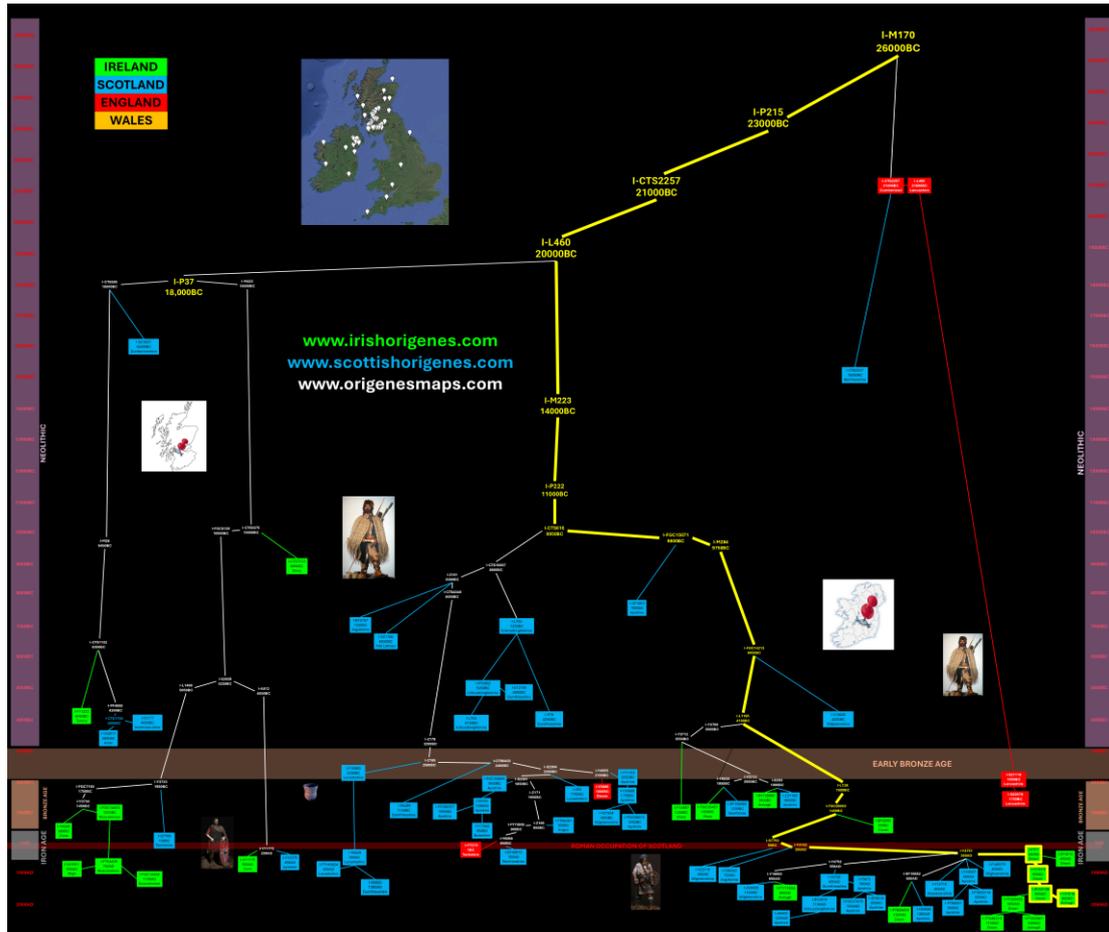


Figure 15: Mr Coughlan's branch (yellow line) on the I-M223 Haplogroup tree. The I-M223 Haplogroup tree is FREE to explore online at www.origenesmaps.com

How to confirm the Coughlan Paternal Genetic Homeland

One must keep in mind that this is a scientific 'DNA' approach. The DNA does not lie, and the paternal origin within Southeast Ulster can be confirmed by Y-DNA testing of males named 'Colgan' who farm the lands that surround Carlingford Lough.