

Who are the Picts? ScotlandsDNA at last finds an answer.

A recently discovered DNA marker suggests that 10% of Scottish men are directly descended from the Picts.



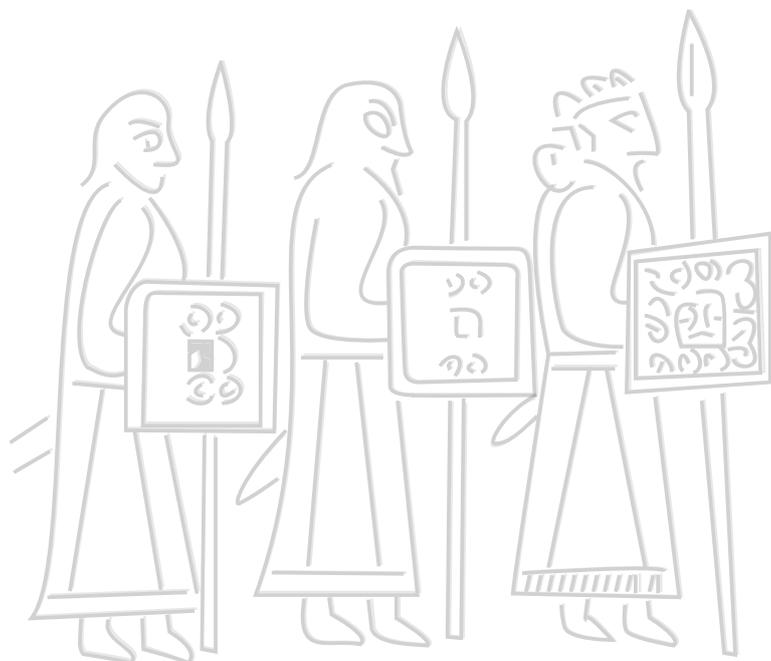
Many generations of historians have puzzled over what used to be called the problem of the Picts. Where did they come from? Who were they? Why did they seem to disappear from history? ScotlandsDNA has found a marker that strongly suggests that they did not fade from the map of our history, and that in fact the Picts are alive, well and living amongst us!

How is it possible to know this? How does the science work? We all inherit a great deal of DNA from our parents, 6 billion letters in all, but some of it can be very informative about our deep ancestry. Fathers pass on Y chromosome DNA to their sons and fatherlines can be reliably traced back through thousands of years.

Dr Jim Wilson, Chief Scientist for ScotlandsDNA, found a new Y chromosome marker which arose amongst the direct ancestors of the Picts. He tested this new fatherline, labelled R1b-S530, in more than 3,000 British and Irish men. And he discovered an amazing statistic, something completely unexpected. R1b-S530 is ten times more common in men with Scottish grandfathers than it is in men with English grandfathers! 10% of over 1,000 Scottish men tested carry R1b-S530 while only 0.8% of Englishmen have it. This difference is highly statistically significant and so can be applied to the general population and it is clear evidence of a very Scottish marker. And there is more.

The pattern in Ireland is also instructive as about 3% of Ulstermen carry the lineage, but was only seen once in over 200 men from the rest of Ireland. It could be assumed that the presence in Ulster is due to the plantations of Lowland Scots in the 16th and 17th centuries. This is a pattern usually seen with markers that appear to be restricted to Scotland.

Ancient Pictland is often defined by historians as the area where the enigmatic Pictish symbol stones and Pictish place-names such as those that have the prefix Pit or Pett are found. This heartland lies in Scotland north of the Forth and stones and pit-names are seen particularly in Fife, Perthshire, Tayside, the North East and around the Moray Firth coastlands.



And indeed, within Scotland there is a strong concentration of the R1b-S530 group in those very same areas, particularly in Central Scotland (17%) and North East Scotland (14%), with a decline towards North and Western Scotland at 8% and South East and South West Scotland at 6%. The difference between Central and Grampian regions and the rest of Scotland is very statistically significant ($P = 4 \times 10^{-8}$). We have yet to see this marker outside of the British Isles.

But where does it come from? What does it mean? A marker that is very common and widespread in Scotland implies that it has been in Scotland for a long time, and the R1b-S530 marker is estimated to be

about 3,000 years old. This strongly suggests that it was common among the ancestors of the Picts, some of the original inhabitants of Scotland. It seems their descendants are living amongst us. And it appears that some Scots, or at least some Scottish men, have not wandered far over the last few thousand years – otherwise this lineage would be more common in England.

So far, we have found 170 men who carry the Pictish marker. We believe that they are Pictish and Proud! A living, breathing testimony to one of the most fascinating and enigmatic facets of the story Scotland and her people.

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Notes to Editor:

Launched in November, 2011, ScotlandsDNA immediately set out to innovate. By combining historical analysis with the genetic information that can be gleaned from testing for ancestral DNA, we aimed to achieve a new understanding of Scotland's history – a people's history.

A commercial company closely involved in scientific research, ScotlandsDNA offers a unique package of information featuring thorough historical analyses of results currently unmatched by any other European DNA ancestry testing company.