

JULY 2006 TRIP REPORT – DNA PROJECT

My overall report is divided into General, DNA, and Archaeology sections.

NIC BURNS – While I was in Dublin, Nic came in from Monaghan for a couple of hours of conversation. Earlier on his trip, Nic had collected four DNA samples from various Byrnes in Monaghan and Louth. Three test results were in, but it was the fourth that Nic especially wanted to see. He said there were two Byrnes crests on tombstones in his area. The one for a Gerald Byrnes (1636-1714) has no chevron. The one for William Byrnes, Apothecary (1695-1755), has the chevron and the mermaid with comb and mirror.

Later, Val Byrnes told me that the Genealogical Office has five different Byrnes crests registered. Hopefully, one of us can obtain copies of these.

VAL BYRNE – Val had invited me to stay with him in Bray, but I was only able to accept his hospitality for one day and night. I went through his extensive Byrnes files, copied his pedigree, and obtained directions to the Carlow cemetery where he found his family crest.

En route from Cork to Dublin at the end of my trip, I visited the cemetery in Clonmore, Carlow, and photographed the Byrnes crest on a broken grave slab, but Val's photos were much clearer and he has drawn a Byrnes crest from it that differs from any other. The mermaid is holding a mirror and a sword, rather than a mirror and comb; there are three lions across the top; and two stars flank the upper hand.

I neglected to ask Val (because I had yet to see the castle) if the O'Byrnes who is buried in Clonmore (Charles of Sleaty) had anything to do with the ruined castle that is close to the cemetery. I did ask the Byrnes who owns a nearby pub if his family had anything to do with the crest on the tomb slab, but even though the pub is quite close to the cemetery, he knew nothing about it.

BRIAN MCEVOY – I wanted to ask Dr. McEvoy in which counties the three Byrnes reside who match the Francis Beirne in our project. I discovered I did not have the proper notes with me to identify the three, so I did not call Brian.

DONEGAL BYRNE – Before my trip I found via the telephone directory that there are about 50 Byrnes families in the Glencolmkille-Kilcar-Killybeg area of Donegal, presumably descendants of the nine O'Byrnes who were there in the 17th century. We have one project member, Bill Burns, who traces his ancestry to Kilcar and who is in our Northwest Cluster. I contacted the secretary of the Donegal Historical Society, and she said she had a Byrnes friend in Kilcar to whom she would write. I also wrote to him, and when in Sligo I followed up with a telephone call. Rather gruffly, the gentleman said, "Nope, not interested."

I am attempting to verify that the Donegal Byrnes, the Sligo Burns, and the Roscommon Beirnes are related (or some of them at least).

ROSCOMMON BEIRNE – I had better luck with this sept. A friend in Sligo had arranged for me to meet Martin Beirnes from Elphin, who is interested in genealogy. I obtained a DNA sample from Martin and mailed it to FTDNA. Martin said he could get

me others if need be, so later I mailed him a test and asked him obtain another DNA sample from a Beirne not related to him.

FATHER BEIRNE – One of the Beirne samples I obtained last year was from a Roscommon priest. Father Francis Beirne is not genetically close to anyone else in the project, including the one other Beirne we have. I called on Father Beirne at his residence in Four Roads and spent several hours discussing his genealogy. He too is from the Elphin area, and it will be interesting to see if he matches Martin Beirne.

JOE BURNS – Joe's and my ancestors lived close to each other in Co. Sligo. We never could establish a paper link, but DNA shows that we are cousins, with a common ancestor more than 200 years ago. I knew that Joe's father still lives in Kilmacurkin, and I assumed they were related to a PJ Burns who lives nearby in Connaghahally, but Joe said no. He also said there is a Ned Burns who lives in Templeboy parish, and he has a nephew, Martin Burns, who lives in Dromore West. There also is a Robert Burns in Easkey village. None of these is related to Joe.

I called on Ned Burns and had a good chat with him, but he was somewhat vague about his ancestry. His father was Martin Burns (b.1883) and his grandfather Pat Burns. He thought his ancestors came from Strandhill. I did not think it the opportune to ask him for a DNA sample on such short acquaintance, so I later mailed a kit to Joe with the request that he obtain a sample from Ned or his nephew Martin.

Robert Burns is a Protestant, and Joe believes he is related to a Bourne family in Killeenduff. I once talked to Walter Bourne of Killeenduff and he said his ancestors came from Castleconnor, so I think I can discount a relationship with Robert. I had to leave PJ Burns of Connaghahally for another day.

BYRNE OF CLARA CASTLE – Anthony Byrne and I have a friend in common-- Brigid Byrne who lives in West Cork but whose family home was Clara Castle in Kilkenny. Anthony's Byrne ancestors are from near there, and he wants to obtain a DNA sample from Brigid's brother, the last male of his line. Unfortunately, the brother says he is not interested. I again approached Brigid about this, and she advised us to be patient. Eventually she will obtain her brother's cooperation. The brother's reason (which makes no sense) is that he has no sons of his own.

On the way from Cork to Dublin I went to the cemetery where the Clara Castle Byrnes are buried and copied the inscriptions on two tombstones. There is no crest on either. I also found Clara Castle and photographed it.

Paul Burns
August 2006