

Our DNA Project

DNA testing is now a worldwide phenomenon and we are all learning of wonderful information being gleaned by academics on the entire human race. A new discipline called genomics has evolved from the collaboration with much older studies such as archaeology, geology, history, medicine, palaeoanthropology and psychology. Thousands of genetic papers are being published each year and the progress of genealogical research continues to advance in leaps and bounds.

In summary, present knowledge leading us onto the genetic trail has established rough estimates of how we all arrived as life on this 3.9 billion year old earth. The species Homo Sapiens, of which you are a member, emerged a mere 200,000 – 1,000,000 years ago from East Africa and spread worldwide exponentially. It is estimated that over 100 billion modern humans have lived on earth since the beginning of our race. As writing has only been practiced for approximately 6,000 years we are left with no historical records of what has happened to humanity during almost all of the past. DNA studies offer a possible method to investigate this unknown past.

The Egan Clan decided in 2002 to embark on the DNA trail and chose Family Tree DNA (FTDNA) in the USA to be our preferred data analysis agency. Various test levels are possible, at 12, 37, 67 or 111 Markers, and after many discussions it was agreed to test for 37 Markers. (The higher the test Markers level, the more the cost). The website of [FTDNA](#) provides a wide range of information about DNA testing, various kinds of tests, interpretation of results, the Genographic Project, Ancestral Origins, Haplogroups, etc. Much of the information was above our heads as the terms were all new to us. In a nutshell the testing method was as simple as using a toothbrush and we agreed to proceed. Testing of one male in a family is sufficient as the DNA on the male side is passed from generation to generation virtually unchanged.

A small group was set up in order to coordinate our efforts and at the present time Greg & Sue Egan in Melbourne, Australia are key to all our DNA investigations. We now have approximately 230 sets of Egan/Keegan DNA analyses from all over the world and have discovered many family links that were unknown prior to the Markers testing. Several clusters of results have been identified throughout Ireland indicating that the family name was more prevalent in those areas than elsewhere. Many, many more questions have been brought to light and rather than delve into these it would be of interest to briefly provide an example of what can be achieved by DNA testing.

A few years ago I received an inquiry from an Agin who was living in Kansas. He explained that he had a “neighbour who lived about 80 km away whose name was Egan who claimed that they were somehow related”. The family folklore in both families was that they came to the USA in the 1740s from somewhere in Ireland. I wrote back to him suggesting that they both should get a test kit from FTDNA and check if they were really related. This they did, and they were a perfect match at 37 Markers! They were from the same family. Their sample results also matched up with two Egan family results from Ireland, one in the USA and another from Australia. The four latter Egans had ancestors who were all traceable to an area close to Ferbane, Co. Offaly. And so it was that these Agin/Egan families, long separated by history, now knew where they were from in Ireland and were able to meet their kin at an Egan Clan Rally in Ireland some years later. A great DNA story ending!

Keeping it Simple

If you have joined the [Clan Egan DNA Project](#) you should have had a 37 marker or more test conducted and received the address of a Member's Page on the FTDNA site showing your results. It is not necessary to understand what the markers mean, but for you to be related to someone most of your markers should match theirs. The number of differences, in simplified terms, is called Genetic Distance.

So how do you interpret the results? Well it's easy enough in fact, just go to your Page and push the "matches" button. You will hopefully see a list of participants you may be related to.

Their contact details, if they have provided them, should be visible if you click on their entry. After that, it is up to you, but we would like to hear of more Ferbane success stories.

There are default settings on the pulldown menus and it may be wise to change the "all" to "Egan" restricting the search to those in the project and reduce the Genetic Distance pulldown to about half the default which will give you people probably related.

Michael J.S. Egan, Mac Aodhagáin 2017