



TCFA Cuairt Litir (TCFA Newsletter)

Tucson Celtic Festival Association



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NEXT MEETING...

The next TCFA meeting will be held at 9am on August 10, 2019 at St. Pius X Church, 1800 N. Camino Pio Decimo.



TCFA COMMUNICATIONS

Here is a list of current TCFA email addresses. These are reassigned as people change positions, so that "President@TucsonCelt.org" is always forwarded to the current TCFA President, as an example. (Note: capitalization does not matter)

Athletic@tucsoncelt.org

Clans@tucsoncelt.org

Entertainment@tucsoncelt.org

General@tucsoncelt.org

HighlandDance@tucsoncelt.org

Membership@tucsonCelt.org

Newsletter@tucsonCelt.org

Operations@tucsoncelt.org

PipeBand@tucsoncelt.org

President@tucsoncelt.org

Secretary@tucsoncelt.org

Sponsorship@tucsoncelt.org

Treasurer@tucsoncelt.org

Vendor@tucsoncelt.org

VicePresident@tucsoncelt.org

Volunteer@tucsoncelt.org

Webmaster@tucsoncelt.org



MEMBER CLAN CONNECTION

TCFA President Dale Pederson

Clan Gunn

Motto: Aut pax aut bellum (Either peace or war).

Crest: An arm attired in the Gunn tartan with the hand grasping a basket hilt sword.

The Clan is Norse claiming decent from Gunni, son of Olaf the Black, who ruled Orkney and the Isles in the 12th century. The Clan lands were in Caithness and Sutherland as well as the Orkney Islands and the fierce reputation of the clansmen was proved in many battles to defend them. The clan's origins stretch over the sea to Norway, and the Clan Gunn themselves also claim descent from the legendary Sweyn Asleifsson, the so-called 'Ultimate Viking', the progenitor of the clan. The current Clan Chief is Iain Alexander Gunn.

2018 HIGHLAND GAMES PROGRAM LINK

For those reading this newsletter who have not seen the 2018 TCFA Program-Magazine, or would like to forward it to a friend, see this link: <http://bit.ly/TUSCelt>

The Tucson Celtic Festival always welcomes new members. Just use the new email address, Membership@tucsoncelt.org

YOUR CELTIC EXPERIENCE...

Speak well of your friend; of your enemy say nothing. *Welsh Proverb*

CELTIC HISTORY AND CULTURE

Part 5: DNA Contradiction

The following was written for the Washington Post on March 17, 2016, by Peter Whoriskey

Ten years ago, the skeletal remains of three humans were found behind McCuaig's Pub in Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland.

The pub owner had stumbled upon an ancient burial while clearing land for a driveway. His discovery would challenge the traditional centuries-old account of Irish origins.

As far back as the 16th century, it was believed that the Irish are the descendants of the Celts, an Iron Age people who originated in the middle of Europe and invaded Ireland somewhere between 1000 BC and 500 BC.

However, the bones discovered behind McCuaig's Pub tell a different story.

"The DNA evidence based on those bones completely upends the traditional view," said Barry Cunliffe, an emeritus professor of archaeology at Oxford.

DNA analysis indicates that the remains found behind the pub belonged to ancestors of the modern Irish and predate the Celts and their purported arrival by a thousand years or more, reports The Star. In other words, the genetic roots of today's Irish people, existed in Ireland long before the Celts arrival.

According to research published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science journal, the "most striking feature" of the bones is how much their DNA resembles that of contemporary Irish, Welsh and Scots. Older bones discovered in Ireland, however, are closer to those of Mediterranean people than to the modern Irish.

Radiocarbon dating indicates that the skeletons discovered at McCuaig's go back to about 2000 BC, making them hundreds of years older than the oldest artifacts generally considered to be Celtic.

"With the genetic evidence, the old model is completely shot," said John Koch, a linguist at the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies at the University of Wales. Dan Bradley of Trinity College Dublin, who is the senior author of the DNA research paper, was reluctant to weigh in on the cultural implications of the finding but did say that the discovery challenges popular beliefs about Irish origins.

"The genomes of the contemporary people in Ireland are older — much older — than we previously thought," he said. So, where does this leave the belief that the Irish and other people of the region are "Celtic"? This may depend on how you define "Celtic."

The first argument revolves around the Irish language, which, like Welsh and Scottish Gaelic, linguists have labeled as Celtic. This group of languages seems to have emerged after a similar evolution from Indo-European and are indisputably related. It is unclear, however, whether the term "Celtic" is an appropriate name for the languages.

The traditional view holds that the Celtic languages originated with the Celts on continental Europe and spread to Ireland, Wales and Scotland. However, a growing number of scholars have started to argue that the first Celtic languages were not spoken by the Celts in the middle of Europe but by ancient people on Europe's westernmost extremities, possibly in Portugal, Spain, Ireland or the other locales on the western edges of the British Isles.

In 2008, Koch, the linguist at the University of Wales, suggested that "Celtic" languages were not imports to the region but instead were developed somewhere in the British Isles or the Iberian Peninsula, and then spread eastward into continental Europe.

He began questioning the traditional beliefs after studying inscriptions on artifacts from southern Portugal, which strongly resembled the languages known as Celtic. The inscriptions dated as far back as 700 BC., which placed Celtic languages far from the Celt homelands in the middle of Europe at a very early date.

"What it shows is that the language that became Irish was already out there - before 700 BC and before the Iron Age," Koch said. "It just didn't fit with the traditional theory of Celtic spreading west to Britain and Iberia." The second line of argument arises from archaeology and related sources.

Numerous digs, most notably in Austria and Switzerland, have traced the outlines of the Celts. The artifacts offer evidence going back as far as about 800 BC. The ancient Greeks and Romans also left written accounts of the Celts, and probably knew them well - the Celts sacked Rome around 390 BC and attacked Delphi in Greece in 279 BC.

It seemed plausible that this group that had invaded Rome had invaded Ireland as well, and in the standard view, it was this people that eventually made it to Ireland. For decades, however, archaeologists and other scholars have noted just how flimsy the evidence is for that standard account and how broad, nonetheless, is the application of the word.

In 1955, an Oxford professor, J.R.R. Tolkien, better known as the author of "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings" novels, described the popular understanding of "Celtic" in a celebrated lecture: "Celtic' of any sort is . . . a magic bag into which anything may be put, and out of which almost anything may come. . . . Anything is possible in the fabulous Celtic twilight, which is not so much a twilight of the gods as of the reason."

Moreover, in recent years, some archaeologists have proposed that the traditional story of the Celts' invasion was, in a sense, exactly wrong - the culture was not imported but exported - originating on the western edge of Europe much earlier than previously thought and spreading into the continent.

In a 2001 book, Cunliffe, the Oxford scholar, argued on the basis of archaeological evidence that the flow of Celtic culture was opposite that of the traditional view - it flowed from the western edge of Europe, what he calls "the Atlantic zone" - into the rest of the continent. In many places of the Atlantic zone, he notes, people were buried in passages aligned with the solstices, a sign that they shared a unified belief system.

"From about 5,000 BC onwards, complicated ideas of status, art, cosmology were being disseminated along the Atlantic seaways," Cunliffe said, and that culture then spread eastward. "If we're right, the roots of what is known as 'Celtic' culture go way way back in time," Cunliffe said. "And the genetic evidence is going to be an absolute game-changer."

If the new scholarship proves correct, exactly what to do with the word Celtic will probably be a matter of some dispute: Should it be applied to languages or cultures that, no matter how clearly defined, were largely uninfluenced by the historical Celts of continental Europe?

Complicating any answer are old ethnic antagonisms: The old notions of a distinct "Celtic race" or "Irish race" have been used not just for poetic tributes, but for scorn.

The famed American anthropologist Daniel Garrison Brinton, for example, described the Celts in 1890 as having conspicuous mental traits: "turbulent, boastful, alert, courageous, but deficient in caution, persistence and self-control, they never have succeeded in forming an independent state, and are a dangerous element in the body politic of a free country. In religion they are fanatic and bigoted, ready to swear in the words of their master rather than to exercise independent judgment."

The new evidence from genetics, however, undermines notions of a separate Irish race, describing them instead as one sliver of the European spectrum.

According to the genetic research, the Irish are at the extreme end of a genetic wave that washed across Europe, a wave of migrants that swept eastward from above the Black Sea across Europe about 2,500 BC.

That wave of migration had been documented in previous research led by David Reich at Harvard University, but it was unclear whether it had extended all the way to Ireland. The Y chromosome and other aspects of the DNA in the bones found behind McCuaig's, however, links the Irish to that surge of population.

"The way to think about genetic variation in Europe is that it is more of a gradient than it is of sharp boundaries," said Bradley, the DNA researcher. "Sometimes, cultural features like language and natural borders can coincide with genetics, but most times not. Genetics is fuzzy, and it doesn't follow political and cultural borders."

Even so, some experts warned that the new findings will disappoint many who would prefer a simpler answer to the question Irish origins.

"The public will always want a place on the map and for someone to point and say, 'This where the Irish are from,'" said J.P. Mallory, an emeritus professor of archaeology at Queen's University Belfast and the author of a book, *The Origins of the Irish*. "But there's going to be no way to do that. These groups were frequently traveling east-west across Europe, from one place to another. Everyone is a mix."

Next Issue: CELTIC HISTORY AND CULTURE
Part 6: More Contradiction