

Nichols & Nicholson Surnames Projects at the Family Tree DNA

PHILLIP NICHOLS, RECENTLY JOINED MEMBER from Detroit, Michigan, reports the following:

“Thanks to the DNA testing done as part of some genealogical work on my family tree, I was able to successfully trace back my family to 1712 Virginia and connect with others on the same tree. Something no one else had been able to do as our family lacked the family records many have. However, the DNA tests did match me with someone else in the Clan who did know his family was Scottish. It seems that we share a common ancestor in Scotland between 1400 AD and 1700 AD.

Although the testing could not be more specific, it did guarantee my family as at least Scottish by descent. For my family this was sufficient.

As more people get tested, more matches will turn up and more people will be able to trace and match up their own family trees.

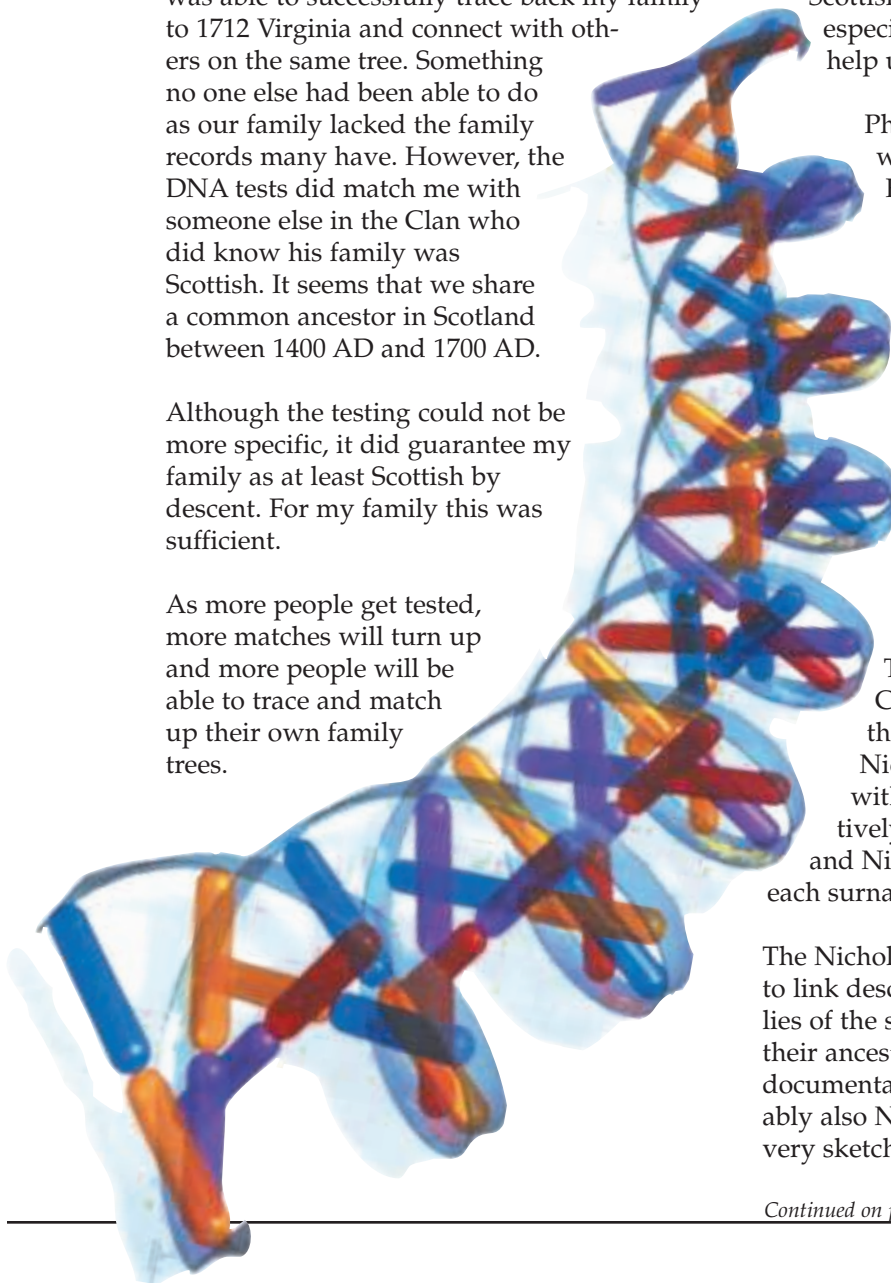
What was even more interesting was to see the difference between the majority English Nichols as compared to our small minor group of four individuals who show a different ancestry. It appears that we have a Viking ancestry, possibly from the time the Danes invaded the Scottish Lowlands. More participants, especially of known Scottish blood, would help us all.”

Phillip’s DNA genealogical research was done through a company called Family Tree DNA - Genealogy by Genetics, Ltd. with world headquarters in Houston, Texas.

Launched in April 2000, Family Tree DNA has been associated since its inception with the Arizona Research Labs, led by Dr. Michael Hammer, a Biotechnology Research Scientist at the University of Arizona, who is billed as one of the world’s leading authorities on the field of genetics.

The main attraction to people in our Clan of the Family Tree DNA is their three Surname Projects involving Nicholson, Nicholson (-2) and Nichols, with 19, 5 and 66 participants respectively as of October 2005. The Nicholson and Nichols Projects involve all spellings of each surname.

The Nichols project use Y-chromosome testing to link descendants of Colonial American families of the surname. Many participants trace their ancestry back to the late 1700s. However, documentation of most Nichols (and presumably also Nicholson) in Colonial America is very sketchy, and it is hoped that the



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Y-chromosome tests might clarify early documents. Many participants have been recruited who trace their ancestry back to specific areas of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

According to homepage of the Nichols Surname Project, it "in essence traces members of a family that share a common surname. Since females (a) don't carry their father's Y-DNA, and (b) acquire a new surname by way of marriage, in order to be relevant to the Surname Project, the tested individual must be a male who wants to check his paternal lines (father's father's father's...). Females should look for a brother or a cousin with the Surname to be tested."

Clan MacNicol does not officially endorse the Family Tree DNA Surname Projects. However, DNA testing does appear to have a growing place in genealogical research as an adjunct, complement or partial alternative to traditional records-based methods. The main limitation of these type of projects derives from the relative-

ly small number of participants. However, as in the case of Phillip Nichols, there is the chance of establishing a genetic linkage to individuals who serendipitously might possess well established family trees.

One practical consideration is that DNA testing does cost. For example, Family Tree DNA tests range in price from \$99 for a group rate for a "Y-DNA - Male 12 marker paternal test" (the standard to verify the Y chromosome for genetic matches between males), to \$995 for a group rate "MegaDNA test" (advertised as the most comprehensive and highest resolution DNA test available in the market for genealogy purposes).

For more information on the Surnames Projects, it is worthwhile checking the www.familytreedna.com website. Also of interest both for understanding the science involved in genetic research and for considering alternative sources of testing, are the websites www.relativegenetics.com and www.dnaprints.com.

