

## OUR STUDY: THE O'BRIEN IRISH ROYAL LINE, R-DC782, THE "Y" MALE LINE OF DESCENDANTS

*By Dennis John O'Brien*

### Abstract

How the discovery of the Y-STR signature, "[A Set of Distinctive Marker Values Defines a Y-STR Signature for Gaelic Dalcassian Families](#)", Dennis M Wright, JoGG Vol 5 Number 1 (Spring 2009) (a), led to the discovery of the R-L226 DNA Haplogroup, which lead to the discovery of a Haplogroup for a King and his descendants.

This paper builds on the discovery of this Y-DNA signature to establish that the SNP R-DC782, which dates from 900CE and is 7 splits after R-L226, the known Dalcassian Clan SNP, dated from 250CE (g), belongs to those who are descendants of King Brian Bóramha, AKA known as Brian Boru.

Thus, supporting a paper trail history over 32 generations in the Inchiquin Line leading to the current Leader of the Clan, Sir Conor Myles John O'Brien, 18th Baron of Inchiquin, as well as finding the missing descendant line from the senior royal line through [Daniel O'Bryan, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Clare \(c1577-c1663\)](#) (c).

As will be discussed later, there is evidence that those who carry this DC782 SNP are primarily of the surname O'Brien, while some have changed names because of political, religious reasons, adoptions, or because of a Non-Paternal-Event (NPE), with most having a known historical connection to the old Provinces of Munster and Thomond.

There are 94 people who have been tested through [FamilyTree DNA](#) (b) and carry the SNP R-DC782, 74 are members of the O'Brien Surname Project and carry a surname associated with O'Brien. There are 4 with the surname O'Dea, who presumed to be of the O'Brien line from associations and family swapping in the 14-15<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

That only leaves 12 other males of various surnames with no connections to the O'Brien's that can be confirmed at this time.

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### Introduction

#### History of Surname Project:

The [O'Brien Surname Project](#) (d) was created and announced on October 21, 2004 and registered with FTDNA (b). The first administrator was Michael O'Brien, of California, was a member of the O'Brien Clan Advisory Council.

One of the first members tested for the then 12 marker Y DNA, was Conor O'Brien, Clan Chief, and holder of the title "The O'Brien", the traditional Chief title going back a thousand years within the Clan. Conor is the 32<sup>nd</sup> descendant of King Brian Bóramha (Brian Boru) 942-1014CE as evidenced by paper trail and accepted family records.

There are many people with the name O'Brien, or one of its accepted variations (O'Bryan, Bryan, Brien, Bryant, O'Bryant, as examples)

In the Irish tradition the designation of "O" represents that the person is the "grandson" of Brian or Brien. In the period of 900CE to 1100CE there were several Clans where the name "Brian or Brien" was common for Clan Leaders. As the slow spread of surnames developed it was normal for a resident family to take of the name of their "Lord" or on whose lands they resided. Thus, the Surname O'Brien (O'Brian) became common.

However, within the Dalcassian Clans there was only one group who took on this Surname and that was those who were descendants of King Brian Bóramha (Brian Boru) or lived on the land holding of one of his descendants. The descendants of Brian Boru continued for many generations to be Provincial Kings or Princes and over time held extensive land holding in the Munster and Thomond Areas of Western Ireland.

Therefore, there are any people with the surname of O'Brien, but only a few who are DNA descendants of Brian Boru.

The O'Brien Surname Project was established and open to any person with the name O'Brien, or variation, based on a false concept that all such persons were related or had connection back to Brian Boru.

In the early days of "Y" testing, at 12 markers it appeared that the connection was very common and broad. It was only when the "Y" 25 and later the 37 markers became measurable, supported by the discovery of the R-L226 SNP in late 2009, that it became obvious that not all those of the name were in fact related. In some cases, non-Irish origins started to appear, especially those connected with Vikings, Normans and others who became integrated into the Ireland of the Middle Ages.

It was during 2008, that Michael O'Brien stepped down as Administrator and I was asked to take on that position from then, a position I still hold.

By December 2009 there were 150 members registered in the project. By this time the SNP R-L226 (Irish Type III) had been identified and was now recognised as the defining SNP for those who were descendants of the Dalcassian Clans. The O'Brien's were mainly that grouping.

As of January 2023, the project has 975 members, of which 254 have been tested to the Big Y level. In total 172 members have a related O'Brien Surname connection and are known or presumed to be carriers of the R-L226 SNP.

The balance of the O'Brien related surname members have been identified as belonging to other Haplogroups, mostly "R" related but also of the "B", "E", "G", "I", "J", "N", "Q" and "T" groups.

There are 63 members who though being R-L226 SNP, have no O'Brien related surname connection. Their surnames do relate, in most cases, to other known Dalcassian Clans and their results show SNP's that precede those of the R-DC782 haplogroup.

## Methods and Data

### Discussion

It is proposed that the haplogroup called R-DC782, a derivative of the R-L226 and the earlier R-M269 haplogroups, can be used to support that a male who test positive for R-DC782, is a descendant of King Brian Bóramha.

The paper by Dennis M Wright (2009) and the subsequent discovery of haplogroup R-L226 with clearly defined and exclusive makers in the DNA sequencing clearly established that those males with his SNP in the Ancestral Path are descended from members of the Irish Clan Dal gCais. This is further supported by the surnames of members of the L226 FTDNA Project which overwhelmingly are names associated with ancient and known sub-clans of this Greater Regional Clan.

If this conclusion is accepted and given that the surname O'Brien is one of the major sub-clan groupings, then it is

reasonable to expect that with the development of the Big Y testing regime we may expect that there would be a point in time when the male SNP results split between those of other sub-clans and the O'Brien's descending from the High King in the middle of the 900CE period.

The L226 Project shows hundreds of members who have the SNP L226 in their ancestral DNA history, of which 91 have tested positive to R-DC782. There are several other members who show indications that they would also test positive for DC782, however at this time those confirming tests have not been undertaken. Therefore, for this paper only those members confirm as DC782 in either the L226 or the O'Brien Surname Projects are being used for the analysis. Currently over 95% of those with positive tests appear in both projects.

After the discovery of the L226 SNP, it was the finding of the R-DC1 SNP in 2009 showing a significant split on the membership of the L226 project, supported by an almost exclusive use of an O'Brien related surname, that we realised that it became apparent there was a DNA path which exclusively cover the O'Brien sub-clan within the Dalcassian Clan.

This was further supported by the fact that Member 29355, Conor O'Brien was found to have a SNP of FGC13418. This SNP was also shared by member 477041, Tasman O'Brien. Both these person were related, being 4<sup>th</sup> cousins with a common ancestor of Sir Edward O'Brien, 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet of Inchiquin, (1773 – 1837), a 27<sup>th</sup> great grandson of Brian Boru.

The DNA connection (MRCA) proved that FGC13418 and an earlier SNP of FT120209 were common to both these members and they also were derived from the SNP YFS231286, believed to date from around 1200CE. (Refer to Chart-1)

Also, there are currently 32 members of the Projects who are also tested positive for this SNP. Within that group are a family of members named "Brien" who can show descentance through the senior line of the O'Brien's as descendant of Viscount Clare line(R-DC344) and thus connecting the Two separate, distantly related families

of O'Brien back to the late 1400's CE at the time of the split in the Royal Irish line and the renouncement of the title of "King" in exchange for titles Earl of Thomond and Baron of Inchiquin.

Also, another group of O'Brien's who test positive for haplogroup, R-YSF231286, split after this SNP with DC1344, at around the early 1400's CE period, just before the historic changes to the titles of the senior O'Brien in late 1400CE. It is within the group that the family name O'Dea appears and would indicate that a minor O'Brien Family was use in securing the swap of sons for security or loyalty purposes. *(This is not part of this paper and may be subject to another paper in the future.)*

The one haplogroup that all these diverse yet related family members have is that they all test positive for R-DC782. This Haplogroup has been determining by FTDNA to originated in the 900CE timeline.

Therefore, it is not unreasonable to believe that Brian Boru either was the person whom R-DC782 SNP was originated or one of his sons.

While we know Brian had several brothers, all who died because of war or clan fighting and that they were originally from the "mac Cinnéide" Clan within the Dal gCais Clan, which eventually became known as the "Kennedy" surname family.

The Kennedy's who have been tested using the Big Y have shown negative for R-DC782 but positive for R-ZZ34\_1 SNP which the immediate split before DC782 and dates form around 800CE.

No person with a surname associated with a non-O'Brien related surname, but still with a Dal gCais clan surname has tested positive to R-DC782.

## Charts displaying various confirmation of haplogroup history and membership

Chart-1: Ancestral Path of the Haplogroups from R-FGC5626 to R-L226 and then its SNP's sub-clads  
Displaying the changes in SNPs over the time period and the splits that occurred before and after R-DC782

Ancestral Path of the Haplogroups from R-FGC5626, to R-L226 and then its SNP's sub-clads					
Examples of the splits and time line between one, the O'Brien's and two the O'Brien's and Kennedy Sub-Clans					
FTDNA Members 29355 & 477041 (4th cousins of the Inchiquin Line) - R-FGC13418					
Steps	Haplogroup	Age Estimate	Time Passed	Immediate Descendants	Tested Modern Descendants
-1	R-FGC5626	750 BCE	1,350 years	2	800
0	R-L226	250 CE	1,000 years	2	799 (a)
1	R-FGC5660	300 CE	<100 years	2	629
2	R-Z17669	450 CE	150 years	5	599
3	R-ZZ31_1	500 CE	<100 years	4	400
4	R-FGC5628	550 CE	<100 years	3	321
5	R-FGC5623	600 CE	<100 years	3	253
6	R-FGC5659	650 CE	<100 years	4	228
7	R-ZZ34_1	800 CE	150 years	8	183
8	R-DC782	900 CE	100 years	2	94 (b)
9	R-Y5610	1050 CE	150 years	8	69
10	R-DC1	1150 CE	100 years	5	52
11	R-YFS231286	1200 CE	<100 years	2	32
12	R-FT120209	1400 CE	200 years	4	11
13	R-FGC13418	1800 CE	400 years	2	2
FTDNA Members N142662 & S112632 & IN73613 (descendants of the Viscount Clare Line) - R-FTB68795					
11	R-YFS231286	1200 CE	<100 years	2	32
12	R-DC344	1450 CE	<100 years	3	7
13	R-DC310	1850 CE	400 years	3	5
14	R-FTB68795	1900 CE	<100 years	3	3
FTDNA Members 405921 & 422354 (Descendants of the Kennedy Lines) - R-DC951					
7	R-ZZ34_1	800 CE	150 years	8	184
8	R-DC709	1050 CE	250 years	5	23 (c)
9	R-DC1544	1150 CE	100 years	4	7
10	R-DC951	1850 CE	700 years	2	2

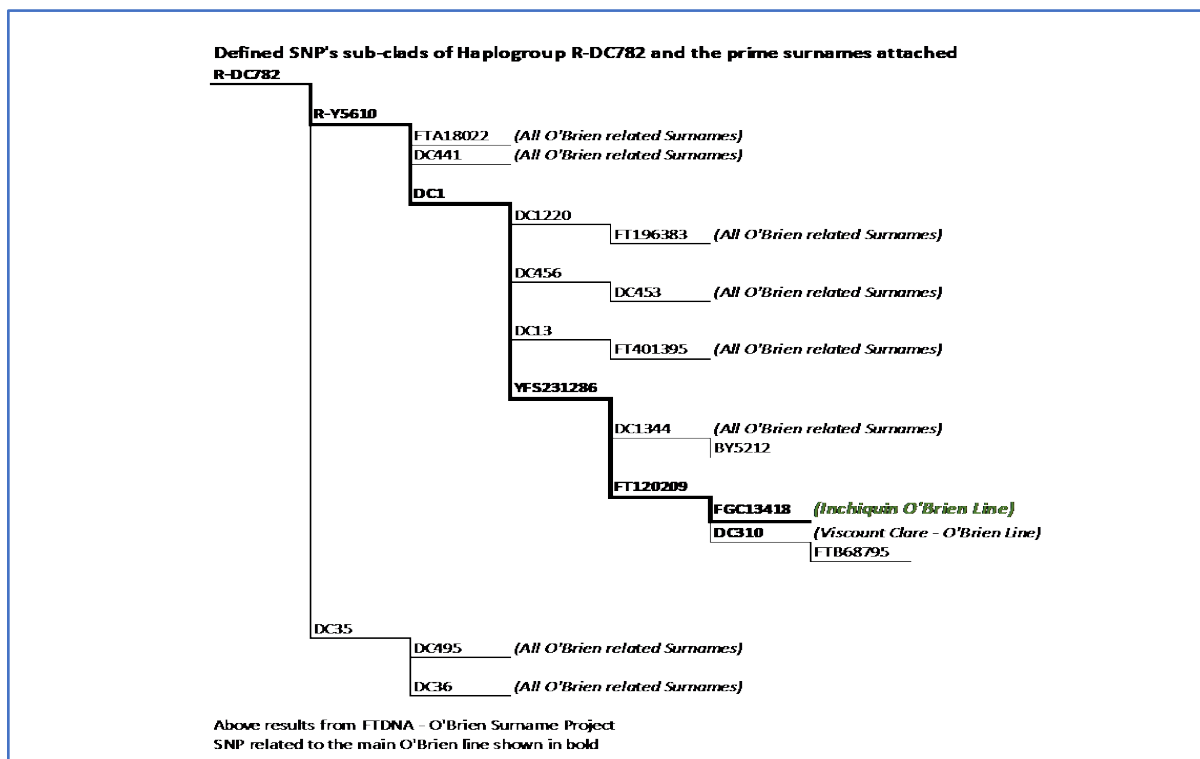
(a) R-L226 is the defining haplogroup for the Dal gCais Clan

(b) R-DC782 is the proposed haplogroup for the descendants of King Brian Boru - (95% recorded with this SNP have an O'Brien surname connection)

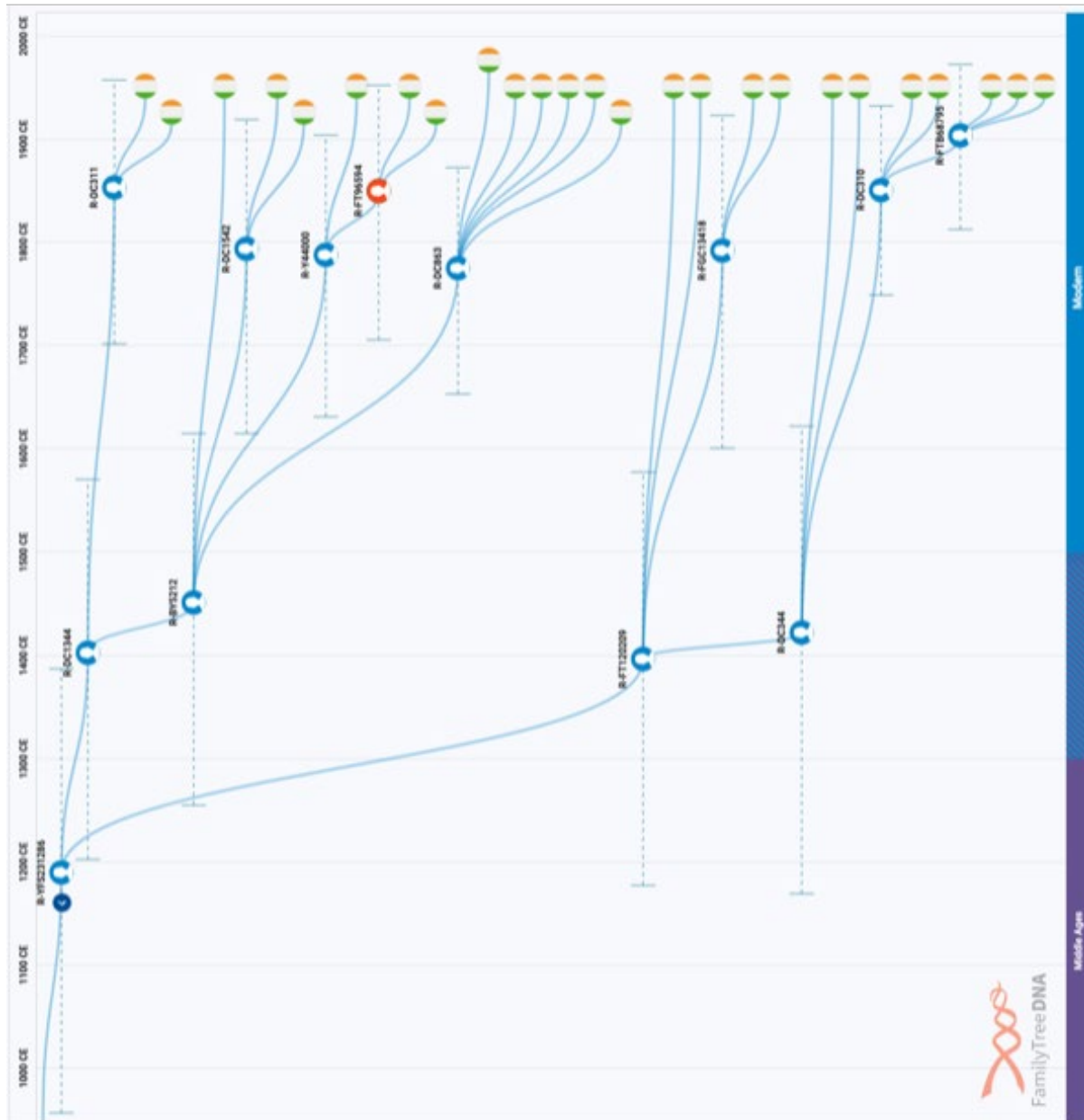
(c) Members testing negative for R-DC782, this Kennedy line is an example of no O'Brien surname connection. This split occurs prior to the time line of Brian Boru and falls in line with the separation between the sub-clan of O'Brien's and the Kennedy's.

Chart-2: Defined SNP Sub-clades for R-DC782

Displaying the pathways of the DNA for the “senior” line of the O’Brien’s



**Chart-3: Tree Time for Haplogroup R-YFS231286**



## Conclusion

Based on the results of Y-DNA testing and the identification of a Haplogroup R-L226, which has been shown to belong to descendants of a small yet prominent Clan of Western Ireland in the Middle Ages, the Dal gCais Clan, which is well documented as the Clan from which the historical High King of Ireland, Brian Bóramha, was a member and head of this Clan, was a members, we can conclude that Brian would have been the carrier of the R-L226 SNP.

Unfortunately, his remains have been lost in time and the remains of his sons are not in places where access and therefore DNA samples can be obtained, we are then required to use logic as a bases for determining which downward SNP Brian would have carried or may have originated.

Given that the overwhelming results show that those with R-DC782 are of the surname O'Brien, which is derived from being a descendant of a "Brian". And given the continued blood and DNA lines in the Inchiquin and Viscount Clare families from the Princes and Kings of Munster and Thomond O'Brien family lines. And given that males tested for R-ZZ34-1, the precursor SNP to R-DC782, but negative for R-DC782, are not of the O'Brien Surname, but related to names associated with his earlier generations.

In addition, timelines for the haplogroup R-DC782, as determined through the records of FTDNA align with the period of Brian Bóramha known lifetime - 942-1014CE.

The DNA evidence for this O'Brien subgroup supports the paper trail lineage (mostly unusual among royal or noble documented lineages!) and that then further, assuming that the lineage is correct would mean that R-DC782 is the most likely haplogroup corresponding to Brian Boru himself.

The writer believes it is reasonable to claim that Brian Bóramha, born into the Dal gCais Clan, later to be crowned the High King of All Ireland and King of Munster and Thomond, is the progenitor of the haplogroup R-DC782 and that his descendant are the only carriers of this SNP.

## Acknowledgements

Research support: Neville J Brien, Dennis M Wright

Endorsed by: Sir Conor Myles John O'Brien, Head of the O'Brien Clan of the Dal gCais Clan, 18 Baron of Inchiquin, 32nd descendant of King Brian Bóramha (Brian Boru) 942-1014CE, High King of Ireland and King of Munster and Thomond

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest and no commercial interests in the subjects covered by this study. He has no financial or personal interest in Family Tree DNA.

## References

- a) "A Set of Distinctive Marker Values Defines a Y-STR Signature for Gaelic Dalcassian Families", Dennis M Wright, JOGG, Vol 5 Number 1 (Spring 2009).  
<https://jogg.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/51.002.pdf>
- b) FamilyTreeDNA, based in Houston, Texas USA, Now owned by MYDNA, Inc. a Melbourne, Australia.  
Website: <https://www.familytreedna.com/>
- c) The "Brien's of Paramatta", Sydney Australia  
Website: <https://www.parrabriens.com/>
- d) O'Brien Surname Project (FTDNA)  
Website:  
<https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/obrien/about/background>

- e) Charts 1-3 have been produced using Surname Project information available to FTDNA Administrators.
- f) In this text the following abbreviations have been used
- DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid)
  - SNP (single nucleotide polymorphism)
  - STR (short tandem repeat)
  - yDNA or Y-DNA (y-chromosomal DNA)
  - FTDNA (Family Tree DNA)
- g) While FTDNA says R-L226 originated ~250CE, YFull is suggesting ~500CE – (these differences relate to the size of the sampling base, which is larger in FTDNA).

## General Background References

- The Irish Genealogist: the O'Briens of Dough and Ennistymon. By P. I. D. O'Brien and Kenneth Nicholls.
- ODavorens of Cahermacnaughten, Burren, Co. Clare. By George U. MacNamara.
- Kevin O'Brien's research on his DC344 line.