

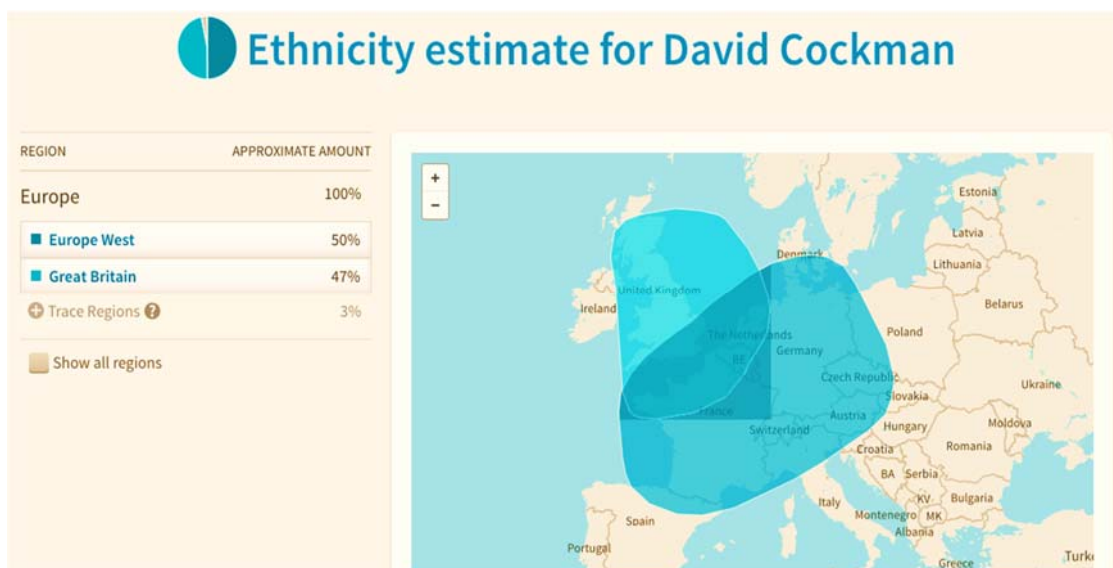
DNA Testing - “Genetic Astrology”?

I have written previously in this place about the constant badgering to have my DNA tested whenever I do any research on the ancestry.co.uk website and of my doubts about the value of any such tests to reveal anything significant about my possible ancestors. At a minimum of £100 per test it is clearly a nice little earner for all the family history websites and a google search now shows a long list of DNA testing firms hoping to cash in.

But recently, following a little win on Ernie, I caved into to the advertising pressure, deciding to put to the test the claim that all manner of unsuspected “secrets’ about my past would be brought out into the open. I signed up, paid my £100 and received by return of post a package containing a plastic phial in which to send a sample of my saliva for the test. That this was then to be sent to an address in the Irish Republic produced a little tinkle from my alarm bell. Was my valuable spit to be placed into the hands of leprechauns? The test, I was told, would take from six to eight weeks to complete and during the wait encouraging e-mails came from Ancestry stoking up the fires of expectation and anticipation. I almost became a believer!

A few days ago I received an e-mail containing the results. Click here to discover the TRUTH! I hardly dared! Did I really want to know who might be lurking in my past, ready to jump out and sock me in the teeth? Or perhaps it would be good news: Mozart, a not too distant cousin, Marilyn Monroe, my long-lost sister.

Alack and alas! The woeful cynicism with which I have regarded the whole process of DNA tests turned out to be more than justified. For this is what I got for my £100:



An estimate of my ethnicity showing that I am 47% British and 50% West European. And that was it, all wrapped up in several pages of mostly impenetrable jargon. No ghosts, good or bad. No ancestor wearing a helmet with horns wading ashore on the east coast. In short a total lack of the detail I had been led to expect. My result will almost certainly be replicated by the vast majority who have lived in this country for many generations. So, don't bother! Buy a couple of cases of wine instead!