

The Viking II Project

Our Society is delighted we can support and promote a new and exciting venture to learn more about the genetic roots of many health conditions. Viking II is seeking 4,000 volunteers – the only condition is that you must have at least two of your four grandparents who are from Shetland or Orkney. The study, based in the University of Edinburgh, is led by Prof Jim Wilson – himself with links to Fair Isle and Orkney. The study costs no money. They will take a sample of your DNA, through a simple “spit kit”, and will include a questionnaire of various issues – your health status, as well as other less obvious matters like, do you wake early or late? They will prepare your DNA profile and make comparisons with others, to see whether and how much various conditions seem to be linked to our genes. All the data is carefully protected and not shared with any other agency. For the first time, this study allows that, if a variant that signals the likelihood of a serious health condition is found, they will make contact through the NHS – but only with people in the UK. Those of us outside the UK won’t be automatically given information, but can get it on request. All the questions are found in the link to the study, and we have also a link to the lecture Prof Jim Wilson gave at the launch of Viking II in Shetland last month.

NZ was a disproportionately popular place for Shetlanders to emigrate to – so we are a great place outside of Shetland to find people who have two or more Shetlandic grandparents. If you know anyone with Shetland or Orkney connections – whether a member of our Society or not – pass on this information. We believe we could make a very real contribution to the growth of knowledge about genetics and health by taking part. (It doesn’t matter where your grandparents actually lived – it’s what is their genetic heritage that counts, not their place of residence.)

My own family has already benefited by learning more about genetic conditions we have inherited via our Shetland forebears – I encourage you to research this Viking II project, and to consider taking part.

Peter Glensor

President