

# EVERYONE HAS ROOTS

## No. 10 Proving your research is correct

### “GPS” FOR THE CORRECT ANCESTOR – CAN YOU PROVE IT?

It is an unfortunate fact of family history research that there are usually very few absolute truths when establishing family relationships (though DNA testing is making inroads) or discovering what happened to an ancestor. Research is both a science and an art and is totally dependent upon the skill and knowledge of the researcher. You will probably make mistakes in the early stages of your quest and have to come to terms with the “probability” factor.

The protocol of proving you have located the correct ancestor will prevent you from following an incorrect ancestral line. Many researchers have traced generations of the incorrect family because they did not take the time to prove their ancestry connection before moving on to earlier generations, only to discover much later that they were on the wrong track. Just like using a GPS navigation system when driving a car and knowing you will arrive at the correct destination, so there is a GPS for tracing the correct ancestry associated with your family.

The Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS) is a guidance system for establishing the reliability and proof of a genealogical research conclusion with reasonable certainty. This standard requires five very fundamental steps which should occur at each stage of your research:

1. That reasonably exhaustive research has been conducted looking at more than one record for one event.
2. Each fact has been analysed and is supported by a complete and accurate source citation.
3. Your evidence is reliable, taken from recognised records that you have skilfully correlated and interpreted.
4. Any contradictory evidence you find has been researched and resolved so there is no element of doubt over your result.
5. Your conclusion has been soundly reasoned.

The over-riding element is that you should be prepared to re-evaluate if and when new evidence becomes available.

Just remember that in referring to the quality of the information contained within a particular record used, primary information is deduced from records created at, or very close to, the time of a particular event with information provided by a person who had first-hand knowledge of that event. Where possible this category of record should be used in research.

Secondary information, by contrast, is information found in records created sometime after the time an event occurred or was contributed by a person who did not have first-hand knowledge of an event. Primary information usually carries more weight than secondary information.

Like any pursuit, genealogy and family history, if they are worth doing, are worth doing well. Set yourself high standards of research, documentation and presentation of your results, and keep to them.

## **USEFUL WEBSITES FOR INITIAL FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH**

The following is a list of URLs for the most useful key websites used for basic family history research which have been referred to within the text of this book.

(F) = free, (S) = subscription

<a href="http://www.familysearch.org">www.familysearch.org</a>	(F)	searchable family history records worldwide
<a href="http://www.freebmd.org.uk">www.freebmd.org.uk</a>	(F)	civil registration
<a href="http://www.frecen.org.uk">www.frecen.org.uk</a>	(F)	census records
<a href="http://www.freereg.org.uk">www.freereg.org.uk</a>	(F)	parish registers
<a href="http://www.genuki.org.uk">www.genuki.org.uk</a>	(F)	useful information about research and archives
<a href="http://www.ukbmd.org.uk">www.ukbmd.org.uk</a>	(F)	local register office certificates
<a href="http://www.gro.gov.uk">www.gro.gov.uk</a>	(F)	search for and order civil registration certificates
<a href="http://www.thegazette.co.uk">www.thegazette.co.uk</a>	(F)	London gazette entries
<a href="http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk">www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk</a>	(S)	British digital newspapers
<a href="http://www.newspapers.library.wales">www.newspapers.library.wales</a>	(S)	Welsh newspapers
<a href="http://www.maps.familysearch.org">www.maps.familysearch.org</a>	(F)	jurisdictions around the UK
<a href="http://www.oldmapsonline.org">www.oldmapsonline.org</a>	(F)	old ordnance survey maps of England
<a href="https://probatesearch.services.gov.uk/#wills">https://probatesearch.services.gov.uk/#wills</a>	(F)	search for and order wills
<a href="http://www.ancestry.co.uk">www.ancestry.co.uk</a>	(S)	searchable UK family history records
<a href="http://www.cwgc.org">www.cwgc.org</a>	(F)	war graves of soldier killed in both world wars
<a href="https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk">https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk</a>	(F)	search government records
<a href="http://www.findmypast.co.uk">www.findmypast.co.uk</a>	(S)	searchable UK family history records
<a href="https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records">https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records</a>	(F)	1923 military records
<a href="http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk">www.longlongtrail.co.uk</a>	(F)	history and facts on World war One
<a href="http://www.iwm.org.uk">www.iwm.org.uk</a>	(F)	Imperial War Museum – soldiers diaries, shipping etc.
<a href="http://www.myheritage.com">www.myheritage.com</a>	(S)	searchable family history records
<a href="http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk">www.thegenealogist.co.uk</a>	(S)	searchable UK family history records
<a href="http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4">http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4</a>	(F)	directories

There are of course many more websites available for research so try a google search to widen your knowledge.

One last request. Visit the two websites below and avail yourselves of the facilities they offer.

## **THE FAMILY HISTORY FEDERATION**

Set up 40 years ago as the Federation of Family History Societies (FFHS) but rebranded in 2019. It sets out to represent the international family history community, provide family history news, support member local family history societies and U3A family history groups. As an educational charity it informs and provides seminars for

the public and its societies on topical family history matters. It is active in publishing books on many family history topics and is represented at many family history events around the country. Come along and talk to us.

Visit the website - [www.familyhistoryfederation.com](http://www.familyhistoryfederation.com)

## **THE SOCIETY OF GENEALOGISTS**

A renowned national family history centre and the largest library of its kind in the UK based in London. Members use the facilities, but non-members can use the facilities on payment of a small daily fee. It hosts exclusive online databases and helps for tracing your family history. It provides free help and advice on all aspects of genealogical research both remotely and face to face in the library. The Genealogists Magazine is produced quarterly and available to members and subscribers. The Society is a major publisher of books and offers regular lectures and workshops. Free access is available to many subscription sites when visiting the library.

Visit the website – [www.sog.org.uk](http://www.sog.org.uk)

## **TAKING RESEARCH FURTHER**

This book should have whetted your appetite and set you off on a really absorbing hobby. There is of course much more to research than just the basics and I hope that you will want to continue your quest, learn more about the many additional records that will help identify and also put the flesh on the bones of your ancestor lives.

You will hopefully now have gained experience in using the records, reading the handwriting and in analysing what they can tell you. So, as you continue researching, your knowledge will broaden even more. Remember that in any social group and no matter what occupation your ancestors followed, the average ancestor left a huge bequest of around 100 different records, most of which can be accessed to build up a life picture.

Your quest now is to discover earlier generations and continue to enjoy researching the lives of your forebears. There are plenty of ways you can develop your knowledge, from reading the specialist magazines to attending lectures and talks and by availing yourself of the various courses and tutorials available through colleges and private tutor organisations.

## **WHERE NOW?**

The following guides are available to help you gain an understanding of how to research and what you can discover about your ancestors.

### **EVERYONE HAS ROOTS (a series of helpful research guides)**

*No. 1 It starts with you*

- No. 2 Ready to begin your research*
- No. 3 Birth, marriage & death certificates*
- No. 4 Grow your tree with census returns*
- No. 5 Baptism, marriage & burial registers*
- No. 6 Records created after death*
- No. 7 Discovering more about your ancestors*
- No. 8 The military connection*
- No. 9 Tracing your ancestors when they moved*
- No. 10 Proving your research is correct***

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