

# New Plymouth Genealogy Society Incorporated Newsletter



Number 46

February 2026

**Society Library:** Open free to members. A small charge to visitors.

**Opening Hours:** Every Monday and Saturday: 10 am to 12 noon  
Other times available by appointment

## Happy New Year

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2026!

We hope everyone had a restful time over the Christmas/ New Year period, and that you are ready to make some great progress with your genealogy research this year.

The committee is lining up a programme of great events to help with your genealogy in 2026. If you have any ideas, suggestions or requests, please let us know. Just talk to any committee member, or [send us an email](#).



Next meeting: 6:00pm Tuesday 3 Feb 2026

## Cemetery Visit

Our first event of the year is a visit to the Okato cemetery. Please note the time for this event; 6:00pm, wet or fine. Our guide, Karen Chard, will tell us about the special people in this cemetery.

There are [headstone transcriptions](#) for this cemetery on our society website. We have over 750 photographs of headstones in the Okato cemetery. These can be viewed on the computers at our rooms, or you can enquire via email.

We are organising some car pooling, so please [contact us](#) if you would like a lift. Be at the NPGS rooms before 5:30pm to share rides.



**Chairperson:** Gail Tanner 027 376 0630  
**Secretary:** Sally Morch  
**Treasurer:** Sharyn Guthrie  
**Committee:** Lorraine Austin  
Jeff Grange  
Peter Hewett  
Glenys Krutz  
Lois Lovell  
Russell Smith

New Plymouth Genealogy Society Inc  
c/- Gail Tanner  
122 Wairau Road  
New Plymouth 4314

**Meetings:** 7:30 pm, first Tuesday each month  
at society rooms, Moturoa Shopping Centre  
access is off the Whiteley Street car park

**Email:** [newplymouthgenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:newplymouthgenealogy@gmail.com)

**Website:** [www.genealogynp.com](http://www.genealogynp.com)

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## Last month: Quiz Night

Our last meeting for 2025 was a quiz night, with quiz questions focused on genealogy and history related topics.

## Christmas Lunch 2025

Our final event for the year was the popular pot luck lunch in December. The event was well enjoyed by all who attended.

The Christmas hamper raffle was drawn, with three hampers won by society members.



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## DNA Interest Group

Sunday 15 February at 1:30pm

I have been asked to talk about Gedcom and how to add one to [Gedmatch](#). So this month, I will show you Gedmatch and why you would want to add a Gedcom file to this.

Gedmatch is a company who host DNA results enabling people to share their results across platforms. Once you have uploaded your raw DNA to Gedmatch you can see who you match on their database. These DNA are from tests at Ancestry, My Heritage, 23andMe, FTDNA and Living DNA plus other platforms which means that you potentially can find people you've not known of before.

If you have any other queries or suggestions for topics to cover, please email me – [sharynjguthrie@gmail.com](mailto:sharynjguthrie@gmail.com).

Sharyn Guthrie

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## Chairperson's Report

The new year has well and truly started, with our first committee meeting held 25 January, and the new year's group meetings are beginning to come together.

Our first meeting, as usual, is a visit to a cemetery. On Tuesday 3 February, we are visiting the Okato Cemetery. There are a lot of old Taranaki names buried there, and it is an interesting place to wander around and see who's who. If there's time and the weather is ok, we could also stop at Tataraimaika Cemetery.

If you would like to carpool out to Okato and back, please be at the genealogy rooms in Moturoa by 5:30pm. Otherwise, just make your own way out there and we'll see you there. We are meeting Karen Chard out there at 6pm. She will be our guide and fount of local knowledge.

Hopefully, while we were all tucked at home with family for Christmas and New Year, you have been beavering away at your genealogy. One of the talks we are committed to making this year is *How to Break Down Brick Walls*. So have a think of your own brick walls, and the ways you have tackled the problems. We are hoping to choose someone's brick wall to go through the process of helping to break down the problem areas with plans, ideas and solutions. More about that closer to the time.

We are always looking at subjects to bring to the monthly meetings. If you have a great suggestion that you think would be a good subject for our meetings, contact me and let me know and we'll see if we can swing it one month. You wouldn't have to do it yourself if you didn't want to – I'm always happy to give talks, so I'd be happy to do it for you.

See you on Tuesday 3 February.

Gail Tanner  
Society Chairperson

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## School Admission Records

Our library has transcriptions of historic school admission records for many local schools, dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The drawers holding these have been reorganised so that the contents are more easily referenced. Also the labels on the drawer fronts have been redone to improve access.

Be sure to check out these records if you are researching people who lived in our area. These records are indexed in the TBI.



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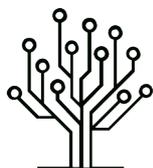
## RootsTech 2026

This is the biggest genealogy conference in the world, held annually at Salt Lake City and it is available online for free.

RootsTech has presentations from some of the world's top genealogists and family history experts, as well as exhibits from the leading vendors. Three days of great genealogy presentations, which you can watch from your own home.

This year, it is on from 5 to 7 March 2026.

You can [register](#) for the free online conference.



rootstech

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## Funeral Sheets

The society library collects funeral sheets from our area. This is part of our goal of preserving local family history. Names are indexed in the TBI so that researchers can locate relevant sheets.

If you have any funeral sheets that are available for our collection, please drop them off at the library.

And if you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Lorraine or any committee member.

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## Finding an Unknown Line Using DNA

*A Personal Case Study by Graeme Jury*

For many years, the identity of my maternal grandfather's father was unknown. Traditional documentary research offered few clues, so I turned to autosomal DNA testing to see whether genetic evidence could help resolve the mystery.

I initially tested with FamilyTreeDNA as I wanted to test my Y-DNA and later transferred my autosomal results to MyHeritage and GEDmatch to take advantage of their chromosome analysis tools. Some years later, I also tested with AncestryDNA to increase the pool of potential matches. While Ancestry provided the largest number of matches, it lacked the chromosome tools needed for detailed analysis, so progress depended on comparing results across multiple platforms. I was further hampered by my matches of interest lying in the 15 to 30 centimorgan range which is not considered a good value to work with for positive matches but no matches in the more ideal 40 to 250 range were available.

I was further hampered through my whole investigation by my maternal grandfather having only one biological daughter (my mother) and I am one of her two biological children. This means that I have no known second or third cousins on my maternal grandfather's side and no mystery matches in that cM region and only one sibling who may have inherited DNA from my grandfather's father.

A major turning point came after watching a RootsTech presentation by Diahn Southard, *The Only DNA Tool You Will Ever Need*. This encouraged me to organise DNA matches into family groups rather than focus on individual relationships.

Using information from Sharyn Guthrie that I gleaned from her series of courses, and other mostly online information coupled with a book titled *The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy* by Blaine Bettinger I applied variations of the Leeds Method, and gradually separated known family lines until a distinct group of matches remained that could only belong to my maternal grandfather. Sharyn's work was indispensable for my learning how to approach DNA matching and although I was unable to often physically attend her sessions, I followed what she had taught by talking to her and other attendees. I strongly recommend members to advance their knowledge via Sharyn's training.

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By identifying overlapping matches between Ancestry and MyHeritage, and with the help of a tested sibling for confirmation, I was able to assign two chromosomes – chromosomes 20 and 13 – to my maternal grandfather’s paternal line. Further analysis showed multiple triangulated matches on both chromosomes, strengthening confidence that they represented the same ancestral family.

Building out trees for these matches revealed repeated connections to the surnames CALVERT and BULMER, families associated with seafaring occupations in northern England. Several DNA matches in New Zealand could be traced back to BULMER families who emigrated in the mid-twentieth century, consistent with known maritime migration patterns. Independent triangulated matches on both chromosome 20 and chromosome 13 converged on this same family network.

I would add that very few trees are accurately built out and it is a formidable task to do this involving countless hours of painstaking work but there are no short cuts.

While documentary gaps and incomplete evidence remain, the convergence of DNA clusters, shared surnames, and geographic patterns has allowed me to develop a strong, testable hypothesis for my maternal grandfather’s paternal ancestry. This case illustrates how DNA analysis – used carefully and alongside traditional research – can open new paths when conventional records fall short. Although the case is not solved, I have identified historical ancestors, left a trail that can be picked up by others and left my DNA for future research.

## **Appendix: DNA Methodology Explained:**

### **The Leeds Method (DNA Match Clustering)**

The Leeds Method is a technique for organising autosomal DNA matches into groups that represent different ancestral lines. Rather than starting with known ancestors, the method works by examining which DNA matches also match each other.

By selecting a group of DNA matches within a defined range (typically mid-range matches that are neither very close nor very distant) and recording their shared matches, it becomes possible to group them into four broad categories corresponding to the tester’s grandparents. These groups can then be subdivided further as more matches are analysed.

In this research, the Leeds Method was used as a

foundational organising tool. It allowed unknown matches to be separated from known family lines, eventually isolating a group of matches that could only plausibly belong to the paternal line of the maternal grandfather. The Leeds Method is able to be applied directly to online family trees in Ancestry.com and My Heritage via their coloured dot systems.

### **DNA Triangulation**

Triangulation refers to the process of confirming that three or more people all share the same segment of DNA with each other. This is critical because simply matching two people does not, by itself, prove a common ancestor on that segment.

True triangulation requires:

- Person A matches person B on a specific chromosome segment
- Person A matches person C on that same segment
- Person B also matches person C on that same segment

When this occurs, the shared segment must come from a single ancestral source.

In this research, triangulation tools available at MyHeritage, GEDmatch, and FamilyTreeDNA were used to identify clusters of matches sharing the same segments on chromosomes 20 and 13. The presence of multiple independent triangulating matches, including a full sibling, confirmed that these segments were genuine inherited segments rather than coincidental matches.

Although short shared DNA segments are often treated with caution, clusters of short overlapping and triangulated segments can be highly informative when they recur across multiple independently tested matches with well-documented family trees.

### **Why This Is True:**

1. The usual concerns are that short segments:

- are more likely to be false positives
- can arise from population-wide sharing
- may reflect very ancient ancestry

This is why many tools ignore segments below 7–10 cM when looked at in isolation.

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2. Short segments become reliable in clusters when multiple people all:

- share DNA with you on the same chromosome
- overlap in the same physical region
- and also match each other (triangulation)

... the probability of random coincidence drops dramatically. At that point, the segment's location matters more than its length. This is exactly what you observed on chromosome 20.

3. Longer segments are not automatically better as they:

- are often from recent ancestors
- but can be misleading if:
  - the match has a poor tree
  - the segment is not triangulated
  - the relationship is misassigned

In contrast, shorter segments that repeat in the same place across many matches often trace back to a stable ancestral couple several generations back.

### Phasing (Assigning DNA to a Parent Line)

Phasing is the process of determining whether a particular DNA segment was inherited from one's mother or father. While the most accurate form of phasing requires parental DNA tests, useful partial phasing can be achieved through comparison with known relatives.

In this investigation:

- Matches known to belong to the maternal side were used to identify maternal segments.
- Once a segment was identified as maternal, attention shifted to determining which of the maternal grandparents it originated from.
- Cross-platform comparisons (for example, matching the same individual on both AncestryDNA and MyHeritage) allowed chromosome identification even when one platform lacked a chromosome browser.

Through this approach, chromosomes 20 and 13 were confidently assigned to the paternal line of the maternal grandfather.

### Why These Methods Matter Together

Each method provides incomplete information on its own, but used together they form a reliable analytical framework:

- The Leeds Method identifies which family line a group of matches belongs to.
- Triangulation confirms that the matches share a real inherited segment.
- Phasing determines which side of the family the segment comes from.

By combining all three, it becomes possible to move from an unknown DNA match to a focused group of candidate ancestors, and ultimately to a well-supported genealogical hypothesis.

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### Irish Research

[A Letter from Ireland](http://www.letterfromireland.com) is a website run by Mike and Carina. They email out a FREE weekly email related to Irish research to those who subscribe.



They also do a brief midweek one as well.

They also have a paid service called *The Green Room* where there are genealogists to help you with your brick walls and Irish research.

Have a look at their website and maybe start getting their newsletter, it's often very informative.

[www.letterfromireland.com](http://www.letterfromireland.com)

Sharyn

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## Library Roster: February 2026

Monday 10 am to 12 noon  
Saturday 10 am to 12 noon

Mon 2 Feb Charles Le Breton  
Sat 7 Feb Karen Crowe  
Mon 9 Feb Lorraine Austin  
Sat 14 Feb Aaron Rump  
Mon 16 Feb Annette Larsen  
Sat 21 Feb Lea Bellini  
Mon 23 Feb Graeme Jury  
Sat 28 Feb Jeff Grange  
Mon 2 Mar Charles Le Breton  
Sat 7 Mar Karen Crowe

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## Facebook Group

Can you believe we now have 300 Facebook members in our local group?

This is also a place to seek help for your genealogy queries. Maybe it is what does a document say or do any of you know this area or this place. It is for you to post your queries and learn from. Maybe you read an interesting article or want to ask how other people do something. Again, it is for you so keep posting to it and select 'Like' for those items you are pleased to see.

Sharyn Guthrie

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## Internet Connection

The internet connection for our society rooms is generously sponsored by Primo.



Primo has supported us with internet connectivity since 2017. Please consider Primo for your internet service and for mobile phone plans. Ring them on 0800 123 774 or visit their website:

[primo.nz](http://primo.nz)

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## Library News

Magazines received;

Who Do You Think You Are  
(Christmas)

Family Tree (Nov, Dec)

Newsletters received;

Ashburton, Dunedin, Hutt Valley, Kapiti,  
Matamata, Nelson, Papakura, Papamoa, Porirua,  
Riccarton, South Waikato

If you would like an email copy of newsletters from another genealogy society or branch, please contact Peter Hewett.



### Newsletter

If you have any comments or suggestions for the newsletter, please contact the editor (Peter Hewett) at [newplymouthgenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:newplymouthgenealogy@gmail.com).