



# Getting It Right

## *Effective Research*

### Other People's Trees



Group of unidentified young men and women, probably Christchurch region.

Maclay, Adam Henry Pearson, 1873-1955: Negatives. Ref: 1/1-028510-G.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/29943176](#)

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This is part of the "Effective Research" series. These notes should be read in conjunction with the accompanying video which can be found on the [NZSG website](#).

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## Other People's Trees

Any tree with more than one person, that isn't your own, falls into the category of *Other People's Trees*. There are many different types including:

- Ornate historical pedigrees
- Genealogies contained in books like Burke's or Debrett's
- Trees sent to you by family members
- Online trees



All types of *Other People's Trees* need to be viewed with a critical eye. You need to notice any red flags they throw up and check them out further. This presentation includes a number of case studies. They are just a few possibilities – there are lots more – so check the information in *Other People's Trees* carefully before you copy them in to your own tree.

## Case Studies

These are a few examples of information which raise red flags. For some, there will be logical explanations of the red flags, but they all need further investigation.

### ***Example 1 – Events after death***

John Smith

- Born: 05 Aug 1870, Matai Valley, Nelson
- Electoral Roll: 1893, Nelson
- Married: 15 Jul 1894, Maitai Valley, Nelson
- Electoral Roll: 1896, Nelson
- Electoral Roll: 1897, Nelson
- Died: 29 Oct 1899, Maitai Valley, Nelson
- Electoral Roll: 1908, Nelson



John Smith died in 1899 but is still on the Electoral Roll of 1908. One of these facts is wrong.



## ***Example 2 – Child born in different location***

The children of John Smith and his wife Mary Brown are listed. Is there an odd one out?

- James b 1898, Palmerston
- Ann b 1900, Palmerston
- Mary b 1902, Palmerston
- John b 1904, Palmerston
- Martha b 1905, Palmerston North
- William b 1906, Palmerston
- Richard b 1908, Palmerston



Martha born in 1905 in Palmerston North is a red flag for two reasons. Firstly, her birth interrupts the pattern of the other children – this is possible.

However, the second – her birth in Palmerston North when the other children are born in Palmerston definitely indicates the need for further investigation.

## ***Example 3 – Birth and Census not lining up***

Information listed for Robert Smith

- Born 1839 as John Smith - Thornton, Lincolnshire
- Census 1841 – Robert age 4
- Census 1851 – Robert age 13
- Census 1861 – Robert age 23
- Census 1871 – Robert age 34
- Census 1881 – Robert age 43



Is that the right birth information for the person in the Census? Either it's the wrong birth or the wrong person in all these Censuses! The birth needs to be checked out further – being aware that the Census age gives someone who was born before Civil Registration began in England.

## ***Example 4 – Mother too old***

William Smith is born in 1755.

His parents are John Smith b. 1700 and Mary Jones b. 1700.




Mary is too old at 55 to have had a child. Are these the right parents? Or the right child? The names may be correct but their birth information wrong.

Which way are you heading - up or down the tree?



## ***Example 5 – Bride and Groom born too far apart***

James Stewart and Mary Brown marry in Penzance, Cornwall. She is born there but he comes from Aberdeen in Scotland.

 Aberdeen is a long way away from Penzance. Is there information to confirm that James was Scottish? A marriage licence is an obvious record, but if they married by Banns, you might need to think about other records such as Wills or Censuses.

## **Sources?**

The easiest solution to the examples above is to see what sources are given with the tree. Are they original records? Or do they just point to another tree? Or are there none at all?



With the sources, are there any notes to help you follow their research?

View all information in *Other People's Trees* as Hints until you can find the records to verify it.

But everyone had it in their tree!

Do you want your tree to be correct  
or like everyone else's????

## **Correcting *Other People's Trees***

Do you contact people to correct mistakes in their tree? It's up to you, but if you do remember:

- Be diplomatic – “you’ve got this wrong” will not be well received, "let's compare notes" gives you both the opportunity to see who is right.
- Include the sources and an explanation of how it fits together (this may be a second step after a “let’s compare notes” message)

Don't be surprised if you get no response. Apart from not liking to be told they're wrong, the mistake may be on a subsidiary branch of their tree that they don't really care about.



## Your Tree?

Is your Tree part of the solution or the problem?

Have you made any of the mistakes highlighted in our examples?

Do you have sources attached?

Do you have notes where things need further explaining?

How do you react when someone (hopefully diplomatically) points out a mistake in your Tree?

## The Genealogical Proof Standard

This is a methodology which can help ensure you don't make any of the mistakes in our examples above – or any others! A *Getting It Right* resource on it can be found on the [NZSG website](#).

## Where to next?

This is part of the *Effective Research* series in *Getting It Right*. [Have a look at our other resources](#).

### Getting It Right:

- Starting Your Genealogical Journey
- Effective Research
  - Genealogical Proof Standard
  - Recording conventions
  - Getting Help
  - DNA Basics
  - Searching Newspapers
  - Other People's Trees
- Sharing Your Family History



# Photo Credits

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Group of unidentified young men and women with hats, one man in uniform, having a picnic in front of tall trees, with a bay and steep hills beyond, probably Christchurch region. Maclay, Adam Henry Pearson, 1873-1955: Negatives. Ref: 1/1-028510-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.  
[/records/29943176](https://records.29943176)

Abydos: Part of the Abydos King List  
[kairoinfo4u](https://www.flickr.com/photos/maanna4u/3329734665) – Flickr



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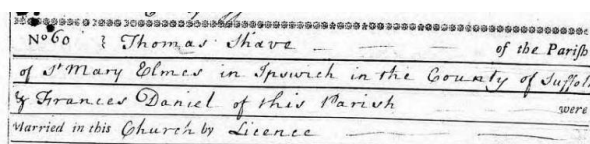
De Orestis (family tree)  
[www.flickr.com/photos/bibliodyssey/8329578305/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/bibliodyssey/8329578305/)

New Zealand / the map drawn & engraved by J. Rapkin ; the illustrations by H. Warren & engraved by J. B. Allen  
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Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, England by Caff55  
[pxhere.com/en/photo/1459537](https://pxhere.com/en/photo/1459537)

Historical atlas of modern Europe from the decline of the Roman empire: comprising also maps of parts of Asia and of the New world connected with European history / edited by Reginald Lane Poole.  
[www.flickr.com/photos/uconnlibrariesmagic/6732081317](https://www.flickr.com/photos/uconnlibrariesmagic/6732081317)



Extract of the marriage of Thomas Shave and Frances Daniel - 14 July 1768, Holy Trinity, Coventry, Warwickshire  
 Ancestry.com. *Warwickshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1910*

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