

Genealogy Group

13 members met at Enterprise House on Thursday afternoon for a talk by Pam Taylor on 'DNA as a Genealogy Tool'. We were enthralled the whole afternoon as she shared her story.

In 2009, on the death of a relative, Pam acquired a box of old photographs. Among them was a photo of a gravestone, and it was this that changed her life. It aroused her curiosity and she was soon hooked as she began to find out more about her family. From thinking she came from a Northern family she has also discovered family links in Scotland, Norfolk and Wiltshire, and extended family much further afield.

Today Pam has over 22,000 people in her family tree – direct bloodline plus all siblings and their descendants, most documented from birth to death.

After a few years of research, in 2016 she had what she described as a 'game changer' – the DNA test. Pam explained what DNA is and what we can find out from Ancestry DNA.

DNA is measured in centiMorgans. The bigger the cM number the closer the match. This can range in Pam's family from 1516 cM, 22%, to 14cM, <1%. Even with less than 1% shared DNA it is possible to find the common ancestor where bloodlines intersect.

The Ethnicity estimate shows where your ancestors came from, and this can change as new techniques are developed.

DNA Matches is the reason most people go for it. You need a family tree on Ancestry to be able to track and compare your ancestry to the ancestry of your match to determine who the shared ancestor is. Ancestry computers compare trees and family lines to find cross-over and suggest possible matches.

There is a huge amount of information available. From television series we see that DNA is used for catching criminals, it is used in healthcare, but for the genealogist it is a great tool for solving puzzles and learning more about your family. Pam shared several examples of how she had discovered more relatives, collaborating and working out how they fitted into the family tree.

Heather Coustick

Next month's meeting will be held on Thursday December 1st at Enterprise House. The topic will be "World-wide Family Trees"