

Family History Interest Group Report – April 2025

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Mark Thompson gave an up to the moment talk from RootsTech2025 on how to [“Learn Genealogy Faster and Easier with Artificial Intelligence”](#). He worked through three examples: firstly learning how to estimate genealogical relationships from DNA matches, secondly how to research a locality guide for a particular district in which you have a genealogical interest (ie description, source repositories etc) and thirdly how to learn to read documents written in Old English scripts. He discussed how to assess whether a given task was suitable for the application of AI and how to write suitable ‘prompts’ to ensue that the AI tool provided an answer at the level and in the format you desired. A message that Mark hammered home was that AI tools can provide incorrect answers (he said “They LIE”) so “Verify, Verify, Verify”. Another message was that it was better to use AI to teach you how to tackle a task rather than just give you an answer.

Unfortunately it seems that as far as the Teesdale audience was concerned it was hard to teach old dogs new tricks but there was a lot to take in in the course of a one-hour presentation. For anyone wanting to investigate further they should go to TinyURL.com/Mark-RT2025-1 and TinyURL.com/Mark-RT2025-2 which give the prompts and answers for the second and third examples. I think sceptics will be surprised by the quality of the results, and the prompts can readily be copied and adapted for your own purposes. I used the Perplexity tool (for free) to produce a ‘Locality Guide’ for County Durham in just a couple of minutes!

The next meeting of the group will be held on the second Thursday of May, May 8th, at 13:30 in Enterprise House when the topic will be the parish register records tool FreeReg – what is it and how do you use it.