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# Phillips DNA News

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Editor: [Nancy Kiser](#)

Please submit news articles or ideas for articles to the editor. Questions about Genetic Genealogy can always be sent to the editor.

## Project News

Happy New Year, everybody! Here's hoping that our Phillips DNA project continues to grow and prosper in 2011. If everyone would make a resolution to recruit one new member in 2011, we could double the size of our project by the end of the year. As noted in the paper mentioned below, although we have almost 500 participants in the Phillips DNA project, this only represents about 0.06% of all the people named Phillips in the world. We need to test more Phillips men to fulfill our goal of identifying all the different branches of Phillips worldwide.

A British man named James M. Irvine recently wrote a paper for the *Journal of Genetic Genealogy* that included an analysis of our Phillips DNA project. The title of the paper is Towards Improvements in y-DNA Surname Project Administration. It was both an honor and a little daunting to be chosen as one of twelve projects Mr. Irvine decided to analyze. According to Mr. Irvine, he "selected, somewhat arbitrarily, twelve y-DNA surname projects with a variety of characteristics and which hopefully include the work of some of the more innovative administrators". Here is a link to his article: <http://www.jogg.info/62/files/Irvine.pdf>

The paper develops three inter-related themes. First, means for relating project size to surname size are explored. It is shown that few projects exceed a "penetration" ratio of more than 0.1% of y-DNA tests per head of population, and that this ratio may be an inverse function of surname size. Measures are also developed to relate Old World/New World ratios of surname populations and participants' places of residence; from these, a crude measure of any geographical bias in individual projects is developed. Second, the paper identifies a diversity of the "rules of thumb" presently used for determining genetic "closeness," and a case is made for moving on from genetic distance criteria that give equal weight to all markers to a criterion that takes account of differing mutation rates, such as some TiP parameter. Third, the difficulties in identifying and handling the sensitive subject of Non-Paternal Events (NPEs) are addressed.

In brief, here are some of Mr. Irvine's findings with regard to our Phillips DNA project:

The Phillips surname ranks among the most populous with over 500,000 people worldwide bearing the surname. The calculation of approximate populations of individual surnames in each country, and thus the world, has recently been made possible by the University College of London's public profiler website.

To date, the Phillips DNA project has tested approximately 0.06% of men named Phillips worldwide, using Mr. Irvine's formula. Mr. Irvine refers to this as project penetration rate. Although 0.06% does not sound like very many, it is the mode or average for all twelve of the projects analyzed. As Mr. Irvine points out, it is important to recognize that this is a poor sample rate in terms of conventional surveys in other fields.

Using another of Mr. Irvine's formulas, our Phillips DNA project has a New World/Old World bias rate of 1.16%, which means we have a predominance of participants residing in the New World as opposed to the Old World (i.e., Europe). Of course, we are painfully aware of this and are trying hard to correct the situation, with some limited success.

In the Phillips DNA project, between 50% to 80% of our participants belong to clusters or family groups (the actual percentage is 70%). Mr. Irvine encountered a big diversity among the twelve projects with regard to this issue. As he writes in his paper, "Why this diversity should be so great is unclear, although it appears that trade-name surnames are more difficult to categorise than place-name surnames. Counter-intuitively, the differing definitions of 'cluster' probably only make a small contribution to this diversity; nor do surname size, penetration or project bias seem to be relevant."

The size of the largest single cluster in each project also spans a wide range among the twelve projects analyzed, from just 2% to 66% of participants. In the Phillips DNA project, our largest single cluster is Group 2, and it comprises about 6% of all our participants. As Mr. Irvine states, there appears to be an inverse relationship between cluster size and surname size. In two of the smaller projects he analyzed (Creer and Irwin), the largest cluster in each comprised more than 60% of all the participants in the projects.

And finally, I found the following conclusion by Mr. Irvine to be most interesting:

"To date, DNA has not shown convincingly that any of the selected projects are single-origin, but has thrown much light on this issue for the Creer, Pomeroy, Plant, Cruwys and Irwin surnames. On the other hand, DNA has demonstrated that the Dalton, Blair, Phillips, Wright, Walker, Taylor and Williams surnames are, as expected, multi-origin."

## Featured Story

### MONTACUTE HOUSE AND THE PHELIPS FAMILY



Montacute House stands amongst some of the most picturesque countryside in the County of Somerset, which lies in the southwest of England. To be exact, the house is located in the village of Montacute, four miles to the west of Yeovil, one of the county's larger towns. Montacute House has been designated by English Heritage as a Grade 1 listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument. It is one of the finest examples of Elizabethan architecture remaining in Britain and has a very interesting history, including the honor of having much of the 1995 film of Jane Austen's novel "[Sense and Sensibility](#)" filmed there, yet it is remarkably fortunate that it is still standing due to the financial problems that have plagued the house throughout its life.

The house at Montacute was built circa 1588-1598 for the Speaker of the House of Commons himself, Sir Edward Phelips, whose family had been residents of Somerset since at least 1460, first as ordinary yeomen farmers before rising in status. The surname Phelips is pronounced the same as Phillips and is considered to be a variant spelling of the name. Sir Edward was a successful lawyer turned politician who rose to become Speaker in the House of Commons and led the prosecution of Guy Fawkes after the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

Sir Edward was born about 1560 and died in 1614. Edward married first Margaret Newdigate and second Elizabeth Pigott. He was returned as a Member of Parliament in 1584, 1586, 1593, 1601. He was appointed Sergeant at Law and King's Sergeant and knighted by King James I in 1603. Sir Edward served as Speaker of the House of Commons from 1604 to 1611. He was Chancellor in household of Prince Henry, 1610, and Master of the Rolls (Head of Chancery Court), 1611. As Master of Rolls, he appears as a subscriber on the [Third Charter of Virginia](#) Company of London, 1612. Despite Sir Edward's association with the Third Charter of Virginia, there is no evidence that any Phelips ever migrated to the New World. It would be interesting

to recruit a male Phelips descendant for DNA testing to see if he might match anyone in the Phillips DNA Project.



Sir Edward wanted a country house to impress, so he commissioned a magnificent new home in Somerset. Records suggest that Montacute House was designed by the architect William Arnold, who collaborated on the construction of many notable buildings, such as Dunster Castle. The house is symmetrical and H-shaped. To add to its splendor, Montacute House was constructed from the local Ham Hill limestone, which would have been a bright golden color when first built but has now matured into pleasant honey tones. Its color and shape have inspired the following rhyme about the house: "It's grand, it's yellow, and it's also very narrow".

Sir Edward was the son of Thomas Phelips of Somerset and Elizabeth Smythe of Bristol. Thomas Phelips was born circa 1500-1510 and died in 1590. Thomas was returned as Member of Parliament from 1545 to 1558. On 3 January 1538, during the events commonly referred to as the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Thomas and his father Richard Phelips were witnesses to the surrender of the impoverished Benedictine Abbey of Muchelney. The monks were pensioned off and dispersed and Richard Phelips was placed in charge of the Abbey site. In 1587, Thomas gave his Montacute property to his son Edward and Edward's first wife Margaret. Thomas died leaving a will dated 25 September 1588. Effigies of Thomas and Elizabeth are in the north transept of the Church of St. Catherine at Montacute.

Richard Phelips, the father of Thomas and grandfather of Edward, was born about 1480 and died in 1560. It is believed Richard married first Emeline unknown and second Emme, widow of a Bristol man named John Spynge. In 1507, Richard is seen as under-sheriff of Somerset in a letter to him from Wells Cathedral chapter after the chapter had been ordered by the court to remove obstructions to the flow of water in the Tone River. He may be the "Ric Phyllps" named as a member of the King's Guard at the funeral of Henry VII in 1509. He may also be the "Rich Philips" named as a "servitor" at the coronation of Anne Boleyn. Among the knights in attendance on that occasion was Henry Grey, the third Marquis of Dorset, whom Richard served

as a surveyor of estates. As evidenced by an Exchequer account dated 1511, he served as the deputy of Sir Robert Southwell, Chief Butler, in the ports of Lyme and Weymouth, 1511-1516.

Richard Phelips spent the greater part of some thirty years, from 1524 on, in service to the Marchioness of Dorset and her son, Thomas Grey, and then the third Marquis, Henry Grey, as a 'general surveyor of her manors of Woodbury, Combyne and Lymptone in Devon and of all others her lordships...lying within the said county & in the counties of Cornwall, Somerset, Dorset & Wilts....' If Richard Phelips had not already retired from service to the Dorsets by the time of the ill-fated plot to place Henry Grey's daughter Lady Jane on the throne, he seems not to have suffered any consequences other than perhaps the loss of his power base when Dorset's lands were forfeited.

Thomas Phelips, the father of Richard Phelips, grandfather of Thomas Phelips, and great grandfather of Sir Edward Phelips, was probably born slightly before 1440 and died in 1501, leaving a Latin will dated 1 January 1500/01, still in existence in the Library of Canterbury Cathedral. Three entries in the Patent Rolls seem to give ample evidence that he resided in the parish of Lukton, Somerset (one mile east of Montacute) prior to having established himself at Montacute and that his origins were in the County of Kent in a parish called Cooling. Kent is located in southeastern England.

The first of these, dated 29 October 1460, is a commission to Sir William Bonville and others to arrest "Thomas Philip of Lukton, county Somerset, Yoman" and bring him before the King in Chancery, presumably for some disloyalty to the Duke of York's assumption of power in September 1460. The second of these, dated February 1466, is a pardon granted to "Thomas Phelip late of the parish of Colying, county Kent, gentleman, alias of Lukton, county Somerset, gentleman, for all offences committed by him before 27 November 1465." The third patent roll entry, also dated in February 1466, is a grant returning all of Thomas' confiscated property to him: "Thomas Phillippes late of the parish of Cowlyng, county Kent, gentleman, of all the goods and chattels forfeited by him for certain felonies of which he was indicted before the justices of the peace in the county."

In 1472, he is seen as one of the patrons of the living of Brympton, Somerset, as a Sydenham trustee. In 1476, when he is still described as of Lufton, he was sued for a debt of 20 pounds. Thomas Phelips was establishing himself at Montacute as early as 1479 when, in December of that year, a half burgage "within the free borough of Montacute in North Street, namely on the east side of that street between a burgage of Thomas Geffrey and a garden of the said Thomas Phelips on the south" was conveyed to him. Burgage is a medieval land term in common use in England and Scotland by the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A burgage was a town rental property owned by a king or lord. The property usually consisted of a house on a long, narrow plot of land.

There exists reasonably strong evidence of a special relationship between Thomas Phelips and the Brooke-Cobham family, seated at Cooling, Kent. The Brooke family has West Country origins and, if Thomas Phelips had been the administrator or surveyor of at least some of the Booke-Cobham estates, his migration from Kent to Somerset is easily explained. Such a

relationship would also explain the presence of Brooke estate documents among the Phelps family papers in the Somerset County Record Office. Further, such an influential connection could explain his rise in rank from yeoman in 1460 to gentleman by 1466 and his appointment to the office of Escheator for Somerset & Dorset in 1471 and 1478. Further evidence of a relationship derives from a lease extant in the Kent County Record Office in which John, Lord Cobham, leased his manor of Brooke Montacute to "Jane Philip, widow".

With regard to the descendants of Sir Edward Phelps of Montacute House, they never reached his level of national eminence. Sir Edward died in 1614, leaving his family wealthy and landed. He was succeeded by his son, Sir Robert Phelps, who represented various West Country constituencies in Parliament and was also knighted by the Crown, King James I. Robert Phelps has the distinction of being arrested at Montacute. The intelligent but impetuous and anti-Catholic Sir Robert was arrested at Montacute and enjoyed an eight-month stay in the Tower for opposing King James I's plans to marry his son, the future Charles I, to a Catholic princess.

The Phelps family's fame and prominence were short-lived. Subsequent generations settled down in Somerset to live the lives of county gentry, representing Somerset in Parliament and when necessary following occupations in the army and the church. This peaceful existence was severely jolted when the estate was inherited by William Phelps (1823-1889). In his early days, William made many improvement and renovations to Montacute. He was responsible for the Base Court, a low service range adjoining the south side of the mansion and the restoration of the Great Chamber, which he transformed into a library.



Later, William Phelps became insane. An addicted gambler, he once famously placed a bet on one of two flies crawling down a window-pane. He was eventually incarcerated for his own good. Sadly for his family, this was after he had gambled away the family fortune and vast tracts of the Montacute Estate. In 1875, when his son, William Phelps (1846-1919) took control of the estate, agricultural rents from what remained of the mortgaged estate were low, and the huge house was a drain on limited resources. Selling the family silver and art

works delayed the inevitable by a few years, but in 1911 the family was forced to rent the house, for an annual sum of £650, and move out. The Phelips never returned.

Despite a lease to Lord Curzon, by 1929 it appeared most likely that Montacute House would have to be demolished, and so it was put on the market 'for scrap'. However, the generosity of one man saved it. Mr. E. Cook (the grandson of the man who founded the travel agents Thomas Cook) donated sufficient funds to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and thus the house was bought and passed to the National Trust. When the Trust received Montacute house, all it contained was a few family portraits and Lord Curzon's bathtub.

Today the house is fully furnished with furniture from the 17th and 18th centuries, thanks to several loans and bequests. In particular, Montacute is noted for its impressive tapestries and hangings. A visit to Montacute is not complete without time spent in the 'Long Gallery', the longest surviving gallery in England, supplied with paintings thanks to a permanent loan from the National Portrait Gallery (Montacute House is a regional partner). The room has around 100 portraits from the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods on display, 50 of these from the NPG.

The house at Montacute is now thriving, having survived the financial crises of past centuries. The National Trust has successfully raised the house's profile while retaining all its charm, and hosts several different events there each year (an example being '[Hidden in History](#)', with period costumes and educational tours). The future of Montacute looks much brighter than it has for a long time and it is highly unlikely that it will now be forced to close in any foreseeable time span.

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## Guest Column

### HOW DO YOU RESEARCH ONLINE?

*By Richard W. Eastman*

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I participated in a conference call today sponsored by FamilySearch. The purpose of the call was to describe several recent changes as well as changes to be made in the near future. However, one statement about search techniques stuck in my mind.

Employees of FamilySearch (and probably all the other major online database providers) spend a lot of time and effort watching how users perform searches on the site and analyzing the results. The purpose is to learn and to make future adjustments to the site to improve search capabilities. Those who monitor and analyze users say they have noticed that genealogy newcomers typically perform searches in a very different manner than do the "old pros." I suspect the experienced users typically end up with more productive results although no statistics are available to prove that assumption.

Genealogy newcomers typically search everything at once. For instance, when looking for records on a particular ancestor, newbies typically enter the person's name into the search field and then search through everything on FamilySearch at once. If the person has a rather unusual name, that might work. However, most of the time, the newcomer receives hundreds or even thousands of "hits," can't filter out the ones of interest, loses interest, and then goes elsewhere.

In contrast, experienced genealogists usually FIRST search for the smallest subset of the many databases as possible. For instance, the more experienced user will generally enter the last name of interest leave the first name blank, (first names are often different in the records from what we expect), and then perhaps specify only one database (such as the census records for one year), only one county, and any other parameters available to narrow the search as much as possible. If the search is unsuccessful and doesn't produce the information needed, the experienced user then expands the search just a little bit and tries again. For instance, he or she might add in the previous census or the following census and then search a second time. If unsuccessful this time, the experienced genealogist might start a third search by adding in the adjacent counties. And so on and so on.

Bit by bit, the experienced genealogist typically expands the search by a small amount each time. All of the search parameters are based upon what the genealogist already knows about the person of interest. Did he likely live in Monroe County? If so, there is no need to search the entire USA at once. Did he serve in the Civil War? If so, there is no need to search for records prior to 1820 and probably not prior to 1830 (on the first search) since he probably wasn't born yet. (Very few Civil War soldiers were 40 years old or older.)

By focusing the first searches on as narrow a geographic area as possible and as narrow a time range as possible, you greatly increase the odds of finding the one person you seek. If unsuccessful in your search, broaden the search area a bit and the years of interest and try



again.

I suspect the experienced genealogists have far better results with their online searches than do the newcomers who jump in and search everything, everywhere, at once. Which would you prefer: finding one or two men with your ancestor's name, located in the area where he or she lived, in the years he or she lived there? Or will you find 100 men or women across the country with the same name?