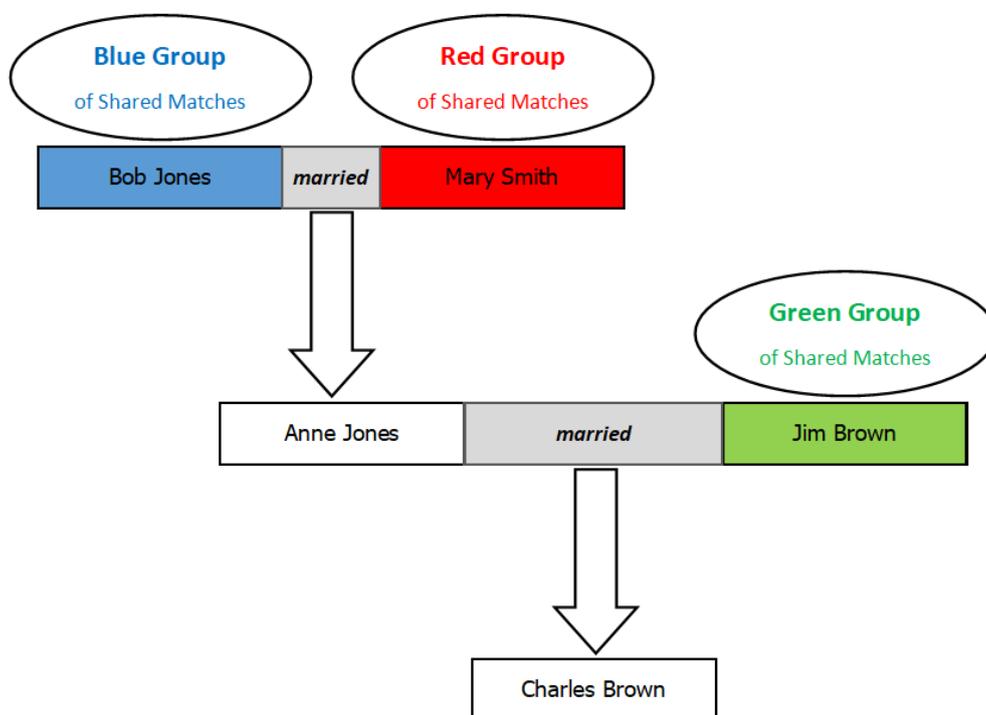# Putting the Final Puzzle Pieces Together

✔ Connecting Shared Match Groups

You are aiming to find places where two Shared Match Groups connect – ie, where someone from one Shared Match Group meets someone from a different Shared Match Group and this couple have children.

One of their children could be your Direct Line Ancestor, bringing your search forward by a generation.

The pattern of couples from different Shared Match Groups meeting and having children should keep repeating itself, joining the Floating Branches within your tree together like sections of a jigsaw:

In theory, this is entirely logical and straightforward. In reality, it can be rather more difficult to spot the connections!

- If your ancestors left you a good paper-trail to follow, with records documenting marriages and births, it can "just" be a case of working through all the possibilities until you identify the connections.

- If there are multiple marriages, adoptions, misattributed parents or not enough records to work with, these final stages can be very frustrating.

- Even when you reach the point where you have identified your potential Grandparents, it can be difficult to work out which of their children is your birth-parent.

✔ Finding the next connection

Once you have found a connection between two Shared Match Groups (like Bob and Mary in the example above) you need to work out which of their children is going to move you forward a generation:

- Identify all the couple's children

- Can you rule out any of the children – some may have died too young to have children of their own?

- Identify all the spouses of the children

- Do you recognise any of the spouses' surnames from your research on other Shared Match Groups?

- If you don't instantly recognise any spouse surnames, try adding the parents and grandparents for each spouse – does this generate any familiar surnames?

  Try searching for these surnames within your DNA Match list to see if they occur repeatedly within a different Shared Match Group.

- If you still can't find a connection, try looking at locations – did one of the children live in the same area as families in another Shared Match Group?

- It is worth keeping an eye out for double-marriages between families. In the example above, Bob has married Mary. What if Bob had a brother or sister who married Mary's sibling? The children from both couples would have the same "mix" of DNA, so you would need to research all these children/their spouses to find the next connection.

If you are dealing with families where there were a dozen children born over a twenty-year period, this task can be very time-consuming. Remember to take a break!

❓ Where do you belong within your Research Tree?

Eventually, you should be looking at a time-period where your grandparents or parents could be among the people listed within your Research Tree.

Every search is different, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach to identifying your closest relatives, but concentrating on the recent generations within your tree:

- Look at the cMs you share with each of your DNA Matches in turn

- Consider all the possible relationships that might exist between you and the match

- Can you can rule out some of the suggested relationships – for example, if you and your match are roughly the same age you would not be grandparent/grandchild?

- Consider factors such as people's ages, locations, whether people married more than once, how many children were born to each couple (couples with large families can end up with grandchildren the same age as their younger children)

- Conversely, consider the more unlikely options. Perhaps a relationship would only work if someone was much older/younger than you'd anticipated? Maybe someone could have been in an unexpected location – did they have a job/education that meant they would have led them to a different area?

- Review each potential relationship to your DNA Matches carefully – hand-draw diagrams if it helps!

    - Exactly what does it mean?

    - Where would it place you within your tree?

    - There may be many options, but trying a "what if" scenario for each match in turn and looking at the results will help you see the possibilities.

- Can you find one solution where there is a plausible relationship between you and every one of your DNA Matches? If not, which DNA Matches fit and which ones don't?

    - Could there be more unseen family mysteries?

    - Would you "fit" better if someone in the tree was a half-sibling not a full-sibling?

    - What if someone had a child that no-one is aware of?

    - What if someone's parent(s) are not who the records say they are?

    - Might someone who appears to be the child of a couple, actually be their grandchild?

Nearly there...

DNA searches often identify close relatives such as Grandparents, but still leave several possibilities as to which of their children could be your birth-parent. If there are four brothers who are similar in age, who all lived in the same area it can be difficult to identify which one is your birth-Father.

You may need to persuade members of this family group to take a DNA test to narrow down the possibilities.

Contacting Relatives

Contacting close family members is nerve-wracking. Remember that you have probably spent many weeks/months learning about DNA – to someone who has no idea of how it works, the suggestion that a saliva sample can lead them to you can be incomprehensible! Make sure that you have gathered all the information you can and completed as much research as possible before making contact.

Social media can be very helpful in DNA searches, but is not a great way of trying to contact relatives. It can be impossible to know whether messages sent via email or messenger have been read and deliberately ignored, or whether they have never made it to the person you were trying to reach. A letter is often a better way to approach people.

It is easier to look at examples for inspiration than spend hours staring at a blank sheet of paper! You may find these posts helpful:

DNA Geek – letter to birth parents:
https://thednageek.com/letter-to-a-birth-parent/

Priscilla Sharp – phone call script:
http://priscillasharp.blogspot.com/2012/04/phone-dialogue-for-contacting-family.html