

# Beyond the paper records

**W**hen I started my genealogy research a few years after my father died in 1989, the only information I had on my paternal grandfather was his name, Richard Frederick Meates, and that he died when my father was nine. That was it. My father had never known a Meates relative, and when he travelled for business, he looked in the phonebooks of the different cities, and never found any Meates.

Before the internet and the abundance of online records, research involved viewing microfilms, writing letters for information, ordering documents through the mail, and sometimes travel to specific archives. Progress was slow.

Eventually, I determined that my grandfather was born in 1882 in Ireland, immigrated the same year with his family to Canada, later immigrated to New York State where he married, and he died in Cleveland, Ohio.

## Ireland records

The next step in my research was Irish civil registration records. The indexes had been microfilmed and were available to order through an LDS Family History Centre. Starting with the index film for 1882 births, I found an index entry for a Richard Meates, and then ordered a copy of the record from Ireland.

I was on the right track, since the father of Richard, my great-grandfather, was listed on the birth registration as Bartholomew, and a Bartholomew had immigrated with Henrietta and his family to Ontario in 1882.

Without any surviving relevant census in the 1800s as a guide, I had no choice but to plough through all the Ireland civil registration index microfilms to determine which Meates were part of my family tree (they have now been released online at [www.irish-](http://www.irish-)

## Susan C Meates explores some fascinating family history discoveries thanks to DNA

[genealogy.ie](http://genealogy.ie)). These films covered 1845-1863 for Protestant marriages, and 1864-1958 for all births, marriages and deaths. I wasn't sure if Mates was a variant, so to be on the safe side, I decided to record all those entries too. To cover the period after the microfilmed records, I then hired a researcher in Dublin to do the indexes from 1959-1997.

In the early years of the marriage index microfilms, many years would go by with no Meates or Mates marriages, indicating a very small population of the surname.

In the end, after years of trips to the Family History Centre, I had 702 Meates and Mates birth, marriage, and death civil registration events in Ireland, covering the time period 1845-1997. I then began ordering all the certificates, to create documented family trees and to determine which people were in my family tree.

With help, all the other relevant Ireland records were eventually done, including parish registers. These records enabled me to take some trees further back in time. A volunteer had done cemetery surveys for the cemeteries in County Dublin and County Wicklow that hadn't been published.

I was able to take my family tree back to a Bartholomew Meates, my great-great grandfather, born about 1790. There are also four other separate documented Meates trees in Ireland that do not connect to my tree, and multiple Mates family trees.

## Surname study

My research had turned into a surname study, collecting all occurrences of the

surname, and constructing documented family trees. I moved on to the civil registration for England and Wales, which was a much larger task, and involved the surnames Mate, Mates, Meates, and Meats. From there, the census, and then Scotland and other countries.

After years of research, I had determined that there were five Meates lines whose most distant ancestor resided in Ireland, one Meates line whose most distant ancestor resided in Worcestershire, and one Meates line in Wales, plus many Mate, Mates and Meats trees.

Are all these Meates related? Are the Mate or Mates families related? Are the Meats related?

## DNA for genealogy

In 2000, DNA testing for genealogy was introduced by Family Tree DNA. I visited the website, found it too overwhelming, bookmarked the site, and added it to my to-do list for some day.

My brother was the last-known surviving male of my Meates tree. In 2001, he was killed in an automobile accident at the age of 48. Later that day, I remembered that I wanted to start a DNA project one day – and if I didn't get a sample of my brother, I could never find out about my family tree. I visited the Family Tree DNA website again, and couldn't figure out what to order, so I sent an email. Eight minutes later, the President, Bennett Greenspan, called, and determined what I should order and arranged to have a test kit sent by next day air to the funeral home.

At this time, in late 2001, the Y-DNA tests only tested 12 markers, and they

### 1. Result for Richard Kenneth Meates

12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 20 21 14 14 16 19 34 35 12 10

### 2. 37 Marker Y-DNA Results: Exact Match

Richard Meates	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 20 21 14 14 16 19 34 35 12 10
Greg Meates	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 20 21 14 14 16 19 34 35 12 10

### 3. Meates 37 Marker DNA Results: No one matches

Ireland Meates/Mates	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 20 21 14 14 16 19 34 35 12 10
Worcestershire Meates	15 23 15 10 15 16 13 13 11 14 12 30 16 8 9 11 11 26 15 20 29 11 11 14 16 11 10 19 21 14 14 19 18 30 38 13 10
Wales Meates	13 23 14 10 14 14 11 14 11 12 11 27 15 8 9 8 11 23 16 20 28 14 14 16 16 10 10 19 21 14 14 16 20 35 36 13 10

were introducing 25 markers. In the future, they introduced 37 markers. I upgraded all 25 marker results to 37 markers, so to keep this article simple, all results will be shown with 37 markers, even though they went from 25 to 37 with the early participants. 37 Y-DNA markers are needed for a genealogical time frame.

The result for my brother came back from the lab (see figure 1 above).

For a DNA result to have value you need other participants with the surname or variant to test, so you can determine if they match and are related. My next step was to recruit others to test.

I wrote first to Greg Meates in Australia, who represents a different Meates tree that goes back to Ireland. When his results came back from the lab we discovered that our two family trees were an exact match, so we shared a common ancestor at some time prior to the start of our documented family trees (see figure 2 above).

All five documented Meates trees where the progenitor was in Ireland were tested. They all matched.

I then moved on to testing the Mates trees of Ireland. The Mates trees all matched the Meates trees, except the Mates tree that went to county Kildare. Most likely this tree was in Ireland as a result of a migration.

DNA had revealed what the paper records could not. All the Meates and Mates of Ireland, except the County Kildare Mates tree, were related and shared a common ancestor prior to the documented trees. The paper records



▲ **Richard F Meates (1916-1989), the author's father, during WW2. The author's father**

had been exhausted, including parish registers, memorials of deeds, and other surviving records, and no documented connection has been found. A key parish register for the Meates of county Wicklow, the Arlkow parish register, did not survive the fire at the Four Courts building in Dublin in 1922.

Without DNA, we would never know if these Meates and Mates trees were related. Today, these trees have descendants in Australia, England, Ireland, New Zealand and the USA.

The next step was to find out about the two other Meates trees, one which went back to Wales and one which went back to Worcestershire, England. Multiple men were recruited and tested representing each of these documented trees (see figure 3 above).

These three trees did not match each

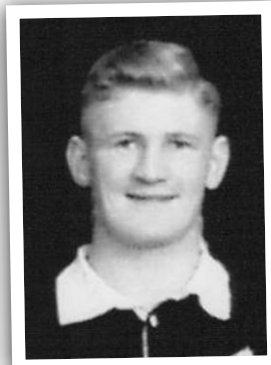
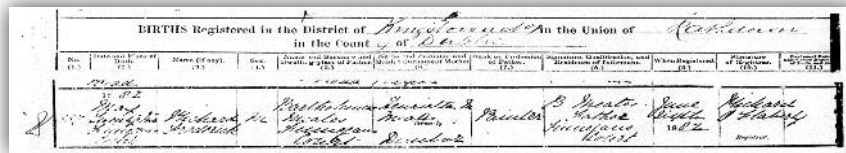
other. So the Meates/Mates of Ireland are **not** related to the Meates of Wales nor are they related to the Meates of England. Since the surname is so rare, most people had assumed these Meates were all related so it was startling to discover that they were not.

The next step was to find out if the Meats (no 'e') trees matched. An easy assumption is that the Meats trees in England and Wales are related to Meates of either Worcestershire or Wales, and an e got added or dropped somewhere. There are five Meats trees going back to various locations: Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Wales.

Finding the participants to represent each tree is often the most difficult part. Some trees are no longer represented in the ancestral country, so a worldwide search is conducted to find a male. The last surviving male of one Meats tree was found in South Africa.

The five documented Meats trees were tested and matched the Ireland Meates/Mates. All five Meats trees share a mutation, and we discovered that the Ireland Meates/Mates trees also share a different mutation as compared to the Meats trees. The mutation shared by all the Meats trees indicates that they share a common ancestor prior to the documented trees (see figure 4 above). The mutation shared by all the Meates/Mates trees indicate that they share a different common ancestor. Both these common ancestors lived between the origin of the surname and the start of the documented trees.

Mate and Mates are both multiple



▲ Clockwise from top left: Irish civil registration of the birth of Richard Frederick Meates in 1882, the author's grandfather; Richard K Meates (1953-2001), c1971 - he was the author's brother and the first DNA participant; Kevin Meates of New Zealand, who played for the All Blacks, represented a branch of his family tree in the DNA project (picture taken 1952); Terry Meates tested and represented another Ireland Meates tree (pictured c1950); and Greg Meates of Australia, the second participant - his family tree migrated from Ireland to Australia to New Zealand (all the Meates of New Zealand belong to this tree - Greg then migrated to Australia)

#### 4. 37 Marker Y-DNA Results

Ireland Meates/Mates	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 20 21 14 14 16 19 34 35 12 10
England/Wales Meats	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 19 21 14 14 16 19 33 35 12 10

#### 5. 37 Marker Y-DNA Results

Ireland Meates/Mates	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 20 21 14 14 16 19 34 35 12 10
England/Wales Meats	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 19 21 14 14 16 19 33 35 12 10
Mate Cheshire	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 19 21 14 14 16 19 34 35 12 10

origin surnames, and these surnames came about in multiple countries.

The various Mates trees were tested in the UK as well as other countries, ranging from the Czech Republic to Romania. All the Mates trees in the UK, which go back to a documented ancestor in Ireland, match the Meates/Mates result of Ireland. There were multiple different results for each cluster of Mates trees in the UK. The Mates trees of other countries are also unique results and do not have matches to any of the UK trees.

Various Mate trees were also tested, focusing on the UK, and then other countries where this surname is found. The Mate tree in Cheshire matched the Meates/Mates of Ireland and the Meats of England, but did not share either mutation that those groups shared (see figure 5 above).

The other Mate trees in the UK are unique results and did not match the large group that matched:

Meates/Mates of Ireland, Meats of England, and Mate of Cheshire. A surname distribution map of England indicates multiple clusters of the surname Mate. One of these clusters has an epicentre in Dorset, and the Y-DNA test showed a unique result, and early records indicate an origin in Dorset.

#### Discovering variants with DNA testing

Meates is a rare surname with a small population, as is Meats. The group of surnames that match with DNA, the Meates/Mates of Ireland, the Mate of Cheshire, and the Meats of England and Wales all combined, have a small population of descendants today.

In addition, these surname forms arose in the 1600s and 1700s. For example, the surname forms Meates and Mates are not found in Ireland before the early 1700s.

The oldest recorded entries found

for the surname Meates are in the early 1700s in Ireland. Based on the number of trees, and the number of events in Irish civil registration records, the origin of the surname was somewhere besides Ireland. In the early years of civil registration marriages, there would be gaps of 18 years between marriages, showing a small population of the surname:

	Meates	Mates
Births	150	161
Marriages	104	85
Deaths	92	110
Total	346	356

Events in Ireland Civil Registration 1845-1997

Surnames were adopted in England circa 1250-1450. In 1250, most people did not have a surname and by 1450, most people had a hereditary surname. Surnames were adopted first in the major population centres and the south, and gradually moved to the



▲ Left: William and Ellen Meates c1885, who migrated from Ireland to Australia and later the family to New Zealand. – all New Zealand Meates descend from this couple; right: William Anthony Meates, son of William and Ellen Meates of Ireland, with wife Rose and children in New Zealand c1915

### 6. 37 Marker Y-DNA Results

Ireland Meates/Mates	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 20 21 14 14 16 19 34 35 12 10
England/Wales Meats	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 19 21 14 14 16 19 33 35 12 10
Mate Cheshire	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 19 21 14 14 16 19 34 35 12 10
Myatt	12 22 15 10 13 15 11 14 11 12 11 28 15 8 9 8 11 24 16 20 29 12 14 15 15 10 10 19 21 14 14 16 19 34 35 12 10

rural areas and the north.

The questions then became: what was the earlier form of the surname at the time of its origin? And are there other variants today?

To find the answers involved both paper records and DNA testing. Many avenues in the paper records were pursued that led to a dead end.

Surname mapping was then used. All surnames starting with Mea were mapped based on the 1881 census and IGI entries. No other surname looked relevant, though this mapping seemed to indicate looking in Staffordshire.

It was now time to take a look at all surnames with a root of Meat in early records. This research pointed to Staffordshire, with multiple recordings of the surname Meate in the 1500s. Going through a parish register multiple times, where the surname Meate was prevalent, showed Meate families vanishing in 1600, and Mayott/Meyott families arriving in

the 1600s. Further investigation showed a curate change in 1601 just as Meate vanished and Mayott/Meyott appeared. It appeared that Meate became Mayott/Meyott due to the new curate doing the recordings. This was confirmed when an explicit alias was found of Meate (Myot), indicating that these forms were pronounced the same. Tracing Meyott further showed an evolution to Myatt in the 1700s.

Could Meates and Myatt really be variants? It seems quite bizarre.

I found five random Myatt men representing five different Myatt trees to test. The suspense of waiting for the test kits to arrive at the lab, and then waiting on the lab results, was excruciating.

The results finally came back. I would never believe it without DNA. The Myatt men matched the Meates/Mates of Ireland, Meats of England/Wales and the Mate of

Cheshire! Meates and Myatt are variants (see figure 6 above).

### The surname origin

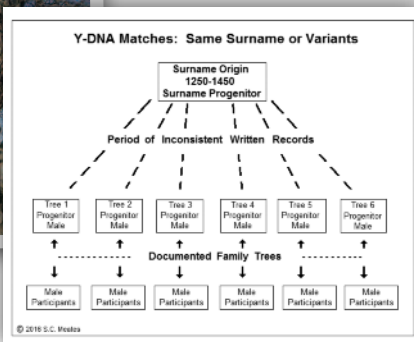
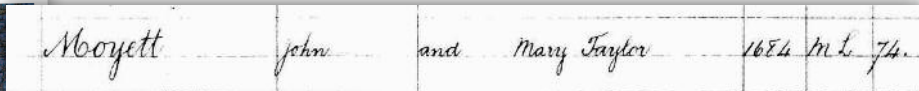
Since the surname form Myatt didn't exist either in early recordings, what was the surname form when it originated?

Over 400 early recordings were gathered. The records researched included the lay subsidy rolls and the poll tax, and showed a wide variety of surname forms.

Extensive research in early records indicates the surname originated as Mayott. The form was stable from the 1200s until the 1500s, recorded primarily as Mayot, Mayott, and Mayotte. The origin is believed to be the manor of Rushton James in north Staffordshire. In the 1500s, many other forms arose, including Meate, Meot, Maot, Meyot, and Meyte. The majority of trees later stabilised as Myatt. It is suspected that the Great Vowel Shift



▲ **Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin, Ireland. Many Meates are buried here, including Bartholomew Meates, born c 1790**



▲ **Ireland marriage licence index entry for John Moyett in 1684, who may be the common ancestor for all the Meates and Mates trees of Ireland who match with DNA**

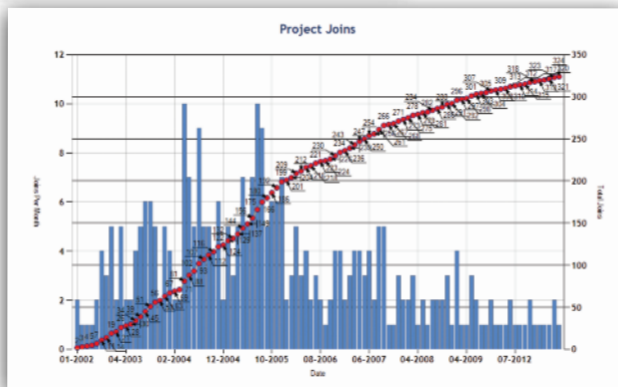
◀ **Documented family trees end when you encounter lack of records, inconsistent written records, or you can't determine the prior location to search for records due to migration. Most trees end in the 1800s or 1700s, and sometimes the 1600s, and rarely the 1500s. DNA then covers the time period from the end of documented trees to the origin of the surname, c1250-1450. This is a time period of hundreds of years**

change in pronunciation was a key factor in the surname evolution.

DNA testing has confirmed that a large group of trees with the surnames Mate, Mates, Meates, Meats and Myatt are related, and all arose from the same surname origin.

With this information about the different surname forms, the Ireland records were searched again. A recording was found in 1653 of a Mayott in Ireland, and in 1684 a marriage licence as Moyett. The mutation shared by all Ireland Meates and Mates, highlighted in yellow in their 37-marker result above, show they share a common ancestor who lived after the progenitor of the surname Mayott and before the start of the documented trees.

An early migration to Derbyshire of a Mayott has also been found. A mutation shared by all Meats today shows they all descend from a man who lived after the progenitor of the surname Mayott. The earliest Meats recordings are in the 1600s, in Derbyshire.



▲ **A report generated by the Family Tree DNA project management system which shows the participants recruited to the Meates DNA Project over time**

None of these discoveries would be possible without DNA testing – 310 men in 17 countries were tested to achieve these discoveries.

### More discoveries to come

There are still more discoveries to come. For example, what about the Meates of Worcestershire? The first recordings in the early 1700s, when the tree first appears, are Mates and Meiats. The easy answer is that some event occurred to break the link between the Y chromosome and the surname, such as an illegitimate male birth that took the mother's surname.

Instead, research in early records has yielded a clue: Mite in the 1327 lay subsidy rolls and Myte in 1332. The challenge now will be to follow the surname evolution forward, to find the surname forms that exist today to test, looking for a match. Could the

surname form Might match these Meates? In addition, the surname Matts, based on a surname distribution map, is worth testing and investigating, due to the proximity to the Worcestershire Meates, to see if a match can be found. I intend to exhaust all avenues, before declaring a break in the Y

chromosome/surname link.

Besides all the traditional applications of DNA testing to assist you with the genealogy of your family tree, it also opens a new avenue of discovery about surnames and their evolution – beyond what we have known to date from just the paper records. ✎

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**SUSAN C MEATES** has over 20 years' experience in performing a surname study, which involved extensive research in Ireland and England. She also started one of the first 25 DNA projects in the world, recruiting over 300 men in 17 countries, and made significant discoveries about her surname and variants. Since 2008 she has served as the DNA Advisor to the Guild of One-Name Studies.