

# USING Y-DNA IN ONE-NAME STUDIES #1: COADS OF THE BORDER<sup>1</sup>

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*[This is the unabridged and unedited version of the article appearing in Volume 12, Issue 2 – April-June 2015 – Journal of One-Name Studies.]*

For most of its existence, Y-DNA has been a central activity the Coad-Coode one-name study and surname reconstruction. Early in the project we discovered 13 main clans of Coad and Coode all dating back to a single known ancestor in the 1600s or earlier, plus several old stray lines. With the aid of strategic Y-DNA tests, we were able to reduce these clans down to three big kinship groups – one from Devon, one from Cornwall, and a likely illegitimate line of the latter from the 1500s.<sup>2</sup> Within these three groups, the thirteen clans (and some sub-clans) have their own DNA signature, because they parted company so long ago, giving them time to have a few unique mutations in their DNA.

In the recently published book of the study, *Unraveling the Code*, a major issue was how to present the structure of a surname used by 5000 individuals in a manageable and comprehensible way. DNA guided this: at the top of the taxonomy sit the three kinship groups, then the thirteen clans which each get their own book chapter, then various senior and junior branches following a tree structure particular to each clan.

After the initial family reconstruction, much of the effort of the project has gone into eliminating brickwalls in the main and stray lines, to simplify the structure. This paper is about a straightforward use of Y-DNA in which three old stray lines, two of them sizeable, were brought back into the taxonomy with a single Y-DNA test.

One of the largest of the thirteen clans is the farming North Hill Coads, who descend from the founder William Coad 1630-1713. William was a small yeoman farmer living in a farming parish where many of his descendants resided for the next 200 years. The village of Coad's Green in Linkinhorne is named after William or his son William jr. William lived into his eighties and had many children – we know of 12 but it seems that he may have had 13, of which eight survived him. His 1714 will mentions his sons William, Henry, Walter and John, daughters Eleanor, Ann and Jane, and executrix a daughter Rebecca.

The main line of North Hill Coads is descended from William's eldest son William Coad jr 1658-1751. Three separate lines descend from three of William jr's sons to the present. His descendants are the second-largest family of Coads and the complete waterfall tree takes up ten pages of text.

Very few land transfer or other documents refer to the clan, indicating they only leased very small plots which did not require lease documents. After generations of farming, most of the descendants eventually lost their holdings, probably due to enclosure, and turned to other lines of work or emigrated. By 1860 only one Coad was still farming in the area, and the line died out in Cornwall by 1950.

The North Hill main line has been very well mapped out by descendants. However, near to North Hill lived two other old stray families of Coad. It was not clear at all they were William's descendants until DNA revealed this. These two lines start from Isaac Coad who had a family in Lamerton, Devon between 1704-12, and James Coad who married Catherine Condy in 1718 in Lezant, right on the Devon border. James had a family in Stoke Climsland and Lezant over the next twelve years, and was buried in Lezant in 1737.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Unraveling the Code*, Chapter 6.

<sup>2</sup> Described in Flood (2009, 2011) and entries in the blog [coadcoode.blogspot.com.au](http://coadcoode.blogspot.com.au)

There were three reasons why we were reluctant to consider the Lamerton and the Lezant Coads as part of the North Hill family:

- It was very unusual for Cornish Coads to move into Devon, though the reverse sometimes occurred. From about 1770 a number of men found work in Plymouth, but we had no records of the Cornish moving to other parts of Devon before 1830, especially not farmers;
- The forenames James and Isaac were not known among the Cornish Coads up to that time. The two men had no baptism records, although the North Hill Coads apparently reliably recorded all their baptisms, and they did not appear in the will of William Coad;
- For over a century until at least 1725, an unrelated family of Coads descended from Rev Arthur Coode 1547 lived around Tavistock, in an area which included Lamerton. It seemed entirely possible that Isaac and James were members of this Devon family.

The biggest danger to seeing the obvious in genealogy as in other forms of forensics is preconceived ideas, and it took DNA evidence to overturn these opinions.

### **Lezant Coads – descendants of James Coad**

Lezant is about six miles from North Hill, right on the Devon border. The records of the line descending from James Coad were rather patchy as all were illiterate and they owned no land, working mostly as agricultural labourers. One branch later took up mining, and there were a few shoemakers and carpenters in the family. They continued to live in these border parishes until the Great Emigration began in the 1850s. In 1900 there were about 60 Coad descendants worldwide, mostly in Australia where three separate lines settled.

It was only in 2012 that we finally obtained a DNA sample from a descendant of James – and it turned out he was very much a North Hill Coad! This gave us a completely different focus on the family.

Because we already thought Isaac and James were relatives, the DNA result suggested that this family were prepared to move into Devon, and were the first Cornish Coads to do so. Second, the North Hill clan was not as good at recording baptisms as we thought – as we apparently now had two sons without baptisms. Once these assumptions were swept away by the DNA test, suddenly a number of areas of commonality between James, Isaac and the North Hill Coad main line sprang into relief.

James must be either an unrecorded son of the North Hill founder William 1630 or his son William jr 1658, and there is circumstantial evidence for either possibility. For the former possibility he must have married late, for the latter, he married (1718) and died (1738) early. Like Isaac he is the first of this forename in the family; he is probably named for King James II who ruled 1685-1688 and he might have been born in that period.<sup>3</sup> This was too late to be fathered by the elder William unless he married twice, and too early for the younger William who married in 1692. He is not mentioned in the will of William senior in 1713, indicating he may be a son of William jr, probably a third son born around 1698. Like Isaac he called his eldest son William after his father; two younger children are named Honor and John after his aunt and uncle (or brother and sister), and his youngest son in 1730 was named after King George II.

The reason for James' move to the border parishes also becomes apparent once this ancestry is assumed. His aunt (or elder sister) Jane married in Lezant in 1701. His uncle Isaac was just across the river. His elder brother William Coad III also had a family in Stoke Climsland from 1714.

### **Lamerton Coads – descendants of Isaac Coad**

Parish records in Devon are much less available than in Cornwall, so we had quite poor records of the Lamerton/Marytavy family, who were mostly stonemasons. Lamerton is about

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<sup>3</sup> There is some evidence other early members of this family were Jacobites.

fourteen miles from North Hill – a long way in these days – but it is just across the Tamar from Stoke Climsland in Cornwall where James had his first two children. Residents of the two parishes “*flit backwards and forwards between the two places as if the Tamar just wasn't there.*”

In 1841 there were 19 Lamerton Coads in Devon, but by 1901 there were none in the whole of Britain, except for several elderly spinsters in London; the line is believed to survive today only in Sydney and perhaps in Ontario. We have not yet found a descendant to obtain DNA confirmation, nevertheless the evidence is compelling as to their ancestry.

The forename ties of this family with the North Hill Coads are even stronger than in the previous case and it is almost certain that Isaac was the youngest, unrecorded son of William the founder. He was the first Coad of that name, but subsequently there were eleven Isaacs among his own descendants and in the North Hill family – and these are almost the only Isaac Coads on record. Isaac named his first son William and his third son Robert, after his father and only uncle, making a fairly tight case for his ancestry.

### **St Budeaux Coads – descendants of Walter Coad**

As well as these two lines, we found occasional references in apprenticeship records to Walter and William Coad in St Budeaux, which today is a northern suburb of Plymouth. Because of the distance, which is about 20 miles away and bypassing two or three other early Coad families, we were reluctant to associate this family with Walter of North Hill.

A partial listing of the baptisms of St Budeaux appeared on rootsweb several years ago, showing eight Coad(e) baptisms in the period 1700-1720. We were able to confirm that these included Walter and William and that their father was a yeoman, Walter Coad. Unfortunately because of the death of the Online Parish Clerk we have been unable to obtain more details. The only real candidate for this father is Walter Coad 1674, fifth son of William of North Hill. Because we know the younger sons of William Coad were prepared to move into Devon, we can reasonably propose that this family is also a North Hill branch

### **Summary**

At this stage, Y-DNA is a fairly blunt tool for establishing lines of descent within families, though improved methods are emerging. However, in distinguishing between families DNA is an unparalleled tool. DNA takes precedence over any other form of evidence when it comes to determining whether two individuals are related or not. If the DNA result contradicts what is currently thought, then any pre-existing conjectures have to be dropped and new evidence sought – completely changing the focus of investigation. Quite often in this situation, an apparently intractable situation is rapidly resolved, and several brickwalls can be solved at once.

In the present case, unjustified beliefs that “North Hill Coads baptised all their children” and “Coads never crossed the Cornwall-Devon border before 1775”, while Cornish farmers “never went farming elsewhere in Britain”, prevented us finding the antecedents of three stray lines: those of Walter, Isaac and James Coad. A single Y-DNA test overturned these assumptions and we were able to assign these families with reasonable likelihood to the North Hill clan.

Like most new tools, Y-DNA is only slowly revealing its practical uses in one-name studies, which are, at present, establishing taxonomies and broad kinship lines, thereby giving direction to conventional research. However we are heading towards the stage where DNA can be used to determine actual lines of descent, as a subsequent article will show.

### **References**

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