

Searching For Connections

by Perry Lee Blair, BSGR Member #1246-L14

This search started many years ago with my aunt's (now deceased) search for a connection to our pre-Texas family. Somehow, she found that my great great grandfather's name was Edward Blair and his wife's name was Martha K. Dismukes, both of whom were from Georgia. She found an Edward G. Blair in the 1870 Alabama US census but his wife's name was Nancy Trussle and there was no mention of my great grandfather William L Blair. My aunt's search was before Ancestry.com, etc., so the search was slow. Ultimately, she gave her research to my oldest brother, who began by searching Blair websites. Eventually, he found the silverhillala.com/blair website. There he discovered that Martha Dismukes had died between 1858-60 after having 5 children, all in Georgia, the oldest being William L., our great grandfather. Edward G., later married Nancy Trussle and they had more children in Alabama. Confusing the issue above was that another Edward Blair born the same year was living in Florence, Alabama.

So the answer to the mystery was that our great great grandfather, Edward Guy Blair, was married twice and had families in two different states. From there, the tree, to my brother's delight, went back to our earliest known ancestor, Thomas Blair b. 1729 in Antrim, Ireland. The silverhillala.com/blair website was put together by Debbie Blair Owen and is worth viewing if you haven't already. I learned much more from an article written by Charlotte Blair Stewart; titled, "Migration Patterns-Ulster to America 1717-1775" on the silverhill website. It is a story common to all Scottish families that

migrated to Ireland in the 1600s and then to the colonies in the 1700s. At this point, my brother lost some interest; and I became more interested.

I saw right away, that the only way to prove we were a part of this line was to do a DNA test. When the DNA test results came back, as my brother had suspected, we were placed in group 4 on the BlairDNA database. I also joined the Blair Society.

Being a novice at genealogy, I then decided to look for the parents of my oldest known ancestor, born 1729 Antrim, Ireland. Quickly, I ran into a stone wall. After reading about the experiences of other people searching for records in this time period, it soon became apparent how this stone wall arose. It was due to the law forbidding protestant churches to exist in Ireland: No churches, no marriages, baptisms, etc. and thus, no records kept, except by a few rogue ministers. This created a gap in family trees of at least, two generations of Scottish immigrants.

After giving my stone wall some thought, (and being the novice that I am) I came up with an idea: "If I can't track my ancestors from the top down; maybe, I can track them from the bottom up." I noticed that some of the people in group 4 had tested positive for the SNP L21, which meant that I should also be L21 positive. It then occurred to me that if I know I am L21+ why should I pay to test this SNP. I could just move down the L21 tree and test for other branches and, once I found a positive, I would be recognized L21 by default. About this time I was in contact

with Terry Blair, Treasurer for BSGR Terry suggested that I test for DF49 (a branch of L21). (He told me later that he compared my DNA signature with those of others in the R-L21 Project and he thought that I matched well with those positive for DF49.) Sure enough, I tested positive for DF49. I then joined the R-L21 project and the R-DF49 project. There are no fees charged for belonging to these projects and you get the latest changes to those trees. Being DF49+ moved group 4 from having a common ancestor from an age of about 3000 BCE to around the time of Christ.

Then, the question was, where do I go from here? There were more options (SNPs) on this tree: the lowest branch (at that time) being M222, which was believed to originate about 500 A.D. with "Niall of the Nine Hostages," who was the founder of a three hundred year dynasty in Ireland. I tested negative for M222. So I moved back up the tree and tested for DF23. I also tested negative for DF23. Looking at my DNA and other branches of DF49 it became apparent that I was at the end of the line; that is, until other branches were found below DF49 and above DF23. Unbeknownst to me Project R-DF49 had been participating in a large research program (the FamilyTreeDNA BIG-Y test). Just when I thought I was at the end of the line, DF49 came out with many more SNPs and placed their members in them for further investigation.

There are currently only two BLAIRS in the DF49 project.

(See www.familytreedna.com/public/R-DF49).

Both of us are in group 4 in the BlairDNA database. In the DF49 project we are placed in a cluster along with 16 others, as being

DF49+, DF23- and having "No known [STR] pattern". So, I am encouraging all BLAIRS in group 4 to test for DF49 and, if positive to join the DF49 project at FamilyTreeDNA. (The expectation is that all members of the group will test positive for DF49, but you must test to be sure. Go to your FTDNA home page and look in the upper right corner for the button to "order an upgrade". Then look in the lower left corner for "Order Advanced Tests"; clicking on that button will bring up a page titled Select a Product. Under "Filter" in the middle of the page find the box labeled "Test Type", and click on the little arrow to the right to enter SNP. That brings up another page where you can enter DF49 in the find box. Simply add it to your cart, pay, and wait for the results. Maybe the sheer number of us will cause them to find a pattern that will fit a new SNP.

I have no idea where all this will wind up, but I am currently taking the "Big Y" test, which all group 4 most likely can share. The hope is that the new SNPs will move me closer in time to today, possibly identifying the time when our Most Recent Common Ancestor lived or even identifying a family. The results will take around 2 months.

I am not really familiar with other groups in the BlairDNA database, but you can see what is known by going to <http://www.familytreedna.com/public/Blair/default.aspx?section=yresults>. You can get some sense of what your SNP result might be by looking at the column labeled haplogroup on the website. For example, in group 2, one person is labeled R-L193 (in green) and another is L21. This means that all the members of that group are L21 and probably L193, which is below L21, but only testing can verify the result.