

Identity Crisis- Am I Really a Gledhill?

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Experienced and long-time family historian and SAG member, Lloyd Gledhill, set up the The Gledhill Genealogy website www.gledhillgenealogy.info in 1997 as a repository and reference centre for material relating to the Gledhill family, the Gledhill name and family trees.

The website documents the extensive research undertaken by Lloyd and others in the years both prior to and after its establishment. It includes historical articles on the Gledhills and their homelands in the West Riding of Yorkshire as well as thirty family trees. The website has long acted as a point of contact for Gledhills across the world, with Lloyd assisting many “cousins” across the world to find their Gledhill links.

In 2019, after all those years of research, Lloyd started to doubt that he was really a Gledhill.

What caused him to doubt his heritage and to muse that maybe he had wasted many years researching a family name that was not actually his?

The simple answer is DNA, or more precisely, a lack of DNA matches with his Gledhill “cousin” in the USA (USA Cousin A) with whom he had been sharing research for many years and with whom he believed he shared three times great grandparents, Joseph and Jane.

Their traditional research indicated that Humphrey (one of his sons emigrated to Australia) and Walter (who emigrated to the USA) were sons of Jane France and Joseph Gledhill and were therefore brothers. See Fig 1.

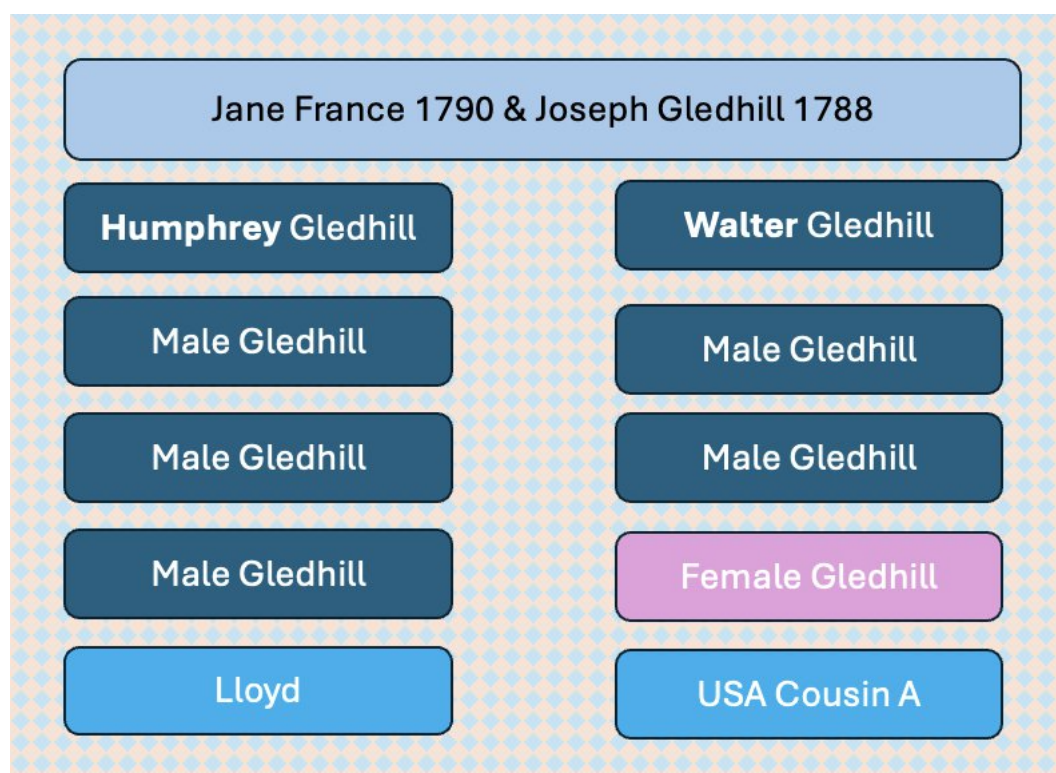


Fig 1

Lloyd had taken autosomal DNA tests (atDNA). These are the DNA tests offered by companies such as Ancestry, My Heritage and 23&Me which test your 23 autosomal chromosomes and match you with “cousins” across both your maternal and paternal lines.

No atDNA matches had been found between Lloyd and USA Cousin A nor any other descendants of Walter.

There were atDNA matches between Lloyd and other descendants of Humphrey and between the descendants of Walter in the USA, but no matches that brought the two “brothers” Humphrey and Walter together.

While there was one atDNA match linking Lloyd to his three times great grandmother Jane France, there were no atDNA matches linking back to Joseph or his parents. See Fig 2.

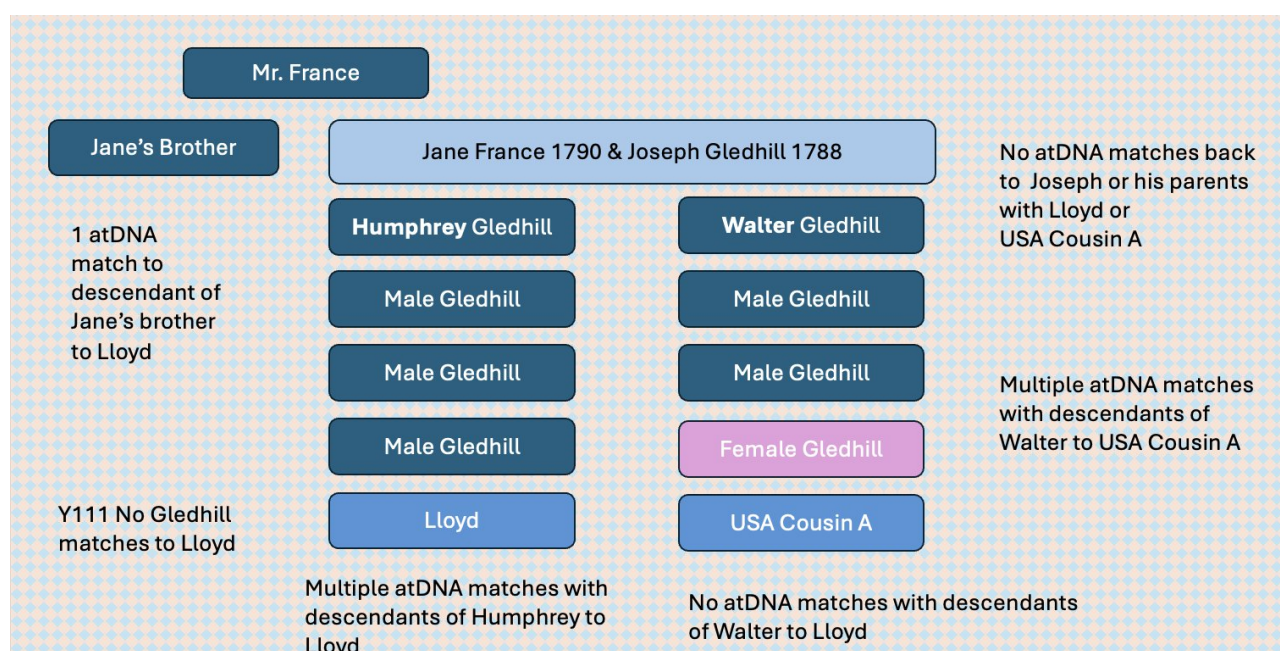


Fig 2

In addition to his atDNA tests, Lloyd had taken a YDNA test at Family TreeDNA (FTDNA) back in 2005. Only males have YDNA (it is what makes them genetic males), so only males on the direct patrilineal line of interest can take the test.

In Anglo culture, surnames are passed down along the direct patrilineal line, so Lloyd expected some Gledhill matches to appear in his YDNA match list- especially since he had established a Gledhill Surname Project at FTDNA which had 22 members, 10 of whom were Gledhill (Glidewell, Hill) males who had taken a YDNA test at FTDNA (though none had been from Walter’s USA line).

Lloyd had NO Gledhill matches in his YDNA match lists.

He did not even match any of the other Gledhill, Glidewell or Hill testers in his project. There was no one in the FTDNA YDNA data base with the surname of Gledhill with whom Lloyd shared a direct common patrilineal line ancestor.

Given this lack of Gledhill related matches from both atDNA and YDNA testing the following questions emerged:

- Were Walter and Humphrey really brothers?
- Was Joseph the father of Humphrey and Walter?
- Were Lloyd and USA Cousin A related as they supposed?
- Was Lloyd really a Gledhill?

Where to Next?

Lloyd and USA Cousin A were very invested in proving their Gledhill connection.

YDNA and surnames are passed along the patrilineal line. The assumed connection was along a patrilineal surname line. YDNA testing was selected as the best tool to use in this instance.

Given that USA Cousin A was connected to the Gledhill line via his mother (a female Gledhill), it was of no value to have him take a YDNA test since he did not carry Gledhill YDNA. It was therefore necessary to identify a direct Gledhill male on Walter's direct patrilineal line to take the YDNA test. i.e. a Gledhill male who had a direct father/father/father/father/father connection to Walter.

A suitable candidate (USA Cousin B) was recruited, and he took a Y37 test at FTDNA. See Fig 3.

The Y37 test is the cheapest YDNA test available and is sufficient to indicate relatedness (or lack of relatedness).

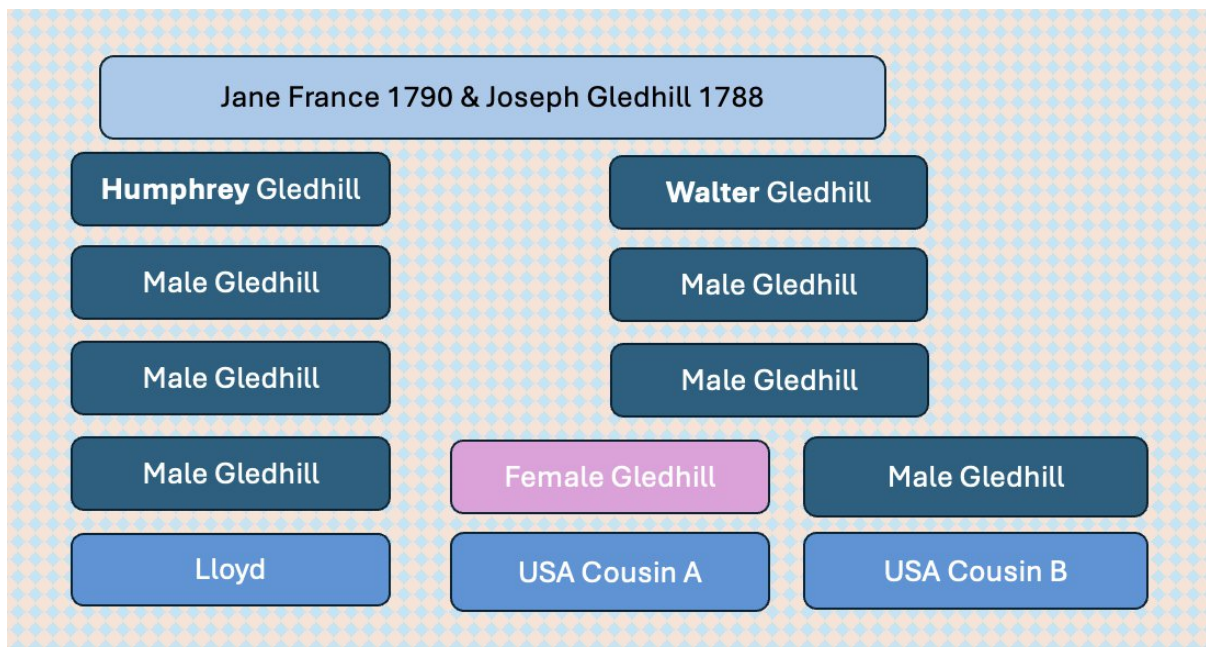


Fig 3

To the great relief of Lloyd and his USA cousins, the YDNA test results showed that Lloyd and USA Cousin B were a match i.e. they shared a common direct male ancestor. See Fig 4.

Note: Lloyd and USA Cousin B could only match at Y37 and not at the higher levels of Y67 and Y111 as USA Cousin B had only tested to Y37.







111 Markers (2)	67 Markers (13)	<u>37 Markers (23)</u>	25 Markers (675)	12 Markers (6635)	
Name 	Markers Tested 	Genetic Distance  ↑	Big Y STR Diff 	Y Haplog 	
USA COUSIN B Gledhill	1 to 37	1 step Link on Family Tree	Not Available	R-M269	

Fig 4

Their Genetic Distance at Y37 was estimated to be 1 Step. Clicking through to the Time Predictor at FTDNA indicated that Lloyd and USA Cousin B shared a direct common male ancestor who was estimated to have been born around 1750. See Fig 5

FTDNATiP™ Report			
Most Recent Common Ancestor Time Predictor based on Y-STR Genetic Distance			
Genetic Distance ⓘ	Y-12 TMRCA ⓘ	Y-25 TMRCA ⓘ	Y-37 TMRCA ⓘ
0	1600 CE (950 - 1950 CE)	1750 CE (1400 - 1950 CE)	1800 CE (1600 - 1950 CE)
1	1100 CE (300 BCE - 1850 CE)	1550 CE (1000 - 1900 CE)	1750 CE (1450 - 1900 CE)
2		1300 CE (400 - 1800 CE)	1650 CE (1250 - 1850 CE)
3			1500 CE (1000 - 1800 CE)
4			1300 CE (650 - 1750 CE)
5			

Fig 5

Joseph Gledhill was born in 1788 which makes him a very likely candidate to be this shared ancestor, although, given the date range of the Time Predictor, the common ancestor could be his father or grandfather. Nonetheless, the match shows the connection between Lloyd and USA Cousin B on their direct Gledhill patrilineal line. Humphrey and Walter were brothers, Lloyd and his USA cousins do relate as they predicted, and they are indeed Gledhills.

Why then had there been no atDNA matches between the descendants of Humphrey and the descendants of Walter?

Due to the effect of random recombination, atDNA's effectiveness for cousin matching has an outer limit of about 5-7 generations from the tester.

As 4th cousins, Lloyd and his USA cousins are just at the edge of the usefulness of atDNA. They are cousins, but they just didn't randomly inherit the same segments of DNA from their 3 times great

grandfather Joseph. With no identical segments of DNA inherited, they couldn't match on an atDNA test.

YDNA does not have this limit as it is passed directly from father to son with no recombination. It stretches back further than atDNA, indeed all the way back to YDNA Adam in ancient Africa. It is therefore very useful if the research question/brick wall is on the direct male line just beyond the reach of atDNA.

Having been reassured that he was indeed a Gledhill, Lloyd wondered what else YDNA could tell him about his Gledhill surname.

One question that had been floating around from the time Gledhill family research had begun, was: Are all Gledhills descended from a single male ancestor?

Early Gledhill researchers and publications indicated that all Gledhills had descended from the one male ancestor in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

Attempts to make the connections across the various Gledhill family trees had all failed due to the lack of documentary evidence for the relevant time period and the time period being beyond the upper limit for atDNA.

The question remained unanswered and continued to be the source of much conjecture.

After years of Gledhill research, Lloyd doubted the single male ancestor proposition. He held that the Gledhill surname had multiple origins but needed more evidence to support his hypothesis.

The evidence he needed was sitting in his Gledhill Surname Project at FTDNA.

Fig 6 lists the male Gledhill, Glidewell and Hill members of the Gledhill Surname Project who had taken a YDNA test. Figure 6 lists most distant known ancestor detail (tester supplied), level of YDNA test taken and Y haplogroup for each tester who is a member of the Gledhill Surname Project at FTDNA.

Name	Paternal Ancestor Name	Country	Haplogroup	Test
Gledhill 1		United Kingdom	R-M269	Y-DNA37
Gledhill 2	James Gledhill, 1669, Elland, Yorkshire, U.K.	England	E-Y17357	Autosomal Transfer Unlock
Gledhill 3		Unknown Origin	R-M269	Y-HAP-Backbone
USA Cousin B	Joseph Gledhill, 1788	England	R-M269	Y-DNA37
Lloyd Gledhill	Joseph Gledhill, 1788	England	R-FTD16140	Big Y-700
Gledhill 4	Richard de Barksland 1200	United Kingdom	R-M269	Y-DNA37
Hill	Edward hill 1889, Glasgow	Ireland	R-U152	Autosomal Transfer Unlock
Gledhill 5	John Gledhill B: 1816. D: 1890	United Kingdom	R-M269	Y-DNA37
Glidewell	Charles Glidewell b. 1745? Mary Hart, Buckingham?	England	R-FTB23471	Big Y-700
Gledhill 6	Richard Gleadhill or Gledhill, b 1748	England	R-FTB23471	Big Y-700

Fig 6

A search of Lloyd's YDNA match lists for each of these project members showed that, of the Gledhill, Glidewell and Hill YDNA testers who had joined the project, only the recruited descendant of Walter

from the USA, (USA Cousin B) matched Lloyd, and therefore shared a common direct male ancestor with his line.

None of the other project members matched Lloyd and therefore, did not share a common direct male ancestor with him. Their direct male ancestors were not direct male ancestors of Lloyd.

Therefore, their Gledhill family lines had different patriarchs to Lloyd's Gledhill family line. Having the same surname, even in the same county, did not guarantee that these various family lines shared one common ancestor or patriarch.

It would therefore follow that there was no single common direct male ancestor who began the Gledhill family tree. The Gledhill surname must have begun, not with a single male Gledhill but with multiple (unrelated) male Gledhills.

YDNA data stretches back further than the available documentary evidence and, in the case of the surname Gledhill, genetic evidence has replaced conjecture and speculation in relation to the single ancestor hypothesis.

Summary:

- Targeted YDNA testing was able to reassure Lloyd that he was really a Gledhill and confirm his relationship to his USA Gledhill cousins.
- His Gledhill Surname Project at FTDNA along with the ten Gledhill males who YDNA tested and joined the project, provided the evidence he was looking for in relation to the single male ancestor hypotheses.
- Neither of these two important questions could have been answered by atDNA and/or traditional research alone. YDNA was needed to be added into the mix.

Next Steps?

Having disproven the single male Gledhill ancestor theory, Lloyd is now turning his attention to his own Gledhill line and its beginnings.

Lloyd's Gledhill family line hails from Dewsbury in Yorkshire. There are still Gledhill families connected to the area today.

Do Lloyd's Gledhills and the Gledhills currently connected to Dewsbury share a common direct male ancestor? If so, within what time frame and what is their relationship to Lloyd's family line?

Further traditional research and the identification of suitable Dewsbury connected Gledhill Y testers may well be able to answer these questions.

By testing living Dewsbury Gledhill males, Lloyd will be able to determine if they share a common direct male ancestor and the approximate year of his birth. If they match and therefore share a common ancestor, this will indicate that they are from the same family line and how far back this line extends.

A longer term project would include the extension of the Gledhill Surname Project to recruit at least one direct male on each of the family lines in the thirty Gledhill trees currently on the Gledhill website to take a BigY700 YDNA test at FTDNA.

Their combined results would produce a genetic tree showing if and when each line was (or wasn't) connected to each other Gledhill line.

A genetically correct whole world Gledhill tree/s would become a reality!

Stay tuned for the next exciting chapter in the Gledhill surname story.....

To find out more about Gledhill Genealogy visit the website at

www.gledhillgenealogy.info

To find out more about the power of YDNA to assist your family history research, sign up for the 3 part webinar series *Understanding YDNA* (available as recordings and /or Zoom webinars)

<https://sag.org.au/event-6070348>