

How to Build 'Quick and Dirty' Family Trees in Ancestry

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You may have heard of 'Quick and Dirty (Family) Trees' and how people use them to find ancestors or prove/disprove family and genetic relationships.

For example, I have a Match on Ancestry DNA who is listed as a 2nd to 3rd cousin. I looked at his family tree and did recognise a surname but not the specific individuals named. For me they are a different branch and I am more distant than 2nd to 3rd cousin. So am I wrong ? or is the Match's tree a bit askew?

I thought I'd try a Q&D tree based on my Match and the parents he shows on his tree. Ancestry quickly found him and his parents and showed some Census and baptism records and some Ancestry family trees which pointed to a SISTER being the Match's grandmother, not the person shown. This made sense to me and confirmed the degree of relatedness. Very reassuring for me and I now look at my Match's tree with caution. I haven't said anything to him as the incorrect (as far as I am concerned) relationship may be in my Match's tree for a good reason as far as he is concerned.

This is a good reason to keep my Q&D tree PRIVATE and UNSEARCHABLE!

What is a 'Quick and Dirty Tree'

This is a family tree you are using to discover possible relationships. You are employing the power and size of the ANCESTRY database which does all the hard work for you.

Essentially you are saying to Ancestry 'I have a person, Charles Humphries, born 1960, what do you know about him? Give me some suggestions.' You can add further information to guide Ancestry if you like such as entering the name Harriet in the Mother profile.

IMPORTANT!!

You SHOULD make your Q&D family tree PRIVATE and UNSEARCHABLE. Why?

Private – because it is for YOUR use only. You will not be verifying all the relationships indicated and you may introduce people into the tree – just to test what is found. You are not ready or confident enough to share this with anyone else.

Unsearchable – because you don't want to mislead or mis-inform anyone else. You are not confident in the relationships that are indicated and you have not proved them to the standards you maintain. Ancestry does not report relationships in Unsearchable Trees to anyone else.

So, how do you make a tree PRIVATE and UNSEARCHABLE?

If you already have a Family tree you want to use for 'fishing' or you have built a tree for a dummy Start person (see below) you should ensure the Privacy Settings for that tree are as follows:

1. In Ancestry, select 'Trees' from the Main menu and choose your 'fishing' or Start HERE tree.
2. Choose 'Tree Settings'

3. Choose 'Privacy Settings'
4. Put checkmarks beside
 - i) 'Private Tree' (This makes the tree Private to You), and
 - ii) 'Also prevent your tree from being found in the search index' (This marks the Tree Unsearchable to Ancestry)
5. SAVE your changes!

Tree Settings

Tree Info **Privacy Settings** Sharing

You control who sees your family tree and the information you enter. Select the level of privacy you are comfortable with:

☐ Public Tree

Making your tree public benefits you and the community

- When your trees are publicly viewable, it is easier to find relatives using the Ancestry sites.
- Members of Ancestry sites can get in touch with you and help with your research. (This is done without showing your name or email address.)

All personal information is protected

- Information about living people is automatically hidden from others and is NOT included in our search index.
- You can change your mind and make your tree private anytime.
- Only you can edit your tree unless you invite people to work with you.

☒ Private Tree

This setting makes your tree "Private" so that it can't be viewed as a Public Member Tree. Note that the information from your tree will still be indexed for searching, but those who find your information can't view your tree without your permission.

What does this mean?

- Even if you don't share your tree, other members can still learn if a specific deceased individual is in your tree, in addition to the birth year and birthplace of the person and your username (but no personal information about you).
- They can then contact you anonymously through the Connection Service on Ancestry sites to request more information. Keep in mind that members who want to learn from your tree may also have helpful information about your tree to offer you in exchange.

☒ Also prevent your tree from being found in the search index.

Note: although your tree will instantly become public or private, it usually takes about a month or more to be reflected in the search index.

Save Changes

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How do I create a Quick and Dirty Tree in Ancestry?

You can build a single tree for each scenario or person whose ancestry you want to explore. Make sure each one is Private and Unsearchable. This just requires the normal process for tree building, but in separate trees.

Or

Build a dummy 'Start HERE' family tree, then link to Dummy Parents, and then detach from the Dummy Parents for each person you are investigating. Your research person is 'Floating' and you can create a Q&D tree for them. This requires a little extra work but keeps all your investigations in one tree, which can be searched easily when you find a name you are sure you've seen before!

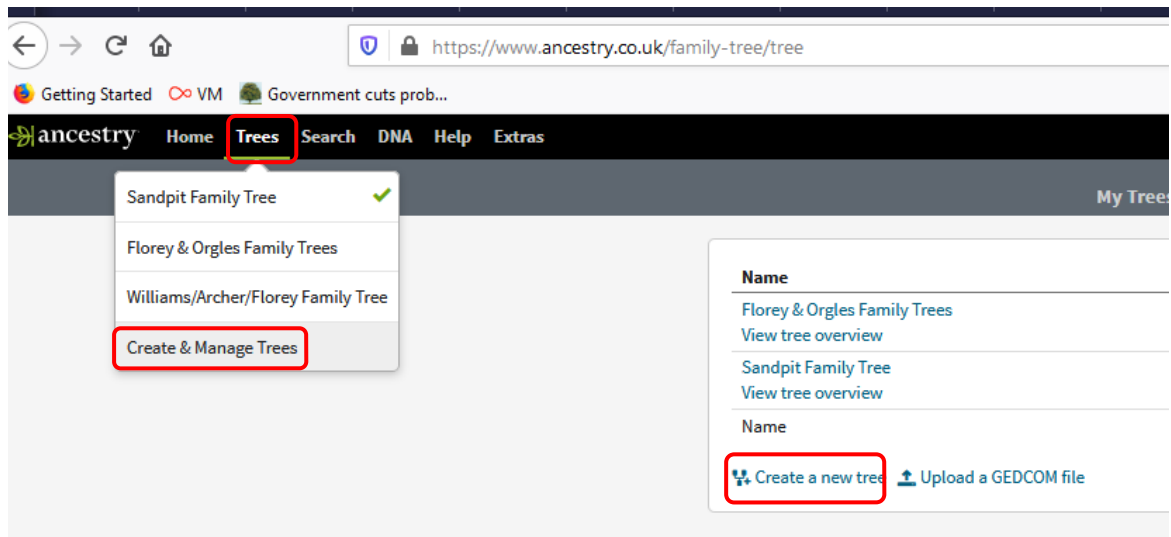
The overall process for this is:

- Create a standalone tree for a person called 'Start HERE' (or similar Dummy Name). Add a Dummy Mother and Dummy Father
- Choose a person to investigate ('A')
- Add 'A' to Start HERE's tree as a SIBLING of 'Start HERE'
- DETACH 'A' from the Dummy parents. 'A' is now 'floating' but is still known to Ancestry as a sibling of 'Start HERE'.
- Add correct/experimental relationship details to 'A'.
- Step back while Ancestry hunts for 'A' in its database and starts to offer HINTS
- Accept or ignore the hints
- Add/remove links and play!

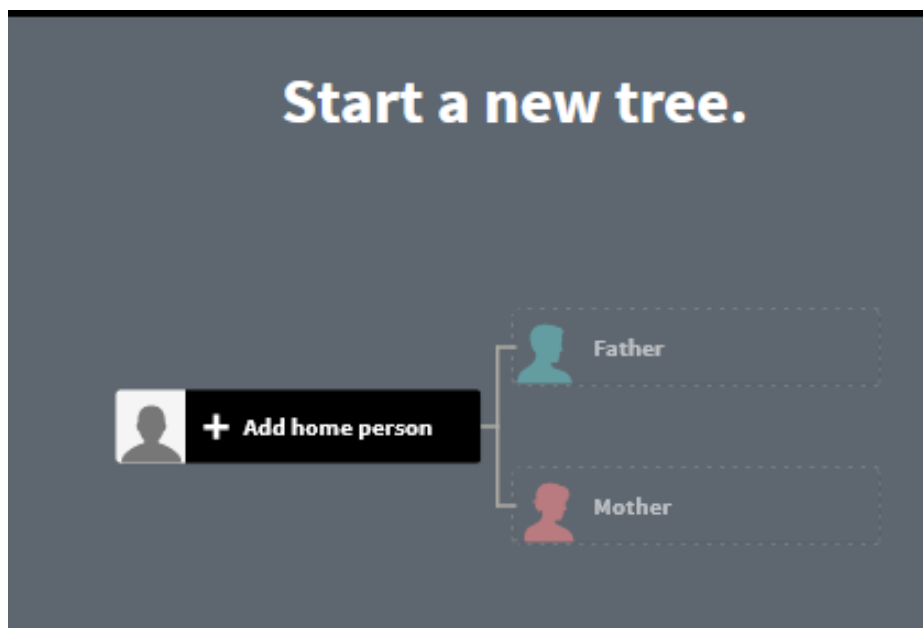
See below for a detailed description of the process.

Stage 1 - How do I start to build the Start HERE tree?

1. Open Ancestry and Select Trees.
2. From the Trees Dropdown, select 'Create and Manage Trees'
3. From the central list select 'Create a new tree'



You are presented with a skeleton tree.



Click on **+Add Home Person**

Add Yourself [X]

Add new person

☒ I am starting with myself (Why do we ask?)

First and Middle Name Last Name Suffix

Gender ☒ Male ☐ Female ☒ Unknown

Status ☐ Deceased ☒ Living

Birth Date Birthplace

DD MMM YYYY City, County, State, Country

Continue Cancel

You could add Yourself if appropriate

Or

Add a New Person, in which case,

Uncheck the 'I am starting with myself' tickbox. A slightly larger box appears.

Add Yourself [X]

Add new person

☐ I am starting with myself (Why do we ask?)

First and Middle Name ☒ Last Name ☒ Suffix ☒

Start HERE Anchor

Gender ☒ Male ☐ Female ☒ Unknown

Status ☒ Deceased ☐ Living

Birth Date Birthplace

DD MMM YYYY City, County, State, Country

Death Date Death Place

DD MMM YYYY City, County, State, Country

Continue Cancel

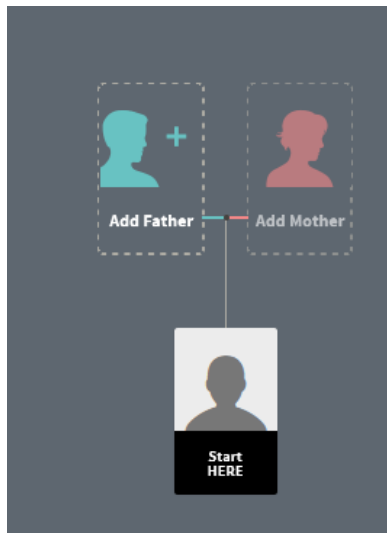
Create your Start HERE 'Anchor' person. Leave the Gender, Status and Dates fields empty.

Why do you need an Anchor Person?

The Anchor person is a Finding Aid for the future.

Press CONTINUE

The Family Tree appears



Add a Mother and Father, as above, using Question marks for their names. Accept the default Gender values but dates and places can be left blank. This has created a family tree and Ancestry asks you what to call it.



I have chosen **HERE Experimental Family Tree** and I have UNCHECKED the 'Allow others to view...' box

Save Your Tree

Name Your Tree *

HERE Experimental Family Tree

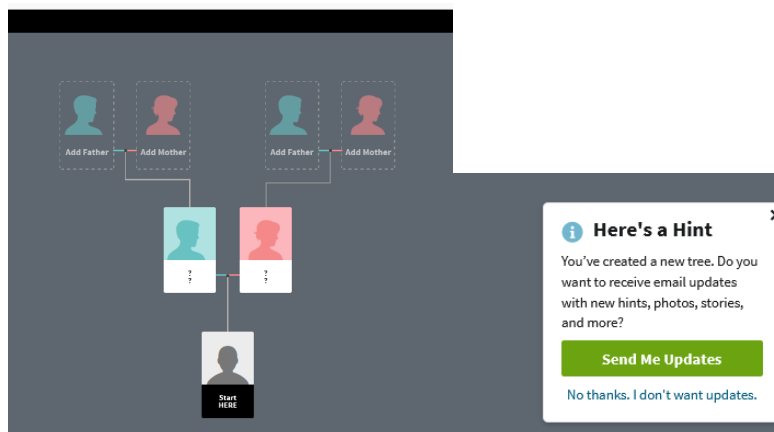
☐ Allow others to view this tree (people marked "living" are hidden). [How does this help me?](#)

Save tree Cancel

We value your privacy. [Read our privacy policy](#)

SAVE the tree.

Admire your new famliy tree!



Accept the Hint so you will receive suggested relatives.

Well done! Stage 1 completed.

Stage 2.

You can now use the tree to enter 'relatives' that you want Ancestry to investigate.

The overall process is as follows:

1. Create a SIBLING to 'Start HERE' (Anchor person). The Sibling is the person you want Ancestry to trace back.
2. Ancestry will assume the Sibling has the same parents as Start Here ie ?? and ??.
3. Break the relationship links to ?? and ?? . The Sibling is now FLOATING.
4. Enter new parents or siblings for the floating sibling.
5. Sit back and watch Ancestry come up with suggestions!
6. Accept or Reject the suggestions. The tree will build until you break the tree or stop accepting hints.

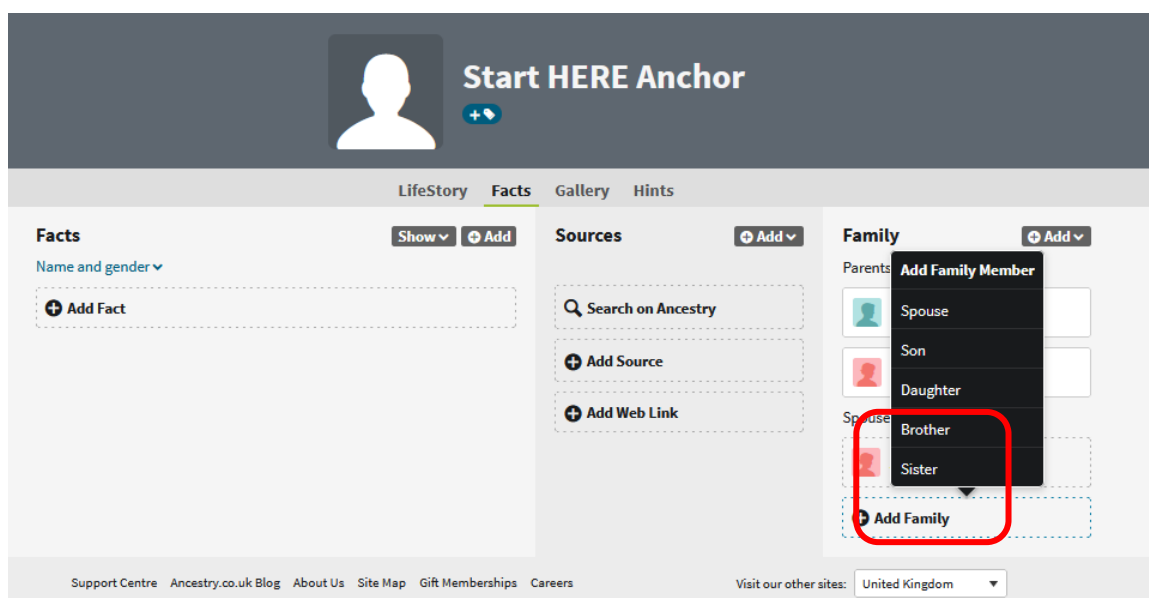
Taking each step at a time...

- 1. Create a SIBLING to Start HERE (Anchor person). The Sibling is the person you want Ancestry to trace back.**

Open your Experimental Tree.

Click on the Start HERE person and select 'Profile'.

Select 'Add Family' and choose 'Brother' or 'Sister'



Start HERE Anchor

LifeStory Facts Gallery Hints

Facts Sources Family

Search Select someone in your tree

+ Add new person

Add new person

First and Middle Name ✓ Charles

Last Name ✓ Humphries

Suffix ✓ DNA 66 cM

Gender ✓

☒ Male

☐ Female

☐ Unknown

Status ✓

☒ Deceased

☐ Living

Birth Date DD MMM YYYY

Birthplace City, County, State, Country

Death Date DD MMM YYYY

Death Place City, County, State, Country

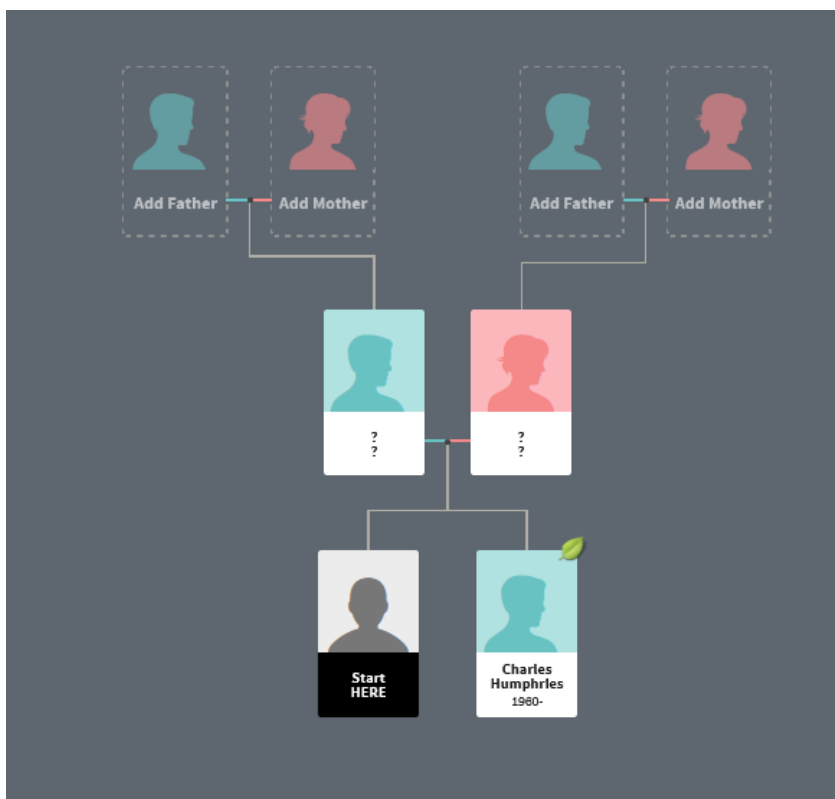
Parents

☒ ?? and ??

Save Cancel

Enter the details of the person whose ancestry you are investigating. Remember to use the Suffix field to lodge a clue to help find them. I have used **DNA 66 cM**.

SAVE!



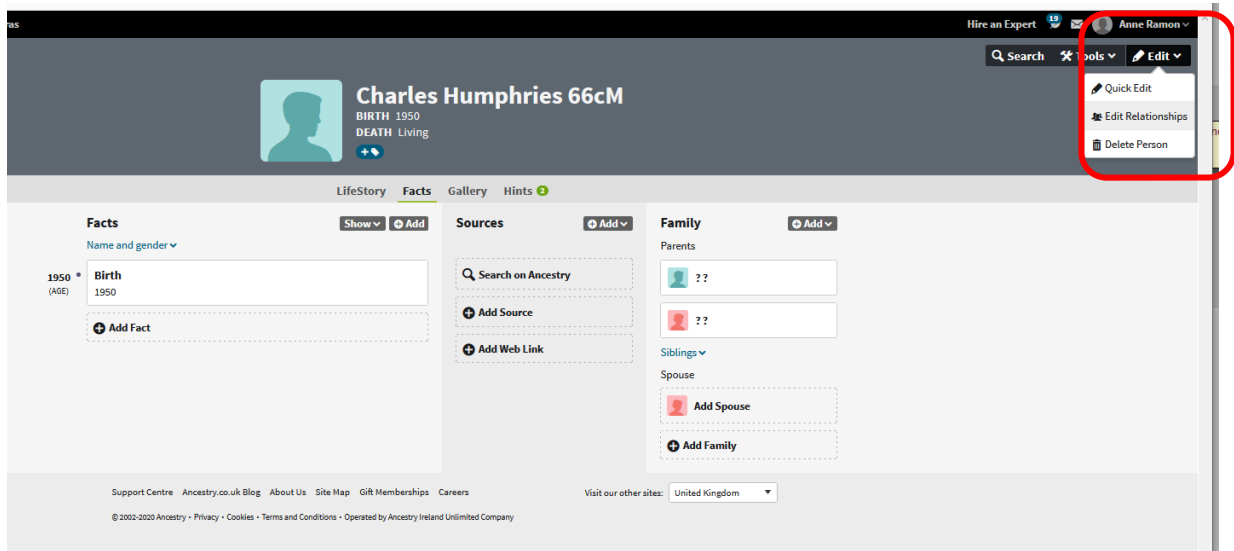
Admire your revised tree!

Next steps....

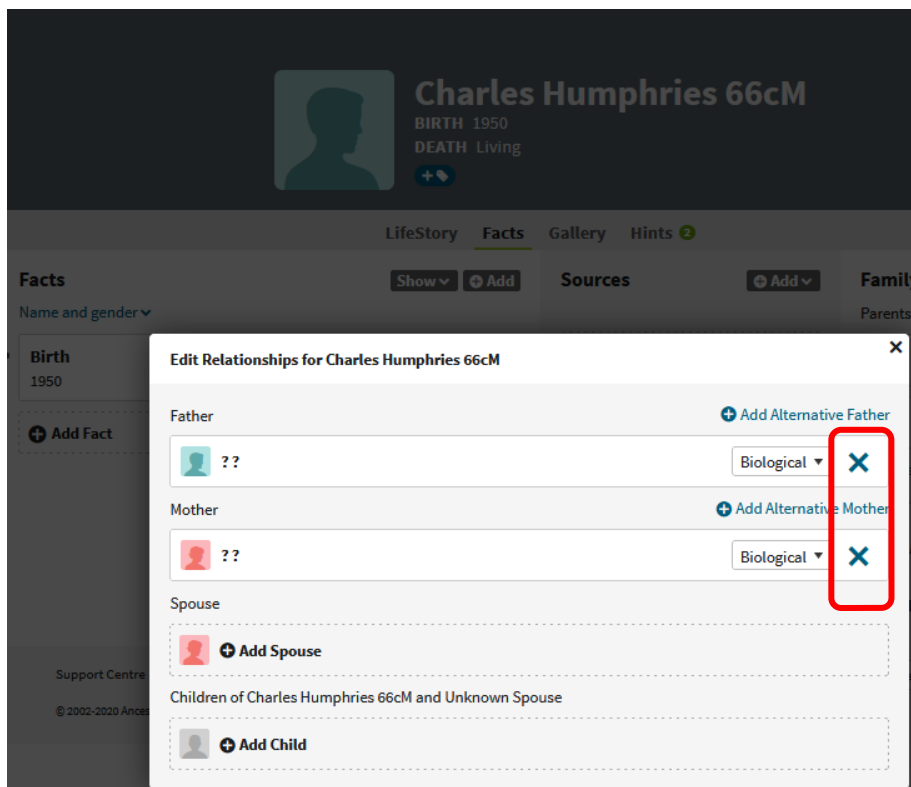
2. Ancestry will assume the Sibling has the same parents as Start Here ie ?? and ??.
3. Break the relationship links to ?? and ?? . The Sibling is now FLOATING

To do this...

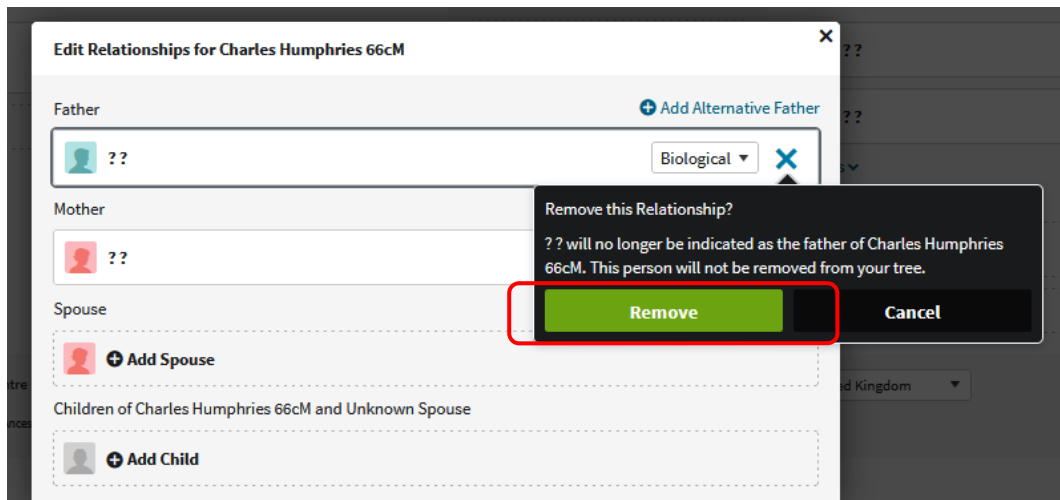
Select the new sibling in the Experimental Tree and choose 'Profile' and then 'Edit' and 'Edit Relationships'



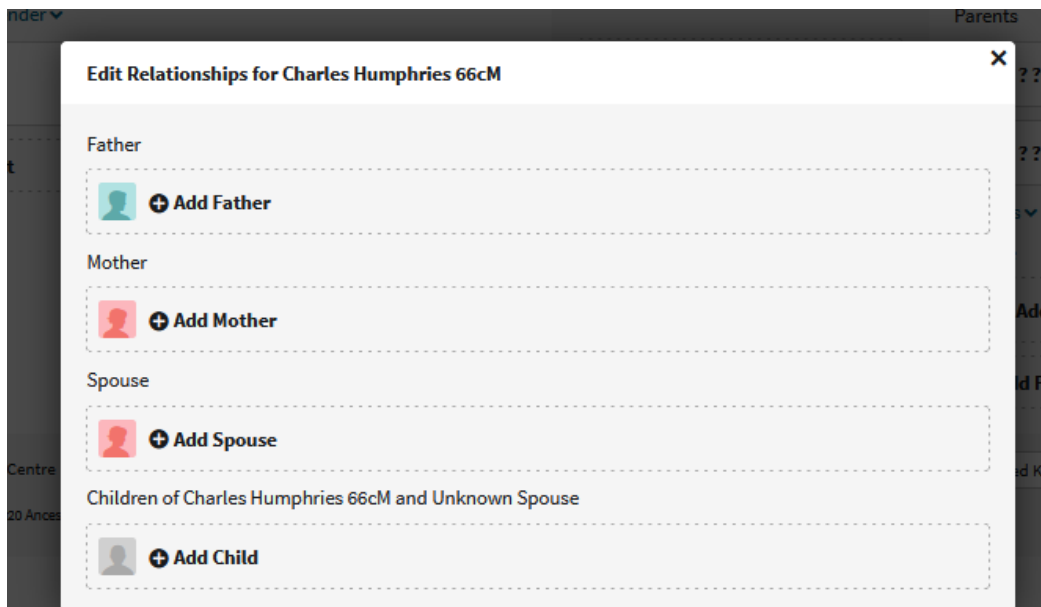
You will see a 'Relationships' list. You want to delete 'X' both the Father and Mother relationships.



Confirm by selecting 'Remove'.

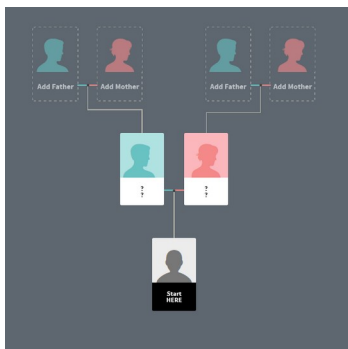


And the result is this...



GONE!

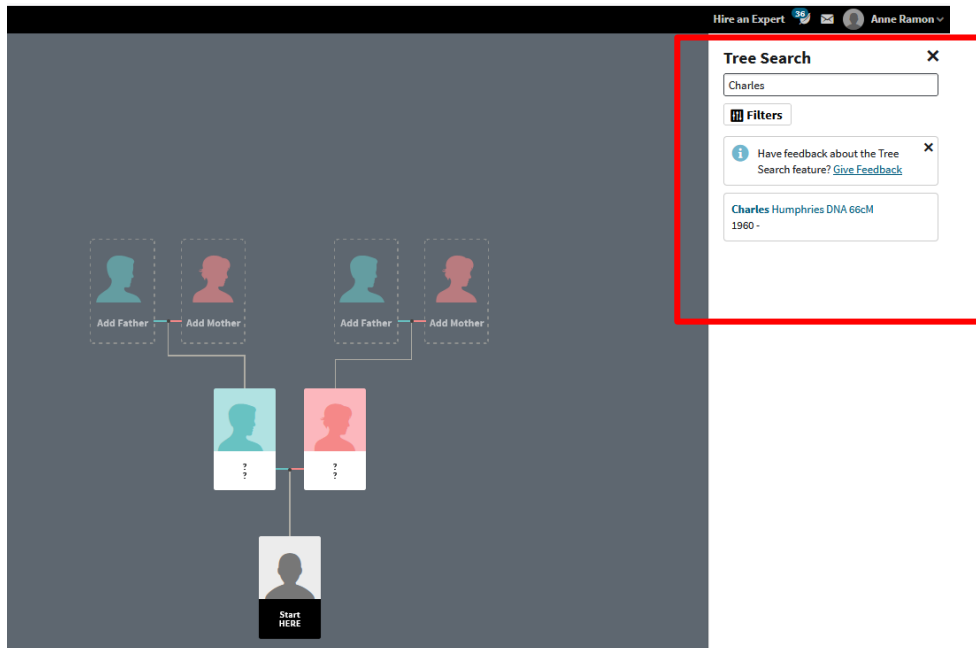
And Charles Humphries has disappeared from the HERE Experimental tree! But don't worry he is still a sibling of Start HERE.



To find your Charles Humphries or other investigation use TREE Search and enter 'DNA' or other search term for a value you know you used in the Suffix.

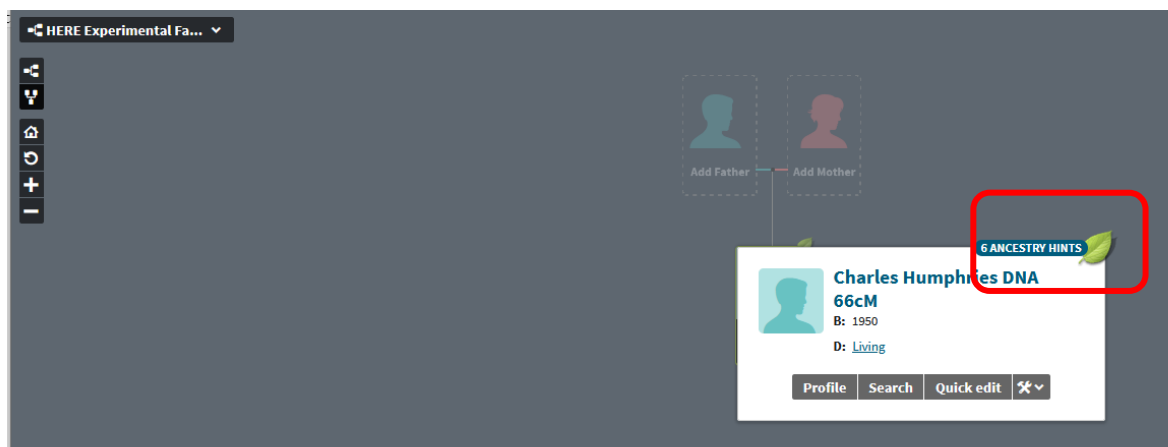
Enter new parents or siblings and link them to the floating sibling. (this is optional but advisable if you are dealing with common names),

Find Charles HUMPHREYS in the Experimental Tree using 'Tree Search' (top right of screen)



You can add relatives to Charles or start to use the Ancestry Hints.

NB Charles already has 6 Ancestry Hints and he's a made up person!



Have fun!!

Further investigations.

Use the Start HERE person to start other investigations via another new 'Sibling' and remember to detach the ?? parents from the new Sibling.