

MY DNA SUCCESS STORY

"FINDING FELIX"

By **Barbara McAlary**

This article relates to the process used to locate my maternal great grandfather Felix Chatel who went missing in 1916 after enlisting for the First World War. It took 100 years, but finally through the use of both traditional and genetic genealogy Felix Chatel has been rediscovered.

Felix Chatel was the second child and first born son to Felix Eloi Chatel (1844-1885) and Catherine O'Connor (1841-1908), born on 4 September 1876 in Williamstown, Victoria.¹ His father was a mariner from the small village of Lanouee in Brittany, France² and his mother, the daughter of a carpenter³, was born in Shanagolden, Co Limerick, Ireland.⁴ Felix had five siblings Mary Elizabeth (1875-1875)⁵, Catherine (1878-1942)⁶, William (1881-1937)⁷, Selina Annie (1882-1905)⁸ and George Albert (1884 -1934)⁹. His early life was a relatively poor one. Living in a two- room wooden house in Albert Street, Williamstown for an annual rate of £8,¹⁰ Felix's father worked as a ballast man at the nearby ports.¹¹ Their home, near to the heart of the shipping industry and railway yards, was situated in a busy working- class area. It was not surprising then, after growing up around the railway yards, that Felix found employment as a railway labourer.

In 1901, at age twenty five, Felix Chatel married Sarah Jane "Jeannie" Reynolds in Footscray, Victoria.¹² Felix and Jeannie began their family welcoming their first child, Mary

¹ Birth Certificate for Felix Chatel, Registrar of Births, Deaths & Marriages, Victoria, 26658/1876.

² Civil Registration of Birth of Felix Eloi Chatel, 10 May 1844, Archives Departmentales Du Morbihan, 1 MI-EC 102 (R15) Lanouee NMD, 1842-1860, www.recherche.archives.morbihan.fr, Accessed on 20 September 2017.

³ Christopher O'Mahony and Valerie Thompson, *Poverty to Promise: The Montegale Emigrants 1838-1858*, Darlington, Crossing Press, 1994, pp.173- 175.

⁴ Baptism Registration for Catherine O'Connor, 17 January 1841, Shanagolden, County Limerick Ireland, National Library Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, Microfilm 02418/03.

⁵ Birth Certificate for Mary Elizabeth Chatel, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 13153/1875 and Death Certificate for Mary Elizabeth Chatel, BDM Victoria, 9306/1875.

⁶ Birth Certificate for Catherine Chattel, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 26436/1878.

⁷ Birth Certificate for William Chattel, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 6366/1881.

⁸ Birth Certificate for Cecilia Annie Chattell, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 20128/ 1882.

⁹ Birth Certificate for George Albert Chattel, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 6451/1884.

¹⁰ Victoria, Australia, Rate Books, 1855-1963, Williamstown 1877, Public Record Office Victoria, North Melbourne, Australia, Series 2341/P, VPRS 2132.

¹¹ Victoria, Australia, Rate Books, 1877.

¹² Marriage Registration of Felix Chatel and Sarah Jane Reynolds, married 3 February 1901, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 784/1901.

Irene (my grandmother) in April 1902.¹³ Moving to Ballarat in 1904 Felix's second child, Kathleen Teresa was born.¹⁴ Finally in 1908, perhaps precipitated by the death of his mother Catherine, Felix took his young family and moved to Western Australia, settling in Yarloop.¹⁵ Here their third child, Augusta May was born.¹⁶ In 1911 the family moved again, this time to North Fremantle, a busy industrial port. Here, Felix and Jeannie had their first son. They named him Felix after his father and grandfather.¹⁷

Not long after the onset of the First World War, Felix Chatel's life took a strange turn. His eldest child, Mary Irene, remembered clearly the day she waved her father off to war in 1916. It was an extremely upsetting day for her and she recalled being so distressed that she had a bad nose bleed.



Mary Irene Chatel, circa 1916.

From private collection of Barbara McAlary

This day was to be the last time my grandmother ever heard from or saw her father Felix again. For their entire lives, Felix's children wondered what had happened to their father who went missing in the war.

¹³ Birth Certificate of Mary Irene Chatel, born 9 April 1902, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victoria 10403/1902.

¹⁴ Birth Certificate of Kathleen Teresa Chatel, born 29 October 1904, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victoria, 25703/1904.

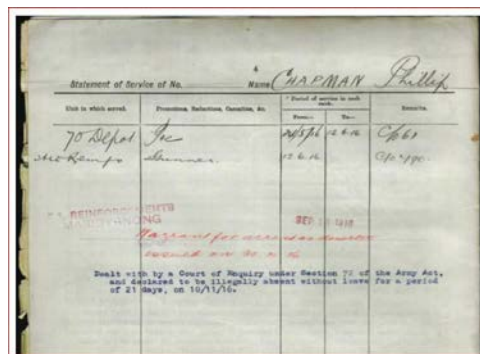
¹⁵ Death Certificate of Catherine Riou, died 14 September 1908, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Western Australia, 135/1908.

¹⁶ Birth Certificate of Augusta May Chatel, born 28 October 1908, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Western Australia, 471/1908.

¹⁷ Birth Certificate for Felix Chatel, born 24 May 1911, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Western Australia, 400/1911.

The mystery of Felix's disappearance from that day in 1916 began to unravel several years ago. Researching his story, the World War One service records at the National Archives of Australia raised more questions than it provided answers. The records showed that in 1916, Felix Chatel was living in Norseman, Western Australia.¹⁸ Why Felix was living so far from his family in Fremantle is unclear, but in May 1916, from Norseman, at age 40, Felix Chatel enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force for service in the First World War. His enlistment however, was recorded under the alias of single man, '**Phillip Chapman**'.¹⁹ The Attestation Papers identified Mr John Butchart of Mossman Bay, Cottesloe as his next of kin.²⁰ John Butchart was Felix's brother in law, husband of his sister Catherine.

The service file indicated that Phillip Chapman also known as (aka) Felix Chatel, left Fremantle and travelled to the Field Artillery Reinforcements camp at Maribyrnong in Victoria arriving on 12 September 1916.²¹ October 20, 1916 was the last day that Phillip Chapman was marked in the roll. On October 30, 1916 a warrant for his arrest as a deserter was issued.²² This was followed by a Court of Inquiry in Maribyrnong on November 8, 1916 which found that Phillip Chapman had "illegally absented himself without leave for a period of 21 days." He did not return.²³



Source: Service Record of Phillip Chapman, B2455, National Archives of Australia.

¹⁸ Google Maps, Fremantle to Norseman, <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/dir/Norseman,+Western+Australia,+Australia/Fremantle+WA+6160>, Accessed 22 September 2017. Located in the Goldfields-Esperance region of Western Australia, Norseman was nearly 750 kilometres from Felix's young family in Fremantle.

¹⁹ Service Record of Phillip Chapman, B2455, p.1, National Archives of Australia.

²⁰ Service Record of Phillip Chapman, B2455, pp. 1-3.

²¹ Service Record of Phillip Chapman, B2455, p. 7.

²² Service Record of Phillip Chapman, B2455, p. 7.

²³ Service Record of Phillip Chapman, B2455, pp. 7, 17, 20, 27-30,

Letters contained in the service file, written by Felix's wife and sister in 1919 and 1920, helped to confirm that 'Phillip Chapman' was an alias being used by Felix Chatel. Their letters provided no further information as to his whereabouts. Interestingly, in one of her letters, Felix's wife Jeannie Chatel, indicated that she knew her husband had enlisted under the alias of Phillip Chapman. However, she was not sure whether he had enlisted in Perth or elsewhere. Although Felix's children had wondered about their father, it appears from his service record that his wife and sister certainly had more insight into the mystery than his children ever knew. While answering some questions, the service file, certainly raised more uncertainty about Felix Chatel. As an illegal deserter,²⁴ Felix risked serious consequences.²⁵ His only means of not being caught was to once again take an assumed name and to disappear from the authorities. So, while my family had always assumed that Felix Chatel had gone 'missing in action,' it appears he actually never left Australia, and certainly had no war experience! So where was Felix Chatel?

From the point of view of traditional genealogy, it is clear that the story of Felix Chatel would be extremely difficult to complete. However, in 2016, one hundred years after his disappearance, I received a message on my Ancestry.com.au account from a lady in Victoria named Joyce. Joyce explained that she had been searching for her grandfather Patrick O'Connor's family unsuccessfully for nearly twenty years. She explained that her grandfather Patrick had married in 1922²⁶ and that he had a family of nine children: Kathleen, Patrick James, John, Irene, Mary, Jean, Joyce Teresa, Michael and Janet.²⁷ Joyce had been trying to locate information about Patrick O'Connor's ancestors in an attempt to take that branch of her family tree back further. She had few family stories to assist her as her mother Mary, her

²⁴ Victoria Australia, Police Gazettes, 1864-1924, 9 November 1916, p.689. Accessed on Ancestry.com.au, A notice for Phillip Chapman, deserter from Australian Infantry, provided a full description.

²⁵ Who Do You Think You Are Magazine, 'First World War Deserters' www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/tutorials/military/first-world-war-deserters. Accessed 20 September 2017. Desertion was a serious offence during the First World War subject to court martial and a death sentence.

²⁶ Marriage Certificate of Patrick O'Connor and Sophia Anderson, married 16 January 1922, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, New South Wales, 3057/1922. Patrick and Sophia were married in St Thomas Church of England Church, Narrandera, New South Wales.

²⁷ Kathleen (born 1922, Narrandera NSW), Patrick James (born 1923, Lake Cargelligo NSW), John (born 1926, West Wyalong NSW), Irene (born 1927, Yenda NSW), Mary (born 1930, Leeton NSW), Jean (born 1932, Yenda NSW), Joyce Teresa (born 1935, Griffith NSW), Michael (born 1937, Griffith NSW) and Janet (born November 1941, Bilbul NSW, 2 months after Patrick's death.) There is an interesting similarity between the Christian and middle names of Felix's first wife and children and the names of Patrick's children. Perhaps it was a deliberate attempt by Felix to ensure he did not 'slip up' by calling his children by the wrong name.

aunts and uncles, all explained they had neither met any of the O'Connor family nor had they ever heard any stories or seen any photos of their father's family. The difficulty that Joyce was facing in her research was that the information contained on each of Patrick's children's birth registrations and his own marriage registration was never consistent – particularly in relation to Patrick's age. There was only one fact that remained constant on every record – Patrick O'Connor's place of birth - Williamstown Victoria. The details given regarding Patrick's parents (as contained on his marriage registration)²⁸ led nowhere – in fact, Joyce explained that she found no evidence that his parents ever existed! Frustrated by her failed research, Joyce wrote to me as she was able to see that my family tree contained an O'Connor family who lived in Williamstown Victoria.

My 2x great grandmother Catherine O'Connor was my connection to the O'Connor family. She was the mother of Felix Chatel. I was happy to assist Joyce in her quest for Patrick O'Connor's family and together we spent a number of weeks searching and communicating with other. However, we had no luck! Eventually, I suggested to Joyce that she should try DNA testing to see whether this would help her to solve the mystery of her grandfather's family.

Joyce had tested her DNA through Ancestry but had no matches with her O'Connor family. I suggested she should upload her raw data to Gedmatch²⁹ to increase the pool of potential matches. This certainly had the desired, but somewhat unexpected result – Joyce discovered through Gedmatch that she had a match with myself³⁰ and my mother Joan.³¹ Joan's DNA match with Joyce was sufficiently large that it indicated a relationship being approximately 2.7 generations from our most recent common ancestor. This was a significant discovery and prompted us to establish a DNA Test Plan to test other members of both of our families.

²⁸ Patrick O'Connor's parents were named as Patrick O'Connor and Mary Burke (both deceased).

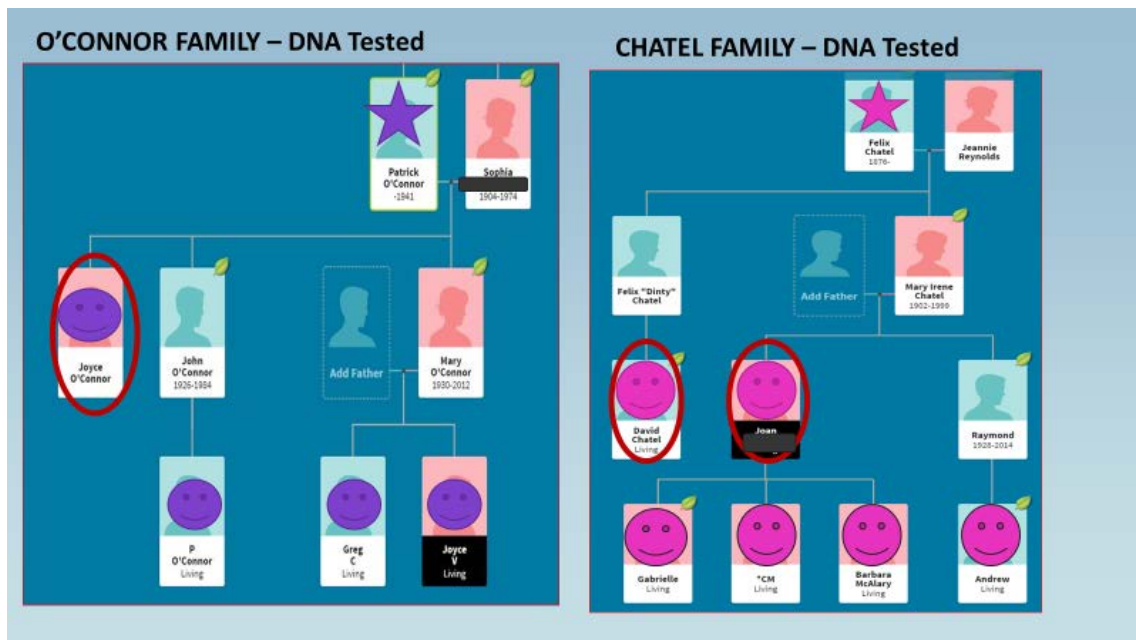
²⁹ Gedmatch is a free third-party tool where raw autosomal DNA data tested at different companies can be uploaded and compared. <https://www.gedmatch.com/>

³⁰ Comparison of Joyce V. (A909608) to Barbara McAlary (T831569)- 162.5 cM, 10 segments, largest segment 30.2cM, MRCA 3.2. at <https://www.gedmatch.com/>

³¹ Comparison of Joyce V. (A909608) to Joan McAlary (T106710)- 343.7cM, 18 segments, largest segment 40.2, MRCA 2.7. at <https://www.gedmatch.com/>

During our communications over many weeks, Joyce and I discussed many details about our families and were struck by the number of similarities we seemed to share. The names of five of Patrick's children were the same names of Felix's children and wife. Was this just a coincidence? Elements of stories Joyce's mother and aunts had told her about their father Patrick, had odd similarity to my research findings about the Chatel family. It was when we began to share family photographs that we understood why we had so many similarities between the two families. The likeness between Patrick's children and Felix's descendants was overwhelming. Joyce and I began to suspect that her grandfather Patrick O'Connor was my missing great grandfather Felix Chatel. Knowing that Joyce's DNA was a match to both myself and my mother added to our speculation.

The only way we could confirm our thinking, was by further DNA testing. We needed to compare the DNA of the closest living descendants of both Patrick O'Connor and Felix Chatel. If possible, these descendants needed to be from different lines of each of the two men. It was important for us to seek informed consent from these family members both to actually test their DNA and also to allow the raw data results of their DNA to be uploaded to Gedmatch.



Source: Condensed family trees for O'Connor family and Chatel family from <https://ancestry.com.au>

The above condensed family trees of both the O'Connor and Chatel families, identifies those we targeted to test. Circled in red are the closest living descendants of each man. We were

fortunate that Patrick O'Connor's daughter Joyce was both living and willing to test her DNA. We also had three of Patrick's grandchildren who were willing to test. On the Chatel side, the nearest living descendants of Felix were his two grandchildren, my mother Joan and her cousin David. We also had four of Felix's great grandchildren who provided their DNA.

When the results of each test arrived, the raw data of each kit was uploaded to Gedmatch to enable use of the excellent autosomal DNA comparison tools available on this free third - party website. We wanted to test the hypothesis that: '*Patrick O'Connor and Felix Chatel were the same man.*' If the hypothesis was correct then we knew that:

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1. Patrick's daughter Joyce would be a *half aunt* to both Joan and David.
 2. My siblings, cousin and myself would be *half great nieces/nephew* of Patrick's daughter Joyce.
 3. Patrick's grandchildren would be *half first cousins* of Felix's grandchildren and
 4. Patrick's grandchildren would be *half first cousins once removed* from Felix's great grandchildren.
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The table below shows data from The *Shared cM Project tool*³², developed by Blaine Bettinger. It was used to determine the expected size (in centimorgans) of a match for each of the relationships we expected from Patrick and Felix's descendants.

| Relationship | Range (99 th percentile) of expected centimorgans (cMs) | Expected size of match (in centimorgans) |
|--|--|--|
| Half Aunt/ /Niece/Nephew | 486 -1761 | 850 |
| Half Great Aunt/Niece/Nephew | 131-851 | 425 |
| Half 1 st Cousin | | |
| Half 1 st Cousin once removed | 47-517 | 213 |

Source: Adapted from the *Shared cM Project Tool – Cluster chart- Version 3.0 (August 2017) Blaine T. Bettinger* at <https://www.TheGeneticGenealogist.com>

³² Shared cM Project Tool, Version 3.0 (August 2017), Blaine T. Bettinger, <https://www.thegeneticgenealogist.com>

The first comparison completed was a one-to-one autosomal DNA comparison between Patrick's daughter Joyce and Felix's grandchildren David and Joan. These results revealed that our hypothesis was extremely likely.

| People Compared | Total cMs | Number of segments | Largest Segment | MRCA (Most Recent Common Ancestor) |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Joyce to David | 821.7 | 18 | 129.5 | 2.1 |
| Joyce to Joan | 961.6 | 28 | 89.8 | 2.0 |

Source: One-to-One Autosomal DNA comparison, JM (A09 [redacted]) to David Chatel (T4 [redacted]); and JM (A09 [redacted]) to Joan [redacted] (T10 [redacted]) at <https://www.gedmatch.com/>

As a consequence, a further comparison was made between each of the people we tested from both families. These results are best illustrated by the Gedmatch Autosomal DNA Matrix.

Autosomal DNA comparison matrix

Ver: Jul 1 2018 11:54:23

Value shown is cM total of matching segments over minimum threshold.

| Kit | name | A09 | A5 | A9 | T10 | T4 | A6 | A5 | T0 | T8 |
|-----|------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| A09 | *JM | 1586.2 | 1385.6 | 961.6 | 821.7 | 727.7 | 543.7 | 520.5 | 474.3 | |
| A5 | *GC | 1586.2 | 2682.9 | 276.6 | 466.0 | 170.2 | 145.4 | 83.1 | 65.7 | |
| A9 | *JV | 1385.6 | 2682.9 | 358.6 | 495.4 | 288.5 | 246.9 | 199.2 | 163.1 | |
| T10 | Joan | 961.6 | 276.6 | 358.6 | 1075.3 | 1833.5 | 3586.9 | 3587.1 | 3587.1 | |
| T4 | *D C | 821.7 | 466.0 | 495.4 | 1075.3 | 737.8 | 488.9 | 498.9 | 316.0 | |
| A6 | Andr | 727.7 | 170.2 | 288.5 | 1833.5 | 737.8 | 790.0 | 963.4 | 805.1 | |
| A5 | *CM | 543.7 | 145.4 | 246.9 | 3586.9 | 488.9 | 790.0 | 2813.1 | 2712.2 | |
| T0 | Gabr | 520.5 | 83.1 | 199.2 | 3587.1 | 498.9 | 963.4 | 2813.1 | 2926.0 | |
| T8 | | 474.3 | 65.7 | 163.1 | 3587.1 | 316.0 | 805.1 | 2712.2 | 2926.0 | |

Source: Gedmatch Autosomal DNA comparison matrix, <https://www.gedmatch.com>

The results show clearly that each person tested has a DNA match with every other person tested. The actual size of each match also corresponds to the expected match size for each predicted relationship. There was no doubt that significant DNA was shared by each person that we tested from both the O'Connor and Chatel families.

Further analysis proved conclusively that members of both families also shared *triangulated segments* of DNA on a number of different chromosomes – i.e. the DNA shared between each person was situated on segments that were in the same position on the same chromosomes. This is a sign that each person shares common ancestry. In essence, our

autosomal DNA was telling us that **our hypothesis was correct** and that Patrick O'Connor and Felix Chatel were indeed the same person.

| Chr 14 | | | | |
|----------|------|-------------------|--|--|
| Match ID | Type | Name | Matching segments on Chromosome 14 | Overlap with previous match |
| 1 | F2 | *D C (AUS) (I) | 35417737 - 106215123 (88.3885 cM) | New Root |
| 2 | F2 | Andr (AG) | 34641402 - 72707456 (33.7786 cM), 72748335 - 87829738 (15.4934 cM) | 35417737 - 72707456, 72748335 - 87829738 |
| 3 | F2 | *JV (A) | 50335203 - 88878493 (40.9836 cM) | 50335203 - 72707456, 72748335 - 87829738 |
| 4 | F2 | *GC (AS) | 50362285 - 72707456 (23.3493 cM), 72723338 - 88967095 (17.8154 cM) | 50362285 - 72707456, 72723338 - 88878493 |
| 5 | F2 | Joan (TI) | 55901573 - 89298802 (35.23 cM) | 55901573 - 72707456, 72723338 - 88967095 |

Source: Gedmatch Triangulated Segments on Chromosome 14, at <https://www.gedmatch.com>

Despite having such conclusive evidence that our hypothesis was correct through the comparison of **autosomal DNA**, we decided to take our results one step further by testing the **Y DNA** of each family. Y DNA is a test that can only be undertaken by males - the results identify the haplogroup of a man's patrilineal line (i.e. his father's, father's, father's line.) As the Y chromosome passes almost unchanged from father to son, it is useful in tracing the origins of the direct paternal ancestors and their ancient migration paths.³³

We were fortunate that in each of our families, there is one living direct male descendent of both Patrick O'Connor and Felix Chatel. We arranged for these two men to complete a Y67 DNA test offered by Family Tree DNA.³⁴ Patrick O'Connor's grandson Peter (who descends through Patrick's son John) and Felix Chatel's grandson David (who descends through Felix's son Felix) both undertook the Y DNA testing. They have produced the same result – they both share the **Y haplogroup R-M269**.³⁵

At the level of 67 markers on their Y DNA test, they both have only one genetic match and that match is in fact with each other. This match is at a **Genetic Distance of "0"**. The table

³³ Family Tree DNA Learning Centre, at <https://www.familytreedna.com/>

³⁴ Family Tree DNA offers autosomal, Y DNA and mitochondrial DNA testing. <https://www.familytreedna.com/>

³⁵ Haplogroup R-M269 is the most common European Y-chromosomal lineage, increasing in frequency from east to west. Michael Hammer, University of Arizona, Family Tree DNA 9th Annual Conference at <https://gap.familytreedna.com>

below from Family Tree DNA Learning Centre provides an interpretation of the meaning of the term, “Genetic Distance of 0.”³⁶

| Genetic Distance | Relationship | Interpretation |
|------------------|----------------------|--|
| 0 | Very Tightly Related | A 67/67 match between two men who share a common surname (or variant) means they share a common male ancestor within the genealogical time frame. Their relatedness is extremely close. All confidence levels are well within the time frame that surnames were adopted in Western Europe with the common ancestor predicted, 50% of the time, in three generations or less and with a 90% probability within five generations. Very few people achieve this close level of a match. |

Source: FTDNA Learning Centre <https://www.familytreedna.com/learn/y-dna-testing/y-str/two-men-share-surname-genetic-distance-67-y-chromosome-str-markers-interpreted>

The results of the Y DNA testing also provide conclusive evidence that both the O’Connor family and the Chatel family share a common male ancestor. Again, this supports our hypothesis that **Patrick O’Connor and Felix Chatel were the same person.**

One of the advantages of communicating with shared DNA matches is the opportunity to share stories, mementos, family records and photographs. Throughout the entire long process that Joyce and I have worked to determine the relationship between our families, we have shared many pieces of information that have helped us to fill in some of the missing parts of the story of each of our families. These pieces of information have indeed presented many elements that were surprisingly familiar to us – none more so than the photographs we have shared. The resemblance between different members from either family have been almost eerily alike. Photographs 1 and 2 show a striking similarity between Patrick O’Connor and David Chatel. The evidence provided by our DNA analysis, allows us to confirm that the photograph below of Patrick O’Connor is indeed a photograph of Felix Chatel. This in turn explains the resemblance of the two men – as we now know they are in fact photographs of a grandfather alongside his grandson. Like DNA, photographs DO NOT lie.

³⁶ FTDNA Learning Centre, <https://www.familytreedna.com/learn/y-dna-testing/>



1. Photograph of Patrick O'Connor circa 1930

courtesy Joyce O'Connor.



2. Photograph of David Chatel

circa 2018 courtesy of David Chatel.

In the years following his disappearance, Felix Chatel (now Patrick O'Connor) lived a hard existence, finding work in saw mills as he moved frequently with his large family, from one small New South Wales country town to another. Joyce O'Connor (one of Felix's children from his second marriage), recalls many stories about her father and remembers him as a loving, caring father who was ill for many years. She relates that she and her siblings always felt there was a mystery surrounding their father.³⁷ Patrick O'Connor, aka Felix Chatel died in Griffith on 16 September 1941. He was buried at the Roman Catholic Cemetery in Griffith, New South Wales on 17 September 1941.³⁸

Today, the descendants of both families of Felix Chatel and Patrick O'Connor, are still learning about the life of their shared ancestor. There are still pieces to this story that continue to be unresolved for the present time. We are particularly interested to discover where Felix Chatel/ Patrick O'Connor was in the period between his desertion from the

³⁷ Joyce M (nee O'Connor), to Barbara McAlary, face to face discussion, 24 October 2016.

³⁸ Death Certificate of Patrick O'Connor, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, New South Wales, 9130/1941. Patrick O'Connor late of Bilbul, died in Griffith District Hospital of cardiac failure.

Australian Imperial Forces camp at Maribyrnong, Victoria in 1916 and his marriage in Narrandera, NSW in 1922.

Without the use of both traditional and genetic genealogy, the mystery surrounding these two families would never have been solved.