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#### WHERE TO FINISH 4 — CITATIONS

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# WHERE TO FINISH 4 – CITATIONS

Michael M<sup>c</sup>Keag, B1191

## Where to Finish?

This series of articles is intended to encourage our Members to write up their family histories in a coherent and readable form so that the fruits of their research will not be lost but will inspire future generations to continue the good work. In the first article a possible structure was suggested so that the task could be tackled a chapter at a time. To produce an interesting and convincing tale three requirements were listed: stories, pictures and citations. This article considers the last of these three.

## Why citations?

Many family trees and family histories, whether published in book form or on the World Wide Web, contain mistakes. It is usually difficult to gauge whether they are right or wrong if they fail to cite the sources of their information.

- A citation enables the reader to have some faith that a statement is, at least, backed up by some research.
- A citation enables the reader to check the source and confirm that the information has been correctly transcribed.
- A citation enables the reader to gauge the reliability of the source. The date on a marriage certificate is usually correct; the age on a death certificate is less reliable. If the source is itself a transcription there is the possibility of a transcription error. A story passed down the family from generation to generation probably has an element of truth but the details may well have become garbled and often exaggerated over the years.

As an example, what reliance can we place upon the following statement?

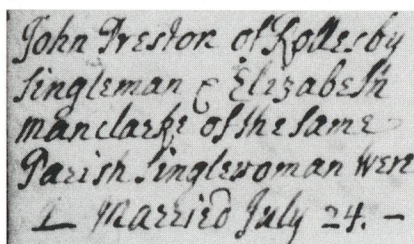
**John Preston** married 24<sup>th</sup> July 1737 **Elizabeth Manclarke** at St. Michael at Plea, Norwich.

We could add the citation:

*England Marriages 1538-1973* transcription at [http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=r\\_845492630](http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=r_845492630).

*So far, so good* – but this is a transcription and not a primary source. We could inspect the original parish register to check that the transcription was correct. There is an image of it at:

<https://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.3.1/TH-267-11578-84872-9?cc=1416598&wc=MMVP-WHY:1569952043>



John Preston of Kettleby  
singleman & Elizabeth  
Manclarke of the same  
Parish singlewoman were  
L married July 24. -



*So far, so better* – but, if we also print the image of the extract from the marriage register entry in our family history, we convince our readers that not only have we done our research properly but also the information is as accurate as we can achieve. *So far, so best!*

## Elements of a citation

A citation should be sufficiently complete that the reader can find the reference. The information required varies with the type of source and not all the items may be needed.

Book	Author; title; publisher; publication date; page numbers. <i>John Preston: <b>The Picture of Yarmouth</b>; being a compendious history and description of all the public establishments within that borough; together with a concise topographical account of ancient and modern Yarmouth, including its fisheries, etc. With numerous plates</i> , 1819. Available at <a href="http://archive.org/details/pictureyarmouth00yarmgoog">http://archive.org/details/pictureyarmouth00yarmgoog</a>
Journal	Author; title; journal; publication date; volume, issue and page numbers. Michael M <sup>c</sup> Keag: <i>Where to Finish? 2 – Stories</i> , <b>North Irish Roots</b> , 2014, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 35-40.
Document	Author; title, location; reference number; page numbers. <i>Protestant householders 1740</i> , P.R.O.N.I., T808/15258.
Newspaper	Author; title; newspaper, publication date; page numbers. <i>Insolvent Debtors' Court</i> , <b>London Standard</b> , Friday 12 February 1836, p. 3. Available at <a href="http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000183%2f18360212%2f008">http://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000183%2f18360212%2f008</a>
Website	Author; title; website; URL; date retrieved (because web pages can be changed). <i>Jane Kinderley Neale grave monument</i> , <b>Gravestone Photographic Resource</b> , <a href="http://www.gravestonephotos.com/public/gravedetails.php?grave=222419&amp;scrwidth=1366">http://www.gravestonephotos.com/public/gravedetails.php?grave=222419&amp;scrwidth=1366</a> 4 <sup>th</sup> February 2015.

## Forms of a citation

If you are working with publishers, they will have a well defined style guide for all aspects of your book. These include type font, type size, use of italics and bold type, forms of chapter and other headings, spelling and usage (English or American), and of course citations – see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citation> for more information and a list of style guides.

Citations may be placed in parentheses immediately after the texts to which they refer or, identified by superscripts, as footnotes at the bottom of the page or as endnotes at the back of the document. My experience with a family history book is that there are usually so many citations that they are best placed at the end of each chapter so as not to obtrude on the narrative. If, however, there are only a few they can be footnotes.

Having said that, footnotes can also be used for another purpose – for subsidiary text that explains or expands upon the main text, without disrupting the narrative. The following illustration shows a page from Palmer's *The Perustration of Great Yarmouth, with Gorleston*



and Southtown, volume 1, 1872<sup>2</sup>. It has three footnotes including one pertaining to Edward Harbord Lushington **Preston**, the Mayor of Great Yarmouth.

† In recognition of his services as Consul for Belgium for 28 years, he received in 1867 from the Belgian Government the decoration of the Order of Leopold.

Many old books have long titles and sub-titles, like John Preston's *The Picture of Yarmouth* above and, if it is to be referenced frequently, the full citation of the book may be given once in a Bibliography and each citation can then be abbreviated to *Preston's Yarmouth*.

## Postscript

In this series of four articles the aim has been to encourage readers to expand their family trees into comprehensive family histories and to print, yes, print, several copies and spread them round the family in the hope that the enormous investment in research will not be lost but will, in due course, fascinate and inspire others to continue the good work.

The first step is to use the structure of the family tree to define the structure of the book as a series of chapters, each of which can be developed reasonably independently. The second step is to type up the facts of each chapter, noting which facts are missing and need to be researched. Then stories should be sought on the members of the family. The secret of success is to follow up each story in the hope that it leads to more interesting revelations. Pictures should also be sought to add further interest to the text. Throughout this, all sources should be properly cited. Once the first chapter has been completed, the rest should be easier and, increasingly, satisfying and – I hope – fun.

## Two versions – Comprehensive and Digest

The aim has been to produce a history of one or more of our families, with one section per surname and, for each surname, a series of chapters reflecting the successive generations of that family. Each chapter begins with an ancestor and goes on to introduce his or her family and all those descendants of which we are aware. It thus aims to be a comprehensive account of the whole family. Within that account we may wish to add information that is only indirectly associated with that family. One example is a brief account of some other family that is connected by marriage; another example is some background information that impinged on the family – perhaps politics or war or the standard of living that affected the family. These extras can often best be introduced in text boxes.

Such a comprehensive record of the family is an excellent reference document for the genealogist but is unlikely to make good bedtime reading for the non-genealogist. For this reason it is a good idea to make a copy of the finished document and go through it excising all but the interesting bits – all the citations can go bar a reference to the comprehensive version, which, of course, carries a full set of citations; all the minor characters about whom we know next to nothing of interest can go, to be replaced by linking prose; indeed, where possible, prose should replace tables and indented text.

<sup>2</sup> Palmer's *Perlustration*, p. 256. Available at <https://archive.org/stream/perlustrationofg01palm/page/256/> 4<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

