

# Margaret BRETT - mother of JOSEPH BARTON



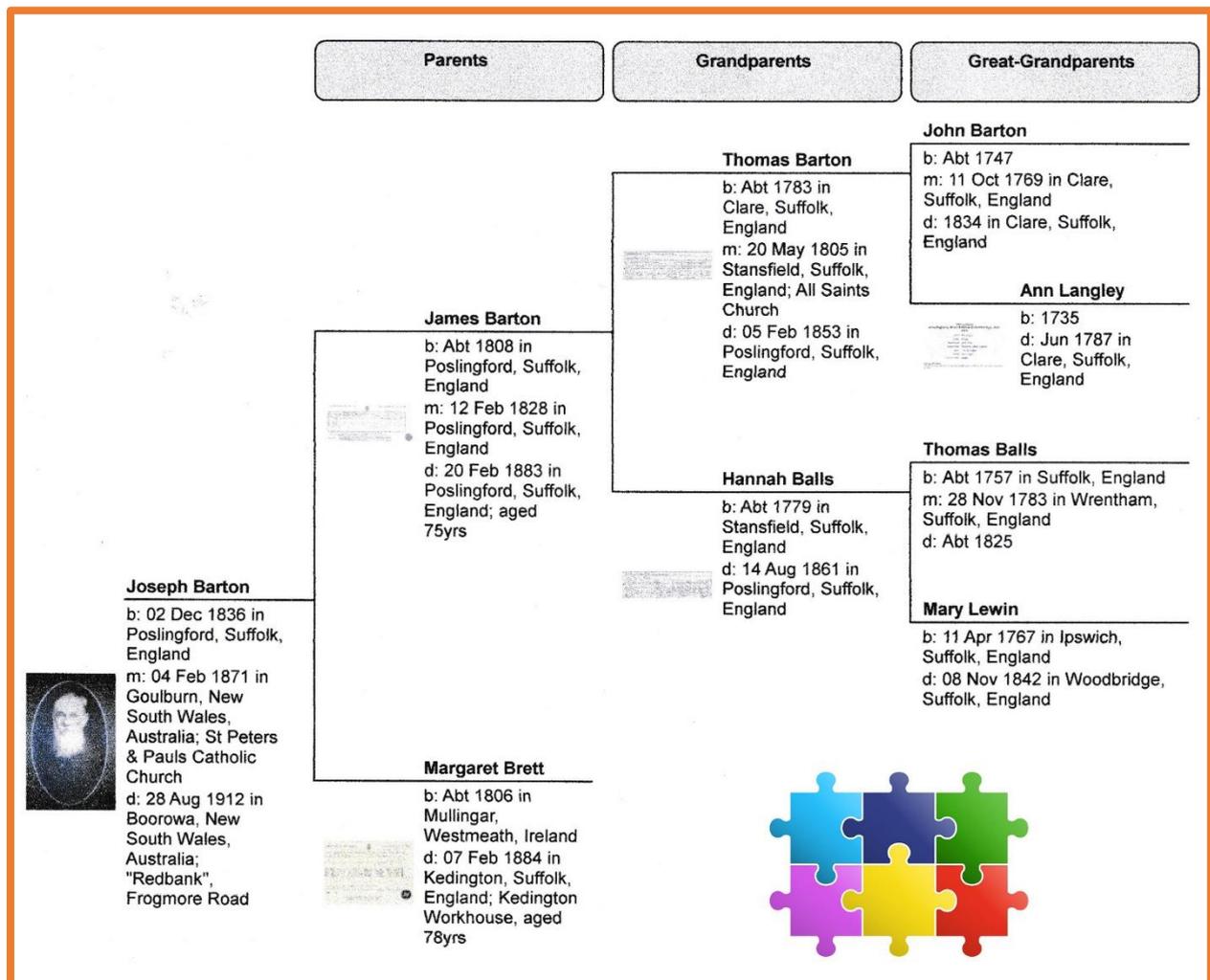
**Joseph Barton** was born in Poslingford, Suffolk, England on 2 December 1836, the son of James Barton and **Margaret (nee Brett)**.

Joseph Barton migrated from England to the Colony of New South Wales per the ship "**Golcanda**", arriving at Sydney Cove on 15 May 1857.

The full Family Story of Margaret Brett and James Barton - [separate article](#).

This story focuses on the **Brett family** of **Poslingford, Suffolk, England**.

## Margaret Brett Family Roadmap



**Please Note:** This story is **"a work in progress"** – any additions / corrections / suggestions would be greatly appreciated in order to add to the history story of our Barton / Balls forbears – JM.



## Margaret BRETT - parentage

The background **parentage** to Margaret Brett has, for many years, been quite puzzling and, at this stage, an **unanswered question**.

- The small village of Poslingford, Suffolk has been the home for **Margaret Barton (nee Brett)** for the majority of her life!
- Many families with the surname **Brett** have also chosen the village as their home over centuries
- Documentation **linking Margaret Brett** to one of those **Brett families of Poslingford** has, at this stage, been 'extremely challenging'.

### Background to the Challenge

*In the 1851 English Census* Margaret Barton (nee Brett) aged 46 years and living in Poslingford, Suffolk, England, is listed as born in **Ireland**.

Parish or Township of		Ecclesiastical District of		City or Township		Town of		Village of		
Name of Street, Place, or Road, and Name or No. of House		Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 1851		Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of		Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether Blind, or Deaf, or Lame
						Male	Female			
67	in street	John Spawer	Head	Mar	43			Ag Lab	Suffolk Hadleigh	
		Mary Do	Wife	Mar	47				Do Stoke	
		George Do	Son	U	14			Do Do	Do Poslingford	
		Margt. Do	Daughter	U	15			Straw Platter	Do Do	
		Henry Do	Son		12			Ag Lab	Do Do	
		John Do	Son		10			Do Do	Do Do	
		Ella Do	Daughter					Scholar	Do Do	
		Samuel Do	Son		4				Do Do	
68	street	Charles Richardson	Head	Mar	24			Currier of Coals &c	Do Do	
		Charlotte Do	Wife	Mar	24				Do Do	
		William Do	Son		4				Do Do	
		John Do	Son		2				Do Do	
		Mary Do	Daughter					Ma	Do Do	
69	Do	James Barton	Head	Mar	42			Ag Lab	Do Do	
		Margaret Do	Wife	Mar	46				Ireland	
		Mary Do	Daughter	U	22			Straw Platter	Suffolk Poslingford	
		Rather Do	Son	U	16			Ag Lab	Do Do	
		Joseph Do	Son		14			Do Do	Do Do	
		Elijah Do	Son		11			Do Do	Do Do	
		James Do	Son		9			Do Do	Do Do	
Total of House		I 3 U B		Total of Persons...		13	7			

In the 1861 English Census Margaret Barton (nee Brett) aged 55 years and living in Poslingford, Suffolk, England, is listed as born in **'Mulgar' Mullinar, Ireland.**

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the											
Civil Parish (or Township) of		City or Municipal Borough of		Municipal Ward of		Parliamentary Borough of		Town of		Village or Hamlet, &c., of	
Poslingford		Poslingford		Poslingford		Poslingford		Poslingford		Poslingford	
No. of House	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. of NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Inhabited (1861)	Name and Surname of each Person	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether	1. Deaf and Dumb 2. Blind 3. Lame or Deaf 4. Lunatic	
24	Highly Alley	1	George Beech	Head	Mar	35	Farmer 400 Acres	Suffolk Kingshall			
			Sally	Wife	Mar	36		Poslingford			
			Walter	son	Un	8		Poslingford			
			Louisa	daughter	Un	4		Poslingford			
			Maria	daughter	Un	2		Poslingford			
			William	son	Un	1		Poslingford			
			Thomas	son	Un	15	Servant	Poslingford			
			Elizabeth	daughter	Un	15		Poslingford			
25	Cottage	1	John Bradshaw	Head	Mar	48	Labourer	Poslingford			
			Maria	Wife	Mar	50		Poslingford			
			David	son	Un	20		Poslingford			
			John	son	Un	18		Poslingford			
			Thomas	son	Un	16		Poslingford			
			William	son	Un	11		Poslingford			
			Richard	son	Un	10		Poslingford			
26	Hills	1	Charles Ambrose	Head	widow	68		Poslingford			
			Elizabeth	Wife	Un	28		Poslingford			
27		1	Thomas Martin	Head	Mar	31		Poslingford			
			Elizabeth	Wife	Mar	29	dairymaid	Poslingford			
28	Cottage	1	John Barton	Head	Mar	51	Cartwright	Poslingford			
			Margaret	Wife	Mar	55		Poslingford			
			Elizabeth	daughter	Un	20	Labourer	Poslingford			
			James	son	Un	19		Poslingford			
			John	son	Un	16		Poslingford			
Total of Houses...		5	Total of Males and Females...		14	11					

In the 1871 English Census Margaret Barton (nee Brett) aged 64 years and living in Poslingford, Suffolk, England, is listed as born in **Mullinar, Ireland.**

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the											
Civil Parish (or Township) of		City or Municipal Borough of		Municipal Ward of		Parliamentary Borough of		Town of		Village or Hamlet, &c., of	
Poslingford		Poslingford		Poslingford		Poslingford		Poslingford		Poslingford	
No. of House	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. of NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Inhabited (1871)	Name and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION	AGE of	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	Whether	1. Deaf and Dumb 2. Blind 3. Lame or Deaf 4. Lunatic	
30	Village	1	Richard Collins	Head of family	Married	49	Blacksmith	Poslingford			
			Maria	Wife	Married	47		Poslingford			
			Elizabeth	Daughter	Single	21		Poslingford			
			John	son	Single	8		Poslingford			
39	Village	1	James Richardson	Head of family	Married	37	Farm Labourer	Poslingford			
			Elizabeth	Wife	Married	35		Poslingford			
			Thomas	son	Single	7	Farm Labourer	Poslingford			
			Elizabeth	daughter	Single	4	Farm Labourer	Poslingford			
			James	son	Single	1		Poslingford			
40	Village	1	James Barton	Head of family	Married	64	Farm Labourer	Poslingford			
			Elizabeth	Wife	Married	62		Poslingford			
41	Village	1	Thomas Richardson	Head of family	Married	48	Farm Labourer	Poslingford			
			Elizabeth	Wife	Married	45		Poslingford			
			James	son	Single	18		Poslingford			
			George	son	Single	16	Farm Labourer	Poslingford			
42	Village	1	John James	Head of family	Married	65	Farm Labourer	Poslingford			
			Mary	Wife	Married	65		Poslingford			
Total of Houses...		5	Total of Males and Females...		11	12					

*In the 1881 English Census* Margaret Barton (nee Brett) aged 76 years and living in Poslingford, Suffolk, England, is listed as born in **Sligo Mullingar, Ireland.**

Page 4												
The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the												
Civil Parish (see Township) of	City or Municipal Borough of	Municipal Ward of	Parliamentary Borough of	Hamlet of	Urban Sanitary District of	Rural Sanitary District of	Ecclesiastical Parish or District of					
No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Inhabited (1), or Building (2)	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN		If (1) Deaf and Dumb (2) Blind (3) Imbecile or Idiot (4) Lunatic		
						Male	Female					
20	Do In Street Cottage	1	James Richardson Head Man 47	Head	Mar			Farmer Labourer	Poslingford Suffolk			
			Charlotte Richardson Wife Woman 43	Wife	Mar			Labourer	Do	Do		
			Edmund Richardson Son Man 24	Son	Mar			Labourer	Do	Do		
			Alfred Richardson Son Man 14	Son	Unm			Do	Do	Do		
			Isidore Hall Nephew Widow 80	Nephew	Widow			Do	Do	Do		
21	Do	1	David Richardson Head Man 62	Head	Mar			Farmer Labourer	Do	Do		
			Elizabeth Richardson Wife Woman 58	Wife	Mar			Labourer	Coventry	Do		
			Harry Richardson Son Man 27	Son	Unm			Farmer Labourer	Poslingford	Do		
22	Do	1	Joseph Ward Head Man 35	Head	Mar			Do	Do	Do		
			Mary Ward Wife Woman 30	Wife	Mar			Labourer	Do	Do		
			Harriet Ward Daughter 9	Daughter	Unm			Scholar	Do	Do		
			Julia Ward Daughter 2	Daughter	Unm			Do	Do	Do		
			John Ward Son Man 38	Son	Unm			Do	Do	Do		
23	Do	1	James Harlow Head Man 63	Head	Mar			Farmer Labourer	Do	Do		
			Margaret Harlow Wife Woman 76	Wife	Mar			Labourer	Mugg Milling, Ireland			
24	Do	1	Nathan Richardson Head Man 58	Head	Mar			Farmer Labourer	Stamford Suffolk			
			Martha Richardson Wife Woman 58	Wife	Mar			Labourer	Stamford	Do		
			Arthur Richardson Son Man 22	Son	Unm			Farmer Labourer	Poslingford Suffolk			
25	Do	1	Sophia Martin Head Widow 40	Head	Widow			Labourer	Stamford	Do		
			William Martin Son Man 28	Son	Unm			Farmer Labourer	Poslingford	Do		
			George Martin Son Man 5	Son	Unm			Scholar	Do	Do		
26	Do	1	Martha Handerson Head Widow 38	Head	Widow			Labourer	Stamford	Do		
			Charles Handerson Son Man 46	Son	Unm			Farmer Labourer	Poslingford	Do		
			James Handerson Son Man 13	Son	Unm			Scholar	Do	Do		
Total of Houses...		7	Total of Males and Females...			13	11					

**Summary:**

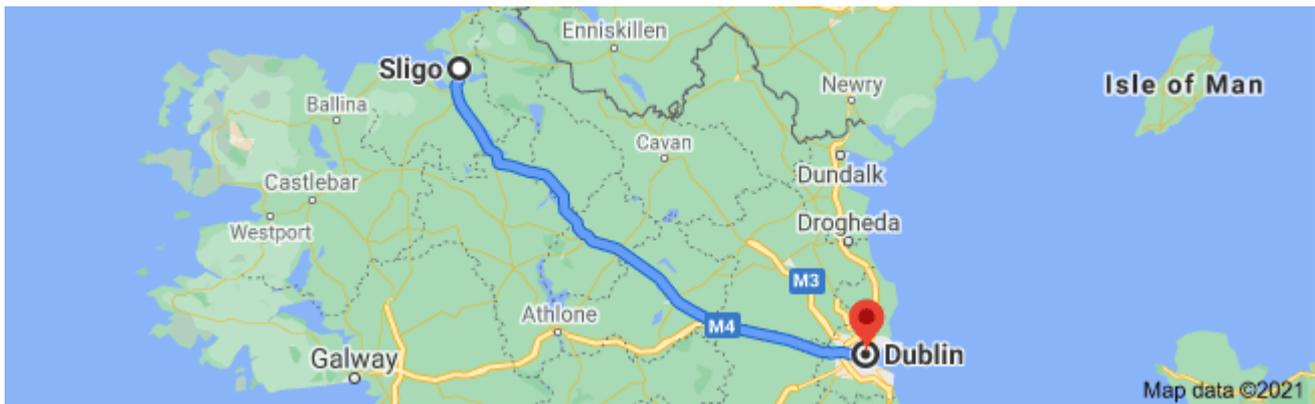
	<u>Census</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Born At</u>	<u>Approximate Date of Birth</u>
Margaret Barton (nee Brett)	1851	46 years	Ireland	C1805
	1861	55 years	Mullingar, Ireland	C1806
	1871	64 years	Mullingar, Ireland	C1807
	1881	76 years	Mullingar, Sligo?, Ireland	C1805
	1884	78 years	Death Certificate	C1806

**Note:**

*Mullingar is in County Westmeath, Ireland.*

*The city of Sligo is in County Sligo, Ireland*

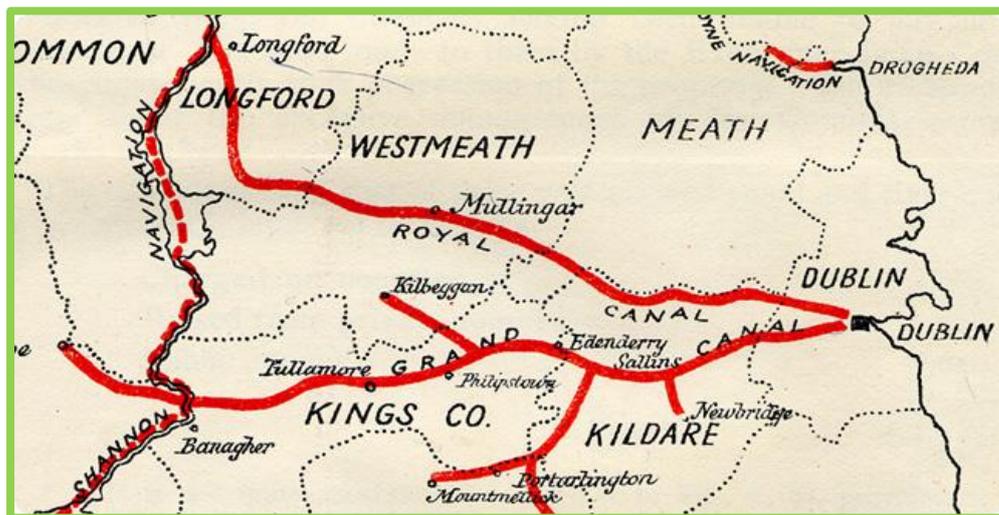
*Dublin to Mullingar takes in a major transport route which continues on to the city of Sligo (Sligo is the administrative centre and the largest city in the county of Sligo).*



*When Margaret Brett was born in Mullingar or Sligo in c1805-1807, what was the status of her parents? Were they native to Ireland or had they come from the Poslingford area to Ireland for improved employment prospects.*

*There was a military base in Mullingar!*

*The Royal Canal from Dublin – Mullingar – Longford was under construction during that period!*



*Who were Margaret Brett's parents and why were they in Ireland?*

*We are probably unlikely to ever provide a solution to the above question!*

# BRETT Family - Poslingford, Suffolk

As a starting point we have taken **Thomas Brett**, born c1745 in Poslingford, Suffolk

**Thomas Brett married:**

❖ **1. Mary Pettit** on 5 November 1765 at Poslingford

**Children:**

<u>Child</u>	<u>Born</u>		<u>Married</u>	<u>Married</u>		<u>Died</u>	
Richard Brett	1766	Poslingford	<i>Died young</i>			1766	Poslingford
Hannah Brett	1767	Poslingford	John Ling	29 May 1790	Tolleshunt Major, Essex	1806	Hockley, Essex
Ann Brett	1769	Poslingford	<i>unknown</i>				
<a href="#">Elizabeth Brett</a>	1772	Poslingford	Edward Honeyball	6 Nov 1792	Poslingford	Jan 1847	Poslingford

**Thomas Brett married:**

❖ **2. Mary Clarke** on 15 August 1779 at Poslingford

**Children:**

<u>Child</u>	<u>Born</u>		<u>Married</u>	<u>Married</u>		<u>Died</u>	
Thomas Brett	13 Mar 1779	Poslingford	Ann ---				
Mary Brett	11 Aug 1782	Poslingford					
Benjamin Brett	1786	Poslingford	Mary Ann Brett	17 May 1812	Westminster, London	6 Jun 1861	Hackney, London
<a href="#">Joseph Brett</a>	1792	Poslingford	Hannah Honeyball	13 Oct 1818	Poslingford	1 Nov 1849	Poslingford
William Brett	7 Mar 1795	Poslingford	Sarah Spooner	13 Oct 1818	Poslingford	1853	Poslingford
John Brett	1799	Poslingford	Ann Chapman			1854	
Ann Brett	3 Jun 1801	Poslingford	George Addison	23 Sep 1830	Poslingford	1832	Poslingford

As per the diagram opposite, **Eliza Ann Brett** is an example of being a descendant of **both marriages** of Thomas Brett.

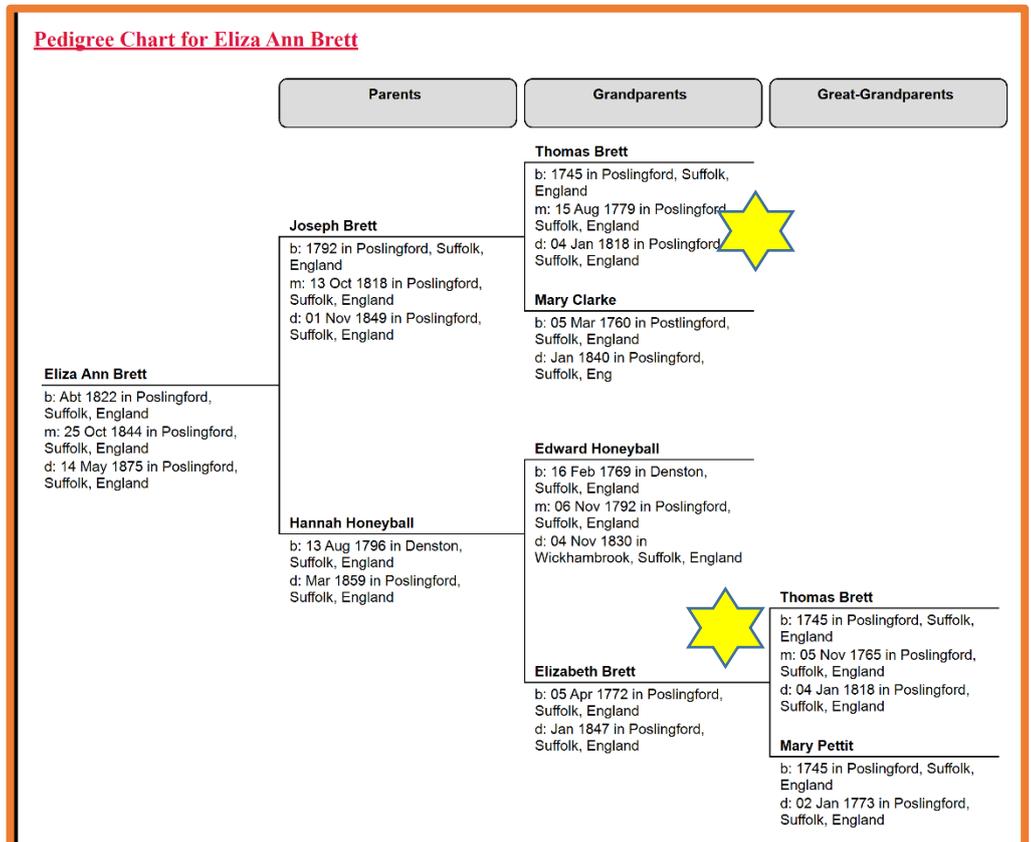
- Thomas Brett (Mary Pettit)**
- Daughter [Elizabeth Brett](#)
  - Thomas Brett (Mary Clarke)**
  - Son [Joseph Brett Jr](#)

**Eliza Ann Brett** is of particular interest as she married:

**Samuel Barton (1823-1899)**  
 Son of Thomas Barton and Hannah Balls and an **uncle** of our **[Joseph Barton](#)**.



## Pedigree Chart for Eliza Ann Brett



## Margaret BRETT – 50 year search!

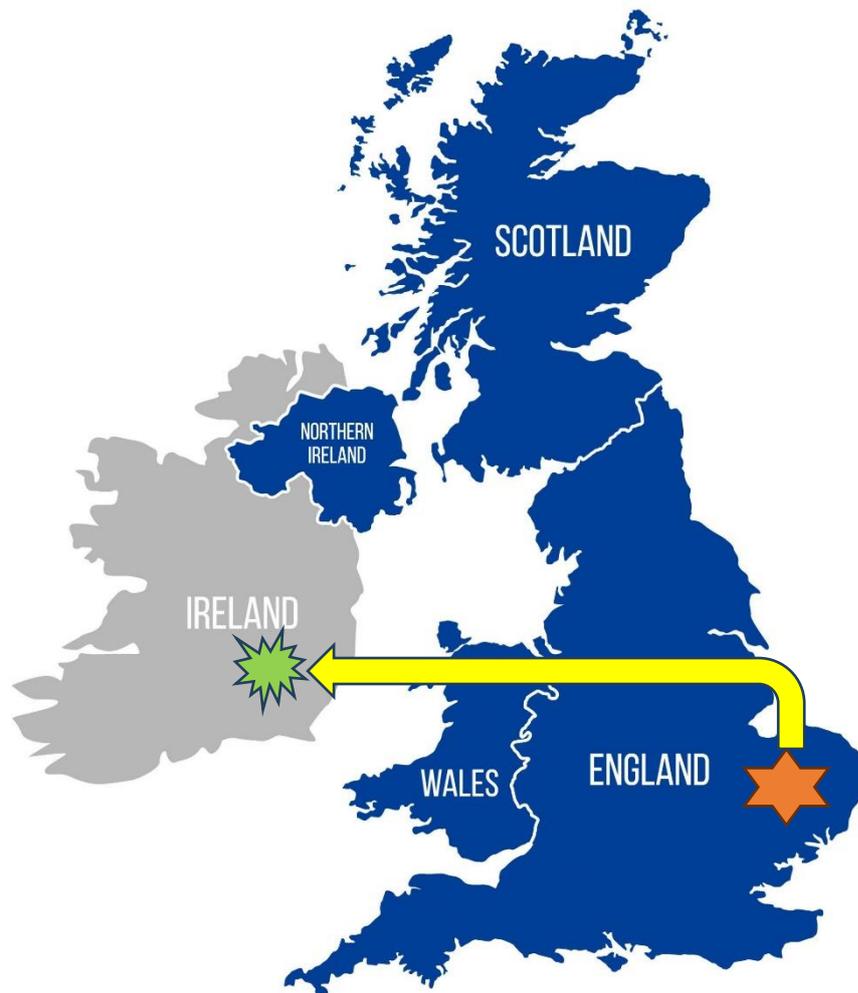
It was during March, 2024 that I had spent a few days looking over my research material on the Brett family.



All the Brett Family in my research lived in or near *Poslingford, Suffolk*.



One member of the Brett family, as per Census information for 1851, 1861, 1871 and 1881, was born a *long way off* in *Mullingar, Meath, Ireland – a 50 year dilemma!*



*After 50 years of research solving the dilemma seemed impossible.*

*An internet search of “Mullingar” produced a single word that was of interest!*

### **Mullingar**

The name Mullingar (An Muileann gCearr) is derived from ‘The wry or left-handed mill’. According to tradition the rotation of the local mill was said to have been miraculously reversed by St Colman of Lynn in the 7th century, and thus, as claimed by Mullingar historian Ruth Illingworth it is ‘probably the only town in Ireland to be named after a miracle’.

Mullingar is the county town of Westmeath and is located in the centre of the county. It is surrounded by a number of fine limestone lakes including Loughs Ennel, Owel and Derravaragh. The river Brosna flows through Mullingar. The town grew up around the monastery of Lynn and came into its own after the **Anglo-Norman invasion** when the **manor of Mullingar was assigned** to the **Petit** family.

## Petit Family of Mullingar, Ireland

Thomas Brett's first marriage in 1765 was to **Mary Pettit (Petit)** – was there a family connection?

[An internet extract from WikiTree states the following:](#)

William Petit (**Guillaume le Petit**) was a Norman adventurer who arrived in Ireland with **Hugh de Lacy**, taking part in the **Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland** in 1172.

In 1191, **William Marshal** and William Pettet (**Guillaume le Petit**) are made **Lords Justiciar of Ireland**. (**Justiciar** is the English form of the medieval Latin term *justiciarius* or *justitiarius* (meaning "judge" or "justice"). The Chief Justiciar was the king's chief minister, roughly equivalent to a modern Prime Minister)

William Petit was granted the lands of Dunboyne; Castlebrack (County Laois) and Magheritherinan (which became the **barony of Magheradernon**) in Westmeath;

*The Song of Dermot and the Earl records Concerning the noble earl I shall here leave off, Of Hugh de Lacy I shall tell you, How he enfeoffed his barons, Knights, serjeants, and retainers. Castle Knock, in the first place, he gave To Hugh Tyrrell, whom he loved so much; And Castle Brack, according to the writing, To baron William le Petit, Magheradernon likewise And the land of Rathkenny*

*The Petit family would eventually become the **Barons of Mullingar**.*

*In the years 1206-1210, he received further **land grants in County Louth**.*

*He became **Steward of Meath** in 1210*

*1213. **Death of William Petit***

[An further internet extract from Wikipedia states the following:](#)

*Baron Dunboyne was a title first held by the **Petit family** some time after the **Norman invasion of Ireland**.*

*Dunboyne was part of the **Lordship of Meath**.*

*The Petit family also had land holdings in **Mullingar**.*

*In 1227, Ralph Petit became **Bishop of Meath**.*

*In that capacity, he founded a priory of the Blessed Virgin in Mullingar and he endowed this establishment with the **townland** of Kilbraynan (or Kilbrena) in Dunboyne, along with the rectory of Dunboyne, its tithes and other ecclesiastical revenues.*

*A century later, Thomas Butler, son of **Theobald Butler, 4th Chief Butler of Ireland**, married Sinolda, heiress of **William le Petit**.*

## Thomas BRETT ( c1775-1818 )

*Thomas Brett was born c1735 at Poslingford, Suffolk, the son of James Brett and Margaret Rutledge. Many of the Brett family members of Poslingford, Suffolk are descended from the following 2 marriages of Thomas Brett:*

### *married*

- 1) Mary Pettit at Poslingford on 5 November 1765*
- 2) Mary Clarke at Poslingford on 15 August 1779*

*A family tree on [Ancestry](#) submitted by:*

***Kelly Brett**, White Plains, Westchester, New York, USA, shows 2 **brothers**:*

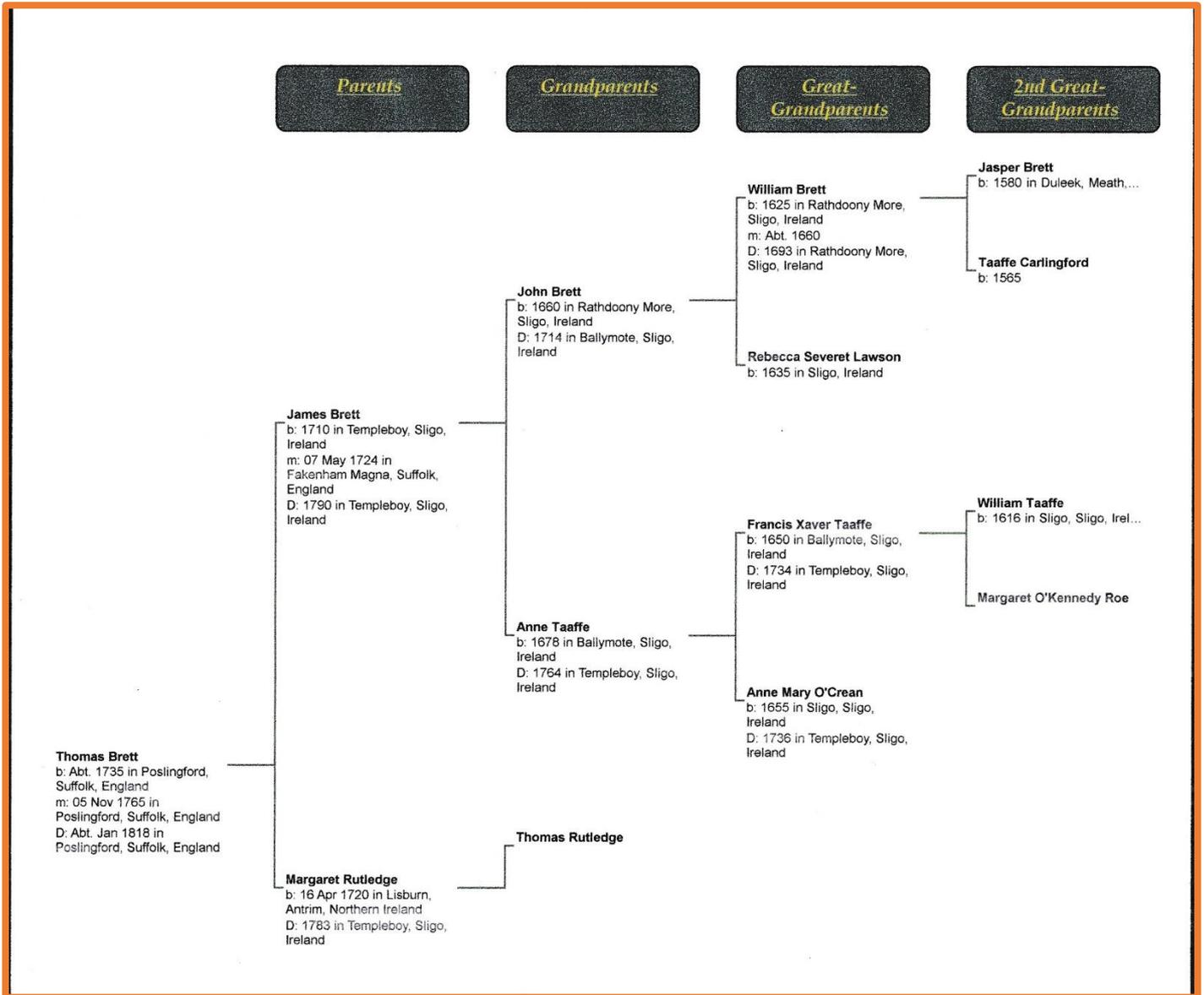
- ❖ **Thomas Pardo Brett** born 1835 **Poslingford, Suffolk***
- ❖ **George Tickner Brett** born 1742 **Templeboy, Sligo***

*On Kelly's family tree, parents of brothers Thomas and George Brett are listed as:*

- **James Brett** (1710 **Templejoy, Sligo, Ireland** – 1790 **Templejoy, Sligo, Ireland**)*
- **Margaret Rutledge** (1720 **Lisburn, Antrim, Northern Ireland** – 1783 **Templejoy, Sligo, Ireland**)*

# Thomas BRETT Pedigree

The Pedigree Chart of Thomas Brett below, shows part of the ancestry of 2 prominent families of Sligo, Ireland - **Brett** and **Taaffe**.



*The Brett and Taaffe family stories* are expanded in two separate stories below:

# Brett Family of Sligo, Ireland

Bill McGee, 73 Crystal Beach Drive

Nepean, Ont., Canada K2H 5N3 - gives a very clear outline of the Brett Family in Sligo, Ireland.

## Early Bretts of Co. Sligo, Ireland

*Bretts of the 1600s, as recorded in Sligo Histories.*

### I. JASPER BRETT

The name **Brett** is of Norman origin, and means 'of Brittany'. The family arrived in Ireland shortly after the **Anglo-Norman invasion** and dispersed through the country in feudal times. The Bretts arrived in Sligo about 1610 with their **relatives the Taaffes**. Dr. Mary O'Dowd [1] notes that the **Taaffes** became the largest of the new landlords in Co. Sligo by 1633-5, and that they brought with them fellow Palesmen from County Louth, namely the **Brett**, Dowdall and Nugent families. The enclosed history of the Taaffe family gives details on this family.

MacDonagh [2] "History of Ballymote and Emlaghfad" gives the following account:

"**Sir William Taaffe**, also, brought many of his less fortunate cousins who became the founders of the many families of the name which, formerly, were to be found throughout the county. Of these, the most famous was Christopher Taaffe of Balbriggan, Co. Dublin, who became the ancestor of the Taaffes of Ballyneglough and Rathnary (now Kingsfort). **Sir William's first wife was Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Brett, of Tullough in Fingall**, and through this alliance the Bretts first came to reside in County Sligo.

"**Jasper Brett**, the founder of the family, lived at Rathdooney, and afterwards built the fortified dwelling, now a ruin, at Deroon. He was **High Sheriff during the years 1627-28, and again in the year 1635.**" [The term High Sheriff is explained in the Oxford Companion to Irish History, in part, as follows. The title is English, derived from Shire Reeve, the king's principal administrative and judicial representative in each shire. In Ireland, the sheriff's principal responsibility was to collect the king's revenues for the Exchequer in Dublin. These included the profits of justice, the annual fee that the sheriff paid for the honour, rents from royal manors and subsidies. In his judicial capacity, the sheriff presided over the county court, kept watch over the king's interests by holding his tourn court (*The tourn (tour, turn) was the bi-annual inspection of the hundreds of his shire made by the sheriff in medieval England*) in every cantred (*A cantred was a subdivision of a county in the Anglo-Norman Lordship of Ireland between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries*), twice a year, summoned juries, levied fines and delivered prisoners.

The sheriff was frequently obliged to defend the county in time of war, and, when necessary, to enforce writs by calling on the aid of the posse. The appointment appears to have been made annually.

Sligo derives its name from the river Sligeach ("Slig." a shell), and was formed into a county, A.D. 1565, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, by the lord deputy Sir Henry Sydney.

The High Sheriff held the **highest position in the County**, and **Jasper Brett was High Sheriff in 1627 , 1628 and 1635**. According to Mary O'Dowd, this reflected a change in power from the native Gaelic lords to the new Old English arrivals.

### II. THE REBELLIONS OF 1640s

The Old English, fiercely Catholic, took part in the wide-spread rebellions of 1641, and generally sided against the Puritans during the Cromwellian wars, although **Cromwell was never in Co. Sligo**. This choice of opponent led to much of the land of Co. Sligo being taken from the rebellious landowners and given to Cromwellian soldiers. [Oddly enough, this did not much affect the lands of Corran and Leyny, since the Taaffes were regranted the former, and the O'Haras, by this time protestant, kept the latter.]

Similarly, the Bretts generally supported the side of James II in the battles with William and Mary.

It is surprising that some of the Bretts continued in the county after these tumultuous years. This probably happened because Theobald Taaffe, first Earl of Carlingford was a favourite in the Court of Charles II, and Charles made him Earl of Carlingford and re-granted him his Irish lands, and the **Bretts and others seem to have managed these lands until they were sold in the 1750s.**

There is a record of a survey of Sligo Town by a Mr. Brett in 1662 and 1663, for the following is recorded in Wood-Martin, Vol. 1: On entering and examining the town it is found to be divided by the river into two parts, one on the right or northern bank, and the other and larger part, on the left bank, each portion containing good streets. It is well to bear in mind that the nomenclature of the streets is comparatively modern. When Henry Vaughan and Mr. Brett, in 1662 and 1663, made a " survey " of the town of Sligo, in virtue of a commission under the Great Seal, the streets had no distinctive names: the district of the town lying to the north of the river being called the Fort-hill Quarter, and that lying to the south, the Castle Quarter, and sometimes the New Fort Quarter.

### **3. JOHN BRETT**

During the same period, John Brett of Sligo is recorded by O'Hart[3] as an M.P. in the Irish Parliament of Charles II., and an Assessor for the province of Connaught. O'Hart further states that five Bretts fought for James II., and one was Deputy Lieutenant of Co. Carlow.

Oddly enough, there are no Bretts mentioned in the rather extensive list of home-owners paying the Hearth Money tax in 1665[4].

During the times of James II **John Brett was appointed to collect taxes on behalf of James II.**, as recounted in Wood-Martin, Vol. 2:"At a somewhat later date James issued a Commission for applotting £20,000 per month on personal estate and the benefit of trade and traffic; to collect this tax he appointed the following persons of local influence in the County of Sligo to assess for three months : The High Sheriff, pro tem.; Col. Oliver O'Gara; Henry Crofton; David Bond; Charles O'Hara ; John Crofton ; James French ; John Brett ; the Sovereign of Sligo, pro tem.

Their applotment was £1186 2s., with all powers and instructions for collecting."

The main Brett residence was presumably at Deroon, which has the following statement in McDonagh's History of Ballymote and Emlaghfad:

'Deroon (Doire Uan i.e., the wood of the lambs). In this townland is the remains of the fortified house of the Brett family while on its hills are several remarkable "Tumuli" or mounds marking the burial places of some great, ancient warriors. What appears to be the entrance to one of them has been recently exposed by the breaking up of the land in tillage. Those of them which have been excavated in the neighbourhood, have been found to contain Urns, evidences of cremation, and bones, which point to their being used up to early Christian times.'

### **4. OTHER BRETT'S OF THE PERIOD**

There are three Bretts of Co. Sligo mentioned in Deeds of the time, as recounted by Wood-Martin. These are John Brett in 1679 and 1680 as a witness on lands leased from Lord Carlingford by William Harloe, Francis Brett as witness on a lease of Bricklow Castle from the Earl of Carlingford to Francis Taaffe in 1687, and To. Brett as a witness on a lease to Margaret Costello in 1680.

- 1. Mary O'Dowd, "Early Modern Sligo 1568-1688, Power Politics and Land", 1991, Belfast**
- 2. J. C. MacDonagh, "History of Ballymote and Emlaghfad"**
- 3. John O'Hart, "The Irish and Anglo-Irish Gentry when Cromwell came to Ireland", Dublin**
- 4. The Hearth Money Roll for Co. Sligo, 1665. Analecta Hibernica, Vol. 24, 1968, pp. 17-89.**
- 5. William Gregory Wood-Martin, History of Sligo County and Town; 3 vol. 1889, Dublin, reprinted about 1990.**

## Taaffe Family of Sligo, Ireland

SOURCE: [DICTIONARY OF IRISH BIOGRAPHY](#)

**Taaffe, Sir William (d. 1631), soldier, official, and landowner, was second son of John Taaffe of Harristown and Ballybraggan, a member of a family who had long been prosperous landowners in Co. Louth. He found employment in the service of Sir [Richard Bingham](#) (qv), an English soldier who was appointed governor of Connacht and Clare in 1584. That year Taaffe appears as deputy to Bingham's brother [George](#) (qv), then sheriff of Clare. During 1585–8 he continued as George Bingham's deputy in his capacity as sheriff of Co. Sligo. Abetted by Taaffe, the Bingham's brutally imposed their authority on this strategically important region on the border with Ulster. He appears to have routinely and illegally quartered soldiers on the locals, seizing goods and foodstuffs, and took advantage of the (often wrongful) imprisonment of a number of landowners to steal either their property or their tenants. By these means, he had established an estate at Bunannaden in south-west Co. Sligo by 1588. He was also able to use his influence to secure an exemption from the composition paid by Connacht landowners to the government.**

**Fitzwilliam and the Bingham regime In autumn 1588 the landing on the Sligo coast of survivors from wrecked Spanish armada ships led to an intensification of government repression in the area, which culminated in an uprising in spring 1589. Taaffe served as sheriff of Sligo that year, but was unable to preserve the county from a devastating raid by Sir [Brian O'Rourke](#) (qv), an independent Gaelic lord from neighbouring Leitrim, who appears to have borne a grudge against Taaffe for executing one of his relatives. The lord deputy of Ireland, Sir [William Fitzwilliam](#) (qv), resented the independence enjoyed by Bingham and his associates, and listened sympathetically to the complaints of the Connacht Irish against him. He pacified the province by empowering a royal commission to investigate the manner in which Bingham had ruled Connacht. That summer these commissioners accumulated damning evidence against both Taaffe and George Bingham, which suggested that they were guilty of theft, extortion, and executing people without trial; Taaffe was further accused of rape. The real target of these investigations was Sir Richard Bingham, but the queen was unwilling to countenance his disgrace and removal from office. As a result, Taaffe and George Bingham escaped censure.**

**In 1591 Taaffe found himself once more caught up in a high-level power struggle when Fitzwilliam sought to press Bingham into producing evidence that would help him convict a former lord deputy, Sir [John Perrot](#) (qv), of treason.**

➤ **{Sir John Perrot is my 13<sup>th</sup> Great Grandfather along the Barton line – the plot thickens!!}**

**One of the charges against Perrot was that during his lord deputyship (1584–8) he had taken no action after hearing that O'Rourke had defaced a likeness of the queen, which was held to indicate that Perrot had conspired with O'Rourke to commit treason. At the time, a report of this incident had reached Taaffe, who later passed it on to Bingham. However, when Fitzwilliam demanded that Bingham and Taaffe testify against Perrot, they refused to cooperate, partly because the allegations against Perrot were plainly untrue, partly because they feared that their enemy Fitzwilliam would use their testimony to accuse them similarly of treason. In autumn 1591 Fitzwilliam had Taaffe summoned to London to face questioning. It is uncertain if he divulged anything, and this matter was not raised at Perrot's trial. On 24 June 1592 and soon after Perrot's conviction for treason, the English privy council granted Taaffe leave to return to Ireland, commending him to Fitzwilliam.**

**Land acquisition and war** He made the most of his enforced stay in London by obtaining a letter from the queen dated 6 July 1592, granting him a lease of unspecified crown lands worth £30 a year. Once back in Sligo, he used this grant to expand his landed interests, principally at the expense of his neighbour [Donough O'Connor Sligo](#) (qv) who was the rightful heir to the largest estate in the county but had been disinherited in 1588 after Sir Richard Bingham had secured a verdict from a local jury that O'Connor Sligo's parents had not been married. Taaffe had been a member of that jury, and during the 1590s he procured grants to much of the hapless O'Connor Sligo's estate. These lands appear to have been granted to him because they were held to be 'concealed lands' – crown lands that had been illegally withheld from the crown by private landowners. During the 1590s the crown officials that were active in Connacht, seeking to uncover concealed lands, discharged this duty in a flagrantly corrupt and self-seeking manner and colluded with local officials to deprive Irish landowners of their rightful possessions. Foremost among these officials was [Richard Boyle](#) (qv), with whom Taaffe cooperated closely in pillaging the estate of O'Connor Sligo and others. They also appear to have used Taaffe's grant to acquire lands worth well in excess of the £30 a year originally specified. On 2 September 1596 he was passed various lands in the counties of Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, and Galway, which he quickly sold to Thomas Spring, Boyle's proxy, for £500.

These activities contributed to growing unrest in north Connacht in the mid 1590s, by which time disaffected locals had found a champion in the form of [Red Hugh O'Donnell](#) (qv), who launched a series of raids into the region from his lordship of Tyrconnell (modern Donegal). These attacks were part of a wider rebellion against the crown, led by a confederacy of Ulster lords. By autumn 1595 the Bingham's grip on north Connacht had been broken and the government decided to sacrifice them in the hope of appeasing the Irish. Taaffe was among a number of Connacht officials who fell in behind this dramatic reversal of royal policy and suddenly began criticising Sir Richard Bingham – who, in any case, had antagonised Taaffe by seeking to restrain his land-grabbing activities – for driving the Irish into rebellion by his harshness. In July 1596 Taaffe revealed to royal commissioners that Bingham had brought about the disinheritance of O'Connor Sligo in 1588 by intimidating the jurors. His and other testimonies led to Bingham's suspension from office soon after. After being detained in London for nearly a decade, O'Connor Sligo was dispatched home in August to rally the Sligo Irish against O'Donnell and to sink his differences with Taaffe as the two men sought to combine against a common threat. As part of this placatory strategy, Taaffe tried to woo other members of the O'Connor clan away from their alliance with O'Donnell, but to no avail. Instead, the rebels interpreted Bingham's removal as a sign of weakness and renewed their efforts to such effect that by the close of 1596 Taaffe and all the other leading loyalists were forced to flee from north Connacht, which fell under rebel control.

**Munster** He appears to have returned to his native Louth, where he was appointed constable of Ardee castle (21 November 1597); he held this position till 1611. By summer 1598 he had been made a lieutenant in Henry Norris's troop of horse, and as such took part in the royal army's disastrous defeat at the hands of the main rebel army at the battle of the Yellow Ford in Ulster in August 1598. News of the government's defeat in Ulster sparked a mass uprising in Munster that October, and Taaffe took part in a short and relatively successful campaign commanded by [Thomas Butler](#) (qv), 10th earl of Ormond, which preserved a number of important towns and garrisons in the province from the rebels. By September 1599 he was captain of a troop of fifty horse based in Kilkenny.

***In 1600 his troop was assigned to Munster and appears to have been based in west Cork. He served as sheriff of Co. Cork in 1601. The president of Munster, Sir [George Carew](#) (qv), thought highly of Taaffe both for his military ability and for his success in obtaining good intelligence. His main contacts appear to have been among the Maccarthys of the lordships of Carbery and Muskerry in west Cork. After the landing of a Spanish expeditionary force at Kinsale in September, he was authorised to use his own troop and another company of foot to hinder the Spanish from receiving supplies and provisions from the surrounding countryside. He was also authorised to command a force of loyalist Maccarthys who had arrived to assist in besieging the town. On 26 October he led a daring night-time raid and, after a fierce skirmish, drew away a large prey of sheep and cows that the Spanish had herded for their own use into a narrow peninsula near Kinsale.***

***However, by 23 December the royal army besieging Kinsale was itself surrounded by a relieving force of Ulster Irish. That night Taaffe was informed by a rebel soldier, who had formerly worked for him, that the Irish would attack either that night or the next day. As a result, the forewarned English were ready when the assault came at dawn the next day. The rebels quickly retreated beyond two streams, which prevented the royal horse from harassing them at first, but the cavalry soon discovered a ford downstream. Taaffe and his company were at the forefront of the charge that caused the rebel army to break and run, turning a fighting retreat into a rout. This victory induced the Spanish within the town to surrender and proved the turning point in the war in Ireland.***

***He spent the latter part of 1602 stationed in west Cork, where he was engaged in mopping up rebel resistance. At this time the catholic vicar apostolic of Ross, [Owen Macegan](#) (qv), had landed in Munster with supplies from the king of Spain, and temporarily reinvigorated the rebel cause. In December Carew put Taaffe in command of a force of 400 men to confront some of the Maccarthys of Carbery who had rallied to Macegan's banner. He led his men to victory in a fiercely fought encounter along the banks of the River Bandon (5 January 1603), in which Macegan was killed. This was the last major battle of the Nine Years' War fought in Munster.***

***Consolidation of estates Soon afterwards Taaffe left for London, and in September the recently crowned King James I granted him land worth £50 a year. As before, he sold this grant to Boyle, who exploited it for the covert benefit of himself and his associates. Following the end of the Nine Years' War in spring 1603, Taaffe was discharged from the army and returned to Sligo to reclaim his estate there, which was concentrated around Bunannaden. Most of this property had formerly belonged to O'Connor Sligo, who protested at this, citing the travails he had endured on behalf of the crown during the war. In the end Taaffe sold his Bunannaden estate to O'Connor Sligo for £1,000 and used the proceeds to purchase Ballymote castle and demesne for £1,500. During the 1580s and 1590s George Bingham had developed Ballymote as an administrative centre and market town, making it a far more attractive holding than Bunannaden. Taaffe also acquired from Boyle the property of the abbey of Sligo, which included parts of Sligo town. His other major holding in Sligo was at Ballintogher, along the border with Leitrim, which contained commercially valuable woodlands. However, a royal official, Francis Edgeworth, procured a grant to this estate, leading to a costly legal dispute between the two men for possession of this property that dragged on throughout the 1610s. Eventually (2 July 1617) Taaffe received a grant from the king confirming all the property he then held in Co. Sligo. However, Edgeworth contended that much of Ballintogher was in Leitrim, forcing Taaffe to procure another royal grant specifically acknowledging his title to Ballintogher on 17 April 1620.***

**Throughout his career he maintained his links with his native Louth, where he had a second residence and settled a number of Louth men as tenants in his Sligo estates. It is likely that he had also recruited tenants from Louth for his estate at Bunannaden during the 1580s and 1590s. Most of his tenants about Ballymote castle appear to have been Scottish merchants and tradesmen. He borrowed money from Boyle to purchase land during the 1610s and struggled to repay this loan, being forced to sell some land in order to raise capital. His long-running legal battle with Edgeworth, the manner in which many of his tenants paid him in kind, and his expenditure on developing his lands all contributed to his financial difficulties, although he surmounted them in time.**

**Final years Taaffe remained in high favour with the crown due to his outstanding record of military service during the Nine Years' War, and was further rewarded with a knighthood (25 March 1604) and with a grant (1611), as part of the Ulster plantation, of 1,000 acres in Co. Cavan, which he sold. In 1610 he served as joint sheriff of Sligo, and in October 1612 was made a burgess of Sligo town. However, the authorities were wary of him due to his Catholicism and generally excluded him from government office, despite his being the largest and wealthiest landowner in Co. Sligo. In the mid 1630s his successor's estate comprised some 3,400 profitable acres, yielding an annual rental income of £527. About 1620 he returned to live in Louth, leaving his heir John to manage his Sligo estates. He died on 9 February 1631 and was buried in the church of Ardee with his ancestors.**

**Taaffe married first Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Brett of Tulloch in Fingal, and secondly Ismay, daughter of Sir Christopher Bellew. With his second wife he had a son, the aforementioned John (d. 1642), and two daughters, both of whom were married into the Louth catholic gentry. John, who was created Viscount Taaffe (1628), married Anne, daughter of [Theobald Dillon](#) (qv), 1st Viscount Dillon; their son [Theobald](#) (qv), grandson of William Taaffe, was created earl of Carlingford (1661).**

## Margaret Barton (nee Brett) born Mullingar, Westmeath, Ireland

Does Margaret Barton (nee Brett) born c1806 at Mullingar, Westmeath, fit into the network of the stories of the **Brett** and **Taaffe** families outlined above?

A challenge is issued to Brett Family Researchers in the future to answer the above question.

Meanwhile, Margaret Brett and her family background story, remains a *“work in progress!”*