

NEWSLETTER

Tel: 096 31809

www.northmayogenealogy.com

Email: nmhmanager@gmail.com

Email: northmayo@gmail.com



RIOCARD BAIRÉAD

We profile the
BARD OF MAYO



Cover image:

ILLUSTRATION OF A HEDGE SCHOOL,
typical of the type held by Riocard Bairéad in the Erris area.
(Image from Stáir na hEireann/History of Ireland facebook)



**TRACE
YOUR
ROOTS**

**Are you interested in professional help to
Research Your Family History?
All research can be done remotely**

For more information, Tel: 096 31809

Email: northmayo@gmail.com

www.northmayogenealogy.com

THE BARD OF MAYO

Riocard Bairéad

The Barony of Kilmore Erris was home to a number of poets and other literary geniuses down through the years, but few are held in such high regard as Riocard Bairéad. Despite his exceptional gifts, Bairéad led a relatively simple life.

Riocard Bairéad [Richard (Dick) Barrett] was born c.1739 in the village of Barrack, near Elly Bay on the Mullet peninsula. He worked as a hedge school master and spent his entire life in Erris apart from three months imprisonment in Castlebar after the 1798 rebellion.

Bairéad married twice - he eloped with Nancy Tollett, daughter of Seán Tollett, Moyrahan, a farmer and member of the established church. After her death he remarried to Mary Moran, with whom he had two children, Mary and Richard. Following his death (c.1819), a substantial amount of his work was destroyed by his wife Mary. She believed it was nonsense and of no value. Bairéad is buried in Cross Abbey, outside Binghamstown, Co. Mayo.

Bairéad was so well acclaimed that Patrick Knight, who worked as an Engineer in Erris and who designed the town of Belmullet, described him as "a real genius" in his book, *Erris in the Irish Highlands*. Despite Bairéad's reluctance to show his work to an outsider, he allowed Knight to collect several versions of his poems and songs, which were later presented to the Royal Irish Academy.

The 'Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing' includes Riocard Bairéad's very well-known composition 'Preab san Ól' - a humorous drinking song.

Many of his other compositions, such as 'Eoghan Cóir', were satirical in nature. In his unique satirical style, instead of ridiculing his subject, he lavished false praise upon them.

In 'Tarraingt na Móna' he wrote of the 'meitheal' system which was a common practice in Erris at the time whereby groups of neighbours would gather to assist one another.

In recent times, his works were brought to a broader audience with the recording of 'Preab san Ól' by the band, **The Dubliners**.

An indication of the esteem in which he is still held in Erris is the naming of events, *Colaiste Riocard Bairéad* and *Eigse Riocard Bairéad* in his honour.

Sources:

J. Karney, 'Richard Barrett, the Bard of Mayo', www.mayo-ireland.ie (*Riocard Bairéad, People from Co. Mayo, Ireland*)



*Why spend your leisure bereft of pleasure,
amassing treasure, why scrape and save?
Why look so canny at every penny,
you'll take no money into the grave".*

Translation of opening lines from 'Preab San Ól'
by Riocard Bairéad



HALLOWEEN EVENT!

Booking now open

www.northmayogenealogy.com/events

29th and 30th October 2022



TICKETS NOW ON SALE

A brief history of the surname **BARRETT**

Bairéid, Bared, Baret, Barrett; 'son of Baret.' Bared, Baret, Boret, Borret, and Borred occur in Domesday Book as names of persons holding land in the time of Edward the Confessor. The name is therefore, most probably Anglo-Saxon and distinct from báróid.¹

Barrett: Families of this name came to Ireland with the Anglo-Norman invasion. It is said that those who settled in Co. Cork were originally Barratt, while the Connacht settlers were always Barrett; but the name is now usually spelt Barrett everywhere in Ireland. The Connacht Barretts held the territory of Tirawley in north-western Mayo where, Gaelicized, they formed themselves into a sept with a chief, like the indigenous inhabitants. Their descendants still live in Co. Mayo and Co. Galway but are not nearly so numerous as the Munster family.²

Barrett: Baróid in Munster, Bairéid in Connacht. These families, which were branches of the same stock, came with the Anglo-Norman invasion and became completely hibernicized.³

Of the 146 Barrett births in Ireland in 1890 - including all variants - 17 occurred in Leinster, 74 were in Munster, 11 occurred in Ulster, while 44 occurred in Connacht. The surname was principally found in Dublin, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Galway and Mayo.¹

¹ 'Irish Names and Surnames' by Rev. Patrick Woulfe, 1993 edition

² 'Irish Family Names' by Brian De Breffny

³ 'The Surnames of Ireland' by Edward MacLysaght

The Old Cross Graveyard –
resting place of Riocard Bairéad
(from findagrave.com)

