

# A History of Joyce of Joyce Country

By

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## Introduction:

For the Joyces of Counties Mayo and Galway, they call this region of Ireland their ancestral homeland. Claiming descent from the Norman knight, Thomas De Jorse, this history of *Joyce Country* has been passed down since the fourteenth century. An ally of the O'Brien family, it has been recorded that Thomas settled in Clifden, County Galway to as far north as Killery Bay,<sup>1</sup> after which his lineage continued on for twenty-six generations. While it is difficult to confirm the accuracy of this genealogy spanning back to the Middle Ages on traditional evidence alone, the latest Y-DNA evidence has shown there is some truth to this history. Only by aligning this pedigree with the DNA evidence can one uncover this likelihood.

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<sup>1</sup> John O'Hart, "*Joyce (No. 1) Family Genealogy*," Library of Ireland, accessed April 9, 2024, <https://www.libraryireland.com/Pedigrees2/joyce-1.php>

## The Historical Account

Documented by Daniel Molyneux (1568–1632), the principal herald in Ireland,<sup>2</sup> he was tasked with “*certifying family pedigrees and dispensing heraldic emblems.*”<sup>3</sup> Taking great care to verify that his research was as correct as possible, it is likely he was in direct contact with persons already established with their own coat of arms. In his pedigree and the accompanying history, one can see detailed accounts of the Joyces as “*great commanders of gallowglasses, particularly Tioboid na Caislein.*”<sup>4</sup> Documented by Molyneux to have lived in Renvyle Castle until his death in 1600, it is likely that Molyneux likely had first-hand knowledge of this event. Because Daniel Molyneux was a contemporary of Tioboid, Chief of the Clan Joyce at the time, it is likely this information is reliable.

This theory is further strengthened by the traditional records associated with Joyce of Joyce Country Y-DNA matches. Most of them have documentation within a genealogical timeframe back to the early nineteenth-century to the townlands of Clifden, County Galway and Derrypark, County Mayo. According to Molyneux, Thomas De Jorse first settled in Clifden, County Galway and as far north as Killery Bay. After a comparison between the ancestral lineages of the Joyce Y-DNA matches and these localities, it is clear they line up. The earliest example is the pedigree of Patrick Joyce (1799-1868) of Clifden, County Galway, who lived near Doon castle which was built by Tioboid na Caislein. This is reinforced by the fact that all of the Joyce of Joyce Country

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<sup>2</sup> John O’Hart, “*Joyce (No. 1) Family Genealogy,*” Library of Ireland, <https://www.libraryireland.com/Pedigrees2/joyce-1.php>

<sup>3</sup> Terry Clavin, “*Molyneux, Daniel,*” dictionary of Irish Biography, accessed April 9, 2024, <https://www.dib.ie/index.php/biography/molyneux-daniel-a5875>

<sup>4</sup> John O’Hart, “*Joyce (No. 1) Family Genealogy,*” Library of Ireland, <https://www.libraryireland.com/Pedigrees2/joyce-1.php>

lineages, according to the history of their patrilineal SNPs, first appear in Ireland about the year 1012 CE in County Mayo. Even more so, each of the patrilineal lineages share the same origins from Sweden. However, as will be seen in the following section, The Genetic Evidence, it is more likely they were not new arrivals in England before settling in Ireland.

## The Genetic Evidence

One of the later Joyce lineages to arrive in Ireland, all of the Joyce of Joyce Country Y-DNA matches share the SNP, or single nucleotide polymorphism, R-YP6007.<sup>5</sup> Estimated by Family Tree DNA to have originally been born in a Joyce male around the year 1012 CE, this SNP is first documented in Clifden, County Galway and Derrypark, County Mayo. Before this, their patrilineal ancestry can be traced through Y-DNA to England with the SNP, R-YP4660, which is dated around 880 CE.<sup>6</sup> This correlation of SNPs, their age, and their geographical locations line up with the pedigree of Tioboid na Caislein as recorded by Daniel Molyneux. Because Molyneux was a contemporary of Tioboid, it can be assumed this info is likely reliable. Even the pedigree from this point backward to Thomas De Jorse, appears to be supported by Y-DNA evidence.

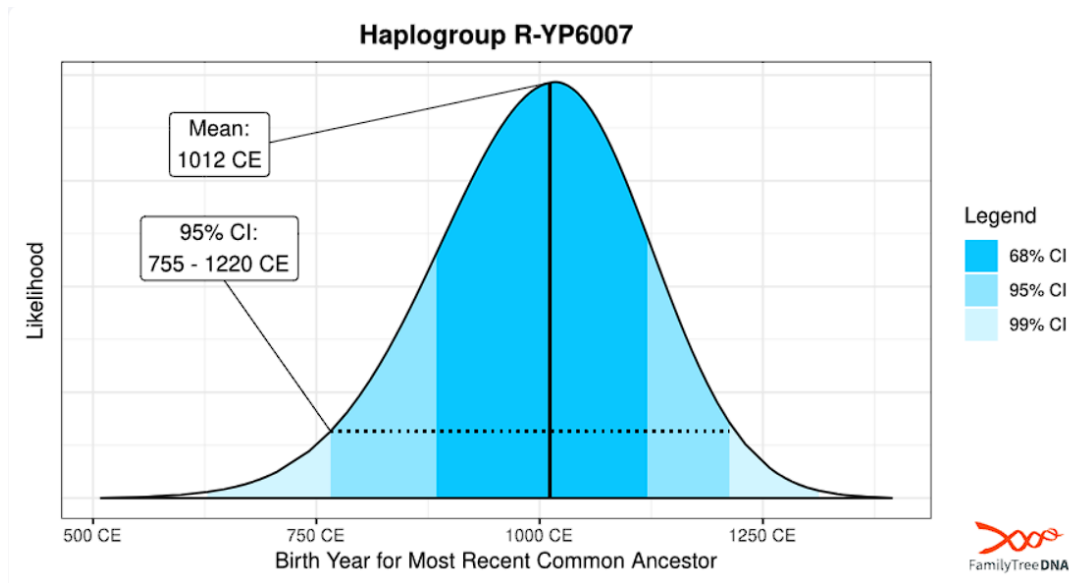


Figure 1 R-YP6007 age estimation from Family Tree DNA

<sup>5</sup>Family Tree DNA, "Your Haplogroup Story: R-YP6007," accessed April 10, 2024, <https://discover.familytreedna.com/y-dna/R-YP6007/story>

<sup>6</sup>Family Tree DNA, "Your Haplogroup Story: R-YP4660," accessed April 10, 2024, <https://discover.familytreedna.com/y-dna/R-YP4660/story>

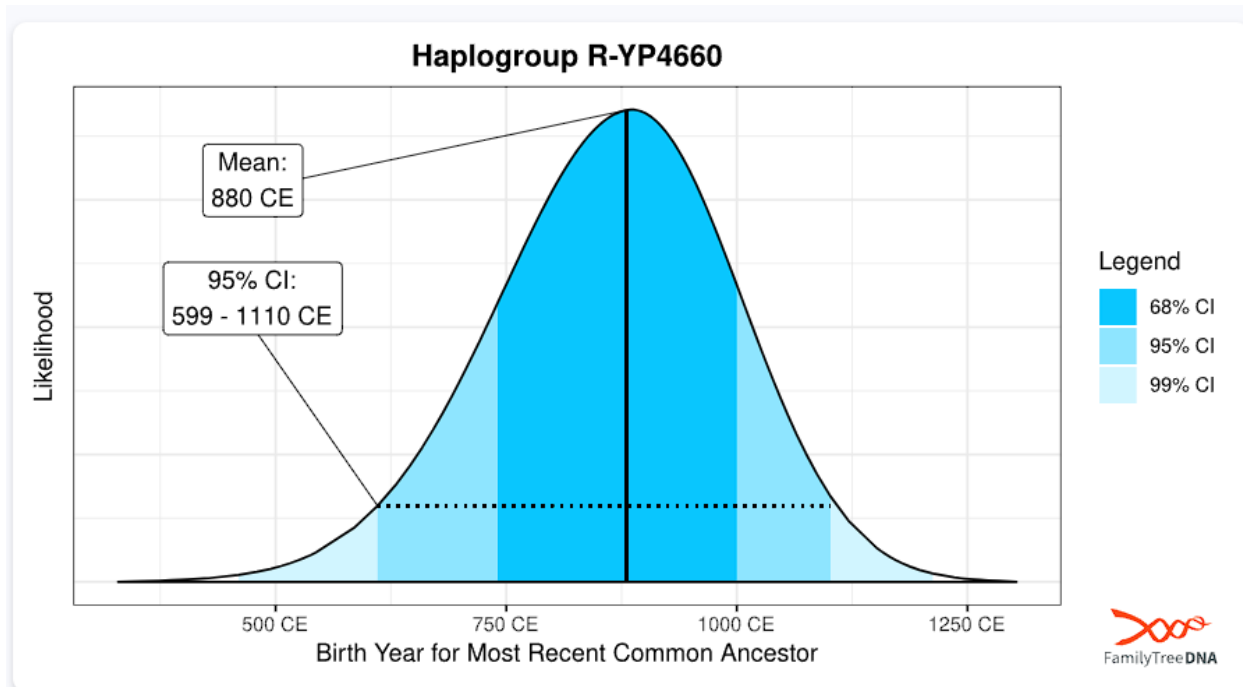


Figure 2 R-YP4660 age estimation from Family Tree DNA

The story of Thomas De Jorse states that he was a Norman. Historically, the Normans were a class of warrior knights who followed William the Conqueror of Normandy on his conquest of England in 1066 CE. Before R-YP4660 is documented in England, the SNP, R-YP4664, occurred about 1450 BCE around Northern Germany.<sup>7</sup> This leap between 860 BCE to 880 CE suggests that at some point, the ancestors of Tioboid na Caislein might have arrived as Normans in England before R-YP6007 first appears in Connaught, Ireland around 1012 CE. With one considers all the above genetic evidence and apply it to the traditional record, there is some truth to Molyneux’s pedigree.

<sup>7</sup> Family Tree DNA, “Your Haplogroup Story: R-YP4664,” accessed April 10, 2024, <https://discover.familytreedna.com/y-dna/R-YP4664/story>

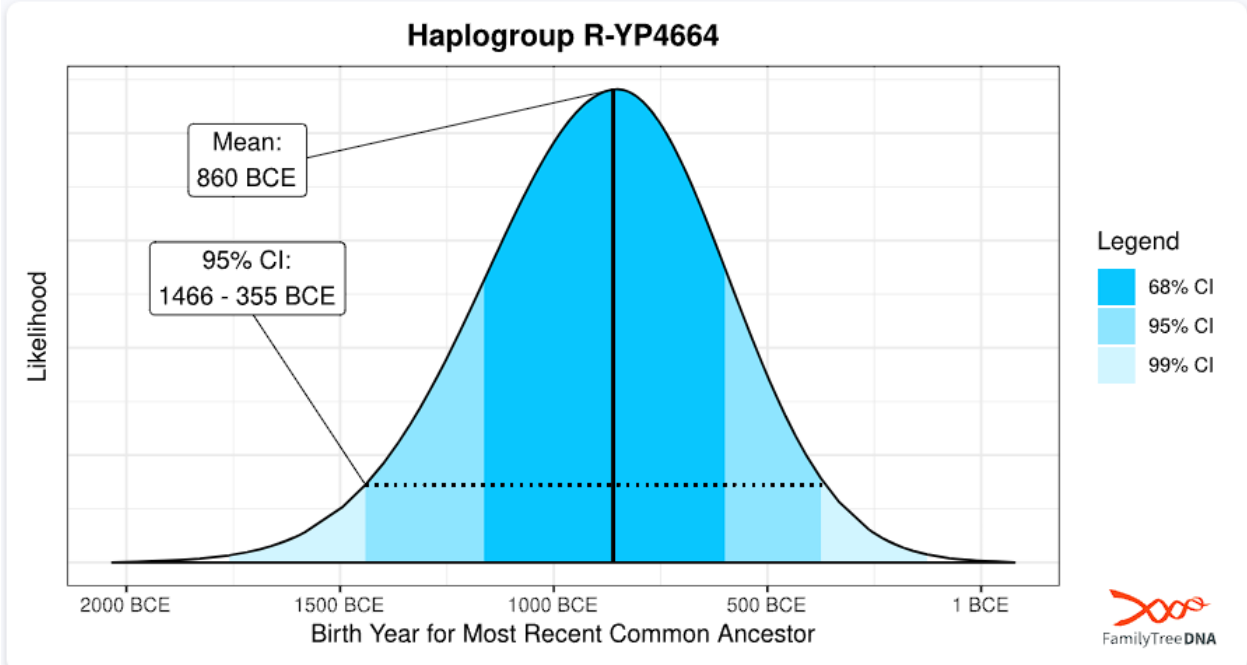


Figure 3 R-YP4664 age estimation from Family Tree DNA

## Conclusion

While offering unique insight into the founding family of Joyce Country, Connaught, one has to study this pedigree with a healthy sense of skepticism. Recorded by Daniel Molyneux, the principal herald of Ireland in the seventeenth century, one naturally wonders how accurate it is the further in time one goes back. However, when one considers the genetic history of the SNPs associated with the Joyce of Joyce Country Y-DNA group and their ancestral connection to the history of Thoms De Jorse, it is evident the Y-DNA evidence largely mirrors this pedigree. Although not a confirmation on every detail, only by comparing the traditional and genetic evidence together can one better understand what is likely true, and what is likely false.