



New Year Resolutions

(originated over 4,000 years ago)

New Year's resolutions

1. Trace my family roots
- Eat more organic veg
- Walk more

North Mayo Heritage Centre
Reception & Organic Garden re-open 6th of January 2026.

(Image: Pixabay)

Are you interested in
TRACING YOUR MAYO ROOTS?

If you are interested in professional help to research your family history or are curious about your ancestry, why not contact us?



The
North Mayo
Heritage
Centre



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



This project is supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development and Pobal through the Community Services Programme

Drowning Disaster in Killala Bay

Extract from Dúchas.ie (The Schools' Collection)

January 6th, 1831.

“Long ago on the 6th of January 1831 boats went out herring fishing. The storm arose, and opposite Kilcummin Head a crew of nine men were lost. There were three brothers named Kelly's, four cousins and two neighbours drowned.

When the storm arose all their friends went to a hill called Cnoc-Mór to see if they could hear the boats coming in, but they did not hear anything apart from crying in the wind. They knew the men were lost. On returning home, the house of the three brothers was knocked by the storm, and a horse and two cows were killed. The father and mother and the rest of the family, had to go into a friend's house for shelter. A few months later, a group of men were card-playing in a house in the village when they saw nine men in shirts and scarves coming towards them - they knew they were ghosts of the men that were lost at sea. When the card-players came home they told all the people about the vision. Three days later a man searching sheep saw them again. The local people went to the priest who read Masses for the souls of the men who died at sea”.

New Year Resolutions

Will you be making some?

Each January 1st, people reflect on their lives and set goals to better themselves, from health and career ambitions to personal growth. But where did this practice originate, and how has it evolved over time?

In ancient Babylon, more than 4,000 years ago, people marked the new year by making vows to the Gods, promising to repay debts or return borrowed goods. The Romans later adopted a similar custom, dedicating the first month of the year to Janus, the two-faced God who looked both backward and forward. Early Christians transformed the idea into a moral exercise, using the new year as a time for reflection, repentance, and renewed commitment to a better life. By the time these traditions reached Ireland, they blended naturally with existing Celtic ideas of cycles, accountability, and renewal.

In Ireland, a country shaped by hard weather, strong community ties, and a long memory of survival, the idea of making promises at the turning of the year has always carried a particular weight. Resolutions were rarely written down or spoken aloud in the modern sense.

Instead, they were often quiet intentions, shaped by necessity rather than self-improvement trends. Farmers might resolve to manage land more carefully after a harsh winter. Fishermen along the coasts or on the islands might promise greater caution at sea. These were not abstract goals, but practical commitments rooted in lived experience.

Catholic tradition also played a strong role. New Year's Day, within the reflective season following Christmas, encouraged examination of conscience. Many people in the west of Ireland saw the new year as a chance to amend behaviour: to curb drink, mend a broken relationship, or attend Mass more faithfully.

In tightly knit villages, a person's word carried social weight. To say you would “do better this year” meant offering help when needed or easing old grudges about land or trespass.

The 20th century saw New Year's resolutions become a secular tradition. With the rise of self-help culture and an emphasis on personal achievement, resolutions expanded to include goals like weight loss, financial success, and career advancement. The concept of “new year, new me” emerged as a cultural mantra, inspiring people to view January 1st as a fresh start.

Many still prefer modest, realistic goals: exercising more, spending time outdoors, staying connected, or minding mental health through the long west of Ireland winters.

The symbolic nature of a “new year” provides a psychological boost, making it easier to believe in the possibility of change.

DID YOU KNOW?

Studies suggest that while nearly half of adults make resolutions, only 8% achieve them.