

# Mayo Heritage

Newsletter



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The  
North Mayo  
Heritage  
Centre



## Have you heard the Corncrake?

Almost half the corncrake  
population can be found in off-  
shore islands

Cover image courtesy of Bird Watch Ireland.

## Origins of the Carolan Surname

A brief history of  
**Termoncarragh**

## 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? All research can be done remotely.

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# The Corncrake in Ireland

Corncrakes were once found in every parish in Ireland but since the early 1900s numbers began to decline.

In 2018, 151 calling males were recorded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, approximately two-thirds of which are in Donegal. Just over half of the Corncrake population can be found on offshore islands, these include Inishbofin in County Galway, Tory off the coast of County Donegal and the Mullet Peninsula in County Mayo. Over the past ten years numbers have fluctuated between 100 and 200 pairs.

The Corncrake is from the bird family of Crakes and Rails and has the scientific name *Crex crex* and the Irish name Traonach. It visits Ireland in the summer from April to September. They are related to moorhens, coots and rails but differ from most members of this family in that they live on dry land. They are small in size, being only a little bigger than a blackbird. In flight they are unmistakable with their bright chestnut wings and trailing legs. Corncrakes are summer visitors and migrate to Africa for the winter.



The corncrake can be identified by its bright chestnut coloured wings, its short bill and yellow brown legs. They are a shy and secretive bird found in hay meadows eating a diet of mainly insects and the seeds of grasses.

The male birds give a very loud distinctive rasping call during the breeding season, the call is repeated during the day, peaks around dusk and continues through the night until dawn. It is usually only the male who calls to defend his territory or to attract a female.

Breeding is from mid-May to early August and they nest on the ground in tall vegetation.

Most nests are in hay fields where their greenish-grey mottled eggs hatch after seventeen days of incubation.

For the first four days after hatching the chicks are fed by their mothers and thereafter they learn to feed themselves and fly in a little over thirty days. Females have two broods, the first hatching in mid-June and the second in late July to early August. The Corncrake is one of Ireland's most critically endangered birds and Bird Watch Ireland is involved in its habitat management on Tory Island off the coast of County Donegal and Termoncarragh Reserve in County Mayo. By working closely with landowners and farmers they hope to conserve the Corncrake population for generations to come.

Source:  
birdwatchireland.ie

## Brief history of the townland of **TERMONCARRAGH**

(*Tearmann Caithreach*, meaning termon or church land (sanctuary) of the fort).

Located in the parish of Kilmore Erris. There are here the ruins of an old fort, called The Caither (Cathair). Situated 3 miles north-west by west of Belmullet.

Bounded on the north by Gladree; east by Corclough; south by Portnafrankagh and by Glebe; and west by the Atlantic Ocean. The property of W. H. Carter, Esq., and is held under a lease for ever by Mr. Caldwell.

It contains 618 acres, 3 roods, 33 perches, of which 214 acres are sandhills; 52 acres are bog; and 50 acres marshy pasturages flooded by high tides.

There is a burial ground in the sands, on the south-east side of the townland.

## Origins of the CAROLAN surname

**Ó Cearbhalláin:** *O Carowlane, O Carolan, Carolan, Carrolan, &c.*; 'descendants of *Cearbhallán*' (diminutive of *Cearbhall*); a well known Ulster surname; formerly common in Donegal, Tyrone, Monaghan and Cavan; also in Meath. There are probably several distinct families of the name. To be distinguished from *Ó Coirealláin*.<sup>1</sup>

**Carolan/Carlin:** Descendants of both the Ó Cairealláin sept, whose seat was in the parish of Clondermot, barony of Tikeeran, Co. Derry, and of the Ó Cearbhalláin sept from Co. Cavan and Co. Monaghan, have adopted the surname Carolan. The heaviest distribution of this surname today outside of the capital is in western Co. Cavan around Kingscourt and Bailieborough in Clonkee barony and in the adjacent regions of Co. Meath, Co. Monaghan and Co. Louth. Occasionally it is now found in use with the original prefix O.<sup>2</sup>

**(O) Carolan Ó Cairealláin.** Of Clondermot, Co. Derry; also *Ó Cearbhalláin* in south Ulster and Meath. Both these surnames are derived from obsolete personal names.<sup>3</sup>

Of the 47 *Carolan* births registered in Ireland in 1890 - including all variants - 19 occurred in Leinster, 1 was in Munster, 13 occurred in Ulster, while 14 were in Connacht. The surname was principally found in Mayo and Cavan.

Of the 20 *Carlin* births in Ireland - 3 occurred in Leinster, 0 in Munster, 15 occurred in Ulster and 2 occurred in Connacht. The name was principally found in Tyrone and Londonderry.

<sup>1</sup> Extract taken from 'Irish Names and Surnames' by Rev. Patrick Woulfe (p.459)

<sup>2</sup> Extract taken from 'Irish Family Names' by Brian De Breffny (p.72)

<sup>3</sup> Extract taken from 'The Surnames of Ireland' by Edward MacLysaght (p.38)



**The Orchard Café**  
**NOW OPEN**  
**at the North Mayo**  
**Heritage Centre**

**Opening hours:**  
**Tue to Sun**  
**10am to 4pm**

**Serving breakfasts,**  
**lunches, drinks and**  
**treats**