

North Mayo Heritage Centre

NEWSLETTER



The
North Mayo
Heritage
Centre

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January Folklore

The Cock's Step (Cois Céim Coiligh)

The townland of **Rathbal**

A brief history



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The North Mayo Heritage Centre is dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich heritage of the region

January

January was named after the Roman God Janus, known as the protector of gates and doorways which symbolise beginnings and endings. Janus is depicted with two faces, one looking into the past, the other with the ability to see into the future. What a fitting symbol for the new year!



Cois céim Coiligh

*'New Year's Day is but an inch wide,
But Twelfth Night boasts a cock's
stride'*

This old saying is broadly interpreted to mean that the increase in daylight at the beginning of January is equivalent to the length of a cock's step.

This increase is believed to begin new year's day and continues until the longest day is reached on 21st June. In early January it was often said: *'Tá cois céim coiligh ar an lá'* meaning there was a cock's step length in daylight.

Dear Ancestor

*Your tombstone stands among the rest,
neglected and alone.
The name and date are chiseled out on
polished marble stone*

*It reaches out to all who care,
it is too late to mourn.
You did not know that I exist,
you died and I was born.*

*Yet each of us are cells of you
in flesh and blood and bone
Our blood contracts and beats a pulse
entirely not our own.*

*Dear Ancestor,
the place you filled 100 years ago
Spreads out among the ones you left
who dearly loved you so*

*I wonder how you lived and loved
and I wonder if you knew
That someday I would find this spot
and come to visit you.*

Walter Butler Palmer

January Weather Lore:

January is the subject of a number of proverbs and rhymes, which were composed to help our ancestors work out what kind of weather was likely to occur during the coming 12 months.

Many relied on the time-honoured belief that whatever the weather is like now, in the next season it will be the opposite. Thus a good number of proverbs suggest that warm or fine weather at the beginning of the year is bad news, especially for the coming harvest. Here are some of them:

- Fog in January brings a wet spring.
- If grass grows in January, it will grow badly the whole year.
- A summery January, a winterish spring.
- A green January makes a full churchyard. (It was believed that cold weather kills germs, while mild winters allow them to spread. In the days before antibiotics, even a common cold could turn into a more serious, even fatal infection).
- It was also believed that the weather of the first 12 days of the year is said to be indicative of the following 12 months. So, the weather on the first, good or bad, will reflect how January will feel. The second day forecasts February, the third forecasts March, and so on.

Taken from the Ordnance Survey Namebooks of 1838

The townland of

RATHBAL

(*Ráth Balla,*
fort of the wall)

Located in the south of the parish of Ballysakeery. Bounded on the north by the townland of Rathglass West; east by Tooreenphilip townland and Ardagh parish; south by Ardagh parish; and west by the townland of Ballynaboll.

It contains 833 acres, 2 roods, 9 perches*, including 11 acres, 3 roods, 7 perches* of water, about 12 acres of plantation, and about 80 acres of bog.

The property of Annesley Knox, Esq., and held by tenants at 36 shillings per acre yearly. Some of the tenants have leases; the others are tenants at will. Soil, light gravelly clay, producing barley, oats, flax and potatoes. Houses are of stone. The inhabitants are apparently very poor.

There are 42 families living in this townland, all are Roman Catholics.

The sub denominations of this townland are as follows:- Rathball Sharp, Rathbal Mullagh Castle, Rathbal Duggan, Rathbal Ballinstira, Rathbal Bally naskelpa, Rathbal Slieveclaur.

* There are 40 perches in a rood, and 4 roods in an acre.

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