

Tel: 096 31809

[www.northmayogenealogy.com](http://www.northmayogenealogy.com)

Email: [nmhmanager@gmail.com](mailto:nmhmanager@gmail.com)

Email: [northmayo@gmail.com](mailto:northmayo@gmail.com)



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## **THE BIG SNOW OF 1947**

**The Irish winter of 1947  
was the severest one in  
living memory.**

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Don't forget ...  
February 6<sup>th</sup> 2023 is  
a Public Holiday in  
honour of St.  
Bridget.



Cover images: Donegal and Boyle, Co. Roscommon during the big snow of 1947.  
Images from Donegal Weather Channels facebook and from Independent.ie.

## THE BIG SNOW OF 1947

The Irish winter of 1947 was the severest one of living memory. It brought freezing temperatures, prolonged snowfall, and a fuel crisis that hindered the country for weeks. Every road and railway became impassable, and every waterway was frozen solid. Power cables and electricity pylons had vanished from sight beneath an immense blanket of snow. Ireland ground to a complete halt.

Of the fifty days between January 24<sup>th</sup> and March 17<sup>th</sup> it snowed for thirty of them.

“The Blizzard” which began on February 25<sup>th</sup>, was the greatest single snowfall on record and lasted close to fifty consecutive hours. Driven by persistent easterly gales, the snow drifted until every hollow, depression, arch and alleyway was filled and the whole Irish countryside became a vast ashen wasteland.<sup>[1]</sup>

Nothing was recognisable anymore. The landscape became a frozen sea of white. It was a merciless three weeks before the snow eventually began to melt. The elderly and young children were the chief victims, as the plunging temperatures caused respiratory issues, heart attacks and strokes. An estimated 600 people died. The snowdrifts left rural areas inaccessible to postmen and other vital services. In the towns, bakers and milkmen were forced to use horse and sleigh, donkey and cart, or resort to on-foot delivery to provide much needed supplies.

These provisions were quickly rationed; no individual was entitled to more than 6lb of bread, half a pound of sugar, half an ounce of tea and 2 ounces of butter<sup>[2]</sup>.

Petrol and gas supplies were also strictly limited. The new electricity supply quickly dwindled, and most people returned to paraffin lamps and candlelight.

Farmers grimly searched the land daily for signs of life from animals trapped below the layers of snow. Thousands of out-wintered livestock were lost due to the devastating conditions. Even the farm animals that were kept in sheds and byres required constant attention as fodder and hay were in short supply and water troughs persistently froze up.

At the beginning of March, a CIÉ rescue team was sent from Dublin into the snowbound areas in Connacht to bring provisions. The group, made up of 20 men, penetrated a route through the blocked road to Ballina.<sup>[3]</sup>

The local Mayo newspapers, Ballina Herald and Western People, dated the 1<sup>st</sup> of March reported that three men were tragically lost in the Bangor and Bellacorrick areas when they ventured out into the snow and were unable to make a safe return. Bonniclon was also mentioned noting that Cahill’s Bakeries managed to get their bread delivered as far as the Crooked Bridge and then it had to be brought into the village in relays.<sup>[4]</sup>

For schoolchildren, however, the snow provided a reprieve from learning lessons as all schools were closed. It brought an unexpected opportunity to spend their days learning to sledge, ice-skate or build snowmen instead. Some took to the Irish slopes on a variety of push cars, enamel basins and aluminium trays.

It was a time of remarkable cooperation and resourcefulness, exciting for children, almost intolerable for adults. An extraordinary event that remained engraved on the memory of all who lived through it.



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**A brief history of the townland of**

**BALLYCORRICK/ BELLACORICK**

(*Béal Áith Comhraic*, mouth of the ford of the confluence).

Located in the eastern extremity of the parish of Kilcommon, 18 miles south-east of Belmullet, and has Crossmolina parish on the east. The property of W. H. Carter.

It contains 800 acres, 3 roods, 32 perches, of which only 6½ acres are cultivated; the remainder is chiefly deep bog and boggy pasture. The Owenmore passes through the north end of it for nearly a mile, as also does the road from Belmullet to Castlebar, which crosses the river by an excellent bridge of 5 arches.

A short distance above the bridge the Owenmore is joined by the Owen Inny, a very considerable river. Close by the bridge is a Police Barrick, called Carrick Station.

*Taken from the Ordnance Survey letters of 1838*

References: [1] [www.irelandsown.ie](http://www.irelandsown.ie) [2] [www.turtlebunbury.wordpress.com](http://www.turtlebunbury.wordpress.com) [3] [www.irishtimes.com](http://www.irishtimes.com) [4] [www.irish-memories.com](http://www.irish-memories.com)



## ST. BRIDGET'S CROSS

Saint Brigid’s Cross is an iconic symbol associated with Saint Brigid’s Day that has endured over the centuries. Traditionally made from reeds, rushes, or straw, the Saint Brigid’s cross is like no other. Unlike traditional crosses, this one has a square centre piece with four radials that are woven together in a crisscross pattern, with each end tied with a string.