

# Mayo Heritage

Newsletter

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North Mayo Heritage Centre

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## RTÉ

(Raidió Teilifís Éireann)

**First broadcast on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1961**

*We profile how RTÉ has developed down through the years*

*(Cover image courtesy of thedailymail.com)*

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?



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



The  
*North Mayo*  
Heritage  
Centre



## RTÉ allowed us to witness the world at home through our TV

When did staring at a screen become a normal part of life?

Some would assume that this is a recent habit. But since the first programmes were broadcast in Ireland by RTÉ in 1961, the screen has played a role in all of our lives to some degree or other. For over 60 years, we have witnessed wars, space launches, films and family dramas without ever leaving our front door.

Ireland was one of the first countries in Europe to embrace the medium of radio, but was a relative latecomer to television. Unlike its European counterparts, the Irish Government did not use the medium of television until 31 December 1961. Teilifís Éireann began broadcasting at 19:00 on New Year's Eve, 1961.

The channel was launched with an opening address by the then President, Eamonn de Valera followed by a live concert from the Gresham Hotel in Dublin, hosted by Eamonn Andrews.

The Late Late Show, hosted by Gay Byrne, began broadcasting in July 1962. It is now the longest running chat show in the world.

Those who owned a television set in the early 60s were few and far between. Neighbours would congregate in those houses to view in black and white whatever was on the box. Many stories are told of the first televisions, such as when viewers watching a western movie turned it off abruptly for fear of being shot!!

The early TV sets were big and heavy and sometimes you would end up watching "snow" due to the fluctuating weather conditions! TVs were rented in contrast to being purchased and programmes were only broadcast on one channel. Colour TVs with remote controls did not become popular until the 1970s. Popular makes of TV in the 1970s were PYE and Bush. Marsh TV rentals of Ballina rented out TVs at 10/6 per week. This rental rate would be reduced after six months.

Television is broadcast 24/7 nowadays, but in the early years of broadcasting, programming did not commence until 5.30pm. However, this service expanded and developed over the years.

In 1978, the Government of Ireland approved the launch of a second public service channel to be operated by RTÉ. Although the viewing hours were restricted, RTÉ covered a reasonably broad range of programmes and it was pleasurable viewing for the long winter evenings especially.

During the 1990s RTÉ began to expand its services to provide regional variations.

In 1996, an Irish-language television service, TG4, was launched from Galway.

The St. Bridget's cross was incorporated into the RTÉ logo up until August 1995.



RTÉ Television began to expand its output through the development of digital television. On 26 May 2011, RTÉ television launched Saorview and Saorsat. On 24 October 2012 all analogue TV transmissions ended in Ireland hence, RTÉ's television channels are now only available digitally on Saorview, satellite, and cable.

Television has long provided synthetic company in the home. Gone are the days of storytelling and card playing, replaced not only by a TV screen but phone and many other screens as well!

Sources:  
rte.ie  
Irelandseye.com  
Theirishtimes.com



The first night of broadcasting from RTÉ, December 31st 1961

(image from rte.ie)

**TELEFÍS ÉIREANN**

**7.00 OPENING OF TELEFÍS ÉIREANN**  
Eamonn de Valera, President of Ireland, will give the opening address. Eamonn Andrews will host the first programme.

**7.30 THE NEWS**  
The first news bulletin will be broadcast at 7.30pm.

**7.50 THE NEWS**  
The first news bulletin will be broadcast at 7.50pm.

**8.00 THE NEWS**  
The first news bulletin will be broadcast at 8.00pm.

**8.10 THE NEWS**  
The first news bulletin will be broadcast at 8.10pm.

**8.20 THE NEWS**  
The first news bulletin will be broadcast at 8.20pm.

**8.30 THE NEWS**  
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**8.40 THE NEWS**  
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**9.00 THE NEWS**  
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**9.10 THE NEWS**  
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**9.20 THE NEWS**  
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**10.00 THE NEWS**  
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**10.10 THE NEWS**  
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**11.00 THE NEWS**  
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**11.20 THE NEWS**  
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**11.30 THE NEWS**  
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**11.50 THE NEWS**  
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**12.00 THE NEWS**  
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**Opening Night, New Year's Eve, Sunday, December 31, 1961**

**12.00 THE NEWS**  
The first news bulletin will be broadcast at 12.00pm.

**12.10 THE NEWS**  
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The TV listings from the first night of broadcasting of RTÉ

(Images from rte.ie)