



## New Year Resolutions

It's almost the end of 2025, time to consider resolutions for the coming year. Except it isn't. I write this for myself but imagine that it's true for many of us, especially over a certain age. They rarely last. Anything worth resolving seems to happen naturally, unless it's an unplanned life-changing Damascene moment. The daily grind over many years offers countless insights, most of which we forget. If we hang on to contrived decisions, even for the best of reasons, they fade, like ripples in water.

I was a motivated child and every year made resolutions, none of which I can remember now. I suppose, at the time, they appeared necessary and had a purpose. They are a kind of re-creation, using Will and Reason to make ourselves a better fit for this changing world. Whether this involves diet or exercise, mental gymnastics, emotional manoeuvres or relationship decisions, there are any number of ways we can forcibly decide to improve ourselves on January 1<sup>st</sup>, all of which slowly dissolve by the end of the month, if not before.

But we need this opportunity to whitewash ourselves and make a new start or at least do some kind of 3000-mile service on our souls. The seasons will soon change, better weather will return and hope springs eternal in approaching Spring. Failing to keep to these resolutions shouldn't be demoralising, though. They are useful reconsiderations of behaviour, and even though we might not keep to them for the rest of our lives, let alone the rest of the month, they remain somewhere in our brains and are better than no inner reflection at all.

Lightning research informs me that: "New Year's resolutions began with the Ancient Babylonians about 4000 years ago, when they celebrated the start of their New Year in mid-March. They marked the occasion with festivals and rituals, which included making promises to the gods to pay their debts and return borrowed items." (Bing) and "New Year's resolutions began with the Ancient Babylonians over 4,000 years ago during their 12-day Akitu festival, making promises to their gods to pay debts or return items for good fortune, a practice later adopted and adapted by Romans, Christians, and medieval knights, eventually evolving into the personal goals we know today. The specific phrase "New Year's Resolution" appeared much later, around 1813, in a satirical piece in the Boston Gazette newspaper." (Google)

I love the idea that four thousand years ago, people were still worried about paying their debts. Some things never change; possibly nothing ever changes. I would like to set myself the same challenge this year, of paying off all the debts, but it feels like Canute trying to hold back the tide. The debts keep coming, charges for everything keep rising and the greedy fingers in bank accounts seem to be rooting around ever deeper and longer. Four thousand years will probably be how much many of will need to pay off mortgages and credit cards. As for borrowed items, I resolved many years ago never to loan out a book again after losing three or four to friends, and friends of friends, ruining complete sets.

Running out of space here, so a nice, simple, short-term resolution will be to write five of these life observations by the end of January. That's doable.